



# GLOBAL DECLARATION OF YOUNG PASTORALISTS

*Global Gathering of Young Pastoralists · Madrid, 9–11 April 2026*

*International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026*

## **Madrid Call to Action**

**We, young pastoralists, including indigenous pastoralists, from across Africa, Arctic, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas** gathered in Madrid from 9 to 11 April 2026, at a critical moment for our communities and rangelands. Pastoralism practices are proven, resilient food production systems that deliver far more than nourishment: they sustain soil health, enhance biodiversity, regenerate ecosystems, preserve pastoral culture and operate with minimal dependence on fossil fuels and inorganic inputs. In a time of acute global instability, they offer a grounded, adaptive alternative rooted in ecological balance to fragile globalized supply chains. This Declaration builds on the collective policy brief of the various meetings on youth pastoralists that have taken place at regional and global levels as well as the brief of the IYRP Youth Working Group. It is our shared, global voice.

We are active stewards of over a third of the Earth's land surface, guardians of biodiversity, and keepers of knowledge accumulated across generations. Young pastoralists are not a marginal group waiting to be included, we are the present and future custodians of pastoral systems that sustain livelihoods, cultures, and climate resilience worldwide. Yet we continue to face land dispossession, restricted mobility, exclusion from decision-making, and the systematic undervaluation of our knowledge. Global policies on climate, land, and food increasingly affect our territories, but are still shaped without us.

**We affirm** that pastoralism is a living, viable, and sustainable way of life, essential to global commitments on climate, biodiversity, and culture. Our mobility is our wisdom. Our commons are carefully managed, not empty. **We reject** policies that undermine mobility, fragment rangelands, and exclude pastoralist voices, and demand a shift toward **rights-based, youth-led, and pastoralist-inclusive governance** at all levels. **We call on** governments and international institutions to recognize that investing in young pastoralists is investing in climate solutions, food security, and sustainable rangeland management. The following demands are the conditions for that investment to be real.

## **I. YOUTH GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP & REPRESENTATION**

**Young pastoralists bring irreplaceable perspectives to governance: we understand land use from the ground up, we will live longest with the consequences of today's decisions, and we have already demonstrated our capacity to lead. The conditions must now be created for that leadership to be structural, funded, and permanent. We demand:**

1. Establish mandatory, dedicated seats for young pastoralists, taking into consideration gender balance, in all national and regional relevant governance bodies, that are representative and with real decision-making power.
2. Protect young pastoralist human rights defenders from criminalization, harassment, and violence, especially those working on land, environmental, and cultural rights.
3. Develop and fund youth leadership and advocacy programs co-designed with pastoralist youth, covering governance, negotiation, knowledge sharing, and digital literacy.
4. Establish a permanent youth agenda item in the FAO Committee on Agriculture Sub-Committee on Livestock (COAG Li) and the committee on Forestry Working Group on Drylands to facilitate recurrent youth dialogues and support the creation of a formal Global Pastoralist Youth Network.
5. Formally recognize the Global Alliance for Rangelands and Pastoralists as an official structured body and ensure its adequate and sustained financing.

## **II. LAND RIGHTS & THE COMMONS**

Communal rangelands are among the most productive and biodiverse landscapes on Earth when managed by the communities who know them. Pastoralist youth are ready to be the stewards of that



future, but secure land tenure, recognized mobility rights, and protection from dispossession are the non-negotiable foundation on which everything else depends. Our demands include:

6. Enact and strengthen national laws protecting communal pastoralist lands from enclosure, conversion, or dispossession by any actor (state, corporate, or conservation), following consented guidelines, ensuring direct community participation, and explicitly recognizing customary and communal land tenure systems as legally valid.
7. Make free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) legally binding for any land-use, infrastructure, or investment on rangeland commons, and implement immediate reform of policies that fragment pastoral lands.
8. Legally guarantee pastoral mobility as a fundamental right by protecting and reclaiming seasonal migration routes and transhumance corridors, both national and cross-border.
9. Recognize and guarantee the land rights of pastoralist women and youth in both legal frameworks and traditional governance systems, ensuring that customary institutions do not undermine but enforce these rights.

### III. CLIMATE JUSTICE, BIODIVERSITY & ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

Pastoralism is one of the world's oldest and most effective systems of ecological management. Pastoralist communities have sequestered carbon, maintained biodiversity, and adapted to climatic variability for millennia, **contributions that must now be formally valued**. Young pastoralists are ready to be full partners in global climate action, bringing traditional knowledge and on-the-ground presence that no satellite or model can replace. Our demands include:

10. Formally recognize ecosystem services of pastoralism and financially compensate pastoralists for contributions to biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem sustainability and other ecosystem services, taking into account local ecosystem conditions.
11. Ensure direct access to climate finance for youth-led pastoral initiatives
12. Prohibit carbon credit schemes and monoculture plantations that dispossess communities of their rangelands.
13. Guarantee pastoralist youth seats in all relevant international processes on climate, biodiversity and desertification as well as regional conventions and processes; and support accreditation of more pastoralist youth organizations in these spaces.
14. Establish accessible compensation mechanisms for losses from climate-induced disasters and assist pastoralist youth-led enterprises to develop green livelihoods and sustain local economies.

### IV. CULTURE, KNOWLEDGE & IDENTITY

Pastoralist knowledge is a living, tested, and irreplaceable body of understanding about how to manage land, water, domestic animals and wildlife, and seasons sustainably. It represents a cultural heritage of global value. Young pastoralists are both its inheritors and its future bearers, but only if education systems, cultural institutions, and public policy actively support its transmission and recognition. Our demands include:

15. Recognise, document, and protect traditional pastoralist knowledge—rangeland management, ethnoveterinary knowledge, local breeds, genetic resources, medicinal plants, seasonal forecasting—through community-led processes as well as policies at national and regional level, with intellectual property rights vested in pastoral communities.
16. Reform national education systems and policies to incorporate pastoralist culture, history, and ecological knowledge, with flexible, mobile, and culturally grounded curricula and formal vocational accreditation of pastoral skills.
17. Design and fund equitable, accessible, and adaptive education systems and methods specifically tailored for pastoralist youth, serving as the long-term guardians of rangelands, including structured intergenerational mentorship programs. Adapt materials to various levels of literacy and local languages.
18. Establish formal 'reverse extension' programs that bring policymakers directly into pastoral landscapes to be trained by communities, inverting the top-down development model and



ensuring that land-use decisions are technically informed by those who have managed these ecosystems for generations.

## V. LIVELIHOODS, ECONOMY & SOCIAL PROTECTION

Pastoral livelihoods are productive, sustainable, and resilient, but they require investment and protection. Young pastoralists want to build futures within their communities, and many are already innovating along pastoral value chains, adopting digital tools, and developing new models of rangeland enterprise. We demand:

19. Direct investments and interventions towards enabling pastoralists to continue practising pastoralism, secure pastoralist livelihoods, and improve access to livestock markets and other enabling infrastructure.
20. Extend social protection programs, healthcare, livestock insurance, veterinary services, and disaster compensation to fully cover pastoralist communities, with dedicated provisions for youth.
21. Design and fund entrepreneurship programs for pastoral youth on value chains, agribusiness, and digital tools; expand mobile connectivity in pastoral areas; and develop financial systems—including insurance and credit—adapted to mobile livelihoods.
22. Recognize and support pastoralist women, guaranteeing equal access to social and financial services.
23. Implement policies to counter growing stratification in pastoral communities, including programs that facilitate livestock ownership and economic access for young pastoralists, and incentivize resident, community-based herd management over absentee ownership models.

### **Our Commitment**

**We commit** to continuing to organize, to building bridges across regions, and to carrying this Declaration into every space where decisions about our lands and futures are made. We commit to building a **global pastoralist youth movement** that is organized, connected, and actively engaged in shaping policies at all levels.

We offer our knowledge, our energy, and our presence as partners, and we call on governments, institutions, and the international community to meet us as equals and honour these demands.

**We are demanding recognition, representation, and decision-making power.**

Our mobility is our right. Our commons are our collective future. Our voice, today, here in Madrid is only the beginning.

**Nothing about pastoralist youth, without pastoralist youth.**

Adopted in Madrid, 10 April 2026