

European DesertNet

EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR GLOBAL DESERTIFICATION RESEARCH

www.european-desertnet.eu

European DesertNet Newsletter n. 3

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1. News from the Board of European DesertNet

The conversion of European DesertNet into an Association

Since the foundation of European DesertNet at the UN premises in Bonn, Germany on 16 and 17 October 2006, the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board of European DesertNet have been discussing with the UNCCD / CST, various ministries and other official partners the fundamental importance of transforming this international scientific network into an Association. An intensive discussion on this issue took place at the UNCCD COP8 in September 2007 in Madrid, Spain. At this point some constraints of having a non-legal status of the scientific network European DesertNet became very apparent just over a year after its foundation.

Since early 2008, the Steering Committee and Advisory Board of European DesertNet have been working on Statutes for obtaining a legal NGO status. Strasbourg Court has been chosen for the registration of our NGO. Simultaneously, we have also been continuously asked by scientists from other continents to consider dropping the word "European" out of the name of the network. The establishment of European DesertNet at the global level has evolved very quickly and we realised

that we had already members from almost all continents. Therefore, members of the Steering Committee and Advisory Board of European DesertNet have agreed to register the network as the "Association Of The Network For International Research On Desertification – DesertNet-International (DNI)". The statutes of our network and detailed information on further implications to membership will be sent to you in short in order to facilitate your move to the Association DesertNet-International (DNI).

Carlos San Juan Mesonada, Chair of the European DesertNet, University Carlos III of Madrid and Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Co-Chair of European DesertNet, Hamburg University, Germany

About the DSD Consortium and the UNCCD CST Conference

Dryland Science for Development (DSD) is a new consortium of five international research organizations/networks with deep and complementary experience on issues of sustainable land management and combating land degradation. The five organizations (in alphabetical order) are: European DesertNet, the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre - Institute for Environment and Sustainability (JRC-IES), and United Nations University's International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH). DSD's main task is to assist the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and particularly its Committee on Science and Technology (CST) in organizing a Scientific Conference on "*Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management*", and in mobilizing resources to make it happen.



First meeting of the DSD Consortium (Bonn, 15-16 Sept. 2008)

The Conference was called for by the CCD's Conference of Parties (COP, the biennial meeting of the 191 nations who are signatories to the Convention) in order to increase the flow of scientific knowledge into the Convention's processes. The Conference will be carried out as part of COP's ninth session in late 2009 (dates to be finalized by CCD). More information on DSD and the Conference will be available soon on the DSD website (under construction) and on the CCD website.

Mark Winslow, ICRISAT and DSD Consortium coordinator

About the Mediterranean Science Conference and the Union for the Mediterranean

The two previous EDN newsletters described the advances of the 'Mediterranean Science Area' and the 'Mediterranean Union' processes. Now, a key step has been reached since the proper authorities have endorsed the two initiatives. Desertification is a major challenge at stake in the Mediterranean basin, closely linked to other physical and socio-economic processes. So, understanding the present status of the two initiatives can only help the DNI network members to analyze how this new framework can help consolidating scientific research and political action in understanding and combating desertification in the region.

A political initiative: the 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean'

The Barcelona Process started in November 1995 and brought together the 25 EU member states and 10 southern and eastern Mediterranean states. Ten years later, the 2005 Barcelona Summit confirmed undisputed advances but also highlighted structural weaknesses calling for far-reaching reform.

The 'Union for the Mediterranean' project is a political initiative of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Originally viewed as a kind of laboratory of the so-called 5+5 nations (France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain in the north and Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia in the south) it soon became clear that the proposed union should encompass all Mediterranean states on an equal footing, as reflected in the Rome call for a Union for the Mediterranean issued by France, Italy and Spain in December 2007. This call scheduled a summit meeting of Heads of States and Governments on 13-14 July 2008 in Paris. As the European Union is also part of the Barcelona Process, some member states like Germany wanted to see the EU play a bigger role. This was accomplished by a resolution of the European Council in March 2008 and a European Commission communication in June 2008 affirming continuity with the Barcelona Process through the official wording: '*Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*'. The basic features of the original project - flexibility and equity - were preserved. In the words of Ambassador Huntzinger, it is "*a project of Union for a union of projects*" in which each project retains its technical and financial independence.

The summit meeting of 43 Heads of States and Governments on 13-14 July 2008 in Paris considered that developing practical projects under the above-presented flexibility and equity principles should mainly launch 'the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean'. Six projects were elected:

- Mediterranean pollution removal, which should make it "the cleanest sea in the world",
- Marine and ground highways,
- Shared definition of a common civil protection against natural hazards,
- Setting up a 'solar energy Mediterranean plan'
- Setting up an Euro-Mediterranean university and an Erasmus project to develop mobility for all Mediterranean students
- A Mediterranean initiative to develop the private sector (mainly SME's)

The so-called 'Inframed' fund was set up by the French '*Caisse des Dépôts*' and the Italian '*Cassa depositi e prestiti*' targeting a 600 M€ objective. The United Arab Emirates are considered as a potential donor, which is well in line with the projects management flexibility. Incentives towards private donors are taken into consideration as well.

Needless to say, the development of the **'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean'** has to be made coherent with all political regional events, such as for instance bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. In 2010 the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area will be opened, with strong consequences especially in Mediterranean agriculture



The Heads of states and governments of the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Union attending the military parade, French national celebration, July 14 2008.



The Egyptian President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak could be one of the first Presidents of the Union for the Mediterranean.

A scientific initiative: the 'Mediterranean Science Area'

The project to create a Mediterranean Science Area had first nothing to do with the Union for the Mediterranean initiative. It started well before as an initiative of the French Academy of Sciences, which brought together six academies from France and four from other nations (Egypt, Italy, Morocco, and Senegal) within the so-called Inter-academic Group for Development (GID) structure. The GID stands up as a unique authoritative regional scientific structure thanks to its interdisciplinary capacity, the legitimacy and independence of its member academies.

When developing the 'Mediterranean Science Area' concept, the driving objectives of the GID were to promote scientific development as a driver of economic and social progress within the overarching concept of a 'Knowledge Society', and to encourage its societal acceptance, such building up an actual co-development laboratory. Some 20 foreign scientific academies and similar bodies have expressed their willingness to join their efforts to those of the GID.

When the Mediterranean Union, then 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' initiative started developing, it soon appeared obvious that the two concepts had to back up each other, implementing fruitful synergies within their clearly defined missions. So, the Mediterranean Science Area can be viewed actually as strengthening the scientific aspects of the Barcelona Process.

The immediate aims of this initiative are/were:

- To convene a Mediterranean Science Conference on June 26, 2008, preceded by three workshops on June 24 & 25, 2008 — on agriculture and sustainable development, fish

stocks and the marine environment, and adapting to the impacts of climate change — attended by experts from all countries bordering the Mediterranean;

- To elaborate scientific strategy recommendations for environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean, to be presented to the French President and Heads of State and Governments at the summit meeting on 13-14 July 2008;
- To set up a Mediterranean, inter-academic science network supporting sustainable development in the Mediterranean region;
- To launch through this network a long-term action programme called 'Parmenides' driven forward by all Euro-Mediterranean science bodies.

Conclusions and recommendations of the Mediterranean Science Conference

This Conference confirmed the unique role that the GID could play to federate scientific actions led by Universities and research organizations. It evidenced the unanimous will to build up a perennial partnership to lead scientific joint projects, integrating its scientific findings into the relevant human and societal frameworks. Capacity building and technological innovation are mandatory components of the "Science, Know-how, Societies" programme promoted by the GID.

The mission of this Conference was to launch the 'Mediterranean Science Area' initiative and to provide the 'Union for the Mediterranean' political meeting with sound scientific conclusions and recommendations. But it was also the first one in a series of three scientific conferences planned by the GID and dedicated to (1) environment, (2) public health and associated policies and (3) cultural and biological diversity.

The key conclusions and recommendations of the thematic workshops can be summarized as follows;

Agriculture and sustainable development

- The Mediterranean agriculture depends upon multiple interlinked factors and is a key factor of success for a fruitful mandatory transition.
- Understanding the transformations, the dynamics and the organization of the food industry offer in the Mediterranean is mandatory to set up a common vision of its regional future. It requests investments in economic and societal research to get such an integrative and efficient vision. Integration between these outcomes and technological finding should support ongoing evolutions and sectoral competitiveness.
- Sanitary problems are growing. They have to be faced in three ways: (1) better understanding links between nutrition, food and health, (2) developing research on emerging or invasive diseases and (3) addressing food sanitary security.
- Natural resources (water, soils) suffer from pollution, overexploitation and vulnerability to climate changes. Soils are degraded by cultural intensification, urbanization, rainfall decrease and dryness periods increase. Improvements in water management have to be implemented through a multi-sector approach (techniques, innovative technologies, societal and political approaches changes). Research about understanding, taking into account the multiple

functions of soils and their level of actual or potential degradation are needed. A coherent database should be implemented.

- In short, a coordinated regional research programme about the sustainable management of natural resources (jointly water and soils) and emerging / invasive diseases should be implemented. This implies strengthening sectoral research network and properly orienting them, through open technological platforms, capacity building and research poles encouraging human mobility. The relevant strategy is to strengthen the involvement of Mediterranean scientific institutions within the European research programmes in a Euro-Mediterranean framework.

Haliectic and marine environment

- The Mediterranean is a vulnerable almost enclosed sea, in which most of the global environmental issues and pressures appear at a regional scale. Facing these pressures upon marine environment and resources in a sustainable way requests eco-system approach at the basin scale.
- The "Marine Protected Areas" have to be developed towards the so-called "10% objective".
- Regional comprehensive and consistent databases have to be developed or consolidated.
- A wide scientific research programme about the Atlantic red tuna has to be launched.
- A wide scientific research programme about the impact of coastal megacities on the marine environment has to be launched.
- The use of the large infrastructures existing in the region (boats and other large devices) has to be coordinated. This should bring a coherent vision of the Mediterranean physics, chemistry and biology in order to support many programmes, and among other the pollution removal programme of the Union for the Mediterranean.
- The programmes of capacity building and human mobility have to be strengthened at the regional scale.

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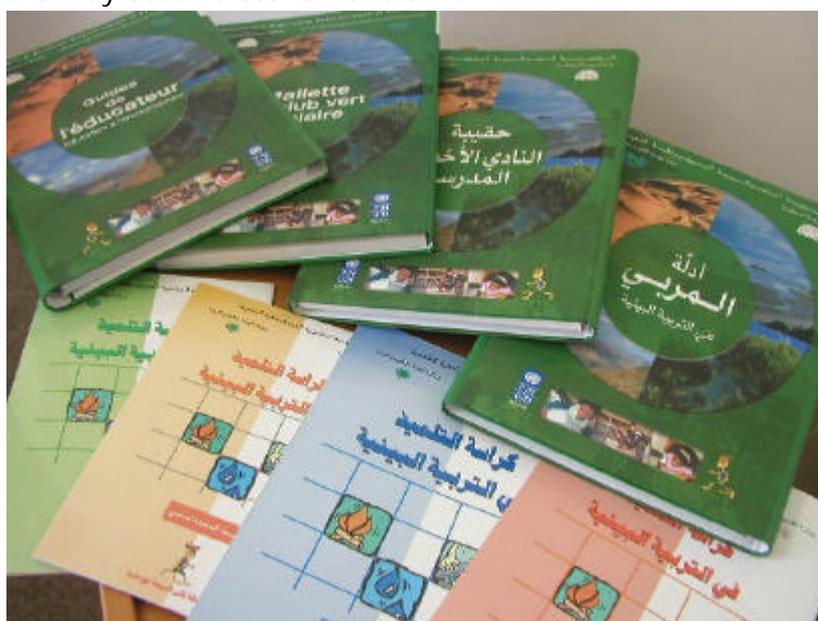
Climate change impacts and adaptation

The workshop addressed three main issues: (1) information prerequisites at large, (2) priorities and (3) governance.

- Mediterranean physical and socio-economic observation systems have to be identified to point out gaps and mutualisation capacities. Delivered information has to be made interoperable and easily accessed. These measurement networks have to be made sustainable through proper investments, political support and integration into development policies. They should ease regional monitoring and studies, but also national decision making processes and production of relevant global change indicators to be integrated into Decision Support Systems (DSS).
- Properly tailored climatic modelling tools are mandatory. Efforts are needed to reach proper downscaling at the basin regional and more local scales.
- Linking science and society has to become the standard way of developing national research plans, favouring regional integrated research projects and early involvement of Southern countries teams on an equity basis.
- Developing integrative research – from information collection to efficient decision policy support- is mandatory. It raises many issues, such as (upstream) properly managing of

research funding and programmes and (downstream) creating and nurturing 'go-between' structures close to policy making processes backed by dedicated educational efforts.

- General main priorities to be targeted are water resources, coastal zones, agriculture, public health and energy managements. Depending upon local and national physical and socio-economic features, the impacts will be more or less severe in various fields, such requiring proper integration or differentiation at proper scales. Regional coherence and hence efficiency has to be improved whenever relevant – the very spirit of a Mediterranean science and policy area. Targeted funding sources should be set up.
- Scales are not only spatial but also temporal. Both physical phenomena timescales and societal reaction and adaptation timescales (engineering, funding, societal acceptance) have to be taken into proper account and made compatible as far as possible.
- Societal acceptance is a key element, which can be reached only by a growing participation of populations at stake in the definition of adaptation processes.
- What has to be managed by States, what should be managed by private stakeholders (including through public-private partnerships, 'virtuous investment circles' and NGO's) has to be carefully checked. Development of private capacities and funding facilities has to be addressed and may deserve economic reforms.



Material for environment education in Algeria. © UNEP.

An overarching recommendation to the young generation

The workshop also draws up a quite general major recommendation. Considering its deep cultural dimension, building up a Mediterranean Science Area implies a long-term vision, which in turn implies sending quite strong messages to young generations. Very early sensitization and capacity building actions have to be set up to all potential categories of future stakeholders in order to give a concrete meaning to collective and sustainable development.

Reading back the decisions of the Heads of States and Governments meeting on 13-14 July 2008 in Paris and the conclusions and recommendations of the Mediterranean Science Area show that the two initiatives are well in line and can back up each other as previously imagined.

Some short comments: the Union for the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean Science Area and regional desertification issues

At a first glance, some coherent points between the two initiatives can be perceived, but overall coherence has to be analyzed more in depth in order to show strong synergistic points. Let us just briefly quote two 'easy' examples:

- The UpM plans 'setting up an Euro-Mediterranean university and an Erasmus project to develop mobility for all Mediterranean students'. The overall and detailed conclusions and recommendations of the MSC emphasize the need for raising student's sensitivity, developing interdisciplinary approaches; capacity building, parity principle, tools coherence (databases, measurement networks, DSS). The UpM plan can greatly help in implementing such recommendations
- The UpM plans 'a Mediterranean initiative to develop the private sector (mainly SME's)'. The conclusions and recommendations of the MSC call for economic reforms, developing flexibility and intermediate structures, better implication of private stakeholders, societal acceptance. If properly managed, such an initiative can also greatly help in implementing such recommendations. Great care must however be taken not to develop an additional superstructure cut away from population concerns and interests.

Desertification issues

Local desertification issues cannot be addressed only at local levels. They are connected to national, regional and global scales both in terms of physics (environment and climate change and their various impacts) and socio-economy (demography, cultural evolutions, national regulations, multilateral regulations and agreements, trade globalization). This means that 'desertification science' (if it exists in itself) is closely interlinked with a wide range of physical, economic and societal disciplines. Regional, national and local scientific studies and support to decision and policy making about desertification are only a specific case of Mediterranean environment issues and concerns. In other terms, desertification science in the Mediterranean implies some sort of Mediterranean Science Area, while combating desertification at regional scales requires some sort of Mediterranean political consensus. Reversely, formally setting up the two initiatives described above can only be beneficial to the regional combat against desertification and its impacts.

Desertification in the Mediterranean has been addressed for long by regional scientists scientific and managers. Many declarations and agendas are available – including the Regional, Sub-regional and National Action Plans (RAP, SPAP, NAP) of the UNCCD. It would be too long to demonstrate here how these initiatives are connected to the above-described conclusions, recommendations and decisions. All the regional actors of the combat against desertification – including of course the members of DesertNet International – can only take advantage of these emerging initiatives to anchor their activities into a scientific and political new impetus.

Gerard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG – Jean-Louis DUCLUSAUD, Ministerial Correspondent in the EDN Users Board. Kindly reviewed by Dr. Pandi Zdruli, CIHEAM Bari, EDN Advisory

Board. The basic information delivered here was reviewed by Pr. André CAPRON, French Academy of Sciences, President of GID (Inter-Academic Grouping for Development).

A few reference books

Mediterranean Climate – Variability and trends – H-J. Bolle, M; Meneti, I. Rasool – Editor H-J. Bolle – Springer Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York, 2003.

Climate Change in the Mediterranean. – Socio-economic perspectives of impacts, vulnerability and adaptation - Edited by Carlo Giupponi & Mordeshai Shechte r- The Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) series on Economics and the Environment, 2003.

A sustainable future for the Mediterranean- The Blue Plan's Environment & development outlook – Directed by Guillaume Benoit and Aline Comeau, Earth Scan, 2005 (exists in French, Editions de l'Aube).

Feuille de route pour une Union méditerranéenne - Le Cercle des économistes and Hubert Védrine, Perrin, November 2007.

The Blue Plan's sustainable development outlook for the Mediterranean – © Plan Bleu, Sophia Antipolis, July 2008 (exists also in Arabic & French)

IFAD President Calls for Increased Agricultural Investment in Africa

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is entitled to be proud, since it is the only multilateral financial institution to have actually increased its loans and grants programme by an average of just over 10 per cent a year since 2003. Some 50 per cent of this funding goes to Africa. IFAD is one of the major financial supporters of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system and is now helping to review the system and reorient it to the new research agenda of today.

In 2003, the United Nations called for agricultural development to be placed at the forefront of the fight against extreme hunger and poverty. Half a decade later, the world is still debating how best to bring agricultural development to Africa

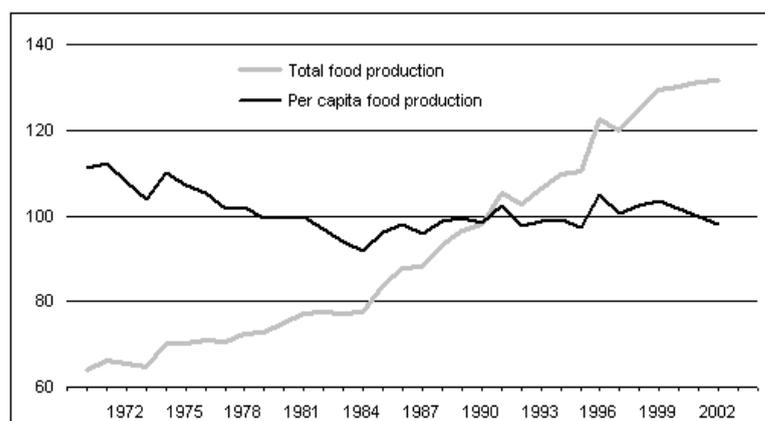
IFAD supports the initiatives of the 2008 African Green Revolution (AGR) Conference bringing together world leaders, representatives of the private sector and development practitioners to find sustainable ways of boosting agricultural productivity in Africa. The Conference built on the value of public/private partnerships addressed in detail at the 2007 and 2006 meetings. In light of today's food security crisis and current estimates that the global demand for food will increase by one-half in the next 20 years, greater investment in agricultural productivity is crucial for poverty reduction and future economic stability. Several African governments have already committed to allocating at least 10 percent of their national budgets to agriculture within five years

IFAD's President Lennart Båge stated the following. 'Smallholder farmers in Africa need to be empowered to become rural entrepreneurs who can build productive and profitable partnerships with the private sector' ... 'The world urgently needs a green revolution in Africa, and the African continent has the potential to deliver, but we are still failing, collectively, to give Africa the level of

co-ordinated and cohesive support that it needs to do so' ... 'Too often agriculture is seen as an unproductive and unprofitable sector, but the truth is that agriculture and those tilling the land – men and women smallholder farmers – have the capacity to feed the world while managing and protecting some of the key assets of our global environment' ...'Smallholder farmers do not need hand-outs or short-term fixes. They need effective, innovative and sustained investment'.

Agricultural productivity has shown a powerful instrument in fighting poverty and hunger in the past. Recent GDP growth generated by agriculture is up to four times more effective in reducing poverty than growth in other sectors. Almost two billion people depend on the world's 450 million smallholder farms for food and livelihoods.

African farmers should be supported with agricultural research, policy, and investment measures to lift themselves out of poverty and contribute to their country's economic growth. Investment in agricultural research is essential To be effective in reducing poverty, it must focus on varieties that meet the needs of poor rural farmers and respond to the challenges they face from pests, droughts and salinity.



Evolution of total production and per capita food production in Africa from 1972 to 2003 © FAO 2003.

Main source: Press release IFAD/38/08

2. News, Activities and Products of the Working Groups of European DesertNet and its partners

Update on Drynet activities

Drynet is a 3-year networking and capacity building initiative taken by 14 NGOs working in 17 countries to address dryland degradation and poverty issues in the context of strategic development frameworks and the UNCCD. One of the results of the project so far has been the recording of different local success stories in the various countries. To name three of the latest ones, in North East of Brazil a program has been implemented in which civil society, in partnership with the government and private sectors, provides the construction of 1.000.000 cisterns for water harvesting in Brazil's semi-arid region; in Iran water harvesting methods have been put into use by

using a century old traditional technique of underground gardens; and a story from Senegal on the Popenguine Nature Reserve where women who have organized themselves into an economic interest group have official responsibility for supervision of the Nature Reserve.

Furthermore, Drynet is taking a position and the floor in several political fora (CSD16, CRIC7, IUCN Conservation Congress, EU-level hearings and meetings, and others) with positions on several issues. There is the topic on the question "wastelands and biofuels", with a focus on the livelihoods of mobile pastoralists. The potential of biofuels is mostly based on the assumption that there are vast surfaces of land freely available, often called wasteland but also including marginal lands or degraded lands. Connected to that is the concern that the production of agrofuels facilitates land-grabbing, the takeover of marginal land from the poor. The topic of adaptation to climate change in drylands particularly interests the African Drynet members. But also more institutional topics such as bridging the gap between research done and research questions still needing an answer to feed policies and practices on the ground, or the position and role of civil society in the UNCCD processes, are on our agenda.

At the country level, the Drynet partners have been able to build relationships with mainly civil society stakeholders and the responsables at the government, and they are organising seminars and training sessions according to needs. Capacities that are often needed among local organisations are project writing skills, lobby skills, and knowledge and skills on the UNCCD, coalition building and communication. Various Drynet partners are designing short informative radio programs to be broadcasted in their own regional languages in order to reach a broader public with information and facts about land degradation and the effects of desertification. The programs are foreseen to be broadcasted in the first half of 2009 on regional radio stations and through internet radio media.

For more news, stories and updates, please visit www.dry-net.org. If you wish to receive the Drynet global newsletter, or rather a regional newsletter of one of the Drynet partners, please let us know through drynet@bothends.org.

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

Biofuels impact on pastoralism in the Sahel

To address the need for more accurate knowledge about the scale and actors in the issue of biofuels impact on pastoralism in the Sahelian waste lands, drynet has launched a call for a small scoping research study (max. 5000€). It is planned to have already results for the CRIC in November. Other calls will follow on different themes related to desertification.

3. Calls of interest to European DesertNet

Last ENVIRONMENT FP7 call

FP7 Cooperation Work Programme: Theme 6 Environment (including climate change)

Call Title: Environment 2009

Call identifier: FP7-ENV-2009-1

Date of publication: 3 September 2008

Deadline: 8 January 2009 at 17.00.00, Brussels local time

Indicative budget: EUR 193.5 million

ACTIVITY 6.2. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

Sub-activity 6.2.1. Conservation and sustainable management of natural and man-made resources and biodiversity (EUR 27 million)

ENV.2009.2.1.2.1 Water management and climate change impacts in the long-term perspective. Collaborative Project (large scale integrating project)

ENV.2009.2.1.3.1 Soil processes and modelling. Collaborative Project (large scale integrating project)

ENV.2009.2.1.3.2 Desertification process and land degradation Collaborative Project (small or medium scale focused research project)-CP-FP-SICA-

Sub-activity 6.4.2. Forecasting methods and assessment tools for sustainable development taking into account different scales of observation (EUR 12 million)

ENV.2009.4.2.1.1 Network of excellence for Impact Assessment Tools. Network of Excellence

For further information, please visit:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=142&act_code=ENV&ID_ACTIVITY=6

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=142&act_code=ENV&ID_ACTIVITY=6>

4. Important upcoming events

List of links to 2008 meetings regarding desertification, water conservation and land degradation.

10-21 Sept	UNESCO-IHE Regular Short Course: Spate Irrigation and Water Management under Drought and Water Scarcity http://www.unesco.org/water/water_events/Detailed/1598.shtml	Delft, The Netherlands
12-14 Sept	International Conference on Ecosystems, Environment and Sustainable Development http://www.waset.org/eesd08/	Heidelberg, Germany
18-22 Sept	5th International conference on land degradation http://www.geocities.com/eswaranpadma/51CLD.pdf	Bari, Italy
30 Sept – 3 Oct	3rd Global Workshop on Digital Soil Mapping http://dsmusa.org/	Utah, USA
5-9 Oct	ASA-CSSA-SSSA International annual meeting	USA

	https://www.acsmeetings.org/	
5-14 Oct	The World Conservation Congress http://www.iucn.org/congress/2008/	Barcelona, Spain
20 Oct	WOCAT Symposium. Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for its Local and Global Impacts http://www.wocat.org/symp.asp	Berne, Switzerland
3-14 Nov	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC7) http://www.unccd.int/cop/cric7/menu.php	Istanbul, Turkey
14-17 Dec	Deserts, Drylands and Desertification http://cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/Eng/Units/bidr/desertification2008/	Israel

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

Improved Tools to Combat Desertification and Drought” - Integrated Agroforestry and Water Management Systems in arid and semi-arid areas in Latin America.

This event will be held on January 21, 22 and 23, 2009 at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) headquarters in Santiago, Chile.

WAFLA International Conference : Improving Tools against Desertification and Drought. Enhanced Integrated Agroforestry and Water Management Systems for Arid and Semi-Arid Areas in Latin America

This event will be held on January 21, 22 and 23, 2009 at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) headquarters in Santiago, Chile. The Conference is co-organised by Acción por la Tierra (EarthAction Santiago - EAN) and ECLAC, and sponsored by the WAFLA consortium, with the support of the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. In general, the Conference aims to create a forum of scientists, engineers and rural and urban development professionals, along with members of the WAFLA consortium, to make an inventory of the current state of knowledge through presentations, to discuss future trends under a 'business as usual' scenario, and identify concepts and pathways to enhance Integrated Water Resource Management in Agro- Forestry. Authors wishing to present a paper or a poster are invited to send an abstract in English or Spanish before August 15th, 2008. Themes for papers include:

- Agroforestry for controlling land degradation and desertification
- Agroforestry for adaptation to climate change
- Structure and composition of agroforestry systems in dry lands
- Agroforestry for provision of environmental services in dry lands
- Options for improved water management with agroforestry in dry lands
- Agroforestry systems for improving livelihoods and food security in dry land areas
- Added value and market chain of agroforestry products in dry land areas
- Capacity building, and networking
- Policies and incentive schemes for agroforestry adoption in dry land areas

More details about the conference regarding participation, registration and other related information can be on the WAFLA conference homepage (<http://www.wafla.com/112.0.html?&L=1>) or on the

EarthAction web page.

(http://www.accionporlatierra.cl/accionporlatierra/publico/01_0000000014.htm).

5. Publications 2008

A list of recently published selected paper regarding desertification:

1. Cao SX., 2008. Why large-scale afforestation efforts in China have failed to solve the desertification problem. *Environmental Science & Technology* 42, 1826-1831.
2. Danfeng, S., Hong, L., Baoguo, L., 2008. Landscape connectivity changes analysis for monitoring desertification of Minqin county, China. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* 140, 303-312.
3. Galindo ICD, Ribeiro MR, Santos M, Lima J, Ferreira R., 2008. Soils and vegetation relations in areas under desertification in Jatauba county, Pernambuco State, Brazil. *Revista Brasileira De Ciencia Do Solo* 32, 1283-1296.
4. Hanafi A, Jauffret S., 2008. Are long-term vegetation dynamics useful in monitoring and assessing desertification processes in the arid steppe, southern Tunisia. *Journal of Arid Environments* 72, 557-572.
5. Ibanez, J., Valderrama, J.M., Puigdefabregas, J., 2008. Assessing desertification risk using system stability condition analysis. *Ecological Modelling* 213, 180-190.
6. Li YQ, Zhao HL, Zhao XY, Zhang TH, Zuo XA, Liu XP. Effects of desertification process on plant-soil carbon and nitrogen pools in the semiarid Horqin Sandy Land., 2008 *Proceedings of Information Technology and Environmental System Sciences: Itess 2008, Vol 4 2008: 454-457.*
7. Linker R, Neumann PM. New directions for improving the management of agricultural soils. *Plant and Soil*, 307: 255-257.
8. Wasson RJ, Juyal N, Jaiswal M, McCulloch M, Sarin MM, Jain V, et al., 2008 The mountain-lowland debate: Deforestation and sediment transport in the upper Ganga catchment. *Journal of Environmental Management* 88, 53-61.
9. West, CT; Roncoli, C; Ouattara, F., 2008. Local perceptions and regional climate trends on the central plateau of Burkina Faso. *Land Degradation & Development* 19 (3), 289-304.
10. Zhang XY, Wang XM, Yan P., 2008. Re-evaluating the impacts of human activity and environmental change on desertification in the Minqin Oasis, China. *Environmental Geology* 55, 705-715.

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

6. Other Information

Scientific preparations for the G8 meeting in 2009 in Sardinia, Italy

From 18 to 20th September 2008 an international meeting of knowledge, experiences and testimonies took place at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Sassari, Sardinia, Italy on the topics of Biodiversity, Desertification, Water, Food and Human Rights. The meeting took place in

the light of the G8 meeting in 2009 at La Maddalena, Sardinia. Documents are currently in preparation which will be provided to the G8 summit. European DesertNet was invited to highlight the issue of desertification for these documents.

EU FP6-Project DESIRE: Desertification mitigation and remediation of land – a global approach for local solutions.



DESIRE aims to enable land managers and policy-makers to respond adequately to the challenges of land



degradation. DESIRE is an Integrated Project (IP) within the 6th Framework Programme of the EU, which started in February 2007 and lasts for 5 years. The consortium includes 28 partners from 20 countries, coordinated by Alterra from The

Netherlands. Identified conservation strategies will be implemented in the field, to monitor and model their effectiveness at various scales. The results will be translated to a series of practical guidelines for environmental management, which will be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders, in various formats, and in different languages. Local facilitators will be trained to bridge the gap between scientists and non-scientific product users, and training packages will be made.

All DESIRE products and training material will also be downloadable from internet. <http://www.desire-project.eu/>

Together with the WOCAT (**World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies**) a new methodology has been developed in which the global database is used as information source for local implementation of SLM. <http://www.wocat.org>

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

DESERTARTE: Information, awareness and communication of desertification for young people



ENEA, the Italian Agency for Energy, New Technology and the Environment, is carrying out, with the support of the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea Protection, the project DESERTARTE. The project aims to improve awareness of desertification and of other environmental issues among students of Italian secondary schools.

Poetry, literature, history, philosophy have been used to address the environmental and social issues of desertification trying to fill the knowledge gap due to the separation of human and biophysical science. The network of schools scattered throughout various Italian Regions in urban and rural areas, participated in real time to the video-seminars made available through internet.

The recorded seminars and documents are archived and available on the web (see: www.desertarte.enea.it).

In addition to a scientific based approach, education to sustainable development can make use of cognitive styles which rely on imagination and on the sensitive and subjective perception. Literature and art with their strong and universal communicative codes can better convey to young people awareness to the problem, with a more interiorized form of knowledge.

Maurizio Sciortino, members of the advisory board of the European DesertNet, ENEA, National Agency for New technologies, Energy and Environment, Italy.

Two major outcomes of the 4th IGBP Congress



The 4th Congress of the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (IGBP) was held on 5-9 May 2008 in Cape Town, RSA. About 380 participants from 65 countries shared their research and knowledge of global environmental change science and contribute to the development of IGBP scientific agenda for the period 2008-2013. Two major documents were presented or endorsed. The African Network for Earth System Science (AfricanNESS) science plan and implementation strategy presented its Science Plan and Implementation Strategy: *"A Strategy for Global Environmental Change Research in Africa"*.

This document first advocates for the strengthening Global Change Research African researchers community and its deep involvement into the international community considering the interconnectedness of the coupled human-environment Earth System. The key challenges faced by Africa are: (1) poverty, (2) disease, (3) hunger, (4) desertification, (5) deforestation.

The strategy focuses on four top-level issues: (1) food and nutritional security, (2) water resources, (3) health, (4) ecosystem integrity and is based upon seven principles:

1. Favour a limited number of multi-year coordinated research programmes over a large number of short-term, independent projects,
2. Promote inter-disciplinarity, multi-institutional and regional research,
3. Recognise and develop indigenous knowledge and capacity,
4. Develop Science-Policy interfaces,
5. Ensure that the products of scientific research are credible, salient and legitimate,
6. Build lasting human and institutional capacity,
7. Contributing to the global research agenda from an African perspective.

The strategy defines research Thematic Clusters and their components:

1. Rainfall: (1) climate observation systems, (2) cloud and rain-generating processes, (3) land-ocean teleconnections, (4) land-surface atmosphere hydrological cycle coupling, (5) GCM improvement and downscaling, (6) adaptation to rainfall variability.
2. Land: (1) drylands, desertification, land degradation, (2) deforestation, (3) vegetation burning, (4) water resources and wetlands, (5) ground water and aquifers.
3. Livelihoods: (1) crop agriculture, (2) pastoralism, (3) fisheries, (4) forest based livelihoods
4. Cities: urbanization.
5. Diseases and pests: (1) Advanced bioclimatic modelling, (2) prognostic modelling of disease, pest and weed spread.
6. Africa and the Earth System: (1) palaeoclimate, (2) land-ocean interaction, (3) atmospheric pollution, (4) carbon cycle, (5) water cycle, (6) ocean circulation, (7 regional climate modelling)
7. Integrated development: (1) transportation systems, (2) air quality, (3) scenario development, (4) governance research
8. Marine: (1) marine ecosystems and coral reefs, (2) marine biodiversity and food resources, (3) large-scale circulations, (4) marine biotic community reorganisation.

The implementation strategy focuses on seven key issues: (1) mechanisms, (2) institutions, (3) partnerships, (4) capacity building, (5) timelines, (6) budgets, (7) success criteria.

The plan outlines a way of implementing and organizing a network of Earth System scientists in Africa, and connecting them to scientists around the world. The so-called 'Cape Town Declaration on Science for Environmental Sustainability' was adopted on the last day and is summarized hereafter. The Declaration underlines how challenging are the UN millennium goals while society is faced with many other challenges. All these problems are strongly interlinked and have to be solved together, which requires a deep and broad knowledge of how the coupled human-environmental Earth system works. Consolidating a sound scientific process-level understanding and properly sharing it with resource managers, private enterprise and policy makers underpins the answers to questions of sustainable development.

The ESSP scientists emphasize the seriousness of the impending global environmental crisis, and the urgency of collective action to ameliorate it. Science has a fundamental role to play there.

- There is a real risk that the climate of the earth will exceed the limits for human security and wellbeing in many parts of the world. Immediate and concerted actions are needed to build resilience and adaptive capacity to the anticipated changes.
- Capitalizing on present knowledge, there is an urgent need for a well-integrated science of, and action for, the environment.
- The major benefits of the development of modern societies are unequally spread within and among them, and many of the costs are being passed on to future generations. The costs to the environment are poorly recognised in the economic frameworks that guide development decisions. Increasingly realistic estimates of the value of the services that ecosystems deliver, and recognition that these services have no substitutes, argues for more robust and sustainable development pathways to be identified and pursued.
- The path to sustainability will be different for different parts of the earth, but attainment of global sustainability is only possible through coordinated, collective and cooperative efforts

by all peoples. The developing world has the opportunity to attain wellbeing of individual citizens without compromising the integrity of their natural environments.

The participants of the Fourth IGBP Congress "Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing Earth System" Congress underlined some key issues of the Amsterdam Declaration (2001), such as: "*The common goal must be to develop the essential knowledge base needed to respond effectively and quickly to the great challenge of global change*" and: "*An ethical framework for global stewardship and strategies for Earth System management are urgently needed*" They committed:

- To build upon a scientific infrastructure that brings together scientists from many nations, disciplines and backgrounds, from across the natural and social sciences;
- To use it to build the next level of scientific infrastructure that is necessary to understand and predict the behaviour of coupled human-environmental systems;
- To build it around the ideas of sustainability and ethical global stewardship of the Earth System;
- To use the understanding developed about these coupled systems as the scientific basis for assessments and communication of the options risks, vulnerabilities and possibilities for future sustainable development of our planet.



Achieving these goals and contributing to making a positive impact on global sustainable development requires a synergistic scientific work. Desertification is one of the major threats to the African continent. Hence, DNI scientists can only actively endorse the '*Cape Town Declaration on Science for Environmental Sustainability*' and develop fruitful interactions and synergies with the nascent network of Earth System scientists in Africa.

Degraded grazing land facing desertification process in northern South Africa – the country where the Fourth IGBP Congress took place. Sparse vegetation and soil erosion can be observed on this image. © University of Maryland

Gerard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG

The Soil Atlas

The Joint Research Centre (JRC), IES, SOIL Action is pleased to announce that the Soil Atlas of Europe is available for downloading. http://eusoils.jrc.it/projects/soil_atlas/Download.cfm

FAO Launches New Global Soil Database

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has unveiled a new global soil database that will help better map current and future land productivity as well as the present carbon storage and carbon sequestration potential of the world's soils.

Based on the soil database, the FAO has produced a Global Gap Map which will help identify where soil carbon storage is greatest and the physical potential for billions of tons of additional carbon to be sequestered in degraded soils. For more information, please visit: <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2008/1000882/index.html>

The World Soil Database can be accessed at

<http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/luc07/External-World-soil-database/HTML/index.html>

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Biodiversity Working Group

The JRC has created in middle 2008 a Biodiversity expert group to provide it with advice and assistance regarding its scientific and technical activities in support to EU soil policy making and research. Membership in the Working Group is open to soil biodiversity experts. <http://eusoils.jrc.ec.europa.eu/library/themes/biodiversity/wg.html>

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Vacancies and Jobs

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Death Notice

It is with deep grief that we inform you about the sudden death of a great friend and colleague, **John Thornes**. We all remember his enthusiasm, passion and dedication and his charismatic leadership touched all our lives.

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