

IYRP 2026 for Business

Why did the United Nations designate the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists – IYRP 2026?

Over half of the Earth's land surface is rangeland: areas where the vegetation is made up of natural or naturalized grasses, shrubs and trees that are grazed and browsed by livestock and wildlife. The productivity and environmental health of rangelands are critical for the livelihoods and cultures of more than 500 million pastoralists and for the sustainable husbandry of livestock. Billions more non-pastoralists benefit from these areas through the milk and meat produced there and other rangeland-sourced products and through tourism, wildlife and biodiversity conservation, renewable energy, carbon sequestration, and countless other ecosystem uses and services.

The IYRP 2026 will raise the profile of rangelands and increase respect for the achievements of pastoralists in sustainably producing food and other products in harsh and highly variable environments that are unsuitable for other forms of food production. This celebratory year will increase recognition of the many contributions pastoral livestock herders make to local, national and global economies, environments, societies and cultures. It will also raise awareness of the challenges and threats to sustaining rangeland health and productivity—rangelands worldwide are at risk from increasing crop cultivation, invasive species, overuse, wildfires, and droughts and floods caused by climate change. The IYRP will increase momentum for nature-based solutions that can help restore degraded rangelands.

Why is IYRP 2026 important for the business community?

- ✓ Healthy rangelands and sustainable pastoralist livelihoods provide sustainable sources of animal-based raw materials for the business community while minimizing conflicts. ***The IYRP calls for stronger commitment to, and government action on, policies that recognize the value of pastoralism and rangelands and offer incentives for supporting pastoralist education, health, marketing, and access to natural resources. Rangelands and pastoralists must not be left behind on the road to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.***
- ✓ Non-livestock rangeland products also offer good business opportunities. Such products include gum Arabic, frankincense, wild rice and cereals, and other plant-based products grown in rangelands and harvested sustainably by pastoralists based on their local knowledge and innovations. ***The IYRP promotes the many alternative livelihood and production options available in rangelands.***



- ✓ There are growing markets for sustainably produced animal products, including cashmere and mohair from goats, wool from baby camels, and milk from camels and goats as well as cows. However, this growing demand has helped to degrade some rangelands, such as those in Mongolia, where the numbers of cashmere goats have risen from 10 to 27 million in the last decade. The potential risk of environmental damage to all rangelands and loss of brand visibility for businesses along the livestock value chain is high, unless sustainability, equitable development, animal-welfare, governance, and other standards are met. ***The IYRP promotes sustainable rangeland practices, including more frequent mobility and rotational grazing, and judicious, science-based certification schemes for businesses to meet international standards and ethics.***
- ✓ Carbon offsets from rangelands is a growing opportunity for financing sustainable practices. Rangelands worldwide constitute 30% of carbon sinks, primarily stored in the soil and roots of perennial grasses and other plants. Protocols for carbon offsets in rangelands are beginning to be established, and trading companies are taking interest. Rangelands offer a good alternative to forest offsets because although they sequester less carbon per hectare, the carbon they do capture is more permanence because it lies below ground, where it is less vulnerable to catastrophic fires and climate change. ***The IYRP encourages greater use of rangelands for grassland carbon capture.***
- ✓ Investments are needed all along the pastoralist livestock value chain, including conservation of local breeds of livestock, traditional knowledge-based practices, and rangeland restoration work. Only large-scale investments will avoid the socio-economic and other harms that have attended past development work in pastoralist communities. ***The IYRP calls for investments in rangeland health and sustainable pastoral livelihoods.***

What's next?

Over 300 civil society organizations and 102 countries have supported the Mongolian proposal to the United Nations for IYRP 2026—and the list is growing. Eleven multi-stakeholder regional support groups for IYRP are ramping up their activities and planning for 2026. These include a North America group that is developing a documentary film to challenge rangeland misconceptions and build new understanding of the many essential contributions rangelands make to humanity and the planet. Pastoralist Day/Week celebrations will hold fairs on sustainable rangeland products. The IYRP International Support Group will carry out international social media campaigns and video productions to raise awareness of pastoralist producers, business people, consumers and policymakers worldwide.

The IYRP 2026 offers the business sector great opportunities to showcase their sustainability programs. For more information, go to: <https://iyrp.info>.

Show your support and sign up by contacting the co-chairs of the IYRP 2026 International Support Group using this email: iyrp@iyrp.info

