

# Introduction

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In the words of Lord John Boyd Orr, the first Director-General of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1948. 'Increases in agricultural production are possible through modern methods. But these advances in Science will be useless, unless there is enough good land for farming. If the soil on which all agriculture and all human life depends is wasted away, then the battle to free mankind from want can not be won.' Total historic loss of land through soil degradation is put at 2 billion hectare, the present arable area of the world being about 1.5 billion hectare Kovda (1977) estimated the annual loss of productive land as 5 to 7 million hectare.

Soil and water are a vital natural source whose proper use greatly determines the capability of life support systems and the socio-economic development of people. History records the rise and fall of civilization in accordance with the wise use or abuse of these resources. **Land degradation is one of the major threats facing mankind which not only undetermines the productive capacity of an ecosystem but also affects global climate.** A large portion of India's land shows clear evidence of advanced and continuous degradation, threatening socio-economic and ecological consequences are immense.

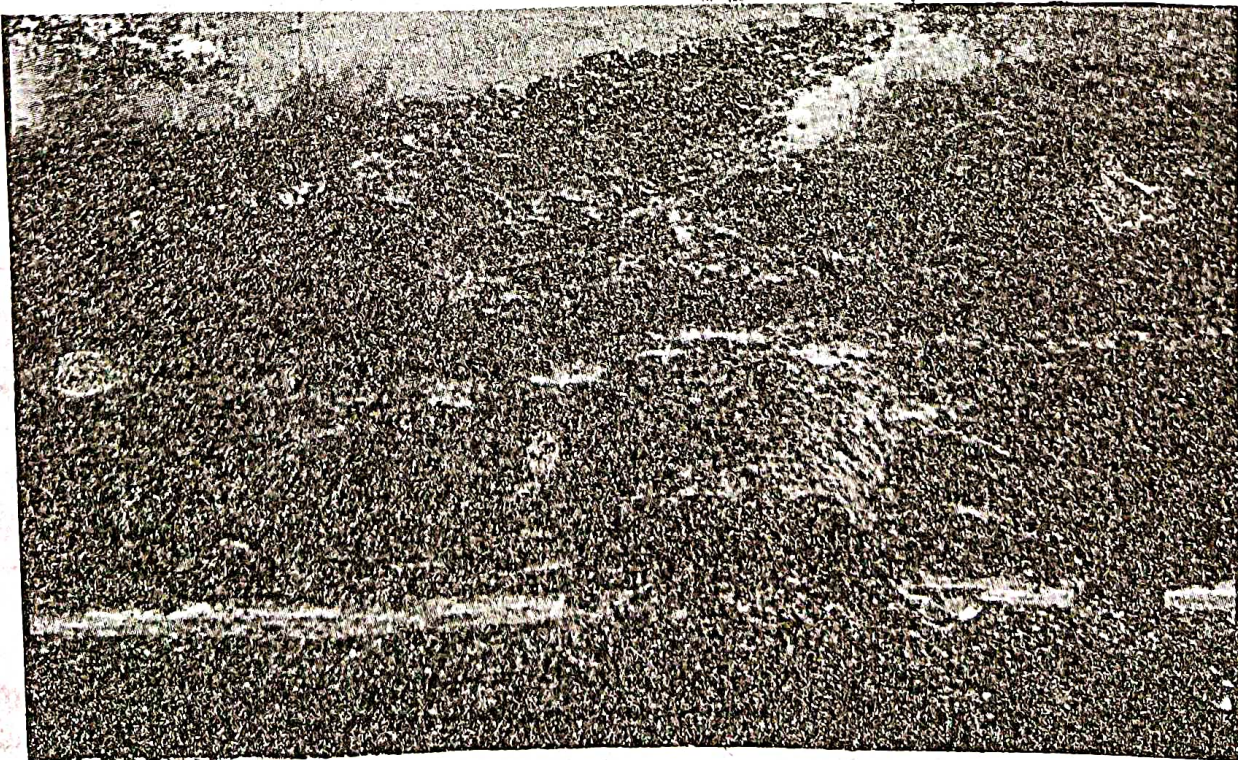


Fig. 1.1 Degraded Soil