



TECHNICAL FACT SHEET
South Africa

**Land Care
Programme**

Agriculture and Grazing

South Africa's terrestrial landscape is classified as semi-arid. The degradation, alternation, and transformation of terrestrial ecosystems in the country is a result of rapid population growth, urbanization, industrialization and agricultural intensification. Desertification and drought are real threats to food security, and two of the most significant land alternating processes in South Africa are agricultural production and livestock grazing. Approximately 86% of the land area is used for crop cultivation or for the grazing of livestock. In response to concerns about land degradation and water scarcity, the government of South Africa ratified the UNCCD in 1995 and has introduced the LandCare Initiative.

Crop Cultivation and Livestock Grazing

Approximately 13% of land in South Africa has been transformed for crop cultivation, while 5% of land is degraded. Soil deterioration and the draining of water sources are two key concerns among South African farmers. The loss of nutrients stemming from soil deterioration reduces output and further encourages producers to use chemical inputs. It is necessary to treat depleted soil and pursue research in order to counteract erosion and the accumulation of silt in waterways. Each year, soil deterioration engenders heavy financial damage.

Overgrazing in the Paulshoek region and its impact on the biotope

Intensive grazing occurs when the size of the herd largely exceeds pastureland's ability to regenerate. In the Paulshoek region, nearly twice the recommended number of goats is grazing on pastureland. Over the past 30 years, overgrazing has led to significant deterioration in plant cover. According to studies conducted by scientists at the National Botanical Institute, the impact of overgrazing on biodiversity primarily concerns the type of species rather than the total number inventoried.

Annual weeds and other inedible plants such as *Galiena Africana*, a toxic plant, have gradually invaded the pastureland. This change in the biotope has encouraged the proliferation of insects, scorpions, spiders and seedeaters such as scarab beetles. Moreover, the loss of bushes in the Paulshoek region has caused nocturnal as opposed to diurnal rodents to flourish and certain bird species have replaced those that relied on the bushes for nesting.

National LandCare Programme

Implemented in 1998, the National LandCare Programme is a form of community based, government supported natural resource management. The concept of LandCare was developed in Australia and it involves the participation of grassroots community groups, native populations, landowners, and government institutions. The program's success is mainly dependent on the farming community, who is responsible for identifying, implementing, and monitoring the land base. LandCare in South Africa has been supported by the Poverty Relief Fund and AusAid, and its goal is to develop and implement integrated approaches to natural resource management which are efficient, sustainable, equitable and consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

LandCare is intended to ensure the sustainable management of agricultural resources in order to optimize production, food security, job creation and better living conditions. Landcare encourages farmers' initiatives and supports local economies through job creation. It has established partnerships between the public sector, communities and the private sector. There are several themes which fall within the National LandCare Programme: Watercare, Veldcare, Soilcare, and Juniorcare.

WaterCare - focuses on regions suffering from a lack of water that require proper irrigation systems.

VeldCare - encourages the adoption of appropriate grazing methods, and promotes preventive practices that reduce erosion and boost production.

SoilCare - encourages farmers to resort to innovative structures to combat soil erosion. The methods proposed under the program are designed to reduce soil acidity and slow the loss of organic matter. Through the program, conservation farming practices such as diversification, the integrated management of inputs and zero-tillage are applied.

JuniorCare - empowers previously disadvantaged youth by providing training in facilitation and leadership skills. This program includes the promotion of food security in the home and at school, awareness of sustainable agriculture, stimulating the formation of youth clubs, and small projects that aim to promote other components of LandCare.



Progress of the Project

In South Africa, groups that are interested in implementing LandCare projects apply for funding through the Department of Agriculture, and successful proposals are in accordance with the objectives of national strategies such as the National Agricultural Policy, the Water and Forestry Management Strategy, Land Reform Programme, and National Environmental Strategy. Interested groups may be NGO's, Community Based Organizations, local governments, farmers groups, public agencies and private interest groups.

For the fiscal year of 2001-2002, an allocation of 25 million Rand was set aside for the implementation of Landcare projects, and under the WaterCare theme, 11 irrigation schemes were selected in four regions of the northern province of Limpopo. These projects involved the holistic and integrated rehabilitation and restructuring of the irrigation systems. Fourteen projects valued at approximately 4.6 million Rand were selected under the Veldcare project, and they benefited 545 communal farmers by clearing away alien invasive species and controlling bush encroachment. SoilCare projects in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal were valued at 7 million Rand and covered seven projects that were concerned with soil conservation and the rehabilitation of degraded areas. Finally, three JuniorCare projects with a value of 1 million Rand were also implemented.

Contribution from farmers' members of Agri South Africa