



# drynet

www.dry-net.org

# No. 11

January 2013

## 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

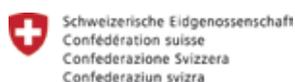
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Published by:



This project is funded by the SDC



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

### Drynet Update

In September 2012, DRYNET held its first Steering Committee meeting together with the network's newly established Advisory Board in the city of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Advisory Board is a body that advises the network's management on organizational matters such as strategy, planning and are ambassadors for DRYNET's mission. DRYNET partners were pleased to receive their new Advisory Board members:

- **Mrs. Maiga Sina Damba** - President of the NGO AFAD, former Minister of Promotion of Women, Children and Families, lawyer – Mali
- **Mr Yves Guinand** – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Vice president Bureau Member of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification – Switzerland
- **Ms. Daniele Hirsch** - Director of

- BothENDS – The Netherlands
- **Mr Yann Arthus Bertrand** - Filmmaker Good Planet - Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations & **Olivier Blond** - Executive Editor - Good Planet Foundation - France

Strategic decisions were made at the meeting involving DRYNET's upcoming activities for 2013 as well as new approaches for promoting the development of drylands. The network came out confident that the newly forged collaboration with its Advisory Board will further contribute to the network's impact in the most arid areas of the world.

In this issue of our newsletter you can find articles on Aflatoxins, a toxic substance that attacks crops; an article on the work and challenges of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; and a piece on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel initiative.



*DRYNET Advisory Board and Steering Committee meeting*

## International Agenda 2013

12 February - 14 February • 2013

### Second International Conference on Water Resources and Environmental Management (ICWRE 2013), Marrakesh, Morocco:

This conference will convene around the theme "Water, Food, Energy Security and Climate Change," and discussions will be organized around sub-themes including: water for sustainable future; global water security; water supply and sanitation; integrated water resources management (IWRM); and environment, water and health.

<http://www.icwre.com/index.php>

11 March -15 March • 2013

### High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP), Geneva, Switzerland:

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in collaboration with a number of UN agencies, international and regional organizations are organizing the HMNDP in Geneva, Switzerland. HMNDP will provide practical insight into useful, science-based actions to address the key drought issues being considered by governments and the private sector under the UNCCD and the various strategies to cope with drought.

<http://www.wmo.int/>

15 April - 19 April • 2013

**UNCCD CRIC 11, Bonn, Germany:** The eleventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 11) is scheduled to convene from 15-19 April 2013. Regional meetings preparatory to CRIC 11 are expected to convene prior to the event.

<http://africasd.iisd.org/events/unccd-cric-11/>

## AFLATOXINS

### Can research and information to farmers stop the silent killer?

By DRYNET partner: *Martine Dahle Huse of DCG Norway*

**Interview with Alemayehu Chala from Hawassa University in Ethiopia who has been leading one of DCG Ethiopia's research projects on aflatoxins in groundnut production.**

#### *Why do research on aflatoxins?*

→ Aflatoxins are a major constraint for groundnut production because they are toxic metabolites, which are unhealthy to the consumer. Animals and humans who consume crops contaminated by aflatoxins may develop loss of appetite leading to malnutrition or growth retardation, and liver disease such as liver cancer or liver failure and finally death. This means you cannot sell groundnut if it is contaminated by aflatoxins beyond a certain level.

#### *What have you found in your research?*

→ In our research we analyzed aflatoxin levels in samples from groundnut crops from eastern Ethiopia, and in most samples the level exceeds international standards. This makes it difficult to sell products abroad, and it is also a risk for consumers at the local market when the product becomes unhealthy because it contains a high level of aflatoxins.

#### *What can farmers do to avoid having aflatoxins in their crops?*

→ There are different recommendations. You can treat the seeds before planting. Another option is adjusting planting and harvesting dates, so that groundnut

*Groundnut arranged in stacks to prevent aflatoxin contamination*  
Picture by: Swathi Sridharan (ICRISAT)



▶ or other plants do not flower by the time there is moisture stress, making groundnut plants more susceptible to the fungus *Aspergillus*, which produces aflatoxins. Yet another recommendation is to sort out and remove damaged grains before storage to avoid contamination. Through sorting out the damaged grains, you can reduce aflatoxin levels by as much as 80%. For the same reason storage houses and transport materials need to be clean, and one should remove any remains of older crops before bringing in new crops because the old ones may have contained remains of *Aspergillus*. When you harvest and thresh you have to avoid mechanical damage because if the grains are damaged, they will easily be contaminated. Before storage, you have to make sure that the grains contain a low amount of moisture. For maize the moisture content should not exceed 14 %, and for groundnut, the moisture content in the grains should not exceed 7 %. If it exceeds this level, the grains can easily be contaminated. There are other methods of controlling the aflatoxin levels in other parts of the world, such as through other microorganisms, but these are not used in Ethiopia, so we mainly recommend cultural practices like those I have mentioned. On top of that, there are varieties that are more resistant to *Aspergillus* and aflatoxins, so if farmers have access to these varieties they can use them.

**Do you think it will be difficult for farmers in Ethiopia to use all of these measures to reduce the level of aflatoxins in their crops?**

→ I don't think the recommendations are difficult, but farmers need to be educated. When we did our survey, we



*Harvest of fair-trade peanuts in Malawi*  
Picture by: Abossuet (ICRISAT)

realized that farmers are not aware of the aflatoxin problem. So if farmers are educated about the risks associated with the aflatoxin contamination, and the possible remedies that are very easy to apply, and which do not cost a lot, then I am sure they can apply them.

**Did your research show that these techniques make a difference?**

→ When we analyzed samples from farmers' storage houses and from markets, the aflatoxin level was very high. Almost all the samples were heavily contaminated. But when we analyzed groundnut samples from the experiments conducted in farmers' fields, the aflatoxin level was generally low. We tested 14 groundnut varieties, and in all the varieties the aflatoxin level was much lower than what we found in storage and market samples. So there

is a significant reduction in the level of aflatoxins when farmers follow all the recommended practices. However, the fungus which produces aflatoxins exists everywhere, so the aflatoxin contamination may start at any point within the value chain. This means that producers should take care of their groundnut or other crop products at all levels of the value chain, starting from the field, during harvesting, during threshing, during transport, during storage and even while on the market because you may have aflatoxin contamination at all levels.

## DRYNET's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday present to the UNCCD

**SYNOPSIS OF ARTICLE WITH SAME NAME FROM FARMING MATTERS MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2012 EDITION.**

*Written by: Patrice Burger (CARI), Nathalie van Haren (Both ENDS), Duygu Kutluay (TEMA), Nahid Naghizadeh and Khadija Razavi (CENESTA)*

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, UNCCD, is celebrating its first 18 years in 2012, which means that, according to UN definitions, it has now reached adulthood. This provides a perfect opportunity to turn on the spotlights and look at the period covering the Convention's childhood and youth - and to present recommendations for an even more successful adulthood.

Looking back at the past 18 years, we see many problems and challenges in terms of desertification and land degradation.

But we also see three promising trends and, as members of DRYNET, we feel proud to have helped shape them. The first is that, despite serious difficulties in terms of governance in many areas, with conflicts over tenure and insecurity over land-use rights, we see that participatory processes in the management of natural resources are becoming stronger. Local people are taking control over their surroundings and livelihoods by actively taking part in these management efforts, making suggestions, and developing and sharing their know-how and expertise.

At the same time, the discourse about agriculture is changing. Pushed and pulled by food crises and deadlocks, agriculture and its linkages to rural development are back on the agenda of the world's decision makers. Presented as agro-ecology, sustainable agriculture



**Rangelands Handicrafts**  
Picture by: Cenesta

by small-scale farmers is receiving more and more attention in scientific and policy discussions.

Thirdly, many grassroots sustainable initiatives, in drylands and areas that suffer from desertification, are gaining attention and recognition – and providing interesting lessons and recommendations.

DRYNET showcases some of these successful grassroots responses to dryland problems and encourages the up-scaling of successful initiatives and their dissemination to other areas. Over the years, DRYNET has succeeded in making its voice heard in international policy and scientific fora. DRYNET also offers participating CSOs the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge with different communities, and to develop their skills base. This gives participating CSOs



**Rooibos field**  
Picture by: EMG

▶ more knowledge about sustainable practices and local initiatives on the ground and more confidence in their dealings with decision makers. During the past five years, DRYNET has shown the importance of working with communities living in the world's drylands and the need to involve them in all development and planning processes. In addition, the network has put sustainable solutions for degradation and drylands onto national and international agendas. Our 18th birthday present to the UNCCD is a set of recommendations resulting from these experiences.

Convinced of the benefits of the approaches our partners are following, we recommend UNCCD grounds its scientific discussions around three areas:

### Agro-ecology

- Invest in participatory research systems, local knowledge and agro-ecological practices to improve livelihoods and production in drylands.

Combine the best of two worlds: traditional practices and knowledge with scientific and formal knowledge;

- Focus, in the first instance, on the people living in drylands; on local markets and food demand, then on regional markets. Only then look further afield.

### Local knowledge

- Get a better insight into the realities in the field and learn from local experiences. Invest in things that have proven to be a success. Emphasise the importance of bottom-up approaches, grassroots movements and farmer-to-farmer exchanges and communication;
- Tackle the obstacles to up-scaling by improving evaluation, documentation and communication of good practices and local success stories. If "seeing is believing", then exchange visits are more inspiring than stories on paper.

### Governance

- Promote greater participation in the management of natural resources and in decision making about ecosystems;

- Use the Right to Food as a guiding principle. Develop sustainable governance systems for the tenure of land. The voluntary guidelines developed by the UN Committee on Global Food Security are an ideal starting point for reviewing and improving tenure, land management and spatial planning.

We congratulate the UNCCD on reaching maturity; it is now ready to take on much more responsibility. Participation of people in drylands management, cherishing sustainable initiatives and building more and stronger partnerships between land users, governments, NGOs, science and the private sector, are the key elements to follow. We know that wisdom is there, and we wish UNCCD lots of courage and success. Cheers to the future of UNCCD and to people living in drylands!

The full article was originally published in Farming Matters, December 2012, Volume 28.4. <http://www.agriculturesnetwork.org/farmingmatters>

### TEMA generating attention for drylands

Picture by: TEMA



## Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel: a continental initiative from Africa but... a slow implementation

By DRYNET partner Patrice Burger of CARI France



Workshop held in Ouagadougou by the network Sahel Desertification  
Picture by: CARI

As a concept launched in 2007, the Great Green Wall Initiative of the Sahara and Sahel is not only a title but also a metaphor for a collective attempt from Africa in combating desertification and improving the living conditions of people in drylands. This initiative was initially specifically targeted at the Sudano-Sahelian zone, that is to say the entire region of the southern margins of the great Sahara desert, from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, a distance of approximately 7000 km. Promoted in the beginning under the concept of being a "barrier of trees ranging 15 km wide", it has been the subject of various criticisms and changes following the work of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the OSS, the European Union and various countries of the Sahel. It now covers not only the Sahel, but also the southern regions of the countries north of the Sahara. It targets a set of cross-cutting issues such as: sustainable

management of natural resources; the sustainability of rural production systems (agriculture, livestock, forestry, etc); rural infrastructure development production and placing rural products on the market; diversification of economic activities and wealth creation and consideration of gender and youth development.

Organized within the framework of the World Food Day from the 16th to 18th of October 2012, the first workshop with civil society actors was held in Ouagadougou by the network Sahel Desertification and its focal point in Burkina Faso, SPONG. The workshop introduced by the Minister of Agriculture and Hydraulics of Burkina Faso, Mr. L. Sedogo and supported by the FAO, served primarily to generate self initiative and to mobilize public opinion. Two members of DRYNET - CARI (France) as coordinator of RESAD and DCG (Mali) attended this meeting. DRYNET's GCOZA

and ENDA were also able to attend two preparatory workshops in Ouagadougou and Banjul in order to contribute to the "harmonized strategy" for implementing the initiative.

Sixty civil society participants from 10 countries have taken note of the progress of this initiative through a dozen institutional, scientific or technical presentations. The initiative has produced a set of decisions, a statement from the participants and a roadmap with commitments for the future. The first workshop session focused on sharing knowledge about the Great Green Wall Initiative of the Sahara and Sahel (GGWISS) by F. Tapsoba of FAO. The two other sessions focused on experiences of resource mobilization of different types of stakeholders and civil society participation.

The final declaration of the participants reported "a great opportunity for Africa and an ambitious and unique unifying project" although it also called for an acceleration of the process, more effective communication, a structured involvement of civil society, and an obligation of producing results under the authority and resources of the African Union.

The roadmap adopted marks the beginning of a process of involving civil society and has various commitments including: the dissemination of information to members and networks; to respond to donors and governments; to constitute capacity for increasing mobilization and activation of consultation frameworks at the country level.

As two international interlinked networks, RESAD and DRYNET will continue to cooperate in the follow up of this important initiative.