

Intergovernmental Roundtable

Pastoralism: A Sustainable Food System

27 July 2025 at the UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktaking Moment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Introduction

As Member States, UN agencies, pastoralists, civil society and other stakeholders gather to reflect on achievements since the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, pastoralism must be recognized as a highly adaptable sustainable food system central to food security, climate resilience, livelihoods, and protection of the environment, particularly in drylands with minimum and variable rainfall.

Globally, pastoralism sustains the food security and livelihoods of more than 200 million households. Pastoralists manage approximately 500 million hectares of land often unsuitable for crop farming but critical for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services and carbon sequestration.

In Africa alone, pastoralism contributes up to 40% of agricultural GDP in some countries with more than 268 million people relying directly on pastoralism. In addition, livestock exports are a major source of foreign exchange earnings, with pastoralism also contributing to sectors like tourism which benefit from pastoralist landscapes and cultures.

Broadly, pastoralism delivers on multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- **SDG 1: No Poverty:** Livestock production represents close to 100% of household income for pastoral communities.
- **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:** Pastoralism produces animal-sourced foods for relatively unproductive areas — providing essential nutrition through milk and meat.
- **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** Collective pastoralist societies protect and support otherwise marginalized groups such as women and children.
- **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Pastoralism-derived livestock sectors drive rural economies and employment in dryland regions including for food and textiles.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action:** Pastoralism if well-supported is able to respond and adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses.
- **SDG 15: Life on Land:** Pastoralists steward ecosystems that support vital biodiversity and environmental services.

Despite its critical role, pastoralism remains marginalized in policy frameworks and investment plans. With global demand for animal-sourced foods expected to grow by over 60% by 2050, sustainable pastoralism must be part of the solution—not sidelined. It must be repositioned as a solution for future food systems transformation, climate resilience and sustainable rural development.

To seize this moment, a **High-Level Intergovernmental Roundtable** will be organized at the UNFSS+4 to galvanize governments and other food systems actors to reposition pastoralism as a solution — not a problem — for sustainable food system transformation

securing not only pastoralist livelihoods but also broader food, climate and environmental goals.

The roundtable will offer a strategic platform to:

- Raise awareness of and position pastoralism as a sustainable food system recognizing it as a cornerstone of resilience, food security, climate adaptation and biodiversity stewardship in fragile ecosystems.
- Align global, national and local actions, investments and policy frameworks to strengthen and secure pastoralist contributions to sustainable development.
- Embed pastoralism more firmly into national food systems pathways, climate, nature and land action plans and investment strategies.

Agenda

TIME	AGENDA
07:30 – 08:00	Welcome over coffee and tea
08:00 – 08:10	<p>Introductory remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mongolia TBC • AUC TBC • ILRI <p>Purpose: Signal the urgent need for a shift in policy, investment and narratives to position pastoralism as central to resilient food systems and rural prosperity.</p>
08:10 – 08:20	<p>Strategic Framing: Pastoralism as a Proven Sustainable Food System</p> <p>Purpose: Present compelling evidence on pastoralism’s nutritional, economic and environmental contributions, highlight the risks of continued policy and investment neglect and outline urgent policy, investment and programming actions.</p>
08:20 – 08:30	<p>Voices from the Field: Pastoralist Leaders on Challenges, Solutions and Priorities (3 leaders each from Africa, Asia and Latin America)</p> <p>Purpose: Share real-life realities from pastoralists giving immediacy, legitimacy and urgency to the calls for action.</p>
08:30 – 09:00	<p>Panel Discussion: From Recognition to Action - Policies and Investments to Strengthen Pastoral Food Systems</p> <p>Purpose: Identify the bold policy shifts, investment priorities, and innovations needed to drive immediate action to scale pastoralist contributions nationally, regionally and globally.</p> <p>Questions:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific policy barriers must be dismantled now to secure pastoralist land rights, mobility and access to markets — and who must act? • How can we shift financing mechanisms to include pastoralism as a sustainable food system more centrally? • What innovations — such as for securing land access, early warning, or veterinary services — must be scaled now with direct investment in pastoralist-led solutions? Who is interested in such investments?
09:00 – 09:20	<p>Interactive Dialogue: Aligning Policies and Investments with Pastoralist Realities</p> <p>Purpose: Facilitate a solution-oriented exchange between governments, pastoralist and partners to align policies, innovations, financing strategies and investment frameworks with the real needs and priorities emerging from pastoralist systems.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can climate finance be unlocked for strengthening pastoralists food systems? • What percentage of national agricultural or climate budgets should be allocated specifically to pastoralist systems? How can we leverage 2026 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists to improve investment commitments? • Identify one service investment — such as veterinary, early warning, restoration, water access — that should be a priority for supporting pastoralist food systems in the next 12 months?
09:20 – 09:30	<p>Consolidating Priorities and Next Steps for Pastoralist-Centered Food Systems Transformation</p>

Issues to be Addressed and Key Messages

- **Recognition and Valuation:** Elevating pastoralism as a solution for food security, climate resilience and livelihoods.
- **Access to Land and Mobility:** Protecting grazing rights, transboundary mobility, and traditional knowledge systems.
- **Innovation and Technology:** Scaling locally-generated innovations, digital tools, veterinary services, and climate-smart rangeland improvements.
- **Climate Resilience:** Investing in building the capacities of pastoralists to improve their adaptability to and investments in climate resilience processes and activities.
- **Market Access and Livelihoods:** Strengthening pastoralism livestock value chains and services to increase incomes and resilience.
- **Inclusive Governance:** Ensuring pastoralists' voices are heard in national food system dialogues and policies.

Expected Outcomes

- **Political recognition** of pastoralism as a sustainable food system.
- **Identification of policy actions and funding priorities** to improve investments in pastoralism as a sustainable food system.
- **Commitments from Member States and partners** to integrate pastoralism into national food system pathways.
- **Inputs into the UNFSS+4 outcomes** to ensure pastoralism is reflected in the final stocktaking declarations and actions.