

Ondernemers zonder Grenzen

Tuesday 13:00 – 13:30 h - AUD A3

15 billion trees

Land degradation goes together with climate change and has reached critical levels in numerous countries. Each year, 15 billion trees are lost whereas 25 billion tonnes of fertile land disappear. Approximately one third of current climate change effects are related to the decline in soil quality. The European Desert Atlas (World Atlas of Desertification (WAD)) shows the increasing pressure on the environment. The Global Land Outlook (GLO) study commissioned by the UN reveals that one third of the area suitable for agriculture is now seriously degraded.

This is the real challenge we face!

Small farmers, women and indigenous communities are the most vulnerable to soil degradation. This is because their livelihoods heavily depend on the profits of their land and because they often have difficult access to land, production infrastructure and economic development. More than 1.3 billion people are trapped on deteriorating agricultural land, dramatically increasing competition for food, water and energy. The causes include erosion, overexploitation, acidification and salinisation of soils. Failure to act leads to conflict and migration.

Entrepreneurs Without Frontiers (OZG), accredited in 2012 by the UNCCD, has been working since 2009 to make degraded land fertile again by sustainably creating agroforests. As a small pioneering organisation, OZG succeeded in developing nearly 10,000 ha of new sustainable agroforests between 2010 and 2017 in the Sahel of Burkina Faso and set an example for other organisations that copied the methodology used.

Since January 2018, OZG has been active in Senegal and aims to be a facilitator in establishing partnerships between farmers and investors in order to achieve positive impacts at the ecological, sociological and economic levels (ESE impacts).

Werner Sels, founder and chairman of Entrepreneurs Without Frontiers, provides an interesting presentation in which he will show how degraded land can be made fertile again in a relatively simple way, resulting in a high biodiversity of flora and fauna. It also appears that thanks to new agroforests and the creation of new income-generating opportunities for local populations, migrations are slowed down and sometimes even stopped. Sustainable CO₂ capturing is also being realised, with rise in SOCs (Soil Organic Carbon) being one of the most important components for improving soil quality and playing an important role in agricultural productivity, as well as a way of financing the whole.