



**17 JUNE**  
**WORLD DAY**  
**TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

***Concept note for the 2015 observance of the  
World Day to Combat Desertification***

***Background***

Some 805 million people in the world lacked sufficient nutritious food between 2012 and 2014 according to the 2014 State of Food Insecurity report. That is about one in every eight people. The vast majority lived in developing countries. Although significant progress has been made towards the MDG hunger target, progress across regions and countries is still uneven.

Tackling hunger requires a multi-faceted approach – from economic development, nutritional intake to managing natural disasters. Still, a focus on land is critical. More than 99.7% of our food calories comes from the land. With the competition for productive land growing even as the global population rises, land for food production will get scarcer. We need to recover degraded land to remain food secure.

Hunger is most prevalent in the developing country dryland areas where water retention is poor, and the land is highly vulnerable to natural and human destructions. The vast majority of the dryland people survive on local foods. Sub-Saharan Africa has made some progress in eradicating hunger, but still has the highest prevalence of undernourishment.

The post-2015 global development agenda, for which the High-level Panel hoisted ‘Leave no one behind’, envisions land-degradation neutrality as a means to alleviate poverty and hunger for all.

***Theme and Slogan***

Eradicating hunger (Goal 2) is one of the post-2015 goals recommended by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. And restoring degraded land and soil are among the prerequisites proposed in Goal 15, in particular, Goal 15.3:

*Goal 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*

*15.3 - By 2020, combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world.*

The 2015 World Day to Combat Desertification theme, '**attainment of food security for all through sustainable food systems**', focuses on these two Goals. The aim is to advocate for the recognition and strengthening of these links (between Goal 2 and Goal 15) in the post-2015 processes. The slogan for the Day is, "No such thing as a free lunch. Invest in healthy Soils."<sup>1</sup>

With the theme and slogan we are calling for:

- (1) Sustainable land management in the drylands, especially through smart agriculture and adaptation to changing climate;
- (2) Access to technology and land rights for small holder farmers who safeguard the environment and meet the food needs of the poor;
- (3) Recognizing and learning from the best practices on the balanced use of land for ecology and consumption;
- (4) Promoting increased investments in sustainable land management practices to ensure the establishment and maintenance of sustainable food systems;
- (5) Recognizing desertification as the invisible frontline with potential threats to security, peace and stability of affected countries through, *for example*, food and water scarcity and environmentally forced migration.

The goal of the World Day observance is to send a strong message to the general public and decision makers that eradicating hunger and poverty for all is closely tied to the realizing land-degradation neutrality.

#### Global observance

The global observance event on 17 June 2015 will be held at the Expo Milano 2015 (1 May-31 October 2014). The Government of Italy will host the event. The Secretariat and Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, in cooperation with the Government of Italy and other potential partners, will organize the event.

Interested countries, in particular countries in the arid zone cluster participating in the Expo, are invited to join the event. They are also invited to observe the 17 June observance in their Pavilions to make the observance an "Expo-wide" event.

The theme of the Expo is 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life' and is related to the proposed WDCD theme for 2015. Under the coordination of FAO, the UN system will promote the UN Zero Hunger Itinerary at different locations throughout the Expo.

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Jihed Ghannem, Sahara and Sahel Observatory, whose proposed slogan obtained *via* crowdsourcing, was selected from those submitted for the campaign.