



## **Sandstorms as indicators of Land degradation in Algeria**

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### **Abstract :**

Land degradation, is an important environmental issue in arid lands, especially in Algeria's high plateaus. The Algerian steppes, the most widespread rangelands in the North African countries, occupy a pivotal position between the north, hilly and humid (called the tell), with a limited area (approximately 5%) and the south, the Sahara, which represents the largest area of the country (approximately 86%) and the largest desert of the planet. The main vegetation units constituted by *Stipa tenacissima* a key species, constituted 2/3 of the landscape in 1978 and occupies in 2012 only 1/10. The vegetation cover reached 40% in the seventies and is generally less than 10% nowadays. The increase of both population and livestock leads to a high pressure on this fragile ecosystems aggravated by the huge drought in the eighties (1980-1988). It results a tremendous soil degradation and sand encroachment. This study emphasizes on the correlation between the desertification steps and the occurrence of sandstorms. It appears that a high correlation is observed and reflect perfectly the land degradation. The recent decrease of sand storms, after a decennium, shows a re-greening, that must be distinguished of an absence of desertification. It appears that sandstorms, could be an interesting indicator, to monitor land degradation.