News Article (FAO)
Launch of the publication "West African Land Cover Reference System (WALCRS)"
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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Agrometeorology, Hydrology and Meteorology Regional Center (AGRHYMET), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS) and SERVIR West Africa launch the new publication **West African Land Cover Reference System (WALCRS)** on **26 July 2022**.

Land cover data is one of the fundamental themes of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) and for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, to meet these goals, various approaches for the use and integration of land cover data, employed by organizations in West Africa, must be strengthened.

In 2013, the West African Regional Conference on Land Cover and Land Implementation suggested the creation of a common framework. Improving land cover information using the latest innovations becomes essential for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), restoration of ecosystems, fight against climate change, disaster risk reduction among many others. Accordingly, the publication of the West African Land Cover Reference System (WALCRS) was prepared and is the first regional land cover reference system of its kind. It serves as the foundation for the development of national and/or regional land cover information.

The WALCRS is the result of a joint initiative towards harmonized land cover monitoring among nations and regional and international organizations. The development of the publication followed the release of the latest international standard on land cover (ISO 19144-2). In addition to providing a strong foundation for the harmonization and integration of land cover information from West African nations and organizations, the publication will help to connect land cover information from different sources and make it interoperable.

This system will also serve as a reference framework in support of land cover monitoring for various national and/or regional efforts, such as the monitoring of land, forests, crops, greenhouse gases, biodiversity and many others. Therefore, the use and implementation of this reference system will contribute to the improvement of land cover monitoring at regional, national and local levels, and ensure a solid and scientific approach for all partner organizations.

The launch of the publication is part of a larger effort in the region to develop a better system for land monitoring, and to strengthen technical capacities and collaboration with various national, regional and international partners to mainstream sustainable and reliable baseline land and water data into development agendas.

This work was made possible through the collaboration among FAO, ECOWAS, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), AGRHYMET, OSS, SERVIR West Africa and its consortium partners and experts and by financial contributions from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the FAO Geospatial Unit at the Land and Water division (NSL).

Publication is available here.

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