



Press Release

Luxembourg, 15 June 2018

Auditors publish Background Paper on desertification in the EU

The European Court of Auditors has today published a Background Paper on desertification in the EU – where land becomes increasingly dry and degraded. Background Papers are designed as a source of information for those interested in the policy and/or programmes. The Background Paper is being published to coincide with the United Nations World Day to Combat Desertification on Sunday, 17 June.

The auditors are currently examining whether the risk of desertification in the EU is being effectively and efficiently addressed. Drawing on material gathered during the preparation of the audit, the Background Paper sets out the main causes and effects of desertification alongside current projections for how it may develop in the European Union over the coming decades. The Paper contains information on the preventative and restorative measures which can be taken. It also explains how aspects of desertification are addressed under various EU strategic documents and policy areas and which EU funding programmes support action on desertification.

The audit report is expected to be published by the end of 2018. A related audit on flood risk management in the EU is also scheduled for publication later this year.

Notes to Editors

Desertification is defined by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as “land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities”. Desertification is a result, but also a cause, of climate change. It also results from unsustainable land management practices. It magnifies climate change, as desertified land loses its capacity to stock carbon, so lower volumes of greenhouse gases can be absorbed.

Thirteen EU Member States have so far declared themselves to the UNCCD as affected by desertification. The auditors have visited five of them: Romania, Cyprus, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

The World Day to Combat Desertification will take place on 17 June, with a focus on sustainable land management as a way to regenerate economies, create jobs and revitalise communities. The Day was established by the UN General Assembly 23 years ago to raise awareness on the global and national actions that address desertification, land degradation and drought.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' Background Paper. The full paper is available at eca.europa.eu.

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