

# Scaling up land restoration in Niger: insights from a national workshop

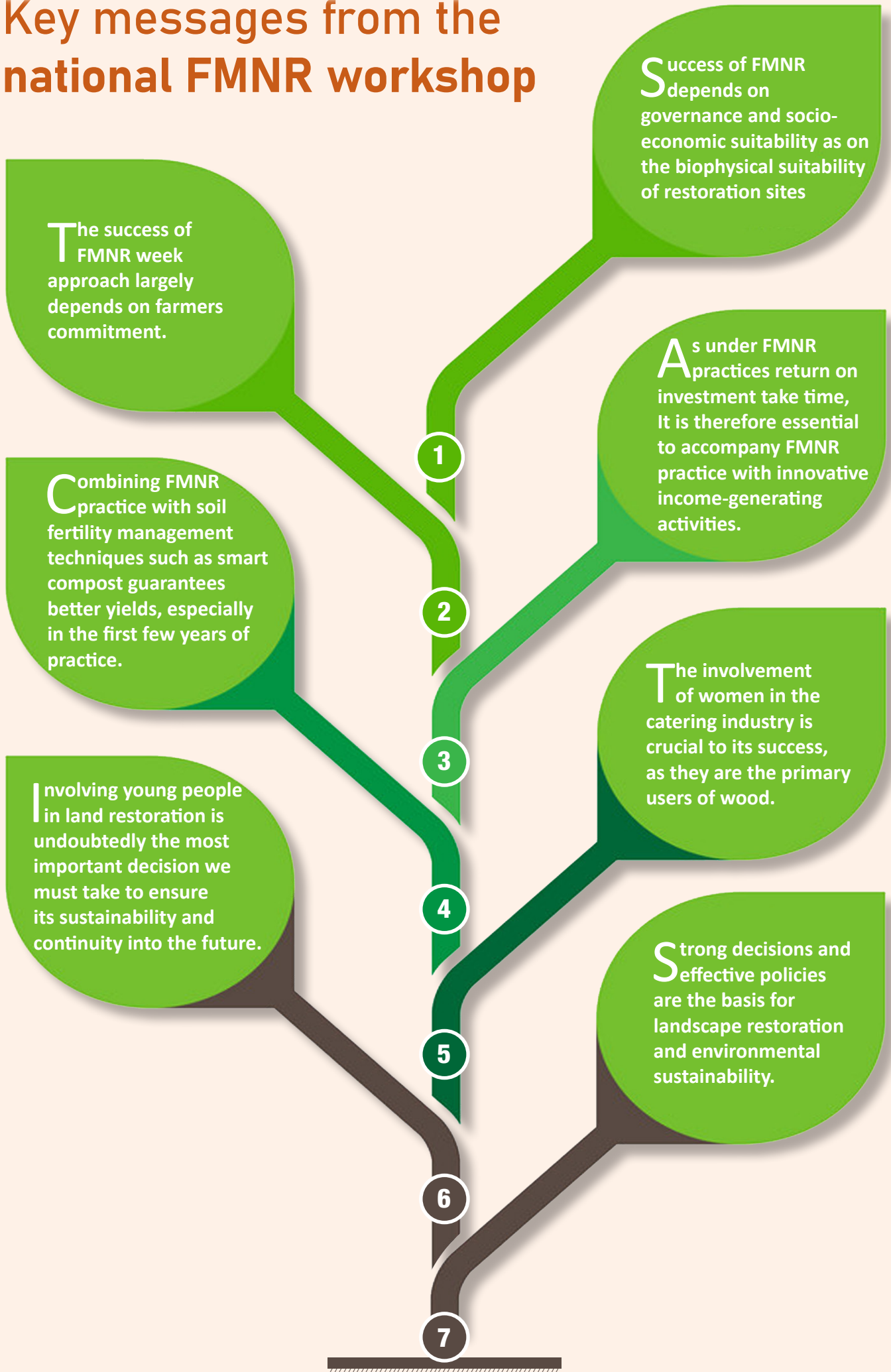


## Summary

This report provides a summary of the key outcomes of the Niger FMNR Scaling National Workshop held between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 in Niamey. The workshop was organized in collaboration of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Niger, ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the semi-Arid tropics), and DGDT/F (Direction of Sustainable Forest and Land Management (DGDT/F) to support Niger's attainment of its Farmer Managed Natural regeneration (FMNR) ambition and to bring together diverse stakeholders. Over 52 people from 15 organizations participated and reflected upon and celebrated the many achievements and emerging approaches for sustainability and scaling FMNR and identified how these can be amplified. Through this interaction, synergies between initiatives were enhanced and areas for coordinated implementation and monitoring discussed. Mechanisms that will better harness the collective strengths of government with non-government organizations were also discussed.



# Key messages from the national FMNR workshop



## Background and Rationale

Land degradation is a pervasive and systemic phenomenon occurring in all parts of the terrestrial world, including Niger. Tackling land degradation and reclaiming degraded land are key objectives for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services essential to all life on Earth, as well as for human well-being.

Land degradation will worsen under population growth, unprecedented consumption, an increasingly globalized economy, and climate change, unless urgent and concerted measures are taken. To this end, global initiatives for land protection and restoration have emerged, including the Bonn Challenge, which was backed by the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), aiming to restore 100 million hectares of degraded lands in Africa by 2030.

The government of Niger, in its efforts to establish a better living environment for its people and in line with its Strategic Framework on Sustainable Land Management (CS-GDT), has committed to restoring 3.2 million hectares of lands by 2030. Promoting the scaling-up of several landscape restoration activities, including the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), has emerged as one of the most promising strategies.

FMNR is one of the most common restoration techniques for improving livelihoods while preserving the environment. It involves managing the natural resprouts (shoots) produced by tree and shrub stumps on farms. Farmers deliberately select and protect woody plants during clearing and soil preparation for a variety of reasons. However, the return on investment of this a natural process is quite long (not less than three years) for farmers, which more often limits its widespread adoption.

The challenge is to identify appropriate combinations of other integrated land resource management options and FMNR, and to define sustainable ways of extending the best combinations. On the other hand, mechanisms are needed to support those factors identified as drivers of FMNR adoption, such as security of land tenure, local governance, supervisory and concertation frameworks. The use of FMNR can be optimized when combined with other technologies and practices such as integrated soil and water management technologies, fertilization options, use of improved seeds, ....

The country program of CRS Niger has implemented a pilot project with focus on the dissemination of FMNR through a series of combinations of this technique with other land restoration practices, including zaï, the use of compost and manure, and agricultural entrepreneurship. This initiative is in line with its 2030 strategic vision, which aims at improving community resilience in prosperous ecosystems. The project is being implemented in 04 communities with technical support from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the Direction of Sustainable Forest and Land Management (DGDT/F).

To share the results of the pilot project with stakeholders involved in scaling up FMNR in Niger, ICRISAT, in collaboration with the CRS-Niger country program and DGDT/F, organized a national workshop to share approaches and experiences for scaling FMNR.



## Key Objectives

- 01**  To share successes and lessons learned on several approaches tested by CRS - ICRISAT collaborative effort to identify FMNR and associated integrated management options to scale land restoration.
- 02**  To appeal to participants on the need to develop an integrated approach through the "SaZa" model for decision-making on the scaling FMNR.
- 03**  To co-develop strategic recommendations for scaling up sustainable land restoration in Niger.







One of the major outcomes for the thematic sessions was making strategic recommendations for scaling up sustainable land restoration in Niger, including some agreed next steps:

### Tools and approaches for informed decision-making for scaling land restoration:

- Scaling scan: Innovation scaling up analysis tool.
- SaZa model: FMNR scaling up suitability areas mapping tool.
- FMNR week and landscape approach

### Bottlenecks and opportunities to informed decision-making for scaling restoration:

- Perception of the benefits and limitations of restoration approaches by farmers and experts.

### The role of women and youth in restoration and potential for their greater inclusion:

- Barriers and opportunities to the inclusion of women and young people in land restoration.
- Concrete actions for greater inclusion of gender in restoration actions.

### Roadmap for scaling land restoration and key actions to chart the way forward:

- Concrete actions to promote the scaling up of land restoration in Niger.
- Sustainability actions for effective scaling up of land restoration in Niger, including income generation activities (smart composting and plant nursery production).

## Participants: 52



Government institutions



NGOs/IGOs



Research Institutions



Universities



Farmers (Beneficiaries)



Students



Youth



Women group

Bottlenecks and opportunities to informed decision-making for scaling restoration.

02

01

Tools and approaches for strong decision-making for scaling up land restoration.

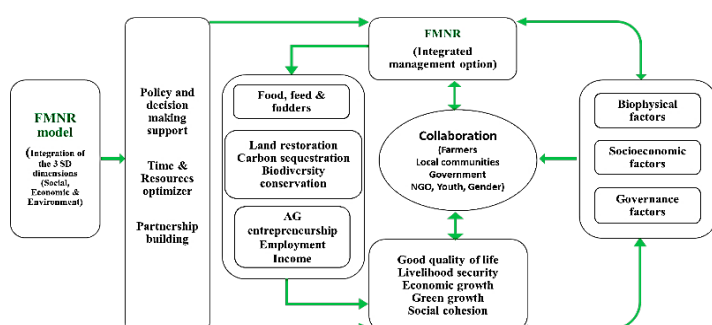
The workshop focused on four (4) thematic areas:

The role of women and youth in restoration and potential for their greater inclusion.

03

04

Roadmap for scaling up land restoration and key actions to chart the way forward.





# Tools and approaches for scaling up land restoration:

This theme explored innovative approaches to scale up land restoration while optimizing time and resources and improving household economy and livelihood conditions.

## Theme Objectives

- Showcase tools to determine the innovative technology to be upscaled, to identify the scaling up sites, and approaches to promote wide adoption of FMNR.
- Determine the best option for FMNR combination with soil fertility management techniques (Zai, Compost, Manure, etc.).
- Identify some key activities to support farmers efforts.

## Key Recommendations

- The usefulness of the scaling scan tool requires organisations to be trained in its use.
- A shift of paradigm is needed for FMNR upscaling: from farm consideration to landscape level for visibility.
- The FMNR week approach should be instituted by the government as a strategy for FMNR upscaling nationwide.
- It would also be interesting for the SaZa model to present an estimate of the return on investment, including carbon trading opportunities for restoration sites.
- Government and development NGOs should adopt the SaZa model as a decision-support tool for identifying restoration sites and appropriate socio-economic and governance interventions.
- The application of FMNR is more than just a practice, it is also about engaging with the right actors and setting enabling policies and upscaling approaches.
- The practice of FMNR must be accompanied by income-generating activities tested as part of the GIRMA project, such as Smart Composting and plant nursery production.
- The Smart Composting should be promoted as an approach to reducing agricultural residue waste and recycling most urban and household solid waste.





## Bottlenecks and opportunities for scaling up land restoration:

This theme explored how farmers and experts perceive the restoration technology, here FMNR integrated with other soil management options, in terms of benefits and barriers towards its wide adoption.

### Theme Objectives

- Find out how farmers perceive FMNR combined with land management options.
- Identify limiting factors for FMNR adoptions.
- Determine farmers' views on the best way to promote FMNR.



### Key Recommendations

- Raise awareness/involve all stakeholders, particularly women and children.
- Take structural measures such as the application of current legislation (sanctions/penalties) to reduce fraudulent logging.
- Set up or strengthen the capacity of village monitoring committees.
- Putting an explicit focus on livelihoods and facilitating effective institutional change to scale up FMNR.



## The role of women and youth in restoration and potential for their greater inclusion:

This theme explored, through group work, participants' views on the role played by women and youth in restoration and the best way to include them in restoration agendas.

### Theme Objectives

- Discuss the constraints and benefits linked to the inclusion of women and young people in land restoration.
- Identify concrete actions to be implemented for the effective inclusion of women and young people in land restoration in Niger.
- Identify the key actors to be involved and their respective roles in facilitating the implementation of these actions.

### Key Recommendations

- Barrier analysis study on the reasons for the exclusion of women and young people in the implementation of land restoration.
- Empowerment of young people and women: example of work in chains (social division of labour) and promotion of female leadership.
- Involve women and young people in decision-making bodies and all land restoration activities, while giving them access to land.
- Publicise the law on gender and appeal to men to give women a voice.

## Roadmap for scaling up land restoration and key actions to chart the way forward:

This theme explored, through group work, participants' views on the best ways to refine the restoration approaches with a view of scaling them up through future actions in Niger.

### Theme Objectives

- Discuss the limits and advantages of each approach presented to achieve land restoration.
- Pave the way for scaling up land restoration by identifying concrete actions to be implemented on the ground.
- Identify the key actors to be involved and their respective roles in facilitating the implementation of these actions.



### Key Actions to Chart the Way Forward:



**01** Mapping and analysis of land restoration stakeholders in Niger.

**02** Creation of a national working group on land restoration in Niger or revitalise the existing platform to develop a national action plan for

**03** Disseminate legal and regulatory texts (FMNR decree) and the FMNR week approach through training sessions, training of trainers, and local and traditional media.

**04** Digitize land restoration areas in Niger and set up effective monitoring systems, including financial means .

Implementation of incentive measures (national FMNR prize, etc.).

## Strong decisions and effective policies are the basis for landscape restoration and environmental sustainability



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