



# **An introduction to drylands**

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## What are drylands?

- Arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas characterized by low and/or irregular rainfall and high evapo-transpiration
- Areas subject to cyclical droughts
- They represent enormous areas such as 1,246 million hectares in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Drylands occur in some 100 countries where nearly 40% of the earth's population live. 54% of the world's productive land is drylands.



## The image of drylands

Drylands often perceived as:

- Deserts and deserted areas
- Low potential areas in terms of agricultural production, economic growth, etc.
- Poorly inhabited areas
- Marginalized inhabitants such as pastoralists
- Politically weak and unstable areas (hub of terrorism)
- Few large successful development projects
- Etc.



## A new image of drylands

Drylands have many values and potentials for development such as:

- Agriculture (rainfed and irrigated)
- Pastoralism
- Biofuel production
- Tourism
- Production of certified products from drylands
- Carbon sequestration in soil and trees
- Etc.



## But what type of development?

Challenges in reaching sustainable development for the benefit of drylands' inhabitants:

- Subsistence and sustainable agriculture versus monoculture
- Issues of land rights limiting pastoralists in their transhumance
- Biofuel versus food security and use of 'marginal' lands
- Ethical and environmentally friendly tourism
- Definition of regulations and standards for certification of products from drylands
- Carbon sequestration: plantations, payment for environmental services, more research on sequestration in soils
- Etc.