



Annex 5.4 Soil erosion



1. What is soil erosion?

Soil erosion is a natural process by which rain and wind remove the topsoil in a given area.

2. What tends to increase soil erosion?

Heavy rains or wind can aggravate soil erosion if the vegetation has been stripped from riverbanks or the shores of lakes.

3. What happens when people living next to lakes or rivers cut down trees to create a lawn or a beach that goes right to the waterfront?

They find that their land erodes each year. The beach is carried off, while the roots of the grass are too shallow to hold the soil.

4. What happens to the water?

The water becomes contaminated by the pesticides and fertilizers put into the soil.

5. What would happen if the shores and banks were reforested?

With their long roots, trees and bushes would hold the soil in place and filter the pollution caused by pesticides and fertilizers. The result is cleaner water.

6. What can we do to improve the situation of shorelines and riverbanks?

We can create a new strip of vegetation 10–15 m wide by planting bushes, evergreens, grasses and other herbaceous plants.

7. What are the consequences of planting this strip of vegetation?

The waterfront soil stabilizes, while the water, now clean, becomes safe for swimming. The bushes and trees provide shelter from the wind, thus reducing the erosion caused by wind and limiting its harmful effect on young plants.

8. What happens to the climate?

The vegetation stores water and causes the dryness to dissipate.