RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

cirad
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

AFD
AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

Supporting Pastoralism in Countries of the South: courses of action for sustainable development

POSITION PAPER BY AFD – CIRAD – THE WORKING GROUP "PASTORALIST ECONOMY"

© Kamikazz / Gret

#WorldInCommon

ACTING FOR LIFE
AVSF AGRONOMES & VÉTÉRINAIRES SANS FRONTIÈRES
GRET
INTER RÉSEAUX Développement Rural
iram

2026 is the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP). It is an occasion to acknowledge the importance of pastoralist contributions to food security and sovereignty, to climate change adaptation, to social cohesion and peace in rural areas, and to biodiversity protection throughout the world. In this position paper, the signatory institutions affirm their joint commitments to support the private and public stakeholders who work with pastoralist communities, especially in developing countries.

We, the French stakeholders signing this position paper, reaffirm our collective commitment to continue the following activities, according to our partners' wishes and to the resources we can mobilize:

1. Increase visibility of mobile pastoralism's contributions to the planet and societies

1. **Document** economic contributions (food and nutritional security, jobs, and rural incomes) to inform public policies and investments.
2. **Promote** ecosystem services (biodiversity, soil fertility, carbon neutrality).
3. **Encourage** national and regional strategies (agricultural plans, climate policies, public budgets) to reflect the benefits of pastoralism. This should be supported by data and partnerships with pastoralist organizations.

2. Strengthen complementarity between farming and pastoralism

4. **Create spaces for local consultation** between farmers and pastoralists for co-managing resources (water, pastures, crop residues) and formalize equitable agreements.
5. **Develop shared agropastoral infrastructure** (e.g., water points, holding areas, processing units) to optimize complementarities.
6. **Encourage integrated production systems** (fodder crops, agroforestry) to improve soil resilience and fertility.
7. **Facilitate mobility** and secure land-use rights for pastoralists and agropastoralists on collective land and transhumance corridors.

3. Support the evolution of pastoralism

8. **Adapt pastoral practices** to climate change (adjusted mobility, forage storage, early warning systems).

9. **Modernize essential services** (mobile animal health, adapted education, access to ICTs).

10. **Support innovation and the development of pastoral economies** (local value chains, quality labels, short circuits).

11. **Secure cohabitation** between farming and pastoral spaces by documenting customary rights.

4. Prevent conflicts and strengthen social cohesion

12. **Establish and strengthen local mediation mechanisms** to prevent and resolve disputes and enhance dialogue.

13. **Fight against preconceptions by highlighting and supporting initiatives that strengthen solidarity and social ties between sedentary and mobile communities** and between urban and rural residents. These initiatives should involve young people and women.

14. **Strengthen community resilience** through agropastoral infrastructure and inclusive local governance.

15. **Incorporate the specific needs of people in pastoral areas, especially those of youth and women, into regulatory frameworks and national and subregional sectoral policies.**

16. **Harmonize cross-border regulations** to facilitate the movement of herds and products.

17. **Strengthen pastoral observatories** to produce up-to-date data.

18. **Promote forms of governance** and the accompanying economic development of **protected areas and pastoralism** and thereby prevent pastoralist/wildlife conflicts.

19. **Support advocacy platforms** to involve pastoralist organizations in climate negotiations and biodiversity forums.

5. Invest in research and innovation

20. **Fund action research programs** on agropastoral models (value chains, productivity, etc.).

21. **Leverage lessons learned** from pilot projects to inform public policies.

6. Mobilize partnerships and international advocacy

22. **Give a greater voice to agropastoral stakeholders** on the international stage to defend their rights and contributions.

The various forms of pastoralism contribute to addressing the major challenges faced by the hundred or so countries worldwide that host this method of livestock farming, specifically in terms of food sovereignty, adaptation to climate change, and social inclusion. In every context, this contribution is significantly more impactful when public policies and investments are designed and implemented alongside all stakeholders, sustained over the long term, and applied across different scales of governance: local, national, and even sub-regional.

1. Pastoralism: a solution for difficult contexts

Rangelands can be made up of desert, shrubland, grassland, savanna, forest, and even tundra that are not conducive to crops. They cover

54%

of the planet's land surface

in all environments, including mountainous, Mediterranean, tropical, and subtropical regions.

(ILRI, IUCN, FAO, WWF, UNEP and ILC. 2021. Rangelands Atlas. Nairobi Kenya : ILRI ; p 9)

› https://www.rangelandsdata.org/atlas/sites/default/files/2021-06/Rangelands_web%20%28144%20dpi%29.pdf

In more than 100 countries, over

500

million people

practice some form of pastoralism.

(UNCCD. 2024. Global Land Outlook Thematic Report on Rangelands and Pastoralists. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn. ; p 15 + p 90)

› https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-thematic-report-rangelands-and-pastoralists

Pastoralism is based on the mobility of herds and the use of natural pastures in environments marked by a high level of ecological variability that includes arid areas, steppes, savannas, mountains, and cold regions. It can be found on all continents, where it provides subsistence to hundreds of millions of people and **helps improve areas where agriculture is unproductive (due to poor soils, altitude, aridity, etc.), difficult, or even impossible.**

Pastoralism is a dynamic system based on continuous adaptation. Herd mobility enables the optimization of access to water, pastures, and markets. For this system to work, however, mobility must rely on proven skills, functional social networks, and rules for using natural resources that are negotiated, recognized, and applied.

From an economic perspective, pastoral livestock systems make it possible to convert natural vegetation – which is dispersed and highly variable – into essential animal products, with minimum inputs. These products are inexpensive to produce because they require few physical investments such as buildings, mechanization, or fertilizers.

A solution to feed, develop, and preserve.

In this way, **pastoralism contributes to the food security and nutrition of both rural and urban residents,** including the most vulnerable, through self-consumption, exchanges, and trade in livestock, meat, and milk. **Locally, pastoralism is vital to the food and income of herders and their families, who are often isolated and have limited alternatives and investment capacity. At the national and regional levels, pastoralism also plays a crucial role in the supply of animal products to regional markets and major urban centers.**

Ecologically, pastoralism promotes biomass recycling, landscape maintenance, and soil fertility. Socially, pastoralism structures communities and territories by providing them with collective governance mechanisms to manage the scarcity and variability of natural resources, and to prevent conflicts. It forms the basis of meaningful traditions that can be found in festivals, weddings, gifts, the welcoming of strangers, and the mechanisms for giving to the most disadvantaged people.

For all these reasons, UNESCO recognized transhumance as an ***intangible cultural heritage of humanity*** in December 2023. The aspects recognized as a contribution to humanity include livestock production methods and pastoral management practices, customary practices in pastoral territory collective management, know-how related to the crafts industry, and the development of food products.

Mobility lies at the core of pastoralism. The daily and seasonal movement of herds makes it possible to use vast areas of natural rangeland by adapting to the availability of resources. In contrast, continuous grazing over time leads to ecosystem degradation. The ability of pastoralism to use limited inputs and to operate despite uncertainty makes it an agroecological activity and a strategic lever for sustainable development.

Because pastoral productivity depends on mobility, it should be supported rather than restricted, especially in the current context of major transformations such as population growth, agricultural expansion, urbanization, mining, climate change, and tensions related to insecurity. These changes restrict spaces for mobility and weaken pastoral systems, which are often constrained by inadequate policy and land tenure frameworks.

These mobility-related specificities must therefore be taken into account in public policy, including the identification and monitoring of animal movements, animal health management and its potential impacts on human health and international trade, taxation issues, access to healthcare for affected populations, education – and in some cases child labor – as well as conflicts over land use between farmers and herders, and between wildlife and livestock keepers.

Domestic livestock farming, which is dominated by pastoral and agropastoral systems, provides nearly 99% of the six million tons of red meat consumed in West Africa (FAO, 2020). However, the economic benefits of mobile livestock systems – including transhumance and (semi-)nomadism – remain largely invisible at national and local levels and carry little weight in policy decisions, despite representing a vital share of rural economies.

Making pastoralism's contributions more visible is a key priority. This includes jobs, incomes, food sovereignty, and its role in territorial dynamics, as well as investment needs in infrastructure, social protection, education, and healthcare.


© Imagéo-Parry/Francin-2025

Toward a sustainable cashmere sector led by nomadic farmers

In Bayankhongor Province, Mongolia, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (AVSF) and its partners (the Eeltei Baylag cooperative network) have been developing the world's first sustainable cashmere value chain since 2014. Initially funded by the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) and the European Union, and later by Hermès, the project supports seven cooperatives of nomadic herders and their national umbrella organization. These organizations assist herders in improving the quality of their cashmere, developing local processing, and negotiating multiyear contracts directly with the luxury industry at fair prices. This approach ensures sustainable and equitable production and marketing conditions, while reducing dependence on intermediaries who purchase raw fiber for Chinese industries.

› https://www.avsf.org/en/projets/sustainable-cashmere-in-mongolia-integrated-production-system/

Milk Offensive Support Project in West Africa (PAOLAO)

This AFD-financed project supports the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in steering and implementing its regional "local milk value chain" strategy. The project includes advocacy work on regulations (review of the common external tariff applicable to milk powder, VAT exemption for dairy products made from local milk and for the equipment needed for it, and the development of a directive promoting use of local milk). It also supports the development of significant investments in the local milk sector by regional and central governments as well as by the private sector.

The project ensures the operationalization of the regional stakeholder platform, and enables the diffusion of knowledge on milk technologies and economic models by setting up pilot actions, for example. It also helps promote consumption of local milk through communication campaigns and the development of institutional purchasing, particularly for school feeding programs.

› https://www.araa.org/en/projets/milk-offensive-support-project-west-africa-paolao

Local milk processing in northern Senegal: Project ASSTEL

Project ASSTEL, financed by AFD and implemented by GRET and its local partners, has supported the structuring of the local milk sector in the pastoral areas of northern Senegal by setting up a collection and animal feeding service. Together with Laiterie du Berger – a semi-industrial dairy that, since its creation in 2006, has focused on collecting local milk – and a milk producers' cooperative, production has expanded and dialogue has been strengthened to negotiate fair milk prices. The diversification of women's economic activities, along with strengthened agency through savings and credit schemes and literacy programs, has also helped highlight their strategic role within households and across the value chain.

2. Adaptation capacity without increasing carbon emissions

Pastureland accounts for

30%

of global soil organic carbon stocks.

› https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/fao-launches-the-international-year-of-rangelands-and-pastoralists-2026-to-strengthen-these-ecosystems-and-support-the-people-who-sustain-them/en

© IRAM

Pastoralism has always been practiced in environments characterized by high climate variability. With the effects of climate change, this variability is increasing, affecting rainfall levels, timing and spatial distribution, as well as temperatures. **Despite this increasingly challenging context, the flexibility inherent in human and herd mobility remains a core aspect of the adaptation strategies of pastoralists, as it enables them to access quality natural resources and actively participate in social and economic exchange networks with local and regional communities.**

This strategy of movement – used to respond to both extreme events and gradual changes – can only be effective if access to water, pastures, markets, inputs, and services is secured and negotiated with other competing resource users.

With regard to mitigation, livestock contributes to 12% of overall global anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).[1] However, emissions vary according to the form of production, and recent research conducted in Senegal and Niger by CIRAD[2] and its partners shows that **the carbon footprint of Sahelian pastoral territories is close to zero.** In these regions, carbon storage in soils and rangeland vegetation fully offsets the GHG emissions linked to livestock feeding and manure deposition. Globally, rangelands and grasslands are carbon sinks that store about 30% of organic carbon.

Available pastoral land is decreasing constantly due to urbanization and agricultural expansion. Climate change is accelerating this transformation, as it exacerbates phenomena such as land degradation. However, solutions to secure access by pastoral herds to food resources do exist, and they concern and benefit farmers as much as herders. These include maintaining informal agreements between herders and farmers for the use of crop residues,

Adaptation through mobility

pastoralists engaging in farming to diversify risk, the development of commercial fodder crops, the storage of hay or crop by-products, and targeted feed supplementation through concentrates.

While some herders do become farmers, an increasing number of farmers are becoming livestock keepers, often requiring periods of herd mobility. This ongoing shift from strictly pastoral systems to an agropastoral model that combines farming and pastoralism better and more extensively is only possible if access to rangelands and mobility for pastoralists is preserved.

In several countries, ranches have been presented as an alternative to pastoral mobility. However, when investments of this type have been carried out, particularly within a private framework, the scale of the enclosed land – sometimes covering thousands of hectares – has led to social tensions linked to land appropriation by investors, often external to the territory[3]. This has disrupted long-standing land governance arrangements and created barriers to the movement of excluded herds.


© Régis Defumaux (AVSF)

[1] FAO (2023). "Pathways towards lower emissions – A global assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation options from livestock agrifood systems". Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9029en

[2] Assouma, M. H.; Lecomte, P.; Corniaux, C.; Hiernaux, P.; Ickowicz, A.; Vayssières, J. (2019). "Territoires d'élevage pastoral au Sahel : un bilan carbone avec un potentiel inattendu d'atténuation du changement climatique". Perspective, (52), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.19182/agritrop/00082

[3] "Les investisseurs étrangers à l'assaut des terres agricoles africaines". https://journals.openedition.org/echogeo/12008

In addition, alongside the health risks exacerbated by livestock concentration, the forage resources produced within enclosed areas have almost always proven insufficient for stocking densities. This has quickly led to vegetation degradation, which is often not diverse enough to withstand seasonal and climatic variability. Even under collective management, ranching is at most an option that allows for the protection of fodder plots, but it is not a substitute for larger-scale pastoral rangeland management practices based on seasonal complementarities between different agroecological zones.

For example, Côte d'Ivoire needs about 200,000 cattle to meet its annual domestic demand. For an offtake rate of 10% per year, 2 million head of cattle need to be raised on ranches, on land that would not be more easily exploited by farming. With a carrying capacity of 2 hectares per head, and still requiring food supplementation from purchased livestock feed or fodder crops, 4 million hectares (40,000 km²) would have to be secured. This represents more than one-tenth of Côte d'Ivoire and is equivalent to the total area of its protected areas and a quarter of its utilized agricultural area (UAA). This calculation can also be applied to other coastal countries.[4]

Faced with ecological imbalances, it is crucial to gather information to inform actors on the ground as well as public policy. To this end, information and early-warning systems adapted to local contexts can be used. Monitoring forage availability, the condition of water points, hazards (droughts, floods), risks along routes, and price trends – drawing on information networks and the widespread use of mobile phones – enables pastoralists and land managers to make informed decisions.

Aligning public action with climate and social changes while maintaining the necessary level of mobility is a crucial challenge for making pastoral territories resilient and preventing pastoral crises. It is important to:

- regulate without creating blockage,
- supervise cross-border flows,
- improve mobile animal health and education services,
- secure water points and pastoral land,
- prevent fire risks, and
- integrate resilience into emergency and long-term responses.

› The Pastoreg initiative

Coordinated by IRAM (Institute for Research and Application of Development Methods) and IRD (French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development), with support from the Land Tenure and Development Technical Committee (2020–2024) and funded by AFD, the Pastoreg initiative established a policy dialogue framework across three Mediterranean pastoral territories: the Drâa-Tafilalet region in Morocco, the governorates of Medenine and Tataouine in Tunisia, and alpine pastures in Isère, France. Through collective expertise missions bringing together local stakeholders and regional institutions, Pastoreg helped co-develop proposals to make pastoral commons recognized in public policies, enhance collective management of rangelands, and support the adaptation of livestock systems to climate change.

› https://www.foncier-developpement.fr/publication/regulations-pastorales-et-changements-climatiques-regards-croises-entre-territoires-pastoraux-au-maroc-en-tunisie-et-en-france/

› After PEPISAO I, PEPISAO II: support for the Observatory of Mobile Livestock Systems in West Africa and the Sahel

Funded by AFD, the second phase of the "Integrated and Secured Livestock and Pastoralism in West Africa" project (PEPISAO II) **supports the Observatory of Mobile Livestock Systems in West Africa and the Sahel.** This platform, led by ECOWAS, CILSS, WAEMU, and regional producer organizations, serves as a system for collecting, processing, and analyzing data. Its purpose is to produce and disseminate targeted, reliable information to support informed decision-making on pastoralism across political, economic, and social dimensions.

› https://www.praps-cilss.org/content/download/4709/35651/version/1/file/Note+de+Synthe%CC%80se+re%CC%81gionale_Version+Finale_020319+%281%29.pdf

› Project CaSSECS

Coordinated by ISRA and CIRAD within the Pastoralism and Drylands Pole (PPZS), and supported by a consortium of 18 partners, the CaSSECS project (2020–2024) was funded by the European Union's DeSIRA program in six Sahelian countries: Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania.

The data generated on the carbon balance of agro-sylvo-pastoral systems enables governments to better assess the climate impact of livestock systems and to meet their voluntary commitments to reduce carbon footprints under the Paris Agreement. The project is now being extended to East Africa through a CIRAD–ILRI partnership.

› https://www.ppzs.org/projets/termine/cassecs

[4] Thébaud. B. and Corniaux, C., "Ranching in West Africa: issues and challenges", AFL-NCG-CIRAD-PRAPS, February 2019. https://acting-for-life.org/en/technical-note-ranching-in-west-africa/

[5] In particular, it supported the development of a shared vision of the changes in the region's livestock systems and led to the regional strategy initiated by the States and the region. https://www.inter-reseaux.org/wp-content/uploads/PEPISAO_Regional-strategy-for-livestock-_-Final-Version-1-4.pdf

© Imageo-Parry/Francin-2025

3. Recognizing the key role of pastoralism in biodiversity preservation

In the European Union,

84%

of semi-natural grassland and pasture habitats are in "unfavorable" conservation status, and

45%

show a deteriorating trend.

(Biodiversity Information System for Europe)

› https://biodiversity.europa.eu/europes-biodiversity/nature-restoration/habitats-to-be-restored/grasslands

© Gilles Coulon / Acting for Life

By helping to maintain open landscapes and limit erosion, pastoralism creates a mosaic of habitats that support a wide diversity of plant and animal species. Through the seasonal movement of herds and the expertise of herders, pressure on ecosystems generally remains moderate, allowing rangelands to regenerate and supporting plant diversity. In sub-Saharan Africa, pastoral livestock systems have been considered, since the 1990s, to have helped slow the process of desertification[6].

Bushfires are a natural ecological phenomenon in African savannas, but they can have contrasting effects on biodiversity. When they occur at the beginning of the dry season, their low intensity promotes regrowth of grasses, stimulates certain plant species, and helps maintain open landscapes. By contrast, more intense late-season fires lead to greater destruction of woody vegetation, jeopardize the survival of young trees, and increase the risk of human and animal mortality. **Pastoralism plays a positive role: by practicing early and controlled burning, herders limit the accumulation of dry biomass, reduce the risk of late-season fires, and contribute to ecosystem balance.**

[6] "Pastoral Land Tenure in Sahel: jeopardized mobilities" (in French). https://journals.openedition.org/bagf/3049?lang=en

Faced with the increasing pressures from human activities (e.g., agricultural and urban expansion) and the effects of climate change, pastoral spaces play a key role in biodiversity conservation. **The challenge is not to bring strict protection and pastoral practices into conflict,** but to **build integrated management models** based on consultation, adaptation, and detailed knowledge of ecosystems. The effectiveness of nature conservation measures depends largely on the ability of land managers to involve local stakeholders in developing new resource management rules and to recognize the ecological value of traditional knowledge.

Concerted conservation approaches can help reconcile biodiversity preservation and pastoral activities

Rooted in savanna and steppe ecosystems, pastoralism offers an alternative to strictly conservationist and protection-based approaches. **By promoting shared use of space and seasonal mobility, rangeland livestock systems help reconcile biodiversity conservation, productive activities, and the preservation of dignified pastoral livelihoods.** Pastoralism and agropastoralism thus contribute to sustainable trajectories for rural territories and help reconcile biodiversity preservation with the provision of ecological, economic, and social services.

When demand for pastoral products is strong and prices are high, as in the cashmere value chain in Mongolia, herders' economic objectives – or poorly designed public policies, such as subsidies focused on short-term goals without considering the long-term sustainability of the activity – can lead to overgrazing. In similar export-oriented sectors, environmental certification schemes for pastoral products can be effective tools to reduce grazing pressure and promote sustainable rangeland management practices.


© Matar Ndour (AVSF)

Analysis of experiences and innovations in techniques for rehabilitating degraded rangelands at the regional level

Rehabilitating degraded pastoral lands, together with pastoralists and pastoral livestock systems, is therefore a major priority for ensuring West Africa's sovereignty in animal proteins and for safeguarding the sustainability and resilience of the region's ecosystems and people (ECOWAS, 2022). Sustainable land management inventories, carried out with the support of IRAM and CIRAD, tend to prioritize agricultural or forestry practices over pastoral practices. However, the pastoral use of rangelands deserves particular attention given the extent of these areas and the economic activity they generate.

The aim of the research was to produce a collective evaluation of the varied practices promoted by Sahelian countries to improve the effectiveness and impact of actions undertaken in support of sustainable landscape management.

› https://etp5-praps2.org/IMG/pdf/etp5_fiche_technique_-_himo-pastoral-vf.pdf

The "One Limpopo One Health" (OLOH) Project in Mozambique

CIRAD is contributing to biodiversity conservation as part of the OLOH project, financed by AFD and the FFEM and implemented by the Peace Parks Foundation. The initiative supports stakeholders in the buffer zone of Limpopo National Park in Mozambique through participatory approaches. This project is part of an integrated territorial health approach serving local communities. It aims to strengthen the sustainable management of natural resources while promoting coexistence between local people and wildlife.

› https://www.ffem.fr/en/projects/one-limpopo-one-health-addressing-challenges-human-animal-and-ecosystem-health

4. Supporting change in the social and economic relations between sedentary and mobile communities

In the Sahel, mobile pastoralism supplies

90%

of the region's red meat needs and

70%

of its milk.

› https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2024/11/05/why-pastoralism-matters-more-than-ever-for-the-sahel-and-west-africa-future


© Kamikazz

At the farm or rural territory level, when specialization leads to the separation of crop and livestock production, this results in a loss of soil organic fertility and reduced use of crop residues and rotations for feed. Farms become more dependent on industrial inputs (mineral fertilizers, animal feed). Initiating, reintroducing, or strengthening crop–livestock integration, and promoting complementarities between farmers and pastoralists, helps limit these negative externalities and makes production systems more resilient.

In Africa, **complementarities between farmers and pastoralists are the subject of long-standing agreements between sedentary and transhumant communities.** Through "manuring contracts", herds are placed for one night or longer periods on fields, where they restore the organic matter originating from the stubble grazing of crop residues and vegetation from common lands and uncultivated gaps between farmland, within the local area. These complementarities between pastoralists and farmers also include **supplying working cattle, constituting and guarding village herds, exchanging meat and milk for cereals, and providing access to arable land for pastoralists,** etc. When there is no fencing around farming plots, the risk that poorly monitored animals cause damage to unharvested crops is also taken into account, through means such as informing when herds arrive, delimiting rangelands and livestock holding areas, and forming damage-settlement commissions, etc.

These relations are dynamic rather than permanently set. In all the agricultural regions of West and Central Africa, areas that are cultivated (annually or through arboriculture) are spreading due to population growth and mechanization. Hydro-agricultural arrangements are created. The number of head in village herds is increasing, with these needing to undergo small-scale transhumance. Ranches are being formed through privatization of commons, and the organic matter of crop residue is also becoming "privatized". All these trends profoundly alter the spaces and routes available for

transhumant pastoralists, and require an updating of agreements so that new constraints due to land use, climate, and social and economic aspects can be taken into account. All stakeholders must be involved in this updating to achieve better recognition and implementation. This includes farmers and pastoralists in particular, as well as the authorities (elected municipal officials and representatives from the central government). One example of this updating is the land-use plans of the municipalities of the Senegal River Valley.

Pastoral mobility contributes to local economies and creates jobs

Securing mobility requires impartial and evolving legal recognition of pastoral spaces and governance mechanisms in which pastoralists, local authorities, and other users are involved. Organized mobility is based on facilities, routes, water points, and corridors in farming areas that are recognized and legally secure. These pastoral areas are traditionally managed collectively. They determine the routes taken and prevent conflicts, as long as they are rethought with participation by all the area's stakeholders when contexts change.

› AFD has long supported investments and public policies that promote productive, remunerative, and nature-friendly livestock farming

In Chad, AFD supported the relaunch of investments in pastoral hydraulics and the securing of herd mobility. This work helped inform the development of national pastoral hydraulic strategies in Chad, Niger, and Mali. Focus was then put on third-generation pastoral projects such as "Pastor", by integrating the various aspects of pastoral development (in particular actions in human and animal health, development of agropastoral territories, the education of herders' children, and resilience to crises through support for the Chad Pastoral Platform).

Project Accept: Adapting access to agropastoral resources in Chad (2019–2024) was an applied research project that produced knowledge, tested and evaluated innovations, and proposed decision-support tools for collective rangeland management and conflict prevention. It encouraged the production of livestock feed, the development of fodder crops (such as maralfalfa) and improved access to water. It was funded by the European Union DeSIRA fund.

› http://www.plateforme-pastorale-tchad.org/

› Supporting livestock mobility to promote access to pastoral resources and markets

Project Pamobarma (2018–2022) was implemented by Acting for Life, in a consortium with 22 local partners (pastoralist, civil society, and intermunicipal organizations). It covered nine West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Togo. With funding from AFD and the European Union, Pamobarma secured more than 2,000 km of cattle trails and developed cross-border pastoral and commercial infrastructure. By strengthening consultation and management between local authorities and pastoral organizations, this project showed that appropriate policies can improve agropastoralist resilience and the economic performance of mobile livestock systems.

© Imagéo-Parry/Francin-2025

5. Strengthening social cohesion in pastoralist areas to prevent conflicts effectively

Only

2%

of total violence in Africa is directly related to conflicts between farmers and herders.

(Krätli, S and Toulmin, C, 2020, Farmer-herder conflict in sub-Saharan Africa ? IIED, London. ; p7)

› https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2021-01/10208IIED.pdf

In West and Central Africa, increased insecurity is becoming a major constraint for the agropastoral world. **This insecurity affects both farmers and pastoralists.** In the face of violence, **several million people have been forced to leave their villages** to move to secondary cities, capitals, or neighboring countries, losing access to all or part of their capital (i.e., land and animals). Those who have remained are subject to new local governance structures that severely impede their daily life and economic activities. Whether they have been displaced or not, they all face **multifaceted violence** (theft of livestock, kidnappings, targeted or mass murders) that weakens agricultural production systems and jeopardizes the very existence of pastoralism.

Over the past decade, herders have faced **increasing stigmatization** in institutional and political discourse, as well as at the local level. This is due to the very small proportion who have joined armed groups, whether through radicalization or in search of income, in response to **a political economy that has historically disadvantaged herders and overlooked their rights.** This stigmatization **fuels a vicious circle, exacerbating conflicts over access to resources, and undermining social cohesion.** Restoring a more equitable political economy would help address the root causes of farmer-pastoralist conflicts, reducing the ability of political actors of all kinds, as well as armed groups, to exploit these tensions and recruit. Preventing conflicts over access to resources is thus a major challenge for strengthening social cohesion in these territories.

Conflict prevention is based on **facilitation, dialogue, mediation and training tools.** The objective is to change individual and collective representations to avoid tensions between different communities due to misunderstandings, negative perceptions, recurring accusations, and negative narratives associated with pastoralism. These tools offer a wide range of solutions, including the establishment of robust social agreements that are negotiated, adaptable, and sustainable, clarifying rights and responsibilities and organizing dispute resolution mechanisms.

Changing perceptions helps improve social cohesion in rural areas

These processes can then be complemented by territorial planning tools to support the development of key infrastructure.

These conflict-sensitive approaches aim to **strengthen connections between communities** to promote mutual understanding. In this regard, the participation of young people and women is essential, as they are key drivers of transformation and the sustainability of pastoral and agropastoral systems. Their involvement fosters innovation, knowledge transfer, and social cohesion.

Project "I Yéké Oko" in the Central African Republic

The AFD-funded *I Yéké Oko* project was implemented from 2019 to 2023 in Mambéré-Kadéi Prefecture, in the west of the Central African Republic, by a consortium composed of the French Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Action Against Hunger, Care, and IRAM. The project supported the gradual return of Central African herders who had taken refuge in Cameroon since the 2014 crisis. Agropastoral space management committees were created to prevent tensions with farmers. This enabled decentralized mediation of disputes and more equitable assessment of farmland damage, thereby strengthening intercommunity dialogue and reducing frustrations between stakeholders.

› https://www.iram-fr.org/ouverturepdf.php?file=capitalisation-iyo-iram-1692713165.pdf

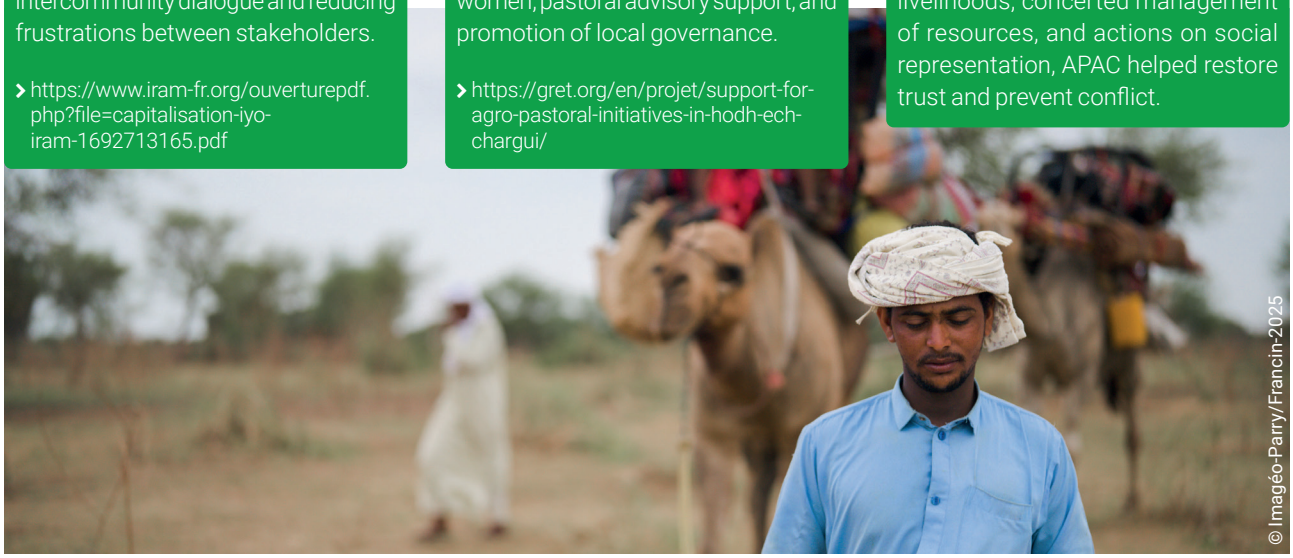
Project Khaïma in Mauritania

Project Khaïma (2023–2028), funded by the G5 Sahel Facility, with support from AFD, is being implemented by a consortium formed by the French non-profit organization GRET and two Mauritanian organizations, Ecodev and Tenmiya. It takes place in the Timbedra and Djigueni *moughataa* (departments) of the Hodh Ech Chargui region, which has hosted more than 90,000 displaced, repatriated, or returned people following the outbreak of conflict in Mali in 2012. The project seeks to strengthen social cohesion and prevent tensions through a combination of agropastoral infrastructure, participatory social engineering, vocational training for young people and women, pastoral advisory support, and promotion of local governance.

› https://gret.org/en/projet/support-for-agro-pastoral-initiatives-in-hodh-ech-chargui/

Rebuilding social cohesion between agricultural and pastoral communities in insecure contexts: Project APAC in West Africa

Project APAC (2024–2025) was funded by the Crisis and Support Centre of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and implemented by Acting for Life and its local partners in several cross-border areas of Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Against a backdrop of pastoral mobility shifting more heavily to coastal countries due to the Sahel crisis, the project aimed to reduce tensions between mobile herders and host farming communities. By combining intercommunity dialogue, support for livelihoods, concerted management of resources, and actions on social representation, APAC helped restore trust and prevent conflict.



© Imagéo-Parry/Francin-2025

6. Giving rangelands and pastoralists their rightful place in public policy and investment


© Julie Delzescaux (AVSF)

In 2023, the share of livestock in gross agricultural production represented nearly

80% in Mongolia

48% in Chad

41% in Peru

(FAOSTAT)

Pastoral policies are key components of food and nutrition security, food sovereignty, trade balance, and national and subregional cohesion policies.

Pastoralism is crucial for food systems and must be supported by coordinated policies

Public policies aimed at maximizing the benefits of pastoral mobility must take into account different territorial scales and their multisectoral dimensions. An approach that links local, national and regional levels of governance is crucial. **Trade, land, health, and environmental policy measures must be included.** Various stakeholders (pastoralists, farmers, elected officials, and civil servants) must be involved in decision-making processes, from design to implementation.

To this end, the following should be considered:

- **Revision of legal frameworks** (land policies, laws and pastoral codes) dealing with land rights and pastoral rights, land use in municipalities, securing commons, routes and timetables for herd movement, fees to be paid, etc.
- **The inclusion of pastoralists at all levels of pastoral policy,** through the involvement of their professional organizations in local, national, and subregional bodies, etc.
- **Financing the infrastructure required to implement regulatory frameworks,** support livestock mobility, and facilitate the marketing of animals (including the marking of routes and grazing areas, adequate water points – from ponds to boreholes – sorting and road-loading facilities for livestock, and livestock markets), while taking into account their location, design, management, and maintenance.
- **Technical and economic services** provided to pastoralists with the aim of improving their income (e.g., breeding advice, genetic improvements, veterinary advice including by community animal health auxiliaries, information and advice on markets and routes, etc.), and access to **basic services for families** such as healthcare and education, including boarding schools.
- **Measures at national and subregional borders:** cross-border agreements, movement of herds within regional areas.
- **Trade policies and taxation** on animal products to promote local sectors and protect them from the dumping of products and by-products from global markets (e.g., meat and skimmed milk powder re-fattened with vegetable fats).

› The Regional Strategy for Livestock Development and the Nouakchott+10 Forum

Led by the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), ECOWAS, and WAEMU, with support from AFD, the World Bank, the Land Tenure and Development Technical Committee, and several other donors, the Nouakchott+10 Forum was held in November 2024, bringing together more than 400 participants, including 15 ministers and around 100 leaders of pastoral organizations. Discussions were strongly informed by regional organizations (RBM, APESS, and ROPPA), which had previously conducted extensive consultations with their members in eight countries and at the regional level to consolidate their analyses and proposals.

The Nouakchott+10 declaration commits States and various stakeholders to promoting concerted territorial governance of resources, securing pastoral mobility, enhancing crop-livestock complementarities, and implementing the Regional Strategy for the Development of Livestock and the Security of Pastoral Systems in West Africa adopted in 2024. Operational support is provided by PEPISAO II.

› https://www.foncier-developpement.fr/publication/webdocumentaire-nouakchott10-une-decennie-daction-pour-les-communautes-pastorales

› Project "Nomads for Life" in Mongolia

The "Nomads for Life" program (2026–2030) is financed by the FFEM and implemented by AVSF and CIRAD. Its aim is to establish concerted territorial management of pastureland in Mongolia. The program involves drawing up territorial action plans co-developed with all local stakeholders including farmers and their organizations as well as public and industrial authorities. These action plans determine collective actions relating to the monitoring of the state of pastureland, the development of livestock services, the regulation of herds and uses, as well as improvement of market access.

› https://www.avsf.org/en/pays-action/mongolia/

The Working Group "Pastoralist Economy"
Since 2023, French organizations engaged in the countries of the South have come together within the Working Group "Pastoralist Economy". This group comprises AFL, AVSF, CIRAD, GRET, Inter-réseaux Développement Rural, and IRAM. Its aim is to share experiences and circulate information in order to strengthen links between actors, and to participate in the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP 2026). In particular, the Working Group supports the involvement of pastoralists' organizations and their national and regional partners.

AFD GROUPE

AFD Group finances and drives the transition to a fairer, safer and more resilient world, working with its partners to support communities all over the world. Drawing on the complementary strengths of its entities – Agence Française de Développement for public financing, Proparco for responsible private investment, and Expertise France for technical expertise – the Group is ideally positioned to meet all sustainable development challenges. Working in over 160 countries, including France's Overseas Territories and Departments, the Group adapts its operations to the realities on the ground, actively supporting local initiatives. With over 4,000 projects, whose objectives are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AFD Group works on behalf of the French people, together with all stakeholders committed to economic development and the preservation of common goods: climate, biodiversity, peace, gender equality and global health. Working by your side, toward a world in common.

cirad
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

CIRAD is the French agricultural research and international cooperation organization working for the sustainable development of tropical and Mediterranean regions. It works with its partners to build knowledge and solutions for resilient farming systems in a more sustainable, inclusive world. It mobilizes science, innovation, and training to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Its expertise supports the entire range of stakeholders, from producers to public policymakers, to foster biodiversity protection, agroecological transitions, food system sustainability, health (of plants, animals and ecosystems), sustainable development of rural territories, and their resilience to climate change. CIRAD works in some 50 countries on every continent, thanks to the expertise of its 1,800 staff members, including 1,240 scientists, backed by a global network of some 200 partners. It also supports French science diplomacy operations.

The sources for this document can be found via this QR code:

www.afd.fr
Twitter: @AFD_France – Facebook: AFDOfficiel – Instagram: afd_france
5, rue Roland-Barthes – 75598 Paris Cedex 12 – France
Tel.: +33 1 53 44 31 31

AFD / March 2026 / © Bathyscaphe Agency/Cover photo © Raphaël Belmin