



Aims, demands & narratives of the German IYRP Group

0. Definition

Close-to-nature grazing, preferably with locally adapted animals (e.g. traditional livestock breeds), provides ecosystem services, i.e. it maintains and even restores diverse habitats for animals and plants. It contributes to the protection of climate, soil, water and air.

I. Target groups

The general public in urban and rural areas, practitioners and decision-makers from politics and administration.

II. Aims

II.1) We create social awareness of the worldwide relevance of grazing animals for ecosystems and of pastoralism for local and global challenges.

II.2) We bring about a political, social and economic strengthening and recognition of close-to-nature pastoral farming.

II.3) The Nature Restoration Law of the European Union (EU) and the restoration plans to be submitted by the EU Member States (including our Federal Government) by August 2026 promote close-to-nature grazing as a means of protecting nature and the climate.

III. Title

We use the official German title of the IYRP 2026 *“Internationales Jahr der Weidelandschaften und des Hirtentums”*. Important terms for our work: pastoralism, close-to-nature grazing.

IV. Demands

IV.1) Change the **framework conditions** so that the considerable ecosystem services provided by close-to-nature grazing can be revitalised. This would mean: i) **Further developing and supplementing existing funding instruments** to enable fair remuneration of the ecosystem services provided by close-to-nature grazing and thus create long-term planning reliability; ii) **Removing obstacles/barriers** that make the management of grazing areas and the work of pastoralists more difficult.

We call for stronger **interdepartmental cooperation**, for example, between nature conservation, water management, forestry and agriculture.

IV.2) **Recognise grazing animals and their great importance** for the life and survival of people here and worldwide – in teaching and training, in the media, in public procurement and more.

IV.3) **Widespread commitment to the return of large grazers, in particular, to the landscape:** with low stocking densities and the most robust, locally adapted breeds possible, preferably all year round and on at least 5% of the agricultural and forestry land in Germany.

IV.4) We therefore call for **the German restoration plan (as part of the EU Nature Restoration Law)** to be used to highlight and lastingly promote the tremendous nature-conservation benefits of close-to-nature pastoral farming – for example, by continuing the Natural Climate Protection Action Programme.

V. Key messages / narratives

V.1) What close-to-nature grazing can achieve

- Close-to-nature grazing and herding regulate comprehensive ecosystem structures and mechanisms: they are a form of active conservation of resources and thus prevention of crises (and potentially also conflicts).
- Close-to-nature grazing counteracts the biodiversity crisis at all levels (genetic diversity, species diversity, ecosystem diversity). It protects from erosion and flooding and promotes water and air purity. It helps restore resilient and species-rich ecosystems that mitigate climate change.
- Pastoralism as a livelihood: grazing animals revitalise and preserve cultivated landscapes and make them usable in the first place. They provide valuable products (especially meat, milk, leather and wool).
- Encounters with animals are good for the soul.

V.2) Complex system of pastoral farming

Pastoral farming encompasses interactions between soil, plants, animals and climate. It requires careful management in order to maintain nutrient cycles, promote animal welfare/health and safeguard soil fertility. We are talking about entire systems in which people, animals and framework conditions must work together. We are seeking to remove obstacles to near-natural grazing: the remuneration of this important work is of central importance, making pastoralism more attractive for newcomers to the profession.

V.3) Not only green meadows

We think far too often in terms of isolated habitats. Ruminants also have a positive effect in forests and on arable land as well as in diverse nature conservation areas. They can also be used when the winter vegetation is still standing in the fields after wet, warm winters or as part of agroforestry systems.

The historical changes are also fascinating: we want to take a closer look at the history of grazing in Germany.