

Awareness Programmes for IYRP 2026

United Nation's General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists on 15th March, 2022. Government of India has supported this proposal of Mongolia to the UN along with 60 other countries.

Over the last 50 years, pastoralists have endured numerous injustices such as dispossession of their traditional grazing areas and blocking of their migration routes. Yet these communities continue to survive with their knowledge, skills, local breeds of livestock and utilize the common lands, uncultivated barren lands and rangelands and contribute to nutrition and food security to the society through protein rich livestock products and other pastoral by-products.

In order to encourage pastoralism and protection and regeneration of grazing lands in our country we propose a few programs the results of which will sooner or later culminate to the celebration of IYRP during 2026. In this regard, we suggest Ministry of Animal Husbandry act as nodal agency and coordinate with state Department of Animal Husbandry and line departments for its full implementation. It may include the following strategies:

1) With Ministry of Animal Husbandry

Training programmes for livelihoods and value chain development, traditional food festivals, workshops for Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA 2006) and natural livestock farming practices with pastoral communities are to be organized in all states. It is very difficult to reach out to pastoralists through state government functionaries alone. Involving grassroots organizations and NGOs is encouraged. Ministry shall promote smooth flow of funds / grant in aid under National Livestock Mission to NGOs and grassroots organizations too. The present system of routing project proposals through the State Dept. of Animal Husbandry is a very tedious process. Kindly explore alternative routes as followed by the Ministry of Science and Technology and other departments.

Pastoralists promote local breed population by keeping true-to-type local bulls in their herds. It also benefits local dairy farmers for natural servicing. Incentives are to be given to pastoralists based on number of farmers animals serviced/pregnant under Rashtriya Gokul Mission. Incentives are to be provided to pastoralists under existing semen bank production unit /AI program. (Note - The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying has been implementing Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) with the aim of development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds, genetic upgradation of bovine population and enhancement of milk production and productivity of bovines thereby making dairying more remunerative to the farmers). In order to promote local breed population, pastoralists are to be provided true-to-type bulls /males free of cost under NLM/demonstration activities under Activity II of Sub-Mission on Innovation and Extension of NLM.

Breed saviour awards are to be given to pastoralists or continued by providing Rs.10,000 for local breed keepers (earlier, National biodiversity Authority supported, now the award has been discontinued) under Activity II of Sub-mission on Innovation and Extension of NLM

Ministry of Animal Husbandry shall send a circular to all states on the importance of protection and regeneration of rangelands and pastoralists culture (covering the benefits of keeping local breeds and natural livestock keeping practices and state support for smooth mobility of herds).

2) Coordination With Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Ministry of Animal husbandry shall send a letter to Department of Tribal Affairs for issuing guidelines on seasonal access for pastoralist communities for claiming forest grazing rights under Forest Rights Act 2006 so that all eligible communities claim their rights before 2026. Then, IYRP will be celebrated during 2026.

3) Coordination with the Department of Revenue

Ministry of Animal husbandry shall send a letter to Secretary of Department Revenue to identify and retrieve common lands meant for grazing purpose and district wise list shall be prepared and displayed in public domain.

4) Coordination With Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

Ministry of Animal husbandry shall send a letter to Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change for protection of revenue lands / revenue forests as such without afforestation programmes which alienate the livestock from grazing. It shall encourage and promote participatory planning with livestock-dependent communities while regenerating rangelands. The social impact of few forest programs on the life of forest-dependant pastoralists (migration pattern and their displacement) can also be studied in order to learn from the past. The social impact of ongoing afforestation programmes and programmes demarcating rangelands under the protected area network, which limit access of mobile pastoralists, are to be re-evaluated and re-designed through participatory processes.

Ministry of Animal Husbandry shall coordinate with Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change to support the IYRP-India group with resources to create communication collaterals and organise events for raising awareness on pastoralism for climate mitigation and adaptation.

5) Coordination with Ministry of Rural Development

Under National Rural Livelihood Mission, *pashu sakhis* have been trained in ethnoveterinary practices and they can be engaged to give first-aid and treatments to herds maintained by moving pastoralists. This will reach mobile healthcare to mobile herds and to animals in remote areas without veterinary services. 100% vehicle assistance is to be given to *pashu sakhis* for purchase of two wheelers for providing first aid/regular deworming (including

ethnoveterinary practices) to pastoralists herds under providing better health care through Mobile Veterinary Units (MVU).

Under MGNREGA, seasonal sheds/community halls for pastoralists and drinking water troughs for pastoral herds are to be constructed for use during animal migration under MGNREGA.

A large portion of rangelands available for pastoralism are still classified as 'wastelands' according to the Wastelands Atlas published every few years in coordination with the Department of Land Resources. These lands are then targeted for afforestation and infrastructure development which takes away land available for indigenous livestock grazing. The Wastelands Atlas needs to be majorly overhauled for the benefit of pastoralism and rangelands. If land is used for pastoralism, it should not be termed as 'waste'. Research programmes should be undertaken to demarcate all the rangelands in the country and in collaboration with other Departments, the value of ecosystem services from rangelands should be measured against other developmental activities.

6) Coordination With Ministry of Agriculture

ICAR shall identify pastoralists' best practices and local breeds for awards annually. Penning system by pastoralists shall be encouraged under National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, promoting natural fertilisers. (Note- Government is promoting the use of organic manures under the scheme Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). The Government is promoting the use of organic inputs in the country, through assistance as under: Promotion of Organic Inputs under Organic & INM Components of Soil Health Management, assistance is provided for Vermi-compost, Bio-fertilizers (Liquid / solid), Waste compost, Herbal extracts, etc. including PROM @ 50 % of cost subject to a limit of Rs. 5000/- per ha and maximum Rs.10,000 per beneficiary.)

7) Coordination with Ministry of Home Affairs

A growing problem for mobile pastoral groups has been intra-state and inter-state security with increasing number of animal thefts and harassment of migrating pastoralists reported from across the country. Safety measures, dedicated helpline numbers and app-based security services with provisions for complaint registration are to be developed for pastoralists in coordination with regional police forces. Awareness sessions and capacity building for use of helpline number and/or security app are to be conducted by regional police forces.