

Land Degradation in South Asia



South Asia faces the problem of land degradation in the form of reduction or loss of biological or economic productivity and complexity of rain-fed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest, and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns.

Land resources in this region are under stress due to excess populations, economic growth and urbanization. Ever rising demands for food, feed, fuel, fiber and raw materials create local and distant pressures for land-use change. Land is an especially an important natural resource for the South Asia as national economies are mainly dependent on agriculture. It has a high economic and social value in the region, and the consequences of land degradation cost its countries and their people, especially the rural population, in terms of reduced production and incomes.

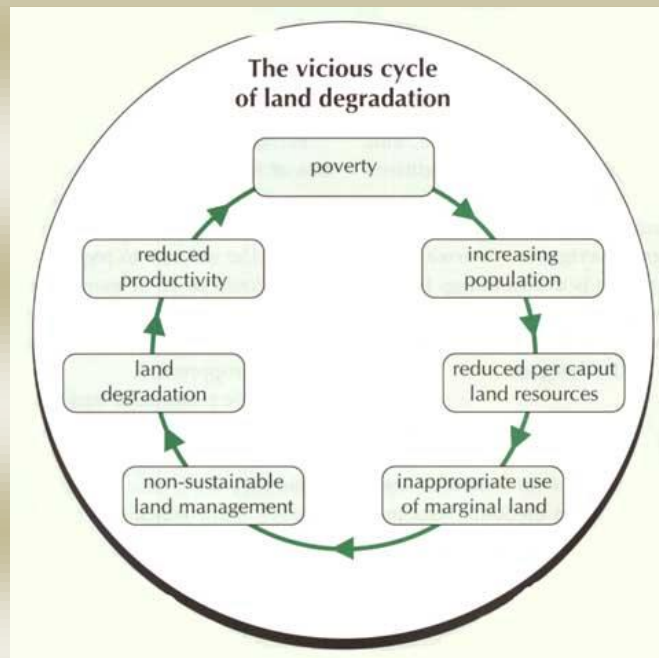
Some of the major causes of land degradation in the region are : deforestation, shortage of land due to increased populations, poor land use, Excessive Chemical Usage, insecure land tenure, inappropriate land management practices and poverty, Unsustainable Irrigation and Shifting Cultivation

The vicious cycle of land degradation

The two most important driving forces of land degradation are **limited land resources** and **population increase**. The result is small farms, low production per person and increasing landlessness. A consequence of land shortage is **poverty**.

Land shortage and poverty, taken together, lead to **non-sustainable land management practices**, the direct causes of **degradation**. Poor farmers are led to clear forest, cultivate steep slopes without conservation, overgraze rangelands and make unbalanced fertilizer applications.

Land degradation then leads to **reduced productivity**: a lower response to the same inputs or, where farmers possess the resources, a need for higher inputs to maintain crop yields and farm incomes. This has the effect of increasing land shortage still further, thus completing the cycle.



Over the years in South Asia substantial efforts have been made by individual farmers, national governments and international agencies to counteract the cycle of poverty and land degradation by research and development of improved technology and much success has been achieved.

Further, conserving forests and other ecosystems is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **Goal 15** (Life on land) of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has identified the need for reinforcing the demand for soil and land information at both local and global scale and it's identified targets aims to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss".

Priyankari Alexander
Programme Officer (SACEP)