

Global Terrestrial Observing System

INFORMATION NOTE (12 April 2001)

Recent developments from the Global Terrestrial Observing System

1) Southern Africa

Southern Africa, after Central and Eastern Europe, is the second GTOS initiative to develop regional terrestrial observing systems based around national programmes. During 1999 a user needs survey was carried out in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Scholes, CSIR, South Africa. The survey assessed priorities among the scientific and policy communities and identified possible activities that GTOS could carry out. Country studies on the environmental information systems of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and the Southern African region as a whole were carried out. A regional consultation was organized in South Africa (February 2000) which discussed how to link the main user needs to data, information, data policy, capacity building and management requirements. An implementation plan was prepared which maps the way forward for GTOS during the next few years.

The report identifies a unique niche in Southern Africa in the form of a data broker (facilitating the movement of information between disciplines and between nations) and in the production of regional products that build upon the already large amount of national activities that have taken place during a number of years.

The report recommends that a pilot regional SAf should be initiated by:

- Assisting in the formation of a regional consortium that will seek funding to establish a regional land cover information system and allow collation and analysis of data in support of regional State of Environmental Reporting.
- Establishing a SAf internet site that will provide links and information on regional data.
- Seeking approval and recognition from the Southern African Development Community (SADC);

The report also contains useful country profile data, needs and requirements, environmental monitoring networks, and contacts.

The GTOS implementation plan for Southern Africa can be found at:
<http://www.fao.org/gtos/gtospub/pub21.htm>

The work in Southern Africa was made possible with financial assistance from the Government of Finland.

2) ProMis training workshop (Zambia)

In following up the implementation plan, GTOS is now working with countries in the development of an environmental information system to facilitate access to and exchange of information and methodologies within the region.

Information about the ProMis information management programme and the Zambia workshop (April 2001) will be provided in a future GTOS note.

Feedback

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