

THE DESIRE PROJECT: DESERTIFICATION MITIGATION AND REMEDIATION OF LAND - A GLOBAL APPROACH FOR LOCAL SOLUTIONS

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Fragile arid and semi-arid ecosystems are in urgent need of conservation approaches that can prevent and reduce the widespread on-going land degradation and desertification processes, such as erosion, flooding, overgrazing, drought, and salinization. The DESIRE project identifies promising alternative land use and management conservation strategies based on a close collaboration of scientists with stakeholder groups in desertified areas around the world. This integrative participatory approach ensures both the acceptability and feasibility of conservation techniques, and a sound scientific basis for the effectiveness at various scales. DESIRE employs a bottom up approach such as is favoured by the UNCCD: i) degradation and desertification hotspots and stakeholder groups have been identified in countries surrounding the Mediterranean, and in 6 external nations facing similar environmental problems, ii) A desertification indicator system has been developed, used and results were analysed; iii) Conservation strategies have been defined with the stakeholder communities; iv) These strategies have been implemented in the field, and are being monitored and modeled to quantify their effectiveness at various scales; v) The results will be extrapolated using indicator sets, geoinformation data, and integrated modeling systems combining socio-economic and environmental aspects; vi) Finally the results will be translated to a series of practical guidelines for good agricultural practices and environmental management, which will be disseminated to all stakeholders in appropriate ways. The DESIRE project started in February 2007, has 26 project partners and will last 5 years. The results to date will be presented.