

Introduction to living terraces

Soil erosion is amongst the most pressing issues regarding global food security.

Lack of grazing management and conventional farming methods like ploughing, monoculture and non renewal of organic wastes leaves the soil uncovered. Wind and rain then leads to soil erosion and this is more serious for farm land on slopes.

Soil erosion reduction

Swales and terraces are the most common methods used to control soil erosion. Swales are constructed by digging trenches along contours and by mounting the soil on the downer hill side. This enables runoff to be collected in the trenches and can better infiltrate into the ground.

Terraces are quite similar to swales. They are also constructed along contours by reshaping the slope into multiple steps which are usually fortified with stones. The runoff is slowed down and has ample time to infiltrate.

Vegetation cover must be established on the terraces from the beginning.

Building living terraces

To build a living terrace, tree rows are established along the contour lines of the slope. When the trees have grown to several metres in height, they are cut down and laid horizontally between the stamps of trees in order to get a woven structure of vertical and horizontal elements.

By choosing trees that are propagated by cuttings, the cut off branches will form roots when they have contact with the soil

and in this way, the whole structure will be alive, productive and more stable due to the roots.