



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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CALL TO ACTION ON DRYLAND FORESTS

Mobilising Partnerships and Support Through a Dedicated Accelerator



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In dryland landscapes, forests and trees outside forests underpin livelihoods, food security, climate resilience and cultural identity for over two billion people worldwide.¹ These ecosystems cover approximately 41 percent of the Earth's land surface and 27 percent of global forest area. This number is even higher when presumed dryland areas are included.² Drylands host a wide diversity of forests, woodlands, woody vegetation and agrosilvo landscapes that are critical to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (see Box 1). These forest ecosystems, together with an estimated 13.5 billion trees outside forests, present significant and often underestimated economic opportunities through the sustainable harvesting of high-demand wood and non-wood forest products.³ They also provide a vital buffer for the most vulnerable people against climate change and increasingly frequent drought events.⁴ They serve as one of the most accessible safety nets for the world's poorest households, providing fuelwood, fodder, wild foods and medicinal plants critical for daily survival and crisis coping.⁵ In line with the One Health approach, these resources are essential for maintaining the interface between human, animal and environmental health.

WHY DRYLAND FORESTS? WHY NOW? DRYLAND FORESTS AT THE HEART OF THE RIO CONVENTIONS

Dryland forests are a nexus solution, simultaneously delivering climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods across dryland landscapes.

Taken together, dryland forests, woodlands, and trees outside forests in drylands play a central and irreplaceable role in advancing the objectives of the three Rio Conventions:

- **Climate action (UNFCCC)**
By providing critical adaptation benefits, reducing vulnerability to droughts and heatwaves, enhancing carbon stocks, and supporting nature-based solutions.
- **Biodiversity conservation (CBD)**
By sustaining unique and highly adapted species, maintaining ecological connectivity, and conserving genetic diversity.
- **Land restoration and livelihoods (UNCCD)**
By stabilizing soils, regulating water cycles, supporting pastoral and agrosilvopastoral systems, and contributing directly to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets.

Box 1 Why Dryland Forests? Why Now? Dryland Forests at the Heart of the Rio Conventions. *Source:* Authors' own elaboration.

¹FAO. 2019. Trees, forests and land use in drylands: the first global assessment – Full report. FAO Forestry Paper No. 184. Rome.

²Haddad, F.F., Blicharska, M., Westerberg, V., Riccardi, T. & Costa, L. 2022. Valuing, restoring and managing "presumed drylands": Cerrado, Miombo-Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Forestry Working Paper No. 30. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0110en>

³Djoudi, H., Vergles, E., Blackie, R. R., Koame, C. K., & Gautier, D. 2015. Dry forests, livelihoods and poverty alleviation: understanding current trends. International Forestry Review, 17(2): 54–69.

⁴Libert-Amico, A., Duchelle, A.E., Cobb, A., Peccoud, V. & Djoudi, H. 2022. Forest-based adaptation: transformational adaptation through forests and trees. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc2886en>

⁵Shackleton, C.M., Shackleton, S.E. and Buiten, E., 2007. The importance of dry woodlands and forests in rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation in South Africa. Forest Policy and Economics, 9(5): 558–577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2006.03.004>

Dryland forest systems are closely intertwined with pastoralism, rangelands and agroforestry, forming multifunctional landscapes essential for pastoralists and livestock herders. In arid contexts, trees and woody vegetation can supply up to half of total livestock feed during dry seasons and periods of climatic stress,⁶ underscoring why the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) provides a timely and strategic moment to elevate dryland forests.

Despite these well-established contributions, dryland forests remain systematically under-recognized, under-financed and inadequately monitored across global forest, climate and biodiversity agendas. Fragmented governance arrangements, persistent data gaps, and insufficient and short-term investment continue to constrain countries' ability to fully harness dryland forests as a cornerstone of land restoration, climate mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.

Against this backdrop, this Call to Action urges governments, donors, international organizations and private sector partners to act collectively and decisively to scale up the sustainable management, restoration and governance of dryland forests through a coordinated global approach. Building on existing commitments, evidence and mechanisms, it proposes the **Dryland Forest Support Accelerator (DFSA)** as an enabling platform to accelerate implementation, mobilize finance, and strengthen country-driven action at scale.

TRENDS AND PRESSURES SHAPING DRYLAND FORESTS

Dryland forests are under increasing and interlinked pressures, with available estimates indicating that approximately 25 percent of

dryland forest ecosystems are already degraded. In many countries, however, the extent of degradation and its specific drivers remain poorly quantified due to persistent gaps in data, monitoring and reporting systems.

The primary drivers of degradation are closely linked to land-use change, including agricultural expansion, urbanization, infrastructure development and unsustainable resource extraction. Together, these pressures undermine the ecological integrity of dryland forests and weaken their capacity to support food security, livelihoods and ecosystem services across dryland regions.

The consequences of degradation are unevenly distributed, disproportionately affecting the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including smallholders, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth, whose livelihoods and cultural identities are closely tied to dryland forest and tree-based systems.

Climate change acts as a powerful threat multiplier. Longer and more frequent droughts intensify water stress, reduce forest vitality and increase susceptibility to pests and diseases. At the same time, drought conditions significantly heighten the risk and severity of forest fires. Projections indicate a potential increase of up to 30 percent in forest fire incidence by 2050, compounding the impacts of deforestation, forest degradation and land-use change.

These disturbances create favourable conditions for the spread of invasive and opportunistic species, whether introduced through human activities or natural processes, further reducing ecosystem resilience and disrupting ecological balance. Without timely and coordinated action, these interacting pressures may trigger negative feedback loops that accelerate forest loss and land degradation across dryland landscapes.

⁶FAO. 2022. Grazing with trees – A silvopastoral approach to managing and restoring drylands with trees. Policy brief. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc2903en>

AN IMPLEMENTATION AND INTEGRATION CHALLENGE

Despite their recognized contribution to sustainable development, dryland forests remain insufficiently integrated and inconsistently addressed across global, regional and national policy, finance, and governance frameworks. This systemic gap is not due to a lack of evidence or proven solutions, but rather to historical sectoral silos, fragmented mandates, and persistent misconceptions regarding the productivity and value of dryland ecosystems. In many global forest assessments and national forest inventories, dryland forests are either underrepresented or excluded due to definitional challenges, limited data availability and methodological biases favouring humid forest systems. As a result, degradation trends, restoration needs, and investment opportunities in dryland forests are systematically underestimated, weakening the policy and financial responses required to address them.

Key interlinked challenges include:

- **Policy underrepresentation:**
Dryland forests are often weakly reflected or absent in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets, despite their direct relevance to all three Rio Conventions.
- **Fragmented governance and institutional mandates:**
Responsibilities for dryland forests are frequently dispersed across forestry, agriculture, livestock, environment and water institutions, limiting the adoption of integrated landscape approaches and coherent policy implementation.

- **Insufficient, short-term, and misaligned finance:**
Investments in dryland forests remain largely project-based, short-term and poorly aligned with national priorities, constraining long-term planning, capacity development and sustainable management. In addition, the absence of appropriate de-risking mechanisms, including risk-sharing instruments, blended finance and guarantees, continues to limit private sector participation and the mobilization of long-term investment in dryland forest landscapes.
- **Persistent data and monitoring gaps:**
Limited disaggregated data on dryland forests undermines evidence-based decision-making, weakens reporting to UNCCD, CBD, and UNFCCC processes, and restricts access to results-based and performance-linked finance.
- **Neglect of forest genetic resources (FGR):**
Dryland forests harbour a globally significant share of the genetic resources of tree and other woody plant species. These resources underpin the productivity and adaptive capacity of dryland forests but are often overlooked in international and national policies and actions.⁷ Reforestation and restoration efforts frequently fail due to shortages of, and poor-quality, forest reproductive material, resulting from inadequate national planning and insufficient investment in tree seed systems.

If left unaddressed, these systemic gaps will significantly compromise countries' ability to meet commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the Paris Agreement, and the UNCCD LDN framework, particularly in the most vulnerable dryland regions.

⁷FAO, 2025. The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources. FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture assessments. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4838en>



EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES AND ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR SCALING DRYLAND FOREST ACTION

A convergence of factors now creates favourable conditions for scaling up options, grouped into five mutually reinforcing areas: growing international recognition and institutional anchoring; increased programmatic and integrated investment; expanding adoption of practices that restore and protect dryland forests; strengthened data and learning systems; and growing momentum for South–South cooperation and cross-sectoral convergence. These opportunities include:

Growing international recognition and institutional anchoring

A major milestone was reached in 2014, when the twenty-second session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) called for greater action and investment in the assessment, monitoring, sustainable management, and restoration of drylands. In response, the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (COFO WG) was established in 2016.

Since its establishment, the Working Group has been chaired successively by the United Republic of Tanzania, Mongolia and, currently, Zimbabwe, while vice-chair roles have been held by Lebanon, France, Peru and Türkiye. Its mandate is to review and report to COFO on the status and trends of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems; strengthen understanding of these systems and the communities that depend on them; promote the scaling up of good practices for their protection, management and restoration; and collaborate with partners to support monitoring, policy development and knowledge-sharing for sustainable dryland management.

The Working Group serves as a collaborative forum dedicated to advancing knowledge, sharing experiences and supporting countries in scaling up sustainable management, protection and restoration of dryland forests

and agrosilvopastoral systems. It brings together countries and experts from all major dryland regions, including both the Global South and the Global North, and fosters dialogue and partnerships across diverse contexts.

In 2019, it produced *Trees, forests and land use in drylands*: the first global assessment,¹ the most comprehensive overview to date of the extent and condition of dryland ecosystems. Published shortly before the proclamation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), this assessment helped underscore the global urgency of protecting and restoring drylands.

Its relevance was further reinforced in April 2021, when the 166th Session of the FAO Council reaffirmed the mandate of the Working Group within the Revised 2021–2023 Action Plan (Outcome 4, Core Area 4) for implementing the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors, consolidating its role as a key platform for evidence generation, knowledge-sharing and the scaling up of sustainable dryland management practices.

Increasing programming and integrated investment

Although dryland forests differ across regions, the challenges they face, as well as many of the potential solutions, are shared. This makes them particularly well suited to programmatic and integrated approaches that address drivers of degradation across entire landscapes and land-use systems.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has moved in this direction through the launch of its largest global programme on dryland forests under its seventh replenishment cycle. Led by FAO, the Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL-IP) operates in 11 countries across Asia and Africa to directly address the drivers of environmental degradation and dryland forest loss through an integrated approach. The five-year programme marks a significant milestone for dryland ecosystems worldwide, as well as for FAO members and partners. It supports the

implementation of the COFO WG workplan and mandate and is aligned with the objectives of the three Rio Conventions, highlighting the importance of dryland forests in achieving LDN, addressing biodiversity loss, and tackling climate change.

Growing awareness and application of practices that restore and protect dryland forests

At the landscape level, there is growing awareness of practices that contribute to sustainable intensification and increased vegetation cover in dryland landscapes, helping to reduce pressure on dryland forests while strengthening livelihoods and resilience.

The integration of agroforestry systems, where trees are combined with agricultural activities, offers sustainable solutions for enhancing land productivity, improving soil quality, and generating additional income opportunities for local communities. This includes diversification through drought-tolerant crops and approaches that better integrate trees, crops and livestock in agrosilvopastoral systems.

Nature-based solutions and improved land and forest management present opportunities to mitigate climate shocks by safeguarding existing carbon stocks and enhancing carbon sequestration, thereby increasing the feasibility and attractiveness of carbon-related initiatives, where appropriate.

Reforestation and afforestation also offer opportunities to rehabilitate degraded lands and enhance biodiversity, soil fertility, water retention and carbon sequestration.

Embedding the sustainable management of dryland forests within national, regional, and global policy and regulatory frameworks, and linking this to coherent investment strategies, can help secure political commitment and long-term sustainability.

Strengthening knowledge, data platforms, and collective learning

Global data platforms such as the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration and Monitoring

(FERM) and the Global Sustainable Land Management Database (WOCAT) play an important role in capturing and disseminating good practices with strong potential for scaling up. At the same time, a growing number of initiatives, including the DSL-IP, are documenting common management challenges and highlighting innovative solutions, thereby advancing collective learning and accelerating the wider uptake of sustainable dryland forest practices.

Rising momentum for South-South cooperation and cross-sectoral convergence

Regional South-South collaboration mechanisms can support countries in identifying, adapting, and sharing evidence and good practices. Several dryland forest-focused networks already exist and can be leveraged, and there is a clear opportunity to strengthen linkages among them in support of enhanced regional cooperation. For example, the Southern African Development Community's Great Green Wall Initiative, the Miombo Initiative led by Mozambique, and the inter-Regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity are collaborating with the DSL-IP's Regional Exchange Mechanism to ensure knowledge flows across borders and that capacities are strengthened in support of more resilient dryland landscapes and livelihoods.

Evidence-based practices emerging from local contexts and regional exchanges should also inform global convening bodies such as the COFO WG on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems, in order to support decision-making and enable the scaling up of lessons learned and good practices across dryland regions.

At the same time, dryland forests cannot be addressed in isolation. Cross-sectoral collaboration, including stronger alignment between forestry and agriculture processes, is needed to ensure that common management challenges are addressed through win-win solutions across sectors, thereby strengthening the resilience of dryland landscapes and livelihoods.

WHAT IS ALREADY WORKING — AND READY TO SCALE

Translating momentum into coordinated action

Across regions, countries and partners have generated a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that dryland forests can be sustainably managed, restored and governed to deliver measurable benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and livelihoods. Accumulated experience indicates that the principal challenge is no longer the absence of viable technical solutions, but rather the systematic scaling up, coordination, and long-term institutionalization of proven approaches within coherent policy, governance and investment frameworks.

Over the past decade, progress in international recognition, particularly through the establishment and consolidation of the FAO COFO WG, has strengthened the global evidence base, policy dialogue, and knowledge exchange on dryland forests. However, despite this progress, implementation remains uneven, and many effective practices continue to be applied at limited scale, constrained by fragmented mandates, insufficient cross-sectoral coordination, and short-term or misaligned financing.

Evidence from cross-country collaboration and structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms demonstrates that peer learning and coordinated action significantly enhance uptake, reduce transaction costs, and improve outcomes across diverse dryland contexts. In parallel, recent country-led initiatives implemented at scale, including large-scale dryland restoration and afforestation programmes, demonstrate that ambitious dryland forest action is both technically and institutionally feasible when aligned with national development priorities, climate objectives and international commitments. These experiences consistently highlight the enabling role of political leadership, predictable long-term financing, integrated landscape planning, and robust monitoring and accountability systems. On this basis, the

following five areas identify priority domains where action is already advancing and where targeted strengthening can most effectively accelerate impact.

Five key areas where action is already advancing, and must be strengthened

- **Cross-country cooperation, policy dialogue and capacity development:** Strengthen and expand cross-country cooperation, policy dialogue and capacity development through dedicated platforms such as the FAO-led COFO WG on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems, enabling dryland countries to jointly address shared challenges, including forest degradation and loss, forest-based value chains, biodiversity decline, and climate adaptation, while strengthening coherence across sectors and regions.
- **Integrated investment and programmatic approaches:** Scale up integrated investment platforms such as the DSL-IP, as well as related GEF-funded and partner-supported programmes, which demonstrate the effectiveness of programmatic, landscape-level approaches that combine restoration, sustainable land management, climate adaptation and livelihood enhancement.
- **Mainstreaming dryland forests into national and global policy frameworks:** Systematically integrate and prioritize dryland forests within national policies and planning instruments, including NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs, as well as within global processes under the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC, in order to strengthen their contribution to economic development, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation.
- **Knowledge, guidance, monitoring and reporting systems:** Strengthen the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources to increase the availability of high-quality forest reproductive material and align these efforts with other priorities of the FAO Global Plan of Action for FGR.

- **Knowledge, guidance, monitoring and reporting systems:**
Strengthen the development and dissemination of evidence-based guidelines, tools, and good practices, supported by global and regional knowledge, data, and monitoring platforms such as the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Drylands Portal, the SFM Toolbox, FERM and WOCAT, in order to improve assessment, monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting, and to support evidence-based decision-making and accountability.
- **Gender-responsive action and women's leadership:**
Advance gender-responsive approaches by strengthening the leadership, participation, and access to knowledge and networks of women and youth in dryland forest and agrosilvopastoral systems, including through FAO initiatives such as WeCaN, recognizing women's empowerment as a key driver of effective, inclusive, and resilient dryland forest and landscape interventions.

Collectively, these experiences demonstrate that dryland forest action is technically feasible, socially inclusive and economically viable. What is required now is a concerted effort to align policies, finance and institutional support to move from isolated successes to sustained, large-scale impact.

THE DRYLAND FOREST SUPPORT ACCELERATOR (DFSA)

Why Do Dryland Forests Require a Dedicated Accelerator?

Building on strengthened international recognition, expanding programmatic investment, and a growing body of country-led evidence, this Call to Action proposes the establishment and operationalization of the DFSA as a FAO-anchored global support mechanism, implemented in close partnership with countries and relevant stakeholders.

While recent initiatives demonstrate that effective approaches to dryland forest management, restoration, and governance are both technically feasible and contextually adaptable, their impact remains uneven due to persistent gaps in policy integration, institutional coordination, financing continuity and knowledge uptake. The DFSA is conceived as a systemic response to these gaps, designed to consolidate momentum and move from fragmented, project-based successes towards the institutionalization of dryland forest action within national systems and international support architectures, thereby enabling sustained, coordinated and transformative impact at scale (see Box 2).

STRATEGIC ADDED VALUE OF THE DFSA

The added value of the DFSA lies in its capacity to operate simultaneously across policy, finance, knowledge, and implementation dimensions, thereby creating the enabling conditions for sustained impact. In particular, the DFSA will:

- **Provide a dedicated, visible and sustained global entry point for dryland forest issues** within FAO and across international forest, climate, biodiversity and land restoration processes, ensuring institutional anchoring, strategic continuity, and increased political and technical attention.
- **Strengthen strategic alignment between national dryland forest priorities and international financing mechanisms**, including climate, biodiversity, land restoration, and development funds, thereby facilitating more predictable, coherent, and accessible financial support for country-led action.
- **Facilitate long-term technical and policy support beyond individual project cycles**, enabling institutional strengthening, sustained capacity development, and the integration of dryland forest considerations into national systems and planning processes.
- **Promote coherence across sectors and scales by linking local land-use systems, territorial approaches, and community-based management** with national strategies and global monitoring, reporting, and accountability frameworks under the Rio Conventions.

Box 1 Strategic Added Value of the DFSA.
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

FAO, together with the members of the COFO WG and participating countries under the DSL-IP, invites governments and partners to join this collective effort. By strengthening collaboration, expanding participation, and consolidating existing initiatives, the DFSA aims to translate shared knowledge and dispersed successes into coordinated, long-term action, thereby enhancing resilience and unlocking the full potential of dryland forests to advance global climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development objectives.

Purpose and added value

The DFSA is intended as a strategic response to a set of persistent and well-documented structural constraints that continue to limit the effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability of action on dryland forests. These constraints include fragmented governance arrangements across sectors and administrative levels; short-term, project-based financing cycles that impede continuity and scale; and limited access to sustained, context-specific technical support and investment tailored to dryland conditions. Addressing these challenges requires a shift from isolated interventions toward an integrated, system-level approach capable of supporting long-term transformation.

Core functions

Through a flexible, modular and demand-driven approach that can be adapted to diverse ecological, socio-economic and institutional contexts, the DFSA will:

1. **Support countries in systematically integrating dryland forests into national policy, planning and investment frameworks**, including NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPs, LDN targets, and related development strategies, thereby strengthening coherence across climate, biodiversity, land and development agendas.
2. **Facilitate access to finance** by supporting programme and project preparation, strengthening linkages with relevant international financing mechanisms, and promoting blended, programmatic and landscape-level financing approaches that enable scale, replication and long-term

sustainability.

3. **Strengthen data, monitoring, reporting and learning systems** to enable countries to generate robust, policy-relevant evidence, track progress over time, support adaptive management, and meet reporting requirements under the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC.
4. **Promote South-South and triangular cooperation** through structured peer learning, technical exchanges, and the systematic documentation and dissemination of good practices, lessons learned, and innovation across dryland regions.
5. **Enhance cross-sectoral coordination and policy coherence** among forestry, agriculture, livestock, rangelands, environment, water, energy, and planning institutions at national and subnational levels, supporting integrated landscape and territorial approaches that address the multiple drivers of dryland forest degradation.

Governance and partnerships

The DFSA is anchored within FAO and implemented through a collaborative, multi-level governance model designed to ensure strategic coherence, technical credibility and strong country ownership. The governance approach reflects the understanding that achieving systemic change in dryland forest management requires sustained coordination across institutions, sectors and scales, rather than parallel or stand-alone initiatives.

FAO provides strategic coordination, technical leadership, and a stable institutional home for the DFSA, drawing on its normative mandate, convening power, and long-standing engagement in dryland forestry, agrosilvopastoral systems, and integrated landscape management. At the same time, the DFSA is explicitly country-driven, with participating countries playing a central role in shaping priorities, guiding implementation, and contributing experience and leadership to collective learning and action.

The DFSA operates in close collaboration with interested member countries, relevant United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations, research institutions, civil

society and financing partners. This inclusive partnership model is designed to strengthen complementarity, avoid duplication, and align technical assistance, investment and policy support around shared objectives. Linkages with existing global and regional platforms, including the COFO WG, ensure that country-level experience informs global policy dialogue, while global guidance and evidence support national decision-making.

The DFSA will engage a group of committed countries that prioritize national investment in piloting, testing, documenting and scaling up on-the-ground solutions to avoid, reduce and reverse forest degradation and loss in drylands. By addressing both forest-specific challenges and pressures arising from other land uses, participating countries support one another in developing evidence-based action plans, strengthening institutional coordination, optimizing resource use, and fostering joint action planning and greater complementarity within and across borders.

Through this governance and partnership framework, the DFSA functions not only as a technical support mechanism, but also as a structured, action-oriented community of practice. It enables continuous feedback between implementation, policy development and global reporting processes, thereby supporting the transition from fragmented initiatives to coordinated, long-term, and scalable impact across dryland landscapes.

This country-driven collaboration also positions the DFSA as a platform for peer learning and action-oriented community in which national experience feeds directly into regional and global policy dialogue and contributes to the transition from isolated initiatives to systemic, long-term change at scale.

Zimbabwe, Türkiye and Peru, as leading countries of this session of the COFO WG on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems, have provided illustrative examples of country-led thematic priorities that demonstrate how the DFSA can support diverse national entry points while advancing its core objectives of scaling integrated approaches, strengthening institutions, enabling learning and cooperation, and

mobilizing sustained investment for dryland forests.

Zimbabwe is an active country in advancing dryland forest action. It currently chairs the COFO WG and its steering committee and will host its fifth session in 2027. In addition, the country plays a critical role in the GEF-7 DSL-IP. In Zimbabwe, the programme focuses on the Miombo and Mopane woodlands of the Save and Runde basins, which feed into wetlands that are vital for water storage, biodiversity and rural livelihoods.

An emerging component of this programme is the upscaling of sustainably managed non-wood forest products (NWFPs) to support nutrition and income generation in dryland communities, thereby strengthening economic opportunities for women and youth.

Zimbabwe has established innovative initiatives such as Community Seed Banks (CSBs), which apply an integrated approach to forest restoration, soil, water and land conservation in order to promote climate-resilient food systems through the sustainable production of traditional grains, often embedded in agrosilvopastoral systems.

Overall, by linking seed production, traditional grains, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), solar-powered infrastructure for soil and water management, and integrated agroforestry approaches, Zimbabwe is piloting a model in which dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems jointly contribute to food security, resilience and LDN.

Türkiye has emerged as a global leader in dryland forestry, combining large-scale restoration efforts with international capacity development. The International Forestry Training Centre supports knowledge exchange and institutional capacity development for sustainable forest management in arid and semi-arid regions and has trained forestry practitioners from approximately 25 countries. Türkiye has committed to restoring 2.3 million hectares by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge, with 2.2 million hectares reportedly restored between 2019 and 2025. These efforts have contributed to a steady increase in forest cover, from 20.2 million hectares (26.1 percent of land area) in 1973 to 23.4

million hectares (30 percent) by 2025, despite approximately 65 percent of the country being classified as arid or semi-arid.

Peru is implementing its Dry Forest Project through a comprehensive inter-institutional collaboration approach involving forest communities, as well as both traditional and intensive agricultural stakeholders. The project aims to harmonize the conservation and restoration of dry forests with sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

Together with contributions from other supporting countries, these thematic priorities illustrate how the DFSA operates as a flexible yet coherent framework, enabling countries to pursue context-specific solutions while contributing to shared objectives of scaling impact, strengthening institutions, and accelerating learning across dryland regions.

DFSM value proposition

The DFSM provides a dedicated, FAO-anchored platform to consolidate momentum, align actors and resources, and support countries in translating proven approaches into sustained, large-scale impact. By addressing structural barriers related to governance, financing, capacity and coordination, the DFSA moves beyond project-based delivery toward the institutionalization of dryland forest action within national systems and international support architectures. By combining FAO's convening role with strong country ownership and peer-to-peer collaboration, the DFSA offers a practical and scalable pathway to advance integrated dryland forest, rangeland and agrosilvopastoral solutions aligned with the objectives of the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC.

It enables countries to integrate dryland forests into climate, biodiversity, land and development agendas; access coherent and long-term finance; strengthen data, monitoring and accountability systems; and accelerate learning through South-South cooperation, thereby transforming dispersed successes into systemic change at scale in support of the UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC and the 2030 Agenda.

WHAT WE ARE CALLING FOR

We call on governments to:

- **Support this Call to Action on Dryland Forests** as a shared framework for elevating dryland forests within national, regional, and global climate, biodiversity, land, and sustainable development agendas.
- **Strengthen the systematic integration of dryland forests** into NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPs and LDN targets, recognizing their central role in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.
- **Strengthen the prioritization of dryland forests within national planning and budgeting** processes, and enhance cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms across forestry, agriculture, rangelands, environment, water and planning institutions.
- **Build on and further strengthen the role, knowledge and leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities**, including pastoralists, as key stewards of dryland forests and landscapes.
- **Support and engage with the DFSA** as a platform for advancing country-led priorities, facilitate access to coordinated technical and financial support, and contribute national experience to collective learning and action.

We call on donors and international financial institutions to:

- **Provide predictable, multi-year and programmatic financing** for dryland forest management, restoration and governance, moving beyond fragmented, short-term project modalities.
- **Align financial support with country-led priorities and the strategic objectives of the DFSA**, thereby reinforcing national ownership and long-term impact.

- **Invest in data, monitoring and reporting systems** that enable evidence-based decision-making and support coherent reporting under the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC.

We call on UN agencies and conventions to:

- **Strengthen coherence, coordination and complementarity** across UN agencies in the implementation of commitments related to dryland forests, including through joint programming, aligned guidance, and shared monitoring and learning frameworks.
- **Call on the CBD** to provide guidance on integrating dryland forests into NBSAPs by strengthening how restoration efforts in drylands are defined and tracked under Target 2, and by ensuring that sustainable management approaches, particularly in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, are more fully reflected in the implementation of Target 10.
- **Call on the UNFCCC** to close the dryland forests gap in climate action by ensuring that dryland forests are fully recognized,

financed and monitored as essential ecosystems for climate adaptation, fire resilience, biodiversity conservation, livelihoods and land restoration. Countries should be supported in integrating dryland forest restoration, woodland stewardship and sustainable forest management in their NDCs, NAPs and long-term climate strategies. This should be supported by region-specific data, emission factors, adaptation metrics and financing mechanisms that reflect the multiple adaptation and mitigation benefits provided by dryland forests.

- **Call on the UNCCD** to formally recognize dryland forests as a priority ecosystem category within LDN implementation, and to strengthen its methodological guidance for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 15.3.1 in dryland contexts by addressing gaps that may lead to the misinterpretation of degradation, improving the treatment of sparse tree cover and trees outside forests, updating its Good Practice Guidance to better reflect dryland conditions, and engaging the DFSA as a technical partner to support country-level implementation capacity.

CONCLUSION

Dryland forests are indispensable for achieving global climate, biodiversity and land restoration goals. Through coordinated leadership, adequate investment and the DFSA, the international community can unlock the full potential of dryland forests for people, nature and climate.

The time to act is now!







Epupa falls. Kunene river boarder between Namibia and Angola.

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