



drynet

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News from Drynet

A global initiative giving future to drylands

Drynet is a project of 15 organisations from all over the world. They work together to combat land degradation

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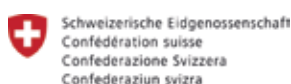
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Drynet Update

Welcome to the ninth issue of "News from Drynet," a newsletter from the Drynet network focusing on local concerns and views about drylands. This issue focuses on Drynet's recent participation in international conferences. 2011 was marked by significant contributions from Drynet in strengthening the participation of civil society in the processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in the course of the ninth meeting of the Committee to Review Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 9) held in Bonn, and subsequently the tenth Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD (COP 10) in Changwon, Korea.

As mandated by COP9, a panel was established to select the CSO representatives to be supported to participate in the two official sessions of the Convention in 2011. Patrice Burger of CARI and Emmanuel Seck of ENDA were elected to this panel as representatives of civil society. For the first time in the history of the UNCCD a transparent process with clear criteria was followed. The process had a positive influence on the way representatives of civil society prepared and presented experiences in the course of "open dialogue sessions" convened to enable civil society to contribute



Batodi's vegetable garden, Niger

Picture by: Marie José van der Werff ten Bosch

directly to the UNCCD process. All three open dialogue sessions were successfully developed and moderated under the leadership of Patrice and Emmanuel at the request of the other participants. Some members of DRYNET were also presenters for these sessions. Although it does not have a formal mandate in the UNCCD processes, Drynet has shown itself to be an active, credible and reliable partner in the implementation of the UNCCD. The network will hold its annual planning meeting during the World Water Forum in Marseilles in March 2012.

International Agenda 2012

12 - 17th March • 2012

6th World Water Forum Marseille, France:

The goal of the 6th World Water Forum is to tackle the challenges our world is facing and to bring water high on all political agendas. There will be no sustainable development while the water issues remain unsolved.

<http://www.worldwaterforum6.org/en/>

20 - 22nd June • 2012

Earth Summit 2012 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil:

The objectives of the Summit are to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development; to assess progress towards internationally agreed goals on sustainable development and to address new and emerging challenges.

<http://www.earthsummit2012.org/>

20 - 22nd August • 2012

3rd International Conference on Research for Development

(ICRD 2012) Research for Global Transformation Bern, Switzerland:

The aim of this Conference is to share and discuss most recent insights on development-oriented research conducted in North-South partnerships and to develop a research policy agenda for global transformation.

<http://www.icrd.ch/>

Improving food and livelihood security through livestock activities in the Ecofarm project

By Drynet partner: Faisal El-Hag of DCG Sudan

This article presents the Ecofarm Project livestock action research activities in the drylands of Kordofan, Sudan, that were presented at a side event 20 October 2011 during UNCCD COP 10 in Changwon City, South Korea.

The Ecofarm project went on for three years (2007-2010) and covered six villages in North and South Kordofan States (3 villages each) in western Sudan. This dryland area is characterized by unimodal (July-Oct) rains (100-450 mm), subject to a relentless series of droughts (1974/75, 1984/85, 1991, 2003), desert encroachment and moving sand dunes. Dryland farming has triggered a change in the composition of rangelands species with dominance of annual plants and forbs, which eventually has resulted in denuded lands and eroded soils. Livestock production systems practiced vary between nomads whose livelihood (more than 50% of the gross household revenue) depends on livestock with continuous migration in search of water and forage, transhumants who migrate seasonally along traditional grazing routes with minor plant cropping activities, or sedentary farmers who practice both agronomic and livestock dominated activities, through combining cropping activities with raising small ruminants and a few cows.

Major constraints faced in livestock production include unavailability of nutritious grazing feed resources on a year-round-basis, water scarcity, deficiency in major mineral elements (P, Ca and I) and diseases. As a consequence mortality is high, the production is unstable, the fertility is low and milk yields are also low.

The main objective of the Ecofarm livestock action research was to improve productivity in order to enhance the food security situation and increase farmers' income. Specifically, the project aimed to improve sheep productivity in terms of higher conception, higher lambing and twinning rates and lamb survival, improving weight gain and added value to weaned lambs to improve farmer income, as well as improving milk yields in lactating animals to improve the household nutritional status.

99 farmers (57 women and 42 men) participated in project activities with 400 animals (120 ewes, 163 goats, 62 cows and 55 lambs) included in Ecofarm livestock action research demonstration trials. The results of the trials were impressive. Strategic supplementary feeding of ewes had improved reproductive performances

► (conception rate from 65 to 80.0%), lambing rates (from 55.8 to 75.0%) and twinning rate (from 4.5 to 23.3%), reduced abortions (from 22.5 to 5.0%) and lowered mortality (from 2.5 to 15.0%), increased overall lamb weight at birth (from 2.01 to 2.41 kg) and improved ewe fertility through reducing time and number of services (1-2 services) to get conceived. Desert lambs fattening Ecofarm technology resulted in higher final body weight and higher total and daily weight gains, and reduced the cost of production. Saltlick supplementation to lactating animals increased total and daily milk yields (50.0% increase in goats and 17.8% in cows) and improved fertility through shorter time to return to cyclicity (2-4 weeks).

The implications of the Ecofarm livestock action research were many: improved productivity in terms of lambing rates, lamb and ewe survival, high goat and cow milk yields and enhanced fertility; reduced costs of production in sheep fattening; improved household nutritional status through availing more milk to children; and increased income through selling early weaned fattened lambs. A good reflection of the Ecofarm livestock technologies is their success in uptake and scaling out by other development projects in the country (IFAD Projects in Western Sudan and Butana area, ICARDA Project in Lower Atbara area Northern Sudan).

The leader of the development committee in Faris village in North Kordofan, Gamal Ishaq Abdellah, affirms that the simple techniques of the Ecofarm project, such as providing a salt lick stone for the animals, was only a small effort to make, but showed a large gain and made livestock an important source of income in his village.

Faris Village leader, Sudan

Picture by: Martine Dahle Huse



Statement by *Patrice Burger* from *CARI France* and *DRYNET* at the *UN General Assembly - New York* on *September 20, 2011*



Patrice Burger at the UN General Assembly

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of civil society, and in the context created by decision 165/60 of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2010. The two NGOs who share this honor today are CARI (France) and WEDO (United States). Distinguished co-chairs, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor but also a great responsibility to speak to you on behalf of civil society here in the United Nations, which is an often criticized institution that is nevertheless more and more necessary in a globalized world. Today's subject is so vast that it would be arrogant to claim to be able to address it in a few minutes, so I

would like to share with this assembly a few perspectives from the experience of various networks and civil society stakeholders engaged in combating desertification and who are committed to giving a future to drylands, such as DRYNET at the intercontinental level, Resad in sub-Saharan countries, RADDO about the safeguarding of oasis ecosystems, or the working group of French NGOs (GTD) and many others that I cannot mention due to lack of time.

MrCo-Chairs, I have observed that in the past 20 years many have assumed that desertification is the problem of the poor living in drylands. Nothing is further from the truth. We deal with blindness and indifference about land

degradation while the process is at work on every continent and threatens our common future. Desertification is primarily a leprosy of the earth, destroying under our feet what we and furthermore our children will be the greatest need of tomorrow. Everywhere land degradation produces insecurity and poverty that in turn causes even more degradation: this vicious circle must be declared public enemy No. 1 and broken. Temporarily more visible among the poorest, desertification is a weapon of mass destruction and the number of silent victims are like an unrecognized epidemic. The recent news about 12 million people affected by drought and famine in the Horn of Africa is only a visible peak. At the end of the day, the inhabitants of the planet will have lost around 4200 hectares of valuable land by erosion, and 16 million tons of soil because of poor farming practices and about 83 000 hectares of new areas of degraded land will be created. Under the combined effect of land degradation and population growth, per capita arable land areas in the world decreased from 2 to 0.4 hectares in 110 years from 1900 to 2010. What "terrepatric", what "home", what "heimat" will be able to claim those coming after us?

But it is in the drylands, covering nearly 40% of Earth's land surface and hosting nearly 35% of the world population, that land degradation is greatest and it directly affects the livelihoods of the poor; for them degraded land means degraded lives. Among them a large part of 800 000 farmers who suffer from chronic hunger; the poverty that affects them is not only the consequence of land whose productivity is in decline, accentuated by the effects of

▶ climate random between droughts and floods, but also their isolation, poor access to public education, health, weak governance, and, I would humbly remind you today, of their abandonment by the international community. In these conditions, exacerbated by a development model which is inaccessible to them, is it really unsurprising that these young men and women, who feel that their future has been confiscated, would develop strategies for migration towards cities and coasts where no one waits for them, opening the door to illegal activities and creating all kinds of social instabilities including escalating social and environmental costs.



Picture by: Marie José van der Werff ten Bosch

Mr co-chairs, what is described here is not a fiction or exaggeration, just an inconvenient truth. The fight against poverty cannot succeed without priority given to drylands, land governance, investment in family farming systems, financing climate change adaptation and providing better food safety and sovereignty. And this directly with poor farmers and pastoral peoples. Does the international community have the legal framework to do so? Yes the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is a visionary instrument taking into account the complexity of the relationship between humanity and nature, but which has been misinterpreted; it is the framework for the implementation of the ten year strategic plan. But greater efficiency in its implementation, requested by all stakeholders, cannot be obtained by minimum service commitments and disorganized investments on the part of affected countries, or donors. This includes emerging countries, which have new responsibilities they may not

ignore, and also requires a stronger independent scientific basis to argue the choices and assess the progress of its implementation. Finally, it requires a real and concrete articulation with the climate and biodiversity conventions, and even eventually the integration of the three currently separate processes for which funding has become competitive and probably unsustainable.

Do we have the financial means? The real cost of desertification is the cost of inaction. It has been estimated that globally is approximately 100 billion euros per year. For some countries it is 5 to 8% of their annual GDP, which cancels the annual growth rate, and ruins any prospect of development. However, with 300 euros / year / ha for three or four years degraded land can be rehabilitated and the productive potential restored. This can be achieved by improving agricultural production systems and livestock and integrating agriculture, livestock and forestry.

The farmers concerned do not have the necessary money, the affected countries do not spend their money for agricultural investment, official public development aid spends only 5% of its budgets on agriculture and only in areas expected to be the most productive; money from the migrants is not going to agriculture but to other basic needs, private banks do not lend money to small family farmers and micro-credit does not mobilize sufficient resources. All these trends are to be reversed by public policies in order to reallocate funds and also make the best use of funds for adaptation and climate change.

Do we have the technical capabilities? Experience shows that experts have often given early warning on famines and disasters, but governments have rarely been able to cope with crisis management while prevention would have been less expensive. The solution lies in accepting a reality that we have

► refused to face for decades: everywhere the most effective and sustainable solutions are those from rural family systems still present, and whose resilience is exceptional. Farmers and breeders have selected the proposed innovations for years and are experts in the development of their territories where they know how to produce in places where most of us could not survive. As demonstrated by the report of O. de Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, agro-ecological production systems show production capacity up to ten times higher than conventional systems in the same contexts, while also rehabilitating land. These agriculture systems must be supported in a pro-farmer manner because they have demonstrated adaptation to changes of all kinds, including to climate change. Research such as the DESIRE international consortium which combines participatory and scientific approaches in different local contexts, can help by providing a methodology in order to assess the potential effects of different

techniques to be used in the different cases.

Distinguished co-chairs, ladies and gentlemen, these changes must be supported with the necessary political courage for land tenure security, the redirection of the funding to non-sustainable production systems and guarantees of the prices of production. Support for developing the entrepreneurial capacity of women and providing opportunities for youth are not negotiable, especially in the field of creation of added value products that generate income. In this regard, the policy framework developed on gender within the UNCCD and staff dedicated to support its implementation in the NAPs of the affected countries could be adopted at COP10.

Finally, civil society is the necessary ingredient to be considered, as the recent history of many countries undergoing profound transformation shows us these days. Whatever its formal structures are, civil society is active and involved in numerous north-south partnerships. It has an

incomparable knowledge from the field, a proximity to population and a gained confidence in the villages, with communities. If public policies are essential to ensure the general public interest and if the UN agencies can help them, the organizations of civil society do have effectiveness and cost benefit comparative advantages both in decision making and implementation.

Mr the Co-Chairs, Distinguished Heads of Government and Ministers, if a rating agency existed that could assess how the international community manages the fight against poverty and desertification, a double BB instead of a triple AAA would undoubtedly characterize its bad long-term investments.

This challenge must be addressed today, and more than this, also during the next Conference of Parties in Korea. The civil society is waiting for you.

Thank you for your attention.

Patrice Burger - Director of CARI



DESIRE: lessons learned in the collaboration between scientists and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in research projects

By Drynet partner: Marie José van der Werff ten Bosch of Both ENDS, The Netherlands

Two Drynet NGO partners have been working in an EU-financed scientific project on land degradation called “DESIRE” (www.desire-project.eu). A lot of valuable lessons can be learned from this rich collaboration. Although NGOs and scientists not only have different working methods, but often also different reasons for being involved in research projects in the first place, these differences can enrich learning by introducing different perspectives and challenging old ideas. Being aware of differences right from the start and making agreements on specific roles and responsibilities helps prevent wrong expectations during the implementation of a shared project. Scientists are held accountable for their publications in scientific journals. On the other hand, NGOs are focused on social change and are far more politicized by nature. Scientists may have difficulties in identifying which research results are pertinent for decision-makers. NGOs tend to use research outputs to target policy makers at crucial moments and do not always want to wait for consensus among the scientific community. The NGOs might even present facts that have not yet been verified, just for the benefit of starting up a discussion, which scientists will generally avoid doing at all cost.

ADVANTAGES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCIENTISTS AND NGOS

Despite their differences in approach and methodology, there are nevertheless numerous reasons to join hands in collaborative projects. Participation in joint research projects not only helps scientists better define their research questions, but also:

- Working with scientists allows NGOs to have better access to scientific information and provide them with the opportunity to engage with a larger number of stakeholders.

- Researchers are consulted by policy makers for fact-based, objective advice. NGOs can provide insights on the social context which may prove useful to complement the facts.
- For research purposes, scientists generally prefer to avoid having to deal with politics and having to keep themselves constantly informed about policy developments. By working with NGOs scientists can feed their scientific results into on-going dialogues with decision makers.
- In order for NGOs to be taken seriously by policy makers and the international community, NGOs need to formalize their concerns and views. One way of doing this is by getting issues addressed in scientific publications.
- NGOs can learn from the sound evidence scientists use to build arguments and statements. NGOs are frequently unaware of the latest scientific publications which could otherwise be of great value to them. ▶

DESIRE Project Participants



- ▶ Although scientists often want to retain their independent position by remaining politically neutral, their research results can be used for a variety of purposes once published. Making choices about how and to whom to present results may positively influence societal debates without threatening the neutrality of the scientist.

SETTING UP THE JOINT PROJECT

From our experience in the DESIRE project, here are some guidelines we found useful for developing a successful collaborative project:

- Develop the project goal jointly from the beginning and ensure that deliverables reflect both scientific and non-scientific components. Pay special attention to research questions, expected results and trends in the light of the joint project goal or the policy issue you want to address and make sure they are well connected.
- Depending on the purpose of the project, ensure a sound balance between project partners coming from a science background and from NGOs, and among the different disciplines.
- Ensure that there is budget for both research/science-like activities and NGO activities such as visiting conferences and non-scientific communication.
- Ensure that roles and deliverables are clearly outlined for the project, and that these are regularly reflected on by all team members.
- Outreach to a non-scientific audience can be done solely by the NGOs, or by all project partners (possibly guided by the NGOs). In case of the latter, make sure all project partners are well aware of this and are comfortable and interested to do so, because it might take extra effort to write for an audience you are not used to. It helps to involve at least some scientists who have experience in reaching out to non-scientific audience.
- The timing of presenting the project findings to an audience of policy makers is essential. You may choose to have a policy question or issue as a starting point for the project, making it easier to feed your results in the policy discussions once available. In order to interest policy makers in research outcomes, timing becomes important as for instance matching your results to be released at the time of relevant policy moments.
- Be creative in designing the activities in the project; make use of each others practices and ways of working. For example, the educational systems in science may also be used for outreach to non-scientists as well.



DESIRE project field work

For more details on the articles published you can check our website www.dry-net.org or contact us at drynet@bothends.org.