



**drynet**

www.dry-net.org

**No. 1**

December 2007

# 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

## GLOBAL NEWS

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## Drynet Update

Congratulations! You are reading the first issue of the Drynet-newsletter: "News from Drynet". Besides this newsletter, 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](http://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

*Drynet partners visiting the Brazilian drylands.*



## GLOBAL NEWS

>> and land degradation does not have one solution, 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 networks 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](mailto:drynet@bothends.org)

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

## International Agenda 2007

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

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**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](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev)

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**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](http://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](http://nsiev.de/jatropha-en)  
[www.diligent-tanzania.com/](http://www.diligent-tanzania.com/)

Research work undertaken by professor C. Namasivayam of the Bharathiar University in India<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

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

## GLOBAL NEWS

### 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 Mechanism<sup>1</sup>- 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](http://www.dry-net.org), news section.

<sup>1</sup> Global 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](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd)

## GLOBAL NEWS

### 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.

## GLOBAL NEWS

### 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.

The Livestock Keepers Rights initiative was supported by The Christensen Fund, Misereor, Swedbio, HIVOS-NOVIB OXFAM Biodiversity Fund and others".

EED, FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, GTZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH, Hivos-Oxfam Novib Biodiversity Fund, Misereor e.V., Rockefeller Foundation, Swedbio, Swissaid, The Christensen Fund and others.

For further information, please check:  
[www.lifeinitiative.net](http://www.lifeinitiative.net)  
[www.lpps.org](http://www.lpps.org)  
[www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org)  
[www.fao.org](http://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](mailto:drynet@bothends.org) or contact a Drynet partner in your region.



## REGIONAL NEWS

### Arid Zone Ecology Forum – 2007

**Despite the chilly winter temperatures in Sutherland, researchers, government officials and others converged on the small town in September this year to attend the 22nd annual Arid Zone Ecology Forum (AZEF), which focused on the topic Drought as a Driver: Physical, ecological and socio-economic effects, interactions and responses.**

Following two days of presentations, field visits and workshops were on the programme. The field trips included visits to natural ephemeral pans to look at birds, a combined outing with some of the local farmers to see the drought mortality in relation to forage value of shrubs and their position in the landscape, and a trip to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT).

A separate outing was organised for Gr.10-11 learners at the Sutherland High School by Clement Cupido. Colleagues from the Department of Agriculture accompanied the learners into the field to demonstrate techniques for assessing the number of plant species and managing water run-off by building a weir. This field trip together with the poster

session was funded by the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP).

Concurrently to the field trips two workshops were also held. A Farmers' Day was hosted by the Bokkeveld Stewardship Project to enable farmers to discuss scientific research being done in the area with the scientists, and to enable them to share knowledge about the veld. A workshop organised by Doreen Atkinson and hosted by the Arid Areas Programme explored the current status of, and future prospects for socio-economic research in the arid areas. The programme is a partnership between the University of the Free State and Rhodes University, and promotes socio-economic research on the Karoo, Kalahari, Namaqualand and Namibia.

On the last evening of AZEF, awards, sponsored by BIOTA southern Africa, were handed out to the three best paper and poster student presenters. In the best poster category, Martha Konje from Rhodes University won first prize for her poster on The influence of rainfall vs. grazing on primary production, composition and diversity of annual dominated vegetation in the Richtersveld National Park. Rhoda Malgas of Indigo development & change won first prize for paper presentations for Small grants for small growers: Farmer-driven mitigation against land degradation in the Cedarberg.

**By Colleen Seymour, AZEF Chairperson**  
AZEF website: [www.azef.co.za](http://www.azef.co.za)



**Drought as a Driver:  
Physical, ecological  
and socio-economic  
effects, interactions  
and responses.**

AZEF Award Winners 2007  
Back: Igshaan Samuels, Andrew Booth  
Front: Martha Konje, Ndafuda Shiponeni, Rhoda Louw

## REGIONAL NEWS

### National African Farmers Union Policy Congress

By Karen Goldberg, Drynet Researcher

At the end of November 2007, the National African Farmers Union of South Africa (NAFU SA) held its national policy congress in Pretoria. Approximately 300 NAFU delegates met to engage in the national policy congress, which informed delegates about key issues and provided a forum for the development of NAFU policy positions. Drynet SA was there to meet NAFU members and gain insight into the issues currently most relevant to black farmers. Since its inception 15 years ago NAFU has primarily played an advocacy role, and has gained recognition as the primary mouthpiece of black farmers. NAFU intends to play a more active role in organising farmers at local level to ensure sustainability and increase participation of black farmers.

On the first day speakers presented on key issues of relevance to African farmers, including access to land, land tenure and the slow pace of land reform. There was general consensus that in light of these on-going constraints, black farmers in South Africa have not

achieved what they had hoped to since 1994.

Other themes debated at the conference that are directly relevant to sustainable land use included sustainable agricultural resources (land and water), climate change and disaster management, gender equity (including women and youth), and biofuels. Current concerns related to water focused on access and distribution. The critical questions of sustainable water use in an arid country received little attention.

The presentation and subsequent commission on gender issues drew attention to the enormous struggle that women have in accessing land, given the patriarchal nature of most rural communities in South Africa.

A broad overview was provided of the current Biofuels debate in South Africa. The emphasis was on small-scale biofuels activities and their potential to meet the fuel needs of farmers themselves,

rather than focusing primarily on the commercialization aspect of Biofuels. The presenter, Knowledge Makhara, from NOPI (National Organic Produce Initiative) introduced a cooperative agricultural model known as Sustainable Integrated Village Agro-ecology (SIVA). SIVA focuses on the pooling of energies between all the participants in a defined geographical area, from seed to market,

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#### Promoting research for resource poor farmers

taking into account the environmental and social factors pertaining to a particular area. According to the model, ideally, members are producers who are based within 70 km from the core to ensure that transport costs are manageable.

On the final day of the congress an MoU was signed between NAFU SA and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) regarding research relevant to African farmers. The MoU deals with knowledge transfer to and from resource poor farmers.

For more information on SIVA, go to <http://nopilife.org/site/>  
For more information on NAFU SA, go to <http://www.nafu.co.za/index.html>



*Caption: Delegates from NAFU and the ARC sign the Memorandum of Agreement*

## REGIONAL NEWS

### Harnessing nature's adaptation mechanisms

Having evolved over millennia of harsh climatic extremes, the plants of southern Africa have developed some marvellous adaptations. Researchers at the University of Cape Town have been looking in indigenous plants that are extremely well adapted to a range of environmental stresses, namely drought, salt stress, and extremes of heat and cold, with the main aim of developing a comprehensive understanding of exactly how these plants manage to cope with these stresses.

Only about 300 species of plants, called "extremophylls", are known worldwide. Of these, an incredible 90% occur in South Africa. These plants have evolved to grow in environments, where nothing else can grow, usually in arid environments, on rocky outcrops, where soils are extremely shallow (which means that water loss is very high) and where temperatures can range from -0° C to approximately 60° C. Many of these extremophylls are related to crop species.

Research has proved that most seed-producing plants have genes in their seeds that are able to switch drought tolerance on and off, according to environmental cues. What is even more fascinating is that these very same genes and mechanisms exist in the leaf and roots of these plants. The only dif-

#### Adaptation of plants to changing dryland conditions

ference between the extremophylls and ordinary plants is that extremophylls are somehow able to switch these genes on



Examples of desiccation tolerant plants in their wet (Left hand photos) and dry (right hand photos) states

when needed.

Research is exploring how these plants are able to switch these genes on and off, as the answers could have huge implications for sustainable agriculture especially in light of global climate change. It might well prove possible to breed plants that are far more drought, heat and salt tolerant. This research offers an environmentally friendly alternative to the GMO technology: genes are not added or removed, but the correct signals (for example certain minerals or hormones) are introduced that allow the crop species to naturally switch on their stress tolerance in their leaves or roots.

Some trials on crops have already begun. ABA (abscisic acid) has been applied to maize leaves, resulting in leaf folding, and in drought tolerance mechanisms that are activated within the outer surface of the leaf. This response

protects the part of the leaf exposed to the elements, and allows the plant to continue to photosynthesise. This simple trial increased the drought tolerance of the maize plant up to 40%. Interestingly enough, this leaf folding can only occur in the ancestral strains of maize. The commercial strains of maize are unable to do this because their leaves are too large and floppy. Prof Farrant, the main driver of this research, is not too worried about this: "We're not trying to save the wealthy. We're trying to help the subsistence farmer. The ancestral varieties of maize may not produce as many cobs as commercial seed, but they are more drought tolerant, which is much more important".

For more information please see Prof JM Farrant's website: <http://www.mcb.uct.ac.za/Staff/JMF/index.htm>

## REGIONAL NEWS

### Off the shelf

#### BOOKS, FILMS AND OTHER MEDIA

- Women pastoralists Preserving traditional knowledge Facing modern challenges 2007**

Published by UNCCD in cooperation with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

ISBN 978-92-95043-20-6

The publication is available in English, French and Spanish, from the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Hermann-Elhers-Strasse 10, 53113 Bonn, Germany.

Email : [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int)

Website : <http://www.unccd.int>

This slim collection consists of sixteen stories, each describing the role of women pastoralists from countries in Africa, Asia, South America and Europe. Experiences from Africa predominate, with five stories from Kenya itself. The stories cover a range of themes and writing styles: from reminiscences of a pastoralist's childhood, to activism, to focusing on the range of responsibilities that women have, and sometimes just a simple exposition of their daily activities.

- TEN african experiences Implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Africa 2006**

Published by Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn, Germany.

ISBN 92-95043-12-X

The publication is available in French and Spanish, from the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Martin-Luther-King Str. 8, 53175 Bonn, Germany.

Email : [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int)

Website : <http://www.unccd.int>

African countries have been hit hard by desertification and drought, and their experiences are valuable for the rest of the world. A brief background section precedes six chapters dealing with different aspects of implementation of the UNCCD, with country examples. These include Participatory Processes involving Civil Society, NGOs and CBOs; Institutional and Legislative Frameworks or Arrangement; and Drought and Desertification Monitoring and Assessment. The countries featured are Ghana, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Kenya, Niger, Morocco, Swaziland, Cape Verde, Djibouti, and Tunisia.

- Climate and Land Degradation. 2007**

Editors: Mannava V.K. Sivakumar & Ndegwa Ndiang'ui

Published by Springer Berlin Heidelberg New York.

ISBN 978-35-40724-37-7

Website: <http://www.springer.com/east/home/environment/>

In many parts of the world, climatic variations are recognized as one of the major factors contributing to land degradation impacting on agricultural systems performance and management. To accurately assess sustainable land management practices, the climate resources and the risk of climate-related or induced natural disasters in a region must be known. Only when climate resources are paired with management or development practices can the land degradation potential be assessed and appropriate mitigation technologies be developed. This book is based on an International Workshop held in Arusha, Tanzania and should be of interest to all organizations and agencies interested in sustainable land management to arrest land degradation.

- Karoo Veld Ecology and Management. 2006**

Editors: Karen J. Esler, Sue J. Milton W.

Richard J. Dean eds.

Published by Briza Publications Pretoria

ISBN: 978-1-875093-52-6

Website: <http://www.briza.co.za/book-store/>

Karoo Veld Ecology and Management promotes an ecosystem health approach to veld assessment, recognising that soil, plants, insects and wild animals, work with the land user to sustain the productivity and value of Karoo veld. The book outlines veld management and assessment approaches for a wide geographical area of arid South Africa, and will assist the land user

to apply ecologically friendly veld management and to evaluate the effects of grazing and restoration on the veld. Prospective land users will be assisted to estimate the potential and suitability of land for a new enterprise before making the investment.

- Climate Risk Management in Africa: Learning from Practice. 2007**

Editors: Hellmuth, M.E., Moorhead, A., Thomson, M.C., and Williams, J.

Published by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), Columbia University, New York, USA.

ISBN 978-0-972925-23-5

Website: <http://portal.iri.columbia.edu/>

The publication can be freely downloaded in English or French from the International Research Institute Website.

The inaugural issue, called Climate Risk Management in Africa: Learning from practice, describes current efforts that are helping societies better adapt, and shows that when climate information successfully reaches vulnerable populations, it can be used to improve livelihoods and economies, and even save lives. The report was launched on January 30th during a special session of the 8th African Union Heads-of-State Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It details five examples of how climate risks are being effectively managed in Africa.

- DVD: Voices of the Drylands 2006**

Director: Ms Liesl-Dana van Schalkwyk

Duration: 27mins.

This film provides glimpses into the lives of people living in the arid regions of Molopo in the North-West Province as well as the Southern Kalahari Mier district, Suid-Bokkeveld and Paulshoek in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. It documents their challenges regarding drought and land constraints and provides viewers with a clear understanding of the Desert Margin's Programme in its objectives of addressing biodiversity loss, arresting land degradation (desertification) and addressing poverty in the arid rural areas of South Africa.

DVDs are available on request. Contact Prof Klaus Kellner: [klaus.kellner@nwu.ac.za](mailto:klaus.kellner@nwu.ac.za)

## REGIONAL NEWS

### NEWS

The South Africa Millennium Development Goals Mid-term Country Report released on 21 November is now available. The report shows that South Africa is well on its way to accomplishing the MDGs by 2015. The report is available online: [http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2007/mdg\\_midterm.pdf](http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2007/mdg_midterm.pdf)

Marthinus van Schalkwyk, South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, issued a statement on the 18 November in response to the release of

the IPCC'S Fourth Assessment Report. He underscored the urgency of significantly advancing the climate negotiations when Environment Ministers meet in Bali at the beginning of December. South Africa wants a 2009 end date for negotiations and a stronger Kyoto protocol, of which no nation may opt out. For more information, go to: <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2007/07111911151001.htm> <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

The final biofuels industrial strategy was released by the Department of Minerals and Energy on Thursday 6th December.

The use of maize will be excluded in the production of biofuels. Its exclusion comes amid concerns over food security and fears of price increases, Minister Buyelwa Sonjica explained at a briefing at the Union Buildings, Pretoria. However, the South African Biofuels Association argues the crops singled out for biofuels production (namely sugar beet and sugar cane) would require the greatest utilisation of water and were thus "surprising" starting points in a country where water was not in abundant supply. The Association were set to meet with the Minister of Agriculture on December 13 and other Cabinet Ministers in the New Year to discuss the issue.

### EVENTS

#### February 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa

LandCare Facilitation Training in the Western Cape. The course is a must for everybody who is involved in community development as it is one of few qualifications that are based on the principles of the Action Learning Cycle, Participation and Sustainable Development. Registration closing date is 14 December 2007. <http://www.capeaction.org.za/includes/getfile-process.php?tid=325>

#### 7 – 9 Feb 2008 in New Delhi, India

Delhi Sustainable Development Summit: Sustainable development and climate change. Sponsorship opportunities are available. <http://www.teriin.org/dsds/2008/index.htm>

#### 25 -29 Feb. 2008

Siyakhula Practical Community Facilitation Programme. This programme aims to provide community development workers with information and skills which will enable them to effectively facilitate and support community projects. <http://www.grassland.org.za/upcoming-events>

#### March 10 - 12 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa

International Conference on Integrated Water Resources Management: Lessons from Implementation in Developing Countries and the Second Africa Regional meeting of the National Committees of UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme.

This conference is organized by the Water Research Commission of South Africa, in partnership with the UNESCO-IHP focal point, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and the Water Institute of Southern Africa. The event is aimed at sharing the experiences and lessons of developing countries on integrated water resources management (IWRM). [http://www.wrc.org.za/downloads/events/IWRM-IHP\\_ConfCall1\\_March08.pdf](http://www.wrc.org.za/downloads/events/IWRM-IHP_ConfCall1_March08.pdf)

#### April 2 – 4 2008 at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom.

Food Security and Environmental Change: Linking science, development and policy for adaptation. An international Conference.

Global Environmental Change and Food Systems (GECAFS). <http://www.foodsecurity.elsevier.com/index.htm>

#### April 2008 at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, Zambia

"Towards meeting the challenges of climate change": Institutional structures and best practices in land and water management in Southern Africa. Current call for abstracts: Abstracts should be submitted no later than 31 December 2007.

3rd SADC-EU International scientific symposium.

<http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d00411/>

#### 5-9 May 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa

Links between environmental stress and food security in Africa

Global Environmental Change and Food Systems Southern Africa Research Initiative (GECAFS-SAF)

<http://www.igbp2008.co.za/index.php?id=1>

<http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d00378/>