Session 7: Viable Dryland Livelihood and Policy Options

Session chair: Prof. Dali Najeh(Tunisia)

Rapporteur: Prof. Marc Bied-Charreton (France)

Synthesis of presentations

The presentations represented three different aspects of the issue which led to some very interesting discussions:

A. The two synthesis and methodology presentations, by Dr Gemma Shepherd, UNEP, and Dr. Richard Thomas, ICARDA, focused on the following points:

1. the need for a multi-level approach, from the local to international level;
2. the need to take into consideration the entire range of ecosystem services by attempting to: evaluate the value of non-productive services, measure the costs and losses associated with desertification, determine who pays for the provision of environmental services;
3. the need for an integrated approach;
4. the need to define how researchers and decision-makers should work together and how best to make the research findings available;
5. the need to establish good analyses of the actual situation and to identify weaknesses and vulnerabilities before project implementation;
6. analysis of the priorities and definition of project beneficiaries: for whom we are working i.e. farmers, herders, civil society, researchers, the state. A study has shown contradictory priorities among the different categories of actors;
7. recognition of the multifonctionality of drylands and the valorisation of their comparative advantages.

B. A presentation on a new farming system, by Dr. Moncef Ben-Hammouda, Ecole Supérieure d'Agriculture du Kef (ESAK), Tunisia

The presentation drew attention to a new system of agriculture, sowing under vegetation cover, with its associated economic and environmental benefits such as: the restoration of soils; the increase in organic matter and water availability for plants and underground reservoirs; the rise in biodiversity and the capacity for carbon sequestration.

C. Two presentations by Mohamed Elfald, University of Helsinki, Sudan, and Dr. Ahmed El Obeidy, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, demonstrated the benefits of two characteristic dryland plants, *Acacia senegal*, which produces gum arabic – a potential income source and a way for agroforestry – and cacti, which are particularly adapted to extreme conditions. There are other useful plants that should be valorised, notably by inciting production through price as well ensuring a well-structured commercial system.