

What means can French cooperation use in combating desertification?

France devotes an average of nearly €35 million per year to combating desertification. The funds are allocated to field projects, research work and institutional support for countries and regional and multilateral institutions. In conformity with the priority awarded to the French priority solidarity zone (ZSP), actions are concentrated in Africa and the Mediterranean area.

All French institutional players are mobilised

France provides technical assistance and expertise for the various international and regional institutions involved in combating desertification (World Bank, Global Mechanism, CILSS, OSS).

Actions funded by AFD form over half of French efforts in combating desertification (currently nearly €20 million per year). The projects carried out with an impact on desertification cover local development, the concerted management of natural resources, conservation agriculture, support for transhumance livestock farming, etc.

The French Global Environment Facility, a bilateral public fund for the protection of the world environment, was reconstituted for the period 2007 – 2010 with objectives of annual financial commitments of €20 million. The funding of innovative field projects for the combating of desertification is the target of 8 to 15% of FFEM funds, that is to say between €1.6 and €3 million.

In this context, the share of funding implemented by the NGOs and the other civil society players will be increased by the development of programmes of the 'call for initiatives' type.

New funding prospects

Other prospects are taking shape in the context of adaptation to climate change. France will make sure that the actions taken to combat desertification and soil degradation are covered by funds already assembled by virtue of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund) or planned for the future (the Adaptation Fund associated with the Kyoto Protocol).

In sub-Saharan Africa, combating desertification and adapting to climate change in rural areas requires the same types of field action. France will support these countries so that they have access to projects aimed at both adaptation to climate change and combating desertification.



After UNDP (2000) (modified)

Research on the socioeconomic costs of land degradation

France supports scientific research efforts and all scientific cooperation in the combat against desertification, in particular through the French Scientific Committee on desertification (CSFD) set up in 1997. This committee mobilises the French scientific community, aids the ministries in charge of the convention on combating desertification (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development and Town and Country Planning, Ministry for Higher Education and Research) in defining the priorities of French action and disseminates research results. It is made up of 19 scientists appointed on a personal basis by the ministries.

With support from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and AFD, the CSFD held an international workshop on 'The cost of inaction and investment opportunities in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas' in Rome in December 2006. This was attended by development agencies, ministries, operators and scientists. It is now shown that:

■ At the national level, annual economic losses resulting from land degradation amount to some 0.5 to 1.5% of the GNP of the most seriously affected countries.

In the long term, land degradation causes increased poverty and loss of know-how. Losses of natural capital as a result of land degradation lead to losses of intangibles—human capital—essential for sustainable development.



■ At the local level, some rates of return on investment in combating desertification attain 30%.

Investing in arid land is therefore economically, socially and environmentally profitable. However, a number of conditions seem necessary in order to attract public or private investors, including the improvement and stability of public policies in key domains: investment, land tenure security, agricultural prices, education, health and civil peace.

The CSFD participates in running an international network devoted to these questions.

More information can be found at:
www.csf-desertification.org

Cover pictures: Woman, Niger (F. Blanchon © IRD) • Argan plantation, Morocco (© G. Matheron)



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FRENCH STRATEGY FOR COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND SOIL DEGRADATION

Enhancing the implementation of actions that directly benefit the populations affected by desertification

Combating desertification and soil degradation: a world issue

Desertification and soil degradation have a direct effect on the world heritage and the struggle to control the phenomenon is one of the major issues for the years to come. France has undertaken to support the efforts made by the countries threatened by ratifying the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This was adopted in Paris in 1994 and ratified by 191 countries.

A problem of development and environment

Desertification is often presented as the natural extension of existing deserts but this is not so. It is a process of gradual loss of soil productivity and the exhaustion of plant cover caused first of all by human activities. These are as follows in descending order of importance: over-grazing, poor land management and the excessive harvesting of firewood. Soil productivity decreases by as much as 50% in some regions.

It is a global phenomenon: 40% of the land area of the world is concerned, with two-thirds of this already affected and 10 to 20% seriously degraded. The

countries most exposed are the African countries, both north and south of the Sahara, and especially the Sahel countries and eastern and southern Africa. Desertification affects a third of humanity, that is to say two billion people. Present climate changes risk aggravating the process and its socioeconomic and environmental consequences.

As desertification leads to a reduction of biodiversity and a decrease in carbon fixation in the soil and in plants, desertification affects world public goods. It thus concerns the developed

countries in addition to the countries directly affected.

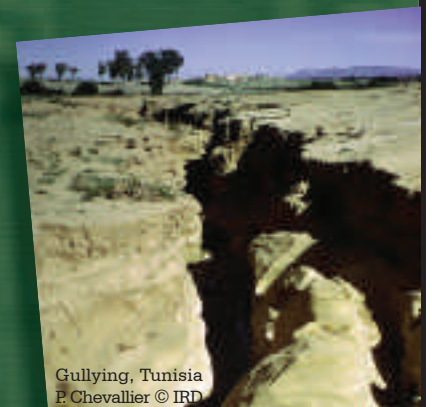
Here, the sustainable development of rural areas enhancing the maintaining of the agricultural, pastoral and forestry activities of hundreds of million of people living on several billion hectares of land that is affected by or at risk from degradation, is a major challenge. Fighting desertification helps to attain the Millennium Development Goals: reducing extreme poverty and hunger and ensuring a sustainable environment.

A strategic approach by French cooperation

In the light of these issues, France adopted a strategic framework setting its priorities in combating desertification and soil degradation, with the main objective of enhancing the implementation of actions that directly benefit the populations affected by desertification. For this, France operates at all levels from the international to the local in order to create a favourable context for the implementation of concrete actions for combating desertification.

The zones most severely affected by desertification

In red: deserts
In yellow: zones affected by desertification



Taking action at the international level

Working for a greater awareness of the combat against desertification and involving civil society in the North and the South

THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS resulting from the Earth Summit devoted to sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, such as the UNCCD, and the creation of specialised international institutions such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) form a suitable working framework for addressing world environmental questions and drafting global policies. Thus, **France, in liaison with the European Union, is active in international bodies** (United Nations, GEF, World Bank, etc.) and in frameworks for multi-donor dialogues (the TerrAfrica Initiative, the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development) to strengthen the implementation of the Convention and the effectiveness of aid in this domain.

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The international forum Désertif'Actions:
désertification et société civile
(Montpellier, France, Sept. 2006)

Civil society and combating desertification

Civil society organisations now participate in the major debates on national and international issues concerning public aid for development, the rules of international trade, debt burden and combating poverty, together with the role of states in governance and the world environment. Combating desertification requires the participation and cooperation of civil society—individuals, community-based organisations, professional groups, NGOs, economic operators, local authorities, etc. The text of the Convention requires the country Parties to involve civil society in all the stages from the design to the implementation of programmes for combating desertification, recognising civil society as being a key player in this question.

In France, the Working Group on Desertification (GTD) is a multi-player platform comprising NGOs, a development agency, scientists, stakeholder groups and a training institute, all of whom operate at various levels of the question of arid and drought zones. Its activities consist of promoting awareness and information in France,

capacity strengthening for its partners in the North and the South, national and international pleas for greater participation by civil society, strengthening links between scientists and NGOs and a quest for the greater taking into account of the combat against desertification. The GTD pursues the same objectives within eniD, the European network of NGOs.

The GTD is run by the *Centre d'actions et de réalisations internationales* (CARI), founded in 1998 and accredited by the Convention. It was the joint organiser of the international forum *Désertif'actions: désertification et société civile* (Desertif'actions: desertification and civil society, Montpellier, September 2006) where more than 200 civil society representatives from some 60 countries launched the 'Montpellier Appeal' to show to all stakeholders the urgency of taking action to combat desertification.

More information can be found at:
www.cariassociation.org/gtd
www.desertif-actions.org

An integrated strategy:

Acting at regional and sub-regional scales

Generating trans-frontier dynamics

THE SEVERE DROUGHTS in sub-Saharan and North Africa in the 1970s led to the development by neighbouring countries of joint methods, in particular for environmental monitoring and the prevention of food risks. **France thus provides support in particular for the work of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).**

■ **Aid in the development, dissemination and implementation of joint, shared methodologies** by contributing to the OSS environmental surveillance programmes (Objective 4).

■ **Structure sub-regional action and coordination between the stakeholders in neighbouring states** by supporting the actions of the CILSS and the OSS: prevention of food and drought risks, accompanying member-countries for the implementation of combating desertification and the development of regional initiatives in combating desertification for the benefit of civil society (Objective 5).

■ **Develop new joint research themes**, devoted in particular to socioeconomic features such as the costs and impact of land degradation and the vulnerability and adaptability of populations (Objective 6).

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Young herder, Cameroon

The OSS, a scientific platform for North-South-South solidarity partnership

The Sahara and Sahel Observatory is an autonomous international organisation grouping more than 20 African countries, several European countries (including France), Canada, sub-regional and regional African organisations, United Nations agencies and civil society. Founded in 1992, it provides support for member-countries for the improvement of knowledge of desertification and shared aquifers and for the assembly and use of existing knowledge. Its activities are aimed at providing the support needed for national and sub-regional processes of implementation of the UNCCD in particular through the strengthening of national capacities. The OSS promotes a participative regional approach based on South-South and North-South partnerships aimed at improving watch systems and anticipating long-term environmental trends.

Its programme of action is hinged on two major features: environmental monitoring and the concerted management of shared water resources. Implementation is supported by two horizontal activities: information and research/development. Leading programmes at OSS include:

■ The facility for the observation and monitoring of the environment provides coordination and assembly of observations of population-environment dynamics from a network of ecological surveillance watches; in the long term this will be operational in 11 African countries. Decision-aid tools are developed for the monitoring and evaluation of national plans for combating desertification and early drought warning at various scales from local to regional.

■ The 'Concerted water management' programme involves the evaluation of ground water resources and drainage basin watches to promote 'drainage basin awareness'. The formalised joint approach mechanism (e.g. the joint approach to the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System) is based on negotiated strategies and joint management tools.

More information can be found at:
www.unesco.org/oss

from international to local

Acting at the national level

Helping to implement strategies and action plans

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS for combating desertification form part of national policies and must be implemented in synergy with the other programmes related to the environment (biodiversity, climate change), the alleviation of poverty and rural development. The strengthening of state structures, of decentralisation and of good governance processes is required for better participation of civil society and to enhance the effective combating of desertification. Thus, **France supports the development of coherent, integrated policies and national strategies. It favours research, the dissemination and implementation of sustainable management practices for natural resources.**

■ **Support the development of policies and national strategies** for combating desertification that are integrated in the priorities of development and poverty reduction policies in synergy with the other environmental national action plans and in participation with civil society. Land tenure security and access to natural resources are also encouraged (Objective 7).

■ **Develop and promote systems and techniques for the sustainable management of natural resources** by strengthening national research capacity and the promotion of sustainable practices: conservation agriculture, the management of pastoral areas, water resource conservation and good management of energy resources (Objective 8).

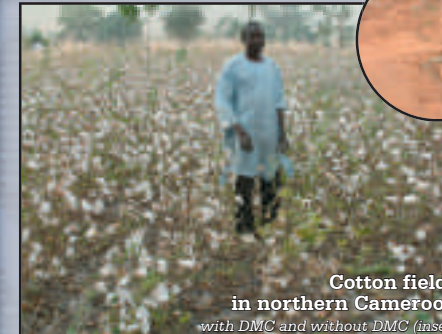
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Animal farmers
visiting a DMC field
in Cameroon

Agroecology: a pathway for combating desertification

© M. Thézé



Cotton fields
in northern Cameroo
with DMC and without DMC (inset)

This plan has two components—a set of projects for the adaptation and dissemination of these techniques, funded by AFD, and a transversal program for monitoring and support for the support and training of field teams in these practices, for exchanging experiences and for mutual benefit.

CIRAD has devised and developed **cultivation systems based on the direct-seeding mulch-based principle (DMC)**. These systems are a revolutionary alternative to conventional agriculture—the latter must be rethought for the conservation and restoration of fertility in the Southern countries. The land is no longer tilled in these systems and the soil is covered by mulch at all times. DMC systems provide numerous 'environmental services', halting soil erosion, improving rainfall efficiency, stabilising agricultural yields and fixing carbon. This line of work is very promising for combating desertification and climate change.

More information can be found at:
<http://agroecologie.cirad.fr>

Acting at the local level

Enhancing decentralisation and the emergence of civil society

THE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT AND PARTICIPATION by local people—men and women, livestock and crop farmers—is a prerequisite for successful actions for combating desertification.

As the main players in combating desertification, their innovative spirit, dynamism and initiatives are guarantees of the success of projects. **France thus acts in favour of the decentralised management of natural resources and the emerging of civil society** so that actions to combat desertification are of direct benefit to the populations affected. The share of funding mobilised by NGOs and the other players in civil society will be increased via North-South partnerships.



Gum
arabic

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Dune control,
Mauritania

■ **Enhance the emerging of field projects** by increasing the awareness and strengthening the capacities of local stakeholders, including crop farmers' and livestock farmers' groups, providing backing for the decentralised management of natural resources, the funding of small local projects (of the IREMLCD programme type), the contractualisation of the management of natural resources and access to land (Objective 9).



Training, Niger

M.-L. Sabrié © IRD

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Agroecology, Madagascar

IREMLCD: funding civil society micro-projects in the combating of desertification

The *Initiative Régionale Environnement Mondial et Lutte contre la Désertification en Afrique sahélienne* (IREMLCD) programme has received funding of €3 million from the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM). Since 2003, this programme implemented by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) funds micro-projects for combating desertification designed and implemented by civil society in the 9 CILSS member-states. IREMLCD is one of the tools that contribute to the implementation of national action plans for combating desertification via 30 field projects: dune control, soil rehabilitation, community forestry, pastoral development, erosion control measures, etc. These projects combine the combating of desertification and poverty alleviation.

This regional initiative is original to a great extent because **the modest projects of local stakeholders in the South have access to international funding**, with subsidies of up to €100,000 per project. Furthermore, civil society is involved in all the stages of project design and implementation as it proposes its own projects. It is also the main beneficiary of the positive impacts of these projects. This procedure in which **the populations concerned are involved in the projects to combat desertification** is a perfect illustration of the general objective of the French strategy.

More information can be found at:
www.cilss.bf/htm/lcd.htm