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Global Youth Recommendations on Youth and Young Women in Pastoralism

A Global Youth Consultative Process informing the
International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists
(IYRP) 2026 and UNCCD COP17



Prepared by:

World Food Forum Youth Assembly

In collaboration with:

IYRP Youth Working Group

UNCCD Youth Caucus

Coalition of Action for Soil Health (CA4SH)

Save Soil

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1.

Executive summary

Rangelands cover around half of the world's land surface and support the livelihoods, food security and cultural heritage of approximately 500 million people (UNCCD, 2024). However, these systems are increasingly threatened by climate change, land degradation, biodiversity loss and growing pressures on land and natural resources. Young pastoralists, particularly young women, are among those most affected by these challenges, yet they remain underrepresented in the policies and institutions that shape the future of pastoralism. As growing global momentum on rangelands and pastoralism, including the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026 and the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17) place renewed global attention on sustainable rangeland management and pastoral systems, there is a unique opportunity to ensure that young pastoralists are recognized as essential partners in building resilient agrifood systems.

These youth recommendations are informed by a global youth consultative process coordinated by the World Food Forum (WFF) Youth Assembly in collaboration with the UNCCD Youth Caucus, the IYRP Youth Working

Group and partner organizations. The process drew on three complementary evidence streams and engaged over 390 participants in total: a global survey of 225 respondents from 27 countries across six regions; the Madrid International Meeting on Young Pastoralists and New Technologies; and a global webinar on Youth and Young Women in Pastoralism. Together, these consultations generated quantitative and qualitative evidence on the experiences, priorities and policy recommendations of young pastoralists and young women ahead of UNCCD COP17.

The findings reveal a consistent set of priorities across regions. Young pastoralists identified climate change, land degradation and insecure land tenure as major threats to the future of pastoralism, while emphasizing that pastoral mobility remains fundamental for resilient rangeland management. Although the overwhelming majority of respondents believe young people can play a meaningful leadership role, many continue to face limited opportunities to participate in governance and decision-making processes. Young women experience additional and intersecting barriers, including unequal access to land, finance, education, leadership opportunities and digital technologies. At the same time, respondents emphasized

that strengthening youth leadership, investing in entrepreneurship and decent livelihoods, recognizing Indigenous and traditional knowledge alongside innovation and expanding partnerships are essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of pastoral systems.

Together, these findings demonstrate that young pastoralists have articulated a clear vision for the future of pastoralism. The evidence generated through the Global Youth Consultative Process highlights not only the challenges they face, but also the priorities and solutions they believe are essential for building more inclusive, resilient and sustainable pastoral systems.

This Global Youth Recommendations paper proposes six mutually reinforcing priorities for action: **(1)** institutionalize meaningful youth participation in pastoral governance; **(2)** protect land rights and pastoral mobility; **(3)** invest in young women pastoralists through targeted and gender-responsive measures; **(4)** expand youth financing, entrepreneurship and decent livelihood opportunities; **(5)** promote innovation alongside Indigenous and traditional knowledge; and **(6)** strengthen partnerships and accountability for youth-led pastoral transformation. Implemented together, these priorities can contribute to more inclusive governance, resilient livelihoods and sustainable rangeland management.

UNCCD COP17 represents an important opportunity to translate these youth priorities into concrete policies, investments and long-term institutional commitments. The evidence is available, the priorities are clear and the time has come to transform these recommendations into collective action.



2.

Background and rationale



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This global youth recommendations paper was developed to ensure that the perspectives of young pastoralists inform global discussions on the future of pastoralism and sustainable rangeland management. While numerous international commitments recognize the importance of youth participation, there remains limited global evidence capturing the experiences, priorities and policy recommendations of young pastoralists across different pastoral systems and regions.

Recognizing this gap, the WFF Youth Assembly initiated a global consultative process to generate youth-led evidence ahead of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026 and UNCCD COP17. Rather than examining pastoralism solely through

technical or institutional perspectives, this process sought to understand how young pastoralists themselves perceive the challenges affecting their livelihoods, the opportunities they identify for the future of pastoralism and the policy actions they believe are needed to support more resilient, inclusive and sustainable pastoral systems.

The resulting policy recommendations translate these collective perspectives into practical policy recommendations intended to inform governments, UNCCD Parties, development partners and other stakeholders working to strengthen pastoral systems. It aims to complement existing technical knowledge by ensuring that youth perspectives are reflected within policy discussions and future investment priorities.

3.

Global youth consultative process

To generate evidence that reflects diverse pastoral realities, the WFF Youth Assembly coordinated a global youth consultative process in collaboration with the IYRP Youth Working Group, the UNCCD Youth Caucus, the Coalition of Action for Soil Health (CA4SH) and Save Soil.

The consultative process consisted of:

- Global Youth Survey on Youth and Young Women in Pastoralism
- Madrid International Meeting on Young Pastoralists and New Technologies
- WFF Youth Assembly Webinar on youth and young women in pastoralism

Each consultation contributed a distinct perspective to the development of this policy brief. The survey generated global quantitative evidence on youth priorities and challenges, the Madrid meeting provided qualitative insights and a shared vision from young pastoralists representing different regions, and the webinar validated the emerging findings while refining the policy recommendations through dialogue with youth and technical experts.



3.1 THE GLOBAL SURVEY

The global survey on Youth and Young Women in Pastoralism was conducted from April to May 2026 to generate youth-led evidence for UNCCD COP17 and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. The survey reached 225 respondents across 27 countries spanning the six regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North Africa, and North America. Respondents included young pastoralists, young women, researchers, civil society actors and other stakeholders working on rangeland and pastoral systems.

The survey captured data across six thematic areas:

- Rangeland conditions, severity of land degradation and drought
- Climate change impacts on food production and pastoral livelihoods
- Land governance, land access and mobility rights
- Youth inclusion in agrifood and land policy decision-making
- Challenges and support needs specific to young women pastoralists
- Investment priorities and recommendations

3.2 GLOBAL GATHERING OF YOUNG PASTORALISTS: MADRID INTERNATIONAL MEETING

In April 2026, the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) convened the **Madrid International Meeting: Young Pastoralists and New Technologies**, bringing together young pastoralists from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Near East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean to exchange experiences and develop a shared vision for the future of pastoralism. The meeting reaffirmed that young pastoralists are

essential actors in sustaining resilient pastoral systems and highlighted priorities including secure land and mobility rights, gender equality, recognition of traditional knowledge, access to services and finance, digital innovation and greater participation in decision-making. These outcomes provided an important foundation for the youth priorities reflected in this paper and reinforced many of the findings emerging from the global survey.



3.3 WFF YOUTH ASSEMBLY WEBINAR ON YOUTH AND YOUNG WOMEN IN PASTORALISM

In June 2026, the WFF Youth Assembly organized a webinar on youth and young women in pastoralism in collaboration with the IYRP Youth Working Group and partners.

The webinar brought together young pastoralists, women leaders, researchers and civil society representatives from across the six survey regions to:

- Present and validate preliminary survey findings with the broader youth pastoral community;
- Identify the most critical priorities for youth advocacy at COP17;
- Develop the core recommendations that appear in this paper; and
- Ensure the voices of young women pastoralists are prominently and accurately represented.

3.4 CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS

The findings presented in this recommendation paper are informed by the global youth consultative process. As participation in the survey was voluntary, the distribution of responses varied across regions and respondent groups. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting the perspectives and priorities of participants engaged in the consultation rather than as statistically representative of all young pastoralists globally. Nevertheless, the consistency of key messages across the survey, the Madrid meeting and the webinar provides confidence that the recommendations presented in this paper reflect common priorities identified by young pastoralists from diverse pastoral contexts.



4.

Demographic details on respondents of the survey



The survey sample captures both experiences of active pastoralists and community members and institutional knowledge from NGO, civil society, researchers and policymakers.

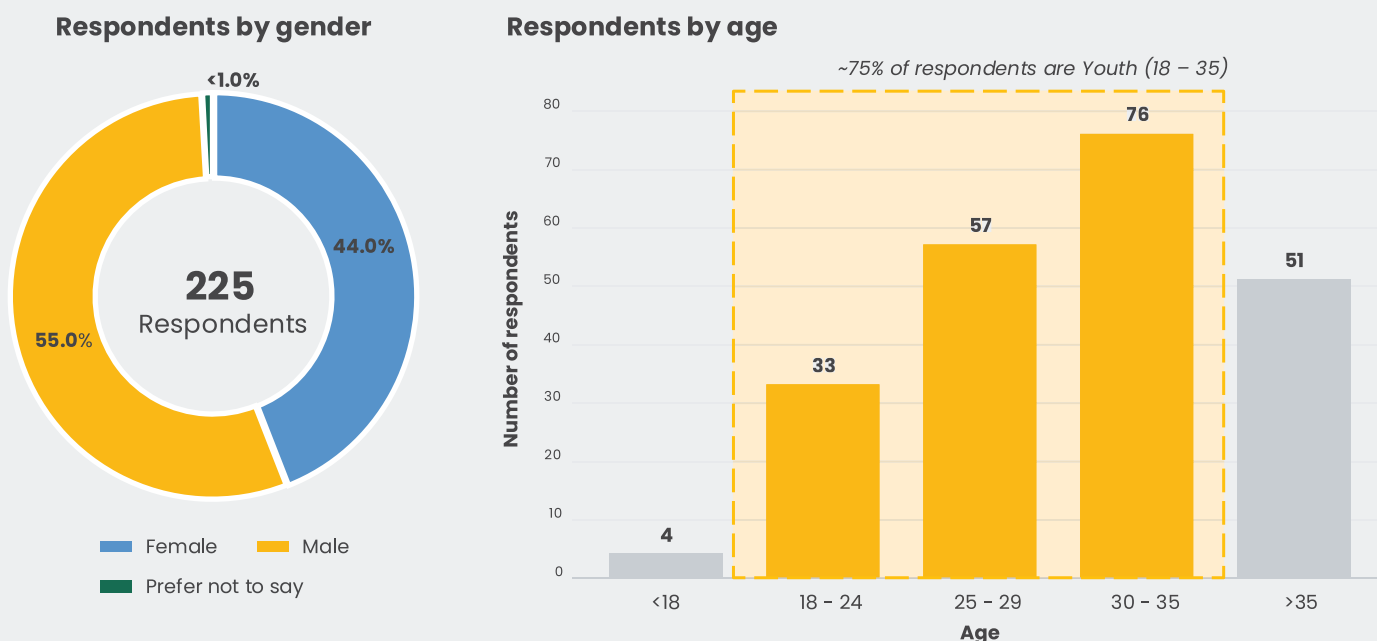


FIGURE 1. GENDER (LEFT) AND AGE (RIGHT) DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=225)

4.1 GENDER, AGE AND GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

The respondent profile was relatively balanced by gender, with 55 percent identifying as male, 44 percent as female and fewer than 1 percent preferring not to disclose their gender. Respondents aged 18–35 represented approximately three-quarters (75 percent) of the sample, with the largest cohort aged 30–35 years (35 percent), followed by those aged 25–29 years (26 percent). Participants over the age of 35 accounted for 23 percent of respondents, while fewer than 2 percent were under 17, indicating that the findings primarily reflect the perspectives of young adults actively engaged in or transitioning into agrifood systems.

Geographically, respondents represented all regions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

Nations (FAO), although the sample was concentrated in Africa (58 percent), followed by Asia and the Pacific (16 percent), the Near East and North Africa (8 percent), Europe and Central Asia (7 percent), North America (6 percent), and Latin America and the Caribbean (4 percent). Nearly half of respondents (49 percent) resided in rural areas, compared with 32 percent in urban and 19 percent in peri-urban areas. This distribution provides strong representation of rural youth, whose perspectives are particularly relevant given their direct engagement with agriculture and food systems, while also incorporating insights from urban and peri-urban contexts to capture the diverse realities shaping youth participation across agrifood systems.

4.2 RELATION TO PASTORALISM AND ASSOCIATED SYSTEMS

Most respondents reported working in support of pastoralist communities (58 percent), including through NGOs, research institutions, extension services and related organizations. A further 27 percent came from pastoralist families or communities, while 15 percent identified as pastoralists themselves. This composition reflects a diverse range of perspectives, combining lived experience with professional expertise, providing a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing pastoral systems.

Agropastoral systems were the most frequently represented production system (35 percent), followed by urban or peri-urban livestock systems (19 percent), nomadic pastoralism (17 percent), semi-nomadic pastoralism (15 percent) and transhumance (13 percent). The broad representation of pastoral production systems highlights the diversity of pastoral livelihoods and reinforces the need for context-specific policies that recognize the distinct challenges, mobility patterns and resource needs of different pastoral communities.

Relation to pastoralism

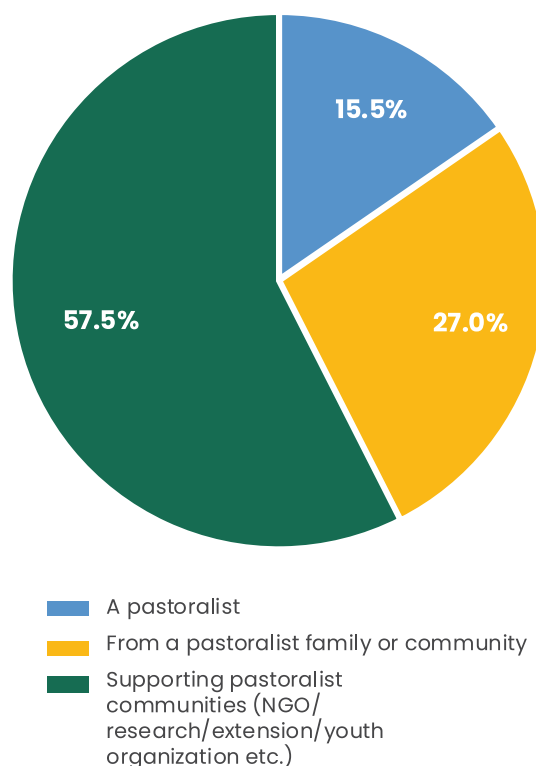
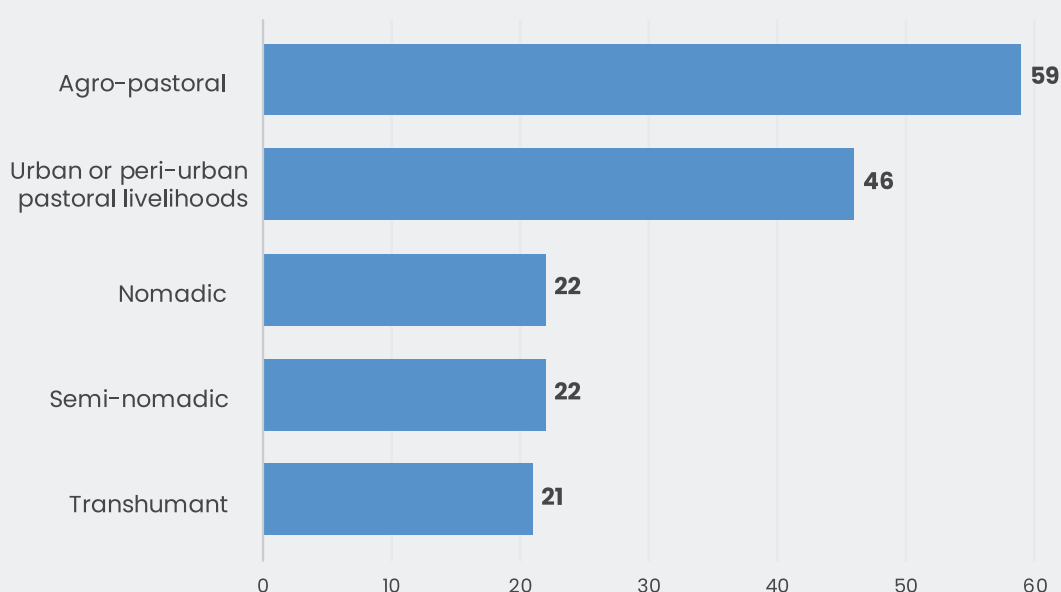


FIGURE 2. RELATION TO PASTORALISM

FIGURE 3.
THE
ASSOCIATED
SYSTEM TO
PASTORALISM

Associated system of pastoralism



5.

Youth priorities identified through the consultation process

This section presents patterns in the responses and youth priorities that were identified through the global youth consultative processes mentioned above.

5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS: LAND DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE

Land degradation and drought emerged as the most frequently reported environmental challenges across the global youth survey.

When asked to rate their severity, the majority of respondents indicated that these conditions have significant impacts on their communities:

Regional land degradation severity (% within each region)

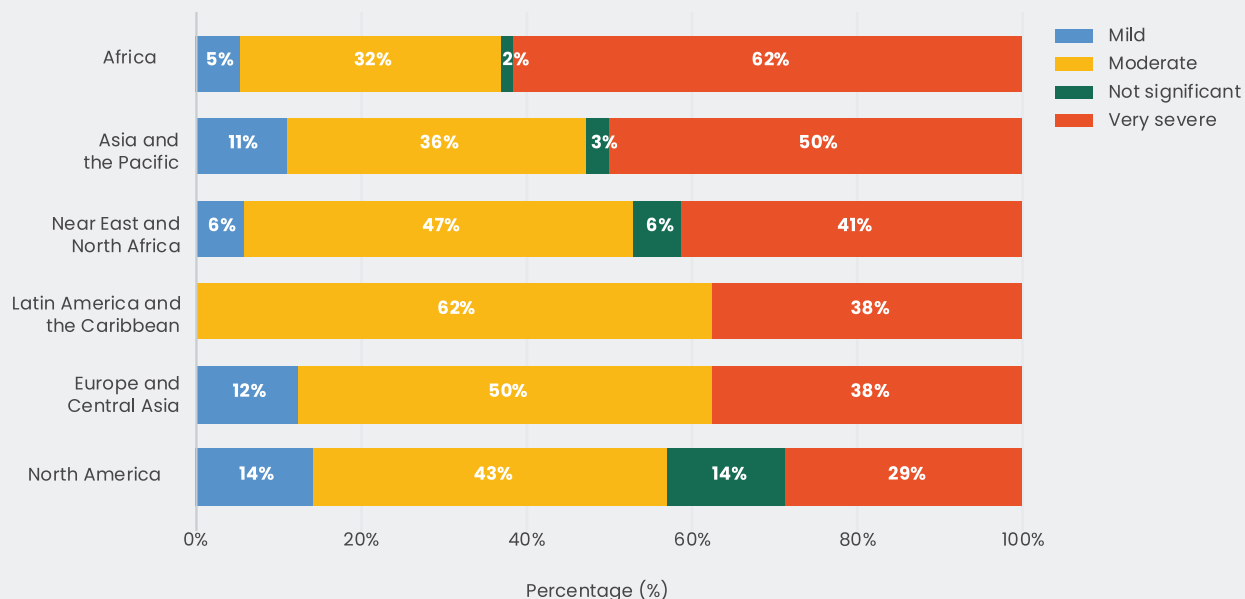


FIGURE 4. LAND DEGRADATION SEVERITY BY REGION

Key observed climate impacts on food and livelihoods

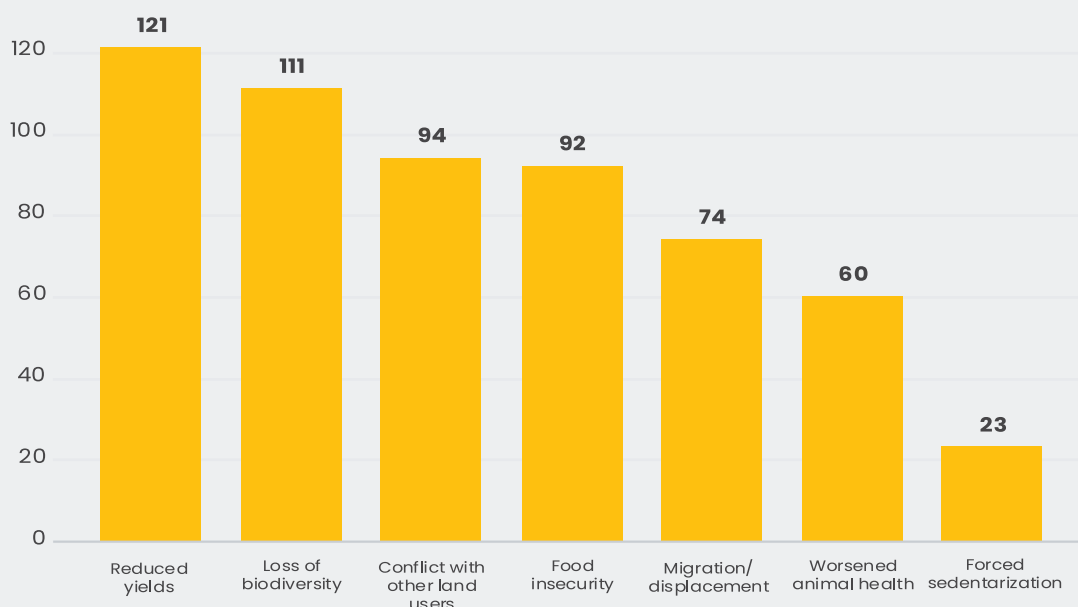


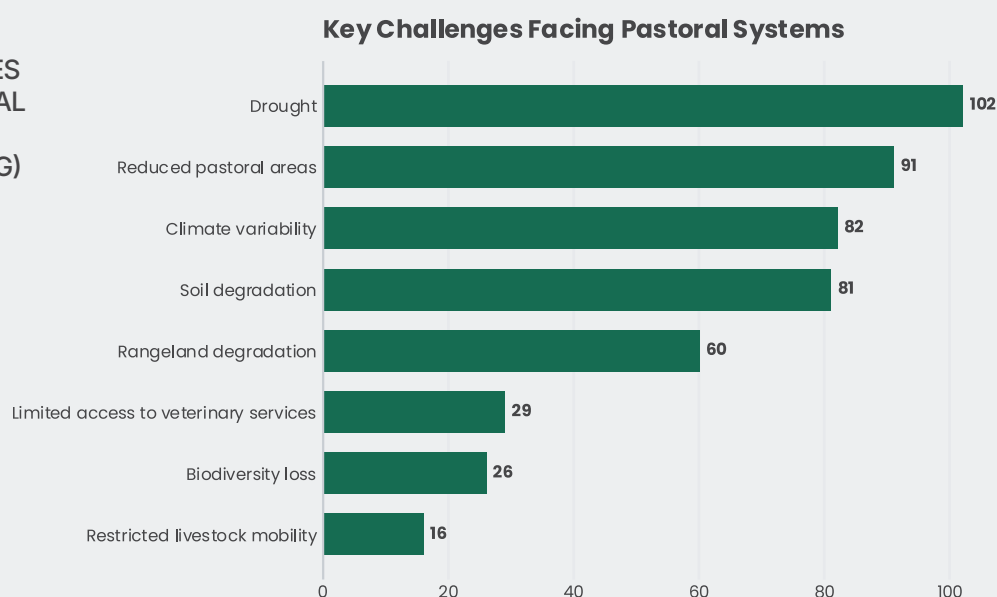
FIGURE 5. KEY OBSERVED CLIMATE IMPACTS ON FOOD AND LIVELIHOODS

Respondents identified climate change as causing multiple interconnected impacts across pastoral systems. Reduced agricultural and livestock yields emerged as the most widespread consequence (56 percent), followed by biodiversity loss (51 percent), conflicts over land and natural resources (43 percent), food insecurity (42 percent), and forced migration and displacement (34 percent). Additional impacts included deteriorating animal health (28 percent) and forced sedentarization (11 percent), illustrating

that climate change affects not only productivity but also livelihoods, mobility and social stability. These findings underscore the need for integrated, climate-resilient strategies that simultaneously address environmental degradation, resource governance and the socioeconomic resilience of pastoral communities.

Respondents also identified the key challenges facing their pastoral communities:

FIGURE 6.
KEY CHALLENGES
FACING PASTORAL
SYSTEMS
(PERCENT CITING)



Drought (45 percent) and water scarcity (44 percent) were identified as the most pressing challenges affecting pastoral systems, followed by shrinking pastoral areas (41 percent), increasing climate variability (38 percent), and soil degradation (37 percent). These findings highlight the growing pressure that climate and environmental change place on the natural resource base underpinning pastoral livelihoods. Structural constraints, including weak

land governance (20 percent) and limited market access (13 percent), were reported across all settlement types, indicating that these are persistent systemic challenges rather than location-specific issues. Notably, rural respondents consistently reported higher levels of environmental challenges than their urban and peri-urban counterparts, reflecting their greater exposure and dependence on natural resources for livelihoods.

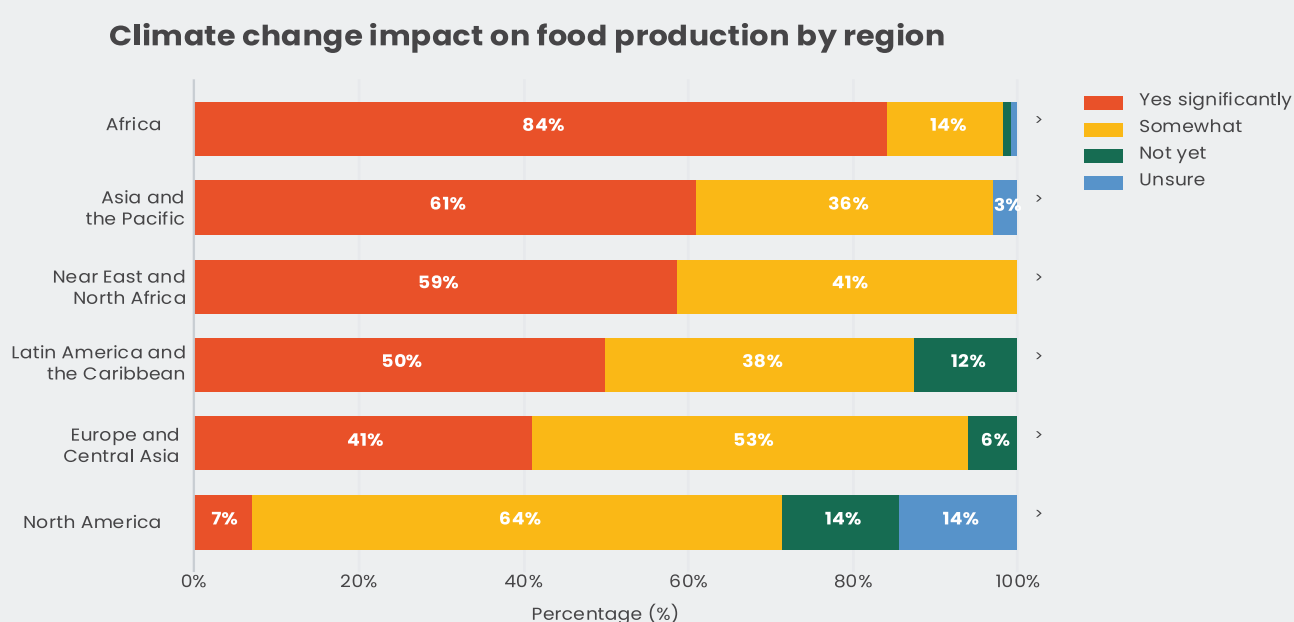


FIGURE 7. CLIMATE FOOD IMPACT BY REGION

Combined, 96 percent of respondents reported some degree of climate impact on food production, highlighting the widespread effects of climate change on pastoral livelihoods. Cross-regional responses suggest that respondents from Africa reported the highest proportion of significant impacts, followed by those from the Near East and North Africa. In contrast, respondents from Europe and Central Asia more frequently reported moderate impacts, which may reflect differences in agropastoral systems and local environmental contexts.

“When water and pasture become scarce, young people face livestock loss, food insecurity and forced mobility, which disrupts education and stable livelihoods”.

– Survey respondent, Male, aged 30-35, Ethiopia

5.2 GOVERNANCE AND YOUTH INCLUSION

Over 60 percent of respondents reported that youth are rarely or never included in agrifood governance and decision-making processes. Responses relating to land policy indicated an even greater level of exclusion, with 40 percent reporting they are rarely included and 33 percent reporting they are never

included, suggesting that nearly three-quarters of respondents perceive limited opportunities to contribute to land-related policy discussions. At the same time, 96.0 percent of respondents agreed that young people can and should play a meaningful leadership role in pastoral systems.

Perceived youth inclusion in land policy vs agrifood decisions

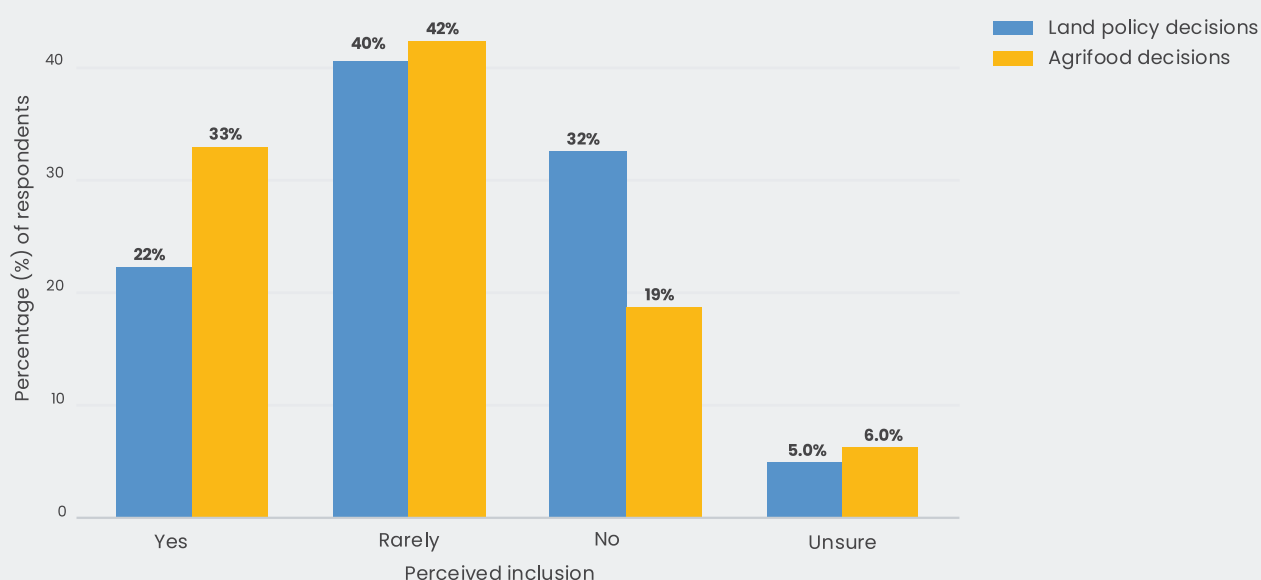


FIGURE 8. PERCIEVED YOUTH INCLUSION IN LAND POLICY VS AGRIFOOD DECISIONS

Together, these findings point to a gap between young people's perceived leadership potential and their opportunities to participate in formal policy and governance processes affecting pastoral systems.

“Ensuring youth inclusion in governance is essential to protect livelihoods, reduce conflict and sustain pastoral systems”.

– Survey respondent, Female, aged 18-24, Ghana

5.3 LAND ACCESS

Secure access to land is foundational for pastoral livelihoods, yet three in four youth lack it.

Respondents identified ten key barriers to accessing land, which can be grouped into three broad categories: economic, governance and social constraints.

Economic barriers were the most significant, with high land prices cited by 57 percent of respondents, indicating that affordability is a major obstacle for young pastoralists and cannot be addressed through land legislation alone. Governance-related challenges, including insecure land tenure documentation (32 percent), limited recognition of customary tenure (26 percent), lack of legal support (22 percent) and privatization of grazing lands (20 percent), further restrict secure and equitable access to land.

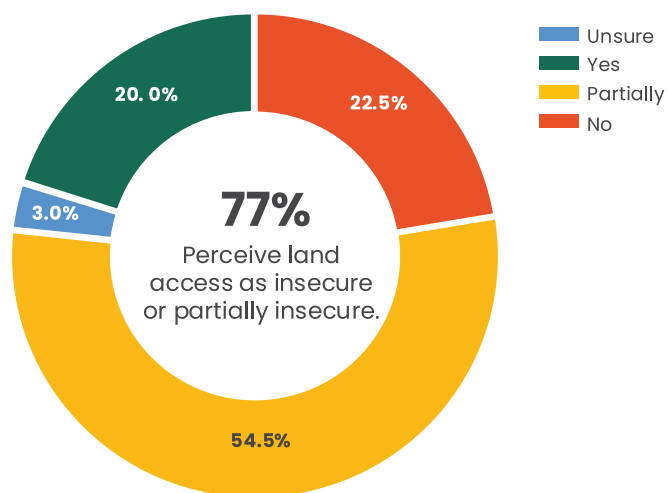
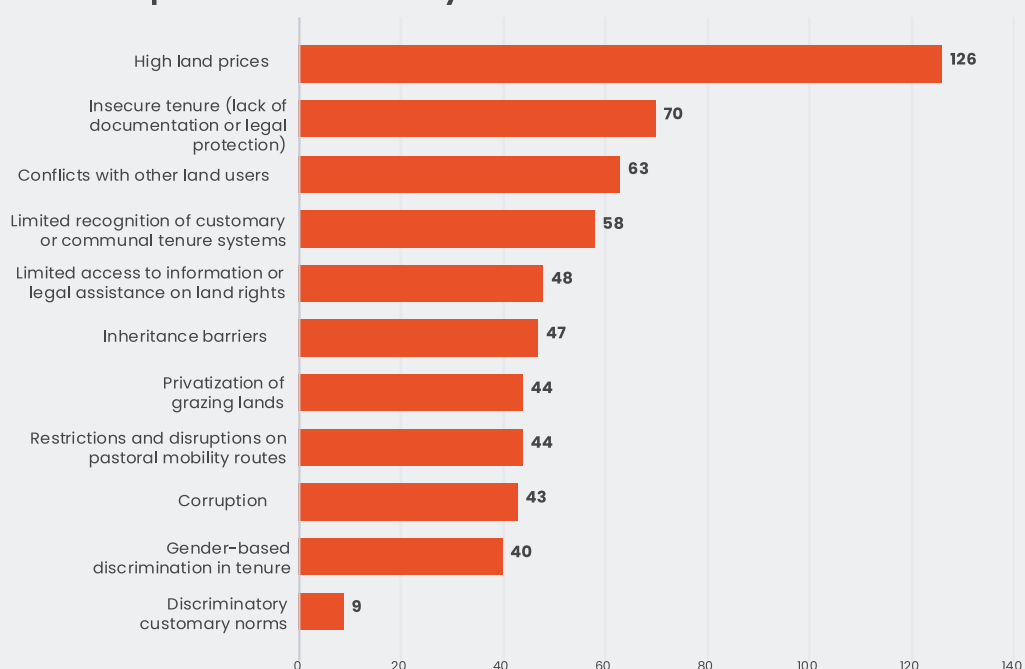


FIGURE 9. DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE SECURE ACCESS TO LAND?

Social barriers including conflicts with other land users (28 percent), inheritance constraints (22 percent), restricted mobility (19 percent) and gender-based discrimination (18 percent) compound these challenges, particularly for young women, underscoring the need for inclusive land governance reforms that address both structural and social inequalities.

FIGURE 10.
MAIN BARRIERS TO YOUTH LAND ACCESS

Main perceived barriers to youth's secure access to land



"Without secure tenure, young pastoralists have no stable foundation for livelihoods or investment."

– Survey respondent, Male, aged 30-35, Georgia

5.4 YOUNG WOMEN IN PASTORALISM: STRENGTHENING INCLUSION AND LEADERSHIP

Young women pastoralists play essential roles in pastoral livelihoods, contributing to livestock production, food security, natural resource management, local economies and the preservation of Indigenous and traditional knowledge. Despite these contributions, they continue to face multiple and interconnected barriers that limit their access to productive resources, leadership opportunities and decision-making. This section presents the perspectives of respondents identifying as young women pastoralists and highlights priorities for more gender-responsive pastoral policies.

Young women consistently reported lower levels of access than young men across all measured domains,

highlighting persistent gender disparities within pastoral systems. The largest gaps were reported in governance and decision-making (81 percent), land access (78 percent), and livestock ownership (77 percent), indicating that inequalities extend beyond access to resources to include participation, agency, and control over productive assets. Although disparities in access to water points were comparatively lower, they remained significant, underscoring the need for gender-responsive policies that strengthen young women's access to resources, leadership opportunities and decision-making.

The main challenges cited by young women are closely interconnected:

Do young women pastoralist have equal access to the following?



FIGURE 11. YOUNG WOMEN'S ACCESS TO PASTORAL RESOURCES

Social norms and gendered expectations (21 percent) and limited access to education (19 percent) emerged as the most significant barriers affecting young women pastoralists. Respondents also identified exclusion from decision-making (15 percent), the limited recognition of women's contributions to pastoralism (15 percent), unpaid care

responsibilities (15 percent), and early marriage (11 percent) as important constraints on their participation and future opportunities. Although reported less frequently, safety risks during mobility (4.7 percent) remain an important concern given the mobility requirements of pastoral livelihoods.

Main challenges for young women pastoralists

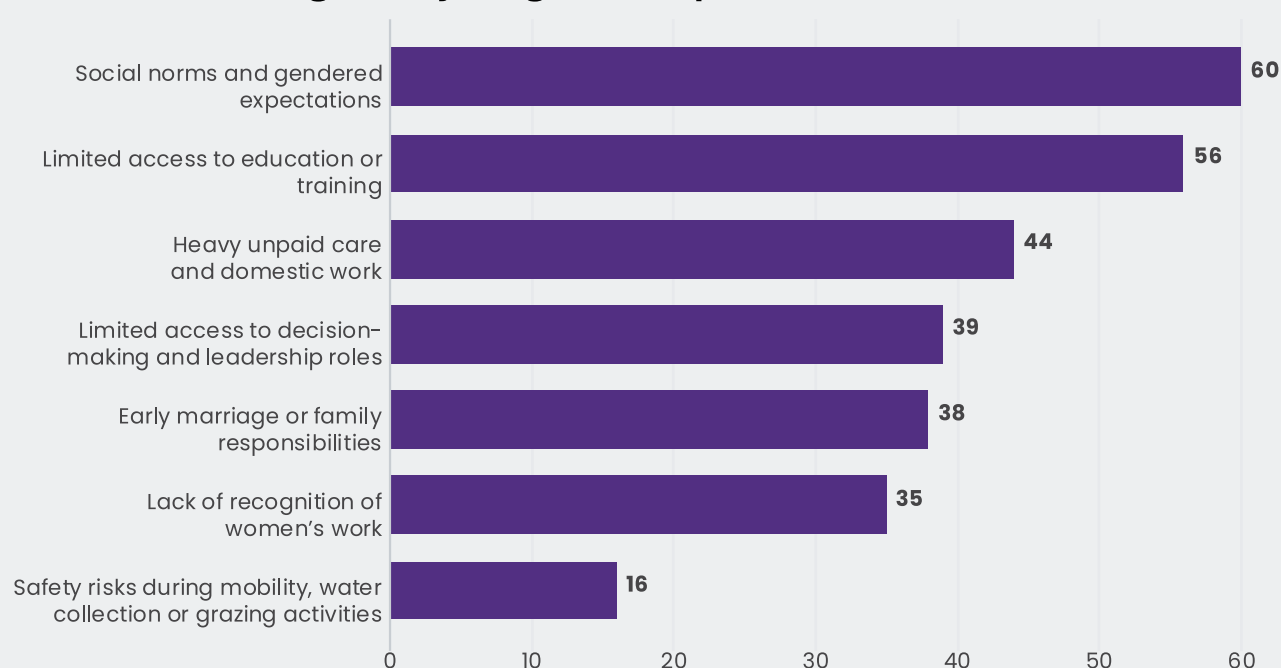


FIGURE 12. MAIN CHALLENGES AFFECTING YOUNG WOMEN PASTORALISTS



Main support requested by young women pastoralists

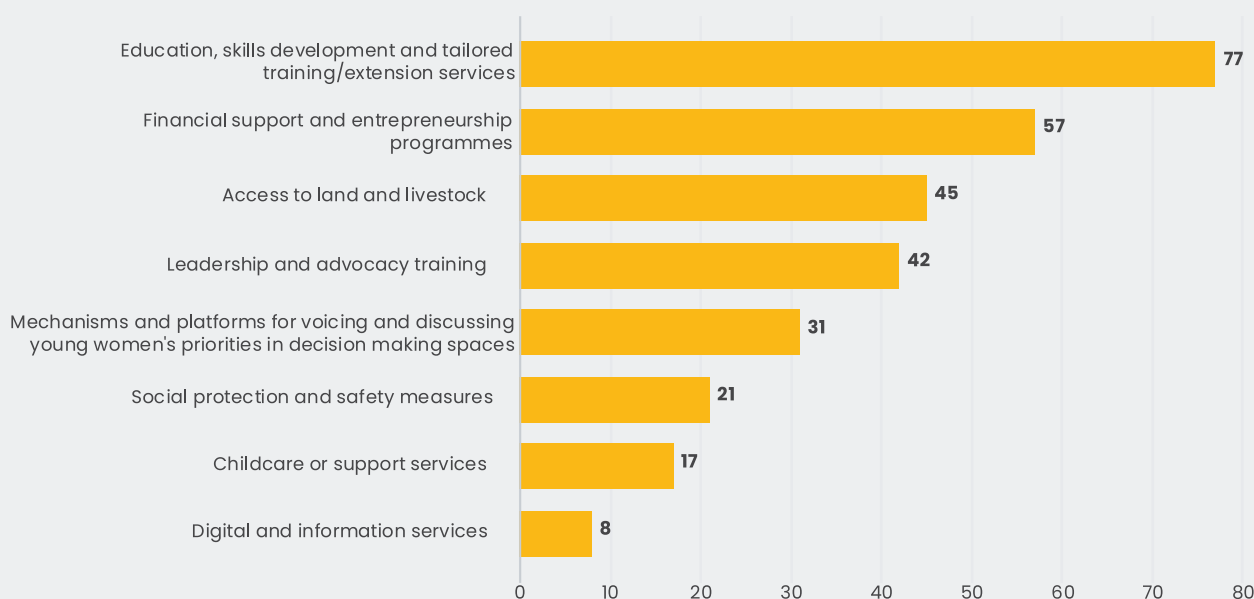


FIGURE 13. SUPPORT REQUESTED BY YOUNG WOMEN PASTORALISTS

WHAT YOUNG WOMEN SAY THEY NEED:

Education, skills development and tailored training (28 percent) emerged as the highest priority, followed by financial support and entrepreneurship programmes (22 percent). Respondents also emphasized improved access to land and livestock (14 percent), leadership and advocacy training (13 percent) and governance platforms (9 percent). Childcare services (7 percent) and social protection (6 percent) were identified as important measures to reduce barriers to young women's participation in pastoral livelihoods and leadership.

“Young pastoralist women and girls do not need tokenistic, short-term funding programmes [...], we need pathways for land ownership [...] and policies that protect our rights and hard work”.

– Survey respondent,
Female, aged 18-24, Australia

5.5 TRADITIONAL AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AS A FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PASTORALISM

A strong and consistent message emerging across the global youth consultative process is that young pastoralists continue to value Indigenous and traditional knowledge as a cornerstone of sustainable pastoralism and resilient rangeland management.

A strong majority of respondents (79 percent) of the survey recognized traditional knowledge as an important contributor to sustainable rangeland management. Recognition was highest among rural respondents (40 percent), while support also remained substantial among urban respondents (28 percent), demonstrating that the value

of Indigenous and local knowledge extends beyond communities directly engaged in pastoral practices.

The findings also highlight growing interest among young pastoralists in combining traditional knowledge with innovation and digital technologies. Rather than viewing these approaches as competing, respondents emphasized the importance of strengthening inter-generational knowledge exchange while integrating locally adapted practices with emerging technologies to enhance climate resilience and sustainable rangeland management.

Traditional knowledge contribution to rangeland management

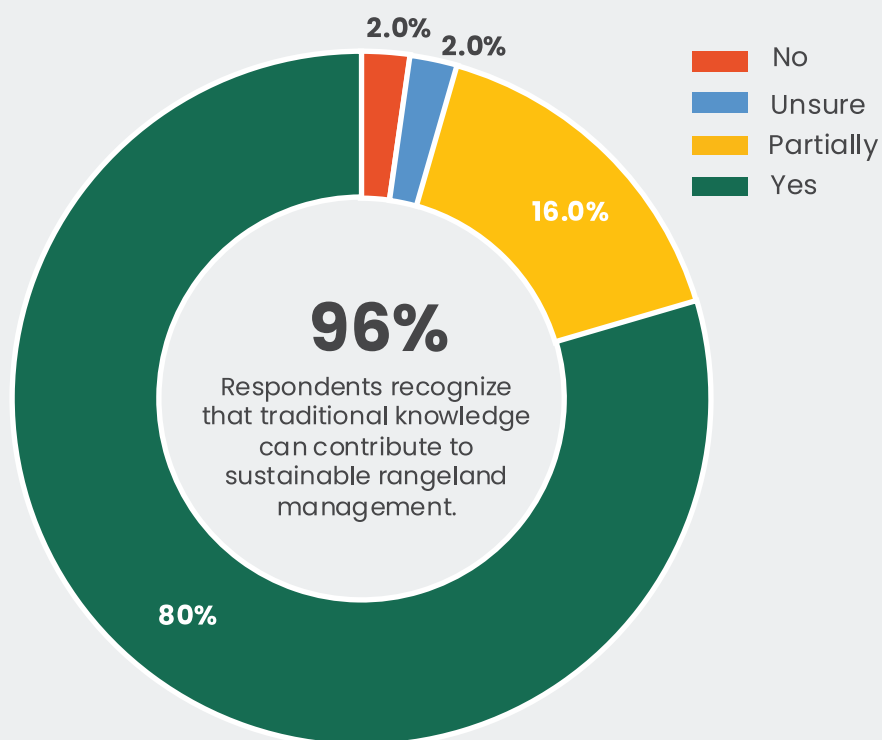


FIGURE 14. TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

5.6 PRIORITY AREAS FOR SUPPORT FROM FAO AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

To better understand how international organizations can support young pastoralists, respondents were asked to identify the areas in which FAO and development partners should prioritize their assistance.

Respondents identified three priority areas of almost equal importance: strengthening partnerships and implementation mechanisms (70 percent), improving resource mobilization and financing (69 percent), and enhancing capacity building and awareness (68 percent). This strong alignment suggests that respondents view sustainable

pastoral development as requiring coordinated partnerships, increased investment and strengthened capacities simultaneously.

While multi-stakeholder dialogue (42 percent) and data and knowledge sharing (33 percent) received comparatively lower levels of support, respondents nevertheless recognized these as important enabling actions that contribute to collaboration, evidence-informed decision-making and the long-term sustainability of pastoral development initiatives.



FIGURE 15. FAO AND PARTNERS: PRIORITY SUPPORT ACTIONS FOR PASTORAL YOUTH

“Recognizing young pastoralists as key contributors to food systems and rural economies, then back that with practical support”.

– Survey respondent, Female, aged 18-24, Ghana

6.

Youth policy recommendations



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The six recommendations presented in this paper emerged through an iterative consultative process. Survey findings identified priority challenges and areas for action, while the two consultation events helped validate, refine and strengthen the recommendations through dialogue among young pastoralists, technical experts and partner organizations.

1. INSTITUTIONALIZE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PASTORAL GOVERNANCE

Young pastoralists are essential stewards of rangelands, livestock systems and pastoral knowledge, yet they remain underrepresented in governance and decision-making processes at local, national and international levels. The global youth consultative process consistently highlighted that youth participation is often limited to

short-term consultations rather than meaningful engagement in policy design, implementation and monitoring. Institutionalizing youth participation will strengthen policy relevance, promote intergenerational knowledge exchange and ensure that pastoral development reflects the priorities and realities of the next generation.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Establish permanent youth representation within pastoral, livestock and rangeland governance processes at national and local levels through designated seats, advisory mechanisms, youth focal points, etc.
- Create new and strengthen existing mechanisms for meaningful youth participation in policy development, implementation and monitoring, including National Youth Pastoralism Advisory Councils.
- Strengthen the capacity of young pastoralists, especially young women, through leadership development, policy literacy and opportunities to engage in national, regional and global decision-making processes.

Lead actors: Governments, Youth Organizations, Regional Organizations.





2. SECURE LAND RIGHTS AND PROTECT PASTORAL MOBILITY

Secure access to land, grazing resources and pastoral mobility is fundamental to resilient pastoral systems, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation. Young pastoralists identified insecure land tenure, shrinking grazing areas, fragmented mobility corridors and increasing

competition over natural resources as some of the greatest threats to their livelihoods. Policies that recognize mobility as a productive and climate-resilient land management strategy are essential for sustaining pastoral systems and enabling generational renewal.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Legally recognize and protect communal grazing lands, transhumance routes and livestock corridors through inclusive land governance frameworks.
- Ensure young pastoralists are represented in land governance institutions and natural resource management processes. This is particularly relevant for young women, whose legal rights to land should be recognized, upheld and protected.
- Promote integrated land-use planning and conflict-sensitive approaches that recognize pastoralism as a legitimate land-use system alongside conservation, agriculture and infrastructure development.

Lead actors: Governments, Land Governance Institutions, Regional Economic Communities.

3. INVEST IN YOUNG WOMEN PASTORALISTS

Young women pastoralists face multiple and intersecting barriers that limit their ability to participate fully in pastoral livelihoods and decision-making. These include unequal access to land and productive resources, limited educational and leadership opportunities, financial exclusion,

gender-based violence, discriminatory social norms, digital inequalities and underrepresentation in governance. Addressing these structural barriers is essential not only for advancing gender equality but also for strengthening the resilience, productivity and sustainability of pastoral systems.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Reform legal, policy and customary systems that restrict young women's rights to own, inherit and access land, livestock, financial services and productive resources.
- Strengthen the meaningful participation and leadership of young women within pastoral governance institutions through leadership programmes, mentorship initiatives and gender-responsive representation mechanisms.
- Expand access to education, vocational training, digital technologies and climate-resilient livelihood opportunities tailored to the needs of young women pastoralists.
- Increase dedicated financial support, entrepreneurship programmes and climate finance opportunities that are accessible to young women-led pastoral enterprises.
- Implement gender-responsive policies and support services that address discriminatory social norms, reduce unpaid care burdens through measures such as accessible childcare and flexible participation arrangements and strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- Promote the collection and use of age- and sex-disaggregated data to better understand the specific needs and contributions of young women pastoralists and inform evidence-based policymaking.

Lead actors: Governments, Development Partners, Women's Organizations, Youth Organizations.



4. EXPAND YOUTH FINANCING, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DECENT LIVELIHOODS

Many young pastoralists are willing to remain in pastoralism but face significant barriers to accessing finance, markets, business development services and decent employment opportunities. Limited investment in youth entrepreneurship and pastoral value chains discourages

generational renewal and increases rural outmigration. Supporting youth-led enterprises and creating enabling economic environments can strengthen pastoral livelihoods while contributing to resilient agrifood systems and rural economies.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Develop youth- and gender- responsive financing mechanisms, including grants, concessional loans, and climate finance tailored to pastoral enterprises.
- Strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems through business incubation, mentoring, market access, cooperatives and value chain development.
- Promote decent work opportunities by investing in sustainable livestock production, value addition, ecosystem restoration, digital services and other diversified pastoral livelihoods.

Lead actors: Governments, Development Finance Institutions, Private Sector, Youth Organizations.

5. PROMOTE INNOVATION ALONGSIDE INDIGENOUS AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Young pastoralists consistently emphasized that innovation should build upon, not replace, the Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems that have sustained pastoral communities for generations. Combining scientific research, digital technologies and locally

adapted knowledge can strengthen climate resilience, improve resource management and support sustainable pastoral livelihoods while preserving cultural heritage and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Recognize, protect and support the appropriate use of Indigenous and traditional pastoral knowledge in research, education, extension services and policymaking through appropriate consent and respect for knowledge ownership.
- Invest in digital technologies, climate information services, early warning systems and innovations that respond to the realities of pastoral communities.
- Promote intergenerational knowledge exchange by supporting collaboration between elders, researchers, young pastoralists and innovation hubs.

Lead actors: Governments, Research Institutions, Universities, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, Youth Organizations.

6. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR YOUTH-LED PASTORAL TRANSFORMATION

The challenges facing young pastoralists cannot be addressed by any single institution. Achieving sustainable pastoral development requires coordinated partnerships, sustained investment and effective accountability across governments, international organizations, research institutions, civil

society, the private sector and young pastoralists themselves. Strengthening collaboration, mobilizing financial and technical support, promoting knowledge exchange and establishing mechanisms to monitor progress are all essential to translate commitments into long-term action and measurable results.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together governments, pastoral communities, youth organizations, international organizations, research institutions and the private sector to co-design and implement pastoral policies and programmes.
- Establish monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms with meaningful youth participation to track progress on commitments related to youth and young women in pastoralism.
- Mobilize sustained financial and technical support for youth-led initiatives and facilitate knowledge sharing, research collaboration and peer learning across pastoral regions.

Lead actors: Governments, International Organizations, Development Partners, Private Sector, Research Institutions, Civil Society Organizations, Youth Organizations.



7.

Conclusion

These Global Youth Recommendations demonstrate that young pastoralists are not only the future of pastoralism, but they are already shaping its present through innovation, stewardship of natural resources, Indigenous and traditional knowledge, entrepreneurship, and community leadership. The global youth consultative process provides evidence of both the challenges young pastoralists face and the solutions they propose.

The findings consistently show that strengthening youth participation in governance, securing land rights and pastoral mobility, investing in young women, expanding access to finance and decent livelihoods, promoting innovation alongside traditional knowledge, and strengthening partnerships are mutually reinforcing priorities. Progress in one area depends on progress in the others. Fragmented or isolated interventions will not be sufficient to address the complex and interconnected challenges affecting young pastoralists and pastoralist communities.

These policy recommendations come at a unique moment. As growing global momentum, including the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026, places renewed global attention

on pastoral systems and as Parties prepare for UNCCD COP17, there is an opportunity to translate the priorities identified through this global consultative process into concrete policies, investments and long-term institutional commitments. The recommendations presented in this brief provide practical pathways for governments, international organizations, development partners, research institutions, youth organizations and pastoral communities to work together towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable pastoral systems.

Ultimately, the value of this youth policy recommendation paper will not be measured by the consultations that informed it, but by the actions that follow. Meaningful youth participation must move beyond consultation towards shared decision-making, sustained investment and long-term accountability. Young pastoralists have articulated a clear vision for the future of pastoralism. The evidence is available, the priorities are clear and the policy pathways have been identified. The next step is collective action to ensure that these recommendations contribute to resilient pastoral livelihoods, healthier rangelands and more resilient agrifood systems for generations to come.

8.

Acknowledgements

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The WFF Youth Assembly

CONNECTING YOUTH VOICES TO POLICY

The WFF Youth Assembly is a youth-led platform and the cornerstone of the WFF's approach to institutionalized youth engagement in agrifood systems governance. Driven by young people through a YPB and the Secretariat, the Youth Assembly works in close collaboration with FAO technical divisions to ensure that youth engagement is evidence-based, policy-relevant, and technically sound. The Youth Assembly provides structured and sustained opportunities for young people to engage in global, regional and thematic policy dialogue through consultations, intergenerational exchanges and youth-led research and recommendations, bringing together a diverse spectrum of youth stakeholders across regions, backgrounds and areas of expertise – moving beyond tokenistic representation towards genuine inclusion. By linking youth perspectives with FAO's technical expertise, the Assembly strengthens young people's capacity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making while serving as a sounding board for FAO on emerging priorities and implementation challenges. This two-way engagement supports young people in moving from consultation to action and embeds their contributions within FAO's institutional processes and broader intergovernmental spaces.

