

Land Use and Spatial Planning Tools to Address Land Degradation and Promote Land Restoration

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Key words: Land management; Land readjustment; Spatial planning; Land Use; Spatial Planning; Land Degradation; Land Restoration

SUMMARY

Land use planning, a component of spatial planning, can be perceived as a future oriented activity consisting of policies and methods that can be used to define, shape and influence the future allocation of land including wetlands, amongst several competing land uses. Decision-making on the highest and best use of land parcels by planning agencies, can be more sustainable if they are guided by an integration of the potential of a particular land use type to trigger land degradation. This review paper highlights the importance of land use planning that considers the potential for land degradation in order to halt further degradation, prevent it and possibly reverse it. In order to holistically assess this global phenomenon of land degradation selected case studies are used to examine where planning has increased exposure and vulnerability of lands to degradation against situations where planning has reduced exposure and vulnerability of lands to degradation. We identify the need for Planning officials responsible for granting development permits that are based on environmental impact assessment of proposed development projects to be sufficiently knowledgeable connections between planning and degradation. The triple planetary crises coupled with uncontrolled degradation of lands and wetlands, presents an opportunity to mainstream land degradation systems thinking into spatial planning. This can result in planning policy and regulatory reforms that will help to halt, reduce or reverse land degradation particularly in urban areas. We align with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) through its G20 Global Land Initiative's commitment to promoting policies and actions aimed at reducing land degradation and enhancing the conservation of terrestrial habitats. With an ambition to achieve a 50 percent reduction in degraded lands by 2040, we recommend that Land use planning and spatial planning policies and methods can be used as tools to realize this ambition.

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FIG Working Week 2024

Your World, Our World: Resilient Environment and Sustainable Resource Management for all
Accra, Ghana, 19–24 May 2024