

## Global Soil Week 2019:

### Creating Enabling Environments for Land Degradation Neutrality in Africa

ICRAF Campus, Nairobi, 27 – 30 May 2019

#### Background

The Global Soil Week (GSW) brings together a diverse range of actors to initiate and strengthen policies and actions on sustainable soil management and responsible land governance. Since its beginning in 2012, the focus and design of the GSW has continuously evolved in order to respond to and shape ongoing policy debates and land management programming. The first GSW supported dialogues around the need to secure the topic of soil on the political agenda. As the United Nations dedicated the year 2015 to soils and adopted the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the GSW 2017 focused on supporting reviews of the SDGs at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) from the perspective of soil health and land governance. After requests from partner countries for a regional event, the African Soil Seminar was held in Nairobi in 2016 with the governments of Kenya, Ethiopia, Benin, and Burkina Faso as co-hosts. Building on the experience and outcomes of previous GSWs, the GSW 2019 will focus on creating enabling environments for land degradation neutrality in Africa.

Growing populations, increasing urbanization, poverty and unsustainable production and consumption patterns are among the strongest drivers of an alarming increase in rates of terrestrial resource degradation which compromises the provision of soil ecosystem services such as water storage, carbon sequestration and soil productivity. This negatively affects the capacity to respond to development challenges like climate change adaptation, poverty eradication and food security. Although global initiatives and programmes have incrementally responded to the challenge of land degradation (e.g. the Bonn Challenge, the Agenda 2030, the African Union's Malabo Declaration on Agriculture and Agenda 2063), increased effectiveness on the ground is required to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN).

The effects of increased land degradation are particularly tangible in Africa. The *Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* has recognized the continent's extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. This is due to estimates that more than 62% of the population depends directly on ecosystem services as source of income, energy, medicine, and food.<sup>[1]</sup> The annual report of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* has revealed that Africa continues to

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<sup>[1]</sup> IPBES (2018): Summary for policymakers of the regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Africa of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

present high levels -20% of its population- of undernourishment.<sup>[2]</sup> Additionally, the *United Nations World Population Prospect*<sup>[3]</sup> shows that Africa has the highest population growth rate in the world with estimates of 1.3 billion more people inhabiting the continent within the next 30 years.

In this context, African policymakers, development practitioners, civil society leaders, investors and farmers are increasingly focusing on sustainable land management in efforts towards not only avoiding and reducing land degradation but also restoring degraded lands. However, structural hindrances such as incongruent land use planning, market distortions in the form of subsidies, inadequate extension and service delivery mechanisms or knowledge-transfer instruments pose an obstacle for these efforts to be further developed and sustained over time; end of project often means end of sustainable land management action. This understanding reveals the need for actions that enable long-term sustainable land management and address its hindering factors. The GSW 2019 will therefore focus on efforts to address land degradation by **creating enabling environments for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** across the African continent.

### Action-oriented Dialogue to Create Enabling Environments

Building on the outputs of the African Soil Seminar 2016, preparatory consultation meetings for the GSW 2019 were held during the 2018 HLPF in New York and the Global Landscapes Forum 2018 in Nairobi with a broad range of stakeholders including government officials, civil society organisations, research institutes and grassroots representatives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi and Madagascar. These meetings have resulted in an innovative design of the GSW 2019 acknowledging **the urgent need to co-develop actionable outputs that can support the achievement of LDN** at all levels (local to international).

The consultation meetings highlighted prominent dimensions of an enabling environment for LDN. These include for example equitable financing mechanisms; accessible extension and other services; adaptive governance structures and cooperation models; land tenure security; grassroots empowerment; and sustainable consumption patterns. In discussing real-world, practical case examples that speak to these dimensions, **the GSW 2019 aims to discover those factors which hinder or enable actions toward LDN and ways to address them.**

### Global Soil Week 2019: Strategic Approach

Considering the above background and focus, the outputs of the GSW 2019 will be generated in two subsequent phases:

1. During a 2-day **Global Soil Week Groundwork Event** up to 40 project implementers from different African countries will engage in evidence-based discussions guided by a selection of case examples. Working groups are expected to discuss the enabling and hindering factors that have affected the implementation of the cases. Participants will group these factors around a set of dimensions of enabling environments such as financing mechanisms, extensions

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<sup>[2]</sup> FAO, IFAD and WFP. (2015). The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress. Rome, FAO.

<sup>[3]</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables. ESA/P/WP/248.

services, and land governance systems (see above). The goal is to co-develop strategies to address these factors so that local actions toward LDN can be further developed and sustained over time.

2. The subsequent two-day **Global Soil Week Joint Action Event** will be an opportunity for up to 180 participants from different backgrounds including soil management practitioners, civil society organisations, academia, policy makers and international development organisations to build on the results of the groundwork event. During **workshop sessions**, they will discuss the proposed factors and strategies to create enabling environments for LDN along the abovementioned dimensions. **Plenary lab sessions** serve to 1. jointly examine the commonalities between the identified factors and strategies, and discuss how to address them more broadly; 2. provide space for government partners to present national programmes and initiatives that support efforts towards LDN; and 3. to discuss how these initiatives support the implementation of the identified strategies and what is needed to further strengthen those efforts. The GSW 2019 aims to generate actionable outputs by directly addressing key stakeholders relevant to the identified strategies. As such, in a **concluding plenary**, the findings will be brought forward for discussions with organizations and initiatives from the global and continental level on how they can respond to the identified needs in concrete terms.

### [Engaging the Global Soil Week 2019: Our Invitation](#)

In close cooperation with our partners from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, and Madagascar, as well as the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), we have developed the goals and strategy of the GSW 2019 and continue to jointly develop the content. This joint preparation process aims to set the scene for partners and stakeholders to further discuss and facilitate the creation of enabling environments for LDN in Africa both during and after the GSW 2019, which will be held **May 27-30, 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya**. We look forward to continue and further the cooperation with our partners in this process as we aim to support the creation of enabling environments for LDN.

Sincerely,

The GSW Team at TMG Research

## Funding Partners



## Implementing Partners

