



Biodiversity is life



Biodiversity is our life

Dry and Sub-Humid Lands

Dry and sub-humid lands cover about 47% of the Earth's terrestrial area. They include arid and semi-arid regions, grasslands, savannahs and Mediterranean landscapes. These fragile environments, home for many endemic species, warrant priority attention to avoid irreversible loss of biological diversity.

Wetland areas in dry and sub-humid lands, for instance, are often of crucial importance in supporting migratory bird species. The biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands is well adapted to the harsh conditions typified by inconsistent rainfall patterns, and, in many cases, high temperatures. Dry and sub-humid lands are the origin of many of the world's crops such as wheat, barley and olives. This biodiversity forms the basis of many livelihoods locally, and supports a large population of the world's food production.

The main pressures on biodiversity in dry and sub-humid lands are habitat conversion (for agriculture, transport, tourism and industry), as well as poor soil and water management. Climate change has a particularly strong impact on wetlands in drylands, grasslands, Mediterranean forests and desert margins. Invasive alien species adversely affect indigenous biodiversity. Excessive collection of fuel wood, over-harvesting of plants, over-hunting of wildlife and unsustainable agricultural practices all add to the problem.

The conservation and sustainable use of dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity is essential to livelihood development and poverty reduction. Unfortunately, the link between biodiversity and poverty alleviation is not often reflected in poverty reduction or development planning. The Convention on Biological Diversity has a programme of work on dry and sub-humid lands, which seeks to fill gaps in our knowledge, supports best management practices, and promotes partnerships among countries, institutions and other conventions.



Convention on
Biological Diversity

www.cbd.int/drylands





Fast Facts

- ▶ Dry and sub-humid lands are home to about two billion people (35% of the global population)
- ▶ Encompass approximately 44% of the world's cultivated systems
- ▶ In developed countries they are some of the most endangered ecosystems
- ▶ 90% of people inhabiting dry and sub-humid lands live in developing countries
- ▶ Largest areas of dry and sub-humid lands are found in Australia, China, Russia, the United States and Kazakhstan
- ▶ Six countries (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Turkmenistan) have at least 99% of their area classified as dry and sub-humid lands
- ▶ Because of harsh conditions (irregular rainfall, high temperatures, etc.), many species have developed unique adaptations:
 - ▶ Desert toads lie dormant below the sand for months until the rain returns
 - ▶ The sociable weaver of southern Africa builds communal nests weighing up to 1,000 kg to maximize insulation from extreme temperatures
 - ▶ The Gemsbok of the Kalahari Desert can survive for weeks without water.
- ▶ Dry and sub-humid lands include important areas of extraordinary endemism, such as the Mediterranean Basin, home to more than 11,700 endemic plant species
- ▶ Some 2,311 known dry and sub-humid lands species are endangered or threatened with extinction.

Learn More

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Drylands Development Centre

▶ www.undp.org/drylands

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) ▶ www.unccd.int

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) ▶ www.fao.org

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

▶ www.unesco.org

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) ▶ www.unep.org

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ▶ unfccc.int

World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) ▶ www.unep-wcmc.org

More ▶ www.cbd.int/drylands/websites.shtml

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

413, Saint Jacques Street, suite 800
Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 1N9
Canada

Tel.: +1 514 288 2220
Fax: +1 514 288 6588
iyb2010@cbd.int

www.cbd.int/drylands

