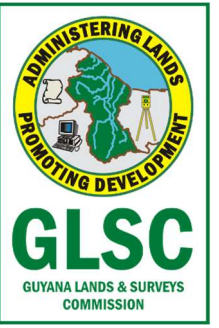


Desertification and Drought Day 2026: “Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore.”

A Message from the National Focal Point Agency to the UNCCD

Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission



On this Desertification and Drought Day 2026 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Guyana joins the global community in recognizing the intrinsic value of Rangelands, their essential role in climate resilience, food and water security, biodiversity conservation and the cultural identity of pastoralist and Indigenous communities.

The United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists under the theme **"Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore."** The theme highlights the critical importance of rangelands, vast landscapes that cover approximately half of the Earth's terrestrial surface, and the stewardship of an estimated 500 million pastoralists worldwide who sustainably manage these ecosystems. Rangelands support unique biodiversity and communities while regulating water resources, moderating surface temperatures, and preventing soil erosion.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO/ UN), rangelands cover approximately 50 percent of the world's land surface and store nearly 30 percent of global carbon stocks, thereby contributing significantly to climate change mitigation. However, the UNCCD estimates that between 2015 and 2019, nearly 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land were degraded annually, affecting the food and water security of approximately 1.3 billion people worldwide.

In Guyana, grasslands, savannahs, and shrublands constitute important rangelands that are utilised, or have the potential to be utilised, for grazing. These landscapes support food security and embody rich cultural heritage, and local and indigenous knowledge systems.

Land degradation resulting from unsustainable mining activities, shifting cultivation, and deforestation could impact soil fertility, water availability, and ecosystem services. In coastal areas, saline intrusion and soil compaction threaten agricultural productivity and food security. However, innovative land restoration initiatives, sustainable agricultural practices, and inclusive policies can reverse land degradation and build a more resilient and equitable future.

Under the Mainstreaming Sustainable Land Development and Management (SLDM) Project, the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC), in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has strengthened the capacities of technical officers, improved soil productivity and promoted the cultivation of high-value crops in areas vulnerable to drought. The SLDM Project achieved improvement of soil health and stability, and enhanced agricultural productivity. These interventions included the application of biochar to improve soil conditions, the use of vermicompost to convert organic waste into high-quality compost, and the introduction of shade-house farming with drip irrigation systems for multi-crop production on degraded lands. These initiatives were executed in collaboration with farmers (beneficiaries) and the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI).

The interventions were successfully implemented in communities along the Soesdyke-Linden Highway in Regions 4 and 10.

Additionally, the Project implemented restoration interventions in Puruni, Region 7, using three approaches: Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) with enrichment planting to rehabilitate deforested areas; vetiver grass planting for soil stabilisation and erosion control; and the construction of brushwood check dams to retain eroded sediments and restore degraded landscapes. The ANR activity included the planting of 1,500 native forest seedlings, comprising Bloodwood, Congo Pump, Trysil, and Morabukea species.

These restoration interventions were implemented in collaboration with the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), and the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI). The agencies also conducted stakeholder engagements during field-based activities to increase awareness among land users of the restoration approaches employed and the benefits of landscape restoration.

Additionally, the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (CSIDS) Multi-Country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Climate-Resilient Food Systems (SOILCARE) Phase I Project has identified pilot interventions to address the drivers of land degradation through the rehabilitation of degraded land and soils in Region 1 and climate resilience actions in Regions 5 and 10. These initiatives support the objectives of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 by promoting land restoration and generating ecosystem and livelihood co-benefits.

As a Country Party to the UNCCD, Guyana has consistently participated in the decisions of the Convention and implemented measures to combat land degradation and address drought. These commitments require continued advancement of sustainable land management practices and strengthened support for drought risk reduction.


Guyana has further reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable soil and land management through its participation in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (CSIDS) Multi-Country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Climate-Resilient Food Systems (SOILCARE) Phase II. Under this initiative, Guyana has received an allocation of US\$1.5 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Community consultations and beneficiary identification activities have already commenced in collaboration with the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI). Building upon the foundations established under Phase I, SOILCARE Phase II will focus on on-the-ground interventions and policy guidance aimed at addressing land degradation, drought risk management, and climate resilience actions beginning in 2026.

Desertification, land degradation, and drought are development challenges that require coordinated, cross-sectoral solutions. On this occasion, I urge all stakeholders—government institutions, local authorities, the private sector, civil society, miners, loggers, farmers, youth, women, and indigenous communities—to scale up investment in land restoration.

By restoring land, we unlock opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Together, we can restore degraded landscapes, enhance food and water security, strengthen our resilience to climate change, and secure a better future for our people, our country, and our planet.

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