

Political Leadership in Enhanced Rainfed Agriculture

On Tuesday, 30th October 2018 at the Africa Water Week in Gabon, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) was joined by the governments of Kenya and Tunisia and the World Bank to explore how governments are improving green water management and rainfed agriculture and transforming rural communities.

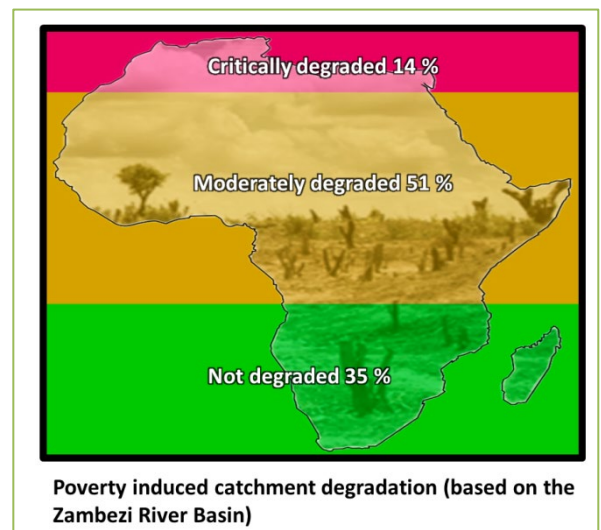
Discussions concluded that green water and enhanced rainfed agriculture is a cost effective approach to building climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods. Governments should prioritize increased investment in rainfed agriculture but they need a more compelling rationale. This rationale or business case can be established by demonstrating the cost advantages, the benefits to infrastructure investments and impacts on local communities.

The objectives of this 90 minute session were to i) present the potential of enhanced rainfed agriculture and the business case for investment, ii) demonstrate how governments are currently implementing enhanced rainfed agriculture and iii) identify how governments can scale up green water management and transform the lives of African farmers. Moderated by Katherine Madden from SIWI, the session included a range of participants from the public and private sectors.

Anton Earle, Director of SIWIs Africa Regional Centre reminded the audience that one third of people across the continent are facing food insecurities and two thirds of the population are trapped in a cycle of poverty. Nearly 90 per cent of Africa's agricultural land is rain-fed and depends on infiltrated rainfall water which is stored in the upper layers of the soil and is available to plant roots. Infiltrated rainwater or green water is complementary to blue water and the two approaches are mutually reinforcing.

Mr. Earle demonstrated that maximising the capture, storage and utilization of green water is critical to agricultural productivity, poverty reduction and food security. Yet 95% of public funding goes towards irrigated agriculture (which only produces 10% of the food in Africa). Scaling up green water management is a cost effective approach to transforming rural Africa but financial resources are required.

Mr. Earle concluded by presenting the Transforming African through Investments in Rainfed Agriculture (TAIRA) initiative, an emerging advocacy effort to scale up green water and improved rainfed agriculture across Africa through financial investments and political leadership. Led by Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGC/A) and a range of partners work to scale green water solutions by i) understanding the challenges and opportunities of implementing green water solutions; ii) enabling high level



leadership and political commitments on green water and iii) unlocking public and private investments in green water across Africa.

Governments are already supporting green water management. African governments are addressing rural poverty and increasing water security for their farmers. National governments, including Kenya and Tunisia, are taking the lead on rainfed agriculture by committing resources and establishing innovative initiatives. An effective strategy, adequate financial support and local government infrastructure are key success factors for these government approaches.

The role of government in scaling green water / rainwater agriculture includes:

- leading and promoting rural regeneration at a regional, national and local levels;
- integrating policies and practices across different approaches and government departments;
- establishing effective policy mechanisms and institutional structures;
- committing public expenditure and translating this into budgets and mandates;
- building capacity and encouraging buy in and ownership by individuals and communities
- regulating and stimulating business involvement along value chains

The Kenyan government is focussing on the “Big Four” of affordable housing, manufacturing, affordable healthcare and food security in order to prioritise public spending over the next five years. Mr. Stephen Kariuki Ikuu, Secretary, State Department for Irrigation, Kenya highlighted how the government is making level commitments to support green water to meet food security and tackle the high costs of farming. The government supports the Kenya Climate Smart Agricultural Strategy to increase productivity and incomes and enhance adaptation and has a programme that encourages argoforesy to motivate forest plantation to protect land in counties such as Machakos. One successful initiative is the Billion Dollar Business Alliance for Rainwater Harvesting which has supported over 5,000 farmers in adopting a business approach to scaling up farm pond technology.

Mr. Hassan Chourabi , General Director, General Directorate Development and Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic and Fishery, Tunisia presented their work on rainfed agriculture which started in the 1990s. There has been work across three distinct phases which has moved from pilot cases to integrating agricultural policies now towards scaling impact across the country. Tunisia is an arid country with increasing demands on the limited water supplies. 92% of Tunisian agriculture is rain-fed (rainfed) and dominated by small family farms. In Tunisia, there is a strong emphasis on a participative and systematic approach to rainfed agriculture. Development partners contribute through providing technical assistance for farmers at local and regional levels.

“Governments should contribute to rainfed agriculture through financing initiatives and encouraging transparency”
Meeting participant

Mr. William Rex, Lead Water Resources Specialist, works in the World Bank on water resources across Africa and gave some reflections on the panel contributions and the role of government in enabling rainfed agriculture. It is critical, Mr. Rex says to identify “hooks” for the government to hang rainfed agricultural practices. These hooks could be landscape or watershed management as with the example of Ethiopia. Another hook is sustainable livelihoods, ensuring the benefits of rainfed agriculture are realised through poverty alleviation and health improvements. To enable impact at scale, it will be critical to ensure there is local government support for rainfed agriculture in order reduce potential risks.

The session concluded with next steps for the TAIRA initiative including a new publication that is now available entitled “Unlocking the potential of rainfed agriculture”. To download this paper or for more information on the TAIRA, please contact Xanani Baloyi xanani.baloyi@siwi.org