

A publication from the DESIRE project - funded by the European Union's 6th Framework Program 'Global Change and Ecosystems'

**Based on
experience from
DESIRE sites**

Desertification research : Discussions between researchers and policy makers can make all the difference



DESIRE stakeholders in China

Why do researchers need to talk with policy-makers ?

Combating land degradation and desertification is a complex job and there are many factors to consider. We might have a goal of sustainable land management, but sometimes what is sustainable for the natural environment is difficult to translate into sustainable land use for those who want to live and work on the land. Policy makers need ways of finding out about the latest strategies and technologies from researchers. Then they will be able to understand desertification risks and make decisions on land management plans. Research carried out in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, from policy makers to schoolchildren, will have a much greater potential for usefulness. If new ideas based on scientific research can be shared and understood they can then be put into action to reach a common goal.

Benefits for policy makers

There are increasing opportunities for policy makers to collaborate with scientists, and to access and compare information and knowledge. Policy makers often wish for concise assessments of the extent and nature of land degradation in their area, that are not biased by the interests of any one particular group. Scientists can do that, and can provide reliable facts plus assessment of the importance of those facts. However, the details in scientific literature may often be too technical, or related just to small or even hypothetical areas. Translation to non-scientific language may be necessary. Policy makers can help by collaborating with research projects to define both the research questions and ways in which the research should be reported. In this way policy-makers can have confidence that their decisions are based on reliable facts, and that research produces results that are useful for decision making .

Benefits for researchers

Researchers need to find out what barriers associated with policies and regulations may stand in the way of environmental sustainability. Policy makers can explain how the policies were chosen and used. Policy makers can also help by identifying different interests that determine various land use options.

Ways in which policy makers have been involved in DESIRE research

Portugal



Local



External



In **Mação, and Góis**, Portugal, researchers and stakeholders are finding ways to restrict the spread of forest fires and reduce soil erosion and other impacts. Policy makers were involved in the organisation of the stakeholder workshops, identifying where environmental protection laws may be implemented more effectively. Policy makers also visited the study sites to discuss desertification issues with stakeholders. The municipality of Mação is now collaborating in developing the implementation of techniques, for example the Primary Strips Network system for fuel management.

Crete



Agricultural University of Athens

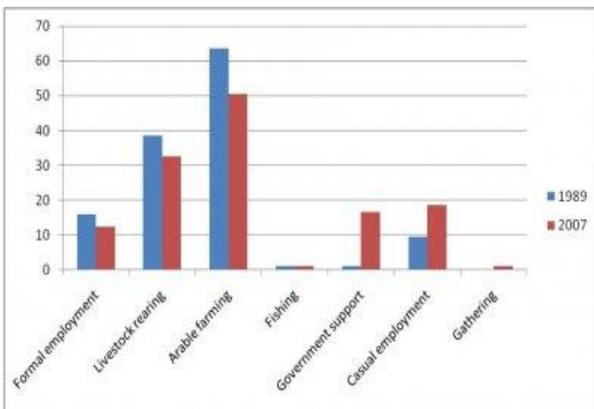
In **Crete**, DESIRE scientists took their research colleagues from all over the world to meet the Mayor of the village of Agia Varvara. Together they discussed how to address local problems of soil erosion under olive and citrus fruit orchards. Research is in close collaboration with OADYK, the Organisation for the development of western Crete.



Botswana



University of Botswana



In **Boteti**, Botswana, the number of people in casual employment without a strong stake in the future of their environment, has increased since 1989. DESIRE researchers have suggested ways to address poverty through ideas for more diverse employment. One such proposal has been to set up a biogas production plant, to derive energy from cattle dung. The Department of Energy is promoting the biogas pilot project in Boteti, and in other parts of Botswana. The Department of Forestry and Range resources plan to jointly embark on a reforestation project in Boteti to complement the biogas project. So, through discussion between policy makers and researchers the field of research has been opened to socio economic areas and alternative energy.

Compiled by **Nichola Geeson, Maude Gentit and Marie Jose Van der Werff ten Bosch**, December 2010
For more information see:

The DESIRE Harmonised Information System: www.desire-his.eu and DESIRE website: www.desire-project.eu

The DESIRE project (2007-2012) is funded by the European Commission, VI Framework Program, 'Global Change and Ecosystems' and brings together the expertise of 26 international research institutes and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This project is implemented by ALTERRA - research institute for the green living environment in the Netherlands.

Copyright and Disclaimer:
www.desire-project.eu/disclaimer

Contact DESIRE coordinator: Coen.Ritsema@wur.nl
Contact DESIRE Communications: ngprojects3@googlemail.com

The opinions expressed in this newsletter and on the website are those of the DESIRE project consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

