

# THE ROAD TO ANKARA

## & TO A LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRAL WORLD



### DEGRADED LAND

An under-performing asset

25% of usable global land is degraded<sup>i</sup>, and this has a corresponding estimated economic loss of USD 40 billion per year<sup>ii</sup>. An additional 12 million hectares - the equivalent of South Africa's arable land surface<sup>iii</sup> - are subject to further degradation every year. Existing usable land is already under high pressure, and there is a risk that it may not be able to meet the demands of the growing population<sup>iv</sup>.

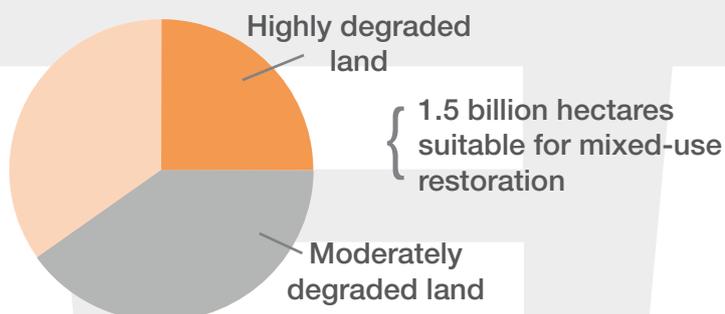
Land degradation is often the result of land mismanagement, including: deforestation, overgrazing, monoculture, salinization, pollution of land and water sources by agriculture or industries, misuse of fertilizers and/or chemicals, poor farming practices, and soil erosion<sup>v</sup>. It leads to increased pests, reduced availability of clean water and biodiversity loss. All of this increases food insecurity and makes the affected areas, their populations and business operations more vulnerable to climate change.

#### What is land degradation?

Land degradation refers to any reduction or loss in the biological or economic productive capacity of the land caused by human activities, exacerbated by natural processes, and often magnified by the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

(UNCCD, 2013)

### GLOBAL LAND AREA



## WHY LAND DEGRADATION MATTERS FOR BUSINESS

Risks and opportunities

Land is an essential asset for many companies, and its degradation represents a risk in sectors ranging from agriculture and forestry through to those that have indirect links to land via supply or value chains, e.g. retail, mining, energy, or insurance.

Concerns over land degradation are now mobilizing the international community, and there are a growing number of global initiatives aiming at increasing government commitments on land restoration. These include the Bonn Challenge (2011) and the New York declaration on Forests (2014), which jointly aim to restore 350 million hectares of degraded land by 2020. As governments increasingly adopt land restoration or Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets, the private sector will also need to contribute to land restoration efforts. But beyond potential legal constraints that may arise from these international frameworks, vast opportunities lie in the adoption of land management techniques and practices that contribute to reaching the full productivity potential of land assets. Adopting sustainable land management practices could deliver up to USD 1.4 trillion in increased production<sup>vii</sup>.

**Restoring the health and productivity of land resources is a significant opportunity for companies that understood the materiality of land to their business.**

### The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Land Degradation Neutrality Target

In 2012 the UNCCD introduced the concept of a land degradation neutrality target at the Rio+20 conference. This proposal is expected to be adopted by the UNCCD parties during COP 12 in Ankara, October 2015. It is also now reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) proposal that is likely to be adopted at the UN General Assembly in September 2015:

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

(UN General Assembly, 2014)

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) can be defined as "a state whereby the amount of healthy and productive land resources, necessary to support ecosystem services, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales."

# FROM “DEGRADE-ABANDON-MIGRATE” TO “RESTORE-SUSTAIN-PROTECT”

## What Businesses can do

Companies can contribute to global Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets by:

- Adopting sustainable land management practices and implementing programs that minimize current, and avoid future, land degradation;
- Rehabilitating degraded and abandoned production lands, and restoring degraded natural and semi-natural ecosystems that are critical to all stakeholders, including business.

The WBCSD has a comprehensive work program that helps its members understand risks and opportunities. It is structured around the international discussions led by the UNCCD on LDN. In particular, LDN is reflected in the WBCSD’s Action2020 target of “restoring at least 12 million hectares per year of degraded land”, and a business solution on “Restoring Degraded Land” has been developed to provide a response to land degradation challenges and the LDN target.

The program operates under three work streams:

### 1. STRENGTHEN THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION

The WBCSD is collaborating with the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) initiative to develop a Land Materiality Screening Tool that will help companies assess the materiality of land to their business and build strategies that address risks and tackle opportunities.

### 2. TRANSLATE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IN COMPANIES’ STRATEGIES

Land Degradation Neutrality is a target designed to be adopted at a country-level, but does it make sense to business? We will explore how LDN can be implemented and monitored by companies, and identify how public policies can help to scale up business-led initiatives.

### 3. SCALE UP ACTION: A BUSINESS LED MOVEMENT TO RESTORE DEGRADED LAND

The business solution aims to trigger an increasing number of initiatives focused on sustainable land management and land restoration projects.

## WBCSD ON THE ROAD TO ANKARA

### How to engage

WBCSD is working closely with the UNCCD and the Turkish Government to strengthen the business presence at the UNCCD COP12 in Ankara, Turkey on 20-21 October 2015. It is a significant opportunity to engage with government and have a collective voice in the COP process.

WBCSD will be the most prominent business voice in Ankara. Our member companies will provide a business response to the UNCCD target and help strengthen the business case for action.

By joining the WBCSD on the Road to Ankara, you will get a clear understanding of the significant costs of land degradation as well as the many benefits of restoring land and implementing sustainable land management practices. You will be able to actively contribute to the LDN target by engaging in multi-stakeholder discussions on land restoration efforts and breaking down pressing global challenges into actionable items and clear policy asks.

To join our work:

Please contact Violaine Berger, Director Ecosystems & Landscape Management at [berger@wbcسد.org](mailto:berger@wbcسد.org)



<sup>i</sup> According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). <sup>ii</sup> FAO figures. <sup>iii</sup> FAO data for year 2012. <sup>iv</sup> ELD Initiative (2013). The rewards of investing in sustainable land management. Interim Report for the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative: A global strategy for sustainable land management. Available from: [www.eld-initiative.org](http://www.eld-initiative.org). <sup>v</sup> ELD (2014). MOOC Practitioner’s Guide. <sup>vi</sup> Source: FAO & WRI. <sup>vii</sup> ELD Initiative (2013). The rewards of investing in sustainable land management. Interim Report for the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative: A global strategy for sustainable land management.