
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON DROUGHT AND AGRICULTURE

PREDICT, PLAN, PREPARE: STOP DROUGHT BECOMING A FAMINE

FAO, 19 JUNE 2017

SUMMARY OF SESSION 1

THEMATIC AREA 1: INTEGRATING AND ALIGNING WATER AND SOIL MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE RESPONSE TO DROUGHT

Theme 1 examined barriers to the joint management of land and water and focused on pathways to scale up the integration of water and soil in drought management planning. The session highlighted the range of available technologies, including: the reduction of soil evaporation through conservation tillage practices and mulch; enhancing soil organic matter for better moisture storage; enhancing soil fertility; reducing crop water requirements by inducing microclimatic changes, for example, wind barriers, shade cover or vegetative soil cover; and improving soil quality through avoiding erosion.

THE CHALLENGES: BARRIERS TO PREPAREDNESS AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

1. The current focus is on post-drought response, compared with lower investment in drought preparedness. Typically, drought responses occur in a window of crisis once drought has set in. Action on drought and progress towards proactive management is rapidly forgotten once rains arrive.
2. Soil-water management for drought preparedness is not a high priority and many countries lag-behind on addressing both water and soil management within a coherent framework that targets drought management.
3. Weak regional cooperation to address soil and water management in drought preparedness and planning.
4. Drought planning, preparedness and mitigation is hampered by imperfect knowledge sharing platforms at national and regional levels.

THE SOLUTIONS: REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION, KNOWLEDGE PLATFORMS, AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

1. Increased coordination, cross-sectoral integration, synergies and strong leadership at national and regional level: there are enough technical solutions but implementation is lagging behind. Strong emphasis was given to the following recommendations:
 - a. Ensure support for the development of drought strategies at national and regional levels.
 - b. Ensure consistent legal, institutional and technical packages for implementation of drought-management solutions.
 - c. Support policy makers with effective decision-making tools for planning drought-management.
2. Prepare young leaders and the next generation to adapt, make decisions, and be innovated by enrolling them in training and awareness raising programmes.
3. Establish regional knowledge platforms to build cooperation among countries and share current best practices.
4. Exploit innovative financing mechanisms to link soil – water storage to soil-carbon storage in future agricultural development.