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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

WORKING GROUP ON DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS
Third Session (Hybrid)
Amman - Jordan
11-13 September 2023
Progress in the implementation of the report of the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (2022–2024)

Executive Summary

This document presents the progress made towards the 2022–2024 workplan and implementation of the recommendations of the Second Session of the Working Group of the Committee on Forestry Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (COFO WG). Document COFO/WG-DF/2023/3[1] 'Review of the relevance and optional modalities of the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems' provides further details on the Working Group's progress and lessons learned.

The Working Group invites Members to:
- take note of and endorse the Progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (2022-2024);
- invite the Working Group to continue its work, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary funds;
- encourage the Working Group to strengthen its collaboration with the FAO Committee on Agriculture-Sub-Committee on Livestock (COAG);
- invite the Working Group to provide an update on its work and activities at the next session.

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I.   Introduction

1.   The Second Session of the Working Group took place virtually on 17-18 November 2021. There were 104 participants at the Session, including 46 nominated experts representing 29 Member Nations and four observer countries. It included six technical events, a virtual poster session, a knowledge café, and a virtual field visit to the Dodoma region of the United Republic of Tanzania, which provided a platform for expertise-sharing and interactive dialogue between Members.

2.   The Working Group developed the 2022–2024 workplan to promote the scaling-up and adoption of good practices for the protection, sustainable management, and restoration of drylands in line with its Terms of Reference[2].

3.   The Working Group agreed upon four work areas: (1) Addressing transformation of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral production systems; (2) Innovative ways to monitor and restore drylands; (3) Improvement of dryland forest-based livelihoods and human wellbeing in post-COVID recovery; and (4) Knowledge documentation and sharing for collaboration and scaling-up of sustainable management and restoration practices across dryland regions.

4.   Over the past two years, many efforts have been made towards achieving the 2022–2024 workplan and to raise awareness on the important role of the Working Group. This work has served to inform decision-making and policy development on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems at global, regional and national levels.

5.   The implementation of the workplan was limited by the availability of extra-budgetary resources during 2022–2024.

II.   Progress of the Working Group

6.   Following the timeframe set in the workplan for 2022–2024, the planned activities and main achievements per work area are listed below:

A. <u>Work Area 1: Addressing transformation of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral production systems</u>

7.   As a response to requests from both the Second Session of the Working Group and the Twenty-sixth Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) that the Working Group support the implementation of the International Year of Rangeland and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP 26), a meeting was held in September 2022 to discuss areas for collaboration. As a result, the Working Group engaged with the IYRP 26 on several events, including the global digital 'Transforming Agrifood Systems with Forests'[3] event that was jointly held by the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) and FAO in September 2022, back-to-back with the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Committee on Forestry.

8.   The Working Group, in collaboration with the IYRP 26, also launched a Summer School programme[3] with the aim of building practitioners' capacities to implement transformational approaches to managing dryland areas. The first Drylands Summer School[4] will run in parallel with the Third Session of the Working Group in Amman, Jordan on 12-15 September 2023. Participants will join theoretical seminars and carry out fieldwork to put their knowledge into practice. The Working Group is hopeful that this ongoing initiative will promote and disseminate knowledge on sustainable management of drylands and agrosilvopastoral systems at global level.

[2] Terms of Reference EN/FR/SP
[3] https://events.globallandscapesforum.org/transforming-food-systems-with-forests/
[4] COFO WG Summer School | Dryland Forestry | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

9.   The Working Group launched the 'Transforming dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems' e-learning course[5] in collaboration with FAO's eLearning Academy and 17 expert partners to further promote the transformation of dryland forests and knowledge of agrosilvopastoral production systems. The partners involved are the Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia: FOCALI – the Forest, Climate and Livelihood Research Network; Forest Rangelands and Watershed Organization of the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture; Global Environment Facility; Global Landscapes Forum; International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; International Livestock Research Institute; International Union for the Conservation of Nature; Livestock Climate and Resilience Project; Swedish Forest Agency; Swedish University of Science and Agriculture; Universidad de la Guajira; Université Mohammed V Rabat; University of Bern; West Africa-North Africa (WANA) Institute, and World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies. The course syllabus raises awareness of and provides evidence on the impacts and causes of forest degradation in drylands, and the benefits of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Sustainable Land Management (SLM).

10.   To further highlight the role of livestock and agrosilvopastoral systems in restoring dryland forests and rangelands, the Working Group served as the technical advisory group for the preparation and review of the global technical report 'Grazing with trees'[6]. The publication was developed in partnership with FAO's Animal Production and Health Division and launched at the high-level Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) event 'Transforming agrifood systems with forests' on 29 September 2022. Two thousand people registered for the event from across 120 countries. The accompanying policy brief[7] 'A silvopastoral approach to managing and restoring drylands with trees' was launched at the GLF Climate 'Frontiers of Change II' event on 11 November 2022 with more than 600 participants.

11.   In response to the Working Group's request that its Secretariat and Steering Committee enhance cooperation with the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) Sub-Committee on Livestock (referred as the sub-Committee), several meetings were organized to discuss forest and agricultural linkages, mainly in dryland ecosystems. As a result, the Working Group's Third Session will be held jointly with the Near East Forestry and Range Commission, and a proposed discussion item will consider ways to integrate the silvopastoral approach with agrifood systems in line with regional needs and priorities. Relevant suggestions and recommendations will be incorporated into the final draft to be presented at the sub-Committee's Second Session in 2024. Subsequently, recommendations will be submitted for consideration of COAG and COFO in their 2024 sessions.

12.   In response to the Working Group's request to strengthen mapping and monitoring tools to support sustainable management interventions in presumed drylands - which are in line with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration - the 'Valuing, restoring and managing presumed drylands: Cerrado, Miombo–Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau'[8] publication was produced. The publication was launched in 2022 at a high-level event as part of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The report contains concrete information on the environmental and ecological value of presumed dryland areas and key recommendations for actions to limit land degradation, sustain biodiversity, and mitigate climate change.

B. <u>Work Area 2: Innovative ways to monitor and restore drylands</u>

13.   Supported by FAO's South-South and Triangular Cooperation (PST) Division, the Working Group has promoted a participatory monitoring approach to documenting and disseminating knowledge resources through the 'Making Every Voice Count for Adaptive Management' (MEV-CAM) initiative[5].

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[5] https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=945
[6] https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc2280en
[7] A silvopastoral approach to managing and restoring drylands with trees: Policy brief
[8] Valuing, restoring and managing "presumed drylands": Cerrado, Miombo–Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau (fao.org)

14.   In 2022, MEV-CAM conducted over 60 training sessions on participatory video in English and French with more than 100 attendees, published a Toolkit[9] on its methods, and participated in the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-6 Resilient Food Systems (RFS)[10] annual knowledge exchange workshop in Malawi. MEV-CAM upscaled the lessons learned from the GEF-6 RFS project in Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania into the GEF-7 Dryland Sustainable Landscape Impact Program (DSL-IP)[11] through four participatory videos. Communities in three countries produced participatory videos to show the Most Significant Change observed as a result of project interventions in Angola, Mozambique and Jordan. Ten good practice leaflets[12] were produced to guide communities in a step-by-step format to implement and utilize these practices to enhance South-South Cooperation. In 2023, MEV-CAM began to further these efforts in Latin America.

C. <u>Work Area 3: Improvement of dryland forest-based livelihoods and human wellbeing in post-COVID recovery</u>

15.   Over the past two years, the Working Group has improved dryland forest-based livelihoods and human wellbeing in post-COVID recovery by providing guidance to the implementation of the GEF-7 Drylands Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (DSL-IP) at national, regional and global levels. The Working Group has participated in the DSL-IP child project Steering Committees in their respective countries to ensure a two-way flow of information between the child projects and the Working Group, with the most recent meeting held in February 2023.

16.   As agreed in the 2022–2024 workplan, the Working Group has provided guidance and think-tank consultation sessions in two dryland regions to promote the deployment of the 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus' approach for human and environmental security. This work contributed to the development of a policy brief entitled 'Doing no harm while doing good: Climate and conflict sensitivity in dryland humanitarian projects'[13] that was launched on International Humanitarian Day (19 August) 2022. The policy paper highlights the fragility of dryland ecosystems in humanitarian settings through a thorough review of three innovative projects implemented by FAO, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and the International Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) in consultation with think tank organizations in Africa and the Middle East.

17.   The Working Group has also provided technical guidance to forest farmer producer organizations and community seed banks to accelerate the adoption, implementation and scaling of good SLM and SFM practices, and sustainable restoration of degraded landscapes through the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach.

D. <u>Work Area 4: Knowledge documentation and sharing for collaboration and scaling-up of sustainable management and restoration practices across the dryland regions</u>

18.   The Working Group has taken several actions to increase South-South collaboration and amplify the contribution of the Working Group to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, as agreed at the Second Session of the Working Group.

19.   Recognizing the role of women and civil society organizations (CSO) in fighting the effects of drought and climate change, and the need to foster women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes, the Working Group supports FAO's Nurturing Community of Knowledge Practice for Women in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems (WeCaN)[14]. Since its launch in 2021, WeCaN has empowered 200 women-led organizations and practitioners across 26 countries in dryland

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[9] https://www.fao.org/dryland-forestry/making-every-voice-count/en/
[10] Home | Resilient Food Systems
[11] GEF-7 Drylands Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (fao.org)
[12] Knowledge Bank | Dryland Forestry | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)
[13] Doing no harm while doing good (fao.org)
[14] WeCaN | Dryland Forestry | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

regions to boost their advocacy efforts and share their knowledge and successful experiences on gender-responsive climate change responses. The mentoring, support and training provided by WeCaN in 2022 enabled ten women's organizations to be accredited to UNCCD's platform. A WeCaN representative also joined the UNCCD COP15 and helped draft a Gender CSO Statement. Moreover, seven WeCaN representatives joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 27th Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP27) as Members of their countries' delegations to advocate for the role of women in dryland restoration. Twenty Members attended a global gathering in Rome in 2023 to validate the WeCaN advocacy strategy and map out an action plan for 2023-2027.

20.   As a response to the Working Group's request that the Secretariat disseminate lessons learned from the implementation of the Green Urban Oases (GUO) programme to promote city-to-city exchange through South-South Cooperation, a webinar was held in December 2022 on 'Urban forestry and urban greening in drylands: improving resilience, health and wellbeing of urban communities'[15]. The webinar was organized in collaboration with the FAO Silva Mediterranea Working Group on Urban and Peri-urban Forestry.

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[15] Urban greenery helps avert multiple crises for dryland cities, FAO report shows

Workplan of the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems*
(2022–2024)

Work Areas*	Activities	Time Frame	Progress- up to date (August 2023)
1. Addressing transformation of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral production systems	1.1 Contribute and support FAO in initiating a Summer School programme with the aim to build the capacities of practitioners on key transformational approaches for dryland resilient systems.	March 2023	Completed
	1.2 Produce an e-learning programme with the support of FAO and Members to continue to raise awareness and provide evidence on the benefits of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and the impacts and causes of forest degradation in drylands.	July 2022– October 2023	Completed
	1.3 Provide inputs and advice into on a global report on the role of livestock in avoiding further land degradation and deforestation in dryland agrosilvopastoral systems.	January 2022– October 2022	Completed
2.Innovative ways to monitor and restore drylands	2.1 Provide guidance, supported by the FAO South-South and Triangular Cooperation (PST), in promoting a participatory monitoring approach to document and disseminate knowledge resources through the 'Making every voice count for adaptive management' initiative.	February 2022– December 2022	Completed the first phase and still ongoing
	2.2 Continue to support the testing of the Dryland Restoration Initiative Platform (DRIP) within the monitoring framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and	February 2022– July 2023	Pending funding availability

	link it with Land Degradation Neutrality targets.		
3. Improvement of dryland forest-based livelihoods and human wellbeing in post- COVID recovery	3.1 Provide guidance periodically to the implementation of the GEF-7 DSL Impact Programme at national, regional and global levels.	**This activity will be linked to the duration of DSL IP program	Ongoing
	3.2 Provide guidance on think tank consultation sessions in four dryland regions to contribute to key lessons in deploying the 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus' approach for human and environmental security.	July 2022	Completed
	3.3 Provide technical guidance on the development of a Farmer Field School (FFS) toolkit on 'Agroforestry in dryland regions'.	January 2022–January 2023	Pending Funding availability
4. Knowledge documentation and sharing for collaboration and scaling-up of sustainable management and restoration practices across the dryland regions	4.1 Provide guidance on the knowledge and outreach activities of the GEF-7 DSL Impact Programme to ensure that knowledge and impacts are disseminated to other countries and regions beyond the programme.	**This activity will be linked to the duration of DSL IP program	Ongoing
	4.2 Promote and support women's communities of practice as agents of change within the framework of sustainable forest and landscape management in dryland regions.	January 2022–January 2023	Ongoing
	4.3 Disseminate lessons learned from the implementation of the Green Urban Oases (GUO) programme to promote city-to-city exchange through South-South Cooperation, including with countries and regions that are not directly involved in the GUO.	June 2022–July 2023	Ongoing