



National Action Programme to Combat Desertification

Department of Land Conservation and Combat Desertification of the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development

Digital Newsletter

ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

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LEADING ARTICLE

The role of environmental legislation in the combat against desertification

Basically, a law is enacted either to order or to forbid something as regards the regulations set by justice and the good of the neighbour. And there are laws for everything that can be imagined: religious, mourning, phonetic, Universe laws... What laws have in common, no matter their nature, is the search for an order regarding procedures and the establishment of rules that must be respected and obeyed. Otherwise, a law is meaningless.

Natural resources do not escape from regulations, regardless the fact that many people ignore them daily. As a starting point, it is worth mentioning the Article 41 of the National Constitution of the Argentine Republic, which establishes that all inhabitants enjoy the right to a healthful, balanced environment fit for human development. Thus, if there is any environmental damage, it must be recomposed as established by law. The authorities are responsible for protecting this right, as well as for administering the rational use of natural resources, preserving biological diversity, natural and cultural heritage, and for providing environmental information and education.

The exploitation of natural resources and the way in which they are used account for the way in which a country cares for environment.

Natural resources are territorial-natured, that is to say, they belong to the jurisdiction in which they are found (according to Article 124 of the National Constitution). The federalist structure that prevails in the country makes decision-taking more complex in relation to the combat against desertification, especially when measures should be taken in all the national territory. Although the State is entitled to design general policies for the environment, the provinces administer the exploitation of the resources which are found in their territories (the Article 124 of the Constitution establishes that the provinces have the original dominion over the natural resources existing in their territory). This competence system makes the Nation be the one that elaborates minimum environmental budgets for environment care and, at the same time, sustainable development.

AGENDA



30 March, Auditorium of the National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI, for its name in Spanish)

Within the framework of the commemoration of the bicentennial of the *May Revolution*, INTI will hold a series of meetings to reflect prospectively on different issues related to development, production, technology and their relation with both the State and society.

More information: www.inti.gob.ar

12 to 30 April, Chair of Agrarian Sociology of the Faculty of Agronomy and Animal Husbandry of the National University of Tucumán

"Postgraduate Course on Territorial Rural Development"

More information: www.wobook.com/WB1o5eP1AA8e/DRT-2010.html

Bearing in mind that the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2010 International Year of Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification invites to join the awareness campaign it will carry out on soil biological diversity.

This campaign kicked off with the celebrations of the Environment Day in Arusha, Tanzania, on 3

March, and will end in Bonn, Germany, on 22 June. Thus, they invite you to share information, education and communication on this issue through different activities.

More information: www.unccd.int.



ENHANCING SOILS ANYWHERE
ENHANCES LIFE EVERYWHERE

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Ruling tools to Combat Desertification

The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) was ratified by the National Congress in 1996. In the NAP Base Document, it is established that, without prejudice to CCD, there is a heterogeneous and complex set of national and provincial rules that refer to the desertification issue. Thus, it is recommended to develop a legal analysis task with the purpose of harmonizing and assembling the different rules prevailing in this subject with those of CCD. The reason why the desertification phenomenon is ruled by such diverse norms is that this problem not only involves different natural resources, but also includes economic, social, political, industrial, urban and tax aspects.

The Base Document also refers to the Soil Conservation Fostering Act, which was enacted on March, 1981. This law was born with the objective of promoting and coordinating private and public actions that encourage the conservation and recovery of the land's productive capacity. Furthermore, it was intended to prevent and control land degradation caused by man's action (Anthropism) and shown by the appearance of erosion, salinization, alcalinization and desertification in arid and semi-arid regions.



Through this law, it was decided that the provinces which join its regime should designate a provincial enforcement authority; conduct a survey of the soil and an agroecological study of their territory on such a scale as to enable compliance with the requirements of law; implement the infrastructure works necessary for land conservation, improvement and recovery; promote research and experimentation in the land conservation-related fields; spread conservationist rules that apply to all the population from elementary education and favour the training of specialized technicians in the subject; give bank credits to producers who are part of a Land Conservation Consortium, etc.

By the end of 1983, all provinces had joined the regime, and its effective implementation took place during the mid-eighties. This gave protection to the soil resource, through sustainable practices based on the prevailing need of maintaining soil cover to prevent erosion-caused floods and losses.

From the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development, a process to establish minimum budget rules is being encouraged for land sustainable management and desertification combat.

In particular, the Department of Land Conservation and Combat Desertification is in the elaboration process of a draft minimum budget bill which considers the main strategic guidelines to take better care of the soil resource. Furthermore, it also allows a sustainable and viable management in time, with the purpose of stopping the desertification process and encouraging the use of sustainable resource-management practices.

Provincial experiences

It is essential that the laws encouraging natural resource productivity do not neglect environmental care and the sustainability of the resources they nourish from. For Patagonia, the "Ovine Law" is an example of the foregoing. This law, whose main purpose is production promotion, encourages the use of environmentally-sustainable production technologies.

It is worth pointing out two cases of provincial legislation: the NAP decentralization process in La Rioja, which was sustained by a provincial law and the Soil Conservation Law in Entre Ríos.

Provincial Law 7985 on UNCCD Provincial Support and Creation of the Provincial Programme to Combat Desertification in La Rioja served to prioritize the treatment of this issue in the afore-mentioned province.

Moreover, the Soil Conservation Act —by which every deducted Argentine peso was multiplied by 50 as productive growth due to conservationist agrohydrological works —has generated benefits for producers who implement good practices in sustainable land management.

Regulations for rural development in drylands

It is necessary to stress the importance of sustainable rural development in the drylands suffering the desertification process. Thus, nowadays, it is proposed to define policies on the purposes, strategies and priorities of local and national development, without ignoring both integration and regional interests. In order to achieve this new sustainable development —from the environmental, economic, political and social point of view— it is necessary to adapt, among other aspects, the normative framework and tax rules. Another essential point to achieve sustainable rural development in drylands is land use planning: it is required a policy that promotes land occupation in a harmonious way and whose main purpose is family development as the law's most important objective.

The combat against desertification is an environmental combat limited by narrow political and economic margins and that, at the same time, should consider the social conditions of the population in general. Furthermore, desertification is a problem that involves the distribution of wealth and, with this, landholding regulation, as every project is subject to the existence of a clear legal framework.

It is important to elaborate provincial legal structures that favour the implementation of sustainable policies related to the use of natural resources, as well as clear regulations for land ownership.

It is necessary to add that the Native Forest Law (Public Law 26331), previously mentioned in the publication N.º 22 of the Digital Newsletter, is an essential tool for combating desertification, as it intends to promote native forest conservation through territorial regulations that control the advance of the agricultural frontier and the uses of land, as well as to implement measures to prevent forest surface from continuing reducing, which encourages the desertification process.

In the Digital Newsletter, we believe it is essential the existence of provincial laws that establish minimum budgets to manage the soil resource properly. This will allow to face the combat against desertification strongly and with accurate tools.

BRIEFS

2010: International Year of Biological Diversity



The United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 International Year of Biological Diversity. This is to attract the international attention to the problem of the continue loss of biodiversity, to reflect on the achievements reached as regards its conservation and to encourage to redouble the efforts to reduce significantly the cadence of species loss. The Secretariat of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) has been designated as the coordination centre for the International Year of Biological Diversity.

Several issues should be considered in this Assembly: it is essential to emphasize public awareness on the importance of safeguarding biological diversity and the threats that stalks it; to increase awareness of the achievements reached by communities and governments; to encourage people, organizations and governments to take immediate measures to stop biodiversity loss; to start the dialogue between the interested parties on the measures to be adopted in the period subsequent to 2010.



Agreement on Biological Diversity

It is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the equitable distribution of its multiple benefits. With 193 Parties, the Agreement on Biological Diversity was signed at the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992.

Biodiversity in drylands

Arid lands (including semi-arid) comprise 47% of the world's land surface. Although these areas are characterized by rainfalls and fragile ecosystems, they have a vast biological diversity which is perfectly adapted to these natural characteristics. The real threats for this biological community are bad human practices, such as the transformation of habitats for human use, overgrazing and the overexploitation of natural resources. All this has led to the degradation of over 20% of dryland ecosystems, with stark results: desertification and drought, the endangerment of many species, and strong economic losses in agricultural productions.



INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Joint Cooperation Agreement between Boca Juniors Club and Agreste Foundation: Programme "Let's Play the Match Against Desertification"



Within the framework with civil society, the Department of Land Conservation and Combat Desertification of the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development—in its capacity as National Focal Point of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification— supports the signing of a Joint Cooperation Agreement between Boca Juniors Club and Agreste Foundation, under the Programme "Let's Play the Match Against Desertification".



This agreement, signed on 5 March, 2010, mainly intends to develop promotion actions, awareness and training related to the different actions and activities under the guidelines of the National Action Programme for Combating Desertification. The main purpose of this alliance is to raise awareness both in companies and in society in general on the importance of the Planet's care and the different environment-related problems affecting the whole world.

The Agreste Foundation's President, Mrs. Griselda Marrero Duarte, expressed: "It is an honour for us to sign this agreement of cooperation with such a prestigious institution, which was able to hear our proposals and interpret the crucial situation our planet is going through. I invite all sectors to join this initiative".

Boca Juniors' President, Mr. Jorge Amor Ameal said: "When the Foundation's authorities came to our institution to raise the matter to us, we knew that we could be a communication vehicle. We have 20 hectares and the possibility of getting 20 more, in which we have asked for an afforestation project to be carried out, as we understand that a tree's life does a lot for the community. This is an issue that concerns us all. Thus, we hope that other institutions take the example and follow us because this is a world problem".

The Director of the Department of Land Conservation and Combat Desertification, Engineer Octavio Pérez Pardo, stated: "It is a proud and an honour for us that these two organizations, one that we know from work every day, as it is Agreste Foundation and another one that we daily see what it means all over the world, as it is Boca Juniors, unite to combat desertification. This Agreement is very important, as there are over 100 countries suffering this problem and the Argentine Republic is not foreign to it".



In order to spread this agreement, on Sunday 7 March, prior to the match between Boca Juniors and Racing Club, the football players exhibited a poster with the slogan "Let's Play the Match Against Desertification".

ENVIRONMENTAL DICTIONARY

Desertification generates concepts, starts debates and frames hundreds and hundreds of words. Some of these words are well-known, some others are not that much, several of them are typical of the subject and some or other has found a new space in the Spanish Royal Academy.

In the Digital Newsletter, we believe that, in order to better understand desertification, it is necessary to become familiar not only with words, but also with the programmes, the policies and the concepts that define this phenomenon. In order to carry this section through, we base on the *Glossary of terms and concepts* by Heitor Matallo Junior, whom we thank his disinterested collaboration.

Adaptation

According to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), adaptation is "the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic conditions or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities". This concept has been included in the UNCCD and can be applied to the context of "adaptation to drought" or adaptation to new environmental conditions in drylands which are a consequence of climate change.

Advocacy

It is the act of pleading or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, an idea or a policy. This term implies an action or a series of actions whose purpose is to influence private or public policies. In the UNCCD context, the concept is used as a synonym of "to influence decision takers" for implementing the Convention or improving the environment and living conditions in drylands through the Convention.

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