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Is existing scientific knowledge sufficient to provide the basis for reliable monitoring of achieving land degradation neutrality?

Alan Grainger

University of Leeds, School of Geography, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (a.grainger@leeds.ac.uk)

A goal of Land Degradation Neutrality by the year 2030 was agreed by the Rio+20 conference in 2012, and subsequently included in the Sustainable Development Goals. It dilutes earlier goals of unrestricted control of desertification, for example, by proposing that the rate of land degradation should be reduced and the rate of restoration of degraded land increased so they offset each other by 2030. As with many environmental concepts that have emerged in recent decades, Land Degradation Neutrality was proposed in the political arena, and scientific study is only now starting to evolve. Yet distinct positions are already forming within the scientific community, for example, on the feasibility of monitoring land degradation neutrality in dry areas when there are no reliable estimates for the rate of desertification, and on what constitutes land restoration in dry areas. Land degradation neutrality is also yet to be put in the wider context of environmental degradation as a whole, e.g. how does it relate to the forest degradation component of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) mechanism of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and to degradation of biodiversity which the Convention on Biological Diversity is seeking to reduce. This session will allow scientists working in the field of land degradation neutrality to share their perspectives in this emerging field.