

Introduction to TACCDA Workshop and welcoming address

Olavi Luukkanen

Viikki Tropical Resources Institute (VITRI), University of Helsinki

Dear workshop participants!

On behalf of the Finnish workshop organisers I wish you all welcome to Finland and to this workshop venue of Hyytiälä Forestry Field Station. I hope you will also have time to enjoy the nature of the Finnish lake district still showing its midsummer glory, while you work for fulfilling the aims of this meeting.

What are the aims of this exercise? As written in the announcements of this event, much information is already available on tropical dryland management and rehabilitation and on related research. The aim is to mainly work on the already existing information and to compile and analyse it, so as to allow further policy and management improvement measures at the local, national and international level. In particular, we should provide information to the responsible European Union body, the EC directorate-general for research, on how to direct further tropical forest-related research and its linkages with development efforts. This has been the reasoning behind obtaining EC funding for this event. Organising this workshop became possible thanks to this EC funding, as well as to the strong commitments and financial contributions of IUFRO (its Special Programme for Developing Countries and GFIS-Africa project) and ETRN.

Quite a number of different global and regional processes and initiatives have been established that are related to dryland development or dryland research. The post-Rio activities during the past ten years have also produced valuable national experiences and results that warrant review, analysis and dissemination. Just as an example, the University of Helsinki and VITRI have already been involved in the organisation of three previous workshops devoted to dryland development and related research, in 1995 and 2002 here in Hyytiälä and in 2000 in Khartoum. While we now try to synthesise the recommendations and experiences from Sub-Saharan Africa to date, we should especially try to work at the research/policy interface and make recommendations for policy improvement based on scientific research. This also includes identifying the gaps in current research activities.

Apart from the organisers VITRI, IUFRO and ETRN, participants of this workshop also represent international and regional organisations or networks, of which I wish especially to mention AFORNET, CIFOR, FAO, FORNESSA, ICRAF, IPGRI and UNCCD. All in all, we expect to have more than 50 participants from 19 different countries.

This workshop was preceded by a well-attended and intensive e-mail discussion, jointly planned by TACCDA and the IUFRO GFIS-Africa project and managed by the ETRN Coordination Unit at Wageningen. The e-mail discussion was led by a number of excellent moderators, whom I also wish to thank. Background documents and results of the e-mail discussion will form part of the workshop proceedings, which in the first place

will be published on the ETFRN and VITRI websites and which also form an output of the IUFRO GFIS-Africa project.

The core programme of the workshop consists of presentations from a number of invited speakers, all experts in their respective fields. In addition, there will be four different working groups each of which will discuss a specific range of topics and thus contribute to the final recommendations. The deliberately slightly overlapping titles for the working groups have been chosen as follows: (1) Drylands and global change, (2) Climate change and dryland forests, (3) Facilitating land-use change on drylands, and (4) International policy implications on dryland use.

According to the specific aims of the IUFRO GFIS-Africa project, related aspects relevant for the humid and sub-humid zones of Africa will be separately discussed and included, if possible, also in the final workshop proceedings.

Dear friends and participants, with these introductory remarks I once more wish to welcome you to this workshop and hope that you will enjoy it.