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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Land Management  
as a Best Practice to Enhance Rural Development  
in the ESCWA Region  
Beirut, 25 – 27 March 2009

**Innovative Opportunities in Support of  
Sustainable Land Management**

*by*

Mr. Fidèle Byiringiro

Sustainable Development & Productivity Division  
Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Development Team

***UN-ESCWA***

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UNITED NATIONS - Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia



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## Innovative Opportunities in Support of Sustainable Land Management

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Fidele Byiringiro

ESCWA/SDPD  
SARD Team

## Overview



To review and discuss a few innovative approaches that could be used to enhance the adoption of sustainable land management by stakeholders.

Discussions will include a review of:

- The challenges faced by the region; and
- The opportunities available.

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## Challenges



- Exploitation of degraded and fragile land;
- Reliance on low-input, low-risk and low-output strategies;
- Farming employs the poorest;
- Low investments;
- High rural-urban drift especially among the youngest and brightest.

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## Challenges cont'd



- Need to break away from the above challenges through structural transformation;
- Need innovative opportunities that rely on market linkages, and that are flexible enough to adjust to global competition and trade rules.

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## Opportunities



- Enhancing markets and trade;
- Developing farm enterprises;
- Developing agro-tourism;
- Hedging against risk.

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## Enhancing markets and trade



- Improving market opportunities through improved linkage between producers, intermediaries and consumers;
- Emphasis on the development of local produces (zaatar, Arabic gum, dates, various fruits and vegetables, etc.);
- Processing for added value.

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## Markets and trade cont'd



- Impact would be great as these are produces grown by poor communities and on fragile land;
- Multiplier effect also if the crops/plants chosen are capable to improve the land (fixing the soil and nutrients, etc.).

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## Developing Farm Enterprises



- Needed to better link producers and consumers and possibly to add value;
- Would provide support to stakeholders including procurement and marketing while ensuring they get rewarded;
- Would have to overcome the usual problems faced by farm enterprises (free ride, lack of capital, risk avoidance, divergence of interests).

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## Farm Enterprises cont'd



Major characteristics:

- Closed and flexible memberships;
- Rights pegged to level of contributions;
- Concentration on market niche;
- **STRONG EMPHASIS** on providing significant benefits so they could invest even more in their productive assets including land.

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## Developing agro-tourism



- It is an activity that supports other activities on the farm;
- It is a fast growing business for rural communities in some countries;
- It plays a vital role in preserving the rural way of life and providing additional revenues while encouraging farmers to better take care of their lands.

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## Agro-tourism



- Needs concerted efforts to promote and finance it;
- Often carried out through public-private partnerships (municipalities, farmers, cooperatives, etc.);
- Needs appropriate laws, regulations and programs to support it.

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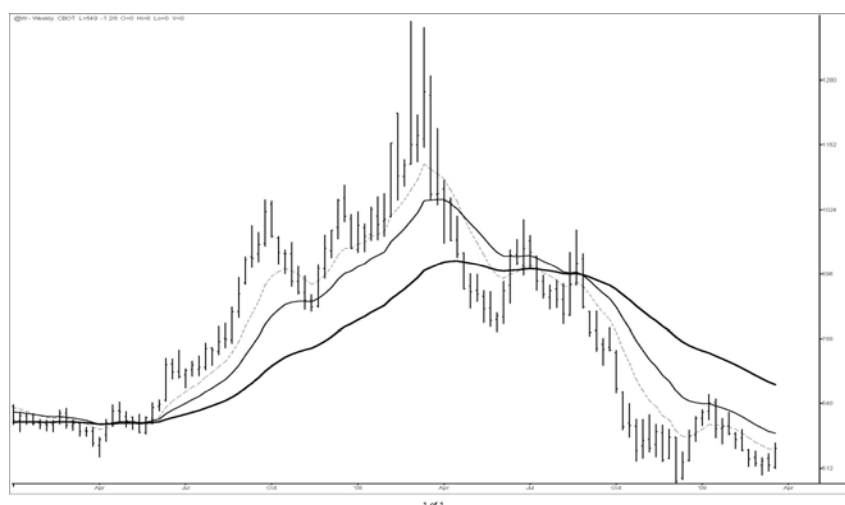
## Hedging against risk



- Prices of major agricultural commodities have been very volatile over the past few years;
- This volatility has hurt the rural and urban poor;
- Farmers have profited while prices went up but have since been hurt by rapidly declining prices.

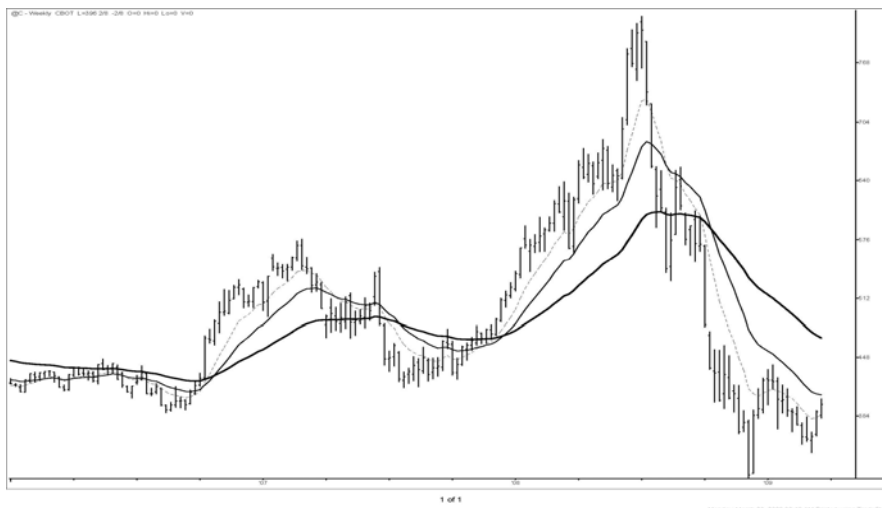
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## Wheat Weekly Chart





## Corn Weekly Chart



## Hedging

- Farmers need to protect their revenues by hedging their crops so as to reduce risk against adverse price movements, thereby allowing them to confidently invest in their productive assets;
- Appropriate assistance would be required to allow them to access the appropriate exchanges.

## Conclusion



- Land degradation is a pressing issue but the adoption of control measures is not guaranteed;
- Stakeholders adopt land conservation practices and other sustainable practices only if offered appropriate incentives to do so.

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## Conclusion cont'd



- Land conservation practices are adopted because of the opportunity to increase income, and as such land conservation is a by-product;
- Appropriate institutions are required to enhance the process and to ensure that benefits accrue to grassroots communities.

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# Thank you!