Desertification of terrestrial ecosystems from human impact leads to reduced productivity, undesirable biological changes, accelerated soil deterioration, and even increased hazards for human occupancy. Desertification, particularly in arid lands, is one of the most serious economic and social problems facing government officials, planners, scientists, engineers, and certainly the farmers and herders who make their living from these lands.

Harold Dregne has organized and presented a comprehensive discussion of the subject. Following a brief introduction, he covers five major topics: desertification processes, desertification indicators, cause and effect, prevention and reversal, and occurrence. Parallel headings in the major chapters highlight the relationships among major desertification events: What happened and to what extent, why it happened, how we know it happened, and what to do about it.

Dregne's discussion of the difficulty of preventing or reversing desertification shows that basic technical knowledge now enables us to make major accomplishments, but adaptive research and field testing are needed to find the right technical solution for a particular location. His suggested four-step program of national commitment, focusing on the most favorable areas first, concomitant development of related small-scale industries, and improvement of infrastructure is an appropriate and workable approach to the reversal of desertification—a long-term process.

The book's format and style make it easily readable by a diverse audience. Data are presented clearly in many tables, and maps showing affected areas and extent of desertification are well drawn and easy to interpret. An extensive list of references accompanies each major chapter, and a final index facilitates locating key concepts.

I strongly recommend this book to all who are concerned with the problem of desertification and who search for its solution.