# *12 possible themes for a proposed International Year on Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)*

## Objective

To achieve, during the IYRP, the best possible world-wide awareness and recognition of the value and contributions of rangelands and pastoralists to global society and ecosystems, so as to influence and launch beneficial country policies, legislation, programmes, and development and research initiatives that would lead to sustainability of rangelands and pastoral/livestock systems.

## Rationale for a global framework of 12 monthly themes

Although each country should decide on how they would celebrate the IYRP, the adoption of a global framework of 12 monthly themes would help to a) provide suggestions and ideas, b) highlight urgent and topical issues, and c) show how pastoralism and rangelands across the globe share similar issues and concerns.

Rangelands and the pastoralists who use them around the world are very diverse in characteristics and dynamics, although the same thematic issues often resonate in different countries. Thus one theme alone would be insufficient to capture this diversity and complexity of the systems.

On the other hand, despite the great diversity, it would still be possible to select at least 12 themes (one for each month of the International Year) that are common to and have meaning for the majority of countries – both developing and developed.

Rangelands are those lands on which the indigenous vegetation is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs or shrubs that are grazed or have the potential to be grazed, and which are used as a natural ecosystem for raising grazing livestock and wildlife. Rangelands may include native grasslands, savannas, shrublands, deserts, steppes, pampa, llanos, cerrado, campos, veld, tundras, alpine communities and marshes (<http://globalrangelands.org>).

Pastoralists are people who raise livestock or wild animals on rangelands, including ranchers, nomads and transhumant herders (IUCN/UNEP 2014 - <http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/wisp_green_economy_book.pdf>). The IYRP will also celebrate other sustainable users of rangelands, such as hunters, gatherers, agropastoralists and fisherfolk.

## Principles for selection of themes

The proposal is to select the 12 themes based on the following criteria:

1. **Expanding awareness on the diversity of rangelands and pastoralists**: popular opinion varies between countries but in general, pastoralists are thought to be wandering nomads or cowboys living on dry dusty deserts. The IYRP would celebrate the diversity of rangeland ecosystems, and pastoral cultures.
2. **Highlighting new insights**: Our knowledge of rangelands and pastoralists has evolved over the last two decades to a better understanding of the value of livestock mobility for both production and conservation, of the value of indigenous and local knowledge systems, of the benefits of organic livestock products, and of the non-equilibrium (dynamic) nature of rangelands – among many other new (and developing) insights.
3. **Issues of concern to pastoralists:** Many pastoralists in developing countries are struggling to benefit from equitable development. Many pastoralists in industrialized countries are concerned with the closure and abandonment of small family operations, and the challenges to making organic farming profitable. In both cases, equitable and affordable access to adequate and sustainable services (health, education, energy, veterinary inputs, trade, political representation, etc.) can be achieved with the right policies and incentives for businesses.
4. **Balanced coverage**: the 12 themes would be balanced between themes reflecting the environment, social, economic, and political issues.

## Preliminary proposal for 12 monthly themes

Using the four principles above, it is proposed that the following 12 themes be considered.

An International Year usually has one multi-national conference associated with it that gets organized by the lead UN agencies. In our case, given the many international conferences that happen throughout the year, it is proposed that no special conference be organized and that existing plans for conferences incorporate the issues and themes through their regular (plenary) agendas and through side events. This would imply a firm commitment from the Secretariats of each of the conferences.

The 12 themes are arranged, as much as possible, so as to coincide with an International Day as these are the days in which nations typically raise awareness on various issues within their countries. It is suggested that all themes, or a selection thereof, should also be covered at major ongoing international conferences (such as the conference of parties of various environmental treaties and conventions) even if they are not being held in that month, thus multiplying the awareness potential.

The following table shows a selection of issues and themes for each month, based on the 4 principles described above. The “theme” and “issues” columns describe the key issues and main concerns. The column “examples of key messages” refers to how the themes and issues can be communicated to a wider public (work in progress). The column “link to SDGs” reinforces the connection to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The first column assigns the theme to a particular month, showing the relevant International/World Day. In three cases no particular relevant Day could be identified.

A period of wide consultation among all stakeholders should follow so as to refine and finalize this list. The advice of communications experts should be sought in order to finetune the messaging for mass/social media.

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| **Month\*** | **Theme** | **Description of Issues** | **Examples of Key messages** | **Link to SDGs** |
| January | Importance of rangelands, grasslands and pastoralists  Rangelands and pastoralists help shape the world  What are rangelands? What are grasslands?  Who are pastoralists ? | * Diversity of rangeland and grassland landscapes – where do we find them, what do we call them (steppes, llanos, cerrado, veld, etc.), what they look like, how they function, how we protect them, how we value them * Goods and services provided by rangelands. * Diversity of pastoralists, pastoral systems, and land use models - Who are pastoralists, where do they live, what do they do and why; what animals and breeds do they herd. * Little known rangeland landscapes – Artic, Mountains, Islands/coastal areas; * Challenges: degradation, abandonment, benign neglect, drought, loss of livelihoods, * Bright spots: examples of viable pastoral and rangeland systems | Increase recognition and awareness of rangelands, grasslands and the people who use them  Every country has rangelands and pastoralists – we just call them differently  Pastoralism is not a nostalgic return to the past, but a way forward towards future sustainability  Pastoral people – a sustainable lifestyle and livelihood under threat  Rangeland landscapes are beautiful, productive, but threatened with degradation  We know so little about rangelands and pastoralists  There are many examples of viable and sustainable rangeland and pastoral systems around the world | SDG 15  SDG 1  SDG 2  SDG 10 |
| February  (20th Feb = World Day of Social Justice) | Pastoralists’ connections to rangelands  Securing access to rangelands by pastoralists | * Ensure land and water resources are distributed fairly; appropriate rights to resources * Develop the right policy framework to help balance development; balance private and public rights; balance benefits to herders and farmers. * What does it mean to be a mobile pastoralist? How is it done? Examples from around the world and implications for land use and land tenure * Transhumance: what is it and why; case of transboundary transhumance (between nations, between regions or states, between counties) * Livestock mobility is important for wildlife and ecosystems, for food production, for forage access, for livelihoods. * Livestock mobility is declining, rangelands are degrading. How to reverse the trends? * In many countries, ownership of rangelands and access rights are legally unprotected. * Good governance and stewardship of collective/public rangelands is a necessity * Common or collective lands in drylands help sustain livelihoods of many poor peoples * Challenges: privatization of commons, rule enforcement, conflicts between farmers, herders and town folks. * Bright spots: examples where rangeland tenure security has resulted/contributed to sustainability, co-management and good governance | Improve governance for sustainable livelihoods  Livestock mobility helps preserve and conserve ecosystems.  Drylands are best used by livestock that are mobile not confined  Many different ecosystems - many types of mobility.  Livestock mobility needs large and diverse landscapes, i.e. extensive systems.  Collective and/or public ownership of rangelands provides the necessary scale.  Modern legal systems must find ways to accommodate livestock mobility and collective land tenure.  Large areas with low population tend to have little political influence | SDG 1  SDG 10 |
| March  (8th March = International Women’s Day)  (20th March = World Water Day) | Services and resources for pastoralists | * Improve access to education, mobile schools, vocational training, for pastoral peoples * Improve access to health and health clinics in remote areas, and for mobile populations; improve access to adequate healthy food * Improve access to credit, insurance schemes for mobile peoples * Improve access by pastoral women to services and resources * Improve adequate and equitable political representation of pastoralists * Improve access to potable clean water and sanitation * Do’s and don’ts of water development for livestock; how to address water for mobile livestock * Increased opportunities for livelihood diversification * Improve access to marketing infrastructure, decentralized slaughterhouses * Improve access to appropriate communications * Improve access to transport infrastructure * Challenges: adopting suitable development policies, commercialization of rangeland and pastoralist products. * Bright spots: examples of viable and effective services for pastoralists. | Ensure social equity  Ensure equity of services  Invest in rangelands and pastoralism  Ensure development equity for pastoralists  Invent new ways for pastoralists to access services, including using internet, renewable energy, and other new technologies  Pastoralists have age-old solutions that can be helpful for today’s challenges | SDG 3  SDG 4  SDG 1  SDG 6  SDG 17  SDG 8 |
| April  (22nd April = International Mother Earth Day) | Resilient rangelands, resilient pastoralism  Rangelands, pastoralism and climate change | * Awareness on expected impacts of climate change on rangelands and pastoralists * More research is needed on GHG emissions from livestock sector (extensive vs intensive systems) * Find adaptation measures, and ways to cope with extreme events * Increase carbon sequestration from rangelands through restoration and rehabilitation * Turn vulnerability into resilience | Climate change will impact rangelands  Pastoralists are survivors of climate change  Need to settle the debate on green house gases and livestock  Restoring degraded rangelands will help capture and store almost 10% of GHG emissions  Prepare for climate change | SDG 13 |
| May  (10th May = World Migratory Bird Day)  (22nd May = International Day for Biological Diversity) | Rangeland biodiversity, ecosystem services and pastoralism | * Preserving biodiversity and ecosystem values, * Protecting threatened biomes and species, including combating alien invasive species, overhunting, habitat loss, and protecting genetic resources of livestock, wildlife and rangeland plants * Preventing ecosystem fragmentation, ensuring landscape connectivity and enhancing transhumance and wildlife corridors * Gathering wild foods sustainably in rangelands for food security and better nutrition * Enhancing the compatibility of livestock and wildlife, including examples of viable conservancies, game areas, and public, community and private conservation areas * Promote tourism and conservation in rangelands, tourism benefits to pastoralists * Encourage benefit sharing schemes from conservation and National Parks * Promote indigenous products and opportunities for commercialization while protecting indigenous intellectual property | Pastoralism and biodiversity can co-exist  High value ecosystem services from rangelands  Wild and natural heritage of rangelands  Cultural diversity for plant and animal diversity  Rangeland’s rich products  Rangelands’ wild harvests | SDG 15 |
| June  (17th June = World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought)  (5th June = World Environment Day) | Rangelands, pastoralists, soils, water and land use | * Recognize multiple uses of rangelands, including pastoralism * Solving land degradation, achieving land degradation neutrality * Droughts are frequent in drylands, water solutions can become sustainable * How/why pastoralism could be the best land use for rangelands * Managing minerals, mining, carbon extraction and other uses of rangelands * Dumping wastes on rangelands because they are considered as “wastelands” * Rapid pace of land use change, preventing land grabbing | Pastoralists know and are adapted to drylands  Rangelands are not wastelands  Multiple uses of rangelands | SDG 15 |
| July  (11th July = World Population Day) | Sustainable consumption of livestock products | * Understanding rising demand for meat due to population increase, rise of middle class * Enhancing healthy and environmentally friendly consumption of meat and meat products * Celebrating diversity of milk and meat products, examples of pastoral foods and regional diversity * Promoting rangeland food and fibre products * Sustainably using hides and skins and other livestock /wild animal products * Understanding how rangeland products can contribute to nutrition, health and hygiene * Knowing specialty or novelty foods (e.g. camel’s milk and its role in helping diabetics) * Livestock trade and markets, including the need to prevent illegal trade of donkeys, cattle rustling, and other illegal activities | Flavours and tastes of Rangelands  Eat meat responsibly and through fair trade  [Local examples of Pastoral Foods] | SDG 12 |
| August  (9th August = International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples) | Pastoralist indigenous and local knowledge, culture and innovation | * Value of local knowledge and worldviews, celebrating cultural diversity and conservation of cultural heritage * Indigenous peoples, First peoples, and their rights * Recognize indigenous knowledge and ways of managing land * Knowledge held by elders, valuing elders, protection of languages, customs, spiritual traditions * New ideas building on traditional knowledge, pastoralist innovation * Examples of traditional mobility solutions that work * Celebrating pastoral art and music * Challenges: negative impacts of some alternative technologies; reconciling extractivism with conservation and generation of local knowledge * Bright spots: How indigenous knowledge and innovation is being increasingly recognized and valued by decision makers | Pastoralists know drylands  Home on the Range  Sound of the Range (music)  What’s new on the Range? | SDG 10  SDG 4 |
| September  (27th Sept = World Tourism Day) | Sustainable livestock production | * Recognizing livestock breeds, encouraging livestock/wildlife tourism that benefits pastoralists * Livestock and herd management, tools and techniques (e.g. how to build a robust herd; mixing species, etc.) * Livestock nutrition, health, hygiene and welfare * Creating link between cities and pastoral areas through sustainable production, encouraging greening of feed * Livestock/wildlife health, welfare, and joint management * Producing environmentally friendly animal products for consumption, including chemical-free processing of milk and meat, sustainable fibre production * Mitigation of pollution from intensive and semi-intensive systems * Challenges: emerging diseases, disease control, policies promoting a transformation into industrial livestock production | Environmentally-friendly and healthy carnivores  Green Feed, Food and Fibre  Promote sustainable production systems  Ensure healthy animals | SDG 12 |
| October  (15th Oct = International Rural Women Day) | Pastoralist women | * Gender equality * Pastoral women’s contributions to economies, environment and culture * Pastoral women’s visions and needs for pastoralism (participation, empowerment) * Pastoral women and parliaments * Challenges: adopting adaptive community-based land management including women | Celebrate pastoralist women  Strive for gender equity  Pastoral women’s lives  Pastoral women leaders | SDG 5  SDG 8 |
| November  (20th Nov = Universal Children’s Day) | Pastoralist youth | * Youth music, art and culture * Youth vision and needs for pastoralism (participation, empowerment) * Youth contribution to economies, and environment; pastoralist youth entrepreneurship * Young herder’s associations encouraged and recognized * Vocational training, specialized training for pastoral youth * Concern for future generations * Challenges: inhibited and/or reverse migration; abandonment of rangelands; lack of opportunities for youth * Bright spots: professionalization of herding (training and certification schools), rodeos and other related festivals; pastoralist youth innovation / entrepreneurship | Pastoral futures  Future of pastoralists and pastoralism  Enterprising pastoralist youth  Safeguard the next generation of pastoralists |  |
| December  (5th Dec = World Soil Day) | Sustainable technologies and innovations for rangelands and pastoralists | * Rangeland and grassland restoration and improvement; soil improvement * Renewable energy production * Sustainable water solutions * New technologies, where from here * Internet and communications * Risk and insurance * Mobile money * Develop education and training programs that result in knowledge and skills for the future of pastoralism * Ensure capital costs and requirements are met * Develop/improve governance arrangements * Promote innovation and transformation for the future | Rangeland and pastoral futures  Pastoralists combine low-tech and high-tech  New technologies for rangelands | SDG 9  SDG 7  SDG 17 |

**Possible types of activities to be undertaken during the IYRP**

Some examples of outreach actions for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists can be provided, as an illustrative guide. International organizations and other global partners could consider hosting a theme at the global level. Actions at the national level should be planned and organized by the national committees.

* National events, including showcasing successful sustainable pastoral systems, awards and prizes, technology fairs, video documentaries, a Herder Day, educational material, etc.
* Joint International Rangelands and International Grasslands Congress to consider the state of the art in science and knowledge on rangelands and pastoralists
* Launching of actions aimed at implementing the recommendations of the UNEP global assessment/gap analysis on rangelands and pastoralists
* Social media campaign and video productions to raise awareness of producers, consumers, and policymakers in both developed and developing countries
* Articles in Time, People, Readers Digest, National Geographic, Smithsonian, Rolling Stone, Popular Science, and International magazines that explain what range is and what pastoralists do
* Pastoralist gatherings sponsored by the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism (WISP) and the FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub to share local knowledge and strategize practical solutions
* An International conference on Sustainable Development Goals and their impact on pastoralists and rangelands, bringing together environmental, social, and economic aspects in an integrated vision
* An international, roving, art exhibition showing art, video and music of pastoralists
* A global “plan of action” for the decade (2020-2030) on sustainability of rangelands and pastoralism, to be endorsed by the UN General Assembly by the end of 2020.
* All countries to put forward an Action Statement for the next decade to ensure the future for rangelands and pastoralists.
* Launching of actions by partners and partnerships at global, regional and national levels, to change policies, and increase development resources and political commitments, to achieve the SDGs in rangelands and for pastoralists.

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