



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Supporting pastoralism



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Pastoralists produce food in the world's driest, coldest, hottest as well as mountainous environments, yet they are often misunderstood and marginalized. They not only sustain vibrant and culturally unique communities, but are also linked with many other people who depend on their activities. Pastoral production systems produce a variety of products and services from multiple sources in the ecosystem. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supports pastoralists and agro-pastoralists worldwide in a wide range of areas to promote food security, resilient livelihoods, pastoral economies and healthy environments.

What we do

FAO supports pastoral production systems by promoting veterinary and extension services for livestock and helping to develop value chains and markets for pastoralist products to increase productivity and generate income and employment in rural areas. For instance, FAO is currently vaccinating over one million animals belonging to 7 000 pastoral households in Sudan in order to control transboundary animal diseases.

FAO helps to restore, maintain and manage grasslands and rangelands to keep them productive, conserve biodiversity, protect valuable ecosystem services and combat land degradation. FAO advocates for pastoral land rights to ensure pastoral mobility and land access through the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure for Rangelands*.

The focus of FAO's programmes aim to improve the food security, nutrition, health and education of pastoralist communities, promote gender equality and resolve inter- or intra community conflicts. In the



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Central African Republic, FAO supports 3 000 vulnerable households affected by violence in the country, through veterinary services and social cohesion dialogue to secure livestock movements.



Supporting pastoralism

FAO contributes, drives and leads policy discussions to promote pastoralist-friendly policies and regulations. FAO strengthens the capacities of pastoralist organizations, voices pastoral concerns at UN level and supports pastoralist representatives to participate in political debates. Initiatives such as the FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub bring together all stakeholders involved in pastoralism to promote collaboration and share experiences.

FAO works towards increasing pastoralists' resilience. It promotes disaster risk reduction management, early warning systems and enhanced knowledge and education to help communities cope with climate change implications such as droughts and floods. FAO helps affected communities with food, health and nutrition interventions through feed provisions, destocking and recovery interventions. By 2018, an FAO programme in Niger aims to train 7 000 herders on climate change adaptation strategies using the Pastoral Field School approach.



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Partners

FAO partners with governments, other UN agencies, research institutions, NGOs and pastoralist organizations to support development in pastoral areas and provide technical assistance and expertise.

Understanding the context

An estimated 200 million pastoralists herd their animals on rangelands that cover a third of the earth's land surface. They rely on their mobility to find adequate grazing and water in the face of uncertain climatic conditions.

Pastoralists produce food where no crops can grow. In many countries, livestock sales, meat, milk, hair and hides contribute to more than half of the agricultural GDP. Pastoral systems are one of the most adapted and resilient forms of agriculture in drylands. Pastoralists nourish not only their own communities; also those living in farming areas, urban centres and coastal regions benefit from the trade and value chains of pastoral products.

Pastoralists are environmental stewards. Pastoralist use and preserve livestock breeds that are adapted to the environment. Livestock grazing provides essential ecosystem services. Their animals fertilize crop fields and the practices help sequester carbon, support ecosystems and control bush encroachment, which prevents fires. Pastoralism maintains biodiversity and landscapes.

Pastoralism under threat. Pastoralists face a long list of threats: conflict and violence, blocked migration routes and water points, loss of grazing land, the expansion of farming into the best grazing areas, lack of services such as schools and health care that are adapted to their mobile livelihoods. Pastoralist communities are often misunderstood, marginalized and excluded from making the decisions that affect them.

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CONTACT US

Animal Production and Health Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla – 00153 Rome, Italy
E-mail: AGA-Director@fao.org

MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.fao.org/pastoralist-knowledge-hub>