



Drought has plagued Niger since the 1970s, and 2012 might not be an exception despite calls by international aid agencies to step up food donations and other aid to the Sahel country



During the 2011 drought, an area of Zinder province where farmers were practicing Re-Greening had a surplus of 14,000 tons of grains. In simplified terms, Re-Greening means that farmers nurture of trees that would naturally grow on their farmlands rather than clearing the land before planting





Farmers benefit from on-farm trees in many ways, as they bring about reduction in soil temperature, erosion control, increased soil fertility and in some cases excess wood for cooking



The people of Dan Saga village in Maradi have successfully re-greened their land, and are even selling their excess trees on a firewood market. They had to form surveillance committees to stop thieves from stealing their on-farm trees





Policy makers in the southern regions of Niger support Re-Greening as a low-cost method to stop desertification. As people migrate to the south of Niger due to escape harsher conditions in the north, the region has to absorb thousands of migrants





Despite its geographical closeness to the Sahara, Niger is in many parts greener than northern Nigeria. That's why the Heinrich Böll Foundation facilitated a study tour of Nigerian politicians, academics and civil society representatives to see how Re-Greening has made a difference in Niger



The Nigerian delegation visiting southern Niger included farmers, directors of environment and women's rights activists. They engaged with villagers in places such as Dan Saga





Without Re-Greening, it is easy to image this homestead in Maradi province in the middle of an exhausted, dried out land, where the seasonal rains would wash away the fertile top soil. Before Re-Greening, farmers had to plants up to 3 or 5 times, as the wind would blow away soil and seeds. Trees work as wind breakers





Low lying areas with more access to ground water appear like oasis to the passing traveller. Re-Greening has brought ground water levels up by 7 to 14 metres as it allows rain to trickle into the ground and recharge the wet layers below





Mechanised farming is still a distant reality to most Niger farmers. But the farmers practicing Re-Greening have successfully adopted cooperative structures and have an information network that links them to development projects and local governments





Pruning is the heart of the Re-Greening technique, which encourages farmers to let a moderate amount of trees grow on their farms, just enough to benefit the farming and increase yields. Re-Greening has rehabilitated 500,000 hectares of barren land in Niger Republic





The degradation of lands is obvious everywhere in Niger. Although Re-Greening has spread over 5 million hectares of land, the desert is still advancing at a threatening rate of 5 to 6 kilometres per year