

Aide memoire

<i>Session</i>	4. Achieving change - moving away from business as usual
<i>Title of presentation</i>	Using the findings of the IPBES Thematic Assessment on Land Degradation and Restoration to promote reduced land degradation and increased restoration
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Abstract

The IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment, completed in March 2018, was the first of its kind: covering all terrestrial and inland ecosystems, worldwide. Degradation, meaning a persistent loss of function and productive capacity, often accompanied by a loss of biodiversity, takes many forms, and can be found in all ecosystems. Less than a quarter of the Earth's land surface is functioning in a near-natural state, and a quarter has been completely transformed by human activities. Without urgent action to halt and reverse degradation, the intact fraction will fall to less than a sixth by the end of the century, and the human-modified fraction will continue to lose its capacity to provide ecosystem services and biodiversity habitat. The LDRA demonstrated that land degradation materially reduces the wellbeing of about 3 billion people and has large, generally unrecognized, negative impacts on current and future economic growth. Not only is land degradation an urgent and critically-important issue in its own right, but it has strong and direct links to several other contemporary issues, such as climate change, poverty relief, food and water security and biodiversity loss. The assessment demonstrated that restoration can be successfully achieved in all ecosystems. The costs-to-benefit ratio of avoiding degradation in the first place is highest, but restoration is also cost-effective if the benefits of the action are fully accounted for.

Key considerations

- Land-and-water degradation is the most pervasive and impactful environmental issue in the contemporary world, for both humans and other life forms, both alone and through its interactions with the climate, food and water systems.
- Degradation can be slowed and reversed, using known and proven techniques, provided the appropriate policies and incentives are in place.

Key discussion points and conclusions

- Perceptions and concepts play a key role in what different actors consider to be degradation, as opposed to an intended and desirable altered state of the environment.
- Distinguishing between transformation – the necessary, regulated and intentional alteration of one ecosystem to another, for purposes of deriving some benefit – and degradation – the loss of capacity to supply benefit, in either transformed or untransformed ecosystems- is helpful in making progress towards zero net degradation.
- A focus on the future desired target is more productive and actionable rather than a retrospective debate on what the appropriate historical baseline should be.
- Action on land degradation is retarded by its fragmentation across many policy sectors – agriculture, forestry, environment, water, health, infrastructure and development.