



**drynet**

www.dry-net.org

**No. 2**

April 2008

# 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

Welcome to the second issue of "News from Drynet", a newsletter from the Drynet project on local concerns and views on drylands. This issue focuses on the upcoming 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) as several dryland-related themes like land, drought and desertification will be under review. Drynet partners have identified CSD-16 as an important forum in which to jointly contribute our common knowledge and experience, like we did for the 8th Conference of Parties (COP8) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in October 2007. We will also make ourselves heard in other international and national discussions!

A year has passed since Drynet was launched. The experience of setting up this project with 14 partners worldwide has taught us that consolidating a group of key working partners on the national level is not done in one day, and communication and information management is a crucial element. We are proud to see [www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org) developing into a public platform for organisations active in dryland man-

agement. We invite you to visit the website and encourage you to read through the success stories and the national newsletters in a variety of languages!

Partners will continue national dialogues to include issues of civil society interest in national policy agendas. Let's see if the outcomes trigger common messages...

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

## CSD 16

The 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) will be held at New York, USA, between May 5-16 2008. The commission was established to make sustainable development a reality, and ensure that the lives of people living in poverty is improved and the continuing degradation of the global environment is reversed. The CSD is a high-level forum on sustainable development, which >>

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>> ensures the follow-up of Agenda 21, the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the national, regional and international levels. Agenda 21 recognizes that broad public participation in decision-making is fundamental for the achievement of sustainable development, and identifies specific roles and responsibilities for several major groups of civil society. The CSD concentrates on cross-cutting and emerging sustainable development issues. CSD16 will focus on desertification and drought along with the interrelated issues of Land, Agriculture, Rural development and Africa.

An outline of the Science and Technology Community's overview and the NGO community's report related to the themes of the CSD16 is provided in the article below.

## Sustainable development challenges

For the CSD16 the International Council for Science (ICSU) submitted a discussion paper ([www.icsu.org](http://www.icsu.org)).

The ICSU emphasizes the achievements of the Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s like increased food and fibre production, in spite of its partial failure (e.g. salinization through irrigation). Need for further growth in agricultural production, however, is stressed. Other challenges for sustainable development are:

### • CLIMATIC CHANGE

Climatic change will exacerbate the vulnerability of certain ecosystems and their users and mostly lessen food security. Better understanding is needed about effects on agroecosystems, adaptation and mitigation strategies.

### • INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Small-scale farmers are difficult to reach with scientific advances and new technology. A broader inter- and transdisciplinary strategy in local and international research using participatory methodologies is supposed to overcome the gap. The role of traditional knowledge is recognised. Better extension services should help to disseminate knowledge.

### • BIOFUELS

ICSU identifies significant potential for biofuels to increase energy security, reduction of GHG (greenhouse gases) and stimulation of rural development. Gains for GHG reduction, with less side effects on food production, are expected especially by the second generation biofuels (using wood and waste). In drylands the use of marginal lands seems very promising.

### • GENETIC MODIFICATION (GM)

ICSU expects large gains by GM, how-

ever, their use has to be discussed on a case by case basis taking socio-economic and environmental effects into account.

### • DRYLANDS, DROUGHTS AND DESERTIFICATION

The important role of adapted management such as mobile pastoralism in semi-arid/arid ecosystems is underlined.

### Conclusions

The Scientific Community raises a number of issues in line with NGOs/CBOs like involvement of farmers/stakeholders, strengthening S/T capacity in developing regions, better extension services to (small-scale) farmers, promoting sustainable agriculture.

However, some diverging views are obvious:

- Increased food production does not automatically make more food available to the poorest - the Green Revolution encloses too little.
- Without land ownership or secure owner rights, sustainable land management is out of reach.
- "Participation of local people and stakeholders" means to involve them in the development process from the very beginning.
- The Green Revolution can be considered in a far more ambiguous light due to dependencies on seed companies, far reaching environmental pollution, i.e. broad use of pesticides and fertilizers with negative effects on agroecosystems, water quality and biodiversity, etc.

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

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### International Agenda 2008

**16-20 June 2008** - Modena Bio 2008: 16th IFOAM Organic World Congress, Modena, Italy "Cultivate the future" congress will focus on Regional Values and Indigenous Knowledge, Innovation and Cooperation between different parties.

[www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam\\_conferences/owc/Organic\\_World\\_Congress.html](http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html)

**25-28 June 2008** - Groundwater and climate in Africa. An International Conference, Kampala, Uganda. The conference seeks to improve current understanding of the impact of climate and development on groundwater resources in Africa, bringing together water and climate scientists, donors and consortia to share knowledge and expertise.

[www.gwclim.org](http://www.gwclim.org)

**20-29 October 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](http://www.unccd.int)

### Drought, a sustainable development topic

Drought occurs when a region receives consistently much lower precipitation than average. Although droughts can persist for several years, even a short, intense drought can cause significant damage and harm to the ecosystem and local economy, particularly in pastoral areas.

Drought, combined with low economic development, is a common scenario in drylands. It is a major cause of food insecurity but the political climate, national and regional agricultural and rural development policies and practices, the state of watershed management, as well as health and nutrition issues etc., influence whether drought triggers a crisis.

In developing countries a large percentage of dryland populations depend directly on the often-degraded natural resource base and typically lack alternatives and/or have limited social safety nets to ensure food security. Strategies to reduce impacts of drought include Drought monitoring and information, Sustainable Land use Management, Conservation agriculture, and Rainwater harvesting. The Drynet approach: highlighting sustainable, innovative and indigenous technologies in dryland communities.

*By Drynet partner: Tanveer Arif of SCOPE, Pakistan*

### Coping with drought

#### **A SUCCESS STORY ON THE CENTURIES-OLD INDIGENOUS TECHNOLOGY THAT ENABLES LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHERN IRAN TO COPE WITH DROUGHT**

Situated in the south of Iran, the province of Bushire has an arid and hot climate in which the temperature can reach over 50 degrees. The local communities have developed ingenious ways of coping with the conditions. A unique example of this is the under-ground gardens of Iran, where traditional agricultural know-how is combined with clever water harvesting techniques to produce stunning quantities of grapes.

A stone wall about 50 metres in diameter encloses every field. The ground outside is fashioned with features that capture and lead the very rare flash floods to an underground cistern half filled with topsoil. Rich harvests of tree crops are achieved in this manner.

In the case of grape vines, underground cultivation chambers about two to three metres across are dug to six metres in depth until they reach a "greasy" soil which is called "shol" in the local language. Expert well diggers who use simple digging bars are employed for constructing the underground chambers. As soon as they reach the shol, they fill the chamber half way with top soil. In January, at the beginning of winter, farmers would select suitable branches of vine, and plant them in good soil to sprout. In March, >>

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>> they would transfer the sprouting branches of vine in the underground gardens. In the dry months of the first summer, they may irrigate the young vines five or six times. In the following years, the vines need no more irrigation.

Vine branches creeping out of the underground chambers, are led atop a stone stand about a metre high called "khan", which is filled with local stones. The workers pass under the branches to harvest the bunches of grapes.

**Challenges:** constructions due to urban expansion have been ruining a great part of the land and the underground gardens.

**Strategies:** Collaboration between CENESTA experts and the government has resulted in a recent decision to declare the remaining underground gardens "cultural heritage". This will ensure the conservation of this unique technology for combating desertification.

**Stakeholders:** rural people and farmers.

**Success:** great local agro-biological diversity; sustainable livelihood, food security and organic agriculture can be maintained by this technology.

**Sustainability:** grapes and other cash fruit trees planted in these underground gardens provide income for the household. If maintained, the vines will pull through as water and humidity are assured all year round.

*By Drynet Partner: CENESTA, Iran*

For more details on the articles published you can check our website [www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org) or contact us at [drynet@bothends.org](mailto:drynet@bothends.org).

*A view of an underground grape garden in Iran showing the roots of the vines. The branches of the vines are led atop a stone stand about a metre high called a "khan" which is filled with local stones. Workers pass under the branches while harvesting the grapes.*





## REGIONAL NEWS

### The Commission on Sustainable Development: What does it promise for civil society?

*Interview by Karen Goldberg, EMG*

The 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (5-16 May 2008) will focus on issues relating to agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa. With CSD-16 just around the corner, Karen Goldberg spoke to Bryan Ashe, Coordinator of the South African Water Caucus and a CSD veteran to find out about current civil society sentiment towards the process and recent levels of civil society involvement.

#### **What is the current level of civil society involvement in the CSD process?**

Over the last few years, civil society involvement in the process has not been strong, and seems to be getting less every year. During the latest Country Review process only 2 NGOs, one parastatal and the main agricultural union represented civil society at the first meeting hosted by DEAT. Even fewer attended the second meeting.

#### **Why is the level of engagement so poor?**

Many people do not see any really benefit for getting involved in the CSD process. Consequently there isn't a strong enough grouping to generate clear civil society positions on the various themes and cross-cutting issues on this year's agenda. Our experience is that CSO positions are not taken seriously by our government counterparts. In the latest review process, I was advocating for water rights

(Free Basic Water) and water services delivery. At the time there was acknowledgement from officials of the challenges in these areas. However, in the final review report, such issues had been "sanitized" from the report: government does not seem to want to highlight any problem areas in the country.

At an international level consensus is not generally reached on key issues and thus no progress is made. Also, when you raise your issues there, they are again sidelined. Some people representing CSOs who have accompanied the official South African delegation to the meetings felt they were not there as independent agents, were obliged to sign confidentiality agreements and felt that they had been gagged to some degree.

The other main reason for poor engagement is one of resources. As 2008 is a review year, the government delegation was not considering taking CSOs to CSD-16, and thus no government funding has been made available. For most CSOs, attending international meetings is not a funding priority. If no external funding is available, these organisations will be able to not attend.

#### **What are some of the other obstacles to CSO participation?**

Red tape and other bureaucratic hurdles also discourage or limit CSO participation. These include the UN accreditation process. The person attending has to be with an organisation that has accredited by the CSD, which is a tedious process.



*Bryan Ashe is coordinator of the South African Water Caucus. If you would like to contact him for further information or advice on how to engage with CSD-17, please do so at [earthbryan@gmail.com](mailto:earthbryan@gmail.com).*

Obtaining visa's to the US is also difficult, and since funding usually becomes available at very short notice, there is just not enough time to schedule the necessary appointments.

#### **Bearing in mind what you have said, do you think it is still worthwhile for CSOs to engage in the CSD process?**

Yes, I do still think it's worthwhile participating. Firstly, it's very useful to understand how the international sustainable development mechanisms work and how the various players (including the South African government) engage in the process. These meetings are also fantastic networking opportunities to connect with likeminded people and organisations throughout the world.

And finally, there is always a chance that your voice will be heard and that some changes are made at an international level because of your participation.

#### **What advice do you have for organisations or individuals interested in getting involved?**

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### **The Commission on Sustainable Development: What does it promise for civil society? continued...**

CSO members can attend the CSD as an NGO representative, as an "indigenous person", or as a farmer. You must register to attend by either being a member of an accredited organisation or ensure that you are registered through an ECOSOC accredited organisation. As next year (CSD-17) is a policy year and it would be useful to go to CSD-17. DEAT will have funding for CSO attendance in New York. If you are planning to attend, make sure that your flights and accommodation have in fact been paid for, and be very specific about the conditions under which you go as part of the official delegation. Make clear that you will be attending the meeting as CSO representative and not the

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### **DEAT will sponsor CSO attendance at CSD 2009**

government.

In terms of actual involvement with the process, I would suggest that it is very important to engage with the discussion document that comes out of CSD 16 and the SA process in the lead-up to CSD17. It would also be important to develop a consistent position, and to link with international organisations working on the same theme. ■

## Let's get involved with the UNCCD and the National Action Plan!

"Desertification" has not yet captured the attention of a global audience in the way that biodiversity conservation and climate change have over the last few years. Ask the average person on the street what they understand by the term and they might mumble something about advancing deserts, or simply shrug their shoulders in ignorance. To many South Africans, desertification seems to be at least as far removed from their daily reality as the melting ice caps and not something of great relevance. But is this really the case?

More than 95% of South Africa is classified as "dryland", and it doesn't take much to see that vast tracts of our rural landscape is already badly degraded or under severe threat of degradation. Degradation can manifest in many ways such as loss of plant cover, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, invasions of alien plants or salination of the soil. All of these forms of degradation can lead to the permanent loss of productivity of the soil, which is what desertification really means.

The UNCCD created a role for civil society as partners to government in combating desertification that is quite unique. Effective participation of local communities and of NGOs are seen as fundamental to the implementation of sustainable land use, which is inextricably linked to sustaining the livelihoods of rural communities.

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), South Africa has (at least in

theory!) committed itself to put an end to desertification in its many guises in partnership with civil society, and can count on international support to do so. Despite this commitment and a number of supportive international and intergovernmental mechanisms, the principles of the UNCCD have not been adequately incorporated into national policies and related frameworks and too few effective interventions are happening on the ground. At the same time, local successes that could inspire other dryland inhabitants remain local, instead of being widely spread and inspiring others.

Up until now, there has been no strong, collective civil society momentum to combat desertification within South Africa and to contribute to the implementation of the UNCCD and the associated National Action Programme (NAP). However, the National Drynet Civil Society Workshop to be hosted from 17 - 19 June 2008 in Kempton Park, Gauteng, will provide delegates with the opportunity to remedy this situation.

The purpose of the workshop is as follows:

1. To share knowledge and experiences relating to civil society participation in the process of enhancing sustainable use of dryland resources, specifically in elaborating and implementing the UNCCD and the South African NAP;

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### Let's get involved with the UNCCD and the National Action Plan! continued...

2. To review current and develop new strategies for taking action in relation to the UNCCD (which includes lobbying and developing projects); and
3. To enable participants to gain new skills and capacities relating to effective collaboration with and lobbying of government decision makers and agencies.

The workshop will open with an evening event on the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) on the 17th June (organised with the national departments of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Tourism) which will be followed by two full days of interactive workshopping on the 18th and 19th of June 2008.

The programme for the 18th and 19th June will include presentations of case studies, discussions and analysis, a lobbying training workshop, and a "Market Place", where all participating organizations have an opportunity to exhibit or sell their wares.

We hope to see many of you at this workshop. If you are interested in attending and have not received a personal invitation, please contact Karen Goldberg (karen.goldberg@gmail.com), and she will forward you the relevant information. Applications must be made no later than 7th May 2008. ■

## Call for participation in compiling the fourth UNCCD Country Report

### Call for participation in compiling the fourth UNCCD Country Report

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the official Focal Point of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is coordinating the fourth Country Report on measures undertaken to combat desertification and subsequently the progress made to date in the implementation of the UNCCD in the country.

The process entails extensive participatory approach to reflect the views and roles played and activities undertaken by various stakeholders in non-governmental organization (NGO's) as well as community based organizations. Three all-day workshops are planned in the provinces, followed by a national synthesis workshop:

- **16 May June 2008, University of Kwazulu Natal, PMB campus**
- **28 May 2008, University of Limpopo.**
- **10 June 2008, Fort Hare University.**
- **11 July 2008, National Workshop, Gauteng.**

If you are interested in participating, please contact **Mr Tlou Ramaru (012 310 3331) or Fhatuwani Tshivhase (012 310 3390).**

Please note the last three workshop dates are tentative at this stage.

For more details on the articles published you can check our websites [www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org) and [www.emg.org.za](http://www.emg.org.za) or contact us at [dryland@global.co.za](mailto:dryland@global.co.za) or [karen.goldberg@gmail.com](mailto:karen.goldberg@gmail.com).



*Brunsvigia bosmaniae or March Lilies in full bloom at Nieuwoudtville, April 2008.*

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### Spreading the word: a reflection on an information sharing workshop on climate change adaptation

**By Karen Goldberg, Drynet Researcher**

All too often information does not reach the people who need it most. It was therefore wonderful to hear about a series of climate change adaptation workshops facilitated by the Green Connection specifically targeting local communities.

Focusing on the Succulent Karoo, the first of six stakeholder workshops was held in Robertson. 17 people attended, including 10 members of the local community, local government and environmental NGOs. I was able to attend the workshop on behalf of Drynet.

The workshop design and identification of the participants was derived from a field survey conducted at the end of last year. The aim of each workshop was to target 20 participants from each priority area in the Succulent Karoo in order that they could gain an understanding of climate change and its relevance to their lives. Such participants would then, it was hoped, take the message further to their constituency.

The workshop used a range of different media and tools, including PowerPoint presentations, role-plays, video clips, and break-away sessions to communicate with the diverse audience. Translators were available for those who did



*Participants and facilitators at the Climate Change Adaptation Workshop held in Robertson on 26 February 2008*

not speak English. The workshop was highly informative and interactive, and drew out people's personal experiences and opinions of climate change and its current and predicted impacts.

Most participants had come to obtain a basic understanding of climate change, its possible local impacts and to find out what they could do about it. Based on the feedback at the end of the day, everyone seemed satisfied with the workshop and felt that their expectations have been met. Participants also expressed appreciation for the variety of educational media used.

I was surprised to hear that the expected attendance at each venue was only 20 people, especially given the importance of the climate change message. However, I was later informed by Christy Bragg of the Green Connection that the main aim of the workshops was to investigate and evaluate the most effective means of communication to get the message out to the widest audience.

Liz McDaid told me that it had been a challenge to persuade people to attend the workshops, underscoring the challenges faced in disseminating information in rural settings.

Despite the clear evidence and indications of climate change, most participants at the workshop I attended did not seem to feel compelled to do anything about climate change. Some participants told me that they were not convinced by the information that was provided. Others felt that if there was going to be an impact that it would be much less than predicted.

One of the participants acknowledged



*"Map of succulent karoo" with caption: Extent of the Succulent Karoo © SKEP*

that "We see what is happening as a result of climate change, but the thought of what could happen is so scary, it's difficult to absorb." This attitude reflects a general passivity towards climate change in South Africa. Perhaps the implications are simply too frightening to contemplate. The conveners, however, had different experiences at their other workshops. Evaluation forms reflected that people are concerned about climate change and want to know the best course of action to take. This indicates the need for an on-going process of information provision and discussion, leading to action.

The workshops were designed as a first step in a longer process of information dissemination and awareness raising, and a dvd and handbook were provided to all workshop participants to enable them to take the message out further into their communities. A telephonic follow up survey will be carried out to assess how participants have been able to use the materials provided in order to communicate with others.

Drynet hopes that this intervention will catalyze action and contribute to real engagement. We look forward to hearing how effective this communication strategy has been, how it has helped the people of the Succulent Karoo to learn to live more sustainably. Funding for this initiative was provided by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

For more information on The Green Connection:

[www.thegreenconnection.org.za](http://www.thegreenconnection.org.za)

For more information on this workshop:

[www.climatetalk.org.za](http://www.climatetalk.org.za)



## REGIONAL NEWS

### Off the shelf

#### BOOKS, FILMS AND OTHER MEDIA

##### **Where the land is greener: case studies and analysis of soil and water conservation initiatives worldwide.**

2007

Editors: Liniger, H. and Critchley, W.

Published by WOCAT, Switzerland.

ISBN 978 92 9081 339 2

Website: <http://www.wocat.net/overviewbookPDF.asp>

The book can be freely downloaded in English from the WOCAT website.

WOCAT describes this book as follows: "This publication looks at soil and water conservation from a global perspective. In total, 42 soil and water conservation technologies and 28 approaches are described. In addition to the case studies, the book includes two analytical sections on the technologies and approaches under study. By identifying common elements of success, these analyses offer hope for productive conservation efforts at the local level with simultaneous global environmental benefits. Policy pointers for decision makers and donors offer a new impetus for further investment – to make the land greener."

##### **A Guide For Desert And Dryland Restoration: New Hope For Arid Lands**

2007

Author: Bainbridge, David A.

Published by Island Press, Washington, D.C., USA

ISBN: 9781559639699

Website: <http://www.islandpress.org>

The CSIRO website describes the book as follows:

"This book discusses the ecology of

desert plants, explores the causes of desertification and land abuse, and outlines the processes and procedures needed to evaluate, plan, implement, and monitor desert restoration projects. Each chapter represents a guide to a critical topic for environmental restoration; extensive photographs, diagrams, and drawings give detailed information for immediate application, and additional resources are included in appendixes. This is the first comprehensive book focused on restoring arid regions, and clearly demonstrates that arid lands can be successfully rehabilitated."

##### **The Land Question in South Africa: The Challenge of Transformation and Redistribution.**

2007

Editors: Ntsebeza, Lungisile & Hall, Ruth  
Published by the Human Resources Research Council.

ISBN: 9780796921635

Website: <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/product.php?productid=2181>

The book can be freely downloaded in English from the HSRC Press website.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the core issue at the heart of the land question in South Africa is how large-scale redistribution can provide redress for dispossession, while contributing to the transformation of the economy and the reduction of both rural and urban poverty. This publication brings together contributions from key stakeholders in the land sector who analyse and debate this burning issue. The book has two sections. The first section establishes a theoretical, historical and comparative context for the debate. In the second section six chapters explore how the land question should be framed, existing land policy and its results, and pro-

posed alternatives and future directions for policy and practice. The Land Question in South Africa is the first book to review the process and present a range of views on alternatives, informed by the hindsight of ten years' experience.

##### **Going For Broke: The fate of farm workers in arid South Africa**

2007

Author: Atkinson, Doreen

ISBN: 9780796921765

Website: <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/product.php?productid=2191>

The book can be freely downloaded in English from the HSRC Press website.

This book reflects a timely analysis of a forgotten part of South African society: those who currently live on remote arid farms, and those who did but who have become unemployed in recent years and have drifted to the towns and cities. It takes the question of farm workers' fortunes beyond the heated land ownership debate, to consider their current and future livelihood, and argues that the question is part of a broader spectrum of economic and social questions. Where should farm workers live? Should rural-urban migration be encouraged? What kind of job prospects can be fostered? How can their participation in the rural and peri-urban economy be promoted? Do farm workers need land, or jobs, or municipal services?

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The UNCCD Secretariat hosted a meeting, on 12-14 March 2008, jointly organized by two CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) Centers, ICARDA (International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas) and ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics), to finalize a global proposal for a science programme to combat agriculturally caused dryland degradation and desertification. This "Oasis Challenge Program" will be submitted to the CGIAR Science Council and Executive Council for consideration, and will focus on integrating bio-physical with socio-economic science through alliances with stakeholders to build their capacities while ensuring that the outputs meet their needs and can be scaled-up for global impact (<http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/oasis/menu.php>).

The draft Expropriation Bill was tabled in Parliament on 16 April. This Bill would replace the outdated Expropriation Act of 1975. This bill will allow expropriation to take place if it is in the "Public Interest". The previous Act did allow for expropriation, but only where this was deemed necessary for public works. The Bill provides for "just and equitable" compensation, which has to strike a balance between the public interest and the interests of the land owners. Some deem the Bill to be unconstitutional not only because it could be enforced without prior discussion, but also because the amount of compensation would depend largely on what the state was prepared to offer and need not be market related. The Bill can be accessed at: [http://lnw.creamermedia.co.za/articles/attachments/12893\\_b16\\_2008.pdf](http://lnw.creamermedia.co.za/articles/attachments/12893_b16_2008.pdf)

South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Marthinus Van Schalkwyk, has voiced his disappointment in response to an announcement made by US President George Bush on 16 April on Climate change. According to Minister van Schalkwyk, the statement by President Bush does not live up to what the

United States committed itself to in Bali just a few months ago. According to the Minister: "It seems as if the current US Administration wants to turn back the clock to where we were before the breakthrough achieved in Bali in December 2007 when all countries, including the United States, agreed to a Bali Roadmap that outlines the negotiation process and building blocks for a strengthened climate agreement." The US is proposing that the fundamental distinction between developed and developing countries should be erased, thus turning a blind eye to historical responsibility for the problem. "In effect, the US wants developing countries that already face huge poverty and development challenges to pay for what the US and other highly industrialized countries have caused over the past 150 years."

For information on the US Climate Change announcement, go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080416-6.html>  
For more information on Minister van Schalkwyk's response, go to: [http://www.environment.gov.za/NewsMedia/MedStat/2008Apr17\\_1/17042008.doc](http://www.environment.gov.za/NewsMedia/MedStat/2008Apr17_1/17042008.doc)

## EVENTS

### 5 - 8 May 2008 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

42nd Annual Conference of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension: Extension Impact: Successes, Challenges and Lessons Learnt. The conference will provide an opportunity to share research findings and different views, practical problems and experiences.

[http://search.sabinet.co.za/agri/agri\\_sasae.html](http://search.sabinet.co.za/agri/agri_sasae.html)

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

The Fourth IGBP (International Geosphere Biosphere Programme) Congress. This Congress is designed to aid the development of the scientific agenda for the period 2008-2013. IGBP has chosen Cape Town, South Africa to improve the programme's research and networking on development issues, such as risk and vulnerability, important to Africa and other developing countries. The Congress is designed to broaden outreach efforts toward agencies, corporations and civil society.

<http://www.igbp2008.co.za>

### 12 - 16 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany Planet Diversity 2008 - Local, Diverse and GMO-Free: World Congress on the Future of Food and Agriculture.

This Congress coincides with the negotiations of the UN-Convention on Biodiversity, and will discuss how farmers, consumers, food producers and their communities can cooperate to enrich and defend their natural and cultural diversity.

<http://www.planet-diversity.org>

### 16 - 20 June 2008 in Modena, Italy Modena Bio 2008: Sixteenth IFOAM Organic World Congress: Cultivate the Future.

The congress will be structure around the Principles of Organic Agriculture, and will address a wide range of issues, including animal production, vegetable crops, cereals and organic seeds, training, rural development, GMOs, viticulture, textiles, development policies, markets, bio-energy, cosmetics and body care.

<http://www.ifoam.org>

### 17 - 19 June 2008 in Kempton Park, Gauteng, South Africa.

Sustaining the land, sustaining our communities. A national workshop to promote civil society participation in the UNCCD and National Action Programme to Combat Desertification.

Contact: Karen Goldberg: [karen.goldberg@gmail.com](mailto:karen.goldberg@gmail.com)

### 21 - 25 July 2008 at Badplaas Avenue, Mpumalanga, South Africa

The 43rd Annual GSSA Congress. The main theme of the Congress is Implementing New Approaches to Range and Pasture Management

<http://www.grassland.org.za/annual-congress/2008/gssa-congress-2008/>

### 18 - 22 September 2008 in Valenzano, Bari, Italy

5th International Conference on Land Degradation: Moving ahead from assessments to actions: could we win the struggle with land degradation?

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