

China makes progress in fight against desertification

China will step up efforts to fight desertification to meet a global target of halting net land degradation by 2030, a senior official said Sunday.

The country plans to rehabilitate more than 11,300 square kilometers of severely desertified farmland in the next three years at a cost of at least 27.2 billion yuan (about 4 billion U.S. dollars), Zhang Yongli, deputy head of State Forestry Administration, said at a press conference.

Zhang said China will enhance vegetation protection on desert land and improve compensation mechanisms to reward localities working toward fighting desertification.

China will also strengthen international cooperation, especially with countries along the Belt and Road, to reverse desertification, Zhang said.

Expanding deserts are a global challenge. It is estimated that one-third of the earth is exposed to desertification, affecting millions of people.

China has spent decades curbing desertification through greening. It has effectively contained desertification, with desertified land area shrinking continuously during the past decade.

The area of its desertified land totaled 1.72 million square kilometers at the end of 2014, nearly one fifth of the country, down 9,900 square kilometers from 2009.