

FRANCOPHONE AFRICA REGIONAL TRIALOGUE

Bright Spots on Land Degradation Neutrality, Pollinators and Food Productivity

CONCEPT NOTE

YAOUNDE, CAMEROON

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Land lies at the centre of political, social and economic development in Francophone Africa, since land-based activities are fundamental to shared prosperity and livelihoods across the region. Land degradation is one of the world's greatest environmental challenges. Africa is particularly vulnerable with two thirds of its land surface estimated to be already degraded to some degree¹, affecting at least 485 million people, or 65 % of the entire African population².

Land degradation is intrinsically linked to biodiversity and ecosystem services loss, and ultimately to agriculture production and food security. The main drivers of land degradation and associated biodiversity loss include, among others, expansion of crop and grazing lands into native vegetation, unsustainable agricultural and forestry practices, climate change and, in specific areas, urban expansion, infrastructure development and extractive industry. The degradation of land resources and associated key ecological services, such as pollination, erodes the foundation for agriculture production and achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs)³.

Combating land degradation is an urgent priority to protect the biodiversity and ecosystem services vital to all life on Earth and to ensure human well-being. Francophone Africa, including the countries targeted by the upcoming Regional Trialogue⁴ are among the most vulnerable, yet at the forefront of the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) political agenda. While the degradation situation is highly critical, solutions exist to reverse the trend. In line with their commitment to SDG Target 15.3, countries have been making proactive efforts to achieve LDN through corrective actions to improve the long-term stewardship of land and sustainability of natural resource use. Often implemented at the instigation of local communities, such actions have contributed to reduced soil erosion, restored vegetation cover with pollinator-friendly plants and crops, retained water for irrigation, improved agro- and silvo-pastoral production and increased the resilience of ecosystems and populations in the face of climate change.

1 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2013. Retrieved from https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/Land_In_Numbers_web.pdf.

2 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2013. Retrieved from https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/Land_In_Numbers_web.pdf.

3 The Economics of Land Degradation Initiative & UNEP, 2015. Retrieved from https://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-unep-report_07_spec_72dpi.pdf.

4 Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Togo



TRIALOGUE: BACKGROUND

The Trialogue is a face-to-face three-way communication and capacity building methodology that strengthens the interface between policymakers, science/traditional knowledge holders and practitioners. Promoted by the [Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network \(BES-Net\)](#), Trialogues aim at enhancing national capacity to integrate findings and policy-relevant options from the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' \(IPBES\)](#) thematic assessments into policy, planning and on-the-ground programmes and projects.

IPBES is mandated, in response to governments' requests, to mobilize international experts and assess the trends, status and future trajectories of biodiversity and ecosystem services at global, regional and thematic levels based on existing knowledge and up-to-date pool of evidence. To date, IPBES has produced two thematic assessment reports, which are of critical importance and value to the Francophone Africa countries in addressing the inter-linked land-biodiversity-climate agendas:

1) [Thematic Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration](#) (2016); and 2) [Thematic Assessment Report on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production](#) (2018). The platform's [Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Africa](#) (2018) also provides insightful finding and recommendations.

TRIALOGUE: OBJECTIVES

The objective of Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue is to jointly review the key messages of the two inter-linked IPBES thematic assessment reports, as well as the regional report and to assess their relevance to the ongoing efforts to achieve LDN, SDG 15.3 and other land-related SDG targets. More specifically, the Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue aims to:

- **Jointly assess latest knowledge** on the contributions that ecosystems, particularly pollination services, make towards agricultural production and food security;
- **Determine the trends and drivers of change** in the status of land and ecosystems degradation, and the impacts on achieving LDN targets, SDG 15.3 and other related targets;
- **Celebrate “bright spots”** where actions are contributing to LDN, improved pollination services and food productivity; and
- **Identify and agree on practical sustainable land management** (SLM) measures that improve resilience of ecosystems and contribute towards LDN and food productivity.

During the Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue, participants will share the latest knowledge about the current situation, including drivers of land degradation in the region, and socioeconomic and environmental (biodiversity and ecosystem services e.g. pollinators decline) impacts of land degradation and associated climate change at national and regional levels.

Furthermore, participants will share and celebrate “bright spots”, or good practice examples existing in the Francophone African countries, where farmers and businesses are enhancing food production through pollinator-friendly agroecology systems, while at the same time, combatting land degradation and strengthening climate change resilience – in ways that are scalable and can contribute to national LDN targets. Participants will share progress in their LDN implementation and generate an action-oriented outcome document, stipulating a set of concrete actions that are within the mandate/capacity of the Trialogue community and identifying policy windows and opportunities.



TRIALOGUE: TARGET AUDIENCE

The Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue will convene seven Sub-saharan Francophone Africa countries: Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Togo. The three-day event will be held in Yaounde, Cameroon, and hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDD), which has been leading the pioneering effort to carry out a thorough policy-relevant [biodiversity and ecosystem assessment](#) within the framework of BES-Net. It will be held in collaboration with key global/regional partners, including among others, IPBES, the [UN Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#), the [UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre \(UNEP-WCMC\)](#), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the [Coalition of the Willing on Pollinators](#), the [West African Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services \(WABES\)](#), and with the financial support of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and SwedBio.

The Trialogue will bring together 50-60 participants from the three communities of government policymakers, academic scientists/traditional knowledge holders and practitioners working on land degradation, biodiversity, climate change and related fields. Participants will jointly explore the opportunity for "bright spots" of practical measures that harness biodiversity and ecosystem services in ways that simultaneously contribute to the achievement of the SDGs on LDN, climate change and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

A particular emphasis will be given to indigenous peoples, farmers and private entrepreneurs efforts to improve food production through pollinator-friendly agroecological systems, while combating land degradation and building resilience to climate change that can be replicated and contribute to national LDN objectives. These efforts are considered as essential for the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

METHODOLOGY AND AGENDA

The Trialogue uses an approach that ensures active engagement and interaction by enabling participants to openly share concerns, make complex information locally relevant, proven success stories and identify innovative prototypes for good practices in their own areas that highlight the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services in LDN implementation. The Trialogue methodology includes ways to practically apply the IPBES findings and options for decision-makers through multiple-stakeholder dialogue, particularly in ways that give voice to indigenous peoples and local community knowledge-holders. The Trialogue also hosts a special breakfast for high-level policymakers and donors on Day 3 to encourage them to be champions of the actions being proposed by the participants.



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SwedBio
A programme at Stockholm Resilience Centre