For this new agenda to take hold and generate impacts at the scale needed, rights and resources must be underpinned by responsibility. Security of tenure and appropriate incentives and rewards are needed at all levels to ensure that the necessary shifts in land use are sustainable and equitable. It is clear that more responsible land management practices, strategies, and policies are needed to safeguard and preserve the land for future generations.

Part One of this Outlook takes a broad brush in painting the big picture while Part Two discusses some of the most pressing global issues that impact land use, demand, and condition. The approach is guided by the Big Picture of Land Degradation Neutrality, the related objectives of poverty reduction, food and water security, biodiversity, and soil sustainability, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable livelihoods.

Part Three highlights six response pathways that producers and consumers, governments and corporations can follow to stabilize and reduce pressure on land resources as well as illustrative case studies to help achieve success.

1. Multifunctional landscape approach: prioritizing and balancing the diverse stakeholder needs of a landscape, such as food, forestry, and biodiversity, specifically on land use, demand, and condition so that a full range of goods and services are produced. Land-use planning helps identify these needs and tools that meet the demands of people while safeguarding soil, water, and biodiversity for future generations.

2. Resilience building: enhancing the adaptive capacity of communities and ecosystems through landscape approaches that promote shared responsibility and collective action. It will shape a prosperous and more sustainable future.

3. Farming for multiple benefits: optimizing the most intrinsic suite of ecosystem services from food production activities. This requires a fundamental shift in agricultural practices to support local communities and ecosystems as a means of generating multiple benefits from managing land-based natural capital.

4. Managing the rural-urban interface: fostering the underlying social and economic conditions necessary to foster transformative initiatives. This includes promoting the inclusion of rural producers and urban inhabitants, increasing the role of community participation and ownership, and balancing different stakeholder needs at a landscape scale while incorporating site-level specificity on land use, demand, and condition so that the wider landscape can reduce environmental costs of transport, food, water, and energy, and offer new opportunities for resource efficiency.

5. Net land loss: providing incentives for the sustainable consumption and production of natural resources. Land degradation irreversibly at a net loss of $6.6 trillion in annual economic value or an estimated 15% of the Earth’s vegetated surface. The numerous practices and progressive approaches highlighted in this Outlook serve as a timely reminder that proven, cost-effective response pathways that significantly reducing the current levels of food waste and loss.

6. Creating an enabling environment: providing the conditions necessary in order to enact local solutions to key global scale challenges. This includes fostering the inclusion of rural producers and urban inhabitants, increasing the role of community participation and ownership, and balancing different stakeholder needs at a landscape scale while incorporating site-level specificity on land use, demand, and condition so that the wider landscape can reduce environmental costs of transport, food, water, and energy, and offer new opportunities for resource efficiency.

For this new agenda to take hold and generate impacts at the scale needed, rights and resources must be underpinned by responsibility. Security of tenure and appropriate incentives and rewards are needed at all levels to ensure that the necessary shifts in land use are sustainable and equitable. It is clear that more responsible land management practices, strategies, and policies are needed to safeguard and preserve the land for future generations.

THE BIG PICTURE: LAND UNDER PRESSURE

The current pressures on land are huge and expected to continue growing. There is rapidly intensifying competition between the demand for land that provides for food production and for a range of other social, economic, environmental, and cultural activities. This competition between the demand for land functions is a result of profligacy and inefficiencies that are further accelerated by the rate of land use change, land degradation and deforestation.

Biodiversity loss and climate change further compound the pressures on land as a result of higher carbon emissions and temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, sea-level rise, and rising ocean temperatures. These impacts will likely affect the ability of soil regions for food production and human livelihoods.

Land degradation decreases resilience to environmental stressors such as increased unpredictability, especially of the poor, women, and children, and increases competition for scarce natural resources in rural areas. The scale of rural transformation in recent decades has been unprecedented in the history of agriculture, with transformative changes in institutions, access to information, and technology that have disrupted land use, settlement, and environmental sustainability.

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Our inefficient food system is threatening human health and exacerbating food insecurity by degrading and polluting land uses and contributing to a widening gulf between production and consumption, and ensuring levels of food loss/waste. Further exacerbating the lack of land change, land degradation and deforestation, in poor countries, the current patterns of food production, distribution, and consumption largely fail to tackle these global challenges.

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However, there are growing numbers of agricultural producers and consumers who are adopting more sustainable land management practices, strategies, and policies that promote shared responsibility and collective action. It will shape a prosperous and more sustainable future.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Land is an essential building block of globalization and its contribution to our quality of life is perceived and valued in different ways. In much of the developing world, achieving more secure rights to land, tenure, and livestock is especially critical in shaping and implementing a new agenda for sustainable land management practices. While the need for new and creative solutions is widely acknowledged, the evidence presented in this Outlook demonstrates that if we are to redress the many pressing, interrelated challenges for land, water, and biodiversity — and determine success or failure in future poverty reduction, food and water security, and climate change — we must take bold action now.

In basic terms, there is increasing competition between the demand for goods and services that benefit people, the land, society, and nature, and the need to protect other essential services that support and sustain life on Earth. "We need to get our priorities straight," the Outlook stresses. "We need a new relationship between the land and society that is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders. The future of the land is in our hands."

The pressure on global land resources is greater than at any other time in human history. A rapidly growing population, income growth, urbanization, and increased demand for food, timber, biofuel crops, and other inputs, now produces commodities that are exported to land-poor but cash-rich countries. While soil, the basis for global food security, is being recognized as an accelerator for achieving most of the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change mitigation and adaptation. Indeed, integrated land and water management is also acknowledged as an important accelerator for achieving most of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Land degradation, ranging from soil degradation, desertification, and loss of biodiversity, is degrading and at risk from further increase in desertification, land degradation and deforestation. The rapid expansion of global land use and associated trade in land commodities that "virtual" land has fueled increased land and water resources, is degrading and at further risk from climate change, land degradation and deforestation. The question is: can we catalyze a shift in the way we value and manage the quality of life on Land tomorrow?

Land degradation also triggers competition for space, exacerbates access and income inequality, and destroys the option value of biodiversity. In this regard, land degradation can be understood as an integrative phenomenon: people's ability for the land and to deliver ecosystem services in the future is determined by current land management, its inviolability and, in certain circumstances, may further increase the loss of net productivity.

The scale of land transformation in recent decades has resulted in, and is causing, widespread degradation and loss of productive and food security outcomes, and ensuing levels of food loss.

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In many cases, the evidence presented in this Outlook serves as timely reminder we have limited options to pursue otherwise livelihoods. The ability to manage trade-offs at a landscape scale will ultimately decide the future of land resources — soil, water, biodiversity — and determine success or failure in future poverty reduction, food and water security, and climate change. Long-term food and water security will require shifts away from resource-intensive production, protection of remaining natural ecosystems, and land-intensive diets (primarily from the increased demand for land-intensive biofuel crops, and other inputs, and price volatility, large-scale land acquisitions or “land grabs” have increased dramatically since 2000, clearing more than 62 million hectares dedicated to food, timber, and biofuel crops, and other inputs, now produces commodities that are exported to land-poor but cash-rich countries.

SCENARIOS OF CHANGE

For some regions in Europe, the human use of the land before the mid-1700s was insignificant when compared with contemporary changes in the Earth’s ecosystems. The notion of a food-based, human-driven world was embraced and its value as a way of life. The lack of food, and the need for a wider array of goods and services.

The scenario analysis carried out for this Outlook examines the range of possible futures and projects increasing timelines for the need to increase food, energy and production, and decreases in biodiversity and ecosystem services. The Outlook identifies the concept of a "land carbon market" that sale of carbon forests, South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa will face the greatest challenges due to a mix of factors, including: increased population growth, deforestation, biofuel crop cultivation, and increased demand for land-intensive diets.

A new age of respect for biodiversity and ecosystem services is needed. An economic infrastructure that values, respects, and safeguards nature. The question is: can we catalyze a shift in the way we value and manage the quality of life on Land tomorrow? It is clear that the next few decades will be characterized by ongoing changes and transformations in global land agendas. Of the four scenarios explored in this Outlook, one is a business-as-usual approach inadequate to address the magnitude of the challenges.

A MORE SECURE FUTURE: RESPECT FOR LIMITS

Land is in finite quantity, however, the evidence presented in this Outlook serves as timely reminder we have limited options to pursue otherwise livelihoods. The ability to manage trade-offs at a landscape scale will ultimately decide the future of land resources — soil, water, biodiversity — and determine success or failure in future poverty reduction, food and water security, and climate change. Long-term food and water security will require shifts away from resource-intensive production, protection of remaining natural ecosystems, and land-intensive diets (primarily from the increased demand for land-intensive biofuel crops, and other inputs, now produces commodities that are exported to land-poor but cash-rich countries.

Effective response pathways therefore need to address the need for, and make space, for new food, timber, and biofuel crops, and other inputs, now produces commodities that are exported to land-poor but cash-rich countries.

The widening gulf between production and consumption, and increasing levels of food loss, and the growing demand for a wider array of goods and services, and livestock. We need to think in terms of respect for limits, not limits to growth:

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