



Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda

Agroecology is key in Combating Desertification and Drought

2021 Desertification and Drought Day

PRESS STATEMENT

17th June 2021

Kampala – Uganda

Nearly three quarters of the Earth's ice-free land has been altered by humans to meet an ever-growing demand for food, raw materials, highways and homes. Fixing damaged ecosystems mitigates Climate Change and bolsters nature's defenses against disasters and extreme weather events such as wildfires, droughts, floods, and sand and dust storms. Avoiding, slowing and reversing the loss of productive land and natural ecosystems now are both urgent and important for a swift recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for guaranteeing the long-term survival of people and the planet.

The 2021 Desertification and Drought Day is focusing on turning degraded land into healthy land. Restoring degraded land brings economic resilience, creates jobs, raises incomes and increases food security. It helps biodiversity to recover and locks away the atmospheric carbon warming the Earth, slowing Climate Change. It can also lessen the impacts of Climate Change and underpin a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goal of Desertification and Drought Day is to demonstrate that investing in healthy land as part of a green recovery is a smart economic decision but not just in terms of creating jobs and rebuilding livelihoods, but in terms of insulating economies against future crises caused by Climate Change and nature loss, and in accelerating progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as we recover from COVID-19.

On this 17th day of June 2021, ESAFF Uganda joins the rest of the world in commemorating the Desertification and Drought Day with the aim of "Combating drought and desertification and restoration of degraded land".

Despite the tremendous contributions by small-scale farmers to feed the world and attain food sovereignty, their importance and contributions often results to harming the environment that leads to desertification and drought. In Uganda, forest cover loss has increased to an estimated 200,000 hectares

annually and about 10% of the population in the Southern and Northern parts experience drought related water scarcity annually.

Last year, ESAFF Uganda embarked on a national tree planting campaign that directly contributes to the reduction in desertification and drought. So far over 25,000 trees have been planted in the different parts of the country. Furthermore, small-scale farmers need to be taught the best practices that help them to conserve the environment in their production. It is important to note that the effects of drought and desertification impact small-scale farmers greatly.

“We need to appreciate the role of agroecology in improving the adaptive capacity of agroecosystems and reducing vulnerability to Climate Change impacts. Agroecological practices also help to conserve soil resulting into food security of small-scale farmers”

Hakim Baliraine – Chairperson ESAFF Uganda

The world is experiencing drought and desertification that renders small-scale farmers’ food insecure and prone to poverty. Uganda is among the countries facing desertification threats. The main factors contributing to desertification include drought, deforestation, bush burning and poor farming methods with soil erosion being the leading contributor to land degradation. However, agroecology is playing a great role in restoring soil fertility and ensuring food and nutrition security of small-scale farmers.

There is need for small-scale farmers and other stakeholders to be supported in their efforts to promote and undertake sustainable land management and agroecological practices in their agricultural production to combat desertification and drought.

To realize this, we call on the government to;

- 1. Mainstream and promote Ecological Organic Agriculture that boosts soil conservation as an approach to restore degraded land.**
- 2. Support Farmer-led Research and Innovations that promote Food Sovereignty and addressing desertification and drought.**
- 3. Avail information and support to small-scale farmers on environmental management and sustainability to ensure the restoration of forest cover and proper land management and use.**
- 4. Speed up the development of the regulatory National Organic Policy Framework to support the Organic Policy operationalization.**
- 5. Ensure a multi-sectoral sensitive Agro-Industrialization Policy which clearly recognizes the roles of the different agencies in restoring degraded land and protection of natural resources.**

ESAFF Uganda is therefore highly convinced of the need to combat desertification and drought to enhance food security, reduction in poverty levels and enjoyment of the natural resources sustainably while preserving the environment and restoring degraded land by all stakeholders. We strongly believe that Agroecology is key in Combating Desertification and Drought.

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About ESAFF Uganda

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda with membership in over 54 districts. ESAFF Uganda brings together small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fisher folks into the movement to advance social and economic equality, agroecology and food sovereignty.

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