



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

GLOBAL NEWS

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PUBLISHED BY



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Drynet Update

Welcome to the third issue of "News from Drynet", a newsletter from the Drynet project on local concerns and views on drylands. This issue focuses on the current food crisis and its implications for food security in dryland areas. It will also touch upon the interrelated issue of bio- or agrofuels. Drynet partners indicated that the recent hikes in world food prices tend to especially affect people who live in drylands where food security is even at best times problematic.

These concerns were raised at the Midterm Meeting of the Drynet project which took place from 30th of June to 2nd of July 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa. The meeting was held in high spirits and with a very positive and energetic atmosphere which seemed to greatly stimulate all partners to continue in the path of corporation and boost

their interest in a joint effort towards combating drought and desertification.

What transpired during the meeting was that the partners are getting a firm grip on local and national stakeholders, political and development processes, and the implementation status of UNCCD action plans and other relevant development plans in their countries. We have much more insight than at the beginning of the project into the role which civil society organisations can play in developing and supporting relevant policies for sustainable livelihoods in drylands. We also made the first steps to further improve participatory processes. The next step will be to increase capacities of local organisations to ensure the implementation of necessary changes.

By Drynet partner: Both ENDS, the Netherlands



The Drynet team in South Africa

GLOBAL NEWS

Global Food Crisis

The threat to **food security** currently looms over much of the developing world. Food prices have doubled in the last 3 years. As always, it is the poor who will bear the brunt of this crisis and drylands are characterised by disproportionately high poverty levels. About half of the 854 million people suffering from hunger worldwide live on marginal, dry or degraded land. Policy-makers appear oblivious to these facts when they tout the development potential of biofuel crops like jatropha and their capacity to grow on marginal land - often the only land left to the poor.

The recent sharp hike in food prices is rooted in the **misguided policies** of international regimes and the mutually reinforcing effect of multiple factors. The major factors being cited are speculation in grains, biofuels, drought leading to failed harvests in major cereal producing regions, the increased demand for fodder in emerging economies, and rising oil prices. An unfair trade regime - that tolerates protectionism by the wealthy while pushing liberalization on the poor - is another significant factor, one whose impact is often underestimated.

Biofuels, apart from competing for resources with food crops, amplify the volatility and rise in food prices by linking them with oil prices. **Speculation** in deregulated world markets has

greatly magnified the contributions of drought and the biofuel boom in depleting buffer food reserves.

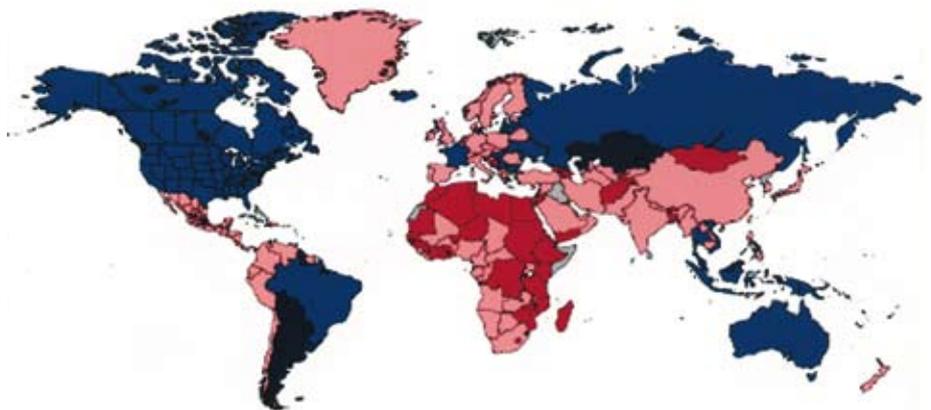
Unfair trade has also substantially undermined food security, often in combination with other factors. The dumping of surplus corn on Mexico as a consequence of US farm subsidies eroded millions of Mexican farmers' livelihoods. Later, this corn was diverted to feed the USA's own biofuel industry, thus unleashing a food crisis in Mexico. Moreover, the abandoning of corn cultivation by Mexican farmers as a result of US dumping led to a substantial loss in corn biodiversity. Such syndromes are common to many developing countries that were transformed from net food exporters to importers by the trade regime.

Cash crops have also been crucial for

food security by providing farmers income for buying food. The cotton and groundnuts sectors in the Sahel were severely affected by unfair trade, leading to the loss of millions of livelihoods, land **abandonment** and **urban migration**. Land abandonment compounded by drought has caused further soil erosion and degradation in the Sahel. The ensuing growth of urban populations is an added threat to food security.

At the grassroots level, people have no choice but to struggle against this line-up of unfavourable circumstances. Many innovative **sustainable agriculture** schemes have partially compensated for the vagaries of international regimes by strengthening local food security. They need our support, and more than ever before.

Urgent and concerted action can >>



Source: Worldbank

2007 - 2008 impact of projected food price increases on trade balances

- Large losers (trade balance worsening > 1% 2005 GDP)
- Moderate losers (trade balance worsening < 1% 2005 GDP)
- Moderate gainers (trade balance improving < 1% 2005 GDP)
- Large gainers (trade balance improving > 1% 2005 GDP)
- No data

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7284196.stm

GLOBAL NEWS

>> still turn the tide. At the national level, state support and **land and market access for small-scale farmers** as well as appropriate technology for sustainable agriculture are of paramount importance. Northern governments need to withdraw their ambitious targets for biofuel use that drive large-scale bio-fuel production in the South, threaten food security and marginalise the poor.

International organisations need to prioritise the production and **equitable distribution** of food, the regulation of

world food markets, climate change adaptation in poor countries, mitigation in rich ones, and - the adoption of - long-term food security and poverty alleviation (rather than 'free' trade) as goals of the trade regime. International Financial Institutions must reverse their liberalization strategies that have led to the marginalisation of the small farmer. Food aid is not - and has never been - the answer. The food production rights and **land rights** of the *mkulima*, the *campesino*, the *kisan*, urgently need to be secured.

By Drynet partner: Sona Prakash, Both ENDS, the Netherland

INTRODUCING THREE OF THE SUCCESS STORIES WHICH CAN BE READ ON OUR WEBSITE:

Participatory afforestation for carbon sequestration in Drylands - Birjand, Iran

The project has been designed to demonstrate that desertified rangelands can be cost-effectively reclaimed by, and for the benefit of, local people and that there is significant potential to sequester carbon in plants and soil in these areas for overall global benefit. The project uses participatory approaches to mobilize stakeholder communities and empower them to do rehabilitation work on their own. ...

Put up defences and reforestation - Thiambène Till, Senegal

The programme aims to raise awareness among key players in the field of rural and urban environmental protection in Senegal by exchanging information, education and communication in order to bring about a change in behaviour and an understanding of the need for effective management. ...

Enforcement of Law and Soil Protection and Land Improvement by TEMA

For the first time in Turkish history, a law on conservation of soil and land management is issued by the efforts of an NGO; which is the "The Law on Soil Protection and Land Improvement". Drynet partner TEMA Foundation together with its volunteers from all parts of the society actively lobbied for the approval of this law by the parliament. ...

International Agenda 2008

3-14 November 2008 - CRIC 7 and CST 9, Istanbul, Turkey. The 7th session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (to Combat Desertification) (CRIC) will convene in conjunction with the 9th session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

www.unccd.int

5-7 November 2008 - ClimAdapt in Göttingen, Germany by AGRECOL, the Association for Agri-Culture & Ecology. An Open Space Event on innovative resources in sustainable agriculture.

www.agrecol.de/climadapt

14-17 December 2008 - Conference on Drylands, Deserts and Desertification. Second conference at the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Sede Boqer Campus, Israel.

The conference will focus on: the drivers of dryland degradation; the sociological, economical and biophysical processes and feedbacks that generate, maintain or strengthen the degraded states; and the management policies and tools for conserving desirable states and for recovery from undesirable states in order to maintain a sustainable system.

<http://cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/Eng/units/bidr/desertification2008>

GLOBAL NEWS

Agrofuels: opportunity or threat?

The energy crisis, product of overuse by developed countries and high hydrocarbon prices originating in the speculation by the petrol industry, has generated a worrisome alliance between seed companies related to genetic manipulation, agro-chemical producers and the automobile industry. This alliance seeks to generate alternative energy sources and apparently contribute to reducing the environmental effects of climate change.

Agrofuels are a source of energy which is based on the mono-cultivation of products such as soy, sugar cane and corn, while biofuels are sources of renewable energy of biological origin such as firewood, charcoal, manure, biogas, bio-hydrogen and agricultural waste. This leads us to the conclusions about the interest which exists amongst the agrofuel producers to favour the term bio over the term agro. This way they want to evade the questions which are directed against this alternative proposal since it implies grave social, environmental and economical impacts which could possibly lead to social conflicts due to food scarcity, loss of nature, contamination of soils and waters, and territorial imbalances.

In Latin America ten countries produce agrofuels, they are the agro-exporters. The paradox is that five of these also



Deforestation for soy production in Brazil, Picture by Jan Gilhuis, Solidaridad

present high levels of malnutrition, a fact which reflects the imbalances in the internal food market. This shows us the conflict which exists between the production of foods and the production of agrofuels which offer higher profitability. In this scenario the lower wage sectors of society are the most vulnerable since they can not pay the rising price for foods.

The argument goes that the crops designated for agrofuel production are developed in degraded areas which no longer yield to intensive agriculture, this is to say that they recuperate degraded soils with certain crops which are especially adapted. What is not said is that these crops, if they develop, bring about the expansion of the agricultural border, eliminate the existing biodiversity, displace pastures designated for livestock cultivation and other crops designated for national consumption, degrade the soil more rapidly through the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and make way for the

displacement of the local population to other regions.

Finally it should be mentioned that the objective of the production of agrofuels is the control over the systems of food and energy production, resulting in more rural poverty, destruction of biodiversity and hunger.

By Drynet partner: Miguel Angel Crespo, Director PROBIOMA, Bolivia

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REGIONAL SECTION

A personal account of the national Drynet workshop

In June 2008, Drynet South Africa hosted a gala event to commemorate the World Day to Combat Desertification, followed by a national workshop to promote civil society participation in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the South African National Action Programme to Combat Desertification. Karen Goldberg, South African Drynet Coordinator, shares her personal experiences of the three days:

"No amount of modern communication technology can substitute for face-to-face human meetings. This realisation came to me strongly during the course of the national workshop organised by Drynet and held in Kempton Park in June this year. After months of email and telephonic communications with individuals and organisations on our distribution list, it was a great privilege to finally meet many of you for the first time. It was truly inspiring to have such a diversity of experts in sustainable land management under one roof.

If I had to put a single phrase to my experience of the three days it would be "relationship building". I experienced this on so many different levels. Firstly, the collaboration between EMG as convenor of the workshop, and the Departments of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and Agriculture was a huge step in enhancing dialogue and cooperation between civil society organisations and governmental departments. The DDG for Biodiversity Conservation, Mr Fundisile

Mketeni and the Hon. Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Ms Rejoice Mabudafhasi graced the occasion with their presence and speeches, and a significant number of government officials attended the workshop itself, helping to create a dynamic and unique forum for engagement and discussion amongst individuals working in different spheres of government and civil society. The workshop, including the informal exhibition on the first day of the workshop, also provided a space where different sectors of civil society could come together and share their experiences and build individual and organisational relations with others. The focus of the lobbying training built on this theme. According to facilitator Linden Booth, successful lobbying is a result of the relationships between the lobbyist(s) and key decision maker(s). Realising that relationship is more important than facts and arguments was an important paradigm shift for many of the participants.

I was deeply touched by the energy and tangible good will generated during the workshop, and the puppetry performance on the opening night of the event contributed greatly to this. Performed by youth from a rural community in Mpumalanga, it told the story of water and land issues as experienced by poor rural people. The performance touched on issues closest to people's hearts, and shifted our thinking from the purely intellectual to realise that our culture and identities are fundamental to the ways we understand and interact with the world. It was as if it opened



Puppetry performance by youth from Mpumalanga

people's hearts in some way...

The workshop ended with high levels of energy and commitment. To those of you who were able to attend the workshop, and on behalf of the Drynet team, I would like to express our thanks for your contributions and for the passion, enthusiasm and commitment that you brought with you. I look forward to seeing some of you at the follow-up lobbying strategy workshop in Cape Town in October, and meeting others for the first time! "

By Drynet Partner: Karen Goldberg and Noel Oettle, Environmental Monitoring Group

Mapping and assessing land degradation in South Africa



Severe soil erosion. © Lehman Lindeque

It is common knowledge that land degradation is a widespread and serious problem in South Africa. However, there is much debate about exactly what the nature of the problems are, where they occur and what the impacts of mitigation measures are. In order to answer these questions, a new National Land Degradation and Conservation Assessment is currently underway for South Africa, which will result in a comprehensive picture of the areas most in need of intervention in terms of land degradation, at a range of scales, from provincial to district and local municipality levels.

Using an assessment methodology jointly developed by the international LADA (Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands) programme and WOCAT (World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies), the process is assessing both land degradation and conservation efforts underway in all areas of the country. By obtaining comparative values for both, a priority index will be determined that takes into account different variables to express the extent and seriousness of land degradation as well as the extent, approach and effectiveness of efforts involved in preventing, mitigating or rehabilitating degradation.

The LADA project is global in its reach, and is funded by GEF and implemented by FAO. Its final aim is to improve decision making for sustainable development in drylands at local, national, sub-regional and global levels. In 2003, South Africa was accepted as one of the 6 pilot countries where land degradation assessment technologies would be developed and evaluated. The Department of Agriculture is the coordinating institution in South Africa and the ARC-Institute for Soil, Climate and Water is the implementing agency.

The assessment is being undertaken by the Lehman Lindeque from the Department of Agriculture as a component of his PhD studies, and is using three avenues for data collection: participatory workshops that draw on the expertise of a range of stakeholders from farmers to conservationists; published and grey literature; and field verification, especially where discrepancies or information gaps exist.

The first 10 of the intended 48 country-wide participatory workshops have already been held. The workshops are being organised at a district municipality level. So far, workshops have been conducted in the North West Province, the Western Cape and Limpopo. Each of

these workshops (carried out over two days) involves assessing different forms of land degradation occurring and conservation efforts underway for all the major land use types in each local municipality of the district municipality in question. The remaining workshops will take place over the next 9 months. The plan is to complete the workshops in the Western Cape and Limpopo before the end of this year and plan the workshops for the remaining provinces for the first part of 2009.

Please contact Lehman at LindequeL@arc.agric.za or 012 310 2598 if you are interested in attending any of the workshops or if you have any published or grey literature that would be useful for this assessment.

For more information on LADA, go to: www.fao.org/nr/lada/

For more information on WOCAT, go to: www.wocat.net

By Drynet Partner: Karen Goldberg and Noel Oettle, Environmental Monitoring Group, and Lehman Lindeque, National Department of Agriculture

SADC Symposium on land and water management and climate change

In May Karen Goldberg of the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG), South Africa attended a 5-day scientific symposium in Lusaka, Zambia hosted by the Southern African Development



*Demonstration of conservation farming in practice: small basins are hand-dug for next year's crop to minimize soil disturbance and retain maximum soil cover, while the trees (*Faidherbia albida*) have been planted to bring essential nitrogen back into the soil. ©Karen Goldberg*

Community Secretariat (SADC) under its SADC Land and Water Management Applied Research Programme (SADC-LWMP) in the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Directorate (FANR). Held for the third consecutive year, the theme for 2008 was: Towards meeting the challenges of Climate Change: Institutional Structures and best practices in land and water management in Southern Africa. The purpose of the symposium was to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of research results in land and water management, and it provided a platform for researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders to meet and exchange ideas. Roughly 170 delegates from 16 countries attended the symposium, with 40 presentations held over three of the five days under the following themes:

- 1: National and Regional institutional positioning in technology generation, development and dissemination
- 2: Best bet practices in land and water management and their impact in enhancing livelihoods and incomes
- 3: Social and economic impacts of land and water management on food security
- 4: The challenges of climate change in land and water management

The emphasis of the symposium was primarily on agriculture and agriculturally-related activities, and that other aspects of land and water management received scant attention. Great emphasis was placed "conservation agriculture": many presentations, a special session, and the field trip were dedicated

to this topic. Conservation agriculture is defined by three basic principles: minimum soil disturbance, permanent soil cover and crop rotation. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), the Agricultural Conservation Tillage Network (ACT), and the Zambian Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) were prominent advocates of the technology.

In contrast to many of the technical or results-based papers presentation, Karen Goldberg presented a paper co-authored by Noel Oettle of Environmental Monitoring Group entitled: Facilitating Sustainable and Efficient Implementation of Action Plans and Programmes in Countries Affected by Desertification. The presentation spoke to the difficulties encountered in implementing the "bottom up" approach emphasised in the UNCCD, especially given the range of interpretations given to the definitions of participation by civil society and cooperative partnerships, terms liberally used in the Convention. The presentation also introduced the Drynet initiative as an effective response to these challenges, which are encountered in many countries.

For more information on Conservation Agriculture, go to: <http://www.fao.org/ag/ca/>
For copies of our SADC presentation or paper, please contact Karen Goldberg (karengoldberg@telkomsa.net) or Noel Oettle (dryland@global.co.za)

By Drynet Partner: Karen Goldberg and Noel Oettle, Environmental Monitoring Group

Local Innovation prevents soil erosion



Mr Ndlovu shows visitors his innovation during a field trip that was undertaken as part of a PROLINNOVA workshop. © Prolinnova

Mr Ndlovu is a farmer in the Hazyview area, Mpumalanga, who produces tomatoes, irrigating his fields with a system of furrows. The area has very sandy soils and one of the challenges he experienced was how to prevent erosion of the furrows during irrigation. In 2002 he started making use of a soil conservation practice that is an adaptation of a practice that he remembered his grandfather using. He lines the main irrigation furrow that runs down the length of the field with grass and this prevents the water from washing away the soil. He uses soft grass that will take the shape of the furrow and lays it across the furrow, covering it with some soil to hold it in position. He has learnt that it is important to use soft grass such as *Themeda triandra* that takes the shape of the furrow: otherwise the water just runs underneath it. Mr Ndlovu also places a sack in the fur-

row where the irrigation pipe feeds into the furrow to prevent it eroding the soil. This intervention makes use of a local resource to solve a challenge that Mr Ndlovu was facing.

Such local innovations are identified and supported by PROLINNOVA, which is an international network that promotes participatory research and development techniques. PROLINNOVA stands for "promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management."

For more information please go to: <http://www.prolinnova.net/>

By Brigid Letty, PROLINNOVA
Edited by Drynet Partner: Karen Goldberg and Noel Oettle, Environmental Monitoring Group

Off the Shelf

BOOKS, FILMS & OTHER MEDIA

AFRICA ATLAS OF OUR CHANGING ENVIRONMENT 2008

Editors: Johnston, Rebecca L. and Chenje, Munyaradzi

Published by UNEP. ISBN 978 92 8072 871 2 Hardback

Website: <http://www.unep.org/dewa/africa/>

[AfricaAtlas/index.asp](http://www.unep.org/dewa/africa/AfricaAtlas/index.asp)

The Atlas, compiled on behalf of the ministers by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), underlines how development choices, population growth, climate change and, in some cases, conflicts are shaping and impacting the natural and nature-based assets of the region. This 374 page publication brings to light stories of environmental change at more than 100 locations spread across every country in Africa. There are more than 300 satellite images, 300 ground photographs and 150 maps, along with informative graphs and charts that give a vivid visual portrayal of Africa and its changing environment. Using current and historical satellite images, the Atlas provides scientific evidence of the impact that natural and human activities have had on the continent's environment over the past several decades.

The Atlas can be downloaded for free from the above UNEP website. >>

Off the Shelf

BOOKS, FILMS & OTHER MEDIA

(continued)

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: Seven-Volume Set 2008

Authors: DeGeorges, Paul Andre, and Reilly, Brian Kevin

ISBN: 978 07 7345 070 7 Hardback

Website: <http://www.africabookcentre.com/acatalog/index.html>

A historical reference tool, a technical document and as a basis for policy formulation, this is one of the first attempts in modern times to look at the entire sub-continent, both historically and currently, examining the complex inter-relationships between conservation, development, human rights and foreign policy.

THE STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE 2008

Website: http://www.fao.org/es/ESA/en/pubs_sofa.htm

The State of Food and Agriculture 2008 surveys the current status of the biofuel debate, exploring implications for food security, the environment and agricultural development in developing countries. It addresses the biophysical and economic potential of 1st and 2nd generation biofuels, global and local environmental impacts, agricultural commodity prices impacts, and implications for agricultural development, poverty and hunger. It also explores policy options to ensure positive outcomes for people and the environment. Also published in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish. Forthcoming: 7 October 2008

WORKING WITH FARM INNOVATORS 2007

Editor: Critchley, W. Published by CTA

Website: www.earthprint.com/productfocus.php?id=CTA1426

For centuries, farmers have developed technological innovations, to produce improved crops, livestock, tools and machinery and manage their resources in a sustainable manner. Yet in many countries, this kind of intuitive experimentation remains untapped, and farmers receive scant credit for their contributions. This handbook is a training tool written and presented in a practical, hands-on style, the manual aims to show how stimulating and supporting farmer innovation can enrich agricultural support systems. It can be used either to set up a project for farmer innovation, or to support an on-going participatory research and extension programme.

CLEANER ENERGY COOLER CLIMATE: DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA 2008 (Forthcoming)

Author: Winkler, Harald. Published by HSRC Press

ISBN: 978 07 9692 230 4

Website: www.hsrcpress.ac.za/product.php?productid=2237&cat=0&page=1&featured

Energy and climate change are issues of critical importance for shaping a sustainable future, both in South Africa and globally. For South Africa, finding a policy approach which balances the increasing demand for energy with the need for sustainability, equity and climate change mitigation is a particular challenge. This book provides an innovative and strategic approach to climate policy, with local development objectives as its starting point.

NEWS

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has released the Biofuels Sustainability Scorecard during the Fourth Annual Western Hemisphere Energy Security and Cooperation Forum, held on 9 September 2008, in Washington DC, US. The scorecard is a tool based on the sustainability criteria of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) and addresses 23 key environmental and social issues such as food security, greenhouse gas emissions, water management, land use change, biodiversity or poverty reduction. The IDB is inviting comments and suggestions regarding the Scorecard, during a six month public consultation period that will end in March 2009.

For access to the scorecard please go to: <http://www.iadb.org/scorecard/scorecard.cfm>.

The Africa Carbon Forum took place from 3 to 5 September 2008 in Dakar, Senegal, and brought together over 500 participants, representing governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector. Organized by the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in collaboration with the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank and the African Development Bank, the objective of the Africa Carbon Forum was to strengthen links between CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) project developers and the region's investment community, and to facilitate knowledge sharing and transactions between CDM project sponsors >>>

NEWS *continued*

>> and buyers. It also sought to provide opportunities to exchange views and share experiences on CDM. The three-day event combined a carbon investment trade fair, a conference and policy forum, as well as targeted capacity building on the CDM.

For more information, please go to:
<http://www.iisd.ca/africa/acf/>

South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has received the green light to undertake greenhouse trials on genetically modified sorghum. An appeal board earlier this month set aside a prior ruling by the regulating authority, the Executive Council of Genetically Modified Organisms, denying the CSIR a permit to undertake contained greenhouse trials on transformed sorghum. The trial forms part of the Africa Biofortified Sorghum (ABS) project, which seeks to develop a more nutritious and easily digestible sorghum. The project brings together seven African and two US organisations, namely DuPont (through its business Pioneer Hi-Bred), CSIR, the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of California Berkeley (UC Berkeley) and the Agricultural Research of South Africa (ARC). This project is funded the Grand Challenges in Global Health Initiative, with a budget of \$18,6-million over a period of five years. The Grand Challenges initiative was launched by the Gates Foundation in 2003, to help

apply innovation in science and technology to the greatest health problems of the developing world. Concerns raised by civil society organisations relate to the expected negative impact on food sovereignty and to the probable pollution of indigenous seed stocks by GM material

For more information, please go to:
http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article.php?a_id=143168

The High-Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs took place at United Nations headquarters on 22 September 2008, under the theme "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward." In the morning, heads of state and government gathered in the General Assembly for the opening session, followed by two parallel roundtables. The roundtables resumed in the afternoon, followed by the closing plenary session, where the Assembly adopted a draft resolution entitled "Political Declaration on Africa's Development Needs." Participants attended a wide variety of partnership events throughout the day to discuss related issues, including on: the food crisis and rural development; the "Gleagles Scenario" approach to scaling up development efforts; and Africa's vulnerability to climate change.

For more information, please go to:
<http://www.iisd.ca/yimb/africa-mdgs/sep22.html>

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), with the assistance of Myezo Environmental Services, is currently in the process of finalizing South Africa's Fourth Country Report for the UNCCD. Provincial workshops have been held in Kwazulu Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo. A final national workshop was held in Pretoria on the 28 of August 2008. Myezo is in the process of incorporating comments, verifying information queried at the previous workshops and seeking additional information on issues that were not adequately covered in the report e.g. gender studies and HIV/AIDS. An updated report will be submitted to DEAT on the 8th of October 2008, after which the report will be sent to stakeholders for final input.

If you would like to comment on the final draft report, please contact Asanda Sontsele at asanda@myezo.co.za or 011 339 4445.

EVENTS

7 – 10 November 2008, Alexandria, Egypt.

Ninth International Conference on Dryland Development: Sustainable Development in the Drylands - Meeting the Challenge of Global Climate Change. This Conference will provide an opportunity to examine the probable impact of global climate change on the natural resources and agricultural productivity of the dry area ecosystems and exchange information and possible ways to enhance the resilience of these systems through adaptation and mitigation strategies. It will also identify many challenges faced by the research community in responding to the problems of arresting desertification, devising ways to sustainably using oases by the communities that live there, and reducing the pace of global climate change through improved management of natural resources in the dry areas.

http://www.icarda.org/Announcement/2008/9th-IDDC/9th-IDDC_FirstAnn.htm

9 – 14 November 2008, Cape Town, South Africa.

World Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. The International Council for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ICMAP) was established with the general objective of promoting international understanding and cooperation between national and international organizations on the role of medicinal and aromatic plants in science, medicine and industry, and to improve the exchange of information between them. A world conference on medicinal and aromatic plants [WOCMAP] is held every five years.

<http://www.wocmap2008.com/home/view.php>

23 – 28 November 2008, Cape Town, South Africa.

New World; New Future. The 10th World Conference on Animal Production, 2008. This conference will examine the scientific progress in livestock production and the effects that these have on the environment, economies and the quality of life of people.

www.wcap2008.co.za/

12 – 16 January 2009, Cape Town, South Africa

5th EGU Alexander von Humboldt International Conference. Iphakade Climate Changes and African Earth Systems Past, Present and Future. The aim of this conference is to bring together international and African earth system researchers from diverse specializations in order to strengthen the discourse amongst African scientists and their international colleagues. Moreover climate change in Africa also has global repercussions that need to be better understood.

<http://www.africaclimatescience.org/access/conference/africa-climate-change-conference-january-2009-in-cape-town/>

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