

WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION & LAND DEGRADATION

17TH JUNE 2017

"Our Land. Our Home. Our Future"



Message from His Excellency Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture and Forests

Today, the 17th June 2017, Bhutan joins the rest of the world in observing the World Day to Combat Desertification/Land Degradation (WDCD). For us, the observation of the day has been significant in helping us remind ourselves of the importance of safeguarding our limited land resources from various forces of land degradation threats.

Every year, a special theme is attached to the day and for this year the theme is "Our Land. Our Home. Our Future". The slogan underlines the central role a productive land can play in turning the tide of migrants abandoning their unproductive land. According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification/Land Degradation (UNCCD), the number of international migration globally, has risen at an alarming rate within the past fifteen years, reaching 244 million in 2015 from 173 million in 2000. Globally, the nexus drawn between migration due to land degradation and environmental degradation, political instability, food insecurity and poverty is very significant.

Our limited land resources support about 58% of the population who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, provide a safe haven to our internationally acclaimed rich biodiversity and contribute significantly towards the global initiatives in combating climate change. With changing time and growing population, our scarce land is increasingly put under undue development pressure and perhaps, way beyond its capability or suitability to sustain. Such a situation results in various forms of land degradation which further accelerates the magnitude of rural-urban migration, fallow land, youth unemployment etc. With the right kind of attention and investment priorities being directed towards land management programs besides the ongoing efforts on rural infrastructure and skills development initiatives, we can address the problems and issues related to management of our land most effectively.

The sustainable land management (SLM) program is a scientifically proven and a widely accepted global initiative towards combating land degradation. Fortunately, the SLM approaches involve the application of simple and cost effective land management technologies while it offers vast opportunities for income generation especially to the rural society. Proper land use planning based on the capability and suitability of the available land is crucial in the utilization of the land that is best suited for a particular use in a sustainable manner.

Hence, on this day, it is important for us all to realize and acknowledge precious values of our limited land and to ensure that we make the best use of such resources without degrading it, after all we cannot deny the fact that "Our Land is Our Home and Our Future".

To mark the day, the Ministry of Agriculture & Forests launched the Agriculture Land Development Guidelines, 2017. Further, in a land management campaign mode, the National Soil Services Centre, established hedgerows covering a land area of about 17.24 ac belonging to 52 households in Jamkhar Gewog, Tashi Yangtse Dzongkhag. This area of land was planted with about 69 thousand napier grass seedlings to help control soil erosion on steep slopes and useful as animal fodder).

Fig. Impacts of land degradation and Sustainable Land Management the key to combating land degradation (Source UNCCD).

