

Pasternak, D., Schlissel, A. (ed.): **Combating Desertification with Plants.** - Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, New York - Boston - Dordrecht - London - Moscow 2001. 462 pp. EUR 137.00. ISBN 0-306-46632-5.

Desertification (degradation of soils in arid and semiarid regions) is occurring in many countries in the world and the number of people negatively affected is in the hundred of millions. In most cases desertification is a direct result of the disruption of the natural plant cover.

This book deals with the role of plants in combating desertification. Plants can not only prevent further loss of soil fertility but also restore degraded lands to productivity. The book provides the reader with the experience of scientists from 30 countries attending the conference "Combating Desertification with Plants" which was held in Beer Sheva, Israel (2 - 5 November 1999).

The book starts with an introduction describing in two chapters the main agricultural production systems and socioeconomic problems causing present day desertification. The book is further subdivided into four sections: "Potential germplasm for arid lands", "Introduction, domestication and dissemination of arid

land plants", "Land rehabilitation", and "Mechanisms of plant transfer". The book presents the results of many years of research during which thousands of plants were systematically screened for adaptability to the soil and climate in dry regions. Many practically important species from edible mushrooms, nectariferous plants, medicinal plants, ornamental plants, cacti, crops, vegetables, fruits to multipurpose tree species were suggested to be useful to combat desertification. The endeavour of biodiversity preservation is also mentioned. Further, the book is focused on bioreclamation of saline soils and stabilization of sand dunes. In the last part, the efforts of international and national organizations of sustainable development in desertification-prone regions are described. Very useful is a detailed list of trees, shrubs and prostrate plants for landscaping, afforestation and environmental improvement in arid lands.

The book might be of vitally importance in the battle against mining the environment in order to survive.

J. POSPÍŠILOVÁ (*Praha*)