

Soil quality

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According to the Law on Pollution (adopted on 1 July 2001) several regulations concerning soil quality has been adopted:

- Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.483 adopted on 20 November 2001 "Inventory and registration of contaminated and potentially contaminated areas"
- Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 804 adopted on October 25, 2005 „Quality Standards for Soil and Ground"

On 19 January 2003 Latvia became a Party of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD). Internet site: <http://www.unccd.int>. The Convention was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature there on 14 – 15 October 1994. It entered into force on 26 December 1996, 90 days after the 50th ratification was received. Now about 190 countries are Parties of the Convention.

The objective of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas. Achieving this objective will involve long-term integrated strategies that focus simultaneously, in affected areas, on improved productivity of land, and the rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level.

Since September 2005 Ministry of the Environment in cooperation with UNDP Latvia started implementation on UNDP/GEF Medium-Size project (MSP) on Building Sustainable Capacity and Ownership to Implement UNCCD objectives in Latvia.

The project has emerged as a result of the UNDP/GEF supported National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management (NCSA) process, implemented during 2003 – 2004, where the final results showed that sustainable land management is a priority theme, and that these issues have not been on the priority agenda prior to ratification of UNCCD and yet Latvia is only at the initial stage of implementing this convention.

The main goal of this project is to create sustainable capacity and ownership in Latvia to mitigate land degradation and thereby meet the country's obligations under the Convention on Combating Desertification. The main objective of the project is capacity building and removal of key barriers to sustainable land management in Latvia.

The expected outcomes of the project are: a) national land policy rationalized and sustainable land management mainstreamed into the policy and regulatory framework; b) local capacities built to adopt sustainable land management practice in the selected areas; and c) improved knowledge and technical capacities for sustainable land management in Latvia.

This project is considered a crucial first step in the overall implementation of the UNCCD in Latvia, as it will lift key barriers to the sustainability of such actions.

- Year 2006 is supposed to be International Year of Deserts and Desertification. More information can be found on Internet site: <http://www.iydd.org>. Regarding this, Latvia also plans appropriate measures informing public and different stakeholders on issues related to land degradation and desertification.

- There are several monitoring systems coordinated by Latvian Environmental, Geological and Meteorological Agency (Internet sites: <http://www.lvgma.gov.lv>; <http://www.lva.gov.lv/lea>), which include also soil quality monitoring – Monitoring of Terrestrial Environment and its Components. These monitoring programs are determined by the National Environmental Monitoring Program (2002) and National Action Plan for Environmental Monitoring (2002).

The overall aim of the National Environmental Monitoring Program is establishment of the environmental monitoring system accordingly to EU directives, International Conventions and legislative acts of the Republic of Latvia, to ensure general public, policy-makers, experts both on national and on international level with reliable, goal oriented and qualitative environmental information.

<https://www.varam.gov.lv/en/soil-quality>