

The EarthTrends Information Guide for Drylands



EarthTrends Environmental Information

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EarthTrends

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Drylands and desert ecosystems are found on every continent, accounting for approximately 40 percent of the world's land area. Popular misconceptions hold that drylands are empty and unproductive, but in fact they contain numerous uniquely adapted species and supply a wide range of goods and services that the two billion humans who live in drylands depend upon to survive and prosper. Despite scarce water resources and variable precipitation patterns, agrarian dryland communities successfully raise domestic livestock, produce energy from woodfuel, and grow food; dryland food production currently accounts for roughly one-third of the global agricultural extent.

Today, however, some 10-20 percent of dryland areas are undergoing desertification—loss of productivity as a result of climatic variation and human activities. Since many of the people who reside in drylands already live in extreme poverty conditions, continued desertification combined with rapid population growth may trigger significant food and health crises and could also lead to economic and political instability in both dryland and non-dryland regions. Preventing desertification requires sustainable and integrated management with broad, ecosystem-based policies that recognize the environmental and economic benefits of drylands in tandem

Find the following **Drylands Information** and much more on **EarthTrends**.

SEARCHABLE DATABASE

[http://earthtrends.wri.org/searchable_db/index.php?theme=9]

Dryland Extent: Arid; Dry sub-humid; Semi-arid; Total dryland area, average
Dryland area as a percent of total area, average

MAPS

[http://earthtrends.wri.org/maps_spatial/index.php?theme=9]

Drylands: Aridity Zones of the World

Carbon Storage in Vegetation and Soils in Drylands

Extent of the World's Drylands

Fire in Drylands

Population Density

Projected Water Supply in Major Watersheds in Drylands, 2025

Share of Biomass Fuels in National Energy Consumption in Drylands

FEATURE ARTICLES

[<http://earthtrends.wri.org/features/index.php?theme=9>]

Unappreciated Gifts: Recognizing the Value of Drylands

An Ecosystem Approach to Drylands: Building Support for New Development Policies

DATA TABLES

[<http://earthtrends.wri.org/datatables/index.php?theme=9>]

Forests, Grasslands, and Drylands

LINKS

EarthTrends May 2006 Monthly Update: World Environment Day - Deserts and Desertification [<http://earthtrends.wri.org/updates/node/43>]

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Desertification Synthesis

[<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/Products.Synthesis.aspx>]

Properties and Management of Drylands

[<http://www.fao.org/ag/agl/agll/drylands/index.htm>]

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification [<http://www.unccd.int/>]