



NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

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ASSESSMENT, MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION OF DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS

I. General and FAO context

1. Well managed dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems contribute to the food security, livelihoods and resilience of millions of people and to sustainable landscapes, including in the Near East. Extensive areas of drylands are already degraded. Drylands are at high risk of further degradation and associated environmental and socio-economic impacts, including desertification, conflict, water and food insecurity, migration, and unemployment, among others. Addressing sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems requires a comprehensive understanding of their complexity, status and roles and context-specific approaches tailored to the unique conditions of drylands. Action and investments in monitoring, sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and their adaptation to climate change need to be increased.
2. FAO, in collaboration with various partners, has dedicated efforts to enhance its support to member countries on assessment, management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems. Below is a brief overview of selected recent initiatives and activities undertaken by FAO, involving Near East countries with high scaling up potential.
3. At its 22nd Session in 2014, the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) called for greater action on, and investment in the assessment, monitoring, sustainable management and restoration of drylands. It requested FAO to undertake a global assessment of the extent and status of dryland forests, rangelands and agrosilvopastoral systems, with a view to better prioritizing and targeting the investments needed for dryland restoration and management. A first global collaborative assessment of trees, forests and other land uses in drylands was conducted using Collect Earth, and preliminary findings¹ were published in July 2016.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5905e.pdf>

4. Recognizing the critical importance of Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems in dryland regions, including in the Near East, the COFO at its 23rd Session (July 2016) agreed to establish a Working Group (WG) in accordance with the recommendation of the 22nd Session and to review its continued relevance and operational modalities. The WG Terms of Reference are contained in the attached annex.

II. Working Group on "Drylands Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems"

5. The WG mandate is to:

- review and report to the COFO on the status, trends, issues and developments in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems;
- contribute to developing a comprehensive understanding of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and the people who depend on them; and
- promote scaling-up of the adoption of good practices for the protection, sustainable management and restoration of drylands forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, enhancing also environmental and socio-economic resilience and sustainable livelihoods.

6. This WG provides an opportunity to promote cooperation and lessons learning between the experts of the Near East and of other dryland regions. Nominations of experts have been made and communicated by COFO members to FAO. Only few nominations from the Near East countries were received. Resource mobilisation efforts are ongoing to organize the first meeting of the working group members during the first quarter of 2018.

III. FAO's activities in the Sustainable Management and Restoration of Drylands

7. To promote forest and landscape restoration in the drylands, FAO has translated in Arabic², as requested by the Near East Forestry and Range Commission at its 22nd Session the "global guidelines for the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes in drylands - building resilience and benefiting livelihoods", which were developed in collaboration with partner and country organizations, and published in 2015 in English³, and in 2016 in French⁴.

8. Many drylands countries, with support from FAO and partner organizations and co-funding from cooperation agencies, have been developing and piloting approaches and technologies to support assessment, monitoring and sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agroforestry systems. These include: innovative water harvesting techniques and technologies, mobilisation and use of quality seeds from native species (trees, shrubs and grasses) for direct seeding and planting, use of treated waste water in forestry and agroforestry systems, sand dune fixation, assisted natural regeneration, community forestry and development of community-based small and medium enterprises. All of these will need further resources for scaling-up through enhanced and targeted capacity development activities, enabling policies, knowledge management, networking, and resource mobilization.

9. With co-funding from the European Union (EU) and in collaboration with the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (GM-UNCCD), FAO's support to the African Union Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGW) resulted in the creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of the GGW, including through the development of National Action Plans, a Regional Harmonized Strategy, a partnership and resource

² Under publication

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5036e.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5036f.pdf>

mobilization platform, a capacity development strategy and action plan and a communication strategy with action plan.

10. As a follow-up to this successful cooperation, a new project “Action Against Desertification”⁵ was approved under the EU-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States) collaboration programme, to support implementation of the GGW national action plans in six selected countries, including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. The project activities were expanded to the Caribbean and Pacific regions, building on the successful results of the activities carried out in Africa to date, with the aim of supporting south-south cooperation between Great Green Wall countries and Caribbean and Pacific countries. Based on the Global drylands assessment data, restoration needs and opportunities⁶ in Africa's Great Green Wall, including North Africa sub-region, have been mapped and quantified for the first time with the aim of catalysing action to restore degraded drylands for stronger and more resilient communities in the face of climate change.

11. Under the Turkish-FAO Forestry Partnership and with support from the Ankara Initiative, Turkey through its Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs (MFWA) is collaborating with FAO's dryland restoration programme to support further Africa's Great Green Wall initiative. A project called “BRIDGES – Boosting Restoration, Income, Development and Generating Ecosystem Services”⁷ was developed by FAO with MFWA (Turkey) and three partner Great Green Wall countries (Eritrea, Mauritania and Sudan). The project aims at scaling up the forest and landscape restoration model that is currently under implementation through the EU-ACP “Action Against Desertification” and bridging the Mediterranean dryland Turkey with the drylands of Near East/Africa. The objectives of the BRIDGES project, which is expected to be launched in early 2018, are the following: (i) Catalyze action, supporting sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and landscapes in three GGW countries (Eritrea, Mauritania and Sudan), stimulating sustainable production, and benefiting livelihoods and generating ecosystems goods and services; (ii) Stimulate south-south cooperation between Turkey and Africa's Great Green Wall countries and beyond across other dryland regions.

12. Furthermore and to boost GGW field implementation in other GGW countries of the Near East, FAO is working hand in hand with GGW focal points and National Designated Authorities (NDA) of Mauritania, Sudan, Algeria and Egypt to prepare project proposals to be submitted for funding to the Green Climate Fund. Furthermore, a workshop was co-organized by FAO with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Commission and the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall on 25-27 October 2017, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, to discuss the development of a GCF/GGW programmatic approach and agree on a joint vision and project pipeline planning with partner technical and financial organizations and countries represented by their NDAs and GGW focal points.

13. As a result of this workshop, it was agreed that FAO, in collaboration with AfDB and other interested technical and financial partners, will be supporting countries in the preparation of Great Green Wall project proposals, contributing to the achievement of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These project proposals to be prepared under a collaborative umbrella GGW/GCF programme will focus on the four agreed main components: (i) Large Scale Restoration including sustainable seed supply and sustainable management of natural resources (based on FAO's Great Green Wall restoration model), (ii) renewable energy for processing and small scale farming (built on the AfDB-led Desert to Power Initiative); (iii) Value chain development of agriculture products including non-timber forest products/commodities, livestock & inland fishery products; and (iv) Development of GGW harmonized and comprehensive Assessment and Monitoring system at

⁵ www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6476e.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7952e.pdf>

country and regional levels. These four components will be supported by two cross-cutting areas (enablers): policy reform and capacity development.

14. Under the framework of the 2030 Agenda adopted in 2015, the target 15.3, which strives to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), is providing an opportunity to support sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems in the region. Indeed, LDN focuses on preserving and improving the quality of land resources and enhancing food security by identifying drivers and measures that are designed to avoid, reduce and/or reverse land degradation. 15 member countries⁸ of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission have already embarked on the process of setting national LDN targets. FAO is currently supporting LDN target setting in Uzbekistan through its Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM-2)⁹, and in Turkey through the LDN project – both GEF funded.

15. Many countries of the Near East region are facing land and forest degradation resulting from increased pressure due to over-collection of fuelwood for cooking and energy, as well as harvesting of other associated forest and tree resources in and around refugee camps and improvised settlements hosting displaced persons. Compounding the challenge are uncertain land and tree tenure regimes and conflict and tension between displaced and host communities over forest resources. The longevity of these crises coupled with their multi-sectoral nature require interventions that address both short-term emergency needs and long-term development ends from the outset. For this reasons, investment in assessment and restoration of these areas are a key part of FAO's work on Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE)¹⁰ [1] – an inter-agency initiative aiming to ensure a sustainable supply of energy, address energy demand and diversify livelihoods to contribute to resilience-building in protracted crises. The SAFE approach is already being implemented throughout Africa with successful results. In Uganda, for example, FAO partnered with UNHCR in a joint rapid woodfuel assessment in and around refugee camps to determine supply and demand of woodfuel resources in the area, which found marked depletion of forest resources, and that the burden of fuelwood collection typically falls entirely on women. FAO is moving towards an integrated systems approach in situations of protracted crises which takes these issues into account, and includes sustainable forestry and resilience building through various forest products and services – wood and non-wood – in its interventions.

16. The lack of job opportunities in rural areas is a factor of demographic instability and migration in the Mediterranean region (Near East and Europe). To activate rural life, job creation for youth in the Mediterranean, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea*, together with partners including the European Forest Institute Mediterranean Regional Office (EFIMED), The International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL), has developed a project idea called "Blue Forest" that aims to support the creation of an innovation platform/incubator on green business and nature-based solutions for young entrepreneurs in Mediterranean rural landscapes.

17. Work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems should be expanded in the region and globally with emphasis put on prioritized actions and identified through strategic planning and partnership looking at sustainable land management across sectors and at landscape level. In this regard, the forthcoming funding opportunities under GEF-7, the Green Climate Fund and from

⁸ Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, ,Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/cacilm-2/en/>

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6633e.pdf>

countries with emerging economies could provide the opportunity to boost global level work on dryland forestry and inter-sectoral related issues in the region.

IV. Points for Consideration

18. The Commission may wish to:

- Encourage members who have not sent yet their nominations of experts for the COFO Working Group on "Drylands Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems" to do so, and encourage them to contribute technically and financially to the organization of its first meeting;
- Work with FAO on the formulation of a global capacity development programme on sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems for scaling up existing good practices and approaches, and helping in the identification of partners and funding opportunities;
- Support the work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, including through providing extra budgetary contributions and seconding experts to FAO.

19. The Commission may wish to request FAO to :

- enhance its support to Near East member countries for project portfolio development on sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems for funding to GCF and GEF-7;
- undertake, in collaboration with partners and interested countries, an analysis of resilience strategies and practices in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, contributing to the achievement of SDGs 15 and 13.

ANNEX**Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems**

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. The Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems is a subsidiary body of the Committee on Forestry, established on the basis of Rule XXXI, paragraph 10, of the General Rules of the Organization.¹¹
2. The Working Group will operate in accordance with the General Rules of the Organization and the Rules of Procedure of the Committee on Forestry ("the Committee"), as applicable.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP

3. The Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems shall:
 - a) review and report to the Committee on Forestry on the status, trends, issues and developments in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, and make recommendations to the Committee on these matters;
 - b) as guided by the Committee, contribute to developing a comprehensive understanding of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and the people who depend on them;
 - c) as guided by the Committee, promote scaling –up of the adoption of good practices for the protection, sustainable management and restoration of drylands forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, enhancing also environmental and socio-economic resilience and sustainable livelihoods;
 - d) report to the Committee on any other of its activities, in accordance with Rule VII (3) of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee.

ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP

4. To achieve its mandate as described above, the Working Group will undertake the following activities:
 - assess and follow, in cooperation with relevant partners, the status of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, and facilitate the use of this information for well-informed decision-making and policy development to address the challenges faced in these systems;
 - assess current capacities and gaps, and advise on capacity development needs for the sustainable management, restoration, assessment and monitoring of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems;
 - identify tools and approaches appropriate for dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and support their dissemination and adoption;
 - share knowledge and lessons learnt on sustainable management, restoration and monitoring of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, and promote their uptake into policy, investments and implementation;
 - identify opportunities for collaboration and scaling-up of sustainable management and restoration practices within the Committee, as well as with other FAO Technical Committees and with relevant other partners;
 - provide advice in support of implementation in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and decisions adopted within the framework of

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp046e.pdf#page=117>

other international instruments, processes and initiatives, in particular the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

- undertake such other tasks as may be delegated to it by the Committee.

MEMBERSHIP

5. Membership in the Working Group is open to all Members of the Committee on Forestry whose territories are situated wholly or partly in drylands or that are interested in contributing to the objectives of the Working Group.

6. Each Member of the Committee shall designate its representative from appropriate sectors and disciplines.

OFFICERS

7. The Working Group shall elect a Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons from among the representatives designated in accordance with paragraph 6 above at the end of each session, who shall remain in office until the election of the new Chairperson and new Vice-Chairpersons at the next session. When electing its officers, the Working Group shall give due consideration to the desirability of ensuring equitable rotation of the offices among the regions and to gender balance.

SESSIONS

8. The Working Group shall normally hold one session every two years, unless otherwise requested by a majority of the Members of the Working Group.