

POLICY BRIEF



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FEMALE-LED NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS IN RESTORING DEGRADED SOILS USED FOR MAIZE CULTIVATION IN NORTH CAMEROON

Gender differences exist in the effects of desertification, climate change and environmental degradation, as well as at the level of sensitivity and adaptability (Mirzabaev et al., 2022). Women in savanna ecosystems therefore have different techniques to adapt to soil degradation, among which are Nature-based Solutions (NbS). While various reasons explain why techniques practiced by women are different from those practiced by men, women's techniques are effective and should be encouraged.



FGD Gouna

OVERVIEW



Groundnut Peels



Composting site in a compound

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Capacity building
2. Incentive programs
3. Research and innovation
4. Access to resources

1. The ministries of agriculture and environment, NGO's and CSO's could provide intense training programs which are customized to enhance the knowledge of female farmers in NbS restoration techniques.
2. The aforementioned could boost motivation by developing programs that provide rewards for farmers, particularly female farmers, practicing these techniques.
3. The ministry of scientific research and innovation should invest in research on female-led NbS and promote the dissemination of best practices through knowledge-sharing platforms.

4. Government should facilitate the acquisition of and access to resources such as land, credit and agricultural inputs for female farmers as a means to support and encourage sustainable farm practices.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Female maize farmers in Lagdo use organic manure and the associated farming techniques to restore degraded farmlands, crops associated with maize include vegetables such as okra, hibiscus and legumes such as soya beans and cowpea (niebe).
2. Findings showed that 28% of women practice associated farming because they need to cultivate vegetables which is the traditional role of women, 33% do not have access to large parcels of land to practice other techniques such as fallowing and rotation, 13% associate crops due to the high cost of chemical fertilisers, 13% due to cultural reasons and 13% to restore degraded soil.
3. The organic manure used is made of compost from household waste, animal dung and waste from farm products. This is generally collected in one corner of the compound and later transported to the maize farms and used as fertilizer.
4. Other local soil restoration techniques such as fallowing and rotation which require the possession of large farmlands are male dominated as culturally, women only have cultivation rights and not land ownership rights.
5. Male maize farmers hardly use Nature-based solutions to increase or restore soil fertility. They generally go for chemical fertilizers which though expensive falls within their income power as compared to women.

NOTE

Local soil restoration techniques in dry savanna ecosystems are of utmost importance given the fragility of soils found in this ecosystem. Thus the use of indigenous knowledge which is inclusive of women is a sure means to curb soil degradation. Given the important traditional role women have in farming, determining the local techniques they use to restore their degraded farmlands.

CONCLUSION

Female-led Nature-based Solutions have the potential to restore soil, conserve biodiversity and enhance climate resilience, thereby increasing outputs and improving livelihoods. By supporting and integrating women's knowledge and expertise, policymakers can foster these sustainable practices. This is especially true of maize production in Lagdo subdivision in the North region of Cameroon, where maize is the most consumed cereal. These initiatives would equally promote the role of women as key stakeholders in adaptation strategies to climate change, soil degradation and biodiversity loss.



Mulching just before planting

REFERENCES

Atud Yvette Cecile Bih, (2023). Assessing local soil restoration techniques used as farming practices by women for maize cultivation in lagdo subdivision, north region, cameroon, (Master's thesis, Université Felix Houphouët Boigny.

