



## **Comparing approaches to soil conservation and protection in Europe and China**

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Are there lessons that China and Europe can learn from each other regarding the way they have organised and dealing with site soil erosion problems? A fact finding Chinese Mission to Europe revealed that the particularly the long term experiences of Europe provided helpful. The benefits of soil protection in China have been known for centuries so that the government is committed to achieving the good governance of its soil resources, as a means also of promoting harmony for the people living in the affected areas. Well maintained terraces can virtually totally prevent sediment from reaching the river enabling farmers to prevent erosion when the soil is bare. China provides many examples of good governance that Europe might do well to follow.

One main difference is that the soil and soil conservation in China is seen as cross cutting environmental problems, so that the main aim is to reduce the amount of sediment being delivered to rivers. The fact that it also increases the amount of water stored in the catchment is being increasingly appreciated. The Changjiang Pearl River Watershed Rehabilitation Project (CPRWRP) is implementing and promoting soil conservation and land use change in the Middle and Upper Yangtze River basin.

Almost every soil conservation text book teaches the need for the integrated management of land soil and water and this is done in China. In contrast, the natural resources of Europe that provide us with habitat, food, water and protection have been divided up by economists who set priorities into systems and sectors that are managed as if they functioned independently. Earth scientists and Ecologists know that this will not work and it will lead to the degradation of natural resources landslides and increased flooding. The approach of the EU has been to integrate environmental protection into the different systems and sectors. The natural resources of Europe that can be used to generate economic profit have been divided up like Africa creating entities which have no sense in terms of the needs of people who see their culture and environment being degraded

The EU China River Basin Management Programme (RBMP) is assisting the CPRWRP and promoting collaboration between the EU and China on integrated river basin management. As part of this collaboration an analysis was made by the RBMP of the experience on soil and water conservation in Europe that may be relevant for the Upper Yangtze Basin. The analysis identified areas in Europe that have or had similar problems and identified the best practices and policies that have been effective. Because similar physical processes and soil conditions are found in both regions and the methods of soil conservation and protection are universal the European experience and practices may be valuable to China and vice-versa.

In China, the main aim of policy is to create a harmonious landscape in which people are happy. Soil conservation activities are performed as a kind of landscape architecture and a kind of garden is being created according to traditional principles. Providing food and or income to farmers is only one element of this.