



*Committee on Forestry Working Group on
Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems*

DRYLANDS SUMMER SCHOOL

Summary report

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2nd Drylands Summer School: summary report

Monitoring Restoration in Agrosilvopastoral Systems for Sustainability and Ecosystem Services

Nairobi, Kenya – 12-15 September 2024

Background

The FAO Committee on Forestry Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (COFO WG) is working to build resilient drylands by training experts to create a shared vision and to advocate for transformative dryland policymaking and management. The Drylands School program represents the forefront of this effort through the building-up of a community of knowledge and practice.

The 2nd Drylands Summer School was organized in collaboration with the FAO Kenya office and in partnership with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) G20 Global Land Initiative, the Community Jameel, the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), the Jameel Observatory, the Agricultural Research Council of South Africa (ARC-LNR), the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026, the GEF-7 Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL-IP), and the Kenya Forest Service. As well as being a partner, the UNCCD G20 Global Land Initiative was the main sponsor of the Summer School, and the Community Jameel funded the field trip.



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Key elements

The overall objective of the 2nd Drylands Summer School was to strengthen capacities to follow-up, monitor, and provide feedback on the actions and related issues in sustainably managing dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral resources. It further built capacities of experts and practitioners on the transformational approach to dryland resilient systems. The specific objectives included the understanding of challenges and approaches, the review and application of monitoring frameworks, co-defining indicators and gathering data, and sharing work and building community.

The 24 participants in the Drylands School included practitioners, project managers, M&E specialists, and policy makers with experience in the management of agrosilvopastoral systems within dryland areas. The program was developed along four days, including a field trip. The entire course was delivered in English. The program was professionally facilitated by the CIFOR-ICRAF team and technically supported by dryland restoration experts and specialists from FAO and the other partners. The Summer School focused on experience-sharing and networking. Participants critically reflected on their work, developed a deeper understanding of their own projects, and learned how to improve the participatory monitoring of their restoration initiatives.



Program and outcomes

The opening of the Drylands School was devoted to understanding challenges and approaches to monitoring dryland sustainable management, degradation, and restoration processes. Opening speeches were delivered by Eliane Oulajiboro (CEO CIFOR-ICRAF), Tiina Vähänen (Deputy Director, FAO Forestry Division), Thomas Hofer (Team Leader, FAO Forestry Division), and Cora van Oosten (Capacity Development & Education, CIFOR-ICRAF). The Keynote presentations were assigned to Igshaan Samuels (IYRP) and Marcelo Rezende (FAO).

Seven dedicated technical sessions, led by different experts, addressed critical issues on monitoring and transforming Drylands, including monitoring frameworks, specific tools and approaches, practices, design and implementation of indicators, adapting monitoring to pastoralist communities, etc. Devashree Niraula, representing the UNCCD's G20 Global Land Initiative, delivered a virtual presentation on UNCCD's innovative tools for monitoring land restoration efforts in drylands.

Along the entire Drylands Summer School participants worked on their case studies both at individual and small group level, focusing on the development of sound monitoring frameworks for their restoration and management projects. Activities related to the case

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studies included participatory landscape mapping, group discussions, practical approaches to monitoring tools, etc.

The program was complemented by a field trip on the 3rd day. The participants visited the KEFRI TIVA Woodland Conservation site in Kwa Vonza including a nursery and a plantation of *Melia volkensii*. The field trip also visited the KEFRI Drylands Eco-Region Research Programme (DERP) in Kitui town and a local commercial forest farmer belonging to the Kyawea Community Forest Association.

The closure of the Summer School was led by Igshaan Samuels (IYRP) and Thomas Hofer (FAO) who shared with participants their ideas how to continue strengthening the Drylands School Program. The upcoming International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 and the International Rangeland Congress in 2025 in Adelaide present many opportunities for growth and collaboration. Deliberations were also held on how to ensure that the group stays connected in the building up of a growing network of dryland restoration professionals across the world. Finally, Tiina Vähänen closed the school and gave the farewell.



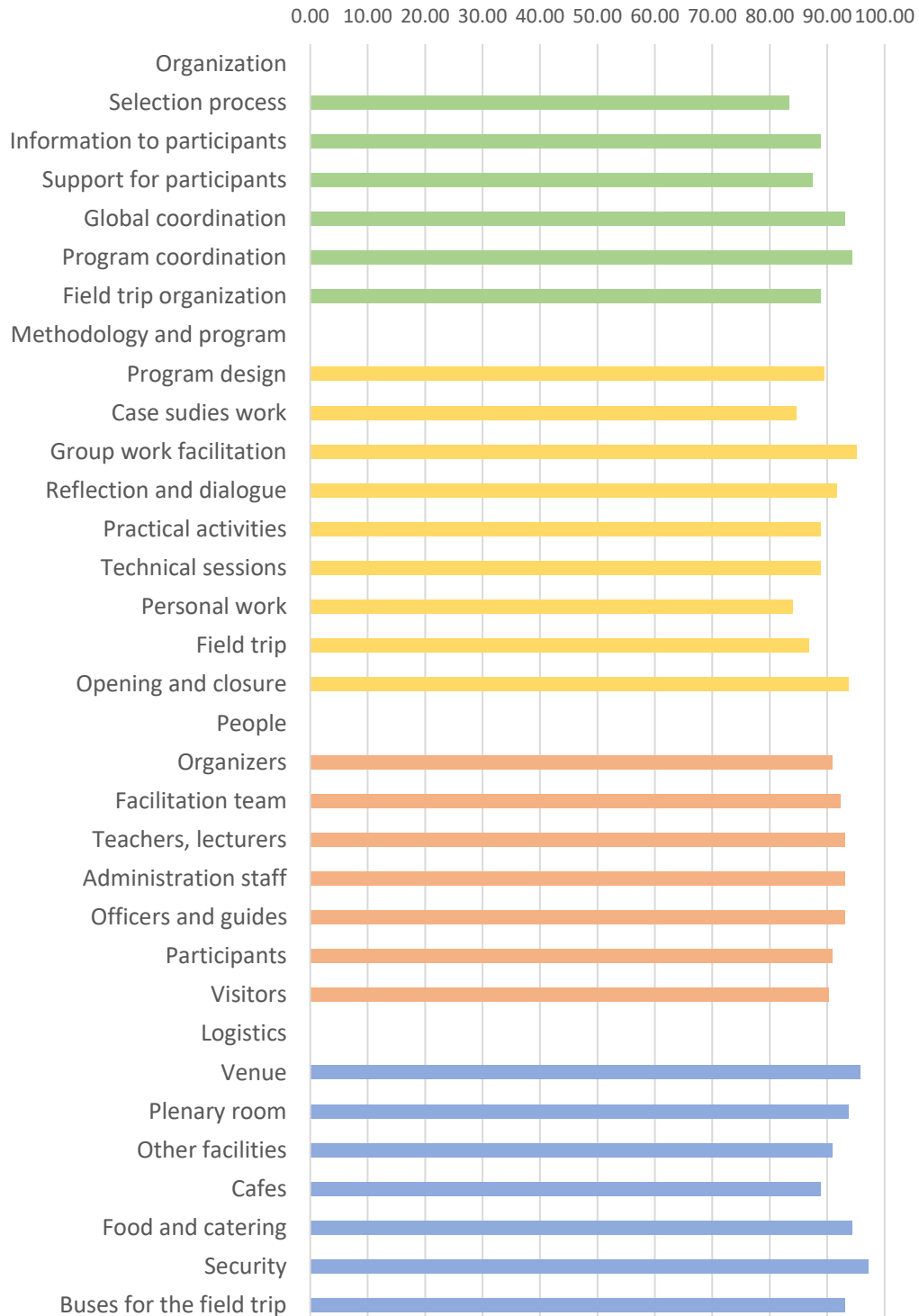
Conclusion

The Drylands Summer School experience has raised significant interest and enthusiasm among the Drylands Community due to its global focus, the long-lasting aim of developing a solid community of knowledge and practice around Drylands and the establishment of an international partnership. The next edition will be celebrated in Adelaide, Australia during the last week of May 2025, ahead of the 2025 International Rangeland Congress. The 4th Drylands School will be held in Mongolia in 2026, framed by the celebration of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

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Evaluation of the 2nd Drylands Summer School

(scale from 0 negative perception to 100 maximum positive perception)



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The participants evaluated the summer school as a memorable and fruitful experience, one of their best trainings. The organization and efforts to make the stay enjoyable were highly appreciated. The event was well-organized with good participation. In fact, the attendees appreciated the selection of participants, based on diversity of backgrounds and experiences. It provided a valuable learning opportunity, with attendees benefiting from the sessions and networking with people. Participants expressed pride and satisfaction, noting improvements in their project management skills and understanding of pastoralism practices. Many look forward to attending future sessions, praising the facilitation team and the educational value of the training.

Dryland's school global aspects: "The overall course was amazing, fun and fruitful"

The participants also expressed high consideration of the co-learning and participatory approach, and the facilitation by the multi-disciplinary resource team and speakers. Participants favoured the interactive group work combined with the practical sessions and networking opportunities. Positive feedback was also received on the narrative the school used towards transforming drylands. This storyline was strongly rated by participants. For future events they recommend a deeper integration between the sessions, practical contents, and experience sharing. Daily reflections and facilitator's debriefings proved to be key elements of the school's success.

Contents: "The content was rich with diversity of ideas"

In their ratings, the participants applauded the wide range of contents included in the program and the combination of theoretical, practical, and experience-sharing topics. Complementarily there were suggestions to give more weight to social economic issues and indicators. The presentation and work on individual case studies has been a particularly highly valued methodological approach in this training.

Time planning: "Extend the school to a full week for better time of active participation"

Time has been a recurring challenge, with limitations arising from the intensive daily schedule and the short overall duration of the program. Time constraints have been particularly highlighted regarding the work on the individual case studies. In the evaluation, participants recommended to extend the duration of the Drylands' schools, ideally up to a week, while improving the flow of sessions and devoting more time to field activities, social interaction, and networking.

Logistics: "Beautiful campus for sharing and making things work"

Participants highly rated the quality of the venue, facilities, and services. The security and collaboration of local staff was also acknowledged.

Field trip: "More field trips to learning from local community experience"

The field trip is considered a particularly important complement to the program. In fact, participants proposed to increase the number of field trips and sites to be visited.

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Planning for the future: *"I will make sure to join again"*

Finally, participants suggested that more resources should be allocated to the Drylands school, which would allow for more travel and accommodation support for participants, especially for early career scientists and practitioners. In addition, participants would welcome more editions each year, ideally with a multilingual approach, and with the inclusion of cultural and social activities in program.



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Annex I

All Applicants Data

The Drylands School application form was open from June to July 2024. A total of 271 applications were received from 57 nationalities, spanning from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America.

<u>Number of Applicants</u>	<u>Number of applicant countries</u>
<u>271</u>	<u>57</u>

The final selection process was performed by FAO, supported by a selection committee including Pedro M. Herrera (FAO), Apoorva Bose (UNCCD-G20) and Ilse Hennemann (CIFOR-ICRAF), who finally approved the 24 selected participants² and a list of reserves to cover unexpected dropouts.

² While 24 participants were selected and confirmed their attendance, 1 did not show up in person to attend the Drylands School, and one cancelled their participation days before the event which did not leave enough time for replacement.