

Association Française
pour l'Etude des Eaux

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Trop spécialisé ☐
Sans intérêt ☐
Pas de mon domaine ☐
Pas le temps ☐

NOM : Mme C. PONSODA

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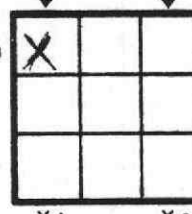
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La desertification. Causes, zones à risques, pays et popula-
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sands 66/70762 of change:

why land becomes desert and what can be done about it

21 JUL. 1989

Poor land management and environmental pressures are degrading many of the world's dryland areas. Despite international efforts to halt desertification, the problem is worsening: one-third of the Earth's land area, and as many as 850 million of the world's poorest people, are potentially at risk.

Key facts

The problem ...

- about 3500 million hectares of land — an area the size of North and South America combined — are affected by desertification;
- every year about 6 million hectares of land are irretrievably lost to desertification, and a further 21 million hectares are so degraded that crop production becomes uneconomic;
- the rural population affected by serious desertification rose from 57 million people in 1977 to 135 million in 1984;
- the situation is likely to become extremely critical in the rainfed croplands by the year 2000, and to be little better elsewhere;
- desertification is caused largely by human action — or lack of it ... it follows that it can also be arrested by human action;

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... and its solution

- desertification causes annual losses of about US \$26,000 million compared to the US \$4500 million a year needed to control it — about three-quarters of what is needed is being spent but the remaining quarter is critical;
- although more money is needed, the most successful attempts to control desertification have been cheap, local, small in scale, and run by those personally affected;
- the technical solutions, such as reforestation, improved farming techniques and better land use, are well known and have been successfully applied in many areas;
- in spite of this, the battle is being lost ... a massive new effort to control desertification is required if declining productivity, erosion, famine and political chaos are to be avoided.



HARVEST OF DUST



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Harvest of Dust

'A decade ago the world's nations agreed to a sweeping Plan of Action to halt the process we call desertification. UNEP has just completed a two year assessment which reveals that the global threat posed by desertification, far from diminishing, has actually increased in severity.

Currently about 35 per cent of the world's land surface is at risk and the livelihoods of the 850 million people who live there are directly threatened. Three quarters of the 45 million sq. kms that make up the world's drylands, which includes the sub-humid tropics is already affected, between half and a quarter severely so.

That is the measure of the problem facing the world community. The international community must act now if we are to avoid shortages leading to chaos on a scale hitherto unknown.'

Dr Mostafa K. Tolba
Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme
1984