

Dryland restoration scaling project

Improving the productivity of dryland agriculture



Background

Many approaches to the restoration of degraded drylands have been successful in Ethiopia. For example, the fencing of communal grazing lands for cut-and-carry forage production has been a driving force behind improved livelihoods and land restoration in Tigray region. Meanwhile, controlled burning controls shrubs and improves rangeland condition in Borana zone of the central-southern Oromia region.

Despite these and other success stories, scaling-up land restoration approaches (or ‘options’) often proves challenging. Options which have been successful in one area may fail in others. The same approaches taken to two or more areas with similar biophysical environments—climate, soils, etc.—regularly produce completely different outcomes, depending on a range of other factors, such as access to markets, gender relations, and strength of local institutions. There is little information on areas where a successful option could succeed, versus where the same option may fail. Consequently, it is often challenging to scale out even the most successful land restoration approaches.

Scaling in Ethiopia

Implemented across four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa—Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, and Niger—a three-year project, Restoration of Degraded Lands for Food Security and Poverty Reduction in East Africa and the Sahel: Taking successes in land restoration to scale, was launched in April 2015 to combine

local and expert knowledge to identify factors controlling the success of land restoration under differing local conditions, and tailor land restoration practices to these local circumstances.

In Ethiopia, ILRI and its partners—the government, the national agricultural research system, non-governmental organizations and CGIAR centres—will develop and test a more systematic scientific approach to guide effective scaling of successful dryland restoration approaches. In seeking to take successful dryland restoration efforts to scale in Ethiopia, the project will apply the resulting data and assessments, creating tools to target restoration approaches already proven in Ethiopia in new areas where they are likely to succeed.

The Ethiopia component—led by the Livestock Systems and Environment team of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)—is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) of the United Nations and the European Commission. The project will advise future IFAD loans to the Ethiopian government, and collaborate with the Netherlands Development Organization-funded Drylands Development Programme and USAID-funded Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion program. The overall project is being led by the World Agroforestry Centre.

Project approach

It has long been recognized that variability in many developing countries is a key factor in determining the success or failure

of dryland restoration projects. Therefore, the project takes what is referred to as an 'options-by-context' approach. The project team has begun by assessing what dryland restoration options have succeeded in Ethiopia. The term 'options' refers to technical, market, and governance/institutional approaches etc. to dryland restoration, or often a combination of 'options' together.

Once this analysis phase has finished, the project will work partners (mostly government; but also NGOs), to select specific options to scale up, and locations where this scaling up should occur. These decisions will be made on the basis of a number of contextual factors, including biophysical (such as soils and climate) and social determining factors (such as capital, market access, and institutions).

Restored grazing enclosure, Borana zone, Oromia region



ILRI will then support its partners to improve scaling of restoration approaches. Specifically, the ILRI team will take responsibility of the 'options-by-context' analysis and the overall coordination of the project for its partners involved in action research with farmers and herders, as well as providing technical backstopping to researchers. The action research will fill several functions, such as:

- a. adapt options to local conditions;
- b. test options in the same and in different areas to compare their effectiveness; and
- c. provide the information used to develop tools to target the restoration of and investment in dryland areas.

The tools will identify where an option is likely to succeed (where the context fits the option), and where it is likely to fail (where the context does not fit the option). Once developed, the targeting tools will be made freely available to the project partners and the general public.

Photo credits:

Page 1 and 2: ILRI/Jason Sircely

Contact

Jason Sircely
Ecosystem Ecologist
ILRI Ethiopia
Phone: +251 943 070 134
j.sircely@cgiar.org



Patron: Professor Peter C Doherty AC, FAA, FRS

Animal scientist, Nobel Prize Laureate for Physiology or Medicine—1996

Box 30709, Nairobi 00100 Kenya
Phone +254 20 422 3000
Fax +254 20 422 3001
Email ilri-kenya@cgiar.org

ilri.org
better lives through livestock

ILRI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium

Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Phone +251 11 617 2000
Fax +251 11 667 6923
Email ilri-ethiopia@cgiar.org

ILRI has offices in East Africa • South Asia • Southeast and East Asia • Southern Africa • West Africa

