Sustainable Land Management

Background and Context

Whether taking the form of soil erosion, loss of fertility, loss of vegetation, desertification, salinisation or pollution, land degradation is increasingly becoming a major global environmental issue. The challenge for humanity is how to sustain the productivity of land while promoting its prudent use. Sustainable land management (SLM) is a response with the potential to address this challenge. SLM is defined as 'the use of land resources, including soils, water, animals and plants, for the production of goods to meet changing human needs while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions' (United Nations Earth Summit, 1992). SLM is fully embraced by both Malabo Commitment 4 – halving poverty by the year 2025 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation – and Malabo Commitment 5 – enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks, with the sub-target of agricultural land being placed under SLM.

National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs) are the main operational and investment vehicle for achieving the CAADP Malabo targets. Incorporating SLM into a country's NAIP processes from the design to the implementation phase will therefore ensure that investments in sustainable agricultural transformation are prioritised. To this end, the Malabo Domestication process should be conducted in a participatory way which involves all relevant stakeholders and which identifies gaps to be clearly addressed in the NAIP.

Main Challenges to Achieving Sustainable Land Management

Land degradation that results from unsustainable land management practices is a threat to the environment as well as to agriculturally-dependent livelihoods (Liniger *et al*, 2011). There is a potentially devastating downward spiral of overexploitation and degradation, enhanced by the negative impacts of climate change, leading in turn to reduced availability of natural resources and declining productivity. This jeopardises food security and increases poverty. The immediate challenge is to sustain the productivity of land and promote prudent use of land and land-based resources by addressing the underlying drivers of land degradation (World Bank, GEF and UNCCD). Figure 1 shows some of the categories of land degradation being experienced around the world.

An IPBES (2018) report notes that '… The impact of almost all direct drivers of land degradation will be worsened by climate change. These include, among others, accelerated soil erosion on degraded lands as a result of more extreme weather events, increased risk of forest fires and changes in the distribution of invasive species, pests and pathogens… Land degradation is also a major contributor to climate change, while climate change can exacerbate the impacts of land degradation and reduce the viability of some options for avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation.' Countering these bleak observations, on the other hand, is evidence suggesting that SLM and

KEY MESSAGES

Sustainable land management is key to maintaining ecological resilience and the stability of ecosystem services indefinitely, while also providing sustenance and diverse livelihoods for humans. SLM provides a portfolio of possible technologies, practices and approaches to land management that are implementable at the local scale in a participatory manner as well as being supported by the broader planning frameworks and environment (ELD, 2015). In sum, embedding SLM within the NAIP is key to achieving the CAADP Malabo Commitments.

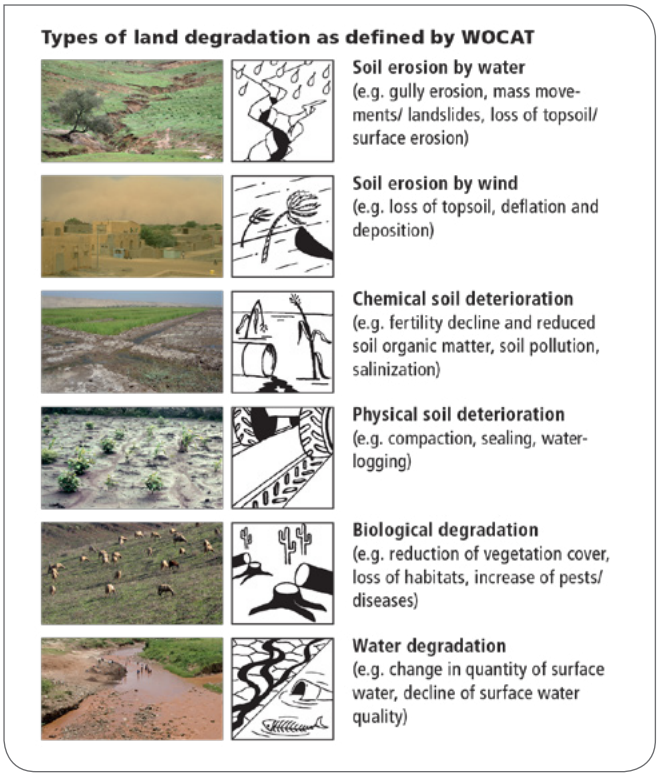

Figure 1: Categories of land degradation. *Source: Harari et al (2017).*

land restoration can assist climate change mitigation and adaptation. SLM practices are, in this way, contributing to achieving climate-smart agricultural practices.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is particularly vulnerable to the twin threats of natural resource degradation and poverty, owing to its high population growth rates and population pressures, dependency of livelihoods on agriculture, agriculture's high sensitivity to variability and changes in climate and markets / prices, and abundance of fragile natural resources and ecosystems. According to the Global Land Outlook Report, already a quarter of Africa's croplands and rangelands show signs of decreasing or unstable land productivity (UNCCD, 2017). In view of this, SLM is crucial for SSA, especially since there are unique circumstances that pose particular problems and challenges for the successful implementation of SLM (Liniger, 2011).

Recommendations for Anchoring Sustainable Land Management within NAIPs

- Sustainable land management is relevant for achieving the Malabo goals and targetsbecause of the need for high political commitment to mainstreaming SLM within national development policy. followed by a long-term, multi-sectoral approach in broad partnerships to reduce the barriers to sustainable land management. The Malabo committments on SLM and

climate resilience are an example of such political committment which, when incorporated into the NAIP, will lead to the achievements of the Malabo goals and targets at the country level. This is because there is assurance of stakeholder participation and financial resource availability to enable the implementation of SLM and climate actions to address land degradation and build resilience respectively.

Investing in avoiding or reducing land degradation restoring degraded land makes sound economic sense: the benefits exceed the costs by far. Timely action can increase food and water security, can contribute substantially to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, and can contribute to the avoidance of conflict and migration. Avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation is also essential for achieving the majority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Figure 2 below proposes some SLM measures which can be promoted and incorporated into the implementation of a NAIP.

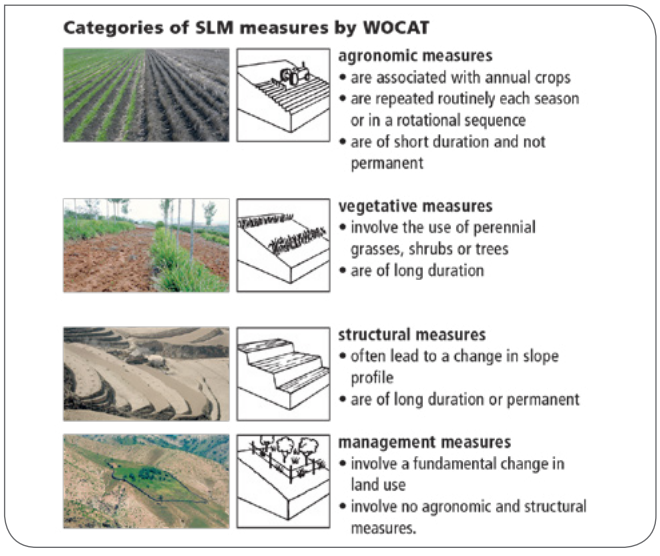

Figure 2: Some recommended sustainable land management measures. *Source: Harari et al (2017).*

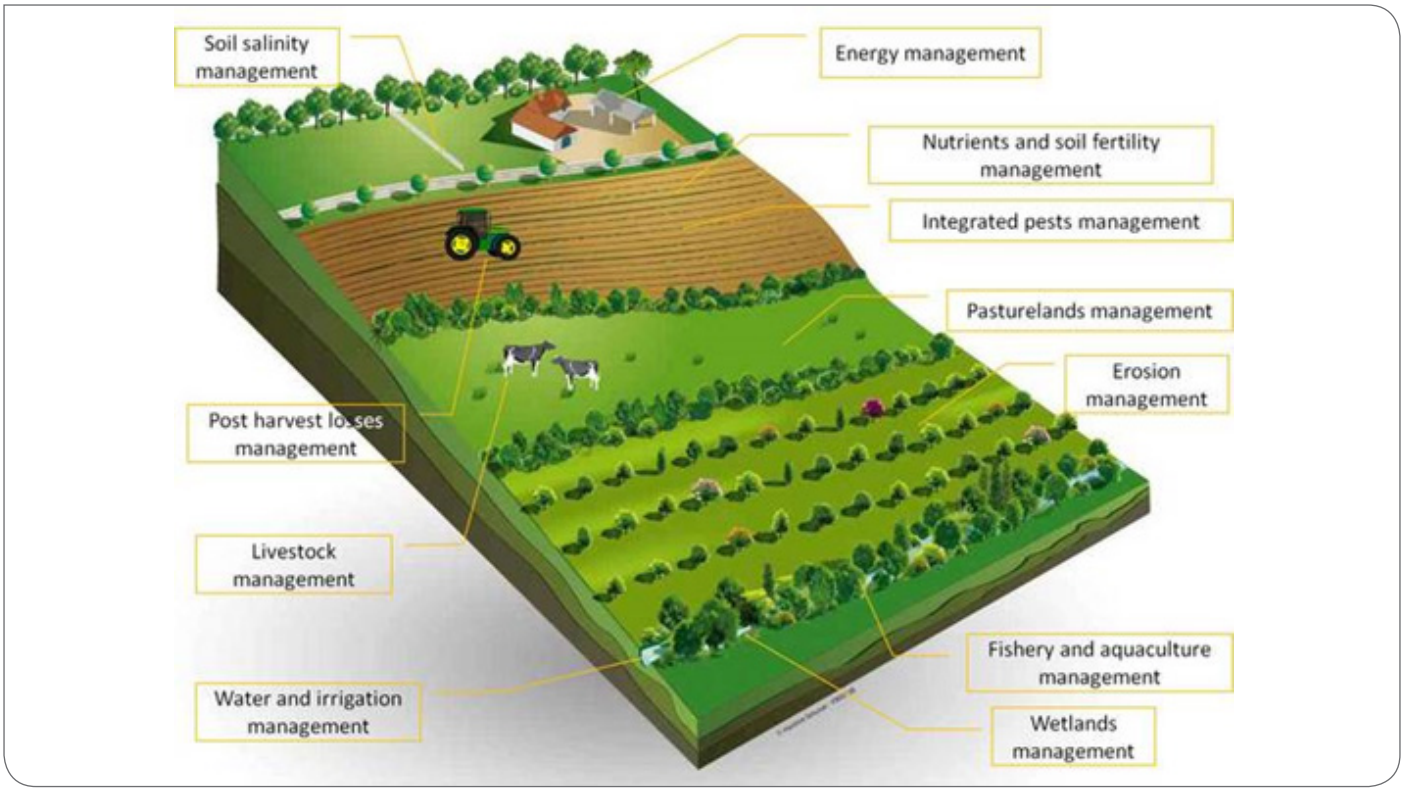

Figure 3: A sustainable agriculture landscape. *Source: FAO Sustainable Agriculture Platform Pilot.*

Ultimately, SLM should contribute to sustainable agriculture, which should lead to productive and integrated landscapes – as depicted in Figure 3 above.

- The policy measures which are recommended for addressing SLM within NAIPs are also reflected in local National Agriculture Policy (NAP), which provides clear and comprehensive policy guidance in agricultural development and the agricultural transformation agenda. The NAP, which should be aligned with the overarching long-term and medium-term national development strategies, is the basis for the NAIP, guiding investment focus in the sector.

  The NAIP, meanwhile, which is likely to be a second-generation framework under CAADP, should be aligned with the African Union Malabo Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sev¬eral other International and Regional Policy Frameworks. The SDGs to which SLM is applicable are numbers 15[1], 2[2], and 13[3].

  Due to the nature of the Malabo Commitments and the SDGs, the NAIP requires close collaboration with key policies and strategies in sectors other than the agricultural sector only at the level of imple¬mentation. Policies, institutional arrangements and investments that create an environment conducive to gender-responsive SLM, such as enhancement of women's access and control of productive and financial resources for SLM, are crucial (see Knowledge Note: Women's Empowerment). These should also be reflected in the NAIPs.

- In order to ensure that SLM is embedded in the NAIP and anchored at national policy level, the NAIPs should help to overcome the common barriers faced by farmers in applying SLM measures and / or in transforming their management systems into more sustainable production systems. This is achieved when the NAIPs achieve the following:
  - Ensure tenure security and legal rights;
  - Set up a favourable regulatory framework for SLM, including the possibility of informal user agreements;
  - Ensure access to finance and / or incentives for investment in SLM – in the form of credits, subsidies, inputs, grant schemes and / or taxing privileges;
  - Establish effective and accessible extension services and know-how transfer for SLM, including increased awareness;

1 SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

2 SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

3 SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

- Integrate risk insurance schemes (such as conversion or retention premiums and insurance;
- Include measures to improve market infrastructure and access – including for ecological labelling and / or bio-markets;
- Improve access to machinery, enhance community collaboration to reduce labour intensity and / or entail food for work or cash for work schemes;
- Reduce perverse and adverse incentives and harmonise inter-sectoral planning.

How Sustainable Land Management is Measured in the Biennial Review

Malabo Commitment	Commitment Performance Category	Objectives	Indicator	Target value
6 Resilience to Climate Variability	6.1 Resilience to climate related risks	Promote initiatives of building resilience of production systems to reduce vulnera-bilities of the livelihoods of African population to climate variability and other related risks.	6.1ii- Share of agriculture land under sustainable land management practices.	30%

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