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To the Secretariat of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) of the  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO),

On behalf of the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), I am writing to  
express our support of the Government of Mongolia's initiative for an International Year of Range-  
lands and Pastoralists (IYRP).

Over the past twenty years, DITSL researchers have extensively studied pastoral production sys-  
tems from disciplinary angles ranging from animal and ecology sciences to social ecology and hu-  
man geography. Our respective research projects in pastoral areas include:

- the Cross-continental network for sustainable adaptation of grassland systems vulnerable to cli-  
mate change (GRASSNET) with sites in China, Kenya and Argentina, funded by the German Mi-  
nistry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ);
- a German-African research collaboration to reduce post-harvest losses in Eastern African food  
value chains (RELOAD) including meat value chains from pastoral areas in northern Kenya, funded  
by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF);
- the collaborative research project "Supporting the vulnerable: Increasing the adaptive capacity of  
agro-pastoralists to climatic change in West and Southern Africa (Mali, Mozambique) using a trans-  
disciplinary research approach" funded by BMZ.

We are currently working on value chain development through branding pastoralists' small stock  
for process- and product-quality in Marsabit County" (funded by Silicon Valley Community Founda-  
tion and Christensen Fund) and are developing a comparative research project on enhancing wo-  
men's agency in navigating changing food environments to improve child nutrition in African  
drylands with partners in Kenya and Benin.

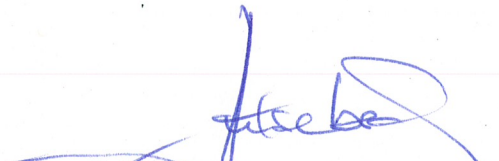
DITSL is a corporate member of the Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism  
(CELEP), which has also submitted a letter of support for the IYRP.

Through our work, we have come to deeply understand the struggles faced in pastoral areas from  
population growth and land rights issues among others as well as the many opportunities related

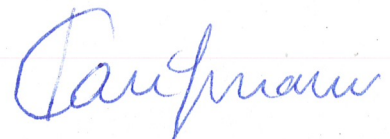
to sustainable, low-carbon livestock production. Rangelands cover over half of the earth's surface and pastoralists from a variety of culturally diverse ethnic groups have developed specialized knowledge how to harness the potential of mobility to raise livestock on these seemingly harsh landscapes. In many cases, the composition of the vegetation on these rangelands is beneficially affected by grazing rather than the myth of constant over-grazing. Further, indigenous governance systems are usually in-place that further protect the lands for long-term shared-use. Without importing feed, pastoralists create high-protein dairy and meat products that contribute to food security. There are many ways that pastoralists can be better supported such as by increasing visibility of their resource management and facilitating their movement such as through cross-border agreements.

DITSL is therefore in full support of the Government of Mongolia's IYRP request in order to bring attention to the potential and value of the pastoral mode of livestock production on rangelands in order to increase political will to support pastoralists and the contributions that they make to food systems through their sustainable livestock husbandry.

Yours sincerely,



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