

At the Warsaw, Poland Climate Change talks

Land ownership key to food security

By Swazi Observer Reporter
Warsaw, Poland

AFRICAN communities that hold title to land tend to take care of the environment better than those who do not own the property. Many land tenure systems in Africa do not give rights to people living on traditional land.

In Swaziland, for instance, chiefs allocate traditional land to people but the King holds it in trust for the nation. People living on such land do not necessarily own it but can use it for building their homes and agricultural activities.

Researchers and policy makers at the first Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) at Warsaw National University, Poland, observed that this policy does not give communities the confidence they need to take care and invest in the land.

In fact, they cannot even use the land as collateral to get loans from banks so that they may invest in farming to improve their production. The environment also suffers a huge blow when people do not own the land on which they do their farming.

Security



CHANGE THE WORLD: Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Christiana Figueres addresses the opening of the 19th session in Warsaw, Poland. (Google)

to restore the land which had been degraded owing to overgrazing and soil erosion for 30 years. Using a win-win participatory approach,

Dr Agnes Kalibata, giving title to land has helped in the management of the environment.

“Land ownership is about ensuring that the farmers do the right thing,” said Kalibata.

The most densely populated country in Africa – at 400 people per square metre – yet 80 percent of the people depend on farming, she said the government had to come up with a plan that would ensure that people maximise their production with minimal impact to the environment.

“Rwandans also use the land as collateral at banks to get money to invest in their development,” said Kalibata. “This approach has worked wonders in improving livelihoods of Rwandans while rehabilitating the environment.”

These are some of the proposals researchers were presenting to the negotiators at the 19th Conference of the Parties (COP19) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), giving evidence that the landscape approach is a holistic approach in addressing climate change and food



FOOD HIT BY CLIMATE CHANGE: The ‘big heads’ sell food damaged by climate.

hailed as a way to bring together the agricultural, forestry, energy and fisheries sectors to come up with collaborative and innovative solutions to ease increasing pressure on the world’s resources, which are threatened by climate change.

“Landscapes are not just an important part of the solution. They are the solution,” Peter Holmgren, Director General of the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), told the forum’s 1 200 participants from 120 countries that “we must put our hope in landscapes. Fragmentation is our enemy and a recipe for disaster.”

Historically, farming, fisheries, energy and forestry have been managed in isolation despite their many links. Agriculture is the chief driver

of deforestation even though it depends on forests for water, pollination and other ecosystem services. Speaking at the conference, His Royal Highness Prince Seeiso Bereng Seeiso of Lesotho described himself as a ‘messenger for Africa’ and said that “the impact of climate change on livelihoods, food security and nutrition at household levels and the environment has been disastrous.”

He said failing to safeguard natural resource base, farmers end up selling their meagre physical assets.

“Only when we take a landscape approach, can we boost agricultural production while adapting agriculture to climate change and reducing agricultural emissions,” said the Prince.