

China may need 300 years to beat desertification

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A file picture shows a woman on her onion farm on the edge of the desert that threatens to engulf it in China's northwest Gansu province. Living on the route of the historic Silk Road, she is on the front lines of a national struggle against desertification, a problem that could take 300 years to reverse, according to state media. About 27 percent of China's mass land is considered desertified

Huge population pressures, scarce rainfall and climate change have made China the world's biggest victim of desertification, a problem that could take 300 years to reverse, state media said Wednesday.

Overgrazing, excessive land reclamation and inappropriate water use also make it especially difficult to halt deserts from encroaching on large areas of land in the nation's arid north and west, the China Daily reported.

"China is still a country with the largest area of desertified land in the

world," Zhu Lieke, deputy director of the State Forestry Administration, was quoted as saying.

About 27 percent of China's total land mass, or about 2.6 million square kilometres (1.04 million square miles), are considered desertified land, while another 18 percent of the nation's land is eroded by sand, the report said.

Experts believe that 530,000 square kilometres of the nation's deserts can be returned to green land, but the process will take 300 years at the current rate of reversing [desertification](#) by 1,700 square kilometres annually, it said.

Some of the worst land erosion in the world occurs in the basin of the [Yellow River](#), China's second largest river, with 62 percent of the area affected by water and [soil erosion](#), the paper said in a separate report.

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