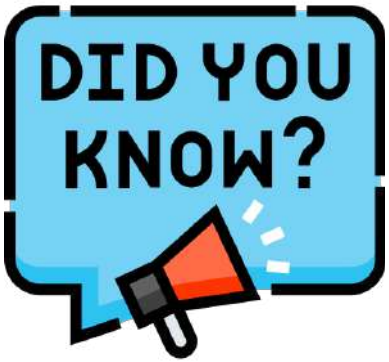
Main strategies and solutions for desertification

Several strategies can be implemented to combat desertification and restore degraded lands. The following are examples of the most effective solutions to prevent desertification and restore degraded land (DGB, 2021).

- Reforestation and afforestation: Planting trees and other vegetation helps prevent soil erosion, enhances soilfertility, and restores degraded ecosystems.
- Sustainable land management (SLM): SLM involves adopting sustainable agricultural practices, such as conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and soil conservation, to improve soil health, increase crop yields, and reduce land degradation.
- Water harvesting and management: Practices like building small dams, ponds, and other water-storage systems, help increase water availability and reduce the impact of drought in arid and semi-arid regions.
- Conservation of biodiversity: Protecting and conserving biodiversity is essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems, improving soil fertility, mitigating the impact of increased carbon emissions as well as the removal of invasive alien species.
- Sustainable energy development: Developing sustainable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, can help reduce the use of fossil fuels. This eliminates the excessive need to cut down trees that result in more degraded land with erosion and desertification.
- Policy and institutional support: Governments, non-profit organisations, and other stakeholders can provide policy and institutional support to promote sustainable land management practices, restore degraded lands, and support the livelihoods of communities living in affected areas.



Every second, an equivalent of four football fields of healthy land becomes degraded, adding up to a total of 100 million hectares each year. Under UNCCD, over 130 countries have already pledged to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030: a world where human activity has a neutral, or even positive, impact on the land.

References

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification: World Day to Combat Desertification. Accessible on https://www.unccd.int/events/desertification-drought-day/2024

SDG Goal 15: Life on Land

DGB (2021) "Combating desertification: Strategies and solutions". Accessible on https://www.green.earth/desertification

Follow us

@edteakzn	kznedtea
edtea_kzn	kznedtea
kznedtealive	@kzn.edtea

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

COMBAT DESERTIFICATION & DROUGHT

United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future

Inspiring New Hope

what it means

Desertification, land degradation, and drought are among the most pressing environmental challenges of our time, with up to 40% of all land area worldwide already considered degraded.

Healthy land not only provides us with almost 95% of our food but so much more: it clothes and shelters us, provides jobs and livelihoods, and protects us from the worsening droughts, floods and wildfires. At the same time, growing populations coupled with unsustainable production and consumption patterns fuel demand for natural resources, putting excessive pressure on land to the point of degradation. Desertification and drought are driving forced migration, putting tens of millions of people each year at risk of displacement.

The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is a United Nations observance celebrated each year on 17 June. Its purpose is to raise awareness of the presence of desertification and drought, highlighting methods of preventing desertification and recovering from drought.

17 JUNE
WORLD DAY
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

What is desertification?

Desertification is a phenomenon that ranks among the greatest environmental challenges of our time. Desertification among other things is the encroachment of sand dunes on land, the persistent degradation of dryland ecosystems by climate change and human inducements. For example: unsustainable farming, clearing of land for industrial development, mining and overgrazing (United Nations Environment Programme, 2024). Wind and water erosion aggravate the damage, carrying away topsoil and leaving behind a highly infertile mix of dust and sand. It is the combination of these factors that transforms degraded land into desert.

Impacts of desertification in nature and population

Desertification is a global issue, with serious implications worldwide for biodiversity, eco-safety, poverty eradication, socio-economic stability and sustainable development. Drylands are already fragile. As they become degraded, the impact on people, livestock and environment can be devastating. Some 50 million people may be displaced within the next 10 years as a result of desertification.




Why is it important to prevent desertification?

Desertification threatens sustainable development and the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. Desertification can result in the loss of soil fertility, biodiversity, and water resources, leading to increased poverty, food insecurity, and conflict. Moreover, desertification releases carbon stored in soils and reduces ecosystems' capacity to absorb carbon dioxide (CO_2) due to the absence of plants and trees in large areas. Combating desertification requires a holistic approach that addresses the underlying causes of land degradation and promotes reforestation, sustainable land-management practices, water harvesting, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable energy development.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

***Implementing sustainable land-management practices**

***Reforestation and afforestation initiatives**

***Effective water conservation management strategies**

Can prevent land degradation and improve the resilience of nature and communities in affected areas.