

Pastoralists advocate for their rights and livelihoods at GASL meeting in Thailand

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The 13th Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL) Multi-stakeholder Partnership (MSP) Meeting and the Regional Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 30 October to 3 November 2023, was a significant event for pastoralists and their allies. The event hosted about 200 participants from different sectors and regions, including representatives of pastoralist communities, organizations and practitioners, who gathered to discuss and collaborate on the challenges and opportunities of livestock systems in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The pastoralist representatives promoted at the event that one of the drivers of change that affects their livestock systems is climate change, which poses significant risks and uncertainties for pastoralists and their production systems. Pastoralists are also facing other threats, such as land degradation, invasion into the pastoralists' territories, lack of recognition of their territories of life, conflict, loss of biodiversity and marginalization. Therefore, it was crucial for pastoralists to raise awareness and advocate for their rights and livelihoods during the GASL meeting.

To do so, practitioners and pastoralists from different regions participated in various sessions and panels of GASL and shared their experiences, challenges and solutions, and highlighted the contributions of pastoralism to culture, economy and environmental health. In addition to this, a group of people who are members of the Regional IYRP Support Groups (RISGs) organized a side event and discussed how they can continue their advocacy work on pastoralism in platforms such as GASL and how GASL can contribute to the IYRP 2026.

One of the main points they raised was the need to give more visibility to pastoral livestock systems and to recognize pastoralists' territories of life and their mobility as important elements of their livelihoods and cultures. They also emphasized recognition of pastoralists' customary governance systems over their territories of life, aiming at conserving their biocultural diversity.

The need to strengthen evidence on pastoral systems as solutions for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change was another part of the advocacy by the development practitioners and pastoralists. They elaborated how pastoral systems have evolved over centuries to cope with harsh and variable environments, and have developed strategies and practices that enhance their resilience and reduce their environmental impact. They also discussed the need to amplify the values of pastoral systems as managers of landscapes that provide multiple ecosystem services through their cultural, traditional, spiritual, and indigenous knowledge systems.

They also discussed the threats that climate change, tenure insecurity, and conflict pose to the survival of pastoralists. Therefore, they advocate to secure tenure rights and land access for pastoralists, to enable them to continue their valuable role in managing rangelands. They are also exposed to the

externalities of development, such as infrastructure, mining and tourism, which may disrupt their mobility patterns and degrade their rangelands. By addressing these impacts, the IYRP can support the peace and stability of pastoralists and their regions, and ensure that development is inclusive and respectful of their needs and preferences.

In addition, they emphasized that pastoralists face many challenges in accessing basic needs, such as mobile veterinary, education, and healthcare services, due to their remote locations. They also lack reliable access to information, communication and markets, which limit their potential and wellbeing. To address these challenges, pastoralists and their allies need to ensure reliable access to mobile veterinary, education and health services for pastoralists and their communities. This could be done by training qualified pastoralist youth and supporting them to deliver these services to their fellow pastoralists. By doing so, they can enhance their capacities and quality of life, and empower themselves to have a voice and a stake in their own development and participation in relevant decision-making processes that affect their lives and territories.

They also agreed to use the GASL platform to leverage for action leading up to 2026, and dedicate space or sessions in 2024 and 2025 to discuss how GASL can support pastoral systems and the IYRP. They also proposed to organize the GASL MSP meeting in 2025 or 2026 in a country where pastoralism is very important, to link up with the efforts of the IYRP. By doing so, the IYRP can benefit from the multi-stakeholder partnership and collaboration of GASL, and mobilize resources and support for pastoralism at the global level.