Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

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Land management policy in Norway

Land and soil resources are important issues in Norway. In 2004, a national target was formulated as follows: We intend to reduce the yearly loss of soil resources by 50 per cent before 2010.

There are three main reasons for the Norwegian emphasis on soil protection:
First: Soil is a scarce and vulnerable resource; only 3 per cent of the land area is cultivated agricultural land
Second: We witness a rapid loss of areas, which cannot be reproduced. This is a critical and non-sustainable development. The regions with the largest cities are expanding. These cities are located in the centre of the most important agricultural areas. Thus, this urbanisation has severe consequences for the soil resources.
Third: Future global food production is uncertain. Worst case scenarios indicate that we may be more dependent than today on our own productive areas.

The Government has delivered propositions to the Norwegian parliament with a view to strengthen the protection of soil resources. Local politicians are involved and the common aims are:

- High productive areas shall be given a high level of protection
- When agricultural land must be used to building activities, they must be used well
- Growth in outreach must stop – we need a more compact planning.

There are three main categories of policy instruments for protecting soil resources: Legal instruments, economic instruments and information. Information tools have been used to put soil protection on the political agenda. By improving communication between different authorities and the public, we want to create a raised awareness.

Property rights are thus well protected in Norway and are based both on customary, collective and users' rights. The authorities have enforced themselves to obtain easy, cheap and fast registrations mechanisms, and with full transparency. These are valuable experiences to draw upon in development efforts in the field of Legal Empowerment.