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Press release

Land, climate, energy, agriculture and development in the Sahel

In-depth national studies on land, climate, energy, agriculture and development in the 11 Sahel countries show how manifold potentials of the region could be better harnessed.

Bonn / Niamey. January 19, 2021. At an online event on January 19, 2021, researchers from national research institutes and universities in the Sahel region and Germany, namely the [Agrhymet Regional Centre](#) of the [Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel](#) (CILSS) in Niger and the Center for Development Research at the University of Bonn (ZEF) in Germany launched a series of national cases studies*) and a [regional synthesis report](#) on rural development, agricultural livelihoods and job creation in the Sahel region. The national case studies and the regional synthesis paper provide up-to-date knowledge and critical insights on the nexus of land degradation, climate change and energy in the Sahel. They also identify policy entry points and investment opportunities that will help advance economic growth, food security, and job creation in the region. Deputy DG Mr. Dirk Schattschneider of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the funding agency of this research, made opening remarks at the event from the perspective of development partners, reaffirming Germany's commitment to development in the Sahelian region.

The Sahel comprises 11 countries (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia) and a population of half a billion people. Poverty has been declining in the region over the last two decades because of economic growth but still about 42% of the population are living below the international poverty line. The major causes of poverty are low agricultural productivity, vulnerability to extreme weather, income inequality and conflicts. The Sahel region has a critical mix of high exposure, high vulnerability, and low adaptive capacities to climate change. These climatic changes are also projected to further amplifying conflict risks.

Joachim von Braun, Director of ZEF and Chair of the Scientific Group for the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 emphasized that *“the region has tremendous African trade and development potentials. We see a promising trend of actions for land restoration and sustainable land management being carried out in the Sahel and that must be accelerated. Thereby climate risks can be addressed more and jobs for youth expanded”*.

The major findings show that socio-economic solutions such as improving access to markets, strengthening social safety nets, increasing investments in transport and energy infrastructures, promoting land tenure security, and expanding off-farm employment opportunities can significantly contribute to sustainable rural development in the Sahel, particularly by aiding climate change resilience and sustainable land management.

Among the key technological innovations identified by the researchers that could boost such a development are: Expanding irrigation practices and adopting water-use efficient irrigation techniques, increasing crop diversification and agricultural mechanization, as well as investing in restoring and rehabilitating degraded lands through reforestation, afforestation and agroforestry practices.

Key lessons learnt from ongoing national policy initiatives for sustainable development emphasize the importance of actively involving stakeholders in consultation processes for policy formulation, and of establishing effective mechanisms for policy monitoring and assessment. By taking these factors into account, sustainable development policies and programs can be implemented successfully in the Sahel region.

Research agenda

The national case studies, regional cross-cutting analysis and stakeholder consultations point out that for attaining the overall goal of a prosperous, food and nutrition secure and peaceful Sahel, policy and action-oriented research is needed on the following specific objectives:

- 1) Identifying and harnessing the synergies across the land-water-energy-food security nexus in order to promote agricultural growth, rural development and job creation, particularly for youth and women;
- 2) Accelerating climate-change adaptation and building resilience against extreme weather events, particularly droughts. Developing mechanisms for the use of climate-change mitigation measures to generate revenues through tapping into international carbon trading;
- 3) Examining how conflict risks are affected and exacerbated by human and environmental stressors (and vice-versa) and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the current, including indigenous, conflict resolution mechanisms;
- 4) Exploring the impacts of investments in soft and hard infrastructures on economic growth and employment generation;
- 5) Improving policy formulation, monitoring and implementation.

*) You can download the reports here:

Land, Climate, Energy, Agriculture and Development in the Sahel. [Synthesis paper of case studies under the Sudano-Sahelian Initiative for Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security](#). By Alisher Mirzabaev et al. (ZEF WP (Working Paper) 204)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Burkina Faso](#). By Mouhamadou Bamba Sylla and Kangbéni Dimobe Safietou Sanfo (ZEF WP 197)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Ethiopia](#). By Assefa Admassie, Degnet Abebaw (ZEF WP 198)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Mali](#). By Ousmane Coulibaly (ZEF WP 199)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Niger](#). By Rabani Adamou, Boubacar Ibrahim, Abdou Latif Bonkaney, Abdoul Aziz Seyni, Mamoudou Idrissa, Nassourou Bellos (ZEF WP 200)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Nigeria](#). By Olawale Emmanuel Olayide (ZEF WP 201)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Senegal](#). By Amy Faye, Mohamadou Dièye, Pape Bilal Diakhaté, Assane Bèye, Moussa Sall, Mbaye Diop (ZEF WP 202)

[Regional Development, Jobs, and Food Security in Sudan](#). By Abdelrahman Khidir Osman, Adil M. Ali (ZEF WP 203)

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