

# Partnership makes strides in promoting sustainable land management in Africa

Rome: Multi-year effort offers valuable lessons in how to halt land degradation and desertification.



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Improved land management strategies and technologies being used across Sub-Saharan Africa are helping protect the environment, boost agricultural productivity, strengthen livelihoods and enhance food security, according to [a new study](#).

The document - published by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its TerrAfrica partners, including FAO - takes stock of lessons learned during the five-year TerrAfrica Strategic Investment Program (SIP) for sustainable land management.

TerrAfrica is an African-driven global partnership program to scale up sustainable land and water management across Sub-Saharan Africa. Its SIP initiative - which ran from 2010 through 2015 - provided \$150 million of land degradation funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and attracted co-financing of \$800 million to support 36 projects in 26 countries. Working across a diverse range of farming systems, SIP support focused on scaling-up proven practices, strengthening advisory services, and improving policy frameworks and knowledge management. It resulted in sustainable land management practices being implemented on 2.7 million hectares, benefitting some 4.8 million people.

Implementing agencies included the African Development Bank, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development

(IFAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Bank, in close coordination with NEPAD and regional economic commissions. Projects were executed in partnership with governments and in collaboration with many development partners including civil society organisations.

The report aims to highlight key issues and provide guidance for future programmes and investments in sustainable land and ecosystem management on the continent. Those lessons are already encouraging governments, partner agencies, NEPAD, the Africa Union and the donor community to scale-up sustainable land management practices across wider landscapes in view of the many productivity, livelihood and environmental benefits.

"This initiative provides an opportunity for Africa and its partners to collectively work together toward ensuring the sustainable use and management of land," said Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO of the NEPAD Agency.

"These findings are particularly relevant to us today, as we mark the World Day to Combat Desertification," said Sally Bunning FAO senior land resources officer. "This report confirms that there is a vast and diverse suite of tools that can successfully be used, in diverse farming systems and in different contexts, to improve land management. It also underscores the importance of investing in longer term and wider scale efforts and in knowledge sharing for sustainable societal benefits" she added.

## **Action at ground level**

The report highlights 18 key conclusions from the SIP portfolio of projects in 26 countries which can inform investments by governments and partner agencies in sustainable land management

There is improved understanding in the countries and partners involved the SIP effort regarding how to address land degradation processes and their drivers through multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches. Project managers and beneficiaries alike identified as most beneficial technologies: crop rotations, conservation agriculture, tree planting, crop-livestock integration for restoring soil fertility, rangeland restoration for enhanced livestock productivity, soil and water conservation measures to control erosion and improve efficiency. These measures, when adapted to local contexts and applied on-farm and across wider landscapes, contribute not only to increased agricultural production but also to enhancing biodiversity and generating many ecosystem services, including nutrient cycling, carbon stocks, pest regulation, improved water flows and resilience to climate change.

Among the successful approaches identified were participatory watershed management and territorial planning, improved user and access rights over resources, conflict resolution mechanisms, by-laws and strengthening capacities of actors and institutions at all levels especially at grassroots. The use of the farmer field school approach emerged as a highlight of several projects and represented a core tool for building capacity of farmers and agro-pastoralists and spreading adapted technologies, the report noted.

## **Creating opportunities**

The SIP has created opportunities for countries to explore innovative options for sustainable land management financing and country strategic investment frameworks, which are expected to be essential tools for future cross-sectoral planning and aid harmonization, according to the report. But more efforts are needed to invest in organisations with expertise in media, knowledge management, learning and training, and in long-term efforts for national policy development and sustained action on the ground, it adds.

The SIP experiences helped increase awareness and demonstrates the vital importance of scaling up sustainable land management across production systems and landscapes for improving productivity, restoring ecosystem services and enhancing food security across Sub-Saharan Africa.

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