

## One World - No Hunger Initiative:

### Global programme

## Soil protection and rehabilitation for food security

### Context

Soil is a non-renewable and non-reproducible resource. Excessive and inappropriate land use leads to nutrient depletion, erosion and other forms of degradation. This dynamic is exacerbated by climate change. Each year, around six million hectares of soil is degraded worldwide, equivalent to an area approximately twice the size of Belgium. This has two main consequences: firstly, land productivity is reduced; secondly, it reduces cultivation area available for agricultural use. However, since the number of people that require food is simultaneously rising, pressure on existing arable land and pasture is growing, which in turn leads to the conversion of forests into farmland.

In developing countries, agricultural production is predominantly in the hands of smallholdings, which provide subsistence-oriented livelihoods for the majority of the poor population. Soil degradation here has a direct impact on income and food security. Despite this, however, the issue of soil conservation does not receive adequate attention in many partner countries. The challenge is beyond the policy-making, institutional and financial capacities in the developing countries affected. There are no economic incentives to encourage sustainable soil use. And although best practice examples for sustainable land management exist, they are not sufficiently widespread. Small farmers often lack the know-how or the capital to apply these good practices to their own smallholdings. In many areas, agricultural extension services are poorly equipped and inadequately trained to disseminate their know-how on soil conservation. There are also few private or civil society providers of inputs for

soil-conserving land use. And at policy-making level, too, soil protection often fails to attract the required interest. In most cases, soil rehabilitation calls for high levels of investment, e.g. in erosion protection measures, for which there is a lack of financial resources.

### Objective

The objective of the global project is to support partner countries with the broad-scale implementation of field-tested approaches for soil conservation and rehabilitating degraded soil. At the same time, the aim is to improve the policy-making framework with a view to establishing incentives for sustainable soil use. To support these activities, there are plans to exchange and disseminate lessons learned from partner countries on a systematic basis.

### Expected results for the target group

The project's target group is small farmers in regions severely affected by soil degradation. These farmers often live in areas where overused and unproductive soils prevail and thus cannot afford any investment of their own in soil protection and rehabilitation.

The global programme promotes a sustainable land use strategy in the context of an area-based landscape approach. Essentially, this involves the active integration and participation of small farmers affected and other stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, local authorities and other government institutions.



Measures are therefore planned and implemented in a participatory process with the target group. The objective is to directly strengthen the self-help capacities of small farmers to implement sustainable soil conservation measures, in order to increase their resilience to the consequences of climate change and improve agro-biodiversity. Further training and the creation of the appropriate legal framework are intended to help reduce obstacles to investment in improving soil fertility. It is expected that the implemented rehabilitation measures will directly result in increased yields from these soils. This will empower small farmers to maintain or improve their livelihood and, depending on how they use their fields, to increase food production and income.

The global project uses three standard indicators to measure outcomes:

- the area of rehabilitated or protected arable land on smallholdings;
- the increase in yields of main crops;
- the number of new incentive mechanisms that promote the implementation of climate-relevant soil conservation and soil rehabilitation measures in partner countries.

A key criterion of the global programme on soil protection and rehabilitation for food security is for an above-average proportion of farms among the target group to be managed by women. Gender equality is promoted by specifically addressing women. In particular, women who manage smallholdings are explicitly included in support given to small farms for implementing soil conservation and rehabilitation measures.

In the same way, the needs of youth and young adults, for whom opportunities in agricultural production are similarly restricted as those of women, are observed. These groups also generally lack access to land and other production inputs. In addition, they normally have no voice in decisions concerning agricultural resources or agricultural production itself.

## Target countries and use of resources

The global programme operates in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India and Kenya, and is embedded in the relevant national policies and programmes of these countries. In order to achieve rapid results and exploit synergies during implementation, the global programme is linked in each case to already existing programmes of German development cooperation and works in partnership with these. The available budget is EUR 40 million, distributed roughly equally among the countries listed. In addition to this, there are contributions from the partner governments.

### Soil protection in concrete terms: promoting soil fertility in Ethiopia

In the country's upland areas the government is promoting a national programme geared to sustainable land management. Success is being achieved here in combating erosion and making more effective use of rainwater for agriculture. The global programme will complement this approach. Utilizing integrated fertility management measures, soil fertility will be increased in land areas which have been protected but remain low in nutrients. A key factor in this is the improved use of organic fertilisers and crop husbandry measures, complemented by the targeted use of mineral fertilisers.

### Soil protection in concrete terms: sustainable land management in Benin

Two thirds of arable land in Benin is now affected by soil degradation. This poses a threat in terms of food and livelihood to the population of predominantly small crop and livestock farmers. To combat this, the Beninese Government promotes tried-and-tested practices of sustainable land management at local, regional and national level. The global programme supports the use of site-adapted and mainly organic fertilisers on smallholdings as well as the safeguarding of access to land. Curricula are being prepared for agricultural extension services with a view to training personnel. At national level, the programme supports integration of the soil conservation issue into national strategies and exchange with international knowledge networks.

## Opportunities for the involvement of non-governmental actors

Non-state actors are involved in the implementation. They are a key element in the specialist knowledge networks promoted by the global programme. Through their experts, they provide relevant know-how for both the South-South dialogue and the international exchange. In addition, local but also internationally active non-governmental organisations (NGOs) participate in the implementation of the global programme in its partner countries through funding agreements. For example, there are plans to access the specific expertise of non-governmental organisations in Ethiopia and India and capitalise on their proven experience in soil conservation and rehabilitation.

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