

Sustainable Land Management Business Forum



Ankara Declaration



Summary

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.3 on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) under the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. The SDG 15.3, which aims at achieving a land degradation-neutral world by 2030, constitutes a critical milestone in the international community's acknowledgement of the importance of land degradation neutrality.

According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 25% of usable land globally is degraded at an estimated economic loss of \$40 billion per year. Land degradation has a significant impact on our economies and societies, as it is directly related to food and water security, carbon emissions, biodiversity loss, political and social risks. For businesses, land degradation can translate into profit loss through reduced productivity and higher costs. It can also increase risks related to market access.

Coordinated global efforts are required to halt and reverse land degradation, restore degraded ecosystems and manage land resources sustainably. The right institutional, political and legal frameworks accompanied by economic incentives can allow the global community to achieve LDN. While participation of all stakeholders is critical to success, the private sector has the resources and technological know-how that is needed for large-scale investments and concrete action on the ground. By bringing innovative solutions, business can significantly contribute to the transformation of our economies to become land degradation neutral.

Part1. Land Degradation Neutrality: an opportunity for business

Business risks of land degradation are multi-fold: it can affect businesses both directly and indirectly, through economic, social or environmental factors. It can lead to both demand and supply imbalances, and target inputs as well as outputs. Moreover, negative effects can spread from one industry to another, representing substantial risks to the whole economy.

On the contrary, sustainable land management practices allow land assets to reach their full productivity potential hence presenting positive outcomes for both businesses and other stakeholders. These include:

- Minimization of profit loss risks due to reduced productivity or higher costs.
- Secure access to labor force and critical markets through reduced exposure to conflict and forced migration risks.
- Higher brand value and market share through improved brand image.

Part 2.

Business contribution to Land Degradation Neutrality

With the aim of supporting local, national and regional LDN targets, forward-looking businesses participating to the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum commit to promote sustainable land management (SLM) practices and land-use planning to prevent, halt and reverse land degradation.

SLM practices include, among other things: sustainable agriculture such as conservation agriculture and agroforestry, sustainable forest management, soil, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, watershed protection, wastewater treatment, reduction/avoidance of waste sent to landfill, and pest and disease control. Increasing productivity sustainably on available land can also contribute to limiting degradation.

As part of an integrated land-use plan, businesses also commit to promote the use of renewable energy resources, such as wind, solar or biomass; while investing in sustainable tourism and natural infrastructure. They also commit to promote rehabilitation of degraded and abandoned production lands and restoration of degraded natural and semi-natural ecosystems that provide vital, albeit indirect, benefits to business, people and landscapes.

Part 3. Calling on government support

Building land degradation neutral economies requires the support of business to reverse land degradation and scale up sustainable land management. In order to incentivize private sector investment and engagement in land degradation neutrality, governments need to put in place predictable long-term policies and a solid regulatory framework that provide a level-playing field for all actors. Particular policy asks include the following:

1. When developing national LDN strategies and policies

ENGAGE IN EARLY DIALOGUE WITH BUSINESS IN ASSESSING THE STATUS OF LAND RESOURCES AND ESTABLISHING COUNTRY-LEVEL TARGETS:

Companies can provide critical insights into the problems associated with land degradation and assist with the identification of realistic targets by bringing in their know-how and innovative technological solutions.

DEVELOP CLEAR LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT CREATE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD:

This ensures improved compliance and equity between players as policies are applied consistently to all companies.

PROVIDE COMMERCIAL BENEFITS:

Implementing LDN can be costly. Government policies should thus provide an economic incentive for companies to implement sustainable land management, land rehabilitation and restoration. They should also focus on building synergies between LDN and other environmental and social priorities, particularly climate mitigation and adaptation to reduce compliance costs.

2. When implementing LDN strategies and policies

PROVIDE TARGETED TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Some companies are still unclear about what LDN entails, how it can be implemented, and what the most cost-efficient business models are. It is crucial to provide support to companies with the design and implementation of action plans, including identification of cost-efficient models. By supporting technological progress and enhancing investments in research, governments can help a sustainable competitive farming sector to balance productivity with efficient use of natural resources and deliver economic and environmental benefits.

FACILITATE ON-GOING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE:

Establishing relevant institutions that allow for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on LDN will ensure that all stakeholders, including business and civil society organizations participate in LDN related decision-making.

COMMUNICATE RESULTS:

Lack of or limited information on the potential risks and opportunities associated with LDN and related policy measures create uncertainty for business that in turn lead to slow uptake and inefficient policy application. Lessons learned from first movers and pilot schemes should be made publically available and widely communicated for the benefit of other businesses and stakeholders

3. When monitoring impact

DEVELOP CLEAR MONITORING FRAMEWORKS:

Governance and enforcement of regulation are important elements in ensuring effective policy implementation and equality. In particular, clear performance indicators harmonized across sectors are crucial for companies to monitor and report on their contribution to LDN and other environmental targets.

GIVE BUSINESS TIME TO ADAPT:

Ensuring there is enough time for companies to adjust to new practices and policy requirements will help businesses succeed in their efforts. This involves setting reasonable and predictable timeframes and updating them when and where necessary.

Conclusion

Tackling the land degradation challenge requires unprecedented collaboration between all stakeholders – business, governments and society. This declaration is an initial step towards implementing land degradation neutrality and needs to be supported by real action on the ground by all parties. In the light of the points outlined above, we call on all companies to join us in our collaborative effort to implement sustainable land management practices and land restoration. Our next steps will be critical in materializing the transition to a sustainable global economy.



BUSINESS FORUM PARTNERS

