

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

NOTES:

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration, Zoom meeting July 25th 2022

Attendants:

Committee on Forestry Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (COFO WG):

Chairperson: Professor Anders Malmer - Director for SLU Global.

COFO WG Secretariat: Fidaa F. Haddad – Forestry Officer – FAO

FAO experts:

Pedro Herrera Calvo - Dryland Forest and Livestock Expert – Forestry Division

Gregorio Velasco Gil - Regional Project Coordinator - Animal Production and Health Division

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Committee Members:

Maryam Niamir- Fuller – Vice-Chair of the International Support Group (ISG) for the IYRP.

Samuels Igshaan - Rangeland ecologist at Agricultural Research Council. Grassland Society of Southern Africa - University of Cape Town.

Time: 03:00 PM – 04:20 PM CET

OVERVIEW

1. Round of introductions
2. COFO WG's role and its link to the policy making process
3. Brainstorming session on how to collaborate with each other to strengthen the IYP in 2026.
4. Plan and next steps

ROUND OF INTRODUCTIONS

All participants introduced themselves and their backgrounds.

Maryam Niamir-Fuller expressed how the current narrative towards pastoralists is quite derogative, as they are seen as an agent of degradation in rangelands as their livestock are

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

“eating everything”. These conceptions are making it difficult for pastoralists to continue to be stewards.

COFO WG’s ROLE AND ITS LINK TO THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

The Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems’ Terms of Reference:

- a) review and report to the Committee on Forestry on the status, trends, issues and developments in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, and make recommendations to the Committee on these matters;
- b) as guided by the Committee, contribute to developing a comprehensive understanding of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and the people who depend on them;
- c) as guided by the Committee, promote scaling –up of the adoption of good practices for the protection, sustainable management and restoration of drylands forests and agrosilvopastoral systems, enhancing also environmental and socio-economic resilience and sustainable livelihoods;
- d) report to the Committee on any other of its activities, in accordance with Rule VII (3) of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee

The first WG session was held in 2019 in Rome and its [second session](#) was virtually held in 2021 and was hosted by the government of Tanzania¹. [Decision FO:COFO/WG-DF/2021/REP/ 31](#) as approved by the WG members is as follows “*The Working Group agreed to support the UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026 by mobilizing and deploying their cross-regional expertise and promoting innovative and inter-connected sustainable agrosilvopastoral systems*”. Therefore, the WG steering Committee represented by Mrs. Andres in his capacity as the WG Chairperson, is having this meeting to discuss how to contribute and to work on strengthening the role of forests in dryland management and the cross-sectorial collaboration between the COFO WG and the IYR.

The Secretariat highlighted that the WG membership is open to government representatives, researchers, experts, and so on, nominated by COFO members; most member States nominated governmental focal points and some nominated researchers.

Anders Malmer noted how there was a slow start for the COFO WG but since it started it has had quite a lot of activities involving the focal points to various degrees producing reports and background papers. Anders Malmer brought up that he worked for Swedish University of

¹ <https://www.fao.org/dryland-forestry/working-group/second-session/en/>

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

Agricultural Sciences as a professor on tropical forest ecology and management for over 30 years. He has worked with both wet and dry forests, and a touch of pastoralism. Currently he is part of the Swedish Forest Agency, running a development aid funded project about locally controlled forest restoration.

Anders Malmer has expressed how for the past ten years there has been a large commitment to forest restoration, but data shows that the ten-year period before saw more new forests than the last ten-year period. And this is due to the difficulty of having this development be scalable and to be about developing economies in which people should live off these new landscapes.

This could be linked to the Dryland landscapes as there is a need to find out how to transform and find scalable development: how these pastoralists could live better from the outcomes of the livestock, as well as other facilities from the landscapes.

The Secretariat explained how even though the COFO WG has a technical mandate, the work that's being done on the ground needs to be reported by the countries to the COFO WG – this is how the group influences the policies and the approach from the member states:

- Support implementation on the ground.
- Contribute to the decision-making process every 2 years of COFO sessions.

Currently the COFO WG plays an important role in the [Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes \(DSL-IP\)](#), which is the first Impact Program carried out by the [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#). This program includes eleven countries from Africa and Asia, [Mongolia](#) being one of them.

BRAINSTORMING DISCUSSION

Maryam Niamir- Fuller inquired information on who requested to create these linkages with the [International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists \(IYRP\)](#) and how this came about.

The Secretariat explained how different committees in FAO coordinate among themselves; in this case there is the [Committee on Agriculture \(COAG\)](#), and the [Committee of Forestry \(COFO\)](#). Under the COAG there is a [Sub-Committee on Livestock Management](#) and under the COFO there is the [COFO WG](#).

COFO WG contributed in the last two years to FAO knowledge and projects, here you can find the WG progress report <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7312en/cb7312en.pdf>, and the current approved work plan <https://www.fao.org/3/cb8038en/cb8038en.pdf>.

Key products of COFO WG as of IYP interest could be as below:

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

- FAO produced the first global dryland assessment: “[Trees, forests and land use in drylands: the first global assessment](#)”, from where it was reflected on the need to create stronger synergies and closer collaborations.
- [Valuing, restoring and managing presumed drylands: Cerrado, Miombo–Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau](#)
- Developed a transformational approach “[Building climate-resilient dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral production systems](#)” with aims to support the decision makers on how to transform the dryland production systems under the climate change scenarios. This publication is available in four languages.
- Currently developing an [The E- learning Program](#) which aims to develop the capacities of and transfer competencies to practitioners on key transformational approaches for dryland production resilient systems.
- Currently is finalizing the global assessment called “[Grazing with Trees](#)” in collaboration between the Forestry and Animal Health and Production divisions in FAO based on the attached approved decision: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7561en/cb7561en.pdf>

Maryam Niamir- Fuller expressed her agreement on the role of the Working Group in analyzing the role of livestock in restoring dryland, as it is a way to balancing all the different issues together. Even though most drylands can be found in rangelands, it does not work the same way the other way around – only 63% of rangelands are in drylands. Rangelands go beyond drylands and consequently also the role of the IYRP.

Through the [Rangeland Atlas](#), there is a beginning of the understanding of the scope of rangelands as it classifies 54% of the world's landmass as rangelands. Many rangelands have been transformed to agriculture land which is a source of concern for pastoralists since rangelands are decreasing by the expansion of these and plantation forests as well. Rangelands became the natural route to expand cropping and tree plantation, but it can be argued that it is not sustainable.

Maryam Niamir- Fuller posed a question about what would be the end result sought by the Dryland WG and COFO.

From the IYRP and pastoralists’ perspective, they want to be able to have the right to conducive policies and laws that secure their land and give them markets. All elements that would allow them to have a discretionary income to invest in things like restoring degraded patches on their pastures and the like, thus becoming the stewards of their lands.

Making extensive livestock systems sustainable and viable and therefore Rangelands healthy is the end game.

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

The Secretariat agreed on the points made by Maryam Niamir- Fuller, adding that more than seventeen case studies have been collected in the upcoming “Grazing with Trees” paper, to demonstrate that the role of livestock goes beyond shading and providing food products.

Maryam Niamir- Fuller observed that there is still challenge when it comes to government policies and the lack of positive change from these towards the protection of common grazing lands - pastoralists are losing hope and trying to claim pieces of land. Taking this into consideration she posed the following question: Do you think the COFO WG can help to work with the COFO members to put a light on the issues with policies that affect pastoralists negatively?

She expressed her interest in working with the WG to change the current approach to dryland.

Gregorio Velasco Gil pointed out that from an inside-FAO perspective finding the Dryland Working Group under COFO was very strategic because it gives another end result for pastoralism in rangelands into FAO committees and raised their attention on this topic.. He agreed there is a need to change the narrative and the rationale behind it, and thinks that COFO could be a good entry point for this.

The Secretariat informed the participants that COAG and COFO have joined efforts to produce a document about the role of forest and agriculture in sustaining food security – how to integrate agriculture and forest to sustain the agri- food systems.

“Grazing with trees” will be launched September 29th before the [COFO 26](#) session. The launch will consist of a discussion about how to link these findings to support the programming in FAO as well as to contribute to the international dialogue and framework.

The panelists along with the COFO WG proposed Ms. Maryam in her capacity as co-chair of the IYRP to promote the importance of livestock in restoring the forests and trees. The Secretariat will share the details with Ms. Maryam and an official invitation to participate in the high- level panel on September 29 will be sent soon by the Global Land Forum- FAO/ COFO.

Pedro Herrera Calvo explained that the main idea shared with “Grazing with Trees” is that there are people (pastoralists-silvopastoralists) that have been managing drylands with trees, savanna, savanna-like landscapes, and even though many times they are unnoticed, they know what they are doing since they're making their livelihood managing a very difficult landscape and it is important to restore dryland with trees to give them a chance to thrive.

For this reason, it can be said that both groups are aligned regarding pastoralists’ position and their need for policies that support secure tenure rights for the people to manage properly, invest and improve their livelihoods.

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

Maryam Niamir- Fuller posed the question on whether anyone has done a study of the costs of restoration through afforestation and restoration through livestock and stated that it is cheaper to restore the land through livestock management rather than planting trees.

Mr. Anders Malmer agreed it is cheaper to do it through livestock but pointed out that the definition of forest restoration includes both – better and sustainable intensification of cattle and the planting of trees. He also reflected on how it is not easy to deal with these issues as it involves all society and many context-based dynamics, which is the reason why the COFO WG is working in gathering many case studies to show that there is not a single way to face these issues. A major characteristic of the COFO WG is the policy support and development support in a way that breaks the either-forestry-or-agriculture silos. Especially in the case of dry rangelands, it is not possible to do either one or the other, there is a need for trees/wooded plants in these areas just as there is a need to live from livestock.

PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

Maryam Niamir- Fuller will share some of the documentation prepared for the [Food Systems Summit](#) held in September 2021. She also extended an invitation to COFO WG members to join the [Afforestation Working Group](#) and reminded that the International Support Group (ISG) for the IYRP² is not an institution but a coalition of partners and volunteers and will most likely be active only until 2026.

The ISG will have a meeting this August with an outline of their next paper. They will be compiling as much scientific evidence as possible and looking at it from a rangeland pastoral perspective and would appreciate having the COFO WG's assessment.

The Secretariat will share more detailed information on the launch event of “Grazing with Trees” as the Working Group would like to have the messages endorsed from different perspectives. The IYRP could support the COFO WG's efforts in understanding the global movements and influencing the outreach of these messages.

The Secretariat used the “Valuing, restoring and managing presumed drylands: Cerrado, Miombo–Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau”³ working paper [launched during the COP15](#) in Côte d'Ivoire as a source of a case study that could be used as an example of the potential of grazing with trees to restore drylands, specifically the Cerrado case.

The Cerrado is considered a presumed dryland and the way the analysis was carried it was by thinking about what the best scenarios would be to achieve land degradation neutrality;

² <https://www.iyrp.info/sites/iyrp.org/files/Press%20release%20on%20RISGs%20Dec%202020%20-%20draft.pdf>

³ <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0110en/cc0110en.pdf>

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP) & FAO Working Group on Dryland Forest and Agrosilvopastoral System (COFO WG) potential collaboration

through this analysis it was found that the areas that have not been restored so far have the best prospect if grazing with trees is used as a technique.

Maryam Niamir- Fuller expressed the intentions of the Afforestation Working Group to launch their paper by the end of this year and participate in the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP28).

Taking into consideration that the COFO WG presents results to COFO every two years, it would be useful to have another discussion on what both working groups can achieve together by 2026.

The Secretariat proposed starting even beforehand by taking advantage of the upcoming COFO 26 session to request COFO WG members to endorse the collaboration with the IYRP; this means it would be possible to work together to produce a strategic document to be presented during the third session of the COFO WG which will be held next summer and hosted by the Jordanian government.

Maryam Niamir- Fuller requested to have an email about the session the 29th of September to be able to organize what is needed for someone from their working group to participate.

The Secretariat encouraged the meeting participants to keep the discussions and coordination going, consequently there should be another discussion before the upcoming COFO session to be prepared for it. Being that many members of their working group will be a part of COFO either as observers or member states, it would be positive to have them endorse “Grazing with Trees”.

Maryam Niamir- Fuller requested to have a list of who the Secretariat would like to have included in the mailing list.

A challenge with Moroccan policies was brought up, and is an example of how policies can mean well but bring negative effects - Pedro Herrera Calvo noted that even with good policies, when these are applied to the ground things can go very south and not as planned.