



Interdisciplinary approaches for land degradation assessment

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Land degradation assessment has a long history, much of dominated either by laboratory based measurement, an over-emphasis on quantifying soil erosion in terms of tonnage soil lost or approaches relying on the judgement of experts instead of direct measurement. A number of trends have emerged over the last decade or so that have greatly informed the development of new more integrated frameworks and approaches for assessment of land degradation. This paper presents an inter-disciplinary assessment methodology, and the principles informing its development, currently being tested in six countries as part of the GEF funded project Land Degradation Assessment in Dryland Areas (LADA). The approach emphasizes the importance of simplicity and prioritises the value of triangulation and incorporation of the land-user perspective rather than high measurement precision. The methods aim to produce data and analysis that combine measurements of the biophysical processes involved in land degradation with important contextual socio-economic information that allow the important drivers and impacts to be identified as part of the assessment process.