SDG Indicator 15.3.1

Tier III Considerations

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United Nations Convention
to Combat Desertification

Indicator 15.3.1 and Definition

Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area

This indicator is defined as the amount or spatial extent (hectares or km^2) of land area that is degraded and expressed as the proportion (percentage) of total land area.

Summing areas subject to change, whose conditions are considered negative by national authorities (i.e., land degradation), using "good practice guidance" to measure and evaluate changes to three sub-indicators:

i)   land cover,
ii) land productivity, and
iii) carbon stocks, above and below ground.

Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on SDG Target 15.3

Land Productivity refers to the biological productive capacity of the land, the source of all the food, fiber, and fuel that sustains humans. Land productivity can be calculated across large areas from Earth observation data on net primary productivity (NPP). Estimates of NPP, using vegetation indices, are influenced in the short-term by crop phenology, rainfall, nutrient fertilization and other variables which must be corrected for to accurately interpret trends. National authorities are best able to determine whether declining levels of land productivity are considered land degradation by taking into account local circumstances.
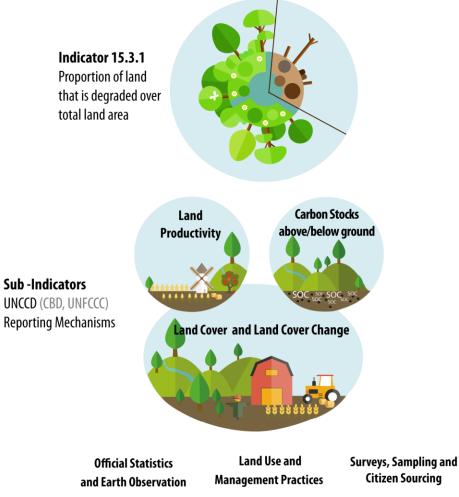
National Data is envisaged to be primarily used, to the greatest extent possible, to derive the sub-indicators and other relevant indicators and information at the country level, covering bio-physical, governance and socio-economic conditions as well as the status of land resources. National Data can be collected through existing sources (maps, databases, reports), including participatory inventories on existing land management systems and their characteristics

Indicator 15.3.1
Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area

Sub -Indicators
UNCCD (CBD, UNFCCC)
Reporting Mechanisms

Land Productivity

Carbon Stocks above/below ground

SOC SOC SOC SOC SOC SOC

Land Cover and Land Cover Change

Data from multiple sources
FAO, GEF and other Reporting Mechanisms

Official Statistics and Earth Observation

Land Use and Management Practices

Surveys, Sampling and Citizen Sourcing

Carbon Stocks (Above and Below Ground) give an indication of the amount of carbon in living and decomposing biomass above and below ground, including soil organic carbon. Carbon stocks are elementary to a wide range of ecosystem services and reflect land use and management practices. These stocks, including for soil organic carbon, can be estimated by applying carbon density values from ground-based measurements or national inventories in conjunction with land cover maps derived from Earth observation data. National authorities are best able to estimate trends in carbon stocks that indicate land degradation by taking into account local circumstances.

Land Cover and Land Cover Change, most often derived from Earth observation, is a fundamental parameter that assists with the interpretation and stratification of the other two sub-indicators. It is also essential for monitoring and reporting on multiple SDG targets focused on natural resource management, food and water security, environmental health and rural/urban planning for sustainable development. For global comparisons, countries are encouraged to use standardized land cover classification systems. National authorities are best able to determine whether land cover change is considered land degradation by taking into account local circumstances.

Current Work

Recognizing that monitoring and reporting should be based primarily, and to the largest extent possible, on comparable and standardized national official data sources

From 2014-2015, the UNCCD executed the Land Degradation Neutrality pilot project involving 14 countries in testing the implementation and monitoring of SDG target 15.3.

Now with the assistance of a number of funding and implementing agencies, this programme will help build capacity in 60+ countries throughout the developing world.

The UNCCD Secretariat, in response to decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties, will:

Compile and make available to Parties national estimates of these indicators as default data for validation in accordance with the procedure established in decision 22/COP.11

Prepare methodological guidelines and provide technical assistance to Parties on the compilation and use of data, including for national targets using these indicators

Countries agreed to complete the reporting and target-setting exercise for 15.3 for review by the CRIC at its intersessional session that will take place after January 2018

Building National Capacity

Africa
1. Bénin
2. Burkina Faso
3. Cameroon
4. Cape Verde
5. CAR
6. Côte d'Ivoire
7. Egypt
8. Equatorial Guinea
9. Eritrea
10. Gambia
11. Ghana
12. Guinea
13. Guinea Bissau
14. Kenya
15. Madagascar
16. Malawi
17. Mali
18. Mauritius
19. Morocco
20. Niger
21. Nigeria
22. Republic of Congo
23. Seychelles
24. South Africa
25. South Sudan
26. Swaziland
27. Togo
28. Zimbabwe

N. Mediterranean/Eastern Europe
1. Azerbaijan
2. Bosnia Herzegovina
3. Croatia
4. FYR Macedonia
5. Georgia
6. Kirgizstan
7. Moldova
8. Russia
9. Ukraine
10. Uzbekistan

Caribbean
1. Trinidad and Tobago
2. Jamaica
3. St. Lucia
4. Suriname

Asia
1. Bangladesh
2. Cambodia
3. China
4. Iran
5. Jordan
6. Lebanon
7. Nepal
8. Niue
9. Philippines
10. Sri Lanka
11. Thailand
12. Timor Leste

Latin America
1. Argentina
2. El Salvador
3. Mexico
4. Peru
5. Dominican Republic

Pilot Countries
1. Algeria
2. Armenia
3. Belarus
4. Bhutan
5. Chad
6. Chile
7. Costa Rica
8. Ethiopia
9. Grenada
10. Indonesia
11. Italy
12. Namibia
13. Senegal
14. Turkey

Future Work Plan

In February 2016, the UNCCD, CBD, FAO and GEF-STAP co-organized an **expert meeting with over 60 experts from organizations, institutions, governments and the private sector**, concerned with the implementation and monitoring of SDG target 15.3 for halting and reversing worrisome land degradation trends.

As a result, we now have a **framework and guiding principles** to further refine the methodology and work is underway to develop **"good practice guidance"** and a **global partnership** to build capacity at both the global and national level, which for many countries can be achieved in a relatively short time frame. This includes a tiered approach to data utilization similar to the IPCC.

Tier 1: Earth observation, geospatial information and modelling
Tier 2: Statistics based on estimated data for administrative or natural boundaries
Tier 3: Surveys, assessments and ground measurements

Custodian Agency and Key Partners

The UNCCD, as the custodian agency, would take the lead in compiling and submitting data for global reporting due to:

i) an **existing mandate** for collecting data from national statistical systems and established **reporting mechanism**
ii) **technical assistance and capacity building** for implementing and monitoring SDG target 15.3
iii) planned adjustments to **existing databases** and its role as **IT focal point** to serve SDG reporting

These activities will be carried out in close collaboration with the FAO, UNEP, UNSD and other relevant specialized institutions

Testing the Methodology

Building on the 2014-2015 pilot

Starting in June 2016, the UNCCD will continue to test and refine the methodology and a tiered approach to data options in the additional 60+ countries

As with the pilot, multi-sectoral teams at the national level will be established to further ensure country ownership

This again will rely on key partners with data capacities, in particular the FAO with its 140 national offices

Timeframe

By the end of 2016

Finalize "good practice guidance" to provide **a comprehensive methodological package** for indicator 15.3.1

In collaboration with relevant specialized institutions, begin to provide:
- national estimates for Tier 1 data
- technical assistance on the compilation/use of Tier 2 and 3 data

2017-2018

Further leverage the capacity building efforts as part of the GEF Global Support Programme (GSP) for UNCCD reporting

2018

Countries have agreed to complete the reporting and target-setting exercise for SDG target 15.3 -- UNCCD's Future Strategic Framework

Reporting to IAEG-SDGs and UNSC

The UNCCD and its partners will work closely with UNSD (SEEA), particularly on a **consistent methodology for land cover and land cover change** as this sub-indicator will be relevant to other SDG indicators such as those for **targets 2.4 and 15.2**

A progress report to the 4th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs and, if appropriate, to the 48th session of UNSC.