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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
**RANGELANDS AND  
PASTORALISTS**  
2026



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# Regional Dialogue on Sustainable Rangelands and Pastoralism - Africa

04 February 2026



# AGENDA – REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM: AFRICA

1. **Opening Segment:** Why Rangelands Matter
2. **COP16 Decision and Implications**
3. **Regional Context** of Rangelands & Pastoralism and IYRP
4. **Government perspectives: case studies, solutions, and future policy perspectives from Kenya, Ethiopia, and Botswana**
5. **Closing & Resources:** Key takeaways, COP17 priorities, next steps



*Regional Dialogues on Sustainable  
Rangelands and Pastoralism*

# The Value Proposition: Why Rangelands Matter

*Unlocking Economic, Climate, and Cultural Potential*

**Clarisse Umutoni**

Livestock and Rangeland Systems Scientist  
ILRI-Senegal, WCA

*February 4, 2025*



# Why talk about rangelands now?



## Rangelands: Mainstream, Not Marginal

**54%**

**Earth's Land**

The largest terrestrial ecosystem on the planet.

**142**

**Countries**

Supporting over 500 million pastoralists worldwide.

**2B**

**People**

Depend directly on rangeland goods and services.



# The Economic Engine: Beyond Grazing

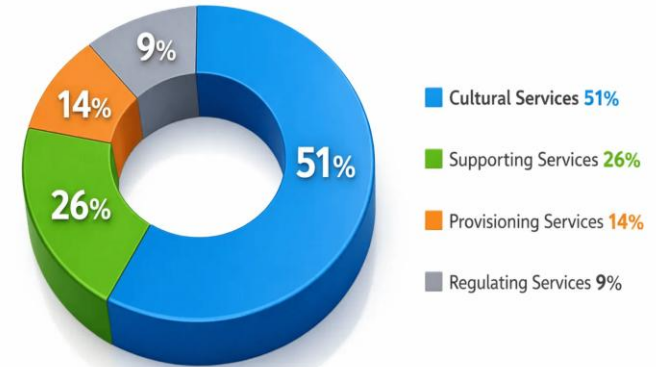
**\$5,934**

*Per Hectare / Year*

**Rangelands  
generate value  
in many ways**

- **80% of Agricultural GDP:** In some countries, rangelands are the primary economic driver, far exceeding conventional estimates.
- **Hidden Assets:** Over 75% of rangeland value comes from "invisible" services like cultural heritage and soil fertility.
- **Complex Systems:** Rangelands are not just grazing land; they are diversified portfolios of goods, from meat and fiber to climate regulation.

Economic Value of Rangeland Ecosystem Services



# The Underground Giant: A Stable Climate Asset

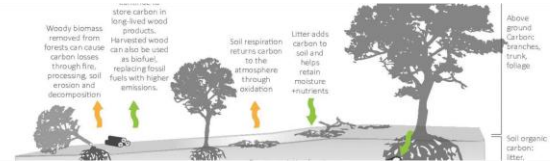
Rangelands are also major climate assets:

- Grasslands store ~34% of terrestrial carbon
- 90% stored underground (more stable than forests)
- Rangelands are one of the world's largest and most ignored, carbon sinks
- Can sequester 2–7 billion tons CO<sub>2</sub>/year with good management



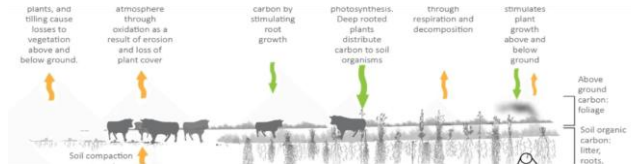
***a low-cost natural climate solution currently missing from global strategies***

## Forests: Above-Ground



Carbon stored primarily **in biomass**  
Vulnerable to fire, pests, and drought.

## Rangelands: Below-Ground



**90% of carbon** is stored underground in deep roots.  
**Highly stable and resilient** to surface disturbances.

# A Living Landscape: Biodiversity & Heritage



## Biodiversity Hotspots

- Rangelands are not deserts;
- They are home to **1/3 of global key biodiversity areas**.
- High species richness and endemism depend on sustainable management rather than isolation.
- Well-managed rangelands allow livestock and wildlife to coexist.

## Cultural Landscapes

- Home to nomads, pastoralists, herders, transhumant systems
- For pastoralists, livestock is identity, wealth, and insurance.
- These living landscapes preserve ancient knowledge systems and maintain social cohesion across generations.



# The High Cost of Inaction

## \$300B

### Annual Global Loss

#### **25–33% of Rangelands**

**Degraded:** Fueling poverty, food insecurity, and mass migration.

#### **Water Insecurity:**

Degraded soils lose the ability to infiltrate rain and recharge aquifers.

#### **Carbon Instability:**

Erosion turns stable underground sinks into major emission sources.

*"When rangelands erode, we lose more than soil; we lose the foundation of our climate and culture."*

# The Business Case for Restoration

## The Business Case for Restoration



## High Economic Returns

Every **\$1** invested in rangeland restoration yields **\$4 to \$35 in returns**, outperforming many traditional infrastructure projects.

## Proven Profitability

Internal Rates of Return (IRR) for grassland restoration range from **35% to 58%**, demonstrating a robust commercial case.

## Scalable Solutions

Passive restoration (community-led management) starts as low as **\$513/ha**, making large-scale impact affordable.

*Investing in rangelands is not charity; it is smart economics and smart climate policy.*



**Median restoration cost:**  
USD 1,691/ha (all landscapes).

**Rangeland costs:**  
From USD 513/ha (passive regeneration) to USD 3,012/ha (silvopasture).

**Benefit–cost ratios (grasslands):**  
From 4:1 to 35:1.

**Internal rates of return:**  
From 35% to 58%

# Key Takeaway

## Why Rangelands Matter Now?

### People

Securing **livelihoods, food, and identity** for over 2 billion people and 500 million pastoralists.

### Planet

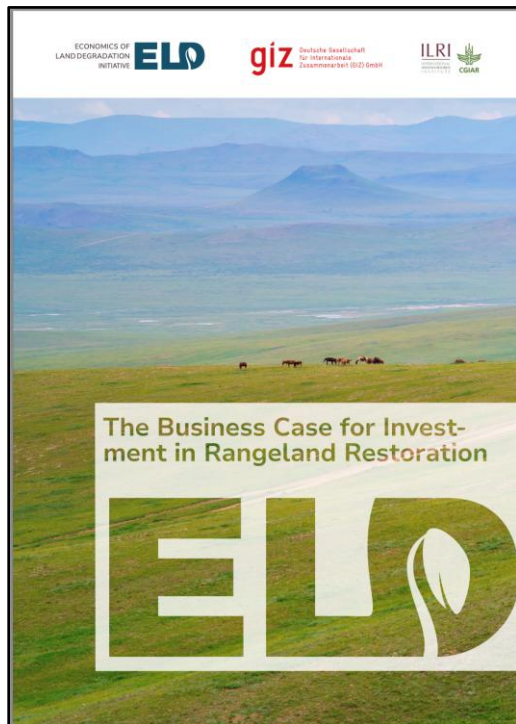
Providing a **stable climate sink** and a haven for 1/3 of global key biodiversity areas.

### Prosperity

Acting as a **high-return economic asset** with proven ROI of up to \$35 for every \$1 invested.

***If we want food security, climate action and biodiversity protection, rangelands must be part of the solution.***

## Published Paper



## Upcoming Global Publication

### Rangelands Rising

*Investing in Sustainable Global Restoration*

**UNDER DEVELOPMENT**

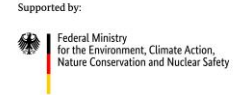
A person, likely a woman, is shown from the back, wearing a traditional headwrap and a shawl. She is holding a long wooden staff. The background is a vast, open savanna landscape with a herd of animals grazing in the distance. The overall tone is warm and natural.

# Let's make the value of rangelands count.

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**Clarisse Umutoni**

ILRI-Senegal, WCA



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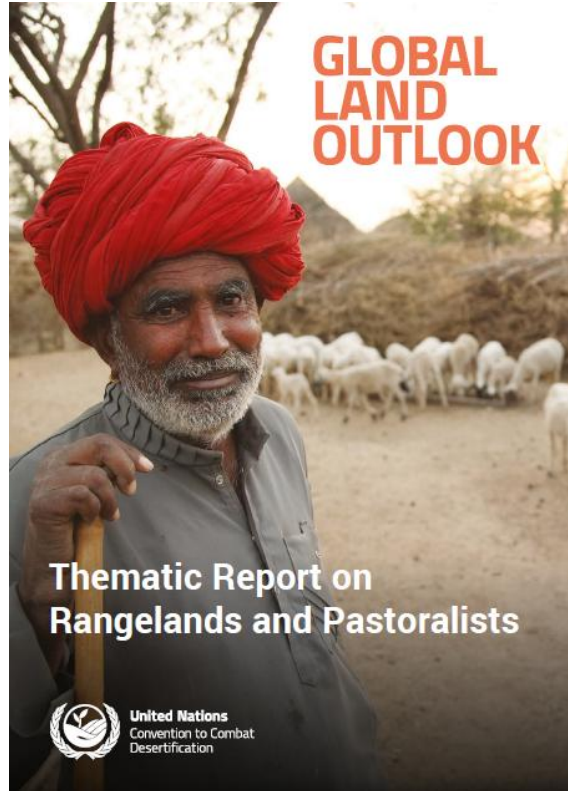
# UNCCD COP16 Decision and Implications

Sasha Alexander, Policy Officer, Global Policy  
Advocacy & Regional Cooperation, UNCCD

Louise Baker, Managing Director, Global Mechanism,  
UNCCD



# UNCCD Global Land Outlook: Rangelands and Pastoralists



- People-centered and rights-based framework for understanding and investing in rangeland health and sustainable pastoralism
- Integration of livelihoods, extensive livestock production, regional economies, and national development priorities
- Policy-relevant narrative and legal frameworks for inclusive governance/management approaches
- More than 60 case studies from around the world: learning from the past and planning for the future

# UNCCD COP Decision on Rangelands and Pastoralists

Decision 29/COP.16 (2024) represents a **commitment by 196 countries** and the EU to protect rangelands and the communities that depend on them.

Countries pledged to **increase their efforts to conserve, sustainably manage, and restore** their rangelands and report progress at COP17, which will be hosted by Mongolia from 17-28 August 2026.

This COP decision **represents a fundamental shift**, placing rangelands alongside croplands, forests, and wetlands in global sustainability efforts ...

... and fully **recognizing the role of pastoralist systems** in enhancing climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and food security.

# National Priorities Identified by the UNCCD COP

Recognizing the essential role of healthy rangelands in addressing key challenges related to livelihoods, cultural survival, food security, desertification, land degradation and drought, biodiversity loss, and climate change, Parties are invited to:

- **prioritize policies and investments** for the sustainable management of rangelands,
- **foster an enabling environment** for responsible and inclusive governance,
- **improve tenure security** in rangelands in line with the VGGT.

# UNCCD Work Programme

The secretariat and the Global Mechanism are requested to work with partners to support Parties with:

- awareness-raising, capacity-building and resource mobilization;
- inclusive, community-based and participatory approaches that meaningfully engage pastoralist and other rangeland communities, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
- the development of initiatives for sustainable rangeland management, restoration and conservation through, inter alia, multi-stakeholder dialogues and national consultations (e.g., Flagship Initiative).

## Next Steps – COP17

UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia will bring together many diverse rangeland constituencies to celebrate the IYRP and the completion of the Silk Road Journey -- with significant NGO/CSO and high-level representation.

While the agenda is still being finalized, rangelands and pastoralists are expected to feature prominently in numerous COP17 spaces, including special events and interactive dialogues.

Once the schedule becomes available, partners will be invited to help shape the discussions on the next steps for the convention, including modalities for partnerships to leverage technical and financial resources.



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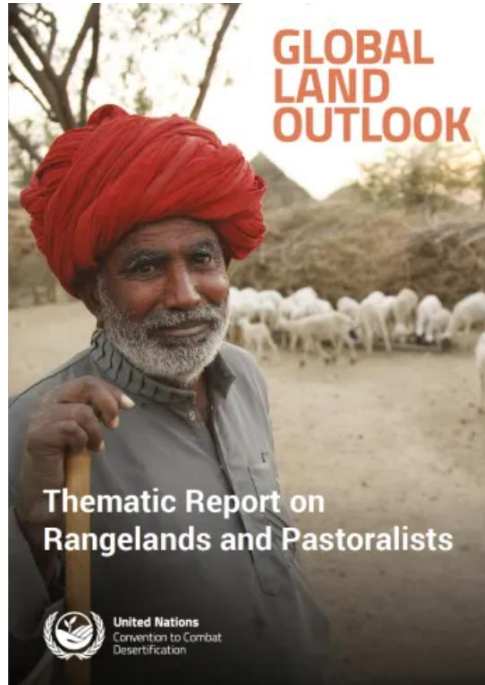
# Rangelands Flagship Initiative

**Increasing rangeland investments to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality**  
By conserving, sustainably managing and restoring rangeland landscapes

# Rangelands Flagship Initiative



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- Rangelands account for the majority of the world's drylands
- 50% of rangelands may face some form of land degradation & desertification
- UNCCD Decision [COP16/L15](#) on Rangelands and Pastoralists calls on all actors to prioritise policies and investments for rangelands
- 2026: International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists: an opportunity for action



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# Rangelands Flagship Initiative



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**Goal: increase rangeland investments to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality**

- Conserve, sustainably manage and restore rangeland landscapes

## Three components

1. Develop supporting knowledge products
2. Increase public & private investment in rangelands
3. Strengthen institutions to promote rangeland policy and investment

The Initiative will be launched at UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia during the International Year on Rangelands and Pastoralists (2026)

## Impacts:

- Sustainable development in rangelands, including:
  - Poverty reduction, livelihood resilience, food security, one health, peace and stability
- Synergy between combatting desertification, conserving biodiversity, and mitigating & adapting to climate change

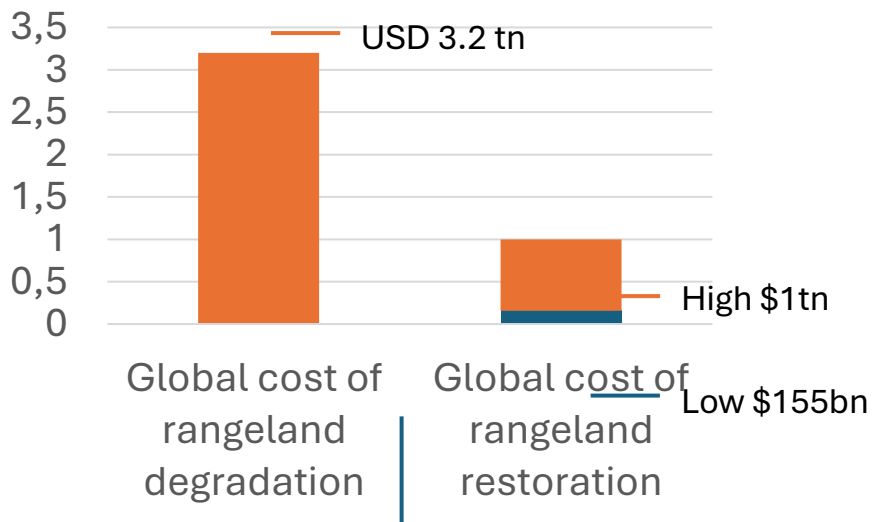
# Rangelands Flagship Initiative



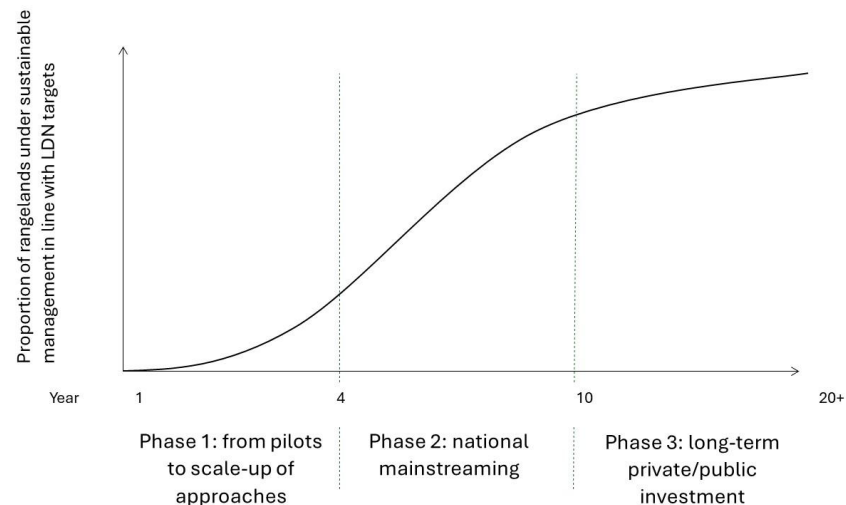
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## Rangeland restoration investment needs

Trillion US\$



## Long term programmatic investments: from scaling up pilots to national mainstreaming



# Component 2: Project pipeline for sustainable rangeland management



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Public-private investment projects in rangeland restoration (US\$ 1 billion) contributing to several impacts:

- Sustainable land management & landscape restoration
- Drought resilience
- Mitigating sand and dust storms
- Conserving biodiversity
- Carbon sequestration
- Climate change adaptation
- Food security
- Pastoralist livelihood resilience
- Securing cultural heritage
- Sustainable livestock production
- One Health
- Conflict and Migration

# Development of the Rangeland Flagship Initiative



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## • Consultations

- 50 interviews with partners
- Consultative meetings in 2023 and 2024

## • Main findings

- Knowledge gaps
- Policy failures
- Low investment
- Missed opportunities

## • Resources

- GLO Thematic Report on Rangelands
- Rangeland Flagship Initiative Concept Note
- Draft Rangeland Standard (SFA)
- Draft Screening Tool for Rangeland LDN Projects
- Draft Coalition Concept Note developed by Mongolia



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United for land

# UNCCD Rangeland Flagship Initiative

Thank you



***CHALLENGES FACING RANGELAND & PASTORALISTS***

***The East Africa Region***

**Ken Otieno**

**Executive Director- RECONCILE**

**Technical Coordinator RP3 Africa**



**What constitutes  
Rangelands and  
Pastoralism?**

## Contextualising rangelands and pastoralists' problems

Rangelands are a communally shared resource that supports pastoralists livelihoods system. The narrative has to change- the discourse on collective land tenure should be cognizant of the great strides in policy frameworks across Africa and increasing understanding of the complexity of rangelands and pastoral systems.

- AU policy framework on pastoralism
- IGAD-Regional rangeland management strategic framework
- Kenya –Sessional paper no.8 of 2012 – Development of northern Kenya & other arid lands
- Kenya-Rangeland management & Pastoralism Strategy (2021-2032)
- Kenya –Community Land Act 2016
- Ethiopia-National policy framework for pastoralism
- Ethiopia –Community land formalization/certification
- Somalia – Rangeland management strategy
- Uganda –Draft Rangeland management policy



# But, there are Challenges that Pastoralist Communities have to deal with.

## 1. Land Governance:

- Pastoralist access to rangelands is increasingly threatened by weakening land and resource governance systems
- Changes in land use, lack of proper land use planning (land enclosure, informal privatization, and territorialization, often supported by states and external investors)

## 2. Climate Change Impacts

- Rangelands face increased pressure from severe and prolonged droughts, along with land degradation, overgrazing, and desertification, all exacerbated by climate change.
- Worsening rangeland conditions and barriers to accessing land force pastoralists into limited, restricted areas, impacting their traditional patterns of mobility and access to feed and water.

## 3. Policy and Governance Challenges

- Governments often fail to allocate

sufficient resources or invest in the livestock sector, with weak support for pastoralist production systems and market access.

## 4. Social and Economic Dynamics

- Disputes over land and water rights are common and have intensified, sometimes leading to violent conflicts and undermining customary resource management.

## 5. Insecure Land Tenure:

- Challenges in securing land rights due to unclear land tenure systems, leading to a lack of legal recognition for their traditional practices.

# **BUILDING COMMUNITY VOICES FOR GLOBAL AWARENESS, INVESTMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

- **Global Initiatives:** The International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists (IYRP) aims to raise awareness and advocate for policies to protect pastoral livelihoods and their role in sustainable development
- Regional and global gatherings as opportunities
- Catalyst for national dialogue between decision makers and communities



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# County case studies and solutions: Kenya

Halima Nenkari, Head of Livestock Programmes  
Coordination and Multilateral Relations, Ministry of  
Agriculture and Livestock Development, Kenya



# The Challenge: Why Rangelands Matter in Kenya

- covers  $\geq 80\%$  of the country's total landmass, home to majority of Kenya's livestock and wildlife and plays a major role in climate change mitigation.
- The Backbone of the Livestock Economy
- Cultural heritage
- Biodiversity and Tourism
- Key for Ecological Health and Climate Action
- Emerging Economic Opportunities



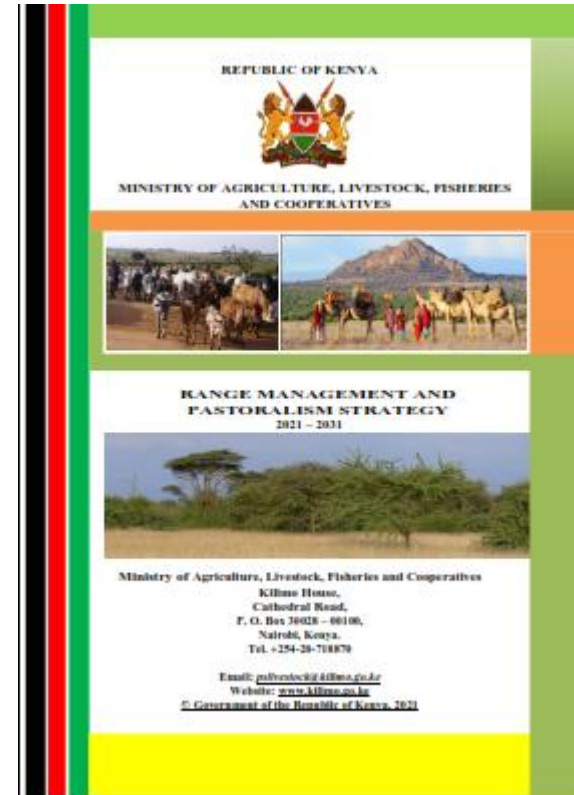
# Key stakeholders affected by rangeland degradation

- Pastoral Communities
- Hunter-gatherers
- Ranchers
- Farmers
- Wildlife and nature conservationists
- Government Agencies
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Local Businesses:

# Our Policy Response: Kenya's National Rangeland Strategy & Integration into LDN

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) indicators

- Land use land cover,
  - land productivity and
  - soil organic carbon
- 
- Policy adopted:
  - Key commitments:
  - 15 billion trees and Irrigated crop production in rangelands – Is this a threat to rangelands?



# Implementation in Action

## Pathways to Scale: Policy → Finance → Results

- Government commitment e.g. growing 15 Billion trees
- Regional commitment
- Financial support - Resource mobilization both local and external
- Customize best practices
- **ACTION – ACTUAL IMPLEMENTATION**

# What We Need Next: Kenya's Priorities for Regional Cooperation & Support

## Priorities

- Harmonizing rangeland policies across borders and promote integrated land-use planning.
- Knowledge Sharing & Technology
- Joint management of transboundary resources combating invasive species

## Support

- Capacity Building:
- Developing innovative regional financing mechanisms
- Infrastructure development and management
- Inclusion of youth and women in rangeland restoration efforts.

UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD regional priorities to be merged and implemented together for better and faster and efficient results



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# County case studies and solutions: Ethiopia

Teshome Tamirat, UNCCD National Focal Point for  
Ethiopia





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# Botswana's Vision for Sustainable Rangelands & COP17 Commitments

Baitshepi Hill, UNCCD National Focal Point for Botswana



# The Botswana Context

- Roughly about 57% of Botswana's territory is rangeland that is land used primarily for grazing livestock and wildlife habitat rather than crop production.
- Approximately 70% of Botswana's land is tribal/communal grazing land (traditional rangeland), with 25% state land and 5% freehold (commercial ranch) land. Communal grazing lands are the core rangelands supporting traditional livestock husbandry across the country; they are managed under customary access more than private ownership.
- About 39% of Botswana's total population lives in rural areas where livestock grazing in communal rangelands is a major livelihood activity ; About 71% of Botswana's farmers graze their livestock on communal rangelands (traditional cattle post systems), and around 86% of the national cattle herd is kept on these lands
- **How does rangeland degradation specifically threaten Botswana's economy?**
- Overgrazing, drought, and vegetation loss are reducing productivity, weakening beef exports, and increasing fiscal burdens through drought relief, rehabilitation, and social protection; thereby directly threatening Botswana's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets.
- restoring and sustainably managing rangelands enhances soil, water, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration, strengthens climate resilience, and secures rural livelihoods providing a cost-effective pathway to achieve LDN, grow the national herd, and support inclusive economic development.



# Current Policy Framework- Botswana's Rangeland Restoration & Conservation Policy Framework

- Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) — 1975 zoned tribal land into different categories: communal grazing areas, commercial leasehold ranches, and reserved grazing land. Large herd owners were encouraged to move into leased ranches to lower livestock pressure on communal rangelands.
- National Climate Change Policy (2021)- Integrates climate resilience into rangeland
- National Rangelands Policy (2015)-Promotes sustainable grazing, rotational systems, and reduced stocking rates.
- Forest and Range Resources Act (2025)-Establishes the Department of Forestry and Range Resources (DFRR) as custodian of rangeland governance.
- Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Policy (2013)-Empower local communities to manage and benefit from natural resources sustainably to ensure that TRUST manage grazing lands, wildlife, and forest resources sustainably
- National Policy on Agricultural Development (NPAD) — 1991 Intended to balance livestock production with rangeland sustainability

## What quantifiable results have been achieved so far (e.g., hectares restored, pastoralists trained, USD mobilized)?

- Botswana has mobilized approximately USD 97 million in climate and public finance to support sustainable and climate-resilient rangeland management, targeting over 5 million hectares of communal and dryland ecosystems and directly benefiting nearly 250,000 people. The interventions contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality through improved ecosystem management, livelihood resilience and an estimated mitigation benefit exceeding 637,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- these results demonstrate Botswana's transition from policy intent to measurable, internationally reportable outcomes, contributing to sustainable livelihoods, climate resilience and progress toward its UNCCD and GCF commitments.

# COP16 Decision – National Entry Points

- The UNCCD COP16 decision (Riyadh, 2024) creates key entry points for Parties to advance Land Degradation Neutrality and sustainable land management. These include
  - land tenure and governance reforms, integrating secure tenure into national DLDD and LDN plans (2025–2026);
  - strengthened monitoring and information systems, leveraging Earth Observation and national reporting tools to track land cover, productivity, and soil organic carbon (2025–2026);
  - enhanced access to finance and resource mobilisation, including development of financing toolboxes and private-sector engagement (2025–2030);
  - inclusive, multi-stakeholder participation, integrating gender-responsive policies and local community knowledge (2025 onward);
  - integrated land-use planning across sectors, supporting sustainable agriculture, rangelands, and territorial development (2025 onward);
  - and a strengthened science-policy interface, providing technical guidance for monitoring and policy design (2025–2026).
- Progress on these actions will be reviewed at COP17 (2026) and implemented throughout the 2025–2030 Strategic Framework period.

# COP17 Vision – What We Can Table

- At COP17, Botswana will present its commitment to quantified land restoration targets aligned with LDN and SDG 15.3, including restoring or sustainably managing 10–15% of degraded communal rangelands, increasing tree cover in degraded woodlands by 5–8%, and enhancing soil organic carbon stocks by 10% in priority districts by 2030, monitored through LDN indicators (land productivity, land cover, and SOC).
- Progress on these measures will be reviewed at COP17 (2026) and implemented under the 2025–2030 Strategic Framework
- Botswana Commits to: Restore/sustainably manage 10–15% of degraded communal rangelands, increase tree cover in woodlands by 5–8%, and enhance soil organic carbon stocks by 10% in priority districts by 2030, tracked through LDN indicators
- Finance mobilization goals: Propose Southern Africa LDN Network and transboundary initiatives with Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe; to mobilize USD 50–100 million by 2030 via blended finance, climate funds, and private-sector partnerships.



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# Closing and further resources






## Resources & Recording

 Further resources & recording emailed through IUCN Engage

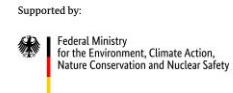
 Visit [engage.iucn.org](https://engage.iucn.org) to stay updated

## Join the Movement - next dialogues:

-  10 February with focus on Latin America & Caribbean
-  12 February with focus on Asia & Arab Region
-  31 March with focus on synergies between Rio Conventions

## Contact Information

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