



Niamey Declaration: From Desert to Oasis

Exciting gains have been made in the fight against desertification, demonstrating that the drylands can grow beyond crisis, suffering and insecurity towards a prosperous, secure future through innovations by land users aided by policy reforms and applied science and development.

Adopted by the Participants of the 'From Desert to Oasis' Symposium/Workshop
Niamey, Niger, 25 September 2006

We, the participants of the 'From Deserts to Oasis' Symposium/Workshop held in Niamey, Niger during 23-25 September 2006:

Express our gratitude to the Government of Niger and in particular His Excellency, Prime Minister Mr. Hama Amadou for welcoming and strongly supporting this international symposium/workshop on behalf of the African continent;

Appreciate the efforts of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), through the Oasis Systemwide Program (convened jointly with ICARDA) and the Desert Margins Program to organize and host this event during the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, in joint sponsorship with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and with the endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and with representation from regional bodies including CILSS and the Regional Economic Communities; and we commend the high level of diversity and expertise contributed by approximately 100 participants from all African regions (including those represented by the CORAF, SADC, and ASARECA research networks) and from international organizations representing the research, development and donor communities across Africa;

Consider dryland degradation to be an insidious threat to all regions of Africa, often unrecognized until it is too late, culminating in intense human suffering as witnessed repeatedly through hunger, poverty, insecurity, conflict, mass migration, and losses of cultural and ecosystem wealth;

Note that while public attention is readily drawn to dryland catastrophes such as famines, conflicts over scarce resources, and flights of refugees, there are meanwhile many inspiring cases of success resulting from the quiet dedication of millions to build better lives for themselves and their communities, importantly aided by policy reforms, investments, research, and development initiatives;

Call attention to the opportunity to learn from and capitalize on these successes in ways that empower people, communities and nations to spread their benefits more widely and deeply, particularly to help the poor and disadvantaged who suffer most from desertification, with special attention to women and youth who are especially vulnerable yet are key to the future;

Urge that development-oriented scientific research be mobilized to capture and build on these lessons and devise ways to spread them widely, and to access major new opportunities through scientific and technological breakthroughs achieved globally;

Recognize that such research and knowledge-sharing, to be successful, must address the priority needs expressed by the poor and must take a holistic approach through cross-disciplinary partnerships that engage the participation of land users, governments, regional and international bodies, non-governmental organizations, civil society, communities and the private sector;

Highlight the comparative advantages of the drylands which are vast grasslands and parklands well suited for livestock grazing and integrated tree-crop-livestock farming, featuring ample sunshine, fewer pests and diseases, relatively low populations, favorable soil structure, significant water resources, valuable biodiversity, and eco-tourism potential—powerful assets for overcoming poverty and insecurity;

Advocate building on land-users' strategy of on and off-farm diversification to introduce new crops and products and the market connections needed to establish additional revenue channels that reward the protection and rehabilitation of natural resources such as soils, water supplies and biodiversity;

Recommend research emphasis on dryland policy options and consequences, land tenure issues, farmer decision-making and incentives, long-term trends in the health of land and ecosystems, interactions between agricultural and natural ecosystems, drought preparedness and mitigation, soil and water resource management, the potential of indigenous and introduced agro-biodiversity, the value of ecosystem services, and the improved sharing of knowledge across the spectrum of stakeholders;

Emphasize the need for research to better document the full costs of dryland degradation, particularly the losses of ecological goods and services, and of human and social capital—and to quantify the substantial benefits that could accrue from the sustainable rehabilitation and development of these lands;

Encourage researchers to better communicate the ways in which their findings can help secure a better future for the drylands, and to partner with the media and high-profile advocates to increase the visibility of this cause; and

Endorse the 'Oasis' international research-for-development program being formed in support of the world's commitment to combat desertification as articulated in the UNCCD.



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