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1 WATER, LAND AND ECOSYSTEMS

IMPORTANCE

An estimated 870 million people worldwide are undernourished. More than half live in mostly rural areas in South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa and rely on subsistence farming. Improving their lives will depend on healthy ecosystems that support sustainable agricultural development, human well-being and resilient food systems.

PROBLEM

Our food production systems depend on the services provided by nature. But rapidly increasing and competing demands for clean water, fertile soils and energy are putting them under strain. By neglecting the management of natural resources, the basic needs of the rural poor are never fully addressed and our ability as a global community to meet future food needs are already being compromised.

“ Our use of land, water and ecosystems is not sustainable. WLE is a unique global network linking disparate areas of environmental management, agriculture and poverty reduction together to meet development needs by identifying innovative and sustainable solutions to complex problems. ”

PROFESSOR JOHAN ROCKSTRÖM, CHAIR, WLE STEERING COMMITTEE

WLE AREAS OF RESEARCH



WHAT WLE IS DOING

WLE seeks to support policy-makers, private sector organizations, donors and NGOs to incorporate sustainable and socially inclusive practices into their investments and decision-making processes. While WLE research has a global reach, it also has established concentrated work in four regions: the Ganges, Mekong, Nile-East Africa and Volta-Niger regions.

Sustainable intensification within WLE recognizes the competing demands on land and water arising from urbanization, population growth, demographic changes and climate change. For instance, WLE looks at reducing the negative urban footprint on ecosystems and human health through market driven incentives such as developing promising business models for the safe reuse of human waste based on 200 case studies across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Expected Outcomes

- ◆ Established regional programs focused on influencing large-scale investments while working with influential partners and clients.
- ◆ Tested/piloted a number of decision-making tools to assess the trade-offs, costs and benefits of natural resource based investments at different scales.
- ◆ Influenced a number of global level processes to shift how agriculture is viewed in relation to ecosystems services including the Ramsar Convention and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
- ◆ Doubled incomes of at least 1 million smallholder farmers in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa based on at least USD 50 million of new investments informed by WLE research around improved agricultural water management.

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