



**drynet**

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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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## 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.

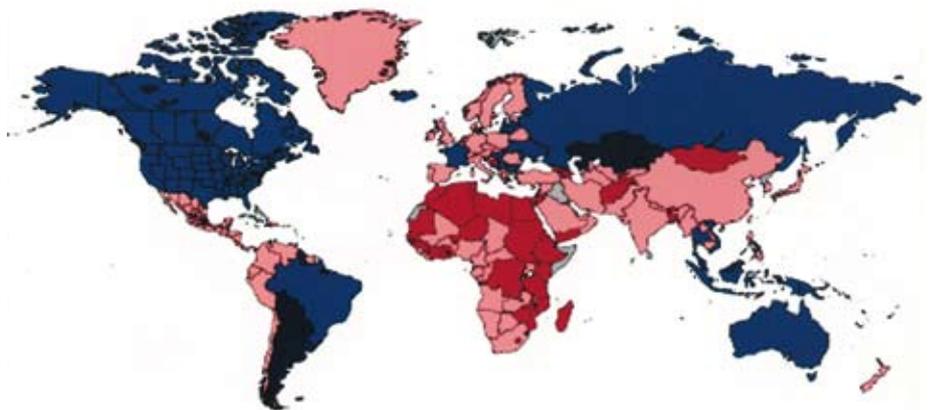
**Unfair trade** has also substantially undermined food security, often in combination with other factors. The dumping of surplus corn on Mexico as a consequence of US farm subsidies eroded millions of Mexican farmers' livelihoods. Later, this corn was diverted to feed the USA's own biofuel industry, 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](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](http://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](http://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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**COLLECTED REGIONAL NEWS**  
**News from all over the world collected from Drynet's Regional Newsletters**



*Physic nut or Jatropha*

## News from Senegal:

### **BIOFUELS FOR AFRICA - AN ILLUSION OR A SUSTAINABLE OPTION TO REDUCE ENERGY VULNERABILITY AND ALLEVIATE POVERTY?**

Africa has experienced several attempts at the development of biofuels. The initiatives in Mali date back to the 1940s, specifically for the conversion of jatropha.

Nevertheless, these attempts remained limited to very small scale usage in the context of improving rural access to basic energy services. Currently, we are witnessing a growing interest across the continent. Mauritius constitutes an example of leadership in the field of bio-energy production with 40% of its energy needs ensured through cogeneration using bagasse coming from the commercial production of cane sugar. Mauritius is also aiming to develop the processing of sugarcane for ethanol production.

Other countries have already developed national strategies, including Mali, with clearly defined objectives, Senegal with a national program, and several countries

in southern Africa (South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia). One wonders whether these strategies are based on reliable data (in terms of both agronomy and energy), and if they are in line with agricultural and environmental policies? Can Africa ensure its energy security through biofuels without first ensuring its food security, its environment and its biodiversity? With the implementation of international standards on biofuels, will African countries, which seem tempted by the potential of being players in a new international market, be in conformity with the standards of sustainable cultivation and production? Beyond the formulation of biofuels strategies, will African countries be in a position to achieve their aims and be competitive on the international market?

The oil crises of the 1970s stimulated the same passion for renewable energy (solar and wind, in particular). It should be noted that more than two decades later, Africa has not managed to leverage these sources for energy security, poverty reduction or sustainable development. Isn't this illusion, previously evidenced around renewable energy technologies such as these, likely to reproduce itself around biofuels? There is a sense of urgent and im-

mediate need in Africa to carry out an in-depth reflection in the biofuel sector, which is still not fully understood. Furthermore, the large-scale development of biofuels should take place within a framework of appropriate overall energy planning. Biofuels must be considered within an overall energy "mix" which should also integrate other forms of clean alternative energies. Beyond the diversification of energy sources, Energy Efficiency should also be a strategic priority both for production and of consumption systems.

Careful attention must be paid to biofuels whose large-scale development involves numerous actors. A national multi-stakeholders dialogue and a harmonization of energy, agricultural, environmental and social policies should be assured in order to maintain a balance between food security, energy, and the right to the sustainable social development.

Priority should also be given to the strengthening of local production in order to satisfy national needs and to provide benefits at the local level. International trade could be considered but only as a secondary option.

**By Drynet partner: Touria Dafallah, ENDA, Senegal**

## COLLECTED REGIONAL NEWS

### News from Pakistan:

#### **HIGH FOOD PRICES IN PAKISTAN - IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND WAY FORWARD**

Food security in Pakistan has significantly worsened as result of the recent food prices hikes. Rural households, particularly in the western provinces who share a border with Afghanistan and food deficit districts and most affected. The total number of households in Pakistan falling into this category was estimated to be seven million. At the request of Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Livestock (MINFAL), Government of Pakistan (GOP), the UN system in Pakistan fielded an inter-agency mission during 9 June and 13 July, 2008 to assess the impact of price spiral and food shortages on the livelihoods and general welfare of households, particularly vulnerable and marginalized ones. Following this a subsequent inter-agency mission will be commissioned to make recommendation for medium and long term measures and assistance needed by the development partners. The assessment is based on consultation with the stakeholders, assessment of impact based on partial equilibrium simulation modelling using Households Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) PSLM data for 2005/06, and rapid assessment household surveys and traders survey. The main findings indicate that more than half of the surveyed households experienced high food prices as a shock.

Most households have tried to cope with the high food prices by reducing non-food expenditures. The high food price is undermining the poverty reduction gains, as food expenditures comprises a large share of the poor's total expenditures and food price hike has severely eroded their purchasing power. The field assessment suggests that households who cannot afford to obtain medical assistance when sick increased from six percent to 30 percent. Similarly there is a serious risk massive school drop out and thus loss of the gains in primary school enrolment achieved in past years. Without an urgent intervention Pakistan will seriously miss MDG targets and, more immediately, face deteriorating child malnutrition (pre-crisis 38 percent of children under five years were malnourished) and increased child mortality (about 50 percent of child mortality in Pakistan is food related). The poorest households now need to spend 70% or more of their income on food and their ability to meet most essential expenditures for health and education is severely compromised. High food prices affect urban and rural households differently, as income, food sources, expenditure patterns as well as coping strategies vary. The survey further indicates that more than 40 percent of households reported no change in income since last year, while a larger share in urban areas observed a decrease than an increase in income. For farmers, the main determinant is the farm gate price they are able to get for crops, while for the 45 percent of the population who are working as employees, it is the change in the real wages, eroded by inflation. The survey also shows that as a result of higher food prices, food expenditure increased disproportionately to total expenditure compared to base year

2005-06. In relative terms, the increase is more pronounced in rural areas, where food expenditure rose by 10 percent and total expenditure by 4 percent, though in absolute figures the increase has been higher in urban areas. As indicated earlier, the poorest have been severely and disproportionately affected by higher food prices. Simulation results show that poorest quintile spends 13 percent more on food than two years ago, while the richest quintile spends only 5 percent more.

The simulation results show an increase in the share of severely food insecure population, from 23 percent in 2005-06 to 28 percent in 2008. The share of moderately food insecure people, who consume more than 1,700 but still less than the international minimum threshold of 2,100 kcal per capita per day, changed only slightly during the same period. Even the population who manage to reach the minimum kcal intake, a significant share likely to still have an inadequate diet in terms of nutrient intake.

This article is a summary of an UN inter-agency assessment report. If you want to read more about this document please go through the following link: [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RW-Files2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnid-Filename/MUMA-7HT54G-full\\_report.pdf/\\$File/full\\_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RW-Files2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnid-Filename/MUMA-7HT54G-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf)

**By Drynet partner: Scope, Pakistan**

## COLLECTED REGIONAL NEWS

### News from Turkey:

#### **A VIEW FROM TURKEY ON BIOFUELS**

Biofuels are introduced as the “ultimate” energy resource throughout the world. Following the EU and USA, biofuels are accepted as a savior in many countries by the public and included in the climate change action programs. Concurrently, biofuels increased the trade volume within the global economy by forming a new niche. Recent developments show us that this sector; which is seen as a remedy to the world, started to cause trouble today due to lack of planning and policies.

“The road to hell is paved with good intentions” clearly applies to the biofuel case, which constitutes a triangle together with degradation of natural ecosystems and climate change. The solution of reducing the impacts of the climate, which is the doomsday of many creatures in the world, is diluting the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Although biofuels emit less greenhouse gas compared to fossil fuels during combustion, the lack of planning in the production mechanism causes additional problems.

Experts state that the conversion of natural lands to agricultural increase the pressure on the ecosystems and significantly accelerate the deforestation in the rain forests. Moreover Biofuels are

causing substantial greenhouse emissions, when they are not produced at feasible locations and with adequate plants of the region. Biofuel agriculture extends the monotypic agriculture often with **Genetically Modified Organisms**. It is also one of the driving factors causing the worldwide hunger problem by threatening the global food security. In the United Nations Conference of Development and Trade, it is stated that the rise of the grain and oil seed prices is correlated to biofuel production along with the inconvenient climate conditions and increasing energy prices. African and South American countries, who utilized their agricultural land for biofuel production, can hardly find grain to feed their people with the current grain and corn prices in the world.

Jean Ziegler, The United Nations Expert on the Right to Food describes the use of tones of corn, grain and soybeans for biofuels production as a crime against humanity. 200 kg corn which would produce of 48 liters of ethanol is enough to supply the annual food of a Zambian child. Ziegler claims that the technology to produce ethanol from agricultural remains and residues would be developed in 5 years and the current technology should not be used until that day.

The leading environmental nature conservation organizations WWF (World Wildlife Foundation) and Birdlife revealed that they would not support the biofuel policy of EU as long as the necessary precautions are taken. They emphasize the urgent need for certification that protects the natural ecosystems, secures the sustainability of natural resources in the production process and ensures that the production of raw materials, that are consumed in EU do

not emit substantial green house gases. They finally recommend the establishment of an expert’s council to stimulate the biofuel policy.

On the one hand Turkish entrepreneurs are exploring opportunities to invest in biofuels. On the other hand, wetlands are drying up and underground water levels are decreasing due to exploitation in many places most significantly in Konya Closed Basin, where massive amounts of corn and sugar beet are produced. If Turkey adopts the biofuel production as a strategy, the demand on biofuel raw material, which often requires a lot of water, is anticipated to rise. Consequently, Turkey may lose more of its natural landscapes and become depended on outside resources. Therefore the total amount and composition of agricultural production should be planned considering the domestic consumption and the problems in other developing countries via involvement of interdisciplinary councils consisting of scientists. If the world experience is ignored, Turkish food security and soils shall both be in danger.

**By Drynet partner: Sureyya Isfendiyaroglu, TEMA, Turkey**

## COLLECTED REGIONAL NEWS

### News from Chile:

#### PROGRESS IN DRYNET EFFORTS OF MAINSTREAMING THE UNCCD IN CHILE

Significant progress in the efforts of mainstreaming the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) into the national policies have been achieved by Chilean non governmental organizations (NGOs), as government authorities accepted to discuss their requests on this regard.

At the end of a meeting with members of the NGOs Network on Desertification and Drought (RIOD-Chile), Environment Minister, Ana Lya Uriarte, expressed her willingness to give major relevance to the implementation of the UNCCD.

During the meeting held on August 27th and coordinated by Drynet partner OLCA, NGOs stated to the minister their concerns for the zero-priority that the Convention has within the national environmental agenda and the lack of a state policy on the subject, 11 years after been signed and ratified by the government and despite the seriousness of the desertification process in the country. Based on proposals from national workshops and seminars on desertification, like the meeting carried out by OLCA on June 17th, a request was made to integrate the co-ordination to implement the three major environmental conventions (climate change, biodiversity and desertification) at the same level. NGOs also offered to the minister their cooperation in the revision of the UNCCD-



*(from left to right) José Torrico, Lucio Cuenca, Daniela Escalona, Eduardo Valencia, Ana Lya Uriarte, Miguel Stutzin, Viviane Castro, Alejandro León and Ricardo Cifuentes*

National Action Plan, a document that needs to be improved and that has not been updated since 1997.

The minister acknowledged the importance of linking desertification and drought as cause and aggravation of the process of global warming and vice versa. She was also in favour of giving greater institutional importance to UNCCD and to facilitate participation of civil society in future discussions on the subject.

Participants at the meeting were the following: Ana Lya Uriarte, Environment Minister; Alvaro Fuentealba, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of the Environment; José Miguel Torrico, Flora and Fauna Defense Committee (CODEFF); Daniela Escalona, Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts (OLCA) ; Lucio

Cuenca Berger, OLCA; Eduardo Valencia, Earth Action; Viviane Castro, Earth Action; Miguel Stutzin, National Environment Commission (CONAMA); Alejandro León, Universidad de Chile, and Ricardo Cifuentes, Coordinator Drynet-OLCA.

**By Drynet partner: OLCA, Chile**

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