

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY INTERVENTION
CSD
DESERTIFICATION
MAY 7, 2008

Thank you Mister Chairman,

Complex factors are influencing desertification - many of which have been identified today by the insightful panelists.

Business and industry is working on several tools that may assist those living in affected dryland areas.

The foremost is, of course, stress tolerance in crops. Traits have been identified that provide drought tolerance and salinity tolerance. Work is well underway to insert these traits into crops. It will still be some years before the most promising products are able to be launched. However, the efforts are more than a decade in the making, already.

The work on plant breeding and trait development is a collaborative effort of industry, scientific, academic, farming, and agronomic communities. All of whom need support for this work.

There is a particular need for focus on crops that meet the specific needs of dryland areas such as sorghum and millet. There is also a need to identify crops and native plants, such as specialized grasses, that may be used for reclamation purposes in drylands. Sustaining plant production in degraded areas is important to avoid soil erosion, foster animal life, and of course - support human life.

Even as noted today, "sustaining biological production" on land is itself a criteria in defining land as "Desertified". Thus viable crops for these areas is a part of abatement as well as adaptation for dryland degradation.

Business and industry also recognizes that once the technology is developed, there remains the considerable challenge of making these solutions available to populations in affected areas. We are ready to work with others including: governments, development organizations, farmers, and agronomic extension networks to find ways to make such crops accessible in needed areas.

We thank you for the opportunity to speak Mr. Chairman and believe plant breeding is one of many tools needed to address the challenges of dryland degradation.