

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY ASPECTS

Discussion material paper on sub-theme “Review of national policies on drylands in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)”

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The overall vision of the forthcoming workshop is stated as “African countries develop and agree on clear national policies and strategies for addressing ecological degradation of savannah and dryland forests taking into account of management and climate change”. Is this a high priority practical development challenge for African countries?

Yes, many African countries are face with recurrent droughts and food deficits. According to FAO (1998), most of the Low Income and Food Deficit Countries (LIFDC) of Africa experience arid climates. The widespread droughts early 1970s precipitated the United Nations Conference on Desertification in Nairobi, in 1977. Among other things, this conference drew the attention of desertification-affected countries to develop comprehensive national policies for sustainable management of their arid and semi-arid lands (ASALS). Indeed, the conference precipitated specific development initiatives like the Inter-States Committee to Combat Desertification in the Sahel (CILSS) for West African countries. And yes, the background paper by Chikamai and Kigomo bears it out that, except for Central Africa countries, SSA countries need to formulate and implement policies and strategies for ASALS development.

What progress has SSA countries made in formulating policies and strategies for ASALS development?

Since 1980s, several countries have attempted to formulate policies and strategies within the frameworks of their agriculture, forestry, rural development, settlement, land tenure and environment policies. The early emphasis, in these ASALS policy dimensions, has been on (i) agricultural production expansion and/or intensification and (ii) control/stabilization of transhumance and “social fencing”. With the more recent ratification of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), some countries have formulated comprehensive and integrated policies and plans (National Action Plans or NAPs) consistent with guidelines in Chapter 12 of Agenda 21. Thus, countries like Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cape Verde and Botswana have concluded their NAPs through comprehensive participatory consultations. Others like Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe have only made pilot attempts at integrated policies and strategies.

How is the scoreboard on policy and strategy implementation?

Markedly unimpressive. The most significant direct result of formulated policies and strategies has been the enhanced attention by development partners (donors) on the plight of the often marginalized ASALS populations.

Donors have positively responded with increased ASALS targeted support. So far, NAP process has failed to attract increased government budget allocation to ASALS.

What are the major limitations in formulating and implementing policies on dryland forest management?

In most countries, the bulk of dryland forests and woodlands exist in common access community trust lands and previous forest policies did not adequately provide for their sustainable management. Some countries are already addressing this limitation through forest policy and institutional reviews. However, such reviews are proving to be complex and slow. What can be done to speed up the process in the face acceleration deforestation and degradation?

A few countries have recently concluded their forest policy reviews and their national forest plans (nfps) as guided by recommendations of UNCED/IPF/IFF/UNFF dialogue. However, there is still lack political determination and support to implement the challenging forest sector reforms needed for nfps to be implemented. What can be done to change the situation and how can workshops of this profile help?

There is lack of modern and traditional knowledge about the functioning of indigenous dryland forests, as is needed for management planning. How can this knowledge be quickly generated and how can this workshop help in that process?

Dryland forests are livelihood safety nets for poor and marginalized communities. Policies for their management must be fully harmonized other socio-economic development policies and plans such Poverty Eradication Action Plans (PEAP). Moreover, government budget allocation for dryland forest management will most likely be based on perceived contribution to PEAP. The strategic question, therefore, is how best can highlight the role of dryland forest management in PEAP?

Any comments on the above issues will be highly appreciated. Thank you.