

Landscapes of Life

A Shared Action Agenda for Grassland, Savannahs and Rangelands



Approximately 200 representatives from more than 70 organizations from across the grasslands, savannahs and rangelands community joined **Landscapes of Life**, the UNCCD Mid-COP 17 Convening organized by WWF and the Sustainable Fibre Alliance.

The event gathered scientists, policymakers, pastoralists and local communities, conservation and development experts, private sector representatives, and financial institutions.

This document outlines the priority actions agreed by these stakeholders as a shared agenda to protect, sustainably manage and restore these vital ecosystems.

Overall Unifying Message

Grasslands, savannahs and rangelands need to be recognized and managed as productive, biodiverse and resilient landscapes. This requires secure livelihoods for the people who manage them, policies and incentives that support sustainable management, finance that reaches the ground, and decisions based on both ecological and socio-economic outcomes.

ACTION ONE: Secure rights and put local pastoralists in decision-making

Pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and local communities manage large areas of grasslands and rangelands, but insecure tenure, unclear resource rights and limited influence over land-use decisions remain major barriers to sustainable management and restoration.

- a. Recognize land, resource and mobility rights. Legal and policy frameworks should recognize community and customary rights, access to water and grazing areas, and pastoral mobility.

- b. Move from consultation to shared decision-making. Pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and local communities should have a formal role in land-use planning, restoration, protected-area management and decisions over natural resources.
 - c. Strengthen local institutions. Support community organizations, cooperatives and other local structures to negotiate collectively, manage shared resources and resolve conflicts.
 - d. Review management approaches that restrict sustainable pastoral use. Protected area and conservation approaches should recognize pastoralism that is compatible with conservation objectives and involve communities in defining management arrangements.
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ACTION TWO: Manage grasslands as connected social, ecological and productive systems

Grasslands cannot be restored by addressing soil, livestock, water, vegetation or wildlife separately. Management needs to reflect how these elements interact across the landscape and with the people who depend on them for their livelihoods.

- a. Use integrated, locally adapted restoration. Restoration should combine soil, water, vegetation, livestock, wildlife and livelihoods and be designed around local ecological and social conditions.
 - b. Protect water, connectivity and mobility. Restore water systems, maintain ecological corridors and protect pastoral mobility as basic conditions for healthy rangelands.
 - c. Manage grazing, fire and invasive species according to local conditions. Avoid blanket prescriptions based only on livestock numbers or vegetation cover.
 - d. Manage livestock and wildlife together. Land and water planning should account for both, including competition for resources, disease transmission and coexistence.
 - e. Protect functioning grasslands, not only restore degraded ones. Avoid further conversion and degradation of intact grasslands while restoring areas already degraded.
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ACTION THREE: Make sustainable rangeland management economically worthwhile

People will not be able to maintain or restore grasslands at scale if sustainable management carries the cost while the wider benefits go elsewhere.

- a. Reform incentives that drive degradation. Identify agricultural subsidies and other public or private incentives that encourage conversion, overuse or other damaging practices.
- b. Value what healthy grasslands provide. Soil carbon, biodiversity, water regulation, forage production, climate resilience and avoided degradation should be reflected in economic and investment decisions.

- c. Build markets for sustainably produced goods. Strengthen local markets, producer organizations and sustainable value chains so that better land management creates tangible economic benefits for producers.
 - d. Use public and private finance together. Develop blended and landscape-level financing approaches that can support long-term management rather than isolated projects.
 - e. Get funding to the people managing the land and its natural resources. Finance should be accessible to pastoralists, small-scale producers, women, community organizations and other local actors, with fewer barriers and intermediaries.
 - f. Stop treating enabling costs as overhead. Monitoring, local capacity, technical support and coordination need to be financed if investments are expected to work.
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ACTION FOUR: Use systemic indicators to inform management decisions

Current indicators often capture individual components of rangelands without showing whether the overall system is functioning or resilient.

- a. Develop a common, practical set of indicators for rangeland health and resilience. These should cover soil, water, vegetation, biodiversity, ecosystem function, productivity and livelihoods.
 - b. Go beyond livestock and wildlife density ratios. Numbers alone do not show whether resources, grazing patterns, wildlife and livelihoods are in balance.
 - c. Include social and governance conditions. Access to land and water, mobility and security of rights are part of the resilience of pastoral systems and should be considered alongside ecological indicators.
 - d. Enable the stewards of the land to define indicators and monitor systemic health. Communities should help define indicators, collect information and use the results for management.
 - e. Build on existing systems. Use and align existing monitoring frameworks, standards and datasets rather than creating another reporting system.
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ACTION FIVE: Fix policy fragmentation and create the conditions for delivery

Grasslands are affected by agriculture, land, water, conservation, wildlife, climate and trade policies, often managed by different institutions and ministries. Lack of coordination can result in contradictory and redundant objectives and incentives.

- a. Align policies across sectors. Governments should identify where agriculture, conservation, water, wildlife and land policies work against each other and remove those contradictions.

- b. Give grasslands and rangelands explicit recognition in national policies and commitments, including LDN, NBSAPs and NDCs. They should be clearly addressed in land-use, restoration, agriculture, climate and biodiversity planning rather than falling between mandates.
- c. Connect implementation across the Rio Conventions. Align relevant UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC targets, indicators and reporting where they address the same landscapes and outcomes.
- d. Clarify who is responsible for delivery. National and local institutions need clear roles for implementation, monitoring and financing.
- e. Build on existing initiatives instead of creating new structures. Connect existing standards, platforms, programmes and initiatives around common objectives and indicators, and provide the resources needed to implement them.

It is time to move from recognizing the importance of grasslands, savannahs and rangelands to changing how they are governed, financed and managed. Secure the rights of pastoralists and local communities; protect functioning grasslands from further degradation and conversion; reform incentives that reward damaging practices; direct finance to sustainable management on the ground; and agree on practical measures of rangeland health and resilience. The organizations that have co-developed this agenda are committed to implementation and driving impact. We call on other stakeholders, including Parties to UNCCD, to scale investment and resources to drive positive benefits for nature, climate and people.

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