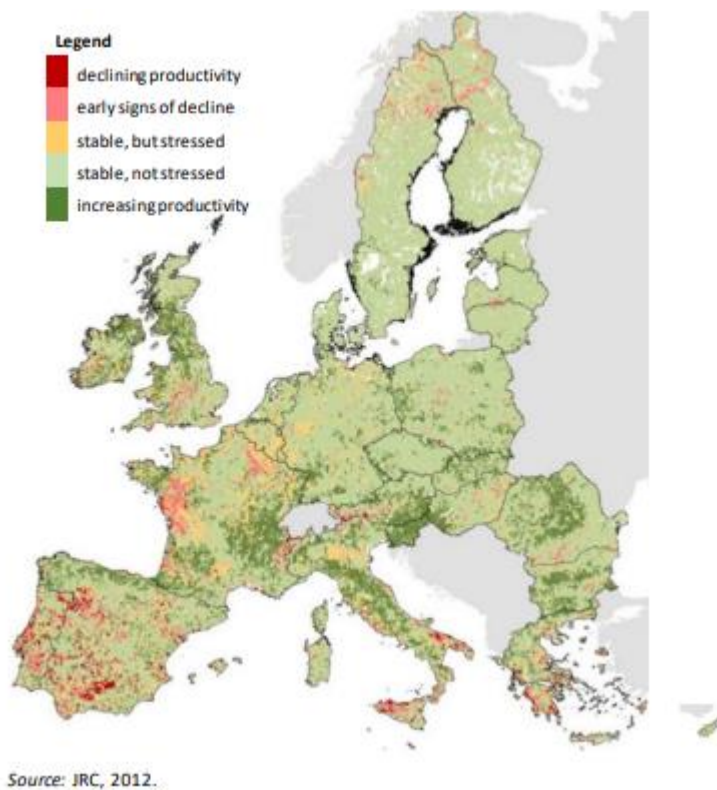


Background information:

Climate change scenarios indicate an increasing vulnerability to desertification in the EU throughout this century, with increases in temperatures and droughts and less precipitation in southern Europe. Its effects will be particularly acute in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania. The figure on land productivity dynamic in Europe (1982-2010) shows that the hot, dry Mediterranean countries are more susceptible to a decline in land productivity.



Audit approach and methodology:

Our audit examined whether the risk of desertification in the EU was being effectively and efficiently addressed.

In particular, we assessed whether:

- the Commission and the Member States had made adequate use of the available data;
- the EU had taken steps to combat desertification in a coherent way;
- projects addressing desertification in the EU had had a positive impact;
- the EU commitment to land degradation neutrality by 2030 was likely to be achieved

Our findings:

We concluded that, while desertification and land degradation are current and growing threats in the EU, the Commission did not have a clear picture of these challenges, and the steps taken to combat desertification lack coherence. The Commission, at that time, has not assessed progress towards meeting the commitment to achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030

Good practice identified:

We identified projects relevant for desertification:



Source: ECA.

An ERDF co-funded project in Sicily, Italy, was aimed at combating desertification by stabilising slopes, enriching the soil, and ensuring better drainage. It also contributed to the growth of vegetation adapted to local climatic conditions. The project contributed to mitigating surface erosion, increasing biodiversity and improving the condition of land.



Source: ECA.

An EAFRD co-funded project in Portugal allowed economic benefits to be obtained from previously non-productive soil. A pine forest was planted in an area with sandy soil. The soil was enriched with organic matter, and irrigation and vegetation control methods that did not involve ploughing were used. The project improved the productivity of the land while protecting the soil from wind erosion.