



European DesertNet Newsletter n. 1/2009

Contents:

1. News from the Board of European DesertNet
2. News from the world
3. Accounts of past events
4. Important upcoming events
5. Announcements
6. Publications 2008
7. Other information

1. News from the Board of European DesertNet

International scientific representation at CST1 and CRIC-7 in Istanbul, Turkey



At CRIC-7 in Istanbul, members of European DesertNet presented the importance of national and international scientific networks as an important structure for providing best practices on biophysical and socio-economic indicators to support the implementation of the aims of the UNCCD. The Dryland Science for Development Consortium (DSD), that is organising the first scientific-style conference of the CST (see message of Mark Winslow below), was officially presented in Istanbul at the science booth which was jointly organised

by European DesertNet and Desert*Net Germany. The DSD core partners are leaders in advanced research (European DesertNet and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre - Institute for the Environment and sustainability), international research-for-development (ICARDA and ICRISAT), and strategic analysis / knowledge management (UNU-INWEH). At the First Special Session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST S-1), the DSD Consortium was presented and discussed.

Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Co-chair of European DesertNet

Go to <http://www.unccd.int/cop/cric7/menu.php> for a summary of CRIC 7 and CST-S1 in Istanbul, Turkey, 3-14 November 2008.

UNCCD COP9: contributions required for the Scientific Conference "Understanding Dryland Trends"

In order to increase the flow of science into the UNCCD process, a Scientific Conference is being planned for the COP-9 event in late 2009. The Conference, organized under the auspices of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) will focus on "Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management." The short title will be "Understanding Dryland Trends". But it is more than just a conference event. It is a year-long process of analysis of the state-of-the-art that will lead to recommendations that policy-makers can use. Three Working Groups (WGs) are being established to analyze three different facets of the topic:

1. WG I. Integrated methods for monitoring and assessment of land degradation processes and drivers
2. WG II. Monitoring and assessing land rehabilitation and sustainable land management
3. WG III. Impacts of economic and social drivers and knowledge management on monitoring and evaluation of land degradation.

These Working Groups are organizing an e-consultation so that qualified scientists worldwide can contribute their knowledge. We'd like to have your ideas. If you are interested in participating, please fill in your professional profile, upload your photo and join the e-network at this link: <http://dsdworkgroups.ning.com/?xqi=9IronLd>

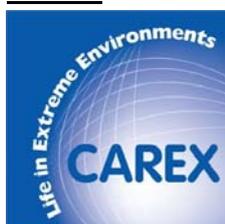
Mark Winslow, Co-ordinator of DSD

2. News from the world

Parliamentarians address next steps lawmaking bodies can take in helping combat desertification.

UN CCD press release at: http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/pressrel/showpressrel.php?pr=press04_12_08

CAREX



Life in Extreme Environments is an emerging area of research in which Europe has considerable expertise but a relatively fragmented research infrastructure. The science of such environments has enormous relevance for our knowledge of the diversity and environmental limits of microbial, plant and animal life and the novel strategies employed for

survival and growth. Such studies are essential in understanding how life established on the early Earth and in assessing the possibilities for life on other planetary bodies. These environments are also a rich source of novel exploitable compounds.

CAREX (*Coordination Action for Research Activities on life in Extreme Environments*) is a FP7 Coordination Action funded for three years (2008 to 2010). This project tackles the issues of **enhancing coordination** of life in extreme environments research in Europe by providing **networking and exchange of knowledge opportunities** to the scientific community and by developing a **strategic European research agenda** in the field. In its developments, CAREX intends to involve key European and international experts in the field of research on life in extreme environments. CAREX's network includes **58 European and non-European partners from 23 countries**.

CAREX is a truly **interdisciplinary initiative** as its approach to life in extreme environment research covers microbes, plants and animals evolving in various marine, polar, terrestrial extreme environments as well as outer space. CAREX set up three on-line databases gathering information on experts, projects and infrastructures of interest for research on life in extreme environments. These platforms allow to find specific expertise, research partners, information on research projects or on the research capacity available in Europe and beyond. These databases have been structured in order to register specific profiles and to perform detailed targeted search with the use of well-defined criteria.

CAREX is managed by a consortium of nine core partners. The British Antarctic Survey is the project coordinator and the European Science Foundation hosts the Project Office.

For more information: www.carex-eu.org

New Global Hunger Index - 33 Countries Have "Alarming" or "Extremely Alarming" Levels of Hunger

The Global Hunger Index has been released for World Food Day (October 16) for the third year in a row by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), in conjunction with Welthungerhilfe (formerly known as German Agro-Action) and Concern Worldwide.

This Index measures global hunger by ranking countries on three leading indicators and combining them into one index. The three indicators are prevalence of child malnutrition, rates of child mortality, and the proportion of people who are calorie deficient. Because data used in the Index come from 2006 and earlier years (the most recent available data vary for different indicators), the rankings do not reflect the current crisis of rising food prices, but they do highlight which countries could be most vulnerable to the crisis. Most of the countries ranked in the Index are net importers of grains, and are therefore more likely to suffer because of rising food prices. In short, 33 Countries Have "Alarming" or "Extremely Alarming" hunger levels.

IFPRI estimates that the additional global public investment is required to overcome the food crisis, and still meet the first Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty and hunger by 2015, is at least US\$14 billion per annum. For Sub-Saharan Africa, the annual additional investment is estimated to be about US\$5 billion, if African governments fulfill their commitment to invest 10 percent of their national budgets to agriculture (*see other paper in this newsletter*).

These concerns have to be addressed through different policies both in intensive agricultural areas and in semi-arid areas, which are the focus of the activity of European DesertNet. Socio-economic Interactions between these two types of agricultural concerns are quite obvious and request an integrated approach.

Béatrice ROY & Gérard BEGNI from several sources, chiefly IFPRI website.

Download full paper at: http://www.european-desertnet.eu/docs/New_Global_Hunger_Index.pdf

FAO /World Food Day stresses climate change and bioenergy effects on poor / The poor will suffer most



Food and
Agriculture
Organization
of the
United Nations



Climate change and bioenergy were the focus of the 2008 World Food Day activities, which involved over 150 countries. FAO celebrates World Food Day each year on 16 October, the day on which the Organization was founded in 1945.

"Global warming is already underway and adaptation strategies are now a matter of urgency, especially for the most vulnerable poor countries. Hundreds of millions of small-scale farmers, fishers and forest-dependent people will be worst hit by climate change. Adaptation strategies, especially for the most vulnerable poor countries, where most of the over 920 million hungry people live, need to be urgently developed, reviewing land use plans, food security programmes, fisheries and forestry policies to protect the poor from climate change," said Alexander Mueller, FAO Assistant Director-General for Natural Resources Management and Environment Department.

The FAO Committee on World Food Security, with representatives from more than 100 countries and a number of civil society organizations, met in Rome (14-17 October 2008) to assess trends in the world food security and nutrition situation. The First Lady of Egypt, Suzanne Mubarak, was the keynote speaker at the World Food Day Ceremony in Rome, 16 October.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton who heads an international non-governmental organization bearing his name participated in a World Food Day ceremony at the United Nations in New York on 23 October. He urged the international community to stop using the global financial crisis *"as an excuse"* to avoid dealing with escalating hunger, adding that over the long term, only agricultural self-sufficiency could take a significant bite out of world hunger and stave off future financial woes.

People living in arid and semi-arid areas are the main and first victims of food crisis. If properly heard, these generous calls can only push the international community to improve the situation in these areas, which means combating desertification among others.

Gérard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG and Béatrice ROY, Mediterranean Science Area – From various sources, chiefly FAO Website.

Download full paper at: http://www.european-desertnet.eu/docs/FAO_World_Food_Day.pdf

Africa's quantitative commitments to support agriculture could not be kept

African heads of State met in Maputo, Mozambique in 2003 and pledged to allocate 10 % of their budgets to agriculture by 2008 in order to put African countries on track to reach the first Millennium Development Goal of cutting poverty and hunger in half by 2015. These leaders also threw their political weight behind the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), an African-led initiative established in 2002 by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU). The Maputo declaration and the broader CAADP agenda marked a paradigm shift in Africa's approach to agriculture: *"The decision of the African leaders was that Africans are the ones who should first be putting their money in agriculture,"* (IFPRI's Director for Africa, Ousmane Badiane). The African agricultural sector is extremely under-funded. Despite its agrarian nature,

Africa spends billions of dollars each year importing food, including 45% of its rice and 85 % of its wheat. For many African countries, increasing agricultural spending to 10 percent of their national budgets in just five years was an ambitious goal. After five years, only a handful of Africa's 53 nations have reached the designated 10 % target (see table).

Level of Agricultural Investment, 2007 (<i>trends in 2008 appear somehow similar</i>)		
At least 10 %	From 5 to less than 10 %	Less than 5 %
Burkina Faso	Benin	Algeria
Cape Verde	Equatorial Guinea	Botswana
Chad	Ghana	Burundi
Ethiopia	Guinea	Cameroon
Mali	Kenya	Democratic Republic of Congo
Malawi	Lesotho	Egypt
Niger	Madagascar	Gabon
	Mozambique	Liberia
	Senegal	Mauritius
	Sudan	Nigeria
	Gambia	Rwanda
	Tunisia	Sierra Leone
	Zimbabwe	Tanzania
		Uganda
		Zambia

Table 1 - Level of Agricultural Investment, 2007- Source: NEPAD Dialogue Online Weekly—23 November 2007—Issue 205.

Many factors can explain this under-investment. Cris Muyunda, senior agricultural advisor for the COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) Secretariat, says this investment concern has increased African vulnerability to drought, hunger, and malnutrition despite the continent's large land and water resources.

G rard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG – Source: IFPRI Forum, Oct. 2008 (International Food Policy Research Institute).

3. Account of past events

The conference about desertification in Israel brings innovative visions.

On Dec. 14, over 350 people from 40 countries met in Sede Boqer, Israel, to analyze specific desertification issues in light of the most recent findings and experiences. Erosion, soil loss and contamination exist everywhere, but long term impacts tend to be more severe and irreversible in low rainfall areas. According to the most 'optimistic' estimations, over 200 million people are suffering from such impacts as hunger, migrations, human communities break-up, ecological degradations. Unfortunately this phenomenon did not get the whole required attention from the international community, in spite of the UNCCD, which is quite sad and unacceptable since many solutions are well known and affordable.

The UN definition of 'arid areas' applies to 93% of the total area of Israel. In 1948, the soils of this country had experienced quite severe degradation and the situation was worsening due to goat herding, deforestation and unsustainable agriculture. Since that time, the situation could be reversed by herding regulation, agricultural innovation, challenging water management and planned reforestation. Lessons have been learnt from mistakes in that rehabilitation process. Wrong irrigation practices led to water resources pollution. It was long to find out the most proper species for reforestation. Some cropping turned into

failures. But all in all, transforming desert areas into profitable agricultural lands and forest has been outstandingly successful, while unfortunately opposite changes do appear in many places all across the world - hence the importance of lessons evidenced by the Sede Boqer Conference. Sponsored by many organizations among which UNESCO and Israel Foreign Affairs Ministry, more than 100 African farmers, experts and official representatives attended it. Topics addressed ranged from desert ecology and pastoralism to dryness resistant species and to the role of women in combating desertification.

*Gérard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG and Béatrice ROY, Mediterranean Science Area
From various sources, mainly Israeli nature protection Society.*

An important meeting between Brazil and the European Union.

The President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, met the present President of the European Union, Nicolas Sarkozy, on December 22, 2008. The two leaders had important talks about deep reforms of the world financial and governance system in light of the present crisis. The EU expressed a deep solidarity with Brazil and the wish for both of them to express and push common visions in the forthcoming G20 Summit (London, April 2, 2009) about deep changes in the financial worldwide control system. The EU also expected the future President of USA to bring radically innovative positions facing the Doha cycle negotiations failure. The two Parties expressed a strong wish to alleviate commercial barriers, to see a growth in exportation of food products from Brazil towards Europe (which were multiplied by three since 2000) and industrial products and services from EU to Brazil.

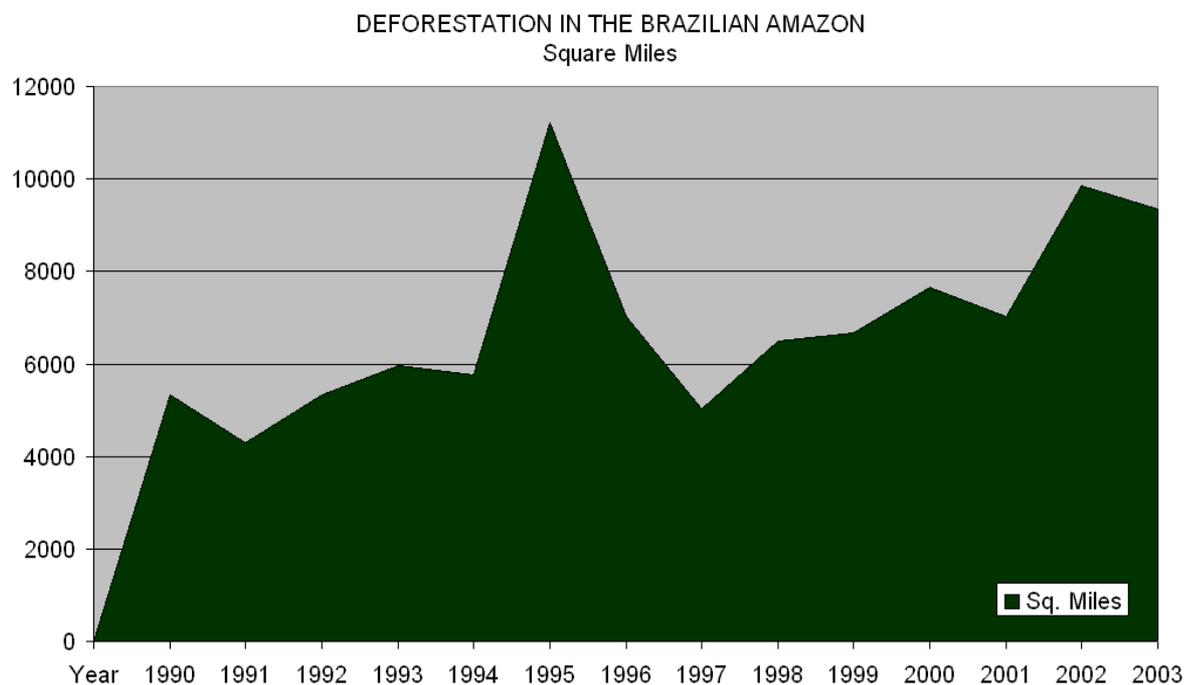


Fig. 1 – Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon.

Answering to Europe's efforts in the field of environment and climate change, especially through its 'energy and climate package', adopted by the European parliament in December 2008, Pr. Lula da Silva announced that Brazil would reduce its deforestation rate by 71% in 2017 and 80% in 2020 – a 'very great news' for the EU. The EU expressed the wish for Brazil to join the UN Security Council, a vision echoed in USA by Mrs. C. Rice who declared that the time when South America was considered as a shelter in the Cold War framework

was definitively outdated. Desertification is the result of climate change and anthropic factors which can only be exacerbated by financial and trading crisis and disorders. These troubles also have negative impacts over victims of desertification. International commitments have to be translated into actual facts. The convergence between Brazil and the EU is indeed a positive signal for all those for which desertification and its negative impacts are a major concern.

G erard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG and B atrice ROY, Mediterranean Science Area

4. Important upcoming events

List of links to next meetings regarding desertification, water conservation and land degradation.

2009		
5-8 Jan	Soil and Water Assessment Tool-Southeast Asia (SWAT-SEA) http://www2.mcc.cmu.ac.th/swat/	Chiang Mai, Thailand
21-23 Jan	International Conference: Improving Tools against Desertification and Drought. Enhanced Integrated Agroforestry and Water Management Systems for Arid and Semi-Arid Areas in Latin America http://www.accionporlatierra.cl/accionporlatierra/publico/01_000000013.htm	Santiago, Chile
31 Jan-2 Feb	International Workshop on Crop Improvement under Drought Conditions: an Integrated Approach http://www.abriiproteomics.ir/	Karaj, Iran
4-7 Feb	IV World Congress on Conservation Agriculture www.icar.org.in/wccagri/index.html www.wccagri.ernet.in	New Delhi, India
9-12 Feb	Conference of the International Erosion Control Association: Environmental Connection www.ieca.org	Reno, Nevada, USA
18-21 Feb	African Science Communication Conference http://www.saasta.ac.za/2ndascc/pdf/ascc_first_announcement.pdf	Gauteng, Africa
2-5 Mar	Crop Production in the 21st Century: Global Climate Change, Environmental Risks and Water Scarcity http://dgsymp09.technion.ac.il	Haifa, Israel
8-14 Mar	Conference on Land Degradation in Dry Environments http://cldde.kuniv.edu	Kuwait
16-22 Mar	5th World Water Forum http://www.worldwaterforum5.org	Istanbul, Turkey
19-24 Apr	Soil erosion and sediment control with vegetation and bioengineering on severely eroded terrain http://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU2009/session/887	Vienna, Austria
19-24 Apr	Digital soil mapping: novel approaches to the prediction of key soil properties for modelling physical processes http://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU2009/session/907	Vienna, Austria
23-25 Apr	Sustainability conference http://www.kent.ac.uk/scarr/	Villanova, USA
26-30 Apr	IHPD Open Meeting; 7th International Science Conference on the Human Dimension of Global change Environment http://www.openmeeting2009.org/	Bonn, Germany
3-5 May	International plant breeding conference "crop research, technology dissemination and adoption to increase food supply, reducing hunger and poverty in Egypt" http://www.sciencedev.net/Docs/plant_breeding_conference.doc	Ismailia, Egypt
17-21 May	World Environmental & Water Resources Congress http://www.content.asce.org/conferences/ewri2009	Kansas City, Missouri
27-30 May	Global Change- Challenges for Soil Management: From Degradation –Through Soil and Water Conservation- To Sustainable Soil Management www.sfb.bg.ac.yu/erosion2009/	Tara Mountain, Serbia

1 Jun	Rendez-vous international sur la gestion integree de l'eau, www.conferencealerts.com/seeconf.mv?q=k1x38ai	Sherbrooke, Canada
22 Jun	First Open Source GIS UK Conference website will be activated on January 15 (email Suchith.Anand@nottingham.ac.uk)	Nottingham, UK
23-25 Jun	"Protection of THE Ecological and Productivity Functions of Soil in a PAN European Context" www.vumop.cz	Průhonice, Czech Republic
25 Jun	European Water Resources Association (EWRA) 7th International Conference http://www.eng.ucy.ac.cy/ewra2009/	Limassol, Cyprus
28 Jun- 1 Jul	16th N Workshop: Connecting Different Scales of Nitrogen Use in Agriculture www.nitrogenworkshop2009.org	Turin, Italy
29 Jun- 1 Jul	XXVII Reunión Nacional de Suelos www.secs09.org/	Huesca, Spain
2-5 Jul	Earth Charter Day Academic Conference 2009 (EDAC2009) www.ecdac2009.org	Eindhoven, Netherlands
5-8 Jul	15th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management http://www.issrm09.info	Vienna, Austria
11-15 Jul	SWCS (Journal of Soil and Water Conservation) Annual Conference www.jswconline.org/subscriptions/	Dearborn, Michigan, USA
20-24 Jul	11th International Symposium on Soil and Plant Analysis www.isspa2009.com	Santa Rosa, CA, USA
5-7 Aug	5th International SWAT (Soil and Water Assessment Tool) Conference http://www.brc.tamus.edu/swat/conf_5th.html	Boulder, Colorado
23-28 Aug	Second World Congress of Agroforestry http://worldagroforestry.org/wca2009	Nairobi, Kenya
25-28 Aug	1st IFOAM Conference on Organic Animal and Plant Breeding Animal-Plant Breeding	Santa Fe; New Mexico
6-9 Sep	International Conference on Land and Water Degradation Processes Management www.ufz.de/comland2009	Leipzig, Germany
8-10 Sep	2nd World Seed Conference http://worldseedconference.org/en/worldseedconference/home.html	Rome, Italy
16 Sep	World Resources Forum http://www.factor10-institute.org/files/WRF_POSTER_2009.pdf	Davos, Switzerland
27 Sep- 2 Oct	XXVI International Population Conference marrakech2009	Marrakech, Morocco.
13- 16 Oct	Biodiversity and Society: understanding connections, adapting to change www.diversitas-osc.org	Cape Town, South Africa
26-29 Oct	International Conference AfricaGIS: "Geo-Spatial Information and Sustainable Development in Africa: Facing Challenges of Global Change." http://www.africagis2009.org/	Kampala, Uganda
12-14 Nov	International Conference The Integration of Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in the Context of Climate Change, the Energy Crisis and Food Insecurity. http://2009-international-conference.synthasite.com/index.php	Agadir, Morocco
22-28 Nov	5th International Conference of ASSS: Soils and New Challenges for Sustainable Development in Africa www.asssonline.org www.asssland.org	Yaoundé, Cameroon

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of DesertNet International, IMIDRA, Spain

International conference on desertification in memory of Professor John B. Thornes

The Area of Physical Geography at the Murcia University and the Geomorphology Spanish Society would organise from 16 to 18 of September 2009 an International Conference on Desertification in memory of Professor John B. Thornes.

Professor Thornes (1940-2008), professor of Physical Geography and head of the Geography Department at King's College, University of London, was an exceptional researcher and Physical Geographer. He had a very special relationship with Spain

throughout his life. In 1967 he developed his Doctoral Thesis in the Upper Duero and since then he carried out numerous researches and projects, especially in the Mediterranean area. Several institutions and universities from different countries have distinguished him with honours, including scientific societies, universities and research centres in Spain. So in 1998 the Geomorphology Spanish Society named him "Honor member" and in 2006 the University of Murcia also named him "Doctor Honoris Causa".

Authors wishing to submit contributions to the Conference on the following topics: Physical Geography Modelling, Soil erosion and Desertification, Fluvial morphology, Relations water – land- vegetation, Impact of livestock and agriculture in terrestrial ecosystems, should send an abstract, before 31 January 2009, to: arodi@um.es.

For more information and abstract submission: <http://fobos.bio.um.es/thornes/doku.php>

Ministerial Conference on Water: a calendar of concrete projects from 2009

The Ministerial Conference on Water held on 22 December 2008 on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan marked the speeding up of the issue of water management and the first important step for the implementation of the decisions made by Heads of State and Government on 13 July 2008 in Paris for the Union for the Mediterranean.

Firstly, the Ministers adopted the guidelines of a Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, permitting the challenges of climate change and its impacts to be met and tackled. This Strategy will make it possible to handle problems exceeding the means of action of any single country or organisation. It will have two figured targets concerning the preservation of water quality and the reduction of pressure on water resources through efficient use.

Secondly, the Ministers drew the attention of governance bodies of the Union for the Mediterranean, in view of the rapid development of new equipment projects in the domain of water, consistent with the Strategy. From this perspective, they have already identified an initial series of projects which will be discussed as from January 2009. These projects will be completed during the Fifth World Forum on Water to be held in Istanbul in March 2009 and the first funds will be finalised for the ministerial conference on sustainable development in Monaco before the end of March 2009.

Public Information from SEMIDE, transmitted to EDN newsletter by Gérard BEGNI

5. Announcements

Vacancy Announcement

Vacancy announcement for Project Officer (Drylands) at the UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY, International Network for Water, Environment and Health based in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Primary responsibilities of the PO concerns the design and implementation of projects related to the Drylands Programme. The Project Officer (PO) serves as an integral member of the UNU-INWEH team.

Closing Date is 28 February 2009. For more information, please go to http://www.european-desertnet.eu/docs/Project_Officer_Drylands-Jan_2009.pdf

6. Publications 2008

A list of recently published selected paper regarding desertification:

1. Désertification, migration et développement local, 2008. This publication is the outcome of a conference in Tripolis in December 2007 which was organised by the Global Mechanism and CEN-SAD. For a copy of the report contact: Youssef Brahim: www.global-mechanism.org
2. Désertification, migration et développement local, 2008. This publication is the outcome of a conference in Tripolis in December 2007 which was organised by the Global Mechanism and CEN-SAD. For a copy of the report contact: Youssef Brahim: www.global-mechanism.org
3. Falkenmark, M., Rockstrom, J., 2008. Building resilience to drought in desertification-prone savannas in Sub-Saharan Africa: The water perspective. *Natural Resources Forum* 32, 93-102.
4. Kamotho, S., W. Strahm, C. Wolfangel (eds), 2008: The nature of drylands – Diverse ecosystems, diverse solutions (IUCN publication). The publication can be downloaded at: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/the_nature_of_drylands_diverse_ecosystems_diverse_solutions_2008.pdf
5. Jafari, R., Lewis, M.M., Ostendorf, B., 2008. An image-based diversity index for assessing land degradation in an arid environment in South Australia. *Journal of Arid Environments* 72, 1282-1293.
6. Jafari, R., Lewis, M.M., Ostendorf, B., 2008. An image-based diversity index for assessing land degradation in an arid environment in South Australia. *Journal of Arid Environments* 72, 1282-1293.
7. Kang, S.Z., Su, X.L., Tong, L., Zhang, J.H., Zhang, L., Davies, W.J., 2008. A warning from an ancient oasis: intensive human activities are leading to potential ecological and social catastrophe. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology* 15, 440-447.
8. Koohafkan, P., B.A. Stewart, 2008. *Water and Cereals in Drylands*. Book published by Earthscan. ISBN: 9781844077083
9. Leblanc, M.J., G. Favreau, S. Massuel, S.O. Tweed, M. Loireau, B. Cappelaere, 2008. Land clearance and hydrological change in the Sahel: SW Niger. *Global and Planetary Change*, Volume 61, 135-150. Available online at www.sciencedirect.com.
10. Lorent, H., C. Evangelou, M. Stellmes, J. Hill, V. Papanastasis, G. Tsiourlis, A. Roeder, E. Lambin, 2008. Land degradation and economic conditions of agricultural households in a marginal region of northern Greece. *Global and Planetary Change*, Volume 64, Issues 3-4, 198-209. For a copy of paper contact: hugues.lorent@uclouvain.be
11. Mu, H.S., Kurozawa, Y., Kotani, K.H., Liu, G.B., Liu, P.L., Tsunekawa, A., Nishino, S., Ito, T.Y., 2008. Health-related quality of life and recognition of desertification among inhabitants of the Loess Plateau region of China : Findings for city and village communities. *Journal of Environmental Health* 70, 38-43.
12. Nkonya, E., J. Pender, K.C. Kaizzi, E. Kato, S. Mugarura, H. Ssali, J. Muwonge, 2008. Linkages between Land Management, Land Degradation, and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa - The Case of Uganda. IFPRI Publications / Research Report

- No. 159, December 2008. Download full report at: <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/abstract/159/rr159.pdf>
13. Orlovsky, N., 2008. Israeli experience in prevention of processes of desertification. Socio-Economic Causes and Consequences of Desertification in Central Asia, 205-229.
 14. Salvati, L., Zitti, M., Ceccarelli, T., 2008. Integrating economic and environmental indicators in the assessment of desertification risk: A case study. Applied Ecology and Environmental Research 6, 129-138.
 15. Stringer, L.C., 2008b. From global environmental discourse to local adaptations and responses: A desertification research agenda for Central Asia. Socio-Economic Causes and Consequences of Desertification in Central Asia, 13-31.
 16. Stringer, L.C., 2008c. Reviewing the international year of deserts and Desertification 2006: What contribution towards combating global desertification and implementing the united nations convention to combat desertification? Journal of Arid Environments 72, 2065-2074.
 17. Suvaryan, Y., Sargsyan, V., 2008. Land and soil resources in Armenia: State of the art and policy measures. Soil Chemical Pollution, Risk Assessment, Remediation and Security, 229-239.
 18. Wang, X.M., Chen, F., Hasi, E., Li, J.C., 2008b. Desertification in China: An assessment. Earth-Science Reviews 88, 188-206.

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

7. Other Information

A sub-regional initiative from Greece in the field of Global Change



Greece is taking the initiative to establish a Global Change Research European Center (GREC) in the area of South Eastern Europe, located in Greece.

GREC will integrate multi-interdisciplinary research in Global Change, including natural disasters, climate change, vulnerability and socio-economic factors.

It will provide the interface of past, present and future measurements and estimates of changes in the water cycle, will assist in the establishment of national-level models for biodiversity, climate and socioeconomic indices, and will help policymakers and planners to reduce vulnerability, strengthen preparedness and advise on infrastructures needed to minimize risks from the synergy of floods, drought, wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis, changes in the cryosphere, landslides etc., thus reducing uncertainties in the relationship between natural disasters and climate change. GREC will fill the existing gaps between modelers and experimentalists by coordinating large and regional field multidisciplinary studies, focusing in Europe and particularly in areas where the synergistic effects are maximized, as is the case of SE Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, giving a specific emphasis needs to be given to coastal areas. The proposed centre will reduce uncertainties and greatly help towards introducing improved policies to protect life, wealth and our fragile ecosystems in a globally changing environment. GREC clearly focuses on 'natural disasters' which are traditionally associated to sudden events (floods, earthquakes).

However, its overall multidisciplinary integrative context should make it a precious partner in sub-regional desertification studies – and indeed desertification is a coupled natural and man-made disaster.

Gérard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG

The launch of the LAND-L announcement list

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), is pleased to announce the launch of the LAND-L announcement list. To subscribe to the LAND-L list, please visit <http://www.iisd.ca/email/subscribe.htm>

The purpose of LAND-L is to provide a free, moderated, community communications tool, allowing subscribers to post announcements related to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) as well as sustainable land management (SLM) events, policy developments, publications and new initiatives. LAND-L is not a discussion list and is limited to non-commercial and non-political announcements.

Threats to Soil Quality in Europe. Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

(...) "The special session during EUROSIL 2008 dedicated to the threats to soil quality in Europe has allowed for an indepth analysis of the status of research in this are and the identification of still existing research gaps for future action. The full coverage of the threats identified within the Soil Thematic Strategy will allow to further support the on-going process towards better soil protection in Europe".

More information at: http://eusoils.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ESDB_Archive/eusoils_docs/other/EUR23438.pdf

Overview on the progress and the achievements of Land Projects

Completed Projects : **DanubeSIS**, **ECALP** (Ecopedological Map of the Alps), **ESVA** (Soil Visual Assessment) , Groundwater Resources, **INSEA** (Integrated Sink Enhancement Assessment), **SINFO** (Mars Crop Yield Forecasting System), **SOTER** (Soil Terrain Database)

Ongoing Projects: **AquaTRAIN**: A Marie Curie Research Training Network. **DIGISOIL**: Technologies for the assessment of soil properties and soil degradation indicators. **Digital Soil Mapping (DSM)**: A geographically referenced soil databases. **eSOTER**: A web-based regional pilot platform with data, methodology, and applications, using remote sensing. **Geoland 2**: Assessing the impact of agriculture on the environment and the effectiveness of agri-environmental measures. **iSOIL**: Development and improvement of technologies for data collection in (digital) soil mapping. **MEUSIS**: "Multiscale European Soil Information System". **Ramsoil**: The Risk Assessment Methodologies for SOIL threats. **SoCo**: Sustainable Agriculture and Soil Conservation. **Soil Images Catalogue (SIC)**: In this Catalogue a number of Soil Images are presented (Metadata also included) and they are free for Download. <http://eusoils.jrc.ec.europa.eu/projects.html>

EU Project RECONDES 'Conditions for Restoration and Mitigation of Desertified Areas Using Vegetation'



The focus of RECONDES is the mitigation of desertification by the means of innovative techniques using vegetation in specific landscape configurations prone to severe degradation processes. The resulted

guidelines have been written mainly by ecologists, geomorphologists, hydrologists, soil scientists, modellers and those with an involvement with policy and its application. This Project, funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General of Research, contributes directly to the objectives of the Global Change and Ecosystems Sub-Priority by providing major support to the **EU Strategy for Sustainable Development**, and the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification**. www.port.ac.uk/research/recondes/

FAO to "Reform for Growth"

A Plan to deal with challenges including hunger and poverty reduction, food crises, climate change, bioenergy and the impact of the ongoing financial crisis on agriculture.

The full story is available at <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/8649/icode/>

Policy Options for Accelerating African Agriculture

Authors Xinshen Diao and colleagues assessed the likely impact of two strategic policy options: doubling African staples production, and improving "market access" through regional integration and lowering transaction costs.

View the full paper at <http://ifpri.org/pubs/dp/ifpridp00825.asp>

Chlorophyll Fluorescence to Assess Drought Performance

Assessing plant performance during drought is a key experimental scientific issue for those who want to evaluate and mitigate the impacts of drought periods over food security. Analysis of survival is commonly used as a means of comparing the performance of plant lines under such conditions. Scientists at the Australian National University (ANU) have developed a rapid, non-invasive technique to lead such assessments. The technique measures chlorophyll fluorescence to determine how plants cope up with low-water conditions. A paper describing the method was published online ahead of print by Plant Methods. The ANU researchers led by Barry Pogson found that plants' viability during increasing water deficit could be measured and quantified by measuring changes to the maximum efficiency of photosystem II (Fv/Fm), and that this was easily measurable by chlorophyll fluorometry. These measurements can be obtained quickly and non-invasively using inexpensive equipment and with minimal expertise. The versatility of the technique was verified by comparing drought performance of several *Arabidopsis* ecotypes to a variety of mutants with altered drought tolerance or photosynthetic efficiency. The chlorophyll fluorescence technique might complement existing methods of evaluating drought performance while also increasing the number of tools available for assessment of other plant stresses.

The paper is available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1746-4811-4-27>

G rard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG

UNESCO-EOLSS Encyclopedia

The UNESCO-EOLSS Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems is an integrated on-line compendium of 16 encyclopedias on themes ranging from Earth and Atmospheric Sciences to Food and Agricultural Sciences, Human and Natural Resources Policies, and Development and Economic Sciences. The project attempts to forge pathways between disciplines in order to show their interdependence and helps foster the trans-disciplinary aspects of the relationship between nature and human society. EOLSS on line is made available free of

charge to universities in the UN list of least developed countries and disadvantaged individuals worldwide. Please visit www.eolss.net

Call for papers

The Honorary Theme Editor (HTE) on Soil Sciences, Land Use and Land Cover is still looking for a few highly qualified papers on various aspects related to Crops and Soil Sciences made by potential authors who would be able and willing to write a peer-reviewed paper of approximately 20 pages (10,000-12,500 words) on Seed Production and Technology, Crop Quality, History, Philosophy and Sociology of Soil Science, among others. People interested in such a collaboration are invited to contact Prof. Willy Verheye, Honorary Theme Editor WVerheye@telenet.be Potential authors should add a short CV with the title of at least three relevant publications stating their experience in the field concerned.

NRCS Soil Taxonomy in Spanish: Claves para la Taxonomía de Suelos, Décima Edición

For decades, NRCS has worked with soil scientists from around the world to increase awareness and expand knowledge concerning the importance of soil and its impact on all aspects of life. By translating the "Keys" into Spanish, many soil scientists and other professionals from Latin America, the United States, and other countries will benefit from this effort for years to come.

Free download in [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NSSC/Soil Taxonomy/keys/Spanish Keys.pdf](ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NSSC/Soil_Taxonomy/keys/Spanish_Keys.pdf)

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

Alain Oustry in memoriam



Since December 2007, we knew that a severe illness had hit him again – he was 45 years old. He struggled with his modest tenacity that was admired and respected by all of us. He came back to work with us every time he could. We could see that he was going worse and worse. But his strength, his enthusiasm and his usual smile changed our sadness into a lesson of simple human dignity that nobody is about to forget.

On October 22 in the morning, we heard that he would never come again to work with us. The busy corridors became desert and silent. Red eyes could be seen in the face of the few colleagues that we

could cross this day.

Alain was an economist. He was engaged by Cnes as budget and contract manager of the SPOT series of satellites, at a time when challenging technological and industrial issues superseded economic ones. Alain led a considerable job in full synergy with his technical colleagues, thus turning the SPOT initiative into a great success within defined constraints. The basic economic concept of the SPOT initiative was a step by step switch from a public to a public-private partnership framework. Alain led this touchy objective both with determination and an utmost care, without any nostalgic look behind him. In parallel, he took the initiative to create a hitherto unknown economic intelligence capacity in Cnes. In particular, he led an outstanding cooperation with the Toulouse University of economic sciences to set up methodologies allowing simulations of satellite series cost evolutions according to various scenarios and constraints.

Within European DesertNet, he enthusiastically joined the '*Economic Drivers and Social-Economic Consequences*' Working Group. Addressing this severe problem through a coherent multi-scale integrated approach linking physical and social sciences and thus contributing to alleviate the fate of some of the poorest people in the world fascinated him. Alain proposed to set up a kick-off workshop in close cooperation with the Toulouse University of economic sciences. He started this job, but could not complete it. This workshop will take place.

Alain, you left us too early. But you know that you will always be alive in our memory and our hearts.

Gérard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG

Communication to all members:

If you would like to contribute to future EDN newsletters, please send your contributions to nrd@uniss.it. We will be pleased to insert any information (1000 characters and a link for more details) related to desertification research, provided it is sent within the announced deadline.

Next deadline for the 2/2009 issue: 10th April

----- Editorial Staff -----

Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Hamburg University, Germany; Gérard Begni, Environment & Sustainable Development, CNES, France; María José Marqués, IMIDRA. Com. Madrid, Spain; Alice Ferrero, University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain; Chiara Zanolla & Valeria Petrucci, NRD - Sassari University, Italy.

Secretariat European DesertNet

c/o Biozentre Klein Flottbek and Botanical Garden, University of Hamburg
Ohnhorststr. 18
22609 Hamburg, Germany
Tel. 040/42816-260
Fax. 040/42816-261

Email: makhtar-schuster@botanik.uni-hamburg.de