

## **‘Pakistan loses 20pc of land annually to erosion’**

**CHAKWAL:** 20pc, or 16 million hectares, of Pakistan’s land is lost to wind and water erosion, while 11.2 million hectares is affected by land erosion caused by water, UNESCO said at the conclusion of a training programme.

A three day training programme on ‘Strategic Strengthening of Flood Warning and Management Capacity of Pakistan’, which included a community based training programme on Watershed Management for Flood and Drought Control, concluded on Friday at the Barani Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) in Chakwal. The event was attended by farmers and agriculture experts. According to the organisation, soil erosion is not being controlled in the country for several reasons. Among these factors are high intensity, short duration rainfall and a lack of awareness among professionals and farmers about watershed management and rainwater harvesting techniques.

Due to this, not only is 20pc of the country’s land being eroded annually, but a huge amount of rainwater is also lost as the upper surface of the land, which is suppose to absorb rainwater, erodes.

In the Potohar region, the loss of water is much greater. “This is not only the loss of water but also results in loss of fertile topsoil that may increase flood severity in lowland areas and silting in dams, rivers and ponds etc, thereby decreasing their storage capacity,” a UNESCO official said. At the concluding session of the programme, Unesco’s representative in Pakistan Vibeke Jensen maintained that participants of the programme had acquired knowledge about watershed management approaches that will result in reduced soil erosion, through a reduction in water runoff and improved rainwater storage, which would mitigate flood hazards.

She said Unesco would continue to assist Pakistan in mitigating flood hazards, reducing soil erosion and control water loss for improved high value crop production.

“Through this training session the participants also learned practical utilisation of stored rainwater through efficient means, to grow high value crops for improving the livelihood of farmers and poverty alleviation,” she said.

Unesco experts also gave a brief history of floods in Pakistan, and discussed the echo hydrology approach to address floods and droughts, onsite training on rainwater harvesting techniques and drip bubbler irrigation systems.

Farmers also visited fields where they saw water saving techniques being used by BARI, and were briefed on soil conservation activities, rainwater harvesting techniques and the high efficiency irrigation system on farms in Kallar Kahar and Murid. They also visited sites to see the impact of gypsum application on soil moisture retention and crop yields.

**Source:** <http://www.dawn.com/news/1297224/pakistan-loses-20pc-of-land-annually-to-erosion>

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