SUMMARY REPORT

Rangeland Stewardship Council (RSC) Roundtable Consultations

London, 21st March 2024

INTRODUCTION

The RSC Roundtable Consultation in London is supported by the STELARR (Sustainable Investments for Large-Scale Rangeland Restoration) Project, an initiative funded by GEF (Global Environment Facility), implemented by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), and executed by ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute), with support from the Alliance Biodiversity International & CIAT, CIFOR-ICRAF and ICARDA. A focus of this consultation is to foster private sector engagement and investment in rangeland initiatives.

This report provides a summary of the discussions and outcomes of the consultation, which will support efforts in establishing a global rangeland standard that aligns with land degradation neutrality targets and broader environmental goals.

A. Objectives:

The primary objectives of the RSC Roundtable Consultations are:

1. **Gauge Understanding:** To gauge the level of understanding among private sector sector stakeholders regarding rangeland stewardship and its significance in the natural fibres industry.

2. **Identify Priorities:** To identify the priorities, challenges, and recommendations concerning rangeland stewardship, regenerative agriculture, animal welfare, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and commodity standards.

3. **Inform Global Standards:** To gather information and insights that will contribute to the development of a global standard for rangelands that promotes sustainable practices and stewardship.

B. Scope:

The consultations focused on the following key topics:

1. **Rangeland Stewardship**: Discussions explored the significance of rangeland stewardship in the natural fibres sector, including perceptions of this relationship, potential incentives and strategies in adopting regenerative agriculture principles, as well as the challenges associated with implementing these practices effectively.

2. **Animal Welfare**: Participants exchanged views on ethical guidelines, challenges in maintaining high standards across the supply chain, and mechanisms for transparency and accountability in animal welfare practices

3. **Commodity Standards**: Participants assessed existing sustainability standards, determined types of commodities that are sourced from rangelands, identified primary stakeholders in the value chain, and explored the guiding principles for a global rangeland standard.

4. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning**: The consultations addressed the challenges in monitoring sustainability and the strategies for navigating these challenges effectively. Participants explored tools and technologies aimed at supporting the monitoring and evaluation of sustainable natural fibres.

C. Approach:

Prior to the breakout sessions, a series of presentations were delivered to provide participants with an overview of the Rangeland Stewardship Council, the importance of establishing a rangeland standard, and the purpose of the consultations. These presentations aimed to contextualise the discussions and provide participants with a common understanding of the topics under consideration.

Participants in the RSC consultations were divided into four separate tables, with each table dedicated to one of the key topics mentioned above.

Each table consisted of a moderator who facilitated discussions using a set of outlined questions to initiate conversations and ensure all relevant points were addressed. Additionally, there was a designated notetaker responsible for transcribing discussions and collating all information generated during the session.

To encourage active participation and capture diverse perspectives, participants were encouraged to write down their thoughts regarding specific questions on post-it notes. These post-its were then collected by the notetaker for later reference and inclusion in the summary report.

At the end of the allotted discussion time, one representative from each table presented the findings that emerged from the discussions at their respective tables. This facilitated the synthesis of insights and ensured that key points from each discussion were shared with the wider group.

D. Consultation Findings:

1. Rangeland Stewardship Roundtable

Questions:

Can you share your understanding of rangeland stewardship and its relevance to the natural fibres sector?

How does your organisation currently perceive the relationship between rangeland management and the production of natural fibres?

Are there any specific incentives or support mechanisms that would encourage your organisation to invest in rangeland stewardship initiatives for natural fibre production?

How do you envision communicating the value proposition of rangeland stewardship to your stakeholders, including customers, investors, and employees?

Key Findings:

Challenges in Rangeland Stewardship
One of the primary challenges identified in the rangeland stewardship consultation session is to define rangelands comprehensively and establish clear accountability for addressing land degradation across diverse ecosystems. This involves delineating boundaries, understanding ecological characteristics, and assigning responsibility among stakeholders. Harmonising geological categorisation is necessary for effective collaboration. Achieving these goals requires interdisciplinary collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and robust governance frameworks to enhance resilience and sustainability.

Establishing Incentive Structures for Accountability
A critical priority is establishing robust incentive structures to ensure stakeholder accountability. This entails exploring carbon credits schemes and adopting successful practices from other sectors in farmland management to effectively incentivise desired behaviours. Action steps include evaluating carbon credits feasibility, adapting successful incentive models (e.g. subsidies, tax breaks, certification programmes), developing tailored monitoring systems, and fostering partnerships for capacity building.

Securing Private Sector Commitment to Rangeland Sustainability
Securing private sector commitment to rangeland health and sustainability is crucial for long-term ecosystem preservation and community well-being. However, the challenge lies in bridging the gap between understanding and action within the private sector. While there is acknowledgment from the sustainability team regarding the significance of rangeland health, there is a notable disparity in translating this understanding into actionable commitments from commercial stakeholders. Achieving this balance requires collaborative efforts and incentivising responsible practices through education, advocacy, and supportive policies.

2. Animal Welfare Roundtable

Questions:

In what ways do consumer attitudes and preferences regarding animal welfare influence your company's business strategies, product development, and potential

economic benefits or competitive advantages in investing in higher standards of animal welfare in natural fibre production?

How does your organisation define, prioritise, and implement ethical guidelines or principles to address animal welfare concerns within the natural fibre industry?

Key Findings:

Consumer Sentiment and Brand Reputation
- *Consumer sentiment, particularly towards luxury brands, drives significant organisational changes, underscoring the importance of addressing animal welfare concerns.*
- *Brands are particularly focused on addressing animal welfare concerns within the realm of natural fibres and strive to stay ahead of the curve in addressing these issues.*
- *Luxury brands frequently bear the brunt of criticism regarding animal welfare, highlighting the necessity to address these concerns consistently.*
- *Consumers frequently expect brands to already uphold proper animal welfare practices.*
- *The greater the brand's reputation, the higher the expectation from consumers regarding ethical practices, particularly in animal welfare.*
- *Generation Z are more mindful of what they consume but have greater financial constraints. Conversely, older generations typically have greater resources but show less concern.*
- *Consumers do not always take notice of product certifications unless brought to their attention by organisations like PETA.*
- *Market research frequently reveals that customers prioritise fine, high-quality cashmere first, with sustainability and animal welfare considerations following behind.*
- *Encouraging consumers can be accomplished through incentives, such as implementing an adopt-an-animal program.*

Certification and Standards
- *Although only a small portion of companies actively seek certifications, it's crucial for brands to be prepared to respond to enquiries regarding certification.*
- *There's a common belief that brands pursue certification primarily for communication and consumer perception purposes.*
- *Currently, animal fibre certifications are not actively sought after, at least not to a significant extent.*

Animal Welfare and Traceability
- *Animal welfare concerns tend to receive greater attention than issues related to human welfare or environmental welfare, possibly because of the relatability factor—livestock can be easily connected to our own pets.*

- *Although PETA may not endorse natural animal fibres, they remain vigilant in identifying and raising awareness about relevant animal welfare issues that require attention.*
- *Ensuring traceability of both the origin and the welfare standards of animals involved in fibre production is indispensable for maintaining consumer trust and ethical accountability.*
- *As the cotton industry has expanded, BCI traceability has gained increased recognition.*
- *Digital passports for traceability, including the use of microchips on product labels to indicate material origins and animal welfare practices, are growing in popularity.*

3. Commodity Standards Roundtable

Questions:

What Standards already exist for rangelands commodities?
What sorts of commodities do rangelands produce?
Who are the major stakeholders in commodity value chains?
What principles should a commodity standard cover?

Key Findings:

Existing Standards for Rangelands Commodities
- *Responsible Wool Standard (RWS)*
- *Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) for cashmere*
- *Good Cashmere Standard (GCS)*
- *Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS)*
- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for endangered species*
- *Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) guidelines for animal welfare*
- *Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS)*
- *Leather Working Group (LWG) for leather*
- *Soil Association standards for farming*
- *Red Tractor standards for meat production*

Types of Rangelands Commodities
- *Energy*
- *Biodiversity credits*
- *Carbon credits*
- *Seed crops*
- *Minerals and mining products*
- *Dairy products*
- *Recreational and tourism services*

- *Animal fibres such as cashmere, mohair, alpaca, and wool*
- *Water resources*
- *Secondary products facilitating commodity realisation*
- *Petroleum and oil derivatives*
- *Timber and forestry products*
- *Various grasses, herbs, and canopy resources*

Major Stakeholders in Commodity Value Chains
- *Producers and herders*
- *Processors and manufacturers*
- *Consumers*
- *Brands, retailers*
- *Advertisers*
- *Traders and promoters*
- *Dairy processors*
- *Waste recyclers and logistics providers*
- *Repair and maintenance services*
- *Chemical manufacturers*
- *Indigenous land users*
- *Governments and local authorities*
- *Technology providers*
- *Secondary producers providing accessories*

Principles for Commodity Standards
- *Gender equality*
- *Animal welfare*
- *Product quality standards*
- *Sustainable transportation practices*
- *Decent work and pay*
- *Mitigation of climate change impacts*
- *Consideration of product life cycle length*
- *Support for philanthropic efforts*
- *Education initiatives*
- *Ethical slaughtering practices*
- *Reduction of fast fashion consumption*
- *Legal compliance and adherence to regulations*
- *Carbon footprint reduction and carbon credit programs*
- *Transparency and prevention of fraud in the supply chain*
- *Establishment of robust chain of custody protocols*
- *Minimisation of energy waste*
- *Protection of environmental resources such as water, biodiversity, and wildlife*
- *Traceability of products from source to consumer*
- *Compliance with international and local laws and regulations*
- *Outreach programmes for raising awareness*
- *Generation of foreign currency through sustainable practices*

4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Questions:

In your experience, what are the main challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating sustainability in the natural fibres sector, and how do you navigate them?

Can you discuss any tools or technologies that you find helpful in supporting monitoring and evaluation activities related to sustainable natural fibres?

Key Findings:

Challenges in Monitoring Sustainability

- *One major issue is the varying interpretations of sustainability terminology across regions, countries, and languages. This highlights the crucial need for standardisation to ensure everyone in the supply chain understands these terms consistently.*
- *Volume reconciliation faces hurdles due to numerous variables and complexities arising from blending different fibres.*
- *Maintaining compliance control often requires commitment to a single supply chain.*
- *Different standards lead to similar yet slightly different requirements, requiring cross-border implementation to preserve the original intent.*
- *Supplier resistance arises from weighing benefits against requirements.*
- *Underutilisation of available tools is often due to a lack of awareness and/or commitment.*
- *Tools or technologies supporting monitoring and evaluation activities for sustainable natural fibres are scarce.*

Remediations for Sustainability Challenges

- *Establish a unified global standard to internationalise sustainability requirements, claims, and monitoring processes. This entails providing step-by-step, transparent guidance on meeting standards, including clear labelling, measurable MEL metrics, and understanding processes, and maintaining detailed records to track sustainability efforts.*
- *Utilise visual aids like flowcharts to help processors understand fibre journey and inputs. Educate the supply chain on tool usage and outcome interpretation for better implementation.*
- *Invest time and commitment in producing verifiable data. Ensure a sufficient level of detail, including Transaction Certificates (TCs), to offer a comprehensive overview of purchased fibres.*
- *Implement third-party measurement of compliance to build and sustain confidence in sustainability efforts.*

Recommendations for Monitoring Sustainability
- *Establish a recognised management system for efficient data collection and analysis.*
- *Implement supply chain visibility mapping.*
- *Conduct volume reconciliation and include product style references on Transaction Certificates (TCs).*
- *Provide step-by-step guidance and metric tools while maintaining consistency in labelling to enhance trust.*

CONCLUSION

The RSC Roundtable Consultations served as a platform for fostering dialogue and collaboration among private sector stakeholders in the natural fibres industry. Through robust discussions on rangeland stewardship, animal welfare, commodity standards, and monitoring sustainability, participants identified key challenges, recognised priorities, and proposed actionable recommendations.

These efforts aim to support the development of a comprehensive rangeland standard that promotes rangeland restoration and broader environmental objectives.