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Key messages on **PASTORALIST ECONOMY**

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A Vast Workforce

Pastoralism supports an estimated 2 billion people globally, many in marginalised and vulnerable communities. Among them, women are vital to the pastoralist economy, as they contribute to resource management, biodiversity conservation, and food security, and in turn benefit from revenues coming from pastoral products.



2

Economic Powerhouse

Pastoralism contributes significantly to national economies, particularly in developing countries. For instance, in Mongolia, livestock employs about a third of its population and contributes to 11.9% of GDP and 84% of its agricultural GDP. In Ethiopia, 90% of livestock exports stem from pastoralists' herds. Nonetheless, these figures do not take into account non-monetised products and services that pastoralism provides, such as rangeland management in fragile ecosystems. Indeed, pastoralists' sustainable practices contribute to biodiversity conservation (not only wild but also domestic, for example, using local animal breeds), soil fertilisation, water supply, and carbon sequestration. While doing so, they use very few or no inputs such as fertilisers, fossil fuel, heating energy, machinery, chemicals, and purchased feed.

3

Food Security Champions

Pastoralists produce food and sustain human activities in arid and semi-arid areas, deserts and mountainous areas, grasslands and savannas, wetlands or shrublands where other farming activities and types of livelihoods are difficult, thus combating the forces driving rural exodus. They use very unpredictable and variable resources and, in spite of that, maintain relatively stable production levels. Worldwide, pastoralists keep 1 billion animals, which corresponds to around half of the world's animal production. They produce a significant portion of the world's meat, milk, fibre, and manure, contributing to global food security. For instance, in Iran and Kenya, respectively, 25% and 80% of the meat produced locally comes from pastoralists. Products coming from animals raised on natural pastures are relatively healthier (compared to products from intensive systems) – they have more vitamins, healthy fats, antioxidants, and higher levels of Omega-3 and Conjugated Linoleic Acid, etc.

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Resilient Livelihoods

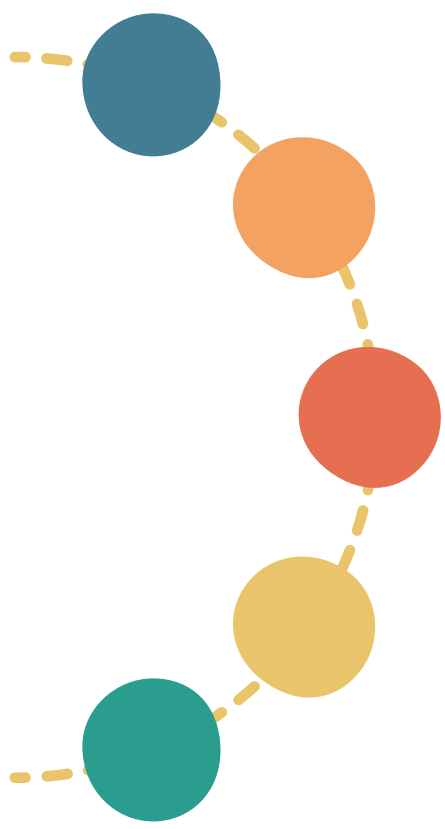
Based on their long-term history on, and knowledge of, the land they live on, pastoralists develop strategies to cope with climate variability and shocks, making their livelihoods remarkably resilient. In many countries, pastoral herds act like capital and safety nets against risks and hazards in the same way a bank account would. Practices such as managing diversity (both animal and genetic diversity, and the nesting of different scales), herd mobility, developing alliances with their neighbours and neighbouring communities, livestock and service exchange, and communal resource management contribute to resilience by spreading risk and managing uncertainty. What they have learnt and developed provides useful lessons for other industries and communities.



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Cultural Heritage

Pastoralism is deeply intertwined with cultural identity, traditions, and knowledge systems. It plays a vital role in underpinning local governance arrangements and pastoral management systems. Indigenous knowledge and the social structure of pastoralism are considered economic assets of pastoralists. Cultural heritage and the open landscapes preserved thanks to pastoral systems, for instance, make a significant contribution to tourism revenues in several countries. Traditional pastoral routes have contributed to the settlement of important human and economic agglomerations. Pastoralism also functions as an in-situ gene pool of locally adapted animal breeds. Several tools support the recognition of this cultural heritage, in particular, the inscription of transhumance as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in several European countries (Albania, Andorra, Austria, Croatia, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Italy, Romania, Spain), soon to be joined by a new wave of countries across continents.



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Market Opportunities

Most pastoralists produce a wide range of goods – including meat, milk and dairy products, manure, hides, and fibre from three or four species of livestock – creating a wide range of value chains. Many of these value chains are informal, and markets for pastoral goods can be difficult to access and face price volatility (due, among other things, to their diversity and heterogeneity). Diversity contributes to the resilience of pastoralist systems but creates great challenges for marketing – if markets focus on only one value (e.g. beef), it leads to the narrowing of the system and a major loss in overall productivity and resilience. Value addition to pastoral products – for instance, through certification labels, sustainable tourism strategies, and support for pastoral handicrafts – can generate higher incomes for pastoralists.

7

Service and Infrastructures

The majority of pastoralists worldwide lack basic services in terms of water, medical and veterinary services, schooling, etc., especially during their migration. This results in low levels of education in many areas and poor health coverage, which negatively impact pastoral economies. Being far from law enforcement agencies has caused pastoralists to suffer from livestock theft. Adapted mobile service provision, such as tailored schooling systems to reach pastoralists throughout the year, as well as improved infrastructure (including roads, water points, and veterinary services), is key to enhancing pastoralists' livelihoods.

8

Policy Challenges

Policies often overlook pastoralism, leading to land tenure insecurity, market access constraints, and limited support services. In most countries, there is no authentic and disaggregated data available on pastoralists, livestock reared under pastoral production systems, and their contribution to national economies. Attempts to support pastoralism through policies based on a sedentary logic have proven to be extremely problematic for pastoralist communities, as in the case of community land titles, which lead to fragmentation of land and undermine the concept of pastureland as commons. Designing public policies that support this complex activity, characterised by its diversity of forms and complementary services, remains a challenge.



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A Sustainable Future

Investing in pastoralism and supporting pastoralist communities is essential for sustainable development and climate resilience. Most rangelands experience severe land degradation, which, if left unchecked, will lead to disruptions for the over one billion people who directly depend on them. For example, studies carried out in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Tunisia show that soil erosion is highest in rangelands relative to cropland and forest land. In spite of this, investments in combating rangeland degradation are scarce, since short-term biomass productivity – and the return on investment – is the lowest of all three biomes. In such situations, pastoralism provides environmental services, contributes to long-term rangeland resilience, and therefore must be recognised and supported.