

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

In 2002, the GEF mandate was expanded to include land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, as a focal area to support the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This decision, coupled with the GEF's designation as a financial mechanism for UNCCD, made sustainable land management a primary focus of GEF assistance.

The GEF's program on sustainable land management focuses on an integrated approach to natural resources management, covering all the major land use systems: agriculture, rangeland, and forestry. Global environmental stability and sustainable livelihoods can only be achieved through a holistic approach where different resource users and decision makers come together to agree on common objectives that maintain the ecological integrity of their resource base.

The GEF's work on sustainable land management is guided by the following four strategic principles:

- Mainstreaming sustainable land management into the production landscape by addressing global environmental and sustainable livelihood issues
- Creating synergies across GEF focal areas to address sustainable land management in the context of biodiversity conservation, integrated land and water management, integrated chemicals management and adaptation to climate change. Specific cross-focal area challenges, such as sustainable forest and transboundary watershed management, will also be addressed
- Promoting country programming for sustainable land management at the country level and building partnerships to support such programs
- Building institutional, financial, ecological, and socioeconomic capacity to foster long-term sustainability

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The GEF promotes sustainable agriculture that integrates environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity objectives. Stewardship of human resources is of prime importance and includes the consideration of social responsibilities, such as working and living conditions of farmers, the needs of rural communities, and consumer health and safety. Stewardship of natural resources is also critical and involves maintaining or enhancing this vital resource and ecological base for the long term.

The GEF advocates the landscape approach because it addresses the connectivity among systems at different scales: from the individual farms, to the local ecosystems, to the communities affected by farming systems locally, regionally, and globally. This approach allows a larger and more comprehensive view of the consequences of farming practices on both human communities and the environment.

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND RANGELANDS

In many parts of the developing world, farmers integrate both crop and livestock operations. Recognizing that the two are highly complementary, both biologically and economically, the GEF promotes sustainable management of rangelands. The GEF emphasizes selected elements of a rangeland management system that livestock producers need to address in order to make the system sustainable: management planning, animal selection, animal nutrition, reproduction, herd health, and grazing management.

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND FORESTRY

The concept of sustainable forest management, as promoted by the GEF, recognizes the connections among the health of forests and the health of communities, the economy, and the environment. Sustainable forest management implies a type of management that views the forest not as the source of any one economic product or service (e.g., timber or climate regulator), but as an integrated whole. Sustainable forest management respects the full range of environmental, social, and economic values of the forest and attempts to integrate the way these diverse values are managed.

The GEF supports the introduction and strengthening of sustainable forest management schemes, including:

- Meaningful participation and benefit sharing by forest users
- Reforestation
- A sustainable market chain, clear and respected tenure and use rights, respect for indigenous people, the existence and implementation of a forest management plan, and a use-intensity classification according to the biodiversity value.

National policies and strategies should provide a framework for increased efforts, including the development and strengthening of institutions and programs for the management, conservation, and sustainable development of forests.

GEF SUPPORT IN COUNTRIES: PROJECT EXAMPLES

Kenya

Kenya relies heavily on the agriculture sector. Increased population has resulted in migration to fragile ecosystems, such as the arid and semi-arid lands, and the subsequent degradation of the environment. Population pressure has also resulted in the fragmentation of land into uneconomical parcels, cultivation of land that is vulnerable to soil erosion, and encroachment and destruction of forests.

A GEF project, which the World Bank is implementing, will help improve people's livelihoods in the rural communities of Kenya by promoting sustainable agriculture and the modernization of the agricultural sector. It will also mitigate land degradation in selected watersheds through promotion of sustainable land management technology packages and practices. This will involve the integrated utilization of soil, water, air, and floral and faunal biodiversity for physical and socio-economic development, paying particular attention to environmental stability.

Argentina

Patagonia in Argentina represents a rich mosaic of varied arid and semi-arid areas, interspersed with some more humid zones. The wide range of ecosystems collectively supports a rich diversity of species and a relatively high rate of endemism. Unfortunately, desertification processes affect an estimated 85 percent of Patagonia. The main cause of this degradation is overgrazing. Livestock rearing, principally sheep, has been the main productive activity in rural areas of Patagonia for more than a century.

A GEF project, which the United Nations Development Programme is implementing, seeks to control desertification in Patagonia through the implementation of sustainable rangeland management practices. The project aims to restore ecosystems to their full integrity, stability, and functions, within the context of the sustainable development of the region. It will also strive to remove capacity-related barriers currently impeding the adoption of sustainable rangeland management in the region and undertake on-the-ground action to complement the Sustainable Sheep Husbandry Development Program for Patagonia.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan possesses a significant forest resource, with 11.5 million hectares of forested land. These forests and wooded rangelands are a key factor in soil and sand retention, protection of watersheds, and reduction in the siltation of waterways and reservoirs. They also have been a driving force in the country's economy as a source of fodder, food, fuel, medicinal plants, and recreation. Unsustainable conversion of fragile rangelands to agricultural use, and other ecologically risky land use for rainfed and irrigated crop production, livestock production, oil drilling, the space program, and nuclear testing, have all destroyed valuable land. As a result, large areas have become wasteland.

A GEF project, which the World Bank is implementing, seeks to develop environmental and economic services through more sustainable use, increased productivity, and enhanced conservation of forest and associated rangeland resources in Kazakhstan. The project will focus on the northeastern pine forest and southern saxaul woodlands. The project will work to create policy, legal, organizational, and information frameworks that enable improved forest and associated rangeland management. In addition, it will promote rehabilitation and effective management of forests and woodlands.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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