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Policy paper

France's international strategic guidelines for combating land degradation and desertification (2020-2030)

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Policy paper

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Summary

Desertification is defined as “**land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities**”¹. It corresponds to a specific form of land degradation in dry areas (arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas), impacting their **potential for biological and economic productivity**, and not strictly to the growth of deserts. The concentration of populations and the development of several activities, such as agro-sylvo-pastoral activities that are often not adapted to local conditions, are the main drivers of desertification. Renewable natural resources are therefore overexploited and do not have the time to regenerate themselves, and drought further accentuates this degradation. Dry areas, subject to significant water stress, represent **40% of the surface of the planet**, across all of the continents, and are home to more than **2 billion people (and up to 4 billion by 2050)**, including the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Today, a little over 40% of the least developed countries (LDCs) are affected by desertification and its economic, social and environmental consequences. Land degradation and drought that are gaining in intensity and spreading across the planet make more and more areas vulnerable to desertification. It is both urgent and imperative that we find adapted and efficient solutions to combat land degradation and to prevent desertification, by preserving biodiversity and water resources, and limiting the effects of climate change.

France has committed to support countries threatened by desertification by ratifying the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**, adopted in Paris in 1994, and ratified by 196 States and the European Union (EU). This convention is the cornerstone of international action in terms of combating land degradation and desertification. Along with the two other conventions from the 1992 Rio Summit², it represents one of the most significant multilateral agreements on the environment, and stands out for the participative aspect of its implementation and the important role it accords to civil society.

Given the considerable challenges related to land degradation and desertification, in 2007, France published a strategic action framework to increase the effectiveness of its actions in these areas. It is important to update this framework for the 2020-2030 period considering the significant changes that have occurred in this domain. This is the purpose of this document.

This updated framework responds to **France’s development policy**, which has made combating global inequality and preserving global public goods a priority, in order to deal with the root causes of crises (security, humanitarian, environmental, social, economic and public health crises, etc.) that impact all continents and that are mutually reinforcing. France’s development policy is part of the multilateral framework that the international community put in place in 2015 when it adopted the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development. This updated strategy is in line with the **conclusions of the meeting of the Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) of 8 February 2018** which formalised the concentration of French official development assistance (ODA) resources on clear geographic and thematic priorities, with 19 priority countries in the category of least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa and Haiti, and five thematic priorities (health, climate and biodiversity, education, gender equality, crises and vulnerabilities). These conclusions explicitly mention adapting agriculture to climate change, bolstering the competitiveness of economic sectors to improve employability, in particular of youth, as well as attenuating vulnerabilities and increasing resilience of the territories of the Sahel and its populations.

1. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Article 1(a)

2. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The strategic actions of this document are also in line with the **2017-2021 French Multilateral Aid Strategy**, which defines France's priorities in multilateral development institutions. This strategy aims to guide actions of multilateral organizations to serve the most vulnerable countries, consistent with the 2030 Agenda, and the French vision of sustainable development, and in an exemplary manner, to become a driver for furthering environmental protection and combating climate change.

These strategic guidelines aim to provide a framework for mobilizing French actors and French development assistance. Therefore this framework is specifically reinforced in relation to the **19 priority countries receiving French assistance**³.

As a response to these priorities, **the main objective of this strategic framework** is to reinforce the fight against land degradation and desertification, to benefit the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems. It defines measures to promote a context that is conducive to combating land degradation at all levels and to enhance the effectiveness of France's contribution to achieving land degradation neutrality⁴ at the global level. As such, actions already under way in this domain must be continued, and they must be given more resources and made more consistent, in coordination with the activities of other development partners, including the EU, multilateral donors, international organizations and civil society.

These strategic guidelines must guide French actors with regard to this objective, including the ministries concerned, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM), research, development agencies, international solidarity organizations (ISOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and French representatives in the different relevant multilateral institutions. France's commitment to combating land degradation and desertification must, moreover, be consistent with those commitments it made within the framework of the CBD, the UNFCCC, and other international agreements on the environment and on development. These strategic guidelines must **contribute to strengthening these links and developing synergies between the actions that France and its partners implement** in these areas.

This document rounds out and confirms the measures set out in France's 2019-2024 International Strategy for Food Security, Nutrition, and Sustainable Agriculture, launched on 22 October 2019, and in France's 2020-2030 International Strategy for Water and Sanitation, launched on 24 February 2020.



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3. Priority aid recipient countries defined by the 2018 meeting of the CICID. https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/releve_de_conclusions_du_comite_interministeriel_de_cooperation_internationale_et_du_developpement_-_08.02.2018_cle4ea6e2-2.pdf

4. Principle dedicated to Goal 15 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, target 15.3.

Challenges

More than 3.2 billion people currently live on the 2 billion hectares of degraded land in the world, and 500 million of these people currently live in zones that are already impacted by desertification. The phenomena of land degradation and desertification are on the rise, and impact all continents, particularly Eastern and Southern Africa and the Sahel region, Eastern and Central Asia, as well as Australia, America, and part of Mediterranean Europe. However, protection of land is essential to **preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services**, and therefore to maintaining the **quality of life of populations** (food security and nutrition, health, preservation and restoration of water resources, energy production, etc.).

The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published on 6 May 2019 by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)⁵ indicates that land degradation linked to land use changes represents the greatest **factor contributing to the loss of biodiversity** at the global scale. **Each year, 12 million hectares of land are degraded.** The cost of the loss of species and ecosystem services resulting from this degradation amounts to at least **10% of the global annual GDP**. These losses of agricultural land, which result in human activities being transferred to ecosystems that were until then preserved, are also an additional factor in the appearance of zoonoses⁶.

Furthermore, in 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) restated the key role of land in the climate system⁷. **A quarter of all land masses are currently degraded due to intensive exploitation, while soil, which is the second largest carbon sink on the global scale** after oceans, can significantly contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change. The natural processes of absorbing and storing carbon in soil and in vegetation **reportedly capture the equivalent of one third of CO₂ emissions** from fossil fuels and industry, while agriculture, livestock farming, deforestation and the degradation of land and forest ecosystems are responsible for **23% of total global greenhouse gas emissions**

from human activity. **Consequently, restoring 350 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 could generate the equivalent of \$9 trillion in ecosystem services and absorb 13 to 26 gigatonnes of CO₂⁸.**

Furthermore, dry areas make a significant contribution to the **global food supply** since they are home to **half of all the cropping systems on earth, and half of global livestock herds**, and constitute a very rich habitat of wild fauna and flora. The loss of the productive potential of land and the increase in local and global demand lead to overexploitation and in turn depletes natural resources⁹ on which local populations depend especially for revenue and for food. This therefore has a **major impact on poverty and threatens food security** and nutrition. Price volatility of agricultural goods and products also contribute to exacerbate vulnerabilities. The High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**, in its June 2019 report¹⁰, recommended a **transition towards sustainable food systems**, including those involving a **transformation of the agricultural use of land**, using an agroecological approach reconciling food security with the preservation of natural resources **at the local, national and international levels.**

Moreover, climate change and degradation and depletion of natural resources and arable land compromise the **stability and security of the most vulnerable countries.** A total of 440 million young people are expected to enter the labour market by 2030 in Africa, 65% of whom will be from rural areas. Given the poor outlook for employment and the low attractiveness of living conditions in rural areas, as well as the difficulty that local populations have accessing land, **emigration** is often seen as the only possible option. With an estimated 4 billion people to be living in arid regions by 2050, and crop yields to diminish by 10 to 50% depending on the region, **135 million people are at risk of being displaced by desertification** in the coming decades. This number will increase to 700 million by 2050 if we include the impact of the loss of biodiversity and climate

5. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, considered the "IPCC of biodiversity".

6. Diseases that are of animal origin or transmitted to humans by an animal vector.

7. Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems, IPCC, August 2019

8. Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration, IPBES, March 2018

9. Natural resources could be defined as any resource necessary to ecosystems and populations in order to meet their primary needs.

10. Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition, HLPE, June 2019



Half-moons, restoration of a pastoral zone, Niamba plateau, Torodi, Niger, 2017

change. Furthermore, increasing inequality, land and resource grabbing with increasingly depleted supply, and the sometimes difficult coexistence of agriculture and pastoralism also make land degradation a **source of conflict**.

From this point of view, **the Sahel** must be accorded particular attention. The region has a large population (which is expected to double by 2035) that is also young, with 60% living in rural areas and who remain subject to more and more climate and environmental disruptions. It is crucial to strengthen food security and living standards of populations, create new economic opportunities (including decent and long-term employment), preserve natural resources and combat desertification. The strengthening of **the resilience of populations, territories and agricultural systems is urgent and indispensable for the development of this region that is increasingly exposed to armed conflict and to terrorism**, including for the long-term prevention of public health, economic and humanitarian crises that are currently magnified by the COVID-19 crisis. This effort must be **combined with security and political efforts** undertaken by all countries and their partners, as part of France's 3D approach: Defence, Diplomacy and Development.

Given its environmental and socio-economic consequences, **land degradation is a major issue for sustainable development**. This issue was formalised starting in 2012 through the global goal of land degradation neutrality, which is now **target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals**¹¹.

Investing in the fight against land degradation and desertification is a profitable effort. Not only does it benefit local populations, but it also provides multiple benefits, and its profitability extends to different scales of sustainable land management. The avoidance, reduction and reversal of land degradation could represent more than one third of the most cost-effective greenhouse gas emission mitigation measures by 2030 to keep global warming under the 2°C threshold provided for in the Paris Agreement, improve food and water security, preserve biodiversity and prevent conflict and forced migration¹². For this to happen, nature-based solutions, including land-based solutions, could be deployed at several levels in order to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and land degradation neutrality targets.

11. SDG 15.3: "By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world"

12. Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration, IPBES, March 2018

Chapter 1

Strategic objective: act to scale up action to combat land degradation and desertification to benefit the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems

In order to achieve this objective, France's actions must focus on two major issues. **Firstly, at the strategic level, it is essential to ensure the development and maintenance of a context that is conducive to combating land degradation at all levels**, by mobilizing all actors (focus 1) and the development and sharing of knowledge (focus 2). **Secondly, at the operational level, it is important to enhance the effectiveness of France's actions to achieve land degradation neutrality**, by supporting more cross-cutting and coordinated efforts, and higher performing (focus 3) and more inclusive (focus 4) projects.

Focus 1: Mobilize all actors

In order to promote a context that is conducive to combating land degradation and desertification at the international, regional, national and local levels, it is important to mobilize all actors at all levels, from the policy, strategy, financial, scientific, technical and operational standpoints. Mobilizing actors will take place through French organizations that are directly involved in the fight against land degradation and desertification, and involved in sustainable development, as well as by France's presence in different financial institutions and international organizations.

Objective 1: Influence strategic guidelines of international and regional institutions

Actions :

1. Act within all of the **relevant multilateral bodies** (Rio Conventions, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization – FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD, World Trade Organization – WTO, United Nations Environment Assembly – UNEA, G7, G20) to promote collective action in **all areas contributing to combating land degradation** and desertification (agriculture, international trade, land use planning, managing water and land resources, etc.);
2. Monitor or contribute to new **international and regional initiatives** in order to ensure they **add value and are consistent** with the actions already conducted, including as part of the "4 per 1000" Initiative or the different regional initiatives for the Sahel;
3. Support the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (**UNCCD**), possibly via voluntary contributions to support the participation of representatives of LDCs in international bodies;
4. Provide targeted and strategic support to regional institutions working to combat land degradation and desertification, including in the **Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)**, in its efforts **to assist member countries** in honouring their commitments vis-à-vis the UNCCD, the defence of their interests in international bodies, and support for the development of projects submitted for financing, including with the Green Climate Fund.

Objective 2: Mobilize financial resources

Actions :

1. **Raise awareness, educate and mobilize large donors** concerning the importance of land, in terms of quality and quantity, in meeting the challenges related to the climate, biodiversity, preservation and restoration of water resources, food security, nutrition and health;
2. Support measures **to simplify access to funds** and international financing;
3. Contribute in such a way that **specialized funds and donors** (Global Environment Facility - GEF, Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, World Bank, EU, FFEM, AFD, LDN Fund¹³, etc.) **continue and strengthen their support for projects to combat land degradation and desertification** and focus their support on projects in Africa;
4. Support the **LDN Fund** and encourage the development of similar blended finance instruments.

Objective 3: Support national and local governance

Actions :

1. Promote **the evaluation of the implementation of national frameworks** covering the fight against land degradation and desertification and support its integration into national policy and legal frameworks;
2. Encourage the establishment of social, policy and regulatory frameworks furthering security and stability for all populations, and **access to land and water resources** and their sustainable management;
3. Help ministries that are in charge of combating land degradation and desertification to situate this objective at the highest level possible in **national priorities and strategies concerning development, combating poverty, agriculture, livestock farming and land use**;
4. Alongside States, promote and support **the transfer of powers to local authorities** in terms of sustainable land management;
5. Strengthen the **involvement of local authorities** in developed and developing countries and **decentralized cooperation** concerning sustainable land management;
6. Pursue **training of policymakers and negotiators**, particularly those in Africa.

Objective 4: Involve civil society more

Actions :

1. **Raise awareness among local populations and actors** in France and in the countries concerned and educate them on the issues of combating land degradation and desertification;
2. **Support French civil society** in its activities, including information watch advocacy and guidance for French public authorities;
3. **Support French civil society** in its role of assisting other development actors in developed and developing countries;
4. Support **collaboration with civil society at all decision-making levels**: promote its participation in international, national and local debates, and build its capacities through appropriate training;
5. Use feedback to facilitate **financing of micro-projects and local projects**.

Objective 5: Facilitate the involvement of research

Actions :

1. Strengthen **involvement of French and French-speaking scientists** and experts in all relevant discussions and international scientific publications;
2. Facilitate collaboration at all levels between **researchers and development actors**;
3. Support the development of **inter-disciplinary and inter-sector research** and the creation of dedicated networks;
4. Encourage **collaboration between different research project categories** (basic, applied, development) in the same region;
5. Support the development of **research groups** involving developed and developing countries in national and regional scientific and academic institutions in the countries concerned.

13. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund.

Focus 2: Mobilize and share knowledge

Knowledge based both on science and traditional expertise are now indispensable for allowing the necessary global transformations to take place in order to combat land degradation, providing support to policy decisions and solutions that can link local actions to global objectives.

Objective 6: Continue developing research

Actions :

1. Improve the evaluation of **synergies and antagonisms** between the objectives of combating land degradation and desertification, preserving biodiversity, combating climate change, preserving and restoring water resources, and improving food security and nutrition;
2. Better understand and anticipate **irreversible** and tipping points in land degradation, related, among other things, to changes in land use and climate change;
3. Develop analyses for the **costs** of the consequences of land degradation, of adopting agroecological intensification and rehabilitation techniques, while accounting for the costs associated with the loss of ecosystem services;



Technical training on plant cuttings, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 2007

4. Promote **agroecology** as a tool for combating land degradation by documenting its multi-dimensional impact (economic, social, environmental, food and nutrition, public health aspects, etc.);

5. Develop research on: defining and monitoring the **restoration** or rehabilitation of land and its economic viability, the impact of different **production and consumption modes** on land degradation at the global scale, the consequences of land degradation on **migration and conflict**, on **human health**, as well as the social acceptability of the **innovations**;

6. Stimulate and support adapted **technological, technical, and social innovation** for sustainable management of land and water resources.

Objective 7: Design, apply and distribute common approaches

Actions :

1. Strengthen cooperation between researchers in developed and developing countries to **jointly design reference methodologies**, based on scientific advances and traditional knowledge¹⁴;
2. Encourage the creation of national platforms and regional networks for **collaboration between scientists and other development actors**, including civil society;
3. Support the creation of **shared mapping tools and decision-making support tools**, based on models and definitions of scenarios through, among others, the OSS, the Science-Policy Interface of the UNCCD, and the French Desertification Working Group ;
4. **Make research results available** using reinforced mediation between scientists and local and regional actors, using various communication resources (publications, films, training, cooperation with NGOs and grassroots organizations, agricultural advising, etc.);
5. Further the development and long-term maintenance of multi-disciplinary and multi-sector **observatories as interfaces between science and policy**.

14. In particular based on the implementation of the Ouagadougou Declaration signed in September 2018 by the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and the national agronomic research institutions of the countries in the Sahel, linking the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD), the French Development Agency (AFD), and the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), to actively contribute to the objectives of the Sahel Alliance.



Local counsellor visiting a market gardening area, Sakal, Sénégal, 2007

Focus 3: develop higher performing projects

A great number of actions have already been implemented to combat land degradation and desertification, specifically in countries that have been the hardest affected. In order to strengthen the performance of these actions, projects should be better coordinated and partnership dynamics should be promoted within regions at several levels, in order to jointly achieve international goals for sustainable development and environmental protection. By focusing on the long term and systematically seeking out actions with multiple benefits, both the economic and environmental viability of the projects is strengthened, along with the resilience of populations and regions.

Objective 8: Further the development of projects with multiple benefits

Actions :

1. Promote **projects to combat land degradation and desertification that have multiple benefits**, including the integrated and sustainable management of water and land resources, preservation of biodiversity, fight against climate change, and improvement of food security and nutrition;
2. Mobilize donors, in particular French donors, to undertake studies on **developing and financing projects that are integrated and that have multiple benefits**;

3. Encourage more consistency between the different **national action programmes relating to the environment**, specifically those developed within the framework of the UNCCD (LDN targets¹⁵), the CBD (National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans – NBSAP) and the UNFCCC (Nationally Determined Contributions – NDC);

4. Ensure the contribution of actions implemented for **SDG 15** and for achieving the land degradation neutrality objective, but also the consistency of those actions with the **other relevant Sustainable Development Goals**¹⁶;

5. Ensure that **actions undertaken by French actors** in rural and agricultural development, climate change mitigation or adaptation, the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems and management of natural resources **contribute to or do not work against combating land degradation and desertification**.

Objective 9: Strengthen project sustainability

Actions :

1. Systematically carry out **diagnostics prior to projects to combat land degradation and desertification including evaluations of their economic and environmental viability**, and on their impacts on ecosystems, related ecosystem services and the resilience of populations and regions;
2. Encourage long-term programmes that include a **regional approach that is systemic, uses multiple actors and covers multiple sectors**, and that are integrated into the strategic framework of the countries and national institutions;
3. Promote **agroecological intensification** of agricultural and livestock production systems, using sustainable and coordinated management of agro-sylvo-pastoral systems, local biodiversity, water resources, forestry and pastoral resources, organic material and fertility of soil, helping to combat erosion;
4. **Diversify activities to combat land degradation and desertification** in order to alleviate pressure on natural resources.

15. Land degradation neutrality targets

16. Including SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13 and 17 respectively: "No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Partnership for the Goals"



Oasis landscape, Dades valley, Morocco, 2013

Objective 10: Guarantee conditions required to implement sustainable actions

Actions :

1. Support the financing of **prior diagnostics and monitoring and evaluation**, to guarantee actions that are targeted, adapted, accepted and equitable;
2. Contribute to the implementation of an **environment that is conducive to responsible investments** in the land sector¹⁷: secure land use rights¹⁸, facilitate access to and the quality and maintenance of agricultural support services (financial services, agricultural advising, market information system, mutual coverage, insurance, etc.);
3. Promote **joint design of projects with all relevant and competent actors**: local populations, civil society, research, local authorities, contracting authorities, agricultural cooperatives, private sector or very small and medium-sized companies (TPMEs)¹⁹, etc.;
4. Encourage **building on and sharing experiences**, including through pilot projects, in order to better adapt successful practices to other regions, seeking **to scale up successful experiences**;
5. Ensure that **emergency projects** (for short-term sustenance) take **sustainability requirements** into consideration for the long term.

17. In connection with France's 2019-2024 International Strategy for Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture

18. In compliance with the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT 2012)

19. Very small and medium-sized companies

Focus 4: develop more inclusive projects

More than a quarter of land surface is managed by local communities, which only represent 5% of the global population. These communities are very often the most vulnerable to and the most impacted by land degradation. In developing countries, more than 80% of women consider that agriculture is their main means of subsistence. It is important to understand the varying involvement of men, women and youth to achieve the land degradation neutrality goal.

Objective 11: Involve all populations in the definition and implementation of projects

Actions :

1. **Jointly design projects** with local actors and all populations, including the local communities and indigenous populations concerned, including by developing **forums for collaborating and sharing of expertise**;
2. Ensure that the value of **local and traditional knowledge** is taken into account;
3. Guarantee that **projects are taken on board** by the relevant populations, by taking into consideration their specificities and social, cultural and economic values.

Objective 12: Ensure that the results benefit all of the local populations

Actions :

1. Integrate the targets of **SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”** into the programmes for combating land degradation and desertification;
2. Promote and support the **involvement of youth** in programmes for combating land degradation and desertification over the long term;
3. Carry out **detailed impact assessments on the project benefits** over the short and long term for the population concerned;
4. Carry out an ex post evaluation of the short- and long-term benefits of the actions for local populations.



Community mobilization to build stone barriers, Landou, Mali, 2009

Chapter 2

Implementation outlook

France's 2020-2030 International Strategic Guidelines for Combating Land Degradation and Desertification will contribute to supporting actions that benefit the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems. All of the French actors concerned (ministries, agencies, research centres, civil society organizations, the private sector) will be mobilised to this end.

Appropriate land management is a **major issue for sustainable development**, simultaneously helping to strengthen carbon storage capacity in soil and in vegetation, and to prevent erosion of biodiversity and the depletion of water resources, poverty and food insecurity, unequal access to natural resources, the emergence and spread of certain communicable diseases, forced migration and conflict. Action should be taken on a global scale to **strengthen resilience of the most fragile populations and regions**, and to avoid new crises, particularly ecological crises.

Hence, France will step up its involvement, not only in discussions within the framework of the UNCCD and the two other Rio Conventions, the UNFCCC and the CBD, but also in all **appropriate multilateral bodies** including the FAO, WTO and WHO, and multilateral discussion groups such as the G7 and the G20. It will in particular uphold its ambitions in the **regional bodies in the Sahel** such as the Sahel Alliance and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, of which it is currently Vice President. In this priority region for its action, France will strive to increasingly integrate environmental issues into development and security issues in order to help re-establish the economic attractiveness of these regions and to support long-term political stability. The increased involvement of women and actions focused on youth will be vital to achieving these goals.

French development assistance policy will provide guidance for this ambition through projects of the Agence Française de Développement Group, which will boost the financing of initiatives that contribute to land degradation neutrality and combating desertification, focusing on France's 19 priority countries²⁰. Multiple actions can be undertaken in this effort: supporting local development, coordinated and integrated management of natural resources, agroecology and agroforestry, supporting mobility of pastoral activity and sustainable intensification of agricultural systems, protection and restoration of ecosystems, or combating deforestation in dry areas. The AFD will also contribute to promoting **nature-based solutions** by providing additional support for projects that simultaneously contribute to combating land degradation, erosion of biodiversity and climate change. In 2019, France dedicated 266 M EUR of bilateral aid to the fight against land degradation and desertification²¹. The AFD will pursue its efforts and strive to **mobilize other national or regional bilateral development banks** in these areas, in its role as Chair of the International Development Finance Club (IDFC).

France will also strengthen its action in favor of the fight against land degradation and desertification through multilateral organizations to which it contributes, such as the United Nations development program or the World Bank.²²

The implementation of these new strategic guidelines for the 2020-2030 period will be **evaluated at the halfway point** by an organization assigned by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in order to guarantee the effectiveness of our collective action.

20. Priority aid recipient countries defined by the 2018 CICID: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo

21. Source : OECD.Stat, Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

22. In 2019, 39% of French development aid passed through multilateral funds and organizations (preliminary figures; final figures available at the end of the year 2020).

Appendix I

List of actors

French actors:

- **Agence Française de Développement (AFD):** the Agence Française de Développement Group is a government agency that contributes to France's external actions, under the supervision of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and the Recovery, and the Ministry for Overseas France. The mission of the AFD – and its Proparco subsidiary – is to implement French policy related to development and international solidarity. The AFD finances and supports projects, programmes, and studies seeking to improve the living conditions of populations, support economic growth, and protect the planet, in the service of humanity's shared assets, and of a transition that is fairer and more sustainable. Its activities mainly involve loans, but also funds, including those delegated by other donors (European Union), through the acquisition of stakes and guarantee funds, which are granted to States, local authorities, state-owned enterprises, foundations, or NGOs, private companies, and financial institutions (banks and public or private microfinance institutions).
- **French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM):** the FFEM was created in 1994 by the French Government following the Earth Summit in Rio, to foster environmental protection in developing countries. To this end, it finances investment projects that have a positive impact on the global environment. Its action, mostly centred on the African continent, helps to combat desertification by supporting systems of sustainable agricultural production, and intelligent management of natural resources.

- **French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD):** created in 1997 by French public authorities, the CSFD plays a role in providing expertise, advice and support to French policymakers. It mobilizes French experts from the main scientific bodies that are skilled in the area of development of dry regions. The CSFD works in close collaboration with French civil society within the French Desertification Working Group, of which it is a member. It regularly publishes themed reports providing scientific knowledge in the fields of land degradation and desertification. The CSFD regularly receives support from ministries responsible for foreign affairs, research and ecology.

- **Centre for International Actions and Projects (CARI):** created in 1998, CARI began its action immediately following the conclusion of the Convention to foster the participation of civil society within the framework of the UNCCD, by establishing:

- In 2001, the Associative Network for the Sustainable Development of Oases (RADD0), which works to safeguard oasis ecosystems in Saharan countries;
- Starting in 2007, the Drynet international network, which brings together civil society organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe involved in the negotiations of the UNCCD;
- In 2010, the Sahel Desertification Network (ReSaD), which brings together the national platforms in Burkina Faso, France, Mali and Niger.

The coordinated action of these networks within the UNCCD improved recognition of civil society as a full interlocutor of the Convention, and supports the adoption of decisions of the COP promoting the creation of a panel of representatives of civil society. CARI has played an active role as a member, and will, for the second time, preside over this panel for the 2020-2021 period. In 2011, CARI's president was designated as the spokesperson for civil society at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

- **French Desertification Working Group (GTD):** created in 2001 on the initiative of the Centre for International Actions and Projects (CARI), the French Desertification Working Group is a platform of French actors working in the field of international solidarity that are committed to combating desertification. It brings together NGOs, scientists, private structures and local authorities. It works with French public authorities responsible for issues related to combating land degradation and desertification, and monitoring the UNCCD, and aims to provide a space where development actors can collaborate and take action. It also serves as an internationally influential source of proposals, particularly within the framework of the UNCCD, through the Sahel networks (ReSaD) or globally (Drynet). CARI receives regular assistance from ministries responsible for foreign affairs and ecology in organizing the French Desertification Working Group.

International frameworks:

- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** the UNFCCC, adopted in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, is a forum for international negotiations related to combating climate change. The Paris Agreement that was adopted in 2015 at the 21st Conference of the Parties was the first universal and legally binding agreement aiming to intensify necessary actions and investments to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to a level below 2°C during this century. It also aims to strengthen the capacity of countries to deal with the consequences of climate change and to support them in their efforts. It was during this COP that France launched the “4 per 1000” Initiative, which aims to provide advocacy for carbon sequestration in soil using agricultural practices adapted to local environmental, social and economic conditions.

- **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** the CBD, opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, is a forum for international negotiations for developing strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It is a legally binding international treaty that seeks fair and equitable distribution of advantages that come from the use of genetic resources. It targets all areas that are directly or indirectly related to biological diversity and its role in terms of development: science, policy, teaching, agriculture, economy, culture, etc. As a result, the 2010-2020 Strategic Framework for Biodiversity²³ was created and will be renewed at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 2021.

- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD):** the UNCCD adopted in 1994 in Paris, following the Earth Summit in Rio which entered into force in 1996, is a forum for international negotiations on combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. Four executive secretaries have led the secretariat for the Conference of the Parties (COP) for the functioning and implementation of action plans from subsidiary bodies (Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention - CRIC, Global Mechanism, Committee on Science and Technology - CST). Following the 13th Conference of the Parties, the UNCCD adopted a 2018-2030 Strategic Framework to guide its implementation, in line with the SDGs. The implementation of target 3 of SDG 15 “By 2030, achieve a land degradation-neutral world” is at the core of the UNCCD strategy. The implementation of the UNCCD is accompanied by the Global Mechanism, a subsidiary body of the Convention, which supports the countries that are party to the Convention in formulating actions, mobilizing partners and financing. Currently France is the fifth largest contributor to the UNCCD.

- **Global Soil Partnership (GSP):** the GSP was created in December 2012 with the objective of facilitating collaboration and synergy of efforts between all members, by improving governance and promoting sustainable land management, both for land users and policymakers. As such, the GSP publishes numerous informative technical documents intended for the general public and policymakers, the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management. Application of these documents is on a voluntary basis. The GSP also works to publish information on a global level through annual symposiums. It is hosted and supported by the FAO, where its secretariat is located. It is often thought to be a part of the FAO, but it is only linked to it by a voluntary partnership.

- Since 2012, land degradation neutrality (LDN) has been covered by **target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals**. This goal provides a target for 2030 of working to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land that is impacted by desertification, drought and flooding, and striving to build a world without land degradation.

23. Aichi Targets, adopted at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010.

Regional frameworks:

- **Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS):** the CILSS is an international organization created in 1973, which brings together 13 countries²⁴ in the Sahel, in West Africa. It is based in Ouagadougou, and has two specialized institutions: the AGRHYMET Regional Centre in Niamey, which provides training and communication services, and the Institut du Sahel in Bamako, which works in the field of agro-socio-economic research. The CILSS is a go-to organization on the topics of food security and combating the effects of drought, desertification and climate change in the Sahel. Moreover, it is very active in supporting African member states in negotiations in the framework of the UNFCCC and the UNCCD.

- **Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS):** the OSS is an independent intergovernmental organization created in 1992 grouping together 25 African countries, 7 developed countries, 7 sub-regional African organizations, international organizations of the United Nations and civil society organizations (including CARI). The OSS is a North-South partnership platform for the production and distribution of information that is helpful in fostering the sustainable management of natural resources and in adapting to environmental changes. It works as a facilitator, serving its members, and contributes to strengthening their actions.

- **Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel (IGMVSS or GMV):** the IGMVSS is a strategic pan-African framework grouping together 11 founding countries, and endorsed by the African Union in 2007. At the operational level, its implementation is coordinated by the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall, based in Nouakchott. The Initiative seeks to restore and sustainably manage the land in the Sahel and Sahara region in order to meet the twofold challenge of combating poverty and the degradation of ecosystems by dealing with cross-cutting issues: access to basic services (water, sanitation, health care, education), food security, increase and diversification of revenue, civil security and peaceful spaces, and conservation of biological diversity.

- **Climate Commission for the Sahel Region:** the Climate Commission for the Sahel Region was launched in November 2016 in Marrakesh on the sidelines of the UNFCCC COP22, during the African Action Summit. After the first meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Climate Commission for the Sahel Region²⁵, a climate investment plan for the Sahel region of more than \$400 billion for the 2018-2030 period was adopted. It combines the

nationally determined contributions set as part of the implementation of the Paris Agreement and is structured within a 2018-2020 Priority Regional Programme that includes a start phase for which financing pledges for certain areas were made, including agroecology (FAO, IFAD, AFD).

- **Sahel Alliance:** launched in 2017 on France's initiative, the Sahel Alliance is an intergovernmental organization that is composed of the main donors operating in the region, including several European countries, the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB). It works to respond to the challenges faced by the Sahel G5. It targets its actions in priority sectors: education and employment of youth, agriculture, rural development, food security, energy and climate, governance, decentralization and basic services, and interior security.



Pastoral well, Bagzam, Niger, 2007

24. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo

25. Niamey Summit, 25 February 2019

International scientific groups:

- **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):**

the IPCC is a scientific body created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the UNDP, which aims to provide detailed assessments of scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its causes, its potential repercussions and alternative strategies. The IPCC publishes special reports on specific topics, including a special report on land²⁶ published in August, 2019.

- **High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE):**

the HLPE is the science-policy interface of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Created in 2009, it aims to facilitate development of policies that provide independent analyses and advisory services that are comprehensive and evidence-based. It drafts its studies according to requests from the CFS and following a scientific process that is transparent and inclusive, involving a wide variety of stakeholders (from the public and private sectors, and from civil society) from around the world. The fields in which it contributes include agroecology, responsible agricultural investment, the impact of biofuels on food security, the challenges of climate change, the volatility of food prices and the Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure.

- **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES):**

the IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body created by States to strengthen the science-policy interface in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, human well-being over the long term and sustainable development. Under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO and the FAO, it was created in 2012 in Panama City and plays a role in educating the general public in scientific matters, mainly aimed at the Governments of the States that are party to the platform.

- **Science-Policy Interface (SPI) of the UNCCD:**

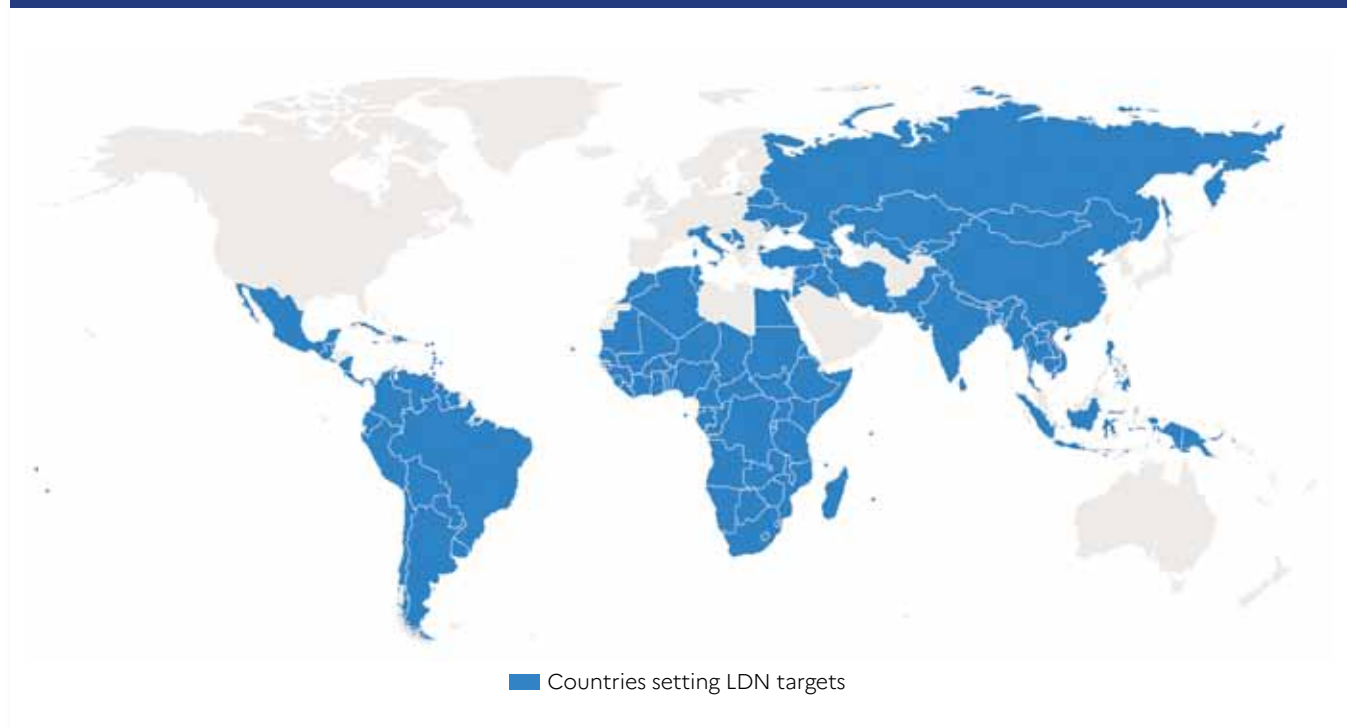
the SPI was created in 2013 at the UNCCD COP 11 in order to encourage and facilitate dialogue between scientists and policymakers on desertification, land degradation and drought. It provides thematic guidelines on the knowledge needed for implementing the UNCCD. It is composed of 15 independent scientists that provide a perspective of all of the disciplines relating to the UNCCD, taking regional, global and political issues into consideration. It also has representatives of observatory organizations, including civil society organizations.

26. Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems, IPCC, August 2019.

Appendix II

Map of the countries having set a national LDN target

Countries party to the UNCCD said to be “impacted” by desertification, with a national land degradation neutrality target (LDN target) having been set in this framework



Source: UNCCD.

Appendix III

Objective summary table

Act to scale up action to combat land degradation and desertification to benefit the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems

| | Focuses | Objectives | Actions |
|---|---------------------|---|---|
| <p>Strategic Objective:</p> <p>Promote a context that is conducive to combating land degradation at all levels</p> | Mobilize all actors | <p>Objective 1:</p> <p>Influence strategic guidelines of international and regional institutions</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Act within all international bodies 2. Ensure the added value and consistency of new international and regional initiatives 3. Support the UNCCD Secretariat 4. Provide strategic support to regional organizations working to combat land degradation and desertification |
| | | <p>Objective 2:</p> <p>Mobilize financial resources</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise awareness among donors and educate them 2. Support measures to simplify access to international financing 3. Strengthen the contributions of funds and donors to projects that combat land degradation and desertification 4. Support the LDN Fund and the growth of such funds |
| | | <p>Objective 3:</p> <p>Support national and local governance</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote the evaluation of national frameworks for combating land degradation and desertification 2. Encourage the definition of dedicated frameworks for access and sustainable management of water and land resources 3. Help ministries in charge of combating land degradation and desertification to make the issue a priority 4. Promote and support the transfer of powers to local authorities 5. Strengthen the involvement of local authorities and decentralized cooperation 6. Pursue training of policymakers and negotiators in the impacted countries |

| | Focuses | Objectives | Actions |
|---|------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Strategic Objective:</p> <p>Promote a context that is conducive to combating land degradation at all levels</p> | Mobilize all actors | <p>Objective 4:</p> <p>Involve civil society more</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise awareness among local actors in France and in the impacted countries and educate them 2. Support French civil society in its roles of advocacy and support for French actors 3. Support French civil society in its role of assisting other development actors in developed and developing 4. Support collaboration with civil society at all decision-making levels 5. Use feedback for financing and defining micro-projects |
| | | <p>Objective 5:</p> <p>Facilitate the involvement of research</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen involvement of scientists in the relevant international bodies and publications 2. Facilitate collaboration between researchers and development actors 3. Support the development of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research projects and the creation of dedicated networks 4. Encourage collaboration between the different research project categories in the same region 5. Support the development of research groups involving developed and developing countries |
| | Mobilize and share knowledge | <p>Objective 6:</p> <p>Continue developing research</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the evaluation of synergies and antagonisms between the different domains related to combating land degradation and desertification (water, climate, biodiversity, food security) 2. Better understand and anticipate the irreversible points of land degradation 3. Develop cost analyses of the consequences of and measures for combating land degradation and desertification 4. Promote and document the development of agroecological practices 5. Develop research on: restoration measures and their viability, the impact of consumption and production methods on land degradation, the consequences on migration and conflict, on human health, and the social acceptability of the innovations 6. Support adapted technological, technical and social innovation |

| | Focuses | Objectives | Actions |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <p>Strategic Objective:</p> <p>Promote a context that is conducive to combating land degradation at all levels</p> | Mobilize and share knowledge | <p>Objective 7:</p> <p>Design, apply and distribute common approaches</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jointly design reference methodologies between researchers from developed and developing countries 2. Encourage the implementation of collaborative platforms between researchers and development actors 3. Support the creation of mapping tools and decision-making support tools 4. Make research results available and make the information accessible to local actors 5. Favour the development of multi-disciplinary observatories as science-policy interfaces |
| <p>Operational Objective:</p> <p>Strengthen the effectiveness of actions to attain land-degradation neutrality</p> | Develop higher performing projects | <p>Objective 8:</p> <p>Further the development of projects with multiple benefits</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote projects to combat land degradation and desertification with multiple benefits 2. Mobilize donors to study development and financing of projects with multiple benefits 3. Encourage consistency between the programmes developed within the framework of the UNCCD, the CBD and the UNFCCC 4. Ensure the contribution to and the consistency of projects with SDG 15, and the other SDGs (including 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 12, 13 and 17) 5. Ensure that the other programmes from French actors do not go against/do contribute to combating land degradation and desertification |
| | | <p>Objective 9:</p> <p>Strengthen project sustainability</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carry out prior diagnostics, including environmental evaluation 2. Encourage long-term approaches that are territorial and systemic in nature, with multiple actors and covering multiple sectors 3. Promote agroecological intensification of agricultural and livestock production systems 4. Diversify activities to combat land degradation and desertification in order to alleviate pressure on natural resources |
| | | <p>Objective 10:</p> <p>Guarantee conditions required to implement sustainable actions</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure the financing of prior diagnostics and monitoring and evaluation 2. Contribute to building an environment that is conducive to investment 3. Promote joint design of projects with all actors concerned 4. Encourage building on and sharing experience 5. Ensure that emergency projects take long-term sustainability requirements into consideration |

| | Focuses | Objectives | Actions |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p><u>Operational Objective:</u></p> <p>Strengthen the effectiveness of actions to attain land-degradation neutrality</p> | <p>Develop more inclusive projects</p> | <p><u>Objective 11:</u></p> <p>Involve all populations in the definition and implementation of projects</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jointly design projects and develop spaces for collaboration and sharing of knowledge 2. Take local and traditional expertise into account and integrate its advantages 3. Guarantee that the populations involved take the projects on board |
| | | <p><u>Objective 12:</u></p> <p>Ensure that the results benefit all of the local populations</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate the SDG 5 targets into the programmes for combating land degradation and desertification 2. Promote and guarantee the involvement of youth 3. Carry out detailed impact assessments on the project benefits over the short and long term for the populations concerned 4. Formalize a dedicated ex post evaluation |

Acronyms and abbreviations

| | | | |
|--------------|--|---------------|--|
| AFD | Agence française de développement | LDC | Least Developed Country |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity | LDN | Land Degradation Neutrality |
| CICID | Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development | NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans |
| CFS | Committee on World Food Security | NDC | Nationally Determined Contributions (within the framework of the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC) |
| EU | European Union | ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization | OSS | Sahara and Sahel Observatory |
| FFEM | French Facility for Global Environment | SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility | SPI | Science-Policy Interface (of the UNCCD) |
| GTD | French Desertification Working Group | UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| HLPE | High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition | UNEA | United Nations Environment Assembly |
| IDFC | International Development Finance Club | UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development | WHO | World Health Organization |
| IPBES | International Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services | WTO | World Trade Organization |
| ISO | International Solidarity Organization | | |

Policy paper

France's international strategic guidelines for combating land degradation and desertification (2020-2030)

Desertification is a gradual degradation of soils in drylands, affecting their biological and economic potential. Today, more than 3.2 billion people worldwide live on around 2 billion hectares of degraded land. Moreover, 500 million people live in areas already affected by desertification. **This growing phenomenon now affects all continents and is a genuine danger for human health, biodiversity, the climate, food security, stability and security.**

France has long been committed to supporting the efforts of countries threatened by desertification, thanks to its ratification of the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**, adopted in Paris in 1994. France has created global initiatives, including the 4 per 1000 initiative and the Green Initiative for the Sahel, and supported many more. Given the importance of desertification issues for both the environment and social and economic development, **France adapted its strategic framework to combat desertification and land degradation worldwide for the period 2020-2030.**

This new strategic framework supports the following goals:

- **Contributing to France's development policy** to combat global inequalities and preserve global public goods, addressing the root causes of mutually reinforcing crises which affect all continents;
- **Guiding ministries, agencies, NGOs and scientists**, as well as other French actors, in their support to the most vulnerable populations seeking to prevent degradation of land and manage it more sustainably.

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