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“Development on the margin”

WASCAL - The West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use

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Abstract

West Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. The high dependence on natural resources and the agricultural sector for incomes and livelihoods, inadequate economic and technological development, inappropriate services and poor infrastructure, weak governance and institutions, rapid population growth, as well as growing poverty and food insecurity result in limited adaptation capacity of the region to climate change and increasing climate variability. Furthermore, the uncertainties surrounding climate change projections, particularly the changes in spatio-temporal patterns of rainfall, hamper the design and implementation of adaptation measures. To meet these challenges, West African and German scientists have developed the concept of the “West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL)”. WASCAL is an initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to establish a centre of competence on climate change and adapted land use in West Africa (currently, the countries involved are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo). The centre will help generate the knowledge and develop the analytical capability in the region to solve current and future land management problems caused by changing climate and weather conditions. The overall aim is to identify resilient land management approaches and develop measures to conserve or restore functional ecosystems that support sustainable human development, while preserving the natural resource base for future generations. WASCAL’s principle components are the competence centre, a core research programme and graduate research programs. The concept of WASCAL and its current state of planning will be presented.

Keywords: Adaptation to climate change, competence centre, graduate school, research program