

Combating desertification The French scientific community is rallying to this cause at the international level

The World Day to Combat Desertification is Monday, 17 June. On this occasion, the French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD) launches the English version of its website devoted to knowledge dissemination to the general public.

www.csf-desertification.eu (English) / www.csf-desertification.org (French)

The [world day to combat desertification, on the 17th of June](#), reminds us of the crucial role of the lands' good health of the globe. Desertification — or land degradation in arid areas — threatens nearly 2 billion people and more than a third of the land surface on all continents. Drylands are vital for the populations who directly live and depend on them. Their degradation must be prevented and combated, and scientists are seeking causes and remedies. CSFD is a relay of this action at the French level. To underline its commitment at the international level, CSFD celebrates this day by launching the English version of its website devoted to knowledge dissemination for the general public.

Desertification in figures

- One third of humanity is affected.
- Arid areas under threat cover 40% of land of which 66% are already affected.
- All continents are affected: 37% of drylands are in Africa, 33% in Asia, 14% in Australia. Some are also found in America and the southern fringes of Europe.
- If nothing is done, 10 million hectares of arable land will be lost each year (1/5 of France).

France, a major actor in combating desertification

- More than EUR 100 million per year are allocated to combat desertification (CD) in affected countries (bilateral aid): projects of soil conservation and restoration, water and forest management, improvement of local governance, etc.
- 171 bilateral cooperation commitments and support for 321 ongoing projects in affected countries (2010-2011).
- About 80 French NGOs are involved in CD projects (2010-2011).
- About 100 French local authorities are engaged in decentralized cooperation partnerships with affected countries.
- In 2006, France adopted a strategic orientation framework setting its priority actions for CD.
- France acts at the local level by promoting decentralization and emergence of civil society; national level by implementing strategies and action plans in affected countries; regional level by supporting regional organizations (e. g. OSS, CILSS); international level by defining global policy.
- France contributes to multilateral institutions efforts, including UNCCD.
- France supports French CD institutional actors, including CSFD and the Working Group on Desertification (GTD).



CSFD, a scientific committee with an international anchor

Advice and support for stakeholders in combating desertification

Since 1997, CSFD has been marshalling the expertise of French experts on desertification, land degradation and dryland development. CSFD, as an independent multidisciplinary committee that provides expert advice, is headed by a president and includes around 20 members appointed in a personal capacity for a 3-year term by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

CSFD produces and disseminates scientific knowledge for the benefit of different audiences. He guides and advises policymakers and civil society stakeholders in France and affected countries. It bolsters the position of the French scientific community globally and participates in French delegations involved in UNCCD events.

The CSFD is actively involved in European and global networks. It is a founding member of *DesertNet International*, a multidisciplinary international network that provides a platform for scientific discussion on all issues related to desertification.

Its operating budget is financed by contributions from the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, as well as the French Development Agency. It is hosted and managed by Agropolis International association (Montpellier, France).

Agropolis International: leader of the next UNCCD scientific conference

The UNCCD 3rd scientific conference “Combating DLDD for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices” will be held in 2014. This conference will be organized by a consortium of 5 active organizations in CD: CSFD & Agropolis International, DesertNet International, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), Argentine research Institute on Arid Zones (IADIZA).

An exclusive link between scientists and society civil

The *Dossiers thématiques du CSFD* are published in French and English for a wide audience. They review scientific knowledge on dryland issues, implications and challenges of desertification. Written by CSFD members or associate experts, they are published along with a factsheet summarizing the key points. The collection is freely downloadable from the CSFD website as well as the main document sharing platforms: [Youscribe](#) & [ScribD](#)

An information portal, managed by CSFD experts, caters to non specialists and scientists:

- Documents on current topics: Great Green Wall, Biochar...
- An expert database (CSFD members and associates)
- The main national and international CD stakeholders...

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