



REPÚBLICA ARGENTINA

SEGUNDO INFORME NACIONAL PARA LA IMPLEMENTACION DE LA CONVENCION DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS DE LUCHA CONTRA LA DESERTIFICACION

*INFORME PREPARADO PARA SER CONSIDERADO EN LA PRIMERA SESIÓN DEL
COMITÉ PARA LA REVISIÓN DE LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN (CRIC) DE LA
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Summary

The Republic of Argentina, placed in the extreme southern sector of the American Continent, has a total extension of 3.761.274 km², including the Antarctic Territory and the Southern Atlantic Isles, being the eighth country of the world in surface terms. This extension determines a wide climatic variety, from subtropical weather in the north, to the coldest temperature in the extreme south, with templates predominating along a great part of it. The National territory presents 23 provincial states.

Subhumid, semi-arid and arid (dry land) areas represent 75% of the total extension of the country. According to the agricultural-ecological classification, the following regions can be mentioned at national level: Puna Region, Chaco (arid, semiarid and subhumid), Arid Valleys Region, Central-West Region and Patagonica Region, every of which has an important and increased desertification processes.

Argentina has subscribed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 1994, which was ratified in 1996 by the National Congress through Law 24.701, but it still has not been ruled by the Executive Power.

The Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development (SAyDS), which depends on the Ministry of Social Development is the Law 24.701 authority of application on its environmental matters, being thus the Organism of National Coordination (ONC).

Among missions and functions assigned to SAyDS are also mentioned responsibilities over a group of environmental laws. Within this frame, provincial laws have also ruled uses and conservation of soils through different legal instruments.

The ONC is working on the design of a Sustainable Development National Strategy to comply with Program 21. This has not been effectively defined and consolidated yet, being related to a deep analysis of new political, economical and social conditions of the country. Within this frame is inserted the **National Action Program to Combat Desertification (NAP)**, which began with an open discussion among public, provincial and municipal institutions and organisms, representatives of the civil society (NGOs) and producers associations, which were related to the subject and would identify strategies for the future.

The elaboration of the NAP finished in 1997 with a Basis Document that constituted the frame of national and local activities that combat desertification, and which, since then up to the present, has been carried out.

Argentina has the advantage to have a group of institutions involved or potentially involved in combating desertification. These cover the whole geographical area with desertification processes and it is integrated by organisms with different organization levels: national, provincial, municipal, universities (public and private), researching institutions and NGOs, which has simplified the application of the NAP.

In 1999 the Provisional Executive Committee was conformed by representatives of the ONC, members of other Ministries and National Organisms, provincial states through the Federal Council of Environment (COFEMA), representatives of researching and technology (universities, institutes of research), teachers, lawyers, NGOs, and regional facilitators.

As Law 24.701 has not been ruled yet, the Committee does not have legal capacity and a specific budget to work. Anyway, some measures have been adopted in order to continue with different activities and to reinforce the institutional frame, like Agreements of Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which coordinate and harmonize measures to combat desertification at national, provincial and local levels.

This participating process continued while NAP was being carried out. The participation of technical and scientific sectors has to be outlined, with their research projects and also their participation in scientific workshops and activities, such as **Traditional Knowledge and Technologies, Evaluation and Monitoring of Desertification Indicators, Early Warning**

System and Project of Economy and Sustainable Development in Dry Lands, which comply with mandates of Committee Science and Technology (CST) of the UNCCD. Argentina is one of the countries that have most advanced in desertification indicators, which allowed its international projection on this subject.

The NAP Supporting Program (APAN) has been developed within the frame of the agreement between S AyDS, National Institute of Rural Technology (INTA) and the German Agency of International Cooperation (GTZ). This allowed the completion of several activities in which different members of the civil society, scientific institutions and provincial organisms have participated. Activities developed from 1999 to 2001 related to the promotion of micro business projects turned to be the main axis of APAN. General response to the convocation overcame the expectations and showed that there is a structural and institutional problem, which blocks an easy access of small producers to credits or donations that would have a beneficial effect on their income. This initiative reached more than 1500 producers, distributed among 380 approved projects, from a total of 710 that had been presented for investments of up to U\$S 5000.

To complete the frame of the agreement, there are excellent documents for public relations which motivate a major interest on the subject, originating a multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional team work and the development of institutions and networks that work with high professionalism on the implementation of different aspects of the NAP. There are also technological models proved at farm level, which present adapted solutions to the social-economic situation of the small producers.

Among the activities with NGOs there is the outstanding participation of ONC in the conformation of the International NGOs Desertification Network (RIOD), which objective is to interchange information and experience.

The NAP has fomented the development of activities through the Project of Prevention and Control of Desertification in Patagonia (PRODESAR, 1989-2001), which was developed at INTA with support of GTZ. This project is being developed within a wide and heterogeneous region with three intervention modules in five provinces. In this period (2000-2001) strategic projects, partially financed, have been established for Small and Medium Enterprises (PyMES) undertakings and (Minifundistas) at levels of real production systems.

Within the NAP context, the “Revolving Fund for the Promotion of micro business projects as a basis of local development” is starting to be implemented. This is constituted by national and provincial contributions, bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation, which will be administrated by ad hoc units, and instrumented by national and local organizations with technical and operational capacities.

A project that controls desertification, promotes the degraded areas recovering and values natural resources of Patagonia is also being formulated, and its proposal will be presented to the Global Environmental Fund (GEF). This project will allow covering environmental components of the Program for Development of **Sustainable Sheep Production in Patagonia**, to be carried out by the Secretariat of Agriculture, Cattle, Fishing and Feeding (SAGyPA).

The economic analysis of uses and management of resources and environment of dry lands, is a basic tool to design and implement investing public and private policies. With this objective the project “**Economy and Sustainable Development of Dry Lands**” is being developed in order to adjust methods of economical- productive and environmental valuing of dry lands, and its application in for decision making. This is developed with the Center of International Development at Harvard University, GTZ, INTA, Buenos Aires University, the National University of Cordoba and the Argentine Institute of Research of Arid Zones (IADIZA).

UNCCD contemplates that countries consult and cooperate to elaborate subregional and regional action programs in order to harmonize and complete national programs and to increase their efficacy.

Within this frame is inserted The Subregional Action Program for Sustainable Development of Gran Chaco (SAP) between Argentina, Bolivia y Paraguay, considering the Gran Chaco Region as a unit for the promotion of sustainable development and which obliges to develop a joint activity within the frame of Convention of Biological Diversity, Climatic Change and UNCCD. This program has obtained important advancements, not only at regional level, but also in the country, resulting this in an important institutional strengthening.

Besides, several actions have been initiated in order to concrete a SAP for the American Puna Region, which involves Chile, Bolivia, Peru , Ecuador and Argentina. This Program, has technical and financial support from Global Mechanism (GM), UNSO/UNDP, and German Cooperation Agency (GTZ).

About education and training, initial activities in the country were included within the National Strategy of Environmental Education. Being conscious of the importance of education and information tasks, the NCO keeps on working on these areas.

From them, a series of tasks were developed in order to make desertification matters reach the educational area. Thus, several activities were promoted to divulge the NAP, though the elaboration of a CD-ROM, and 50 posters were made containing a brief history of the project and activities developed to combat desertification along different arid and semi-arid zones of the country. A publication (1000 copies) also informed about the meaning of desertification along the country and about different programs and projects related to the NAP.

Activities of international cooperation in Argentina related to desertification have been significative and the trigger of national and provincial strategies.

Technical and financial support of Multilateral Agencies (FAO, UNEP, UNSO/ UNDP) and the Secretariat of the CCD, permitted the elaboration and consolidation of the NAP Basis Document; the beginning of Gran Chaco and Puna Subregional Programs, and also to deepen on gender matters.

At the same time, cooperation of Government Spain resulted in an important support to the development of Gran Chaco Subregional Program.

The GM has been supporting activities related to priority matters of CCD and CST, especially “Indicators and benchmarks”. During the last two years financial support has reached the global amount of U\$S 70.000. This has been distributed to carry out activities of the Program of Assesing and Monitoring Desertification Indicators, project of **Sustainable Sheep Production in Patagonia** to control desertification in Patagonia, and the Project “**Revolving Fund for the Promotion of micro business project**” as a basis of local development.

At subregional level the MM supports the implementation of Gran Chaco Americano and Puna SAPs, in order to harmonize, to complete and to increase NAP efficiency.

German Cooperation, through GTZ, has been one of the most developed even before the UNCCD. During the last 12 years important projects linked to desertification matters have been carried out, in which, as a counterpart, more than 20 million U\$S have been invested.

During this international cooperation process an efficient mechanism of inter-institutional coordination has been developed, through the agreement mentioned above, in order to carry out the APAN and which first phase was finished in 2001. The completion of the second one is estimated for 2002-2004 period, with a contribution of about U\$S 1.500.000 by German Cooperation.

The achievement of this agreement was a joint action of the responsible national institution of Environmental Policy (SAyDS), the international cooperation organism (GTZ) and the

rural development institute (INTA), which could plan, design and develop together projects and activities to combat desertification.

Related to what has been established by the CCD, the NAP in Argentina has not its own budget, but it turned to be an optimization mechanism of financial resources from the most varied sources through consensus and priorities of spending and investment.

In this sense, the mobilization of national and external resources has continued decentralized, according to federal characteristics of the State and to the important quantity of institutions involved in the subject.

Structural Investment within national and provincial government, in management of natural resources and environment, in the context of public expenditure has decreased 25%, what means approximately, expenses of U\$S 20.000.000. This structural expense is mainly destined (80-85%) to salaries and maintenance of technical, scientific and building infrastructure.

The activity of a network of Arid Zones Research Institutions, requires a biannual budget in basic personnel and services that goes up to U\$S 10.700.000. If salaries are excluded, the total amount is reduced to U\$S 670.000, which is financed by the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) that belongs to the National Secretariat of Science and Technology.

This institution, by its Technical and Science Program (2000/2002) and the Secretariat for Technology, Science and Productive Innovation has approximately assigned U\$S 182.000 to finance projects of research and development applied to natural resources of dry zones.

Since its creation, INTA has worked in technological development to control the degradation of resources in arid zones. Lately, the total assigned budget of INTA decreased in a 40%, addressing U\$S 21.000.000 to salaries and operative expenses of 25% Rural Experimental Stations and extension agencies, located in the dry region.

It has been demonstrated that associative mechanisms applied to international cooperation were efficiently developed, as well from the institutional aspect as from the financial one, optimizing these international contributions (relationship dollars that were spent and received by the country was 10:1). This allowed creating in a national level a critic mass of coordination between different actors and a great participation of governmental institutions and NGOs.

Argentina has developed an active participation in the CCD since its beginnings, showing continuity during the whole process and complying with its principles and mandates. This permitted it to be projected in national and international levels, with innovating actions and concepts, mobilizing and optimizing capacities and also national, provincial, public and private resources.

In the participated diagnosis, done within the frame of elaboration of this report, weaknesses, strengths, warnings and opportunities were identified, which, from the present situation, permit to identify priority actions that have to be completed to deepen this process, such as:

- To develop the Partnership building through turning the Provisional Executive Committee of the NAP into the Executive Committee, with operative capacity and relevance within the whole process of decision-making.
- To update and strengthen normative aspects, through ruling the Law 24.701 and compatibility of national and provincial normative.
- To grant a continuity of the process is the strategy that has to be prior than any other one, being this what transversally gets through all the identified axis.
- To improve institutional articulation in a national, provincial, and local levels, and to insert the concept of the NAP strategy into development programs.
- To gather and organize an active network with the existent capacities of governmental and non-governmental organisms. It is essential to establish a continuous process of

communication that allows relating all of the actors, systematizing projects and information, generating and updating data basis, and granting continuity and access to information.

- To establish a national system to follow up of desertification problem, emphasizing Traditional Knowledge and Technologies and Indicators of Desertification oriented to decision-making.
- To extend participating processes in those areas not related to the NAP, and/or to incorporate them to the desertification issue.
- To avoid regional asymmetries to combat desertification. It is necessary to equally support, in economic and operative terms, within those zones that have not received enough attention to combat desertification.
- To increment projects which consider direct actions to support the development of local population. In this sense, it is necessary to work on the selection of impact and follow up indicators, of the application of the Convention and the NAP.
- To deepen subregional and international action programs, as a strategy of internal strengthening and to concrete the proposals which are in management process, such as those referred to indicators, with the support of IDB, CEPAL or MEDRAP.

During the last two years, as this reports expresses, Argentina has invested in human, institutional and financing resources to combat desertification. Present economic and social situation risks the continuity of those efforts, being that the institutional and human structural capacity in both, governmental and non-governmental levels, will have to make a great effort to solve multiple causes and consequences of this complex crisis. Thus, a discontinuity of investments to combat desertification is foreseen in the country, which will weaken the application of proposals and programs designed within the frame of the NAP. To smooth this impact, and to continue and to deepen these actions, it is necessary to one more time put into action the development of strategies from the NAP, which will have to be empowered with external support.