

An Action Plan promoting and supporting European pastoralism is needed to tackle sustainability challenges in the EU and beyond



The EU must support the designation of the year 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)

The European Committee of the Regions, the [Yolda Initiative](#), the [European association of mountain areas](#) (Euromontana) and the [Regional International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Support Group for Europe](#) organised a joint online workshop on 14 June to underline the need to maintain pastoralists.

Pastoralism is a time-honoured practice of extensive livestock husbandry on rangelands such as mountains, dry plains, savannahs, steppes and tundra. This form of livestock husbandry makes economic use of areas that are not suitable for mechanised crop farming and/or are difficult to access.

More than half of the Earth's land surface is classified as rangeland. On an average, 21 % of the utilised agricultural area in the EU-27 is devoted to extensive grazing. The proportion is particularly high in Portugal (59 %), Latvia (58 %), Estonia (55 %) and Sweden (52 %). During the meeting, the European Committee of the Regions reiterated its call on the European Commission to develop an action plan to promote and better support European pastoralism.

[Ulrika Landergren](#) (SV/Renew), Chair of the Commission for Natural Resources (NAT), stated that "for the European Committee of the Regions, maintaining pastoralism is vital for keeping rural areas alive and for contributing to territorial cohesion, which is a fundamental value of the EU."

Juan Andrès Gutiérrez, President of Euromontana, underlined that "maintaining pastoralism is crucial for achieving the EU's objectives on environment, climate and biodiversity protection within the EU Green Deal. Member States should put in place sufficient and appropriate support measures for pastoralism in their future CAP Strategic Plans. Furthermore, the EU should develop an Action Plan for Pastoralism to give pastoralists the adequate support they need to overcome the threats they face."

Herbert Dorfmann (IT/EPP), Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on the Farm to Fork strategy, stated that "within the new CAP, plans regarding the role of cities and regions have been developed in order to enable pastoralism. One of the big challenges is definitely the return of the large carnivores. A balance between the protection of wolves and the protection of grazing livestock is essential. The fact that there are little

efforts to protect grazing livestock shows that there is a major imbalance within this debate.”

Rui Martinho, Secretary of State for Agriculture and Rural Development and Representative of the Portuguese presidency of the Council, stressed that “pastoralism is essential to preserve farming and livestock breeding in less favoured areas, contributing to a living rural fabric and thus to the objective of territorial cohesion enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. Pastoralism is also fundamental to achieve the EU’s environmental, climate and biodiversity protection objectives, as expressed in the EU’s 2030 Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.”

At the global level, the United Nations (UN) are being encouraged to officially designate 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) to further support these ecosystems and livelihoods. Led by the Government of Mongolia, an international coalition of actors is supporting this initiative.

Maria Helena M.Q. Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General, said that “the FAO Council endorsed the proposal of the Government of Mongolia to establish observance of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026 as pastoralism contributes to several of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

Engin Yılmaz, Director of the Yolda Initiative stated that “the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists is aiming to provide the impetus and momentum necessary for a worldwide understanding of the importance of rangelands and pastoralism to healthy ecosystems, global food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and rural economies.”

“A modern world should not leave the Rangelands and Pastoralists issue behind,” stated Mendsaikhan Zagdjav, H.E Minister of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry, Mongolia.

The meeting discussed pastoralism in four round tables on: the contribution of pastoralism to biodiversity and to tackling climate change; food security and resilient rural communities; pastoralism’s role at the international level; and, lastly, ways to develop an EU action plan for pastoralism and to support the IYRP in concrete terms.

[Meeting documents](#)

Webinar’s agenda: [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)

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