



Sustainable Land Management and Agriculture

Sustainable Land Management (SLM) aims to balance the needs of **people**, **economies** and **environment** while minimizing the negative impacts associated with each land use. More specifically, it is “the use of land resources, including soils, water, animals and plants, for the production of goods to meet changing human needs, while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions” (UN Earth Summit, 1992)

Understanding the link

In order to be safe and content, **people** need access to shelter, healthy food, clean drinking water and cultural nourishment. These can be provided by a well-functioning local **economy** that supports local people for the long-term through the provision of opportunities to earn adequate income and aid the provision of important services such as schools, hospitals and trade centres. Of course, the economy depends on the resources of the natural **environment** which provides vital ecosystem services – food, air, soils, water, etc. However, these services will only continue to be available if the environment remains in a healthy state, with rich biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems.

SLM is therefore crucial to minimizing land degradation, rehabilitating degraded areas and ensuring the optimal use of land resources.

SLM Benefits

SLM should be of concern to all of us for the following reasons:

- **Food and fibre** – it helps to meet the rising food and fiber demands while sustaining ecosystem services and livelihoods.



- ***Growing population*** - It is necessary to meet the requirements of a growing population.
- ***Enhances land productivity*** - It involves preserving and enhancing the productive capabilities of land in cropped and grazed areas.
- ***Sustains Forests*** - It aids in sustaining productive forest areas and forest reserves and maintaining the integrity of watersheds for water supply and hydropower generation needs and water conservation zones and the capability of aquifers to serve farm and other productive activities.

The agricultural sector contributes around thirty percent (30%) of the GDP of Guyana. The vast majority, ninety-five (95%), of this important sector is based on the coastland because of the favourable climatic conditions and richer soil. In order to make the shift to more sustainable modes of agriculture, it is important to understand current practices threaten the longevity of the sector and the quality and quantity of produce.

Common SLM principles

Land degradation had accelerated during the 20th century, due to increasing and combined pressures of agricultural and livestock production (over-cultivation, overgrazing, forest conversions), urbanization, deforestation and extreme weather events such as droughts and coastal surges. The SLM approach utilizes four common principles to address this problem:

- Land-user-driven and participatory approaches;
- Integrated use of natural resources at ecosystem and farming systems levels;
- Multi-level and multi-stakeholder involvement; and
- Targeted policy and institutional support, including development of incentive mechanisms for SLM adoption and income generation at the local level.

Collaboration and partnership

The application of SLM requires collaboration and partnership at all levels – land users, technical experts and policy-makers – to ensure that the causes of the degradation and corrective measures are properly identified, and that the policy and regulatory environment enables the adoption of the most appropriate management measures.

SLM is considered an essential for sustainable development and plays a key role in bringing together the complementary, yet historically conflicting goals of production and environment. Thus one of the most important aspects of SLM is this important union of agriculture and environment through twin objectives of maintaining long term productivity of the ecosystem

functions (land, water, biodiversity) and increasing productivity (quality, quantity and diversity) of goods and services, and particularly safe and healthy food.

Sources:

<http://www.fao.org>

<http://web.worldbank.org>

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com