

Sustainable pastoralism key to conserving biodiversity of rangelands & grasslands

Over 50 institutions and individuals endorse “The Cancun Statement” calling for the promotion of sustainable pastoralism

FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub, 23 December 2016

Over 50 institutions and individuals endorsed “The Cancun Statement” calling for the promotion of sustainable pastoralism and livestock production for the conservation of biodiversity in grasslands and rangelands.

The statement was presented at the side event titled [“World’s Grasslands and Rangelands at risk: the Role of Pastoralists and Livestock to Conserve Global Biodiversity”](#) held on the sidelines of the 13th meeting of the Coalition of Parties (COP13) on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cancun, Mexico.

Signed by international organizations, multilateral agencies, government ministries, civil society organizations, scientists and individuals, representing 27 countries and 44 local, national and global organizations worldwide, the statement expresses concern over the degradation of pastoral landscapes by invasive species and soil erosion, the undermining of common property systems, and unsustainable land-use changes, such as mining, inappropriate afforestation and unsustainable agricultural practices.

The Cancun Statement calls for increased investment in sustainable pastoralism as a sustainable land-use and livestock-production system. It asks to stop or reverse all efforts to sedentarise mobile pastoralist communities, and to better understand, respect and encourage indigenous and local knowledge.

Rangelands and natural grasslands cover nearly half of the Earth’s surface, and many are hotspots of biodiversity providing wildlife habitat and a number of ecosystem services. Pastoralism greatly contributes to conservation and sustainable use of natural and domestic biodiversity, but these extensive systems are under great threat from adverse policies and subsidies.

Suitable policies, social services, and finance, and protection of land rights and common property systems should be enacted to empower pastoralists and other stewards of grasslands and rangelands.

Pastoralists should be recognized as key stakeholders and decision makers to achieve sustainable production in rangelands and landscapes that simultaneously allow for the un-impaired movement of thriving and healthy populations of migratory animals travelling through corridors of public, private and community lands and protected areas.

The statement also calls to consider a possible United Nations resolution designating 2021 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

Signatories of the declaration include the organizers of the side event including Instituto Potosino de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (IPICYT), Conservation International, Conservation International (CI), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Society for Range Management, International Land Coalition (ILC), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Rangeland Congress (IRC), International Grassland Congress (IGC), Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), Yolda Initiative, DiversEarth, and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).