Notes to Editors

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Purpose of the World Day Celebrations: Established 23 years ago, the World Day to Combat Desertification and drought is designed to highlight international cooperation in efforts to combat desertification and drought. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was assigned the lead role in celebrations to mark the Day. In this role, it pursues three objectives. First, to enable governments to share targeted information about a particular global dimension of land degradation, desertification and drought. Second, to help governments to engage with their publics on initiatives that can keep the land healthy and productive. Third, to encourage countries, individuals and groups around the world to work in solidarity to make positive change and to use a shared platform to report their plans and events to mark the Day.

Status of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought and International Cooperation: The Global Land Outlook published last year shows that 30% of all land is degraded. In 2013, 169 of the 195 countries that are Party to the UNCCD declared that they are affected by desertification, land degradation and/or drought. When in 2015 the international community adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030, Goal 15, on Life on Land, opened the door for renewed action worldwide on these problems and their related and growing challenges. Parties to the UNCCD agreed to achieve SDG target 15.3, on achieving land degradation neutrality, as the key measure of success in global efforts to combat desertification, land degradation and drought.

Land degradation neutrality is achieved when actions to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation successfully counterbalance any new degradation that may occur elsewhere. By end of 2017, at least 114 of the 195 UNCCD Parties had committed to achieve land degradation neutrality. More than half have set the targets to be achieved by 2030 and are already starting to design transformative initiatives to restore degraded lands that can, at the same time, create green jobs and increase food production as well as improve access to clean ground water, habitats for wildlife and recreation and the land's ability to sequester the excess carbon dioxide emissions that are warming the Earth. Also, in 2017, UNCCD Parties decided to support the development of national drought preparedness plans to ensure droughts are managed earlier, better and effectively.

2018 Campaign Theme: The convergence of four key factors is driving the public and private sectors to invest in degrading land. First, productive land can yield economic returns because the forecasted future population growth means there will be a huge market for goods and services to be produced from the land for the foreseeable future. Second, food and water demand, in particular, will be high due to the continuing loss of productive land through poor land use practices made worse by climate change. This will affect the amount of food produced per hectare and the zones where essential food can grow. Third, the rush to grab productive land in anticipation of these changes. And fourth, political pressure due to the chronic unemployment of young people and the rise in the number of economic migrants flocking to urban centers and across borders.

Policies are the tools governments use to influence the behavior of consumers. But consumers, though the goods they purchase every day can promote what is important to them, such as fighting chronic unemployment and hunger, or keeping the land healthy and our recreational spaces hospitable. The 2018 campaign is designed to help consumers to achieve two goals. First, to understand their own and their social network's ecological footprint. And second, to work with the network members in committing to one change in the goods they buy to help move market demand towards investments that maintain, not degrade, the land. Even small individual lifestyle changes can have significant global impacts.

Key Data and Facts on Consumer Choices from the Global Land Outlook

- 30% of all land is degraded
- 1.3 billion people, mostly in developing countries, depend on this degrading land for their livelihoods – jobs, incomes, food, water, energy, medicines, etc.

Consumers in wealthy countries buy fruits all year round, some of it flown hundreds of miles but cheaper than those grown locally. An ecological footprint analysis of London found that around 80 per cent of food consumed in the city is imported from other countries.[1] A similar footprint for the Netherlands found that to meet the food needs of this small, highly urbanized country requires a land area four times larger than the country as a whole.[2]

Over the past five decades, human diets have moved toward a greater consumption of processed foods that are low in essential nutrients and contain a high percentage of refined

[1] Satterthwaite, D. 2011. How urban societies can adapt to resource shortage and climate change. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A 369: 1762-1783.

[2] Rood, G.A., Wilting, H.C., Nagelhout, D., ten Brink, B.J.E., Leewis, R.J., et al. 2004. Tracking the effects of inhabitants on biodiversity in the Netherlands and abroad: An ecological footprint model. Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Bilthoven, Netherlands.

sugars, oils, salt, and fats.[3] Based on recent average annual dietary changes and the contribution of palm and soybean oil to vegetable oil consumption and yields, this will result in converting an additional ~0.5 to 1.3 million hectares of land to oil palm plantations, and ~5.0 to 9.3 million hectares to soybean plantations by 2050.[4]

Among the world's most water-intensive crops are cotton (7,000-29,000 liters per kg); rice (3,000-5,000 liters per kg); sugar cane (1,500-3,000 liters per kg), soya (2,000 liters per kg), and wheat (900 liters per kg).[5] Due to the sheer amount grown, rice accounts for 21 per cent of total water used by crops and wheat 12 per cent.

Global meat consumption has virtually doubled since the 1960s,[6] and its production requires about five times more land per unit of nutritional value than its plant-based equivalent.[7]

Beef production uses the most water; measurements in the United States found that beef requires 11 times the average amount of water used in other forms of livestock production.[8]

Currently, 36 per cent of calories produced by the world's crops are diverted for animal feed, with only 12 per cent of those feed calories ultimately contributing to the human diet as meat and other animal products. This means that almost a third of the total food value of global crop production is lost by "processing" it through inefficient livestock systems.[9]

Virtually every scenario of future food availability shows that reducing meat consumption, especially beef, is the quickest and most effective way to increase food security and reduce carbon emissions and offsite impacts.[10]

It is estimated that one-third of all food produced is wasted: this is equivalent to 1.3 Gt of edible food every year, grown on 1.4 billion hectares of land (an area larger than China). Annual food waste is also the waste of 250 km^3 of water and USD 750 billion (equivalent to the GDP of

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[3] Monteiro, C.A., Moubarac, J.C., Cannon, G., Ng, S.W., and Popkin, B. 2013. Ultra-processed products are becoming dominant in the global food system. Obesity Reviews 14 (S2): 21-28.

[4] Lee, J.S.H., Koh, L.P., and Wilcove, D.S. 2016. Junking tropical forests for junk food? Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment 14 (7): 355-356.

[5] WWF. Undated. Thirsty Crops. WWF International, Gland, Switzerland.

[6] FAO, 2013. 'FAOSTAT' (http://faostat3.fao.org/faostat-gateway/go/to/home/E) accessed November 11, 2016.

[7] UNEP. 2009. Towards sustainable production and use of resources: Assessing biofuels, United Nations Environment Programme, Division of Technology Industry and Economics, Paris, France.

[8] Eshel, G., Shepon, A., Makov, T., and Milo, R. 2014. Land, irrigation water, greenhouse gas, and reactive nitrogen burdens of meat, eggs, and dairy production in the United States, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 111 (33): 11996-12001.

[9] Cassidy, E.S., West, P.C., Gerber, J.S., and Foley, J.A. 2013. Redefining agricultural yields: From tonnes to people nourished per hectare. Environmental Research Letters 8: doi:10.1088/1748- 9326/8/3/034015

[10] Bajželj, B., Richards, K.S., Allwood, J.M., Smith, P., Dennis, J.S., Curmi, E., and Gilligan, C.A. 2014. Importance of food-demand management for climate mitigation. Nature Climate Change 4: 924-929.

Switzerland), and has a cumulative carbon footprint of 3.3 Gt of CO_2 equivalent per year, making food waste the third largest emitter after the United States and China.[11]

Campaign Materials[12]

Logo:

Land has true value.

Invest in it

Social Media Campaign Tools to promote the WDCD: #2018WDCD, #UNCCD, #Desertification

The shared plans will be posted in the WDCD site of the UNCCD homepage by countries and regions, http://www2.unccd.int/actions/17-june-world-day-combat-desertification

[11] FAO. 2013. Food Wastage Footprint: Impacts on natural resources – summary report. FAO, Rome, pp. 6-7.

[12] The information is not part of the press release. It will be uploaded on the UNCCD Home Page. The text above should be posted on the UNCCD page 2 days after the press release has been disseminated.

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