

# Strategy and action of the French Cooperation to combat desertification and soil degradation

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994, following a major push by France and the African countries. Since France has not been declared to be affected by desertification, its action in implementing the convention is based on the activities of the French Cooperation, which give priority to affected countries in Africa.

To organize its action, France adopted a strategic guidance framework in December 2006 that sets out its priorities in combating desertification and soil degradation. This strategic guidance document was drawn up in close coordination with civil society, including the scientific community (*Comité Scientifique Français sur la Désertification*, French scientific committee on desertification). This strategy is based on the following principles:

- creating an environment favourable to the implementation of actions directly benefiting affected populations;
- taking action at three levels: international, national and regional.

The implementation of the French strategy is based on support to key actors at each level: capacity building for decision-makers in the countries of the South; support for research; strengthening the initiatives of civil society; regional structures (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, Sahara and Sahel Observatory).

## At international level

### *Support for the Convention implementation process.*

France supports the two key institutions of the UNCCD: the Convention Secretariat and the World Mechanism of the Convention. It also supports the African countries, fostering their participation in Convention negotiations.

### *Socio-economic research and development*

France supports research analyzing the social and economic costs of desertification and the cost of inaction. An international workshop on the issue was held in Rome on 4 and 5 December 2006. It resulted in the creation of a network. The objective is to provide donors with economic decision-making tools.

### *Reinforcing the focus on combating desertification in international organizations*

Too few programmes have been effectively implemented on the ground to apply the Convention. The UNCCD has only had the benefit of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) since 2004, and the affected countries need capacity building to formulate projects. Thus, in conjunction with the *Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie* (IEPF) (Francophonie energy and environment institute), France helps organize training in formulation of projects eligible for the GEF. In addition, France particularly supports the implementation of the Terrafrica regional initiative on sustainable land management in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Last but not least, new prospects for funding effort to adapt to climate change are opening up. France will support the countries affected to ensure that they have access to projects focused on both adaptation to climate change and combating desertification.

## At regional and sub-regional level

### *Reinforcing sub-regional structures in Africa.*

This is a major focus of French action to combat desertification. The great droughts of the 1970s in Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa prompted the development of common methods by neighbouring countries, particularly in the area of environmental monitoring and famine prevention. In this context, France particularly supports the activities of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory and the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

## **At national and local level**

### *Support for civil society initiatives*

The inclusion and involvement of local populations are an indispensable prerequisite for successful action to combat desertification. Men and women, livestock breeders and farmers are the main actors in the struggle against desertification; their innovative spirit, dynamism and initiatives are crucial to the success of projects. France works to foster decentralized management of natural resources and the emergence of civil society, to ensure that action to combat desertification directly benefits the populations affected.

The FGEF funds the *Initiative Régionale pour l'Environnement Mondial et la Lutte contre la Désertification* (IREMLCD) (regional initiative for the global environment and the struggle against desertification). Implemented by CILSS, it provides funding for micro-projects carried out by civil society.

In addition, France supports the *Plateforme des ONG Françaises GTD (Groupe de Travail Désertification, coordination nationale des ONG)* (French NGOs working on desertification) in its cooperation activities with NGOs in the countries of the South (capacity building, awareness-raising, etc.). In 2006, France supported the international "*Désertif'actions : Désertifications et société civile*" forum that enabled over 200 representatives of civil society from some sixty countries to issue the "Montpellier Appeal" calling the attention of all stakeholders to the urgent need for action to combat desertification.

### *Implementation of projects on the ground: conservation agriculture and management of pastoral herding*

The French Development Agency (AFD) with an annual commitment of 22 million euros, implements projects on the ground to combat desertification and soil degradation. For example, conservation agriculture practices are being developed in northern Cameroon, Tunisia and Madagascar; a Tafilalet oasis rehabilitation project will be implemented with FFEM funding in 2007; in Chad, an ongoing special herding programme aims to reconcile pastoral herding practices with sustainable management of natural resources.

## **French Cooperation resources devoted to combating desertification**

On average, France devotes 35 million euros per year to combating desertification, with the funds being allocated to field projects, research projects and institutional support to countries and to regional and multilateral institutions. In accordance with the priority given to the French Priority Solidarity Zone, activities are concentrated in Africa and the Mediterranean.

Actions funded by the AFD account for over half the French funding to combat desertification (currently approximately 20 million euros annually). At the French Global Environment Facility, (a bilateral public fund for the protection of the world environment), between 1.6 and 3 million euros are earmarked to fund innovative projects aimed at combating desertification on the ground. The share of funding accounted for by NGOs and the other civil society actors will increase thanks to the development of "call for initiative" type programmes. In addition, France provides technical assistance and expertise to the various international and regional institutions engaged in the struggle against desertification (World Bank, World Mechanism, CILSS, OSS).

## **Other prospects for funding**

Other prospects for funding efforts to adapt to climate change are beginning to take shape. France will ensure that action to combat desertification and soil degradation is covered by the funds already set up under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund) or planned (Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the fight against desertification and adaptation to climate change in rural areas involve the same kinds of actions on the ground. France will therefore support these countries to ensure that they have access to projects that focus on both adaptation to climate change and the fight against desertification.