

## **Both ENDS and partners launch new project: Drynet**

*June 17<sup>th</sup> is designated as the United Nations' World Day to Combat Desertification, commemorating the day in the year 1994 when the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris. This is also the day that Both ENDS together with 13 organisations from around the world, will present a joint initiative called Drynet to the press. This EU-funded project aims to strengthen civil society networks, such as farmers' collectives, indigenous groups; women's organisations; trade unions and non-governmental organisations with the right knowledge and visibility to influence dryland development policies in affected countries.*

### **Land degradation and alternative strategies**

Desertification is simply said the degradation of drylands, arid regions such as deserts; grasslands and savannahs, which cover nowadays over one third of the present global land area. Close to one billion people directly depend upon dryland ecosystems and products for their livelihoods. Due to current climatic changes and destructive land use, land is degrading faster than ever. Developing countries bear the heaviest burden of this process, forcing local farmer organisations to come up with alternative land management strategies. Many of these approaches turn out to be quite successful; they only need to be revealed and brought to the attention of policy makers and other stakeholders.

### **Success stories**

A good example of a sustainable dryland initiative developed by local civil society organisations is the "Polyculture Project" in the Brazilian drylands. Although known for its rainforests, Brazil also contains a large semi-arid region. Much of this is severely degraded, due to large-scale deforestation, ploughing and goat-herding beyond the support capacity of the land. Rain in this region is unpredictable, often coming in downpours followed by long dry periods even in the rainy season. In spite of this, the farmers plant corn and beans, which depend on rain, practically programming themselves for agricultural failure. Worse, they clean-till and hoe the land, leaving it open and exposed to the sun and drying winds. It is in this scenario that the "polyculture project" showed an alternative to an agricultural system that had come to depend heavily on irrigation and chemical inputs. Today the project boasts 500 demonstration fields on farmers' plots and works directly with 1000 farm families. The strategy of the polyculture model is to imitate a natural ecosystem, which is resilient in the face of climatic variations, while new products are introduced to guarantee household revenues.

### **Drynet: a global initiative, giving future to drylands**

By identifying, collecting, sharing and disseminating many more of these success stories, Both ENDS and partners from Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mauritania, South Africa, Senegal, Kazakhstan, India, the Netherlands, France and Germany will strengthen national civil society networks in both knowledge and skills, making them important partners for policy makers in putting dryland and related poverty issues higher on the political agenda. Through newsletters, radio programmes and an interactive website, Drynet will stimulate and promote sustainable development. The ultimate goal is to give key global stakeholders from science and policy makers an urgently needed practical response to combat land degradation: by linking local action to global opportunities.

Click [here](#) for more information.

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