

CONCEPT NOTE

Agdal Initiative for the Preservation and Sustainability of Pastoral Transhumance in Morocco

From Living Pastoral Heritage to a Model for Climate Adaptation, Rangeland Conservation, Biodiversity Protection and Community Development

Initiative Lead: Tifsa Atlas Association for Sustainable Development – T.A.S.D.
Khénifra Province – Morocco

Proposed period: 2025–2030

Main event: First National Conference on Pastoral Transhumance in Morocco

1. Background and Rationale

Pastoral transhumance in Morocco represents a traditional system of livelihood, production and territorial management deeply rooted in the history and cultures of local communities. It is based on the seasonal movement of livestock between different pastoral areas and on knowledge and practices transmitted from one generation to another.

In the Middle Atlas, this system is closely connected to the Agdal system, a traditional form of community-based governance that contributes to regulating access to pastoral resources and allowing rangelands periods of rest and regeneration.

However, the continuity of pastoral transhumance is increasingly facing interconnected challenges, including climate change, rangeland degradation and reduction, growing pressure on pastoral areas, territorial and administrative transformations, and the gradual erosion of traditional knowledge and governance mechanisms.

In response, Tifsa Atlas launched in 2025 the Agdal Initiative for Pastoral Transhumance as a long-term process combining documentation, research, dialogue with pastoral communities and field-based development actions.

2. Overall Objective

The Agdal Initiative aims to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of Moroccan pastoral transhumance as living cultural heritage, while strengthening its sustainability and capacity to adapt to climate change and socio-economic and territorial transformations.

The initiative also seeks to promote Agdal as a local experience of community-based governance of natural resources, with potential contributions to rangeland conservation, biodiversity protection and the livelihoods of pastoral communities.

From a heritage perspective, the initiative aims to build a scientific, documentary and community-based foundation that can contribute to the national process of recognizing pastoral transhumance as intangible cultural heritage, and potentially support a national nomination process to UNESCO, in accordance with official procedures and in coordination with the Moroccan Ministry of Culture and relevant stakeholders.

3. The Community Role of Tifsa Atlas

Tifsa Atlas Association for Sustainable Development acts as a community-based focal point for this process in the Middle Atlas, building on its direct engagement with local and pastoral communities.

The Association works directly with pastoralists and local communities; documents local pastoral knowledge and practices; organizes studies, scientific meetings and community consultations; connects pastoral communities with researchers and institutions; involves women and youth; contributes to a national scientific and documentary knowledge base; and mobilizes national and international partners.

The Association does not present itself as an alternative to official national authorities in the UNESCO process. Rather, it contributes to documentation, research, local mobilization and the production of evidence that can support the official national process.

4. Agdal: The Heart of the Initiative

The initiative is based on a renewed understanding of the Agdal system, not simply as a traditional pastoral custom, but as a community-based system for organizing the relationship between community, land, rangelands, livestock, water, time and governance.

The Agdal system regulates the use of natural resources and allows pastoral areas periods of rest, contributing to their regeneration.

The initiative seeks to document, study and revitalize Agdal, while exploring how traditional knowledge can be connected with contemporary scientific approaches.

The objective is not to freeze Agdal as a practice of the past, but to identify how this accumulated local knowledge can contribute to developing solutions for the future.

5. Main Components of the Initiative

Component 1 – Scientific and Heritage Documentation: documenting traditional transhumance routes; pastoral knowledge and practices; the Agdal system and related governance mechanisms; relationships between pastoralists, rangelands and water resources; cultural practices; and oral histories and testimonies.

Component 2 – Rangelands, Water and Climate Adaptation: a study on water resources, rangelands and transhumance routes to identify challenges and explore sustainable approaches supporting pastoral mobility. This builds on field experience supporting pastoral communities in Oum Er-Rbia, including access to solar energy and water.

Component 3 – Pastoralist School: a study for the establishment of a Pastoralist School of the Middle Atlas as a space for transmitting pastoral knowledge between generations, including rangeland knowledge, climate observation, livestock management, transhumance routes, Agdal governance and pastoral culture.

Component 4 – Wool Valorization and Women's Economic Empowerment: a study on wool valorization as an economic resource linked to pastoral transhumance, identifying women's needs, capacities, value-chain opportunities, training and equipment needs, cooperative and market opportunities. Wool valorization is conceived as a component supporting community resilience and heritage preservation.

6. First National Conference on Pastoral Transhumance in Morocco

The First National Conference on Pastoral Transhumance in Morocco represents one of the main milestones of the Agdal Initiative.

The Conference aims to bring together pastoral communities and livestock herders, researchers and universities, public institutions, international organizations, civil society organizations, and experts in environment, climate and cultural heritage.

Proposed themes include pastoral transhumance as living heritage; Agdal and traditional governance; transhumance and climate change; territorial and administrative transformations; the future of rangelands; the Pastoralist School; mobile green rangelands; wool valorization and women's empowerment; and documentation and national and international heritage recognition.

The Conference is conceived not simply as a two-day event, but as a national platform for knowledge production, dialogue, networking and collective action.

7. The Conference as a Tool for Building a National Knowledge Base

The Conference will serve as a mechanism for generating and consolidating knowledge.

Expected outputs include scientific conference proceedings; a National Declaration on Pastoral Transhumance; a national and international network connecting researchers, pastoral communities, institutions and organizations; and a documentary knowledge base containing studies, testimonies, knowledge and practices.

8. Pathway towards Recognition of Pastoral Transhumance as Living Heritage

The initiative seeks to contribute to a long-term national process for the preservation and documentation of Moroccan pastoral transhumance.

2026 – Foundational Phase: First National Conference; scientific studies; documentation of pastoral knowledge; networking among researchers and stakeholders; development of a scientific and documentary foundation.

2027 – Development of the National Process: contribution to the preparation of scientific evidence and documentation for the national process, in coordination with the Moroccan Ministry of Culture and relevant authorities.

Subsequent phases: continuation of the official national and international process in accordance with applicable procedures, while exploring opportunities for regional and African cooperation.

9. African and International Dimension

The initiative does not consider the Moroccan experience in isolation. Pastoral transhumance is shared by numerous pastoral and mountain communities across Africa and the Mediterranean region.

The initiative seeks to facilitate knowledge exchange between pastoral communities, develop regional and African cooperation, document different pastoral experiences, explore future regional or joint initiatives in accordance with official procedures, and connect the Moroccan experience with international networks working on mountains, rangelands, pastoralism and sustainable development.

10. Expected Results and Impact

Heritage: documentation and valorization of pastoral transhumance and associated knowledge.

Environment: contribution to rangeland conservation, biodiversity protection and climate resilience.

Community: greater participation of pastoral communities in knowledge production and decision-making.

Knowledge: stronger links between traditional knowledge and scientific research, with mechanisms for transfer to younger generations.

Economic: identification of opportunities for women's empowerment, particularly through wool valorization.

Institutional: creation of a national and international network of universities, institutions, organizations and pastoral communities.

11. Why Mountain Partnership?

Tifsa Atlas sees a strong convergence between the Agdal Initiative and Mountain Partnership areas of work, particularly sustainable mountain development; pastoralism and rangelands; biodiversity conservation; climate change adaptation; traditional and local knowledge; livelihoods of mountain communities; and cooperation among communities, researchers and institutions.

We therefore wish to move beyond a one-time exchange and explore a long-term institutional and knowledge-based relationship with Mountain Partnership.

12. Proposed Areas of Collaboration with Mountain Partnership

1. Scientific and institutional participation in the First National Conference on Pastoral Transhumance.
2. Connecting Tifsa Atlas with international experts and organizations working on pastoralism and mountain regions.
3. Sharing and promoting the Agdal Initiative and its results through Mountain Partnership networks.
4. Exchange of experiences on sustainable rangeland management.
5. Support for documenting and transmitting traditional pastoral knowledge.
6. Exchange of experience on climate adaptation in pastoral communities.
7. Exploring inclusion of relevant activities within the momentum of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026.
8. Exploring cooperation around studies on water, rangelands, the Pastoralist School and wool valorization.
9. Contributing to a national and international network on pastoral transhumance.
10. Exploring the possibility of Tifsa Atlas formally joining the Mountain Partnership.

13. Added Value of the Initiative

The added value of the Agdal Initiative lies in its integrated approach. It does not consider pastoral transhumance solely as an environmental issue or solely as cultural heritage. It approaches it as an interconnected system involving heritage, traditional knowledge, community governance, rangelands, biodiversity, climate, local economy, women and youth.

The initiative therefore seeks to move from simply preserving heritage towards valuing heritage as a source of local solutions for sustainable development and climate adaptation.

14. Sustainability

The sustainability of the initiative is based on strengthening community capacities rather than relying solely on temporary activities.

This includes documenting and preserving knowledge; training young people; developing the Pastoralist School; building national and international networks; strengthening community governance; developing economic opportunities for women; establishing partnerships with

universities and institutions; continuing research and monitoring; and transforming study and Conference results into reference resources for future policies and initiatives.

15. Conclusion

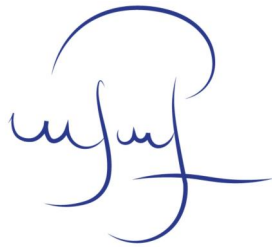
The Agdal Initiative for Pastoral Transhumance seeks to build a bridge between the past and the future.

The knowledge accumulated by pastoral communities over generations is not simply a cultural memory. If properly documented, studied and developed in partnership with science and institutions, it can provide local solutions to climate change, rangeland degradation, biodiversity loss and the sustainability of pastoral livelihoods.

Tifsa Atlas seeks to act as a community and knowledge-based focal point in the Middle Atlas, bringing together local knowledge, scientific research, field action and institutional cooperation.

We therefore look forward to presenting the initiative in greater detail to the Mountain Partnership Secretariat and exploring opportunities for cooperation, knowledge exchange and international networking.

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