

Joint International Grassland & Rangeland Congress 2021

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Resource mobilisation for research in sustainable pastoralism

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The need for further understanding of pastoralism and rangelands has been underscored frequently – in various reports/articles and also in this conference by some of the earlier speakers.

For example, according to the report “*Case of benign neglect: knowledge gaps about sustainability in pastoralism and rangelands*” by UN Environment (2019), credible and publicly available information on the condition and trends of pastoralism and rangelands remains limited.

However, what is paradoxical to note – as mentioned by Michael Odhiambo in an earlier session of this conference – is that pastoralism and rangelands are among the most researched areas but remain least understood.

Types of research that need to be funded

Therefore, while mobilising resources for research **one needs to reflect on what types of research are needed to address knowledge gaps for sustainable pastoralism.**

In this regard, I wish to briefly point out the types of research needed to improve pastoralism, which have implications on the resources required:

- There is need to focus on research that brings out the real value of pastoralism and rangelands. As you already know, rangelands and pastoralism have been grossly undervalued and this has resulted in inadequate **investment of resources for studying, protecting and monitoring rangeland resources.**
- While we advocate for detailed research to improve our understanding of pastoralism, focus is needed on the basic data such as the number of pastoralists and their contribution to local, national and regional economies, all of which remain invisible. Therefore, research is needed that generates reliable basic data about the thus far invisible pastoralists.
- Looking at also the need to understand processes that shape the rangelands and pastoralism, long-term research should be emphasised. Currently, most of the research grants are for about three years – with five years being the maximum. This severely limits the possibilities to carry out the longer-term research needed.
- It is important to invest in transdisciplinary research – an approach that interfaces several scientific disciplines and involves key stakeholders such as the societal actors (including women and youth) **so that their capacities to collect and analyse data and to use them in policy dialogue are strengthened.**

- The transdisciplinary research approach also appreciates and integrates local knowledge and scientific knowledge systems – in **such a way that solutions to challenges are built on peoples’ own knowledge and experiences, their own innovations and initiatives.**
 - It allows for integration of various aspects of sustainable pastoralism – for instance, not only about livestock production and marketing but also about provision of services such as human and animal and environmental health (One Health) and mobile education.
- Considering the above, there is need for focus on research that fills the knowledge gaps by not only working in easily accessible with close-to-the-tarmac-road respondents but rather covering areas that are difficult to access – **this particularly in order to understand the production logic and needs of nomadic and other highly mobile pastoralists, also crossing national borders.**

Resourcing research

These long-term, transdisciplinary and participatory research approaches are time consuming and resource-intensive.

- Few donors thus far have been willing to support this type of research, but a positive example is the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture (BMEL), which currently funds the NaviNut project “Enhancing women’s agency in navigating changing food environments to improve child nutrition in African drylands”, which takes a transdisciplinary research approach – co-creating knowledge across different scientific disciplines and societal stakeholders.
- It is important to create and use decentralised research funds, including climate adaptation funds, to support locally relevant research, with fund governance structures that include local people. Such an approach is, for example, is used by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), to promote a mechanism for delivering climate finance to the local level for inclusive climate adaptation.
- To improve resourcing of research, there is need for enhanced collaboration in cross-border research co-funded by the countries concerned to enable mobile and flexible pastoral production and marketing.

In conclusion, therefore, I would say that there is need for more engagement of researchers and pastoralists in jointly lobbying national governments, regional bodies and donor agencies to raise their awareness about the importance of making funding available for such long-term, transdisciplinary research.

This would include funding for decentralised, more locally governed research in areas and with people that have usually been marginalised or totally excluded from research funding.