

National Workshop on The Vetiver System Applications

16 March 2009, Ghion Hotel, Addis Ababa

Opening Speech by His Excellency Ato Beshir Abdulahi
State Minister, Natural Resource Sector, MoARD

Distinguished Workshop Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The land-based agricultural sector is the backbone of the Ethiopian economy accounting for 50% of GDP, 90% of export revenues and 80% of employment. Most of the 85% of the Ethiopian population residing in rural areas directly depend on land resources for their livelihoods.

Land resources in Ethiopia are seriously damaged by severe land degradation caused mainly by soil erosion, thus undermining the potential of the agricultural sector. About 85% of the land surface of the country is considered prone to moderate to very severe soil degradation. Currently it is estimated that about 30,000 hectares of land are lost due to soil erosion and some 1.5 billion tons of soil are removed annually by erosion processes over the whole country. More than 2 million hectares have already been severely damaged.

The problem of land degradation has been consistently identified as a major priority for Ethiopia in all national strategies and policies including Rural Development, Poverty Reduction, Conservation Strategy, Environmental Policy, Land Administration, etc.

To address the challenges of land degradation the Government of Ethiopia and its development partners have prepared the Ethiopian Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF) for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in a programme-based approach planned to be implemented with the participation of partners and the target communities over the next 15 years (2009-2013) in three phases.

The overall objective of the ESIF for SLM is to improve the livelihoods and economic well-being of the country's farmers, herders and forest resource users by scaling up sustainable land management (SLM) practices with proven potential to restore, sustain and enhance the productivity of Ethiopia's land resources.

The core purpose of the ESIF for SLM is to contribute to the reversing of the alarming land degradation in Ethiopia through adopting, promoting and scaling up successful SLM practices and improve the livelihoods of farmers.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The participants of this national workshop from different parts of Ethiopia and abroad are gathered here to share, document and disseminate the worldwide experiences of the vetiver system (VS) applications for soil and water conservation (SWC), environmental protection, land rehabilitation, and income generation. The VS that uses vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*) that adapts to wide range of climate and soil conditions is simple to use and is cost effective.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that the VS applications could be easily integrated into the national SLM programme and scaled out/up in Ethiopia.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to thank SLUF, TVNI and Sida to take the initiative of organizing this important occasion which created a platform for like minded GOs and NGOs to share the rich experiences in the application of the vetiver system for environmental conservation and rehabilitation.

Since SLM requires concerted effort we expect that all development actors and our development partners i.e. government and non-government organizations, multi-lateral and bilateral donors, research and education institutions, and the private sector would integrate the VS in their environmental and integrated watershed management (IWSM) programs/projects and scale out/up the technology.

Finally, I wish you fruitful deliberations and sharing of experiences and declare that the workshop is open.

Thank you