



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Maintenance of the roster of experts and the creation, as necessary, of ad hoc panels of experts

Report on progress on the maintenance of the roster of independent experts

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Decision 23/COP.10 invited Parties to revise and update the details of existing national experts, and to propose new candidates for the roster in order to achieve better representation of all relevant disciplines, including traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices, and of women, and a more balanced geographical distribution of non-governmental organizations. The Conference of the Parties (COP) further urged Parties that have not yet nominated experts for the roster to do so, as they deem necessary, and provide full postal and e-mail addresses.

Decision 23/COP.10 also requested the Committee on Science and Technology to review the current list of disciplines, and to update it with new disciplines, including traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices. It also directed the secretariat to set up web-based facilities, and to report to the COP at its eleventh session on progress made in implementing this decision.

This document describes the current status of the roster of independent experts as of 1 June 2013 and makes proposals for a series of improvements.

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I. Background

1. Article 24, paragraph 2, of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) states that “the Conference of the Parties shall establish and maintain a roster of independent experts with expertise and experience in the relevant fields”. By its decision 18/COP.1, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish and maintain a roster of independent experts on the basis of the procedures attached to that decision. By its decisions 13/COP.2, 15/COP.3, 15/COP.4, 15/COP.5, 13/COP.6, 13/COP.7, 11/COP.8, 21/COP.9 and 23/COP.10, the COP provided further guidance on the maintenance of the roster.

2. Article 24, paragraph 2, of the Convention indicates that the roster shall be based on nominations received in writing from the Parties, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach and broad geographical representation. Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the procedures attached to decision 18/COP.1 further indicate that, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach, an appropriate gender balance, and broad and equitable geographical representation, the nominations shall be communicated by the Parties through diplomatic channels. Paragraph 6 of the procedures states, inter alia, that the roster should reflect the diversity of knowledge and skills needed to provide advice on combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought

3. By its decision 11/COP.8, paragraph 3, the COP requested the secretariat to continue to distribute information on the roster through the established e-mail network. At the time this document was prepared, 39.4 per cent of the experts on the roster had no e-mail address included in their data.

4. By its decision 21/COP.9, paragraph 3, the COP requested the secretariat to examine and analyse the current procedures and criteria for the nomination of experts to the roster of independent experts, and to make recommendations for improvements to the COP at its tenth session. In paragraph 6 of the same decision, the COP also requested the secretariat to include additional disciplines in the roster of experts including, but not limited to, environmental monitoring and assessment.

5. By its decision 21/COP.9, paragraph 4, the COP encouraged the secretariat to update the software required for the roster of independent experts on the basis of new technological developments and the needs of the Parties. By paragraph 5 of the same decision, the COP also encouraged the secretariat to report to the COP at its tenth session on possibilities of developing a common web-based search tool that would enable the rosters of experts of the three Rio conventions to be searched.

6. By its decision 23/COP.10, the COP – noting the increasing need to involve the scientific community in the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) and of activities in the work programme of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), and acknowledging the ongoing efforts made by the secretariat to update the roster of independent experts based on nominations submitted by Parties – invited Parties to revise and update the details of existing national experts, and to propose new candidates for the roster in order to achieve better representation of all relevant disciplines, including traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices, and of women, and a more balanced geographical distribution of non-governmental organizations.

7. By its decision 23/COP.10, paragraph 2, the COP further urged Parties that have not yet nominated experts for the roster to do so, as they deem necessary, and provide full

postal and e-mail addresses, through regular diplomatic channels, no later than six months before the eleventh session of the COP (COP 11).

8. By its decision 23/COP.10, paragraph 3, the COP requested the CST to review the current list of disciplines, taking into account the Proposed International Standard Nomenclature for Fields of Science and Technology as well as the lists of disciplines used by the Parties at national level, and to update the list with new disciplines, including traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices, as needed, and further requested the CST to present an updated list for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh session.

9. By its decision 23/COP.10, paragraphs 5 and 6, the COP directed the secretariat to set up web-based facilities to ease the process of updating the roster, and requested the secretariat to report to the COP at its eleventh session on progress made in implementing this decision.

II. Current status of the roster of independent experts

10. Chapter II is dedicated to presenting the current status of the roster by country group and by discipline.

11. As at 1 June 2013, the date this document was prepared, the UNCCD roster contained 1,954 persons from 94 Parties. The gender balance was 84.2 per cent male and 15.8 per cent female, in line with the situation in 2011.

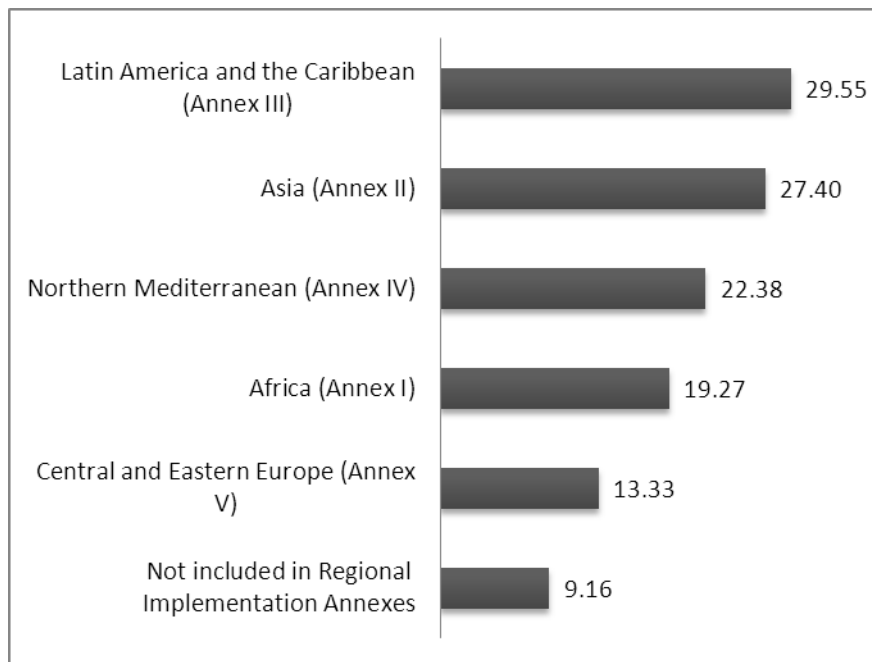
A. Experts by Regional Implementation Annex

12. Table 1 and figure 1 below show the disaggregation according to UNCCD country groups, including Regional Implementation Annexes to the Convention, and country Parties in regions not included in the Regional Implementation Annexes to the Convention, as of 1 June 2013.

Table 1
Number of experts by Regional Implementation Annex and by gender
(as of 1 June 2013)

	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	<i>Total number</i>
Africa (Annex I)	14.36	85.64	578
Central Africa	21.05	78.95	19
Eastern Africa	16.67	83.33	96
Northern Africa	11.29	88.71	124
Southern Africa	15.00	85.00	80
Western Africa	14.29	85.71	259
Asia (Annex II)	10.40	89.60	548
Central Asia	42.00	58.00	50
East Asia	7.81	92.19	256
South Asia	6.45	93.55	62
South-East Asia	4.55	95.45	22
West Asia	6.96	93.04	158
Latin America and the Caribbean (Annex III)	23.69	76.31	325
Andean region	13.73	86.27	51
Caribbean	36.22	63.78	127
Mesoamerica	3.77	96.23	53
South Cone	23.40	76.60	94
Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)	14.35	85.65	209
Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)	26.67	73.33	120
Not included in Regional Implementation Annexes	16.67	83.33	174

Figure 1
Average number of experts per country by Regional Implementation Annex (1 June 2013)



13. The roster shows an average of 21.2 experts per country, with the averages for affected countries ranging from 9.2 for countries not included in a Regional Implementation Annex to 29.6 for Latin America and the Caribbean (Regional Implementation Annex III). The COP may wish to consider how to reduce such differences between the Annexes in the average number of experts per country.

14. The COP may wish to consider how to improve the gender balance in every country group, taking into account the nomination criteria at national level.

15. The roster shows that 91.3 per cent of the experts are located in affected country Parties and 56.5 per cent of the experts are located in Africa and Asia. The COP may wish to discuss whether these figures reflect the profile of the scientific community involved in the UNCCD process. The representation of regional capacities reflected in table 1 and in figure 1 above could be taken into account when planning scientific activities within the UNCCD process.

B. Experts by discipline

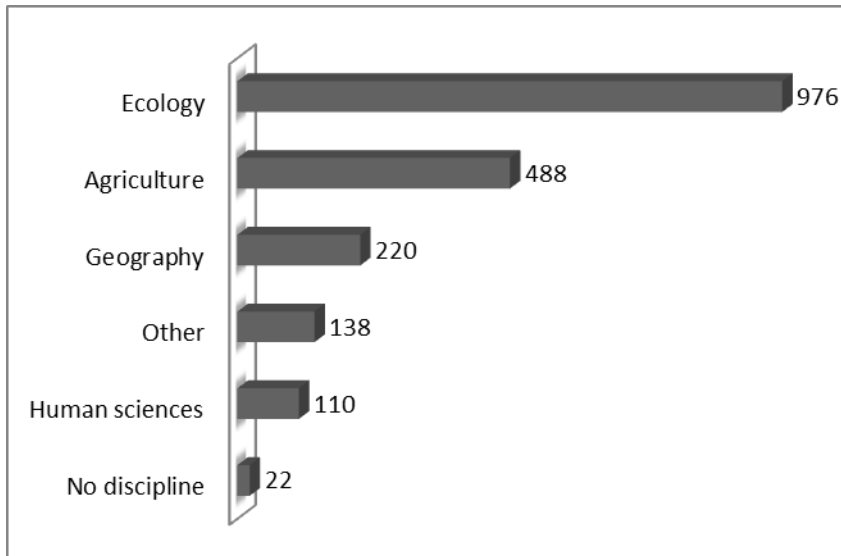
16. Table 2 and figure 2 below illustrate the repartition by discipline as of 1 June 2013. The list of disciplines shown in table 2 is extracted from the roster database currently in use. Some disciplines appearing in the current database are not included in the indicative list of disciplines in the annex to decision 15/COP.3. A rough clustering of the disciplines has been made for ease of analysis.

17. Each expert can indicate a maximum of three disciplines; 32 per cent selected one discipline, 34 per cent selected two and 34 per cent selected three. The analysis in the present document has been made based on the first discipline indicated by each expert.

Table 2
Number of experts by cluster of disciplines (1 June 2013)

<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Number of experts</i>
Agriculture	Agricultural science	214
	Agrometeorology	2
	Agronomy	4
	Animal science	20
	Forest and rangeland dynamics	10
	Plant science	72
	Soil science	162
	Irrigation, water management	4
Agriculture total	488	
Ecology	Biodiversity, biology, other	8
	Desertification research	6
	Ecology/ecosystems	188
	Natural resource management	760
	Other	14
Ecology total	976	
Geography	Atmospheric sciences	33
	Climate change and adaptation	1
	Climatology	2
	Environmental remote sensing	1
	Geography	62
	Geology	25
	Geographic information systems (GIS)	1
	Hydrology	83
	Physical science	12
Geography total	220	
Human sciences	Anthropology and sociology	32
	Economics	44
	Education	5
	International relations	1
	Political science	28
Human sciences total	110	
Other	Information systems	16
	Medical science	7
	Other	115
Other total	138	
No discipline given	22	
Grand total	1,954	

Figure 2
Repartition of experts by discipline cluster (1 June 2013)



18. Table 3 below shows the repartition of experts by Regional Implementation Annex according to discipline clusters. It shows that Africa and Asia have a high representation, and there remains limited focus among experts on economics, anthropology and sociology.

Table 3
Repatriation of experts by Regional Implementation Annex according to discipline cluster (1 June 2013)

<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Africa (Annex I)</i>	<i>Asia (Annex II)</i>	<i>Latin America and the Caribbean (Annex III)</i>	<i>Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)</i>	<i>Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)</i>	<i>Not included in Regional Implementation Annexes</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
Agriculture	121	130	97	73	<u>29</u>	<u>43</u>	493
Ecology	283	306	165	82	55	78	969
Geography	72	62	<u>30</u>	<u>21</u>	11	<u>28</u>	224
Human Sciences	52	12	13	9	6	17	109
Other	<u>37</u>	<u>35</u>	19	<u>24</u>	17	6	21
No discipline given	13	3	1		2	2	
Grand total	578	548	325	209	120	174	1954

Underline >150 experts

Bold >50 experts

Underline >20 experts

19. A rough clustering of the disciplines shows that the roster may require an increase in human sciences experts considering that desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) is well-recognized as a multidisciplinary issue. Economic aspects were addressed during the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, held in April 2013, which focused on the theme of “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”. In the future, it might be necessary to strengthen the presence of experts in disciplines such as economics, sociology and political science to ensure follow-up to and mainstreaming of the outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference and of future events.

III. Improvements to the roster of independent experts

20. Chapter III proposes some improvements to the current roster in terms of:
- List of disciplines;
 - Validation of existing data;
 - Procedures for nomination;
 - Procedures for updates and web-based services; and
 - Access to the roster through the UNCCD website.

A. List of disciplines

21. The roster database currently contains more disciplines than the indicative list of disciplines approved by decision 15/COP.3. A few disciplines have been added in the years following COP 3, but these are seldom used or could be consolidated into other disciplines.

22. As there is some overlapping among the disciplines included in the indicative list of disciplines, it is difficult to ensure accurate mapping of the experts according to various criteria. It is proposed that the list of disciplines be as limited as possible in order to maximize accuracy when mapping experts. It is important to avoid overlapping fields as much as possible.

23. Pursuant to decision 23/COP.10, paragraph 1, which requested the CST to review the current list of disciplines, the secretariat has submitted to the Bureau of the CST an updated list of disciplines, which has been examined and approved during its meeting on 30–31 May 2013.

24. The updated lists consist of 21 disciplines (see annex I) and 69 thematic areas (see annex II), which reflect the specificities of the scientific aspects of desertification as well as the Proposed International Standard Nomenclature for Fields of Science and Technology, and fulfil the request in decision 23/COP.10 to include traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices.

25. The proposed lists of disciplines and thematic areas may be updated every four years, taking into account the evolution of research in new fields as well as the results of the Scientific Conferences promoted by the UNCCD.

26. The COP may want to harmonize the list of disciplines used for the roster of independent experts with those used for the activities of the UNCCD, also taking into account the proposal by the Ad Hoc Working Group to Further Discuss the Options for the Provision of Scientific Advice Focusing on Desertification/Land Degradation and Drought Issues (AGSA) on core and non-core disciplines (see ICCD/COP(11)/CST/3).

B. Validation of existing data

27. Validating the information on the experts provided through diplomatic channels is essential to ensuring the roster is useful to the Parties and stakeholders for developing research activities in the area of desertification, and will have to be undertaken on a regular basis in the coming years.

28. The secretariat has taken actions so Parties can review and validate individual applications by experts in order to:

(a) Identify those experts whose activities and interests are no longer relevant to DLDD;

(b) Obtain a valid e-mail address for those experts who have not provided it with their application; this information is essential for providing access to individual experts so that they can update their profiles; and

(c) Obtain valid and updated contact details, which is needed in case the secretariat or any organization involved in DLDD research or technological development have to contact the experts.

29. It is proposed that, following the validation process undertaken by the secretariat, profiles remaining unvalidated by the Parties by, for example, the end of 2013, should be deleted from the roster without further notice.

30. A further validation process should be performed by the secretariat every four years. Experts whose data is not validated during this process should be automatically deleted from the roster.

C. Procedures for nomination

31. The nomination criteria for experts at country level are briefly presented in decision 18/COP.1:

Each Party may nominate experts on the roster, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach, an appropriate gender balance and broad and equitable geographical representation. Nominees shall have expertise and experience in fields relevant to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.

32. Moreover, although the COP encourages Parties to improve the gender balance as well as the representation of disciplines such as human sciences in all decisions taken with regard to the roster, these areas are yet to be improved.

33. The roster is currently updated based on nominations received from Parties through official channels.

34. In order to make the roster of experts more operational, it is crucial to explore a new procedure for maintaining the roster. The new procedure would allow experts to apply online. New applications would be stored as pending until an official confirmation is received from the national focal point (NFP) electronically or in writing. The written procedure should be maintained as an alternative for those experts or NFPs who do not have adequate Internet access.

35. It is proposed that each expert be allowed to include a maximum of three disciplines and five thematic areas in her or his application.

D. Procedures for updates and web-based services

36. Updated information from the Parties is needed to prevent the roster from quickly becoming out of date. If this information is not forthcoming, the roster quickly becomes outdated on many levels, from incorrect curriculum vitae details to unavailable experts.

37. The database of the roster of independent experts requires revisions and updates to take into account advancements in information technology and data management made since its inception. These revisions and updates are also essential for implementing a web-based procedure allowing experts to update their data themselves (see decision 23/COP.10, paragraph 5). The web-based system will be called 'RoEWeb'.

38. Experts in the database would be able to use RoEWeb to update their profile with new information on their contact details, skills and expertise. All updates would also be sent electronically to the relevant NFP.

39. Experts would be able to log in to their account using their e-mail address as a login identification. The secretariat proposes that each expert should be able to update her or his personal data after logging in. The web-based system would keep track of all changes, automatically informing both the secretariat and the NFP of the country that initially sent the application for the expert.

40. Experts would receive an e-mail every year asking them to review their profile. If the profile is not reviewed for four consecutive years, it is proposed that the expert would be deleted from the database.

41. It would be advisable to maintain the current updating procedures, as some experts may have limited access to the Internet.

42. RoEWeb is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. Its implementation is to be carried out in parallel with the work undertaken by the secretariat on knowledge management and the consolidation of all UNCCD secretariat databases.

E. Access to the roster of independent experts through the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification website

43. The restructuring of the UNCCD and the review of the structure of all databases has improved access to the database of the roster of experts. Information on experts is currently available on the UNCCD website in the 'National contacts' section,¹ which provides a list of all experts nominated by each country, along with all relevant information, including contact details, current position and work experience.

44. It is also possible to query the database through the UNCCD website by searching by discipline or language. The search results provide a complete listing of experts from various countries.

45. Updated statistics on the roster are available in the 'Roster of Experts' section of the UNCCD website (see <www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Science/Roster-of-Experts/Pages/default.aspx>), under the heading 'Roster Statistics'.

IV. Mobilizing experts in the roster of independent experts

46. The roster of independent experts is a fundamental tool to promote the participation of individual scientists and experts in activities on desertification, both at national and international level. Through their inclusion in the roster, experts might become involved in the following activities:

- (a) Participation in scientific events, including the 3rd Scientific Conference;
- (b) Validation of best practices at local level;
- (c) Utilization of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) of the UNCCD, both by accessing the portal as a user and by making local scientific documents, papers, and databases available and searchable through the SKBP;
- (d) Participation in international projects in research and technology transfer; and
- (e) Promotion and participation in fellowships.

47. Given these objectives and in order to improve the effectiveness of the roster of experts, it is also necessary to have complete and validated information that is easily accessible and covers a wide range of countries and disciplines. The CST may want to discuss how to promote the use of the experts in the various UNCCD activities.

¹ <www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/Official-contacts/Pages/default.aspx>.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

48. Pursuant to decision 21/COP.10, the COP, at its eleventh session, may wish to:
- (a) Encourage Parties to revise and update the details of existing national experts and propose new candidates for the roster in order to achieve better representation of all relevant disciplines and of women and a more balanced geographical distribution of non-governmental organizations;
 - (b) Invite Parties that have not yet submitted nominations of experts for the roster to do so, no later than six months before the next session of the COP;
 - (c) Adopt the updated lists of disciplines and thematic areas as provided in annex I and annex II;
 - (d) Request that the list of disciplines be updated every four years on the basis of the evolution of research on DLDD and UNCCD activities;
 - (e) Request that the list of disciplines used for the roster of independent experts be aligned with the list of disciplines used for other UNCCD activities;
 - (f) Agree on procedures that allow for the direct electronic application by individual experts to the roster, including the electronic approval of the NFP;
 - (g) Agree that each expert is allowed to include in her or his application a maximum of three disciplines and five thematic areas;
 - (h) Request the secretariat to:
 - (i) Delete all applications in the database which have not been confirmed by the relevant NFP by 31 December 2013. If experts want to be included again in the roster of experts, they should proceed with a new formal application;
 - (ii) Perform a validation procedure of the roster every four years in order to ensure that it contains updated information. All profiles that are not validated during this time would be automatically deleted from the roster;
 - (iii) Ensure that the online procedure for nominating experts is implemented and maintained, that online applications are validated by NFPs electronically or in writing, and that adequate information is provided to NFPs and experts;
 - (iv) Ensure that the online procedure for updating experts is implemented and maintained, that NFPs receive information on the updates by individual experts, and that adequate information is provided to NFPs and to experts;
 - (v) Maintain the current procedures for nominating and updating experts, taking into account the needs of experts with limited access to the Internet;
 - (vi) Provide updated statistics on the roster, its gender balance, and representation by discipline on the roster website;
 - (vii) Communicate directly with experts, electronically and/or in writing, in order to provide information on access to the roster, the editing of personal data, opportunities offered by the roster, as well as scientific and technical information; and

- (viii) **Decide how to include the experts on the roster in the various activities of the UNCCD.**

Annex I

Proposed list of disciplines for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification roster of independent experts

The following proposed list of disciplines has been examined and approved by the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology during its meeting on 30–31 May 2013.

- Agricultural sciences
- Animal sciences
- Anthropology
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Desertification
- Environmental economics
- Environmental sciences/ecology
- Forestry
- Geography
- Geology
- Hydrology
- Information technologies (including remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS))
- Medicine
- Physics and mathematics
- Political sciences
- Social sciences
- Soil science
- Statistics and demographic sciences
- Biodiversity and ecosystem sciences
- Meteorological sciences

Annex II

Proposed list of thematic areas for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification roster of independent experts

- Adaptation
- Afforestation
- Albedo
- Biodiversity
- Biomass
- Biomes
- Carbon sequestration
- Climate change
- Climate modeling
- Climate variability
- Communication and awareness
- Conservation
- Deforestation
- Desertification
- Disaster risk management
- Drought
- Dust storms
- Ecological resilience
- Economic development
- Ecosystem services
- Environmental degradation
- Environmental engineering
- Environmental governance
- Environmental impact assessment
- Environmental monitoring
- Environmental policy analysis
- Extreme events
- Food security
- Integrated water resources management
- Integrated natural resources management
- Irrigation
- Land cover change
- Land degradation
- Land restoration/reclamation
- Land-use change
- Land-use planning
- Land–climate system
- Landscape ecology
- Livelihood analysis
- Migration
- Mitigation
- Monitoring and assessment
- Natural hazards
- Plant pathology
- Policy analysis
- Population growth
- Poverty
- Rangeland ecology
- Rangeland management
- Reforestation
- Remote sensing
- Risk assessment
- Rural development
- Salinization
- Science policy analysis
- Sea water intrusion
- Social resilience
- Soil conservation
- Soil degradation
- Sustainable agriculture
- Sustainable development
- Sustainable land management
- Traditional knowledge
- Vegetation change
- Vegetation degradation
- Vulnerability
- Water conservation
- Water logging and salinity
- Water quality