Abstract

Dryland systems cover 41.3% of global area, support 35.5% of global population and provide important services for both human livelihoods and global ecological sustainability. The dryland ecosystems however are not static but respond to the global changes in climate, economic and social political governance systems. Some of the key challenges facing sustainability of dryland ecosystems and societies include rapid demographic changes, climate change; land degradation through non sustainable utilization of dryland resources; loss of biodiversity; land fragmentation; land tenure and land use changes, escalating conflicts over diminishing natural resources, increasing vulnerability of dryland livelihoods to droughts and floods, and loss of access to global markets. Interventions in drylands improve of our knowledge and understandingof dryland ecosystem resilience and human adaptation strategies for coping with these changes will contribute to sustainable management of these ecosystems. Such interventions will lead to better decision making in promoting opportunities for sustainable land management of drylands. The new Center for Sustainable Dryland Ecosystems and Societies at the University of Nairobi is addressing the opportunities and challenges facing the drylands in Kenya through improved educational curricula, generation of new knowledge through action research, outreach activities as well as by establishing an information/knowledge exchange platform for key players in sustainable dryland development.