

## Foreword



One of the world's current and future challenges is the human induced or natural processes leading to land degradation in general and desertification in particular. Already a downward eco-social spiral is being experienced by more than 1 billion people in the vulnerable parts of the world such as the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. The complex nature of these challenges requires a global joint effort in addressing the causes of land degradation and the stresses occurring on the degraded soils.

The Arid Land Research Center (ALRC) of Tottori University is already collaborating in different ways with various institutions and scientists around the world in combating the factors leading to soil instability and permanent land damage. The ALRC has established academic exchange programs with the Agricultural Research Corporation of the Sudan, Soil and Water Conservation Institute and Shijiazhuang Agricultural Modernization Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Hebrew University of Israel, etc. Last year the ALRC received four foreign visiting professors/researchers from Australia, Slovakia, Sudan and Turkey. Also a number of foreign students are receiving their graduate training at the ALRC every year. Apart from these, the Sudanese and Saudi ambassadors to Japan visited the ALRC, and they requested the ALRC to play a vital role in tackling land degradation and its associated problems in their respective countries.

The ALRC will sign a 5-year joint project, with the Soil and Water Conservation Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which will be funded by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). This project, which will be carried out in the severely land-degraded Loess Plateau of western China, is expected to have a significant and positive impact in land reclamation of the already affected area. Similar projects in collaboration with Israeli, Saudi and Sudanese scientists are underway. In the near future the ALRC is looking forward to expanding its current academic and research linkages to various parts of the world because a worldwide scientific collaboration is the only way for "our necessary scientific competence, vision, common sense and determination to alleviate the threat to the world's food security through sustainable agriculture in the marginal areas" to become a reality.

The ALRC is wide-opened to researchers and scientists all over the world who are dedicated to work for the benefit of mankind. The friendly environment and the up-to-date facilities at the ALRC provide an excellent atmosphere for academics and research. For those who are interested in collaborating with scientists at the ALRC, please refer to the 'Visiting Foreign Research Fellow Program' in this annual report, or visit our homepage at "<http://www.alrc.tottori-u.ac.jp/>", and make your contacts directly to the concerned scientists at the ALRC. I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage foreign students to apply for postgraduate (MSc and PhD) scholarships at the ALRC through the Japanese diplomatic missions abroad.

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Director