

New Alliance for sustainable pastoralism in Germany

"Pastures for the future!" is the slogan of the recently founded German Alliance formed to draw attention to the International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists (IYRP2026). On 26 June 2025, in front of the German Ministry of the Environment, Dr Gebauer – Head of the Department for Nature Conservation, Sustainable Natural Resource Use and Natural Climate Protection – met with alliance partners from the livestock grazing, nature conservation and agriculture sectors. "Pastoralism is not only an animal-friendly form of livestock husbandry but also active nature conservation. Our cultural landscapes need shepherds," said Sabine Poth from the League for Pastoral Peoples and member of the Alliance.

The Alliance is preparing for and will accompany the IYRP 2026, which was proclaimed by the United Nations. The aim is to raise public awareness of the outstanding ecological and cultural significance of grazing – and to initiate concrete political measures for sustainable grazing and herding. One of the alliance's central concerns is that sustainable grazing must play a greater role in national environmental and agricultural programmes – above all, in the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Law – a still hotly contested instrument and a huge opportunity to protect our livelihoods in a sustainable manner.

"Grazing on natural pastures is a key measure for restoring ecosystems. The Alliance calls for it to be included in Germany's national restoration plan and specifically promoted," said Sabrina Schulz, Deputy Head of Nature Conservation in the Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. (DUH, German Environmental Aid) on behalf of the Alliance. She added: "If we offer livestock farms long-term agricultural and environmental subsidies geared toward nature conservation, we can successfully achieve national goals such as restoring floodplains and moors hand in hand."

Kirsten Wosnitza, herself an active dairy farmer, brought the position from the field: "Dairy cows can and want to graze! Because grazing cows are often less profitable, more and more dairy cows are unfortunately kept in barns today. We can change this if fair rewards are provided for sustainable grazing practices that achieve animal welfare and biodiversity. In this context, the postponement of eco-regulations to promote grazing and improve biodiversity is a damning indictment! We need a nationwide grazing premium for dairy cows and a stronger negotiating position for farmers in the market."

Ortrun Humpert from the Association of German Sheep Breeders also called for "a policy that supports us." She explained: "Sheep are not only a tradition, but above all represent the future for all areas of our society: We need a policy that makes it clear what good and important work we actually do and that creates the conditions to allow us to make a living from it."

Several member organisations of the German Alliance are already planning activities for the IYRP2026, including educational programmes, political campaigns and high-profile events. The

Alliance's detailed demands are presented on the alliance website: <https://weidelandschaft-hirtentum.de/> (in German).