

Saudi Arabia launches grants to addresses challenges of land degradation, desertification and drought

15 November 2024 | News

Launches Landmark Young Researchers Awards with \$70,000 Prize fund to reward innovation and research



Launches Landmark Young Researchers Awards with \$70,000 Prize fund to reward innovation and research

As part of Saudi Arabia's incoming UNCCD COP16 Presidency, the Kingdom has launched the Young Researchers Award at the COP16 Science Pavillion. The prestigious competition, with a total prize pool of \$70,000, aims to accelerate groundbreaking research and innovative solutions addressing land degradation, drought and desertification and is open to students and young researchers from across the world.

A total of seven awards of \$10,000 each will be given to early-career researchers (up to age 35) who can demonstrate impactful contributions to key areas including sustainable land management, drought resilience, and land restoration. The seven award categories are land restoration, sustainable agri-food systems, equitable land governance, community and youth engagement, science, technology and innovation, resilience and climate adaptation, and finance and sustainable land investments.

The awards will be presented at a high-profile event during UNCCD COP16 in Riyadh. Nominees will be flown to Saudi Arabia and provided five days of accommodation. Winners will also be given a unique opportunity to be mentored by leading experts.

"Land degradation, drought and desertification are leading causes of many of the issues impacting people around the world, be it food insecurity, water insecurity or forced migration. COP16 in Riyadh is an opportunity to find urgent solutions, and help turn the tide on these global crises," said Dr. Osama Faqeeha, Deputy Minister for Environment, Ministry of Environment,

Water and Agriculture, and Advisor to the UNCCD COP16 Presidency.

The awards seek to accelerate research, innovation and technology that can help tackle land degradation, drought and desertification, and enhance global land restoration and drought resilience efforts.

The international competition encourages applicants to demonstrate innovative approaches, long-term sustainability and scalability, and focus on how their work can benefit the Middle East. Submissions are open until November 22nd and will be evaluated by a dedicated scientific committee that includes leading experts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The awards come as Saudi Arabia seeks to accelerate global action on desertification, land degradation, and drought, which affect 3.2 billion people worldwide. With 40% of land already degraded according to the UNCCD, Saudi Arabia's incoming UNCCD Presidency is seeking to mobilize the international community at COP16 in Riyadh to deliver multilateral action on a range of pressing issues, including land restoration and drought resilience.

The awards are part of a packed agenda taking place at the COP16 Science Pavilion, a hub aimed at showcasing cutting-edge research and fostering collaboration between scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders. The Pavilion will be part of the first ever Green Zone at a UNCCD COP.