



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Rome, Italy, 23-27 June 2014

ENHANCING FAO WORK ON DRYLAND FORESTS

I. Background

1. More than elsewhere, forests and agrosilvopastoral systems in drylands play crucial ecological, social and economic roles while improving environmental sustainability and resilience in the wider landscapes. They harbour species that are particularly adapted to extreme ecological conditions and provide essential goods and ecosystem services. If well managed and properly valued, forests and agrosilvopastoral systems in drylands can help alleviate poverty and contribute to food security and sustainable livelihoods for two billion people worldwide. They provide means to help adapt to climate change, maintain land productivity, regulate water cycle, prevent and combat desertification and increase resilience of the millions of communities who live in the world's dryland areas.

2. Today these forests and their associated ecosystems are facing serious and multiple threats, ranging from deforestation, to degradation, fragmentation and desertification. These dynamics are driven by interrelated factors, such as climate change and related disasters such as fires, policy and socio-economic drivers including human actions leading to overharvesting of resources, lack of technical capacity as well as a general lack of understanding of the importance and vulnerability of these systems.

3. Dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems can be found across the globe and yet, they continue to be poorly understood and researched. They receive limited recognition and attention and have not attracted the amount of technical and financial investment (when compared to other ecosystems, such as humid tropical forests) needed for their assessment, conservation, sustainable management and restoration. This is so, in spite of recent studies showing that globally, drylands offer the highest restoration potential.

II. FAO's recent work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems

4. During several decades, FAO, in collaboration with various partners, has dedicated efforts to work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems. Below is a brief overview of selected recent initiatives and activities undertaken by FAO on which the Organization could build to enhance and scale up its work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems globally.

5. FAO has been developing a number of country-driven guidelines in collaboration with partner organizations such as the "Guidelines on sustainable forest management in drylands of sub-Saharan

Africa” published in 2010 and the forthcoming “Guidelines for restoration of forest landscapes and degraded lands in drylands”. FAO promotes the adoption and implementation of agroforestry practices as a means to increase the resilience of agrosilvopastoral systems, especially in more fragile ecosystem such as drylands. In this regard, FAO published a guide to assist countries in developing policy, legal and institutional frameworks that facilitate the adoption and implementation of agroforestry practices.

6. 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 sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agroforestry systems. These include: innovative water harvesting techniques and technologies, 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 and networking, and resource mobilization.

7. Since 2010, FAO has been supporting with partners, the implementation of the African Union Initiative “Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI)” aimed at improving the resilience of human and natural systems in Sahara and adjacent countries using a landscape and multistakeholder approach to find long-term solutions to desertification, land degradation and drought, climate change and biodiversity loss. The focus of FAO’s support included 13 partner countries with funding from the European Union (EU), FAO and the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (GM-UNCCD). This support resulted in the creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of the GGWSSI (development of National Action Plans, a Regional Harmonized Strategy, partnership and resource mobilization platform, a capacity development strategy and action plan, communication strategy and action plan). As a follow-up to this successful cooperation, a new project “Action Against Desertification” was recently approved under the EU-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States) collaboration programme, to support implementation of these action plans in selected countries and expand activities to the Caribbean and Pacific regions, building on the successful results of activities carried out in Africa to date and supporting south-south cooperation between Great Green Wall countries and Caribbean and Pacific countries.

8. Within the framework of the FAO Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea*, and with support of the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests (CPMF), FAO led the preparation and launching of the first edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests and the new Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests. The Strategic Framework was endorsed at a high level segment held at the Third Mediterranean Forest Week in Algeria in March 2013.

9. FAO has also responded to requests by member countries for assistance in developing and implementing field projects tackling sustainable forest management and restoration as well as forestry and watershed management in a number of countries in Africa, Near East, Central Asia and Latin America, including using Global Environment Facility (GEF) resources. Under the CPMF, projects focusing on Mediterranean forests and climate change adaptation and mitigation were also developed and are being implemented in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, with funding support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the French Fund for the Global Environment (FFEM) and the EU.

10. Moreover, FAO in collaboration with UNCCD, other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)¹, countries and other partners, invested efforts in raising awareness on dryland forests and agroforestry systems, through the organization of events in relevant international fora and Conferences of Parties of the Rio conventions, and developed and disseminated communication materials, including at celebrations of international years and days recognized by the

¹ The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is an informal, voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial programmes on forests, chaired by FAO. These agencies share their experiences and build on them to produce new benefits for their respective constituencies. They collaborate to streamline and align their work and to find ways of improving forest management and conservation and the production and trade of forest products

United Nations (including the International Year of Forests, the World Day to Combat Desertification, and the International Day of Forests).

III. Gaps and recommended activities for urgent collaborative investment and action

11. Work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems should be expanded 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 and due to its strong and long-lasting partnership with UNCCD, FAO is hosting since April 2014, the UNCCD Global Mechanism Programme on "Liaison-Land, Security and Resilience". This programme and the forthcoming funding opportunities under GEF-6 and from countries with emerging economies could provide the opportunity to boost global level work on dryland forestry and inter-sectoral related issues.

12. Moreover, at the global level, knowledge of the extent and value of dryland forest and agrosilvopastoral systems is relatively limited and might explain the reasons behind the lack of investments in their management and restoration. These knowledge gaps include, inter alia:

- global mapping of the extent and status of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems;
- lack of coordination and integration of existing monitoring systems for dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems globally and regionally to track changes and identify risks (land use changes, climate changes and their impacts such as longer droughts, fires, pests and diseases as well as deforestation and desertification);
- analysis of resilience strategies and practices in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and their potentials for scaling up;
- global prioritization of investments to improve dryland forest management and restoration;
- estimation of the required level of investments (technical and financial) for dryland forests and sustainable management and restoration;
- economic valuation of the contributions of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems to sustainable development, including economic returns of investments in their sustainable management and restoration.

13. Despite their importance and the urgent challenges affecting dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, efforts in the last decade to raise substantial funds for dryland forestry issues have not been sufficient to produce the expected impact on the ground. It is important that current and future financing is well coordinated and upscaled rather than focused on short-term and scattered projects, without a harmonized vision and prioritization. Furthermore, a solid analysis of integrated data resources will be beneficial for prioritizing future financial investments.

14. On the another hand, FAO's recent experience in facilitating development of partnerships at regional levels (such as the Mediterranean, the GGWSSI, and Central Asia) with CPF members, the African Union Commission, *Silva Mediterranea* and other partners, has shown the value and benefits of partnerships bringing together the international community and regional and national institutions and technical and financial partners. These regional partnerships could provide a solid ground and pave the way for a more global, cohesive and inclusive process to mobilize resources (technical and financial) for dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral investments.

15. In order to enhance the work on dryland forestry issues and build on existing regional platforms and partnerships, the Committee may wish to decide on setting up a working group on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems. This working group could:

- facilitate dialogue among countries on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems issues and identify key areas of work;
- boost global engagement and commitment, in terms of technical and financial resources, of countries and partner organizations;

- define a programme of work and budget for FAO's support to the working group and for its activities on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, as consistent with FAO's Strategic Framework;
- play a role of a liaison technical platform to inform FAO and other UN bodies such as the UNCCD on technical issues related to dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.

IV. Points for consideration

16. The Committee may wish to invite countries to:

- work with FAO for 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 help identify partners and funding opportunities;
- support the work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, including through providing extra budgetary contributions and seconding experts to FAO.

17. The Committee may wish to request FAO to:

- undertake, within the framework of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and contingent upon the availability of extra-budgetary funding, a global assessment of the extent and status of drylands forests, rangelands and agrosilvopastoral systems to inform the parties and the working group in the identification of priority areas of work;
- 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 FAO Strategic Objectives 2 and 5, and to a lesser extent, to FAO Strategic Objectives 3 and 1.

18. The Committee may wish to:

- consider the relevance and benefits of establishing, in accordance with Rule VII of the Rules of Procedure, a working group on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, which would report regularly to the Committee;
- request FAO to organize an ad hoc preparatory meeting to consider the draft terms of reference, modalities and other relevant arrangements for the said working group.
- further request FAO to present a recommendation to the Committee for the establishment of the working group on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems for consideration and possible adoption at its next session.