RSC
Rangeland Stewardship Council

Towards a global rangelands standard
A pastoralist-centered approach to sustainability certification

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Purpose Today

Explain — Explain what we mean by 'sustainability systems', 'standards' and 'certification'

Share — Share where we're up to with the Global Rangelands Standard

Invite — Invite the IYRP Global Alliance into early, formative co-design

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WHAT WE WANT

A world where rangelands are sustainably managed, pastoralist voices are heard, and land stewardship is valued by all.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

We'll bring people together to share knowledge, drive investment, and accelerate action around the core principles of responsible rangeland management to protect, restore, and value rangelands.
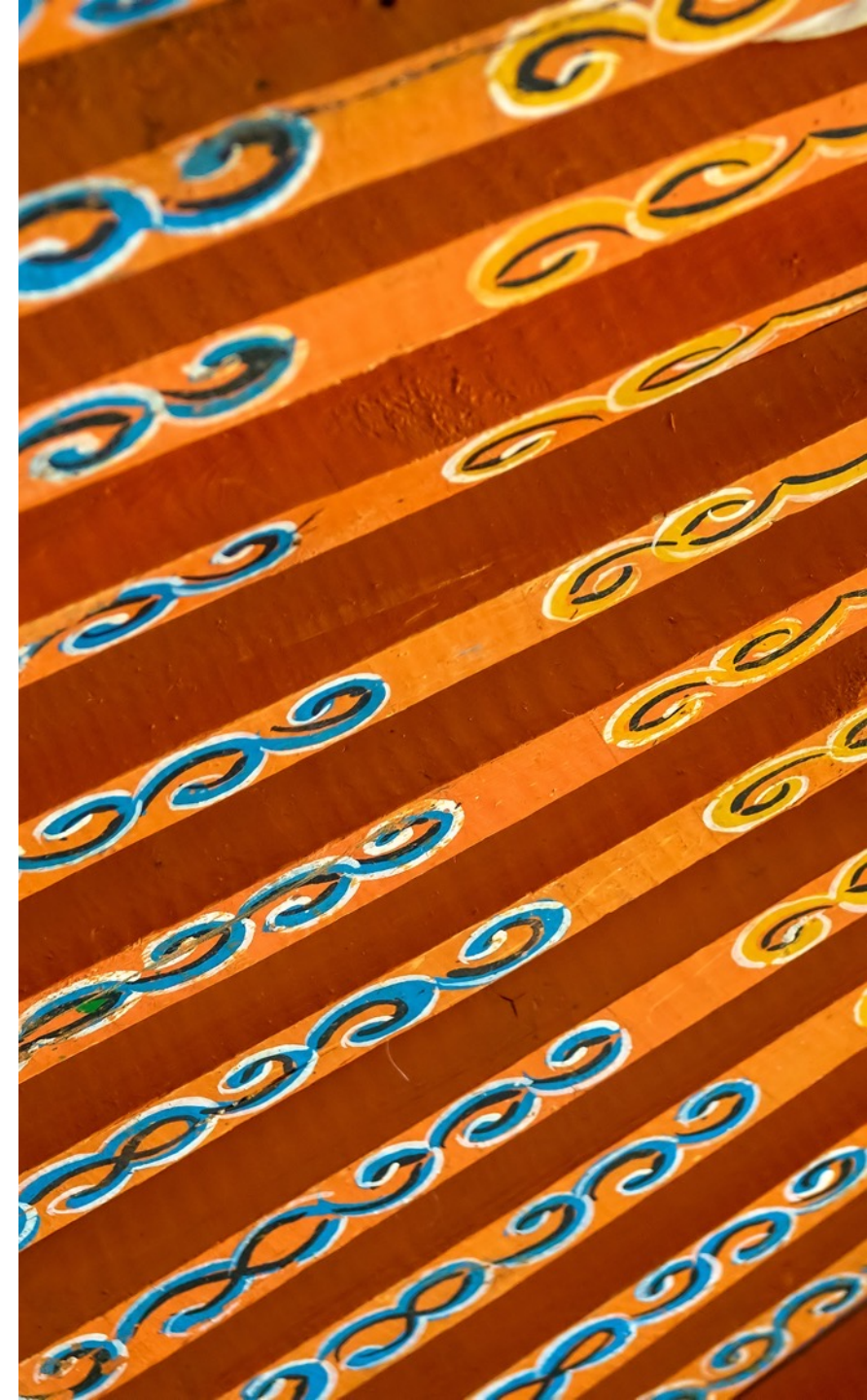
Rangelands:

- Cover >50% of Earth's land surface
- Support livelihoods, biodiversity & climate regulation

Yet:

- Poorly served by existing sustainability standards
- Communal, mobile systems often excluded by design

What do we mean by a 'sustainability system'?

ISEAL definition:

Organisations and approaches that

- define sustainability performance levels or improvement pathways
- measure, monitor, or verify performance or progress
- allow for claims and communications.

These elements work together to

- connect consumers and producers
- use the power of the market to support sustainability improvements.

Sustainability systems enable

- the recognition of good performance and sustainability improvement
- provide needed confidence to regulators, investors, businesses and consumers.

What do we mean by a 'sustainability standard'?

- A set of requirements that define what 'sustainable performance' means in a given context

- Standards set out rules, guidance or characteristics for products, processes, production methods or organisational practices that aim to improve sustainability outcomes

- Examples:

- In the rangelands context, we're talking about a set of requirements that define **'good rangeland stewardship'**

What do we mean by 'certification' in the sustainability context?

Sustainability certification

- Voluntary, third-party verification against agreed rules or outcomes (defined by the specific standard)

- An independent 'stamp of approval'

More than just a label

- Credible certification represents a commitment to improvement, transparency and measurement of impact
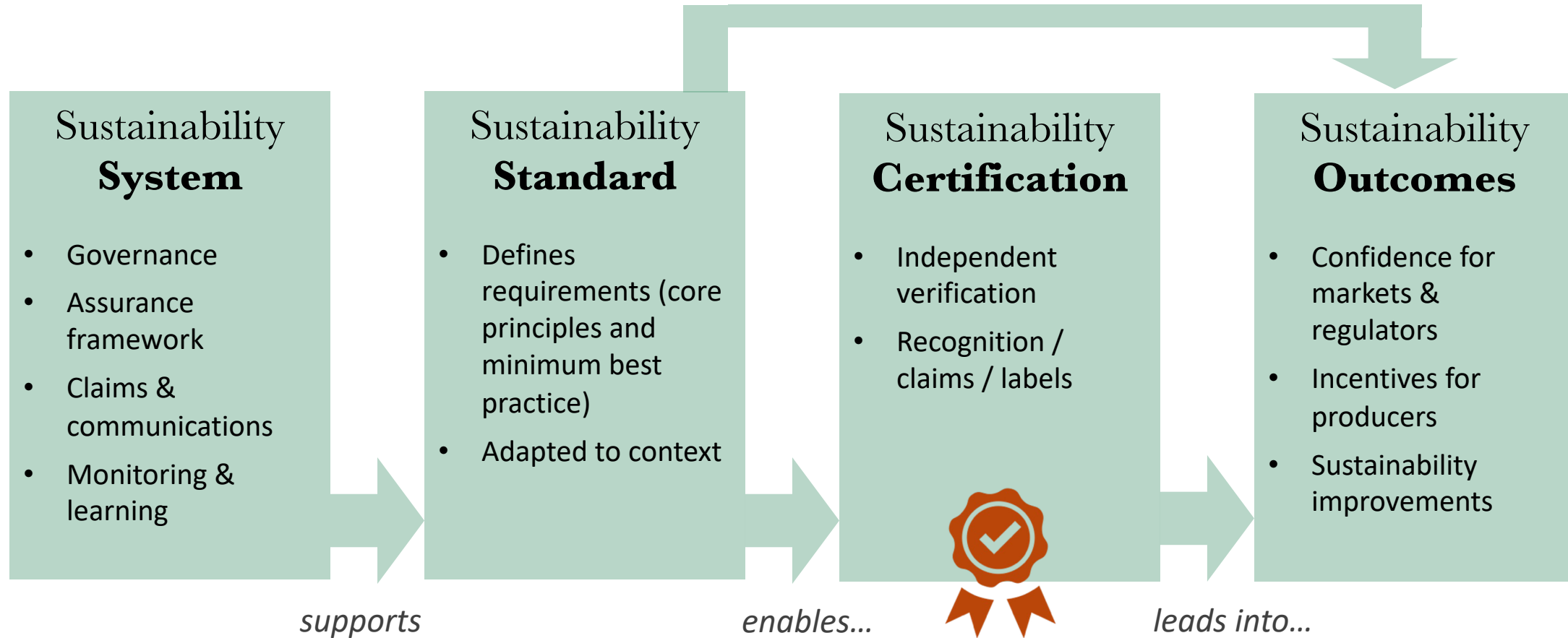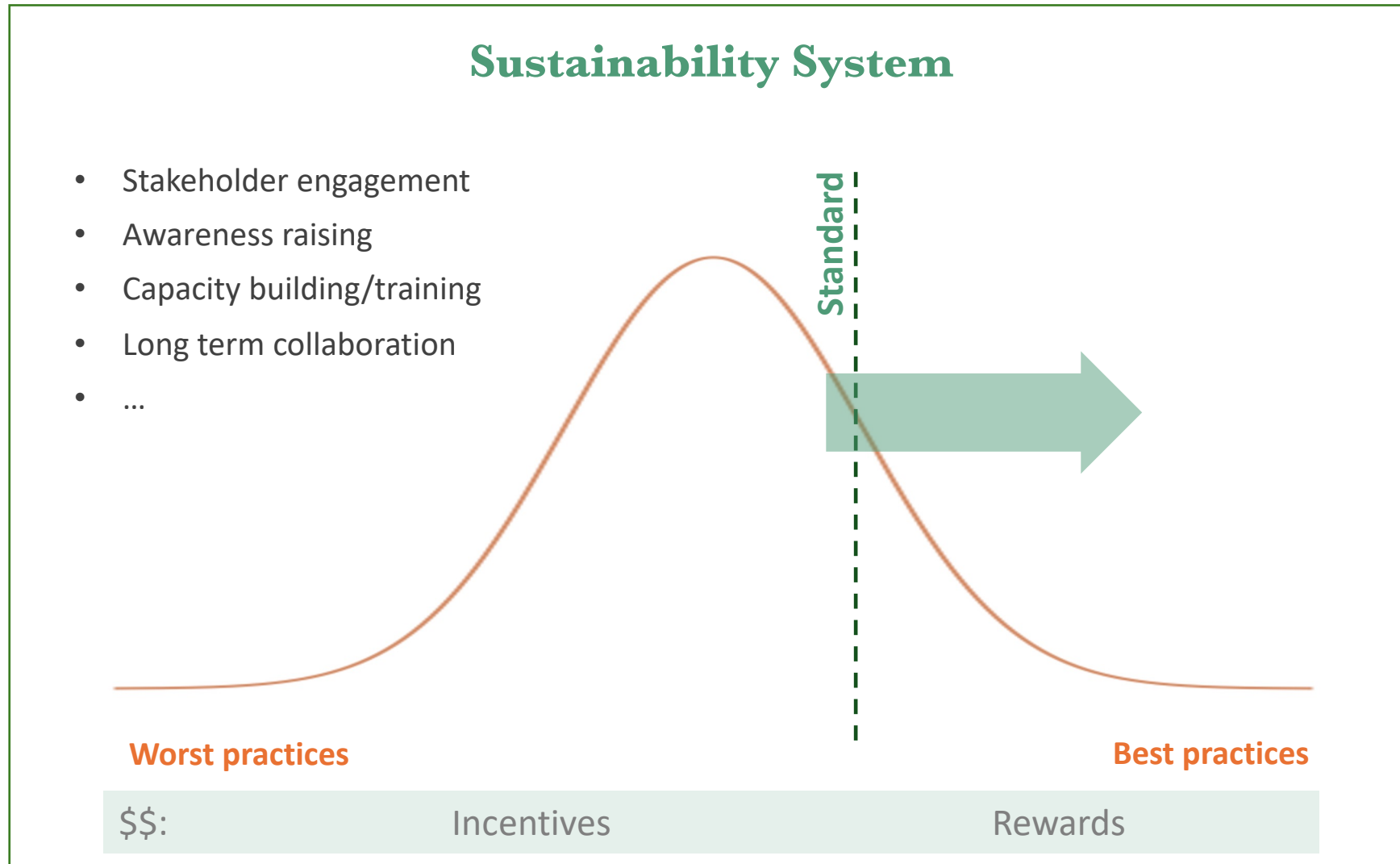
Product-based   **Process-based**   **Landscape/Jurisdiction-based**
                                                      (early stages)

How it works in practice…

Sustainability System

- Governance
- Assurance framework
- Claims & communications
- Monitoring & learning

supports

Sustainability Standard

- Defines requirements (core principles and minimum best practice)
- Adapted to context

enables…

Sustainability Certification

- Independent verification
- Recognition / claims / labels

leads into…

Sustainability Outcomes

- Confidence for markets & regulators
- Incentives for producers
- Sustainability improvements

Another view:

Sustainability System

- Stakeholder engagement
- Awareness raising
- Capacity building/training
- Long term collaboration
- …

Standard

Worst practices

Best practices

$$:   Incentives   Rewards

The case for a 'rangelands standard'

There is currently:

- **no multi-commodity, global standard that has been designed for diverse rangeland systems**

Existing standards:

- Have been designed primary for farms
- Are single commodity
- Struggle with mobility, shared land and customary governance
- Aren't set up for landscape and jurisdictional collaboration
- Lack market buy-in

Filling a missing niche:

- There's a 'structural gap' for rangelands in the standards market

What's required to develop, implement and scale a standard?

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Standard system components

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Theory of Change
- Standard requirements
- Implementation guidance
- Implementation support
- Assurance process
- Auditing oversight
- Claims policy
- Governance policy
- MEL Framework

Development of a *full standard system* takes considerable time and resources

For product-level certification

- Chain of custody system for every market supply chain
- Market demand for every product being certified
  - Building relationships
  - Creating awareness and understanding
  - Building value that consumers will pay for
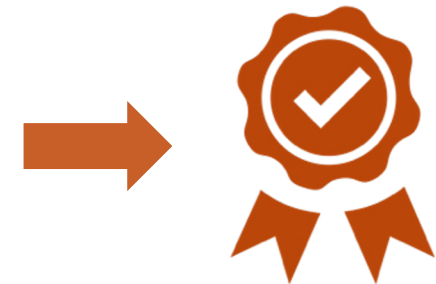
RSC's approach to rangeland recognition

STRATEGIC GOAL:

To connect private sector investment to better rangeland stewardship on the ground

To achieve this, two types of investment are needed:

1. **Supporting good practice where it already exists**

2. **Incentivizing improvement where best practice is not yet in place**

How RSC will do this: two parallel strands

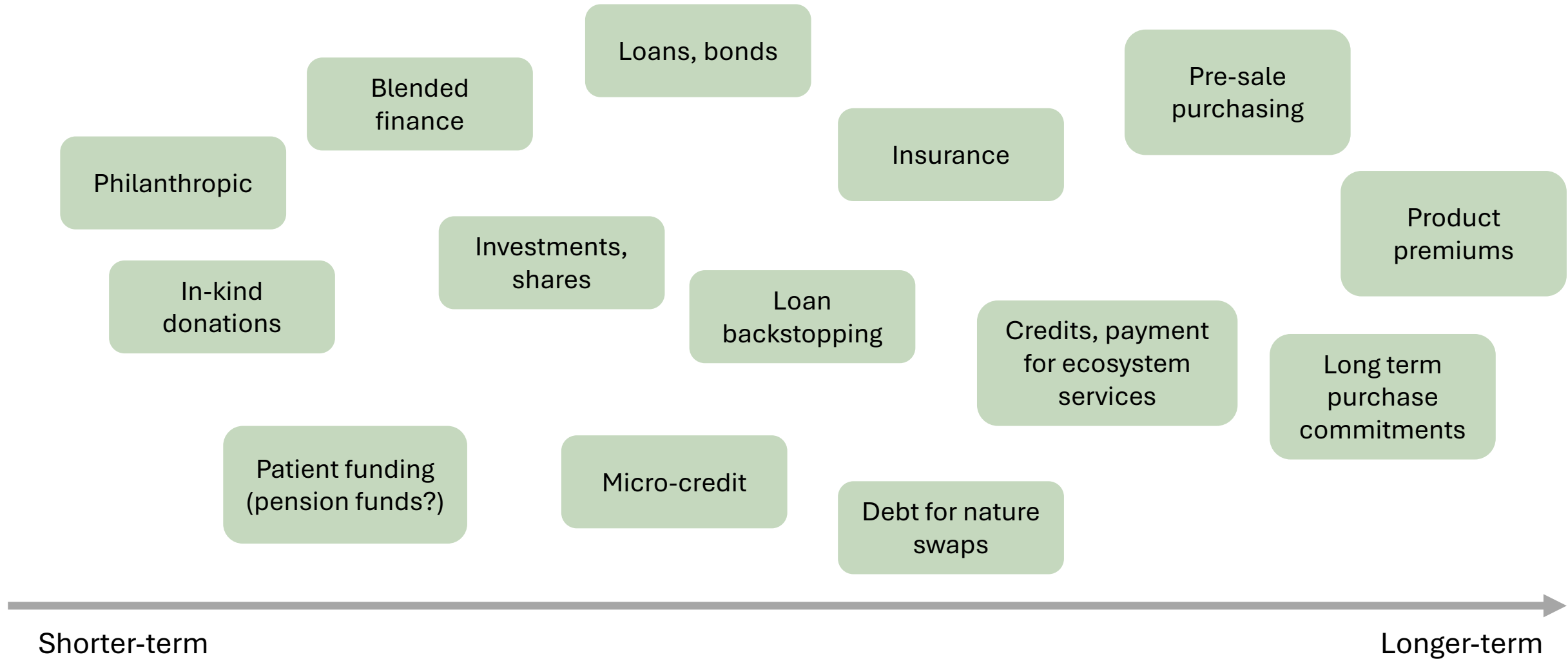1. **Co-development of a 'global rangelands standard'**

   - RSC stakeholders agree a shared definition of 'best practice' rangeland stewardship

   - These requirements form the foundation for future verification

   - Over time, this can support

     - Recognition of good stewardship

     - Certification of rangeland products

   - Additional standard elements will be developed to enable implementation and scale

2. **Exploration of diverse financial support models**

   - Identify ways to channel finance now to support rangeland stewardship

   - Test incentives that reward existing practices and enable transition toward best practice

   - Designed to complement the full standard system (not wait for it)

Build rules for the long-term, while mobilizing finance in the short-term

Potential financial support models

Loans, bonds

Blended finance

Pre-sale purchasing

Philanthropic

Insurance

Investments, shares

Product premiums

In-kind donations

Loan backstopping

Credits, payment for ecosystem services

Long term purchase commitments

Patient funding (pension funds?)

Micro-credit

Debt for nature swaps

Shorter-term → Longer-term

Global Rangelands Standard (GRS) development

Development so far:

- Over the past three years, the SFA has been working on the development of a global standard for rangelands

- Benchmarking of existing rangeland standards and scoping of key principles (2022/2023)

- 'Draft 0' version of the standard produced (2023)

- Several stakeholder consultation events were carried out across UK/Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia (2024-2025)

- Feedback captured from industry, domain experts and producers.

Clear feedback:

- governance expectations unrealistic

- producer knowledge not reflected

- needs to support landscape-level collaboration

- a more explicit pastoralist-first design is essential for clarity, feasibility and credibility.

Feedback informed drafting of new version: GRS Draft 0.1

What's changed in the new draft?

Global Rangelands Standard 0.1 reflects:

- A stronger pastoral-systems framing

- Clearer distinction between:
  - what producers can control vs influence
  - what they can only influence

- Explicit recognition of:
  - customary governance systems
  - traditional ecological knowledge
  - landscape/jurisdictional collaboration

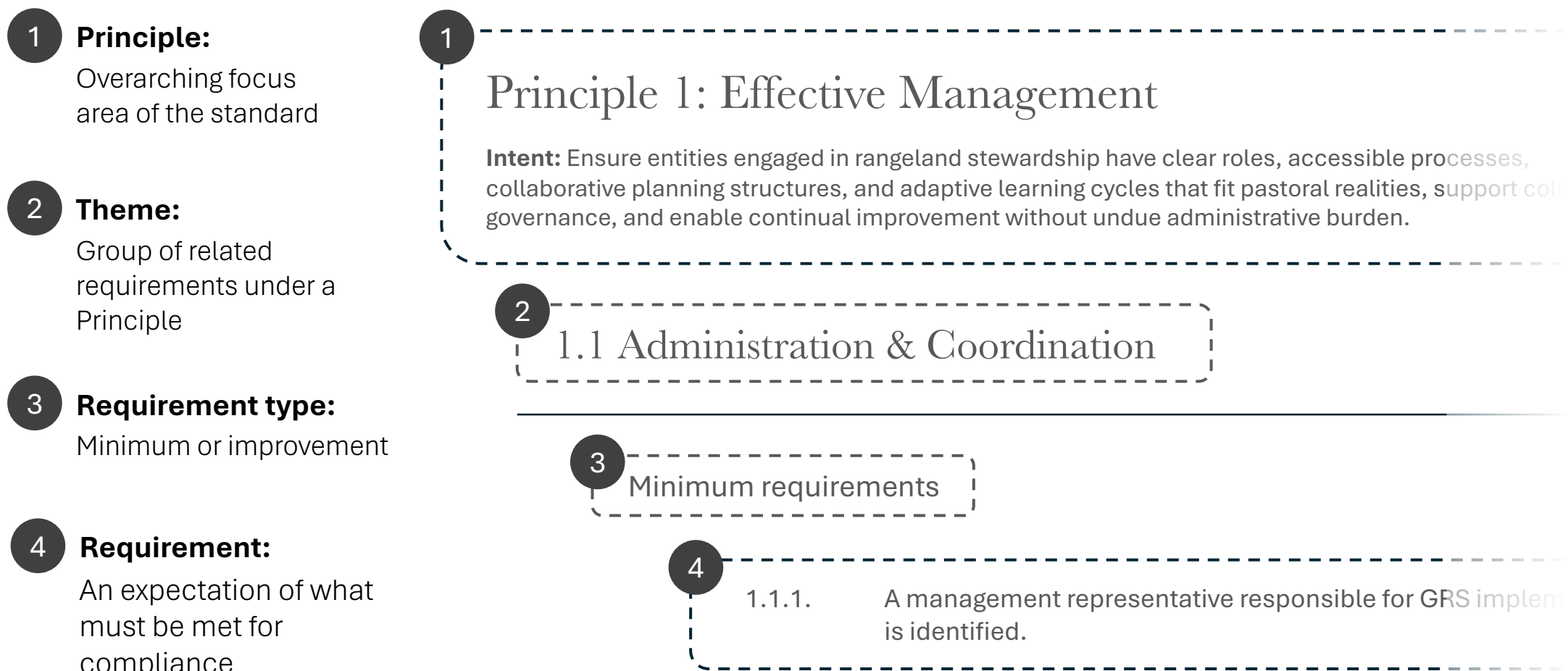- Stronger alignment with global frameworks

Pastoral systems as the design case

- Rangelands are defined by **variability, disturbance and uncertainty**

- Pastoralism evolved as an adaptive response
  → **mobility, flexibility and collective governance** manage risk and variability

- Most standards assume sedentary production
  → fixed boundaries, private tenure, single-operator, larger enterprises
  → poor fit for mobile, communal and smallholder systems

- Equity and impact require starting with the margins
  → the most rangeland-dependent and climate-exposed producers

- Therefore, design the standard for **mobile and communal pastoral systems first**

  → "what does good stewardship look like in pastoral systems, on their own terms?"

  → adapt outward for more sedentary and enterprise-based systems

Structure of the Global Rangelands Standard

RSC

Three levels: **Principles** > **Themes** > **Requirements**

1 Principle:
Overarching focus area of the standard

2 Theme:
Group of related requirements under a Principle

3 Requirement type:
Minimum or improvement

4 Requirement:
An expectation of what must be met for compliance

1

Principle 1: Effective Management

Intent: Ensure entities engaged in rangeland stewardship have clear roles, accessible processes, collaborative planning structures, and adaptive learning cycles that fit pastoral realities, support collaborative governance, and enable continual improvement without undue administrative burden.

2

1.1 Administration & Coordination

3 Minimum requirements

4

1.1.1.   A management representative responsible for GRS implementation is identified.

Structure of the Global Rangelands Standard

5 **Guidance:**

Provides information to support interpretation and implementation of each Theme within the Standard

5

Guidance – Theme 1.1

Effective administration and coordination are necessary for implementing the Standard across all rangeland contexts, but the formality and structure of these functions will vary widely depending on governance arrangements, scale, mobility and capacity.

Administrative coordination refers to the ability to organise, communicate and maintain responsibility for certification-related activities. This does not require a permanent office or formal organisational structure. Coordination functions may be fulfilled by individuals or groups and may be formal or informal, fixed or rotating, seasonal or combined with other roles.

Examples of coordination and management roles may include, where relevant:
- administrative coordination or record keeping
- liaison with the CAB, RSC, or buyers
- coordination of the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP)
- communication across Operational Units
- representation of women, youth, elders or customary leaders
- conflict resolution or access coordination
- risk, emergency, or contingency coordination

Principles of the Global Rangelands Standard

- 🗒 Effective Management

- 👤 Responsible Land Governance & Tenure

- 🍃 Regenerative Management & Ecosystem Health

- 🌱 Resilient Livelihoods

- 👤 Rights, Equity & Inclusion

- 🐖 Animal Welfare (still to be developed)

How does certification actually work on the ground?

Three key concepts:

- **Certificate Holder** → who is accountable

- **Management Unit** → what land is in scope

- **Operational Units** → who actually manages day-to-day

Allows for:

- group certification

- mobility

- shared and overlapping land use

No requirement to:

- formalise land tenure

- resolve historic land disputes

- show short-term ecological improvement

Continuous improvement

Improvement may mean:

- adapting
- learning
- maintaining effective practice

Certification approach must recognise:

- drought
- conflict
- policy barriers

**No change ≠ failure
in rangelands**

Alignment with global frameworks

Designed to align with:

Land Degradation Neutrality

Sustainable Development Goals

Convention on Biological Diversity

International Labour Organization

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

INTENT: to help producers, businesses and governments meet existing commitments, not add to the reporting burden.

Why the IYRP Global Alliance matters

IYRP brings

- global rangeland expertise
- policy insight
- links to pastoral networks

Critical for

- testing assumptions
- surfacing blind spots
- connecting with pastoralists across the globe

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR
RANGELANDS & PASTORALISTS

What kind of feedback are we seeking?

Primary focus:

- Does this work across real rangeland systems?

- What doesn't fit?

- What's missing?

Secondary focus:

- Principle-level feedback

- Regional perspectives

- Framework alignment

How you can engage

Two pathways:

- High-level feedback (priority)
- Optional deep dives

We're especially keen to:

- link with pastoralist organisations
- co-design engagement approaches

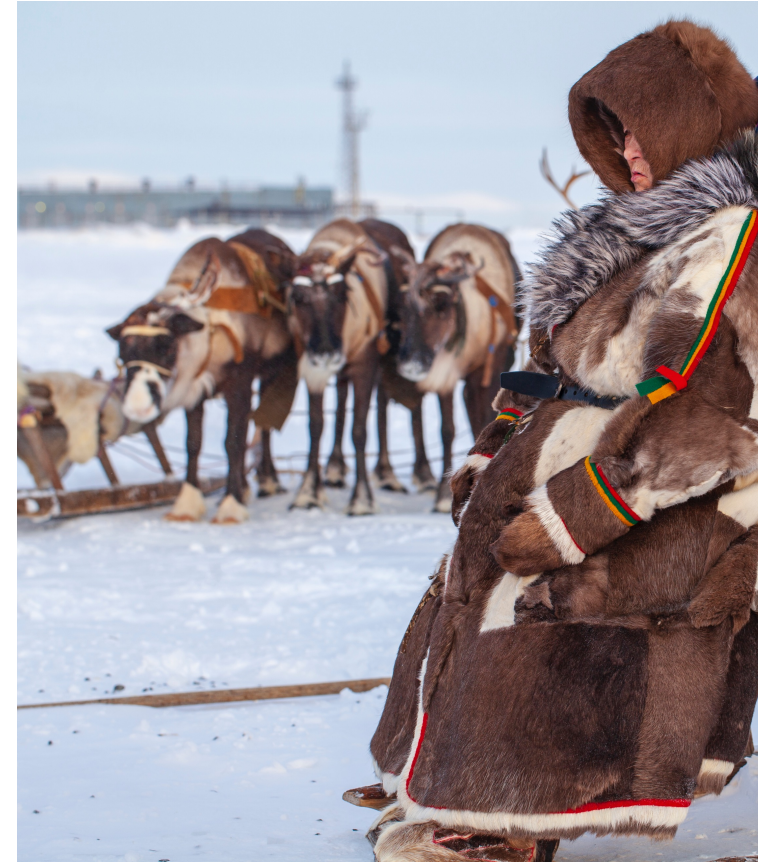# What success would look like

A standard that...

pastoralists recognise as
their own

supports customary
governance

is credible globally,
including with markets

What success would look like

IYRP Global Alliance as…

a critical knowledge partner

a bridge to diverse rangeland voices

an amplifier in global conversations

YOUR INPUT

We're seeking IYRP Global Alliance input in two key areas:

Shaping the standard itself

Feedback on the GRS design and, where possible, active co-development.

Maximising impact beyond the standard

Strategic input on how this collective work can be best used to benefit rangelands globally - including how the GRS can support better recognition of rangeland stewardship.

OVER TO YOU FOR QUESTIONS & THOUGHTS!