



drynet
www.dry-net.org

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News from Drynet

A global initiative giving future to drylands

Drynet is a project of 14 organisations from all over the world. They work together to combat land degradation

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Drynet Update

Congratulations! You are reading the first issue of the Drynet-newsletter: "News from Drynet". Besides this nesletter, which will appear at least 8 times during the 3 year-long project period (2007-2009), you can follow the progress of Drynet closely on the website **www.dry-net.org**. On this website Drynet success stories will be documented, as well as news items, articles, regional agenda's... You can already review several stories, for example a centuries-old system of private pastureland management in India and about polyculture practices in Brazilian drylands. But most important: Drynet is also very interested in your

success stories, as sharing means learning! Therefore Drynet looks forward to reading about your experiences.

Drynet started in March of this year with a kick-off meeting in Fortaleza, Brazil, where all 14 Drynet-partners met to share ideas about the project. The first thing one could notice was the enormous variety of partners coming from so many different regions. One nice example was the astonishment of partners from Iran and Pakistan when visiting the Brazilian drylands, which looked lush and green after the rainy season, while in Asia no drop of rain had fallen for a long time! This example illustrates the additional value of Drynet - as combating desertification >> and land degradation does not have one solution,

Drynet partners visiting the Brazilian drylands.



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but requires multiple approaches from different perspectives.

One of the ongoing activities at this moment concerns "mapping". Drynet-partners are mapping Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on a national level, creating a clear overview of the different local organisations working on dryland issues. This overview will provide the basis to both strengthen net-works and to build capacities. In addition, the so-called "Financing Partners", consisting of the donor community and coordination, will also be "mapped". If your organisation is working on issues, concerning drylands, you and Drynet can be an added value for each other. So please do not hesitate to get in contact with us!

Over the next few months Drynet will, on the basis of the mapping results, organise national seminars on a country or regional level, as well as conduct needs assessments and trainings. This will help achieve the ultimate goal of providing Civil Society Organisations with the appropriate knowledge and visibility to influence dryland development policies and to aim at making Civil Society a respected counterpart for governments.

Thus, there is a lot of work ahead, but by working together with organisations such as yours along with other stakeholders involved, we can achieve a great deal in the fight against desertification! We hope this first newsletter will inspire you. By sharing minutes of important meetings; giving insights into the ideas of the World Meteorological Organisation; focusing on a drought

resistant crop and a article on "drylands rich in animal genetic resources", we think we will.

We welcome all your comments; questions or remarks on this first issue. You can send them to:

drynet@bothends.org

**By Drynet partner:
Danielle de Man, Both ENDS,
the Netherlands**

International Agenda 2007

12-16 Nov. 2007 - Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council Meeting and NGO Consultation, Washington DC, USA
www.thegef.org

28-29 Nov. 2007 - UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Regional Implementation Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile
www.un.org/esa/sustdev

3-14 Dec. 2007 - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties 13th session and Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, Bali, Indonesia
www.unfccc.int

What is... Jatropha?

JATROPHA CURCAS: A BLIND ALLEY OR AN OIL PLANT OF UNKNOWN QUALITIES?

Jatropha curcas is a multipurpose non-edible plant that has proven to be drought resistant. In particular, its seeds have raised considerable attention as a source of oil for biodiesel production. In the past Jatropha had been promoted to make rural dryland areas self sufficient by providing fuels for cooking, lighting and motive power. Currently, however, this enthusiasm has yielded mainly to criticism because of the considerable production costs involved. Nevertheless, Jatropha has some unique features: it can grow on soils that have previously been considered unsuitable for crop cultivation.

Check out the links:

nsiev.de/jatropha-en

www.diligent-tanzania.com/

Research work undertaken by professor C. Namasivayam of the Bharathiar University in India¹ and others in March 2007, shows another hitherto unknown potential for this multipurpose plant: the husk from Jatropha, has been tested in filtration research with waste from biodiesel industries. The husk that contains a form of activated carbon (JHC) enhances the feasibility of removal of toxic anions, dyes, heavy metals and organic compounds from water.

¹Correspondence to: Professor C. Namasivayam, Environmental Chemistry Division, Department of Environmental Sciences, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore 641046, India

**By Drynet partner:
Silke Brehm of LPP, Germany**

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Drynet Meeting Minutes

DRYNET BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER DURING COP8

Could you imagine a small organisation from Burkina Faso discussing with a Finnish Government Representative? Not so easy indeed! But Drynet did it, thanks to its unconventional side-event organised during the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Madrid, Spain. The event was called "Developing capacities in changing times: NGOs and land users in combating desertification and coping with climate change".

The Drynet approach was unique: we invited and actively involved a wide array of stakeholders including national delegates, international donor agencies, scientists and civil society organisations, representing countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe in a discussion. Two key questions were discussed: "what are the elements of successful actions to combat desertification and adapt to climate change at local level" and "in what ways can each of us support processes and projects that have a good chance of success".

After two opening presentations by Drynet-partners, ENDA Tiers Monde and Scope, highlighting their innovative initiatives carried out at grassroots level in respectively Senegal and Pakistan, representatives from the European Union, and the Global Mechanism¹ - which both

actively finance activities in the fight against desertification and land degradation - underlined the crucial role of civil society organisations in identifying, documenting, and replicating such local initiatives so as to broaden their impact.

The discussion became very lively and interesting when the participants were randomly divided in groups of five to six people and openly shared their opinions and ideas. They talked together about the importance of local experiences, traditional knowledge, scientific advances and innovative means of replicating such experiences as well as the role of each stakeholder in the process.

The results of this side-event could without any doubt prove useful for both policy-makers and local actors, providing new ideas and approaches for sustainable development in dryland regions. It also helps to create a common understanding of what should be done in the combat against desertification. But the greatest contribution of this event was the refreshing approach that brought actors together in a relaxed and friendly environment, and enabled them to freely discuss some of the most important aspects of desertification and poverty in dryland areas.

This multistakeholder dialogue is only a preview of what Drynet is designed to achieve: bring people together who would normally not easily get in contact with each other and strengthen the collaboration between all actors to combat desertification. In the future Drynet will work hard to make this happen on a larger scale by strengthening Civil Society Networks and give them the right knowledge and visibility to influence dryland development policies and become important partners in developing those policies.

The full report of the side-event, the presentations and answers to the two questions discussed can be read at www.dry-net.org, news section.

¹Global Mechanism is financing Drynet and actively working together with Drynet partners on common activities

By Drynet partners:

**Mark Camburn of Probioma,
Bolivia and Danielle de Man
of Both ENDS, the Netherlands**

International Agenda 2008

28-29 Jan. 2008 - UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Regional Implementation Meeting for Europe and North America, Geneva, Switzerland

[www.unece.org/env/
SustainableDevelopment](http://www.unece.org/env/SustainableDevelopment)

5-16 May 2008 - 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, United Nations headquarters, New York, USA

www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd

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Drynet Interview

LOOK FOR WIN-WIN SOLUTIONS TO COPE WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr. Mannava V.K. Sivakumar, Chief of the Agricultural Meteorology Division of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) spoke to Namitha Dipak during COP8 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held at Madrid in September 2007.

How can we make drought monitoring more effective?

It is important to have good spatial information...so for that you need to have a good network of meteorological stations.

One of the buzz phrases during this COP appears to be "early warning systems". How challenging is it to implement in a diverse geographical area like India?

Today we have very good tools to make forecasts at our disposal, as opposed to about 30-40 years ago. Of course, these are not perfect forecasts, that is the reason they are given in terms of probability. A forecast will mention what is the probability that the rainy season, for instance in 2008, will be normal, above normal or below normal.



Dr. Mannava V.K. Sivakumar

What does that mean for the common person?

If I say that the rain in 2008 will be 30% below normal, what we then do is take the normal patterns in northern, eastern, western and southern India, and the information from the seasonal forecast and then downscale it. The value of such information is that the farmer will be able to make decisions.

That means that the farmers have to be trained to cope with this information?

Exactly. That is why when such forecasts are available, it is very important to bring in agricultural extension services. And also NGOs, like your Drynet network as well. The benefits of science must come to society, otherwise science has no meaning.

Could you give us an example of local efforts that are helping to mitigate the effects of climate change?

There are some examples emerging now from some of the Scandinavian countries. Scandinavian countries are more proactive than reactive to what are the likely impacts of climate change. They are looking at win-win situations. And that's what we in India should also be looking at. A 2-3 degree increase in temperature - when translated to a local level - could mean something higher than 2-3 degrees. This 2-3 degree range is a global average. That is why some countries are taking very serious steps. They are already informing communities about the likely changes and how they should start shifting their cropping patterns.

**By Drynet partner:
Namitha Dipak of LPPS, India**

Curious to read more about Dr. Mannava V.K. Sivakumar's view on climate change, land degradation and drylands? The full text of the interview is available on our website.

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Global Article

COUNTRIES ACKNOWLEDGE RICHNESS OF DRYLANDS IN ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

Every month, one farm animal breed becomes extinct as locally adapted livestock is replaced by high performance breeds. But local breeds have many advantages: they make use of locally available resources and exploit dry and other marginal areas where crops can not be grown, and are a much more efficient means of food production.

To raise awareness about the importance of livestock diversity and to agree on a common approach to managing it in a sustainable manner, 109 governments met in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 1-7 September at the First International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources where they issued the "Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources", and elaborated a Global Plan of Action (GPA).

The GPA makes special references to drylands. Studies have shown that drylands have produced a disproportionately high number of well known breeds which are basically the result of the efforts and the indigenous knowledge of pastoralists.

The African region and many NGOs had been advocating for "Livestock Keepers Rights", a bundle of rights that would strengthen the role of pastoralists and farming communities in managing animal genetic resources. Unfortunately this was mooted by developed countries.

Nevertheless, the role of indigenous and local communities, especially pastoralists is acknowledged in Strategic Priority Action No 6 which recognises that the "adaptive animal genetic resource management strategies of these communities continue to have economic, cultural and social significance and to be highly relevant to food security in many rural subsistence societies, particularly though not exclusively in dry lands and mountainous regions" and suggest various ways to support indigenous and local communities.

Scientific programmes to increase drought resistance of organisms are funded with millions of dollars. Yet the day-to-day efforts of pastoralists to keep and develop animals under drought conditions and thereby sustain crucial gene pools – that will prove priceless during climate change - remain entirely unrewarded. It will be the tasks of NGOs to continue advocating for compensation for these important environmental services.

For further information, please check:

www.lifeinitiative.net
www.lpps.org
www.pastoralpeoples.org
www.fao.org

**By Drynet partner:
Ilse Köhler-Rollefson of LPP,
Germany**

The following issues of the Drynet newsletter will be based on a variety of thematic topics. If you have any suggestions for themes that you would like to see covered, then please send your ideas to: drynet@bothends.org or contact a Drynet partner in your region.



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Desertification in Central Asia

United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) sub-regional action programme for the Central Asian countries indicates Central Asia as a classic example of an arid and sub-arid region characterized by serious cross-border problems of desertification. The redistribution of water resources in the region has caused numerous ecological impacts that are adversely affecting natural ecosystems, economic growth and public health, and stimulating migration. As we witness the involvement by the international community we also begin to observe the growth of NGOs and their investment in Central Asia. Strategies for combating desertification in Central Asia are now being developed in partnership by many groups and individuals.

In *Desert Problems and Desertification in Central Asia*, Babaev (1999) provides solid research about Central Asia conditions. His research is about physi-

cal Central Asia and its peoples and encourages international assistance and local action. Deserts of Central Asia mostly cover lowlands, from the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea to the Tien-Shan and Altai consisting of about 250 million hectares. The desert landscapes vary strongly in their geology, soil, and vegetation; hence, there is a great deal we must learn and share about deserts in Central Asia.

Yet, with modern life and its socio-economic conditions we see a shift from dryland rural livelihood to urban development. Consequently, knowledge about pasture management, dryland conditions, and traditional land practices are being forgotten. There is also a greater need for local and regional academic primary research within Central Asia. NGOs require an expansion of their networks, funding, and awareness. State involvement and participatory planning in land management would also be invaluable. Central Asia is welcoming development and with it comes many social and economical advances; we must also think about what ecological advances are taking place, or is there any? Desertification is a top sustainability issue in Central Asia and should be approached with such priority.

Babaev, A.G. (1999). *Desert Problems and Desertification in Central Asia*. Springer: Germany.



Erosion of the traditional cultural landscape

Desertification is caused by severe degradation of the vegetative cover and erosion of soils from overgrazing, further growth in the erosion and degradation of arid lands from agriculture, development, un-managed pasture management, and salinization (Babaev, 1996) to name a few. The impacts of desertification on the physical landscape are abundant. Yet, the impacts on the cultural landscapes are also critical. The cultural landscape is also irreplaceable like the physical landscape and its ecosystem characteristics. Desertification not only places ecosystem characteristics and rural population livelihood at risk but also the cultural stories, people's histories, and stories of the land are at risk for being eroded.

Dr. Peter A. Schmidt (1998) writes about human's survival and how it is dependent on the knowledge of the local environmental conditions, habitats, and natural resources in mountains. In the 19 mountain ranges of the former USSR live more than 16 million farmers and

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shepherds. Such environments have given rise to major differences in the knowledge and culture of the people living there. Arab geographers designated the Caucasus as «the mountains of languages». The Cultural Landscape Foundation defines the cultural landscape as a range of geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with a historic event, activity, person, or group of people. Cultural landscapes give us a sense of place and «reveal our relationship with land over time». Desertification threatens rural populations, biodiversity, and our cultural relationship with each other and the land.



Babaev, A.G. (1996). *Problems of Arid Land Development. Regional Centre for Research and Training Personnel for Desertification Control: Moscow.*

Schmidt, Dr. P.A. (1998). *Mountains Regions as Natural Environments for Human Beings. Ch. 33 in Dompke & Succow. Naturschutzbund: Germany.*

Aarhus for ICTs and its impact on desertification

“Capacity Building for the Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism and Electronic Information Tools” June 2007 sub-regional workshop was conducted at the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Aarhus Convention supports access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice on environmental matters. The workshop provided a forum for discussion and exchange of good practices and possible conditions for increasing participation of state institutions and civil society and the necessity of Internet communication technologies (ICTs) in Central Asia. Free exchange of information coupled with the advancement of ICTs requires further development in Central Asia.

The 8th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention was held in Geneva from 31 October to November 02, 2007. The meeting was attended by over 30 country parties, UNITAR, and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, among many other NGOs. Central Asia's participation developed a partnership with the Environment Action Network for Central Asia and Russia (CARNet) to support digital information networks for dissemination



of environmental information. A second joint project aims to prepare a manual for Central Asia and the Caucasus in local languages.

ICT development has great potential to further combating desertification in Central Asia. As we see with Drynet, the interactive website provides its partners and large audience made possible via the Internet valuable good practices tools for rural populations. In order to ensure that these tools reach rural populations, they require training and capacity-building in ICT technologies and benefits. Not only does this recognition of ICT bring forth the needs for ICTs in rural populations but also the need for resources for acquiring such technologies.

**By Drynet partner:
Elmira Aleynikova, CAREC,
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Participants from Central Asia



Central Asia, international environmental discussion Belgrade, 2007

"Central Asia Initiative on Sustainable Development: Platform for Cooperation" is the main theme with which Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia presented Central Asian region at VI European Conference of Ministers of Environment "Environment for Europe" in Belgrade (Serbia, October 10, 2007). One of the tools to transfer to sustainable development is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Equally, ESD is the top priority and the key factor to achieve the goals of sustainable development of the Central Asian countries and the whole region.

At the Belgrade conference CAREC presented the work that was executed in Central Asia in order to promote «Central Asia Initiative on Sustainable Development» (CAI) during the period following Kiev ministerial conference of 2003, and informed on best practices and prospects for CAI in future. CAI is aimed at multiple sector partnership between governments, private sector, non-governmental and communal organizations in order to adopt, in cooperation with international organizations and donor countries, best international practices in environmental management, resolving problems of a limited access to natural resources, imbalanced economic development and solution of social issues, including those of education, health and elimination of poverty, in the Central Asian countries.

The expansion of Europe turned the EU into a center of formation of regional policy and made it set guidelines and standards for the European countries

and EECCA in many spheres, such as power, water resources, climate change. The CIS region (EECCA) became more non-uniform developing regional programmes united by common ecosystems, i.e. the Black sea, the Caspian sea, the Aral Sea, the Caucasus, the Carpathian Mts, which demands joint efforts and uni-form programmes.

All the Central Asian countries, UNECE, international, and non-governmental organizations backed Kazakhstan's proposal on holding the next ministerial conference in Astana in 2011, which signifies a rising role of Kazakhstan in international processes.

By Drynet partner:
Emil Gareyev, CAREC,
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