

2024 IN REVIEW:



KEY LEGISLATIVE UPDATES IN THE PASTORAL SECTOR ACROSS CENTRAL ASIA AND MONGOLIA

In 2024, pastoralism in Central Asia and Mongolia experienced notable legislative developments, both promising and contentious, aimed at addressing the complex challenges faced by pastoralist communities. Governments across the region initiated significant reforms to create more sustainable, resilient, and equitable systems. However, not all changes have been without controversy, as some policies have raised concerns over their potential to undermine traditional pastoral practices and equitable land access.

Mongolia

In 2024, Mongolian Parliament has approved the Law on Herders. Legislation was passed to ensure the right of herders to use pastures. This is the result of many years of work of POs, NLC Mongolia and other stakeholders.

By this law securing the rights of pastoralists to use pastures has made a significant contribution to their sustainable livestock production and adaptation to climate change and combating desertification. Made responsible use of pastures under contract (PUA) in accordance with pasture carrying capacity formal obligation of all herders.

Also, new law on the “Legal status of the association of herder households”, was approved by Great Khural (Mongolian Parliament) in July 2024. The law provides key regulations for the use of pasture under contract in accordance with carrying capacity, activities in animal health, breeding, environmental protection, DRR and organization of livestock product marketing at a single point for grading and selling.

One of the most notable legislative developments in Mongolia in 2024 was the launch of the “**New Cooperative – Wealthy Herder**” program, aiming to stabilize livestock income through collective action that enables herders to secure better pricing and reduce income volatility. As part of the initiative, the government has facilitated investment loans for cooperative member herders. These loans, provided by commercial banks, are supported by government incentives covering interest rate differentials and collateral guarantees ranging from 80-100% through the Credit Guarantee Fund of Mongolia. Within this framework, herders will have access to investment loans of up to 50 million MNT over a period of 60 months, with a nominal interest rate of 6%. This pivotal

measure aims to lay the groundwork for herders to initiate cooperative endeavors and ultimately transition into agricultural producers.

The initiative promotes sustainable livestock production by encouraging environmentally friendly practices and integrating new technologies to meet green standards. Additionally, it enhances social security for herders by providing government-supported safety nets, reducing the impact of economic uncertainties and fostering greater resilience within pastoralist communities.

In early 2024, **Draft Law on Mitigating the Negative Effects of Climate Change on Traditional Livestock Husbandry** was introduced to the State Great Khural (Mongolia's Parliament), it focuses on enhancing the resilience of Mongolia's pastoralists to the harsh effects of climate change. The law seeks to provide a legal framework for herders to adopt sustainable livestock practices that can better withstand severe winters and droughts, which have become increasingly common in Mongolia.

Key provisions of the law include:

- **Cooperatives:** Encouraging herders to form cooperatives to pool resources, share knowledge, and access markets more effectively. These cooperatives aim to stabilize incomes and reduce the economic risks posed by unpredictable climate events.
- **Sustainable Grazing Practices:** Promoting rotational grazing systems to preserve pastureland health and increase the productivity of land over time.
- **Support for Technological Integration:** Offering incentives to herders who adopt technology, such as climate-smart livestock management practices, which could improve efficiency and adaptability to changing environmental conditions.

In December 2024, Mongolia enacted significant amendments to its **Law on Livestock and Animal Health**, aimed at tackling persistent challenges related to animal diseases and boosting the international trade of livestock products. The reforms strengthen disease control measures to safeguard herders' livestock and enhance export potential, while introducing stricter government oversight in animal health management. Key provisions include improved veterinary services and robust regulations to prevent disease outbreaks, ensuring that Mongolia's pastoral sector aligns with international trade standards and secures the health and well-being of the nation's livestock.

Kazakhstan

In 2024, Kazakhstan made amendments to the Land Code aimed at strengthening the protection of grazing lands and traditional pastoral practices.

Key changes:

- **Prohibition of converting grazing lands to other agricultural uses:** Grazing lands, intended for the needs of the population to graze livestock for personal use, including communal pastures, cannot be converted to other types of agricultural lands. (online.zakon.kz)
- **Reservation of grazing lands:** A requirement for the reservation of grazing lands for the needs of the population to graze livestock for personal use has been introduced, based on the Pasture Management and Utilization Plan. (online.zakon.kz)
- **Conditions for providing and using grazing lands:** New legislation regulates the conditions for

granting and using grazing lands for livestock grazing, including access to water facilities on a free-of-charge basis. (online.zakon.kz)

- **Liability for unused pastures:** Grazing lands that are not used for grazing livestock, or where the number of animals is less than 50% of the allowable grazing load for one year, are subject to *compulsory expropriation* in accordance with land legislation. (online.zakon.kz)

However, the risk of compulsory expropriation for underused land could negatively impact pastoralists who struggle to meet grazing load requirements, especially in areas with environmental challenges. Additionally, the strict regulations may limit flexibility for herders, particularly small-scale ones, and could marginalize those facing economic difficulties. Successful implementation relies on adequate support and monitoring, which, if lacking, may hinder the effectiveness of the reforms and harm vulnerable communities.

Uzbekistan

In 2024, Uzbekistan's Cabinet of Ministers introduced Decree No. 126 on March 12, outlining several significant measures aimed at protecting pastures, combating degradation, and safeguarding groundwater. The decree focuses on preventing overgrazing through the establishment of pasture rotation systems, restoring degraded land, and ensuring sustainable management of water resources. These initiatives are designed to promote environmental sustainability and improve the long-term health of the country's natural resources. However, from the perspective of pastoralists' rights, the decree presents both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, the measures could lead to healthier pastures, increased biodiversity, and better water management, which are essential for the long-term survival of pastoralism. On the other hand, the restrictions on pasture use may limit pastoralists' access to traditional grazing lands, which could negatively impact their livelihoods. If these restrictions are not coupled with adequate support, such as compensation, educational programs, or alternative grazing areas, pastoralists might face economic difficulties and social inequality. The success of these reforms hinges on finding a balance between environmental goals and the rights and needs of pastoral communities. In conclusion, while the decree introduces crucial steps toward sustainable land management, it is vital that the government ensures that the rights of pastoralists are respected and that they are provided with the necessary tools and support to adapt to the changes.

Kyrgyzstan

In 2024, Kyrgyzstan dismissed the Law on Pastures, a significant achievement of the country that had been in place since 2009. This law aimed to regulate the use of pastures and grazing lands, and it was one of the first attempts in Central Asia to decentralize pasture management, allowing local communities to take responsibility for their rangelands.

As a result, the Kyrgyz government decided to repeal the Pasture Law in favor of new reforms that are seen as more aligned with the broader land governance reforms currently taking place.

The initiators of the process argue that the New Land Code will preserve the basic principles and rights of pasture users, ensuring continued access to grazing lands. The law seeks to optimize and consolidate all existing regulations related to land and pasture use into a single code, streamlining the legal framework for better clarity and implementation.

Adoption of the New Land Code

In parallel with the dismissal of the Pasture Law, Kyrgyzstan adopted a new Land Code in 2024, which introduced a series of changes to the management and use of land, including pastureland. Some key aspects of the new Land Code include:

- **Centralization of Land Management:** The new Land Code centralizes land management in the hands of the state and local authorities.
- **Legal Uncertainty:** The shift from a decentralized law to a centralized one leaves a gap in terms of local governance and community control. Without a clear framework for local participation in land decision-making, pastoralists are at risk of losing the ability to advocate for their needs within land management policies.
- **A key risk of centralizing the budget** is the potential lack of transparency in the allocation of funds for pasture users groups operations costs, which could lead to unequal distribution. This lack of clarity may result in marginalized communities receiving insufficient support for sustainable grazing practices and pasture restoration.

In summary, Kyrgyzstan's decision to dismiss the Pasture Law and adopt a new Land Code has the potential to create both opportunities and risks. On one hand, the reforms aim to modernize land management practices and improve governance. On the other hand, they raise significant concerns about the centralization of land control, and the erosion of pastoralists' rights, all of which could threaten the livelihoods of rural herders.

As these reforms continue to unfold, it will be crucial for the Kyrgyz Government to ensure that the voices of pastoralists are included in decision-making processes, and that the risks to their access to land and grazing rights are mitigated.

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