

A New Generation of Herders Takes the Stage in Madrid

Nineteen years after the first global meeting of mobile pastoralists (WAMIP 2007, Madrid), young pastoralists around the world gather in Madrid to champion pastoralism as a solution for the environmental and social challenges of the 21st century.

Young herders from 35 countries will meet in Spain for a landmark event of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026

Madrid, March 19, 2026. Madrid will become the international capital of pastoralism this April as it hosts one of the most significant European events of the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP 2026)**.

The international meeting “**IYRP Young Pastoralists Global Gathering & New Technologies**” will take place from **9 to 11 April** at the **Institute of Engineering of Spain**, bringing together **200 participants**, including young pastoralists, researchers, policy experts and representatives of international organisations.

Originally promoted by **IMIDRA** (Madrid Institute for Rural, Agricultural and Food Research and Development), and **Fundación Trashumancia y Naturaleza**, with the collaboration of **FAO** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and **CIHEAM Zaragoza**, and the support of **Fundación Biodiversidad** (public foundation of the Spanish Government, attached to the Ministry of the Environment), **Red Electrica España**, **Fundación Entretantos** and the **International Land Coalition (ILC)**, the initiative has become one of the most important gatherings in Europe dedicated to pastoralism during this UN-designated international year.

A global meeting for the next generation of pastoralists

One of the most remarkable aspects of the event is the strong participation of **young pastoralists from 34 countries across Africa, America, Asia and Europe**. They all are leaders in their communities and represent the new generation responsible for carrying forward pastoral traditions while adapting them to the challenges of the 21st century.

The meeting focuses on **generational renewal**, innovation, and the role of **new technologies in pastoral systems**, addressing one of the major challenges facing pastoral regions worldwide: ensuring the continuity of a millennia-old way of life while strengthening its sustainability and economic viability.

During three days of discussions, presentations and exchanges, Madrid will become a space where pastoralists and experts share knowledge and experiences aimed at protecting and strengthening pastoral systems—particularly **mobile pastoralism and transhumance**, practices recognised by UNESCO as part of the **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.

International experts and pastoral leaders

The event will feature internationally recognised experts in pastoralism and rangeland management, as well as many outstanding young pastoralists:

- **Ilse Köhler-Rollefson**, worldwide specialist in Pastoralism and founder of [LPP League for Pastoral People](#)
- **Gregorio Velasco**, coordinator of the **FAO [Pastoralist Knowledge Hub](#)**
- **Rusudan Mirzikashvili**, researcher at the [ICOMOS World Heritage Transhumance Initiative](#)

- **Ariunzaya Enkhtuya**, Representing the **Ministry of Agriculture and Light Industry (MOFALI)** of **Mongolia**
- **Bálint Sándor**, specialist in traditional ecological knowledge at the **Centre for Ecological Research in Hungary**
- **Kunduz Adylbekova**, representative of the [International Land Coalition \(ILC\)](#), and member of the Young Pastoralists from Central Asia working group
- **Georgios Ziagkas** representative of the [Greek Transhumant Pastoralists](#)
- **Veronica Apaza**, representing the wool artisans of [Red Puna \(Argentina\)](#)
- **Jacob Lekaitogo**, Coordinator Young Pastoralists Working Group of the [Global Alliance for Rangelands and Pastoralists](#)
- **Tamara Mitrofanenko**, Secretariat of the [Carpathian Convention](#) UN Environment Program
- **Maya Sherpa**, representative of the **Himalayan pastoralists in Nepal**

Experts from institutions such as the **Global Alliance for Rangelands and Pastoralists**, **ICOMOS**, **CIHEAM**, the Polytechnic University of Madrid (**UPM**) and the Autonomous University of Madrid (**UAM**) and Spanish Society of Rangelands (**SEP**) will also contribute to the discussions.

Building a global voice for young pastoralists

A key objective of the gathering is the preparation of a **joint declaration by young pastoralists**, which will be presented at **COP17 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** to be held in **Mongolia in August 2026**.

The event also aims to:

- Strengthen **international networks of young pastoralists**
- Promote **ecologically sustainable and socially inclusive livestock systems**
- Support **value chains based on local livestock breeds**
- Encourage **innovation and appropriate technologies for pastoral systems**
- Promote **holistic conservation approaches** that protect biodiversity, ecosystems, local breeds and traditional knowledge

Field activities and cultural programme

Alongside the conference sessions in Madrid, participants will take part in a **field visit to the historic Casa de la Monta at IMIDRA in Aranjuez**, where technical demonstrations, exhibitions and cultural activities will showcase the living heritage of pastoralism and transhumance.

As a prelude to the event, **CIHEAM Zaragoza** will organise a technical meeting on **sustainable livestock systems** on **7 and 8 April**.

Registration

Professionals, researchers and media representatives interested in attending (in person or in streaming) can register through the official website:

<https://iyrp2026madrid.org>