

**CANADA**  
**National Reporting to CSD-16/17**  
**Thematic Profile: International Desertification**

1. Strategic planning frameworks for the protection and sustainable management of natural resources in deserts and areas affected by desertification, their integration into national development strategies and/or action plans.

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD), which came into force in 1995, is the only internationally recognized, legally binding instrument that addresses the problem of land degradation in the drylands (known as “desertification”). It recognizes the causal relation between combating land degradation and reducing poverty. Canada has been a strong supporter of the UNCCD since ratifying it in 1995, and plays a dual role in the implementation of the Convention, both as an affected country (i.e., arid regions in Western Canada) and more significantly, as a donor country assisting the developing world in meeting UNCCD objectives. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), as the department responsible for administering overseas development assistance, leads Canada's collaborative efforts under the UNCCD. CIDA works with other Parties and partners towards ensuring that the Convention's guiding principles are encompassed into their collaborative work.

Although the primary focus of the Convention is on Africa, desertification has great implications for many other parts of the world. To address this need, Canada has funded through its official development assistance a broad range of initiatives in Africa and other regions that not only help promote sustainable land management to combat desertification, but by extension also help increase food security. More productive, environmentally responsible agriculture can lead to improved nutrition, improved human well-being and reduced poverty.

Canada's integration of land-related programming, including desertification, has underscored the four interconnected dimensions of sustainable development: economic well-being, social development, environmental sustainability, and good governance. CIDA's approach to addressing desertification issues and other impacts of land degradation in partner countries is premised on sustainable development, and emphasizes poverty reduction, capacity development and participatory initiatives. These take place at all levels of intervention, involving people and institutions from the community to regional and international levels.

CIDA is working towards a long-term approach to land degradation and desertification, building on ongoing international commitments, as well as on Canada's experience as an affected country, to assist developing countries in their efforts to combat desertification. This approach aims to strengthen links between sustainable agriculture, food security and desertification within the context of development. CIDA hopes to enhance efforts to address land degradation by supporting actions to promote knowledge sharing and integration into broader CIDA programming. In close partnership with a range of stakeholders in affected countries, Canada will continue to support development of National and Regional Action Programs under the UNCCD.

For a detailed overview of Canada's international efforts to combat desertification, please refer to our [national reports](#) located on the UNCCD website.

2. Inter-ministerial/institutional coordination mechanism for anti-desertification programmes.

At the national level, Canada coordinates its global anti-desertification efforts primarily through partnerships between CIDA (as lead), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), the International

Development Research Centre (IDRC) and civil society organizations. Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC), which contributes to Canada's reporting under the UNCCD, focuses largely on domestic desertification/land-degradation matters.

IDRC, for example, contributes to finding solutions, through research and associated action, to address the concerns of dryland countries. IDRC's Environment and Natural Resource Management Program has supported work that is field-based: action and policy research that offers viable alternatives to, or improves, current environmental management practices and institutions. These provide practical approaches to enhancing food and water security, human health, the quality of natural resources, democratic participation, governance, and equity. IDRC has also assisted countries in defining useful indicators to monitor the implementation of the UNCCD and continues to work collaboratively with developing country partners to find solutions to social, economic and environmental problems through applied research. Numerous IDRC research initiatives have contributed to a better understanding of desertification (causes, dynamics and impacts), leading to solutions that help populations address land degradation at the local level. IDRC has also contributed to strategies that address land degradation and related problems from a broad perspective. It has developed initiatives to foster participatory development of technologies; the strengthening of capacities of local authorities; and the development of appropriate communication tools to meet the needs of local populations, with a special emphasis on women. IDRC's mission of "empowerment through knowledge" is demonstrated through its projects.

Canada has also consistently contributed to the strengthening of civil society work under the Convention by, e.g., strongly supporting civil society's participation in key UNCCD meetings. In addition, Canadian delegations have encouraged dialogue with non-governmental organizations (NGOs, both national and international), and have used their perspectives to inform international discussions, where appropriate. More recently, CIDA has provided seed funding towards launching a Canadian civil society network on sustainable land management that will involve the engagement of a range of civil society stakeholders. The objective of this network is to strengthen dialogue between Canadian civil society organizations and the federal government regarding global sustainable land management. The focus of work is on policy and programming issues relating to drylands, with particular emphasis on the UNCCD and other Multilateral Environment Agreements, primarily the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Canada has provided bilateral support for international desertification-related initiatives in a number of affected countries within Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East. Canadian support to multilateral initiatives and institutions, whose programming has a major impact on sustainable development, has included the United Nations Development Program, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Land Coalition.

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| <p>3. Improved use of and local access to climate and weather information, forecasts, early warning and information networking to combat desertification.</p> |
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Accurate, current and accessible land cover information is a requisite for sound land-use management, particularly relating to land use change and the effects of large-scale disturbances such as fire. Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) has been committed to fulfilling these information needs, as demonstrated through its involvement in the Global Observation of Forest and Land Cover Dynamics (GOFC-GOLD). GOFC-GOLD is a coordinated international effort to ensure a systematic long-term program of space-based and on-the-ground observations of land cover and forest change, including the role of fire. NRCan directs the work of GOFC-GOLD through the project office at the Canadian Forest Service (housed at NRCan).

GOFC-GOLD is designed to help provide the data needed for global monitoring of terrestrial resources, to study global change and to improve natural resources management. Originally developed as a pilot project by the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites as part of their Integrated Global Observing Strategy, GOFC-GOLD is now a panel of the Global Terrestrial Observing System and interacts with several United Nations bodies and numerous international and national scientific and technical organizations.

By promoting and supporting participation on implementation teams and in regional networks, GOFC-GOLD develops regional and global scale products in two thematic areas: Land Cover Characteristics and Change, and Fire Monitoring and Mapping. Capacity is strengthened by working with regional networks, which provide guidance on specific needs and promote the transfer of technology and experience in South East Asia, Northern Eurasia, Latin America and, more recently, East Asia.

For more information on GOFC-GOLD, please visit [here](#).

4. Research and dissemination on ways of reducing water loss from soils, on increasing the water absorption capacities of soils, and on water harvesting technologies in desertification affected areas.

In the context of UNCCD, CIDA and its Canadian partners have over the years concentrated on China, India, and Bangladesh. In particular, Canada continues to make a difference in agricultural practices to reduce desertification in China. Our cooperation with China has included a range of successful programming initiatives to address land degradation. Canada has initiated various Sustainable Land Management projects that have shown considerable promise. These have led to the development of second phases of projects, or have resulted in complementary efforts by a variety of Canadian partners. For example, the Hebei Drylands Research Project, managed through the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, aimed to “develop and transfer ecologically sound dryland management technology and practices, including improved water-use efficiency, soil and water quality, and increased farming profitability, in the Hebei Lowland Plain and in ecologically similar areas in China.” The project developed socio-economic indicators to monitor the impact of the adoption and application of technologies. These technologies are now being applied by farmers across the lowland plain, and are being promoted to farmers beyond the border of Hebei Province to regions with similar ecological conditions.

For more information on the Hebei Drylands Research Project, please visit [here](#).

5. Desertification and land degradation impact assessment

**United Nations Development Program and Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF), LDC and SIDs Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming for Sustainable Land Management (LDC-SIDs Portfolio Project)**

The overall goal of this project is to assist Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDs) in promoting effective Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for global and local benefits. Its objective is to strengthen the domestic capacity for mainstreaming SLM into national development policies. The LDC-SIDs Portfolio Project aims to help 47 LDC and SIDS countries to develop individual, institutional and systemic capacity for SLM. Mainstreaming and capacity building will be achieved through the introduction of innovative tools such as: strategic environmental assessment; economic valuation and other economic tools; environment-poverty mapping; and integrated assessments. Furthermore, the project will establish participatory mechanisms at the national level for cross-sectoral debate that will be able to inform the Poverty

Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process at the highest political levels. Canada, through CIDA, has provided financial support to the LDC-SIDs Portfolio Project and is serving on its Global Advisory Committee. At the conclusion of the project, it is expected that each country will have strengthened capacity to mainstream SLM into their national development frameworks.

For more information on the LDC-SIDs Portfolio Project, please refer to Canada's International Desertification Case Study and/or visit [here](#).