



'Our Land, Our Future'

Dr. Parveen Kumar

Subject Matter Specialist (Agril Extension)
KVK-Ramban, SKUAST-Jammu

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The World Environment Day celebrated every year on June 05 since 1974 is one of the biggest annual environmental events organized by United Nations that recognizes the need to put up collective action to protect our environment. It has now grown up to be the largest global platform for environmental outreach. This event of the United Nations (UN) aims to generate awareness about the significance of environment and the urgency with which efforts need to be made for a sustainable environment. 'Sustainable' means an environment that would provide the present generation with all the basic necessities required for their survival without compromising with the generations to come. A healthy environment is a prerequisite for a healthy living and well being of all the biodiversity that exists on this planet. Our natural resources like air, water and soil are a vital part of our environment. Air we breathe, water we drink and soil from we get different crops ultimately decide the existence of life on earth. Environment consists of both biotic as well as abiotic components. Without it, the living things couldn't survive on Earth. Our planet, Earth is a home for different living species and we all are dependent o

the environment for food, air, water, and other needs. However, from the last few decades several issues are disrupting our environment and causing some irreversible damage to living beings. Therefore, it becomes important for every individual to save and protect the environment.

The United Nations General Assembly established World Environment Day in 1972 on the first day of the Stockholm Conference on the Human environment. The Stockholm conference adopted resolution A/RES/2994 to mark June 05 as the World Environment Day. The resolution was adopted urging the government and the organization in the United Nations to undertake on that day every year worldwide activities reflecting their concern for the preservation and enhancement of the environment with a view of deepening environmental awareness. Two years later in 1974 the first world environment day was held with the theme 'Only One Earth'. Every year the day is celebrated with a specific theme which highlights the major issues confronting the environment and which require immediate action. In 1974, it was celebrated with the theme 'Only One Earth'. Since then, various host countries have been celebrating it and idea for



rotating the centers of these activities started. This year's World Environment Day theme is '*land restoration, desertification and drought resilience*'. The theme will be celebrated under the slogan '*Our land, our future. We are #GenerationRestoration.*' At present the planet is witnessing an intensification of the triple planetary crisis i.e. the crisis of climate change, the crisis of nature and biodiversity loss, and the crisis of pollution and waste. This crisis is placing the world's ecosystems under assault. Billions of hectares of land are degraded, affecting almost half of the world's population and threatening half of global GDP. Rural communities, smallholder farmers and the extremely poor are hit hardest. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will host World Environment Day 2024.

'Desertification' refers to 'the process of persistent degradation of dry land ecosystems by climatic variations and human activities. Desertification occurs as a result of a long-term failure to balance human demand for ecosystem services and the amount the ecosystem can supply. As a result of Desertification, fertile areas become increasingly arid the biological productivity is lost. It is in other words, the spread of arid areas caused by a variety of factors, such as climate change (particularly the current global warming) and overexploitation of soil as a result of human activity. Desertification and Drought have a bearing on each other. With less vegetation there is less transpiration and evaporation from the soil, causing less rainfall which ultimately leads to Drought like situation. Drought triggers the desertification and also the desertification can influence the drought by reducing the water soil content. No matter where we live, the consequences of desertification

and drought concern all of us. According to the UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification), 25% of the world's land area is either highly degraded or undergoing high rates of degradation and is no longer productive. 75 per cent has been transformed from its natural state, mostly for agriculture. This transformation in land use is happening at a faster rate than at any other time in human history, and has accelerated over the last 50 years. Scientists say the evolution from one state to the next is so rapid and the process is only observable over very short periods. Everyone needs to know that desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) have direct affect on their daily lives, and that everyone's daily actions can either contribute to, or help fight DLDD.

Land restoration is a key pillar of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, which is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Restoring terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems is a crucial step in the transformation of global agri-food systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable. Ecosystem restoration also offers a long-term solution in the fight to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition, as we face population growth and increased need for foods and ecosystem goods and services. Land that is healthy and resilient is the first point of defense against disasters such as droughts and flashfloods, which are becoming more frequent, long and severe. The loss of more and more productive land is thus a concern for all of us. Given the speed with which the process is going on, the next few decades will be the most critical in restoring land for sustainable



future. The problem is man-made, which means humans are also part of the solution. Thus, sustainable land management should be everyone's business. Together, we can restore the productivity of over 2 billion hectares of degraded land and improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion Peoples around the world. Land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss is intimately connected and is increasingly affecting human well-being. Tackling these issues together is also a key to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A decade of land degradation may create irreversible damage, but a decade of land restoration may bring multiple benefits. If countries can restore the nearly 800 million hectares of degraded land they have pledged to restore by 2030, we can safeguard humanity and our planet from the looming danger, according to I. Thiaw, Executive director UNCCD'. Investing in land restoration creates jobs and generates economic benefits, and could provide livelihoods at a time when hundreds of millions of jobs are being lost. But land restoration can reverse the creeping tide of land degradation, drought and desertification. Every dollar invested in restoration can bring up to US\$30 in ecosystem services. Restoration boosts livelihoods, lowers poverty and builds resilience to extreme weather. Restoration increases carbon storage and slows climate change. Restoring just 15 per cent of land and halting further conversion could avoid up to 60 per cent of expected species extinctions.

Along with land restoration, it is also equally important to combat climate change. Restoring land without tackling climate change would be like giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

So, the global bodies like G20 nations must show leadership across the whole climate agenda and must come out with definite achievable goals for the member countries to commit and achieve. Countries have promised to restore one billion hectares, an area larger than China. If they deliver, this will be huge achievement. For the year 2024, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) have named seven initiatives from Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean and South Asia as UN World Restoration Flagships. These initiatives include ecosystems at the tipping point of outright degradation resulting from wildfires, drought, deforestation, and pollution. These restoration flagships are now eligible for technical and financial UN support. The World Restoration Flagship awards are part of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration led by UNEP and FAO which aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean. Together, the seven new flagships are expected to restore nearly 40 million hectares, an area almost 600 times the size of Nairobi and create around 500,000 jobs. These initiatives show how we can make peace with nature, put local communities at the heart of restoration efforts and still create new jobs.