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Global actions for sustainable rangelands and pastoralism to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality

A POLICY BRIEF, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNCCD CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP)

Prepared by the IYRP Rangelands & Land Degradation Neutrality Working Group

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Rangelands and pastoralism must be valued and supported for their contribution to achieve local and global goals – particularly towards reaching Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)

More than half of the world's land mass is rangeland – and yet these landscapes and the people who inhabit and manage them have been largely neglected. They are a main source of food and feed for humanity, and yet they are also the world economy's dumping ground. It is time to shift perspective – from **'a rangeland problem'** to **'a sustainable rangeland solution'**. It is time to commit globally to halt indiscriminate rangeland conversion, to pass judicious policies and laws. It is time to reach a global consensus to upgrade rangelands, **set stronger LDN targets** and allocate funding.



The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has designated 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP 2026) to enhance rangeland management and the lives of pastoralists. With this declaration, UN Member States are called upon to invest in sustainable rangeland management, to restore degraded lands, to improve market access by pastoralists, to enhance livestock extension services, and to fill knowledge gaps on rangelands and pastoralism.

This brief summarizes the findings of a comprehensive science review undertaken by a team of experts from the IYRP International Support Group, a coalition of more than 320 organizations worldwide, to determine key issues to address in rangelands and pastoralism and targets to set in the LDN work proposed by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to maintain or enhance the world's land-based natural capital.

Rangelands occupy more than half of the Earth's land surface. Pastoralism has been practiced for millennia on rangelands as a way for communities to adapt to climatically highly variable environments with a great diversity of natural resources. More than two billion people today depend directly or indirectly on pastoralist livelihoods, value chains and foods. Pastoralism remains the most viable way to manage rangeland ecosystems for the benefit of both people and the environment. In addition to producing nourishing milk, dairy products and meat from livestock herds, pastoralism on rangelands and farmlands provides essential ecosystem services by enriching soils, capturing carbon, dispersing seed, shaping landscapes, protecting downstream areas from floods and drying up of rivers, and conserving biodiversity, including the many endangered wildlife species that make rangelands their home.

Challenges

The main threats to the world's rangelands and pastoralism are conversion to land uses other than grazing and degradation of the remaining rangelands. Increasing human pressures and climatic stressors are together forcing millions of traditional rangeland users to cope with livestock production losses, water and forage scarcity, land use conflicts, displacement, sedentarization and poverty. The major drivers behind this suite of problems are poor governance and

institutional weaknesses, policy neglect, underinvestment, and large knowledge and technology gaps. In some countries, the encroachment of mining activities and of poorly planned large-scale renewable energy interventions are damaging pastoralist livelihoods and rangeland health, and compromising pastoralists' access rights. Worldwide, policies prioritizing the industrialized livestock sector are under-

mining sustainable pastoralist practices. A persistent lack of appreciation for pastoralism as a viable and sustainable land use that contributes to many ecosystem services, has left rangelands and their pastoral stewards marginalized and overlooked in global agenda setting. If continued, this deteriorating situation will have dire consequences for pastoral lands and peoples and for the whole planet.

Shifting the perspective

Despite these significant threats, implementation of many innovative policies and good practices has enhanced the wellbeing of rangelands and pastoralists in different parts of the world. Those demonstrable successes inform our calls to action below. These eight calls to action demand a shift in view – from regarding pastoralists and their livestock as part of 'the rangeland problem' to seeing them as part of a time-honored and nature-based solution for the health of rangeland agro-ecosystems.

A similar level of global commitment is needed to halt indiscriminate rangeland conversion as there has been for halting deforestation. LDN as a global commitment and tool must increase attention to rangelands through stronger targets, action, and funding.

Judicious policies and practices for sustainable rangeland management and restoration can go far in meeting national and global commitments to mitigating climate change, to meeting the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Managing rangelands sustainably is a commitment many countries have made to reach LDN. Achieving LDN as defined by UNCCD is keeping the balance between the amount of land being degraded and the amount being restored or improved.



Calls to action

The International Support Group for IYRP 2026 calls on the UNCCD Conference of the Parties to adopt eight priority actions to meet the challenges facing rangelands and pastoralists.

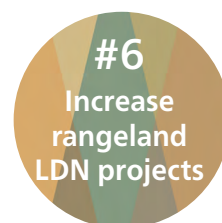


#5 Strengthen participatory land governance and equity: Incorporate pastoralists in all decision-making on the use and management of rangelands and ensure they have well-defined **legal and customary tenure and access rights**. Support **participatory governance** practices that recognize pastoralists are at the heart of rangeland stewardship. Build on traditional pastoralist knowledge and promote equity by facilitating the participation of marginalized pastoralist groups such as women, youth, elders and indigenous peoples.



#1 Stop indiscriminate conversion of rangelands: Continued conversion of rangelands to croplands, tree plantations, forests, mining areas, land for generating renewable energy, infrastructure and human settlements is hurting rangeland productivity, ecosystem services and rangelands' potential role in mitigating climate change. Halt indiscriminate rangeland conversion practices until appropriate legislation and monitoring efforts are put into effect.

#6 Increase rangeland and pastoral projects under the LDN Fund by 30%: Invest in rangeland restoration and traditional rotational movement, transhumance and other cost-effective and sustainable rangeland management practices, by calling on the **LDN Fund to increase its support to rangelands and pastoralist projects by 30%** by 2026, year of the IYRP.



#2 Recognize the importance of pastoral mobility: Grazing by migratory, wild and domesticated herbivores is an integral component of rangeland ecosystems. Recognize the importance of **pastoral mobility** as a nature-based solution for sustainably managing and restoring rangeland health. Provide flexible and secure land-tenure systems, well-planned and provisioned animal corridors, and waterpoints for transhumance systems.



#7 Commit LDN targets to rangelands and pastoralism: Include rangeland restoration and sustainable pastoralism in **UNCCD LDN targets** and accelerate work towards them. Require Parties that have not done so to set specific LDN targets to avoid, reduce and reverse rangeland degradation and promote sustainable rangeland management and pastoralism.



#3 Innovate policies and technologies: Re-assess **economic policies** that harm rangelands and pastoralists. Replace subsidies for supplemental feed that lead to rangeland degradation with economic alternatives, such as support for ecotourism and environmental services, livestock insurance and mobile abattoirs. Lift market barriers, encourage animal diversity, livestock health and locally adapted breeds. Support decentralized and small-scale renewable energy production and access. Set up legal frameworks for organic certification of pastoral products.



#8 Earmark 25% of the LDN Fund for knowledge and capacity building: Reduce significant rangeland and pastoralist knowledge gaps through participatory research and impact assessments; co-creation of knowledge; monitoring, evaluation and modeling. Incorporate this knowledge in strategic planning to help determine and verify global statistics, to assess the impacts of different land management practices; and to identify, map and monitor changes in land use and management practices. Ensure that the **LDN Fund earmarks 25% of its funding for knowledge sharing, awareness raising, evidence-based decision-support work and capacity building** of local pastoralist land users and decision-makers.



#4 Promote integrated, multifunctional land use: Employ sustainable rangeland management practices and policies that seek integrated objectives, such as silvo-pastoralism and other agroforestry schemes, wildlife-livestock integration and eco-tourism to achieve multiple sustainability benefits through **multifunctional land use**.



Seizing the opportunity

The IYRP 2026 offers an excellent opportunity for UNCCD Member States and other parties to enhance the momentum for achieving the SDGs and making the Year a game-changer for rangelands and pastoralists and for a healthy planet.



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