

PART III, SECTION III

MANAGING FRAGILE ECOSYSTEMS: COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

Canada has responded to the issues raised in Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 through a variety of innovative activities, both domestic and international.

Domestic Initiatives

Large areas of the Canadian Prairie provinces are subject to land degradation and erosion, frequently as a result of inappropriate land use practices. These problems are compounded by the region's semi-arid climate, with periodic droughts and wide temperature variations. Canada's response has been to encourage rural economic diversification and a move to better agricultural practices.

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) supports federal/provincial co-operation to promote the sustainable management of land resources in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The PFRA promotes environmentally sustainable farm practices that afford greater economic security to areas prone to soil degradation and erosion. It focuses on wise use of land and water resources, crop diversification, and alternative uses of marginal lands.

The Community Pasture Program protects approximately 900 000 hectares of land, of which approximately 80 percent is native range, while providing grazing for cattle and other livestock. These community pastures make up 10 percent of Saskatchewan's critical wildlife habitat, essential for maintaining the province's biological diversity. PFRA's Shelterbelt Program promotes tree planting for soil conservation, snow management, and crop stabilization. The Shelterbelt Centre undertakes research to find or develop new varieties of trees adapted to the regional climate.