



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

Worldwide Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment Report: A Primer

- World's 1st comprehensive evidence-based assessment report on land degradation will be launched in March 2018
- Best-available evidence for decision makers to make informed decisions to halt & reverse land degradation
- Prepared by more than 100 leading international experts from 45 countries over 3 years
- Draws on more than 3,000 scientific papers, Government reports, indigenous and local knowledge & other sources
- Improved by over 7,300 comments from more than 200 external reviewers, including Governments
- Examines implications of land degradation for achieving SDGs, Aichi Targets & Paris Agreement

Land, air and water are the cornerstones of life on Earth. To sustain the vitality of our global ecosystem, we **must understand the health of our natural assets and how to halt and repair damage** done to them.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) will make a major contribution to this understanding in March 2018, with the planned release of the **world's first comprehensive scientific assessment report on land degradation and restoration**.

IPBES is the global science-policy platform tasked with providing the best-available evidence to inform better decisions affecting nature - by Governments, businesses and even individual households. IPBES is often described as 'the [IPCC](#) for biodiversity'.

The IPBES land degradation and restoration assessment report will **identify the threats** to land-based ecosystems, **offering evidence** from around the world and a **range of best-available solutions** to reduce the environmental, social and economic risks and impacts of land degradation. **It will help decision makers to make more informed choices about how to halt and reverse land degradation, particularly in the context of the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**.

This authoritative, comprehensive report will examine the **effects of land degradation** on quality of life, what **drives** the problems, their **impacts, responses** and the best methods to tackle their **causes**.

It will also examine the **implications of land degradation and restoration for reaching key global goals and commitments**, including the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#) and the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#).

At a total cost of just under \$1 million, the assessment is the product of **three years of work by more than 100 experts, from 45 countries, who together are reviewing more than 3000 scientific papers, Government and other information sources, including indigenous and local knowledge**. All experts volunteered their time. The assessment report comprises eight chapters, with a concise summary for policymakers highlighting the most important and policy-relevant (not prescriptive) findings and policy and governance options.

To ensure the **highest-possible levels of credibility and policy-relevance**, the IPBES assessment report has already gone through two rounds of external review, receiving a **total of 7330 comments from 216 external reviewers**, including Governments, scientists, scientific bodies, decision makers, practitioners and the holders of indigenous and local knowledge.

A growing global problem

- Land degradation is a **major problem on every continent** except Antarctica.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates the economic impact of land degradation at **more than \$40 billion annually**.
- Among the UN's 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) are specific goals to halt and reverse land degradation (SDG 15.3), and decouple economic growth from environmental degradation (SDG 8.4). In addition to these specific goals, achieving many other SDGs will require addressing land degradation.
- In 2015, the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD endorsed its land degradation neutrality target setting process. Since then, more than **100 countries have signed up to participate in this voluntary process to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030**. Credible scientific evidence about the status of land degradation and available restoration measures has therefore never been more important.
- The **Bonn Challenge** launched a global effort in 2011 to restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land by 2020. The IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration **assessment is a vital step toward meeting the Bonn Challenge**, with a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and processes of land degradation and their consequences for biodiversity and people. The assessment also evaluates responses to the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded land, options for the avoidance of future degradation and the benefits that this will deliver to people.

TIMELINE

<i>January 2015</i>	Scoping report established the parameters of the assessments.
<i>June - July 2016</i>	External experts and Governments reviewed first draft of the assessment chapters, with review comments incorporated into the subsequent drafts by IPBES experts.
<i>May - June 2017</i>	External experts and Governments reviewed the second draft of the assessment chapters and first draft of the summary for policymakers. These comments are being reviewed and will be incorporated into the final drafts by IPBES experts.
<i>March 2018</i>	Negotiation by member States at IPBES-6 Plenary session of final text of the summary for policymakers of the assessment report in Medellín, Colombia, followed by the public launch.

Four other IPBES assessment reports scheduled for release in March 2018

In addition to the land degradation assessment, four other IPBES regional assessments reports on biodiversity and ecosystem services are in development. **All five are scheduled for public launch in Medellín, Colombia, at the 6th annual session of the IPBES Plenary (#IPBES6) in March 2018.**

The four IPBES regional assessment reports will address issues specific to land-based, freshwater and coastal biodiversity, as well as the state of ecosystem functioning and nature's contributions to people. They will **evaluate the status of biodiversity and nature's contributions to good quality of life** in each region and their respective subregions, describing **current status and trends**, as well as their **links to drivers of change and threats, identifying policy-relevant issues affecting them**. The analyses will start by looking back several decades and then **project likely interactions between people and nature for decades into the future**, based on different decision pathways.

Launch venue: IPBES-6, Intercontinental Hotel, Medellín Colombia, March 17-24, 2018.

About IPBES

With 127 member Governments, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is the global body that assesses the state of biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, in response to requests from decision makers.

Chaired by Sir Robert Watson, the mission of IPBES is to strengthen policy and decisions through science, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human wellbeing and sustainable development.

The IPBES secretariat, led by Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie, is hosted by the German Government and located on the UN campus in Bonn. More than 1000 scientists worldwide contribute to the work of IPBES on a voluntary basis. They are nominated by their Governments or organisations, and selected by the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel.

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