

Knut Schmidtke, Florian Leiber, Anet Spengler  
Tel +41 (0)62 865 72 90  
[anet.spengler@fibl.org](mailto:anet.spengler@fibl.org)  
[florian.leiber@fibl.org](mailto:florian.leiber@fibl.org)  
[knut.schmidtke@fibl.org](mailto:knut.schmidtke@fibl.org)

Secretariat of the committee on  
Agriculture (COAG) of the Food and  
Agriculture Organization of the  
United Nations  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
**00153 Roma**  
Italia

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## **Support to the request from the Government of Mongolia for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Switzerland presents its sincere greetings to you and your office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. We are writing to you to express our support of the request of the Government of Mongolia for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

We are convinced that such a Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists would provide a great opportunity to draw the attention of policymakers and of the public on the important and necessary functions of grasslands all over the world:

- Permanent grasslands / rangelands cover two thirds of the global agricultural surface and therefore play an important role in nutrient production and preservation of agricultural land. Also in Switzerland they cover two thirds of the agricultural surface and play an important role in sustainable agriculture, nature preservation, biodiversity, security, and decentralised settlement.
- Permanent grasslands / rangelands are a major store of carbon in the whole world, they provide good water filtration, prevent erosion and avalanches in the mountains as well as the break of dykes.
- Permanent grasslands / rangelands are diverse habitats for a multitude of plants, animals and microorganisms, among them many threatened species. Many herders keep local, well adapted breeds to take care of those areas. Often they are beautiful landscapes which are attractive for tourism and local recreation.
- Large parts of these areas have been created through animal grazing, many herders and pastoralists have worked on their development and conservation over many centuries. They can only be preserved and their important



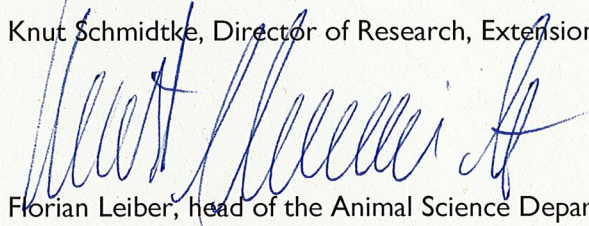
functions can only continue if the work of pastoralists will be going on and will be further developed and adapted to the new challenges of climate change on all continents.

We believe that global measures to preserve rangelands and traditional herding practices and to promote and develop best herding practices are urgently needed. Public attention has not been drawn on these environmentally important aspects; so a Year of Rangeland and Pastoralists would be a very good way to do that.

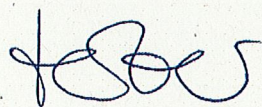
FiBL has been supporting pastoral farmers and herders in developing management practices, animal breeding, and health management over many years and is therefore especially interested in a global support of these farmers.

Sincerely yours

Knut Schmidtke, Director of Research, Extension and Innovation



Florian Leiber, head of the Animal Science Department



Anet Spengler Neff, head of the animal husbandry and breeding group

