

Pressemitteilung**Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn****Johannes Seiler**

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Tier / Land / Forst, Umwelt / Ökologie
überregional**Land erosion rises dramatically worldwide**

Land degradation is on the rise to a dramatic extent, affecting around 3.2 billion people worldwide. Every dollar invested in saving land and soils today will save us five dollars in the future. Professor Klaus Töpfer, former Executive Director of UNEP; Professor Joachim von Braun, Director of the Center for Development Research, University of Bonn (ZEF); and Dr. Stefan Schmitz, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will present the latest research insights on this issue.

The press conference will be held on Thursday, February 11, 2016, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM in the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Jägerstraße 22/23, in 10117 Berlin.

Land and soil are the basis of life on Earth. Nevertheless, insufficient effort has been made so far to ensure sustainable land use and the protection of soils. This is the conclusion that a team of international scientists has drawn from studies conducted in 12 world regions and countries, including India, Argentina, Central Asia, Russia and a large number of African countries. The findings, partly based on remote-sensing satellite data, are alarming: Globally, 33 percent of grasslands, 25 percent of croplands and 23 percent of forests have experienced degradation over the past three decades. Around 30 percent of the global land area, home to around 3.2 billion people, is affected by significant soil degradation. The global costs amount to around 300 billion Euros per annum. The global assessment concludes: Every US Dollar invested today will save us five US Dollars in the future.

“Sustainable land management contributes to achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as land degradation neutrality and an ambitious climate and biodiversity agenda. This fact was highlighted in the series of Global Soil Week events held in Berlin in recent years”, explains Professor Klaus Töpfer, former Executive Director the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

“Soil is the most neglected natural resource”, states Professor Joachim von Braun, Director of the Center for Development Research (ZEF) and co-editor of the book “Economics of Land Degradation and Improvement – A Global Assessment for Sustainable Development”, which was published by Springer recently. “Yet, investments in land and soil are crucial for food supply, climate and human security”, von Braun adds.

According to von Braun: “The international scientists involved in these country case studies basically all reach the same conclusion; namely, that if we invest in rescuing global land and soil now, the cost will be much lower than if we wait longer. This applies both to industrialized and developing countries alike”.

The high levels of land degradation in croplands and grazing lands in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, pose a serious problem too and may lead to migration. Often, there is a lack of advisory services and knowledge transfer for farmers, for example about integrated soil fertility management. Poor access to markets is another obstacle as well as weak security of land tenure.

The latter means that farmers are not motivated to practice sustainable land use methods. "In order to change this, the German government has been substantially involved in sustainable land use initiatives", emphasizes Stefan Schmitz of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), who is the coordinator of the BMZ special initiative 'One World no Hunger'. "Combating land degradation is one of the most important elements in our fight against hunger", he adds.

Location, date and time

Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science (Berlin Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften) in Berlin, Jägerstraße 22/23, 10117 Berlin. Thursday, February 11, 2016, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Speakers:

Professor Klaus Töpfer was the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) based in Nairobi and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations (1998-2006).

Professor Joachim von Braun, Director of the Center for Development Research, ZEF, University of Bonn; former Director General of IFPRI in Washington (2002-2009); Chair of the National Bio-Economy Council in Germany and Vice-Chair of the German Welthungerhilfe.

Dr. Stefan Schmitz, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), coordinator and special representative of the BMZ project "One World no Hunger".

In addition, representatives of WWF, Oxfam and Welthungerhilfe will make contributions to the discussion.

Contact and registration (please register with presse.zef@uni-bonn.de by February 9, 2016, 1:00 PM)

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