



RSC Standard V0.1

Draft Normative Document, March 2026

Note: The RSC Standard was previously referred to as the Global Rangelands Standard (GRS) and has been renamed to avoid confusion with other uses of the acronym.

Forward

Rangelands cover more than half of the world's terrestrial surface and support the livelihoods, cultures, and food security of hundreds of millions of people. They are among the planet's most diverse and dynamic landscapes, shaped by variability, mobility and long-standing relationships between people, livestock and ecosystems. Rangelands also play a critical role in biodiversity conservation, climate regulation and the stewardship of shared natural resources.

Despite their global importance, rangelands are often poorly reflected in sustainability standards and certification systems, which have tended to prioritise sedentary, privately managed agricultural models. As a result, many pastoral and rangeland systems - particularly communal, customary, mobile and state-governed systems - remain underserved or excluded from existing approaches.

The Rangeland Stewardship Council (RSC) has developed the RSC Standard (previously the Global Rangelands Standard, GRS) to address this gap. It provides a comprehensive framework for good rangeland stewardship that is applicable across diverse ecological, social and governance contexts, while remaining grounded in the realities of pastoral life. It is intended not only as a basis for certification, but as a broader framework to guide, align and strengthen efforts to support rangeland stewardship globally.

Table of Contents

- Foreword
- How to Use This Standard
- Structure of the Standard
- Development Process and Consultation Scope
- Alignment with Global Frameworks
- Design Rationale: A Pastoral Systems Framing

1. Purpose of the RSC Standard

- 1.1 Intended Sustainability Outcomes
- 1.2 Continuous Improvement Logic
- 1.3 Role of the Standard in Rangeland Landscapes
- 1.4 Relationship to Other Standards and Benchmarking Intent

2. Scope of the RSC Standard

- 2.1 Introductory Context
- 2.2 Geographic Scope
- 2.3 Production Scope
- 2.4 Sustainability Scope
- 2.5 Activities Included and Excluded
 - 2.5.1 Included Activities
 - 2.5.2 Excluded Activities
- 2.6 Applicability to Different Rangeland Systems

3. Terms and Definitions

4. Application Pathways: Certification Model

- 4.1 Overview of Certification Model
- 4.2 Certificate Holder
- 4.3 Management Unit
- 4.4 Operational Unit
- 4.5 Group Certification
- 4.6 Relationship to Governance and Tenure Contexts
- 4.7 Applicability Across Rangeland Contexts

5. Principles, Themes and Requirements

Principle 1: Effective Management

- Theme 1.1 Administration & Coordination
- Theme 1.2 Record Keeping and Documentation
- Theme 1.3 Understanding & Learning
- Theme 1.4 Continual Improvement
- Theme 1.5 Collaborative Rangeland Management

Principle 2: Responsible Land Governance and Tenure

- Theme 2.1 Clear and Legitimate Land and Resource Use Rights
- Theme 2.2 Inclusive and Participatory Land Use Planning
- Theme 2.3 Conflict Resolution and Grievance Mechanisms
- Theme 2.4 Equitable Access and Participation
- Theme 2.5 Transparency & External Pressures
- Theme 2.6 Integration with National & Regional Frameworks

Principle 3: Regenerative Management & Ecosystem Health

- Theme 3.1 Adaptive Grazing Practices
- Theme 3.2 Conservation of Natural Habitats and Biodiversity
- Theme 3.3 Soil, Water and Plant Communities
- Theme 3.4 Pollution Prevention & Waste Management

Principle 4: Resilient Livelihoods

- Theme 4.1 Risk Awareness and Planning
- Theme 4.2 Responsible Diversification

Principle 5: Rights, Equity & Inclusion

- Theme 5.1 Empowered Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities
- Theme 5.2 Inclusive Participation, Gender Equity & Non-Discrimination
- Theme 5.3 Fair Work & Labour Rights
- Theme 5.4 Safe Working & Living Conditions
- Theme 5.5 Child Rights & Pastoral Learning

Principle 6: Animal Welfare (*under development*)

Annex: Guidance on Tiers under Principle 5

How to Use This Standard

The RSC Standard is designed as a globally applicable framework for defining, supporting and recognising responsible rangeland stewardship across diverse ecological, social and governance contexts.

The Standard may be applied in multiple ways, depending on context and stakeholder needs. These include:

- as a **reference framework** to define good rangeland stewardship;
- as a **guidance tool** to support improved management practices and learning;
- as a **benchmarking framework** to align, compare or strengthen existing standards, programmes or initiatives;
- as a **basis for monitoring, reporting or investment frameworks**, including landscape initiatives or sustainability-linked finance; and
- as a **foundation for independent verification or certification systems**, where appropriate.

Certification is therefore one potential application of the Standard, but not its sole purpose.

This document sets out the **normative requirements** of the Standard, which define the expectations for responsible stewardship regardless of how the Standard is applied. Additional guidance and tools may support interpretation and implementation across different use cases.

Structure of the Standard

The RSC Standard is organised into three interconnected levels:

- **Principles**, which define the overarching objectives and outcomes for responsible rangeland stewardship;
- **Themes**, which group related areas of management, governance or practice under each Principle; and
- **Requirements**, which set out the specific expectations used to assess alignment with the Standard (referred to as “conformity” in certification contexts).

Requirements are divided into minimum requirements, which define the baseline expectations for good stewardship (and must be met where the Standard is applied within certification systems), and improvement requirements, which describe pathways for strengthening practices and outcomes over time. Requirements define *what must be demonstrated*, while allowing flexibility in *how* they are met across different ecological, social and governance contexts.

Guidance is provided for each theme in the Standard to support consistent interpretation and proportionate implementation across the wide diversity of rangeland systems globally. This guidance – which is non-normative - is intended to support consistent and credible assessment across different application contexts, including by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) in certification systems, while also offering clarity to Certificate Holders. It explains the intent of requirements, clarifies how they may be applied in different governance, tenure, scale and mobility contexts, and provides illustrative examples of appropriate approaches or forms of evidence. Guidance is primarily designed to support consistent interpretation in assessment contexts, including but not limited to certification.

More detailed country-level guidance will be developed to support implementation of the Standard in future field-level pilots. Building upon the guidance included in the Standard, the country-level guidance will provide a more comprehensive and context-specific articulation of how requirements may be interpreted and applied within national legal, institutional, ecological and cultural contexts, without altering the normative requirements of the Standard.

Supporting guidance will also be developed to assist rangeland users in the preparation and implementation of Rangeland Management Plans (RMPs), ensuring they are practical, context-appropriate and aligned with the intent of the Standard.

Development Process and Consultation Scope

The RSC Standard has been developed through a multi-stage, iterative process led by the Rangeland Stewardship Council, informed by scientific evidence, practitioner experience and stakeholder input.

Draft 0.1 of the Standard is now released for a targeted phase of consultation to:

- test the clarity, relevance, and feasibility of the proposed principles and requirements;
- assess applicability across different rangeland governance and tenure contexts;
- identify gaps, unintended consequences or areas requiring further refinement; and
- gather input to inform subsequent revisions.

Feedback received during this consultation will be reviewed and considered through RSC's governance processes and used to strengthen future drafts of the Standard.

Alignment with Global Frameworks

The RSC Standard is aligned with, and informed by, internationally recognised frameworks and commitments related to sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, land governance, animal welfare and human rights.

In particular, the Standard contributes to the objectives of:

- the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), including Land Degradation Neutrality;
- FAO frameworks and guidance on pastoralism and sustainable rangeland management;
- the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions;
- the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP);
- the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs);
- internationally recognised animal welfare frameworks, including the Five Domains model.

This alignment is intended to support coherence with international policy goals, facilitate benchmarking with other sustainability standards, and reinforce the credibility of the Standard as a globally applicable framework for rangeland stewardship.

Design Rationale: A Pastoral Systems Framing

The RSC Standard is intentionally grounded in a pastoral system framing, reflecting the ecological characteristics of rangelands while accommodating both mobile and sedentary production systems. This framing is based on how rangelands function as landscapes, rather than on the identity, governance arrangements, or legal status of those who manage them.

Rangelands are shaped by high spatial and temporal variability in forage availability, strong climatic influence on productivity, large spatial extents, and periodic disturbance. Under these conditions, extensive and adaptive approaches to livestock management are well suited, responding to environmental signals and landscape dynamics over time rather than relying on fixed or highly controlled production models.

Pastoralism, understood as an adaptive land-use system based on extensive grazing, has evolved in response to these conditions and provides a coherent functional logic for sustainable rangeland stewardship. Pastoralism is one form of farming adapted to rangeland environments, and rangeland users may identify in diverse and overlapping ways - as pastoralists, nomads, herders, farmers, producers, or through locally specific terms - often combining multiple roles within a single livelihood system.

Many sedentary or privately managed rangeland systems operate according to pastoral principles in practice, even where mobility is limited or systems are not described as pastoralist. By contrast, sustainability standards developed primarily around sedentary, farm-based assumptions often struggle to accommodate the variability, scale, shared resources, and adaptive decision-making that are central to rangeland systems.

Across this diversity of identities and production systems, all rangeland users share a common role as stewards of the land – an understanding at the core of the RSC’s mission and the purpose of the RSC Standard.

1. Purpose of the RSC Standard

1.1 Intended Sustainability Outcomes

The RSC Standard is intended to function as a **shared global reference framework for rangeland stewardship**, capable of supporting multiple application pathways, including but not limited to certification.

The purpose of the RSC Standard is to define a credible, globally applicable framework for sustainable rangeland stewardship. This purpose is operationalised through a structured set of Principles, Themes and Requirements that together define expected outcomes and pathways for implementation across diverse rangeland systems. The Rangeland Management Plan (RMP) is a central tool for applying the Standard across multiple pathways, including but not limited to certification.

The Standard seeks to support outcomes including:

- **Ecologically functional rangelands**, characterised by healthy soils, vegetation, and biodiversity, and resilience to climatic variability and disturbance;
- **Sustainable and adaptive land use practices** that reflect the inherent variability, mobility, and scale of rangeland systems;
- **Secure and equitable livelihoods**, including respect for human rights, decent working conditions, cultural values, and traditional knowledge systems;
- **Responsible animal husbandry and welfare**, recognising the central role of livestock and working animals in rangeland systems; and
- **Effective governance and management**, including transparency, participation, and continuous improvement in decision-making and stewardship.

The Standard emphasises outcomes and management systems rather than prescriptive practices, recognising that effective rangeland stewardship may be achieved through different pathways depending on ecological, social, governance and application contexts.

1.2 Continuous Improvement Logic

The Standard is designed to support continual improvement while recognising the realities of rangeland systems, including climatic variability, long ecological timeframes, governance constraints and external pressures.

Where the Standard is applied within certification systems, continuous or linear improvement is not required at each assessment cycle. Improvement may be demonstrated through learning, adaptation, collaboration, or maintenance of effective practices, depending on context. The absence of short- or medium-term biophysical change does not preclude certification where responsible stewardship and informed decision-making are evident.

1.3 Role of the Standard in Rangeland Landscapes

The RSC Standard is intended to serve as a **global benchmark for responsible rangeland stewardship**, providing a comprehensive and credible framework that can be applied across diverse rangeland systems and through multiple implementation pathways.

These pathways may include certification, but also extend to benchmarking, policy alignment, investment frameworks, landscape initiatives, and other verification or recognition approaches.

The Standard is designed to:

- address sustainability issues that are distinctive to rangelands and pastoral systems, including scale, mobility, shared resources, and governance complexity;
- provide a coherent framework that integrates environmental, social, economic, governance, and animal welfare considerations within a single standard; and
- enable certification, benchmarking, and alignment across rangeland-based production systems that are not adequately served by existing agricultural or land-use standards.

By articulating a clear set of principles and requirements grounded in rangeland realities, the Standard aims to improve consistency, credibility and comparability in how sustainability is defined and assessed in rangeland contexts.

1.4 Relationship to Other Standards and Benchmarking Intent

The RSC Standard is designed to operate as a standalone standard, capable of being applied independently of other certification schemes. At the same time, the Standard is explicitly intended to support benchmarking and equivalence assessments with other relevant sustainability standards and initiatives operating in rangeland landscapes.

Through benchmarking:

- existing standards may demonstrate alignment with the principles and requirements defined by the Standard;
- gaps or strengths in coverage of rangeland-specific sustainability issues can be identified; and
- users may reduce duplication while maintaining credibility and rigour.

Following the finalisation of the Standard, RSC will develop a benchmarking framework against which other standards and initiatives may be assessed for relevance and equivalence in rangeland contexts.

2. Scope of the RSC Standard

2.1 Introductory Context

For the purposes of this Standard, rangelands are extensive landscapes dominated by natural or semi-natural vegetation, including grasslands, savannas, shrublands, deserts, tundra, alpine areas and open woodlands where ecological processes are shaped primarily by climate variability, grazing, fire and other natural disturbances. Rangelands are typically managed through low-input systems and support livestock grazing, pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods, wildlife habitat and a range of ecosystem services. They are characterised by spatial and temporal variability, large scales and diverse governance and tenure arrangements, including private, communal, customary and state-managed systems.

2.2 Geographic Scope

The RSC Standard is global in scope. It is intended to be applicable in all geographic regions where rangelands occur, including arid, semi-arid, dry sub-humid, alpine, sub-polar, tropical, and temperate rangeland ecosystems.

The Standard is designed to be applicable across diverse climatic, ecological, socio-economic, and institutional contexts, recognising that rangelands occur across multiple continents and jurisdictions and are subject to varying environmental conditions and governance arrangements.

2.3 Production Scope

The Standard applies to all rangeland-based livestock production systems, defined as systems that rely primarily on natural or semi-natural rangelands for grazing and forage.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- pastoral, agropastoral, and ranching systems;
- sedentary, transhumant, and nomadic livestock systems;
- mixed livestock systems operating predominantly on rangelands; and
- rangeland-based systems supplying fibre, meat, milk, hides, or other livestock-derived products.

The Standard applies irrespective of scale, intensity, ownership structure, or degree of market integration, provided that rangelands constitute a core component of the production system.

2.4 Sustainability Scope

The RSC Standard addresses sustainability in a comprehensive and integrated manner, encompassing the following dimensions:

- **Environmental sustainability**, including ecosystem health, soil function, vegetation dynamics, biodiversity, and landscape resilience;
- **Social sustainability**, including human rights, labour conditions, wellbeing, cultural values, and traditional knowledge;
- **Economic sustainability**, including livelihoods, risk management, productivity, and long-term viability of rangeland-based systems;
- **Governance**, including land tenure realities, decision-making processes, participation, transparency, and accountability; and
- **Animal welfare**, recognising the central role of livestock and working animals in rangeland systems and the importance of humane and responsible care.

These dimensions are addressed collectively through the principles, themes and requirements of the Standard.

2.5 Activities Included and Excluded

2.5.1 Included Activities

The Standard applies to activities directly related to the management and stewardship of rangelands and rangeland-based livestock systems, including:

- grazing and livestock husbandry practices;
- rangeland management, maintenance, and restoration activities;
- water access and management relevant to livestock and ecosystems;

- animal handling, health, and welfare practices within the production system;
- governance, planning, monitoring, and management activities associated with rangeland use; and
- activities undertaken to support adaptive management and continuous improvement.

2.5.2 Excluded Activities

The Standard does not apply to:

- intensive livestock production systems that are predominantly feedlot-based or rely primarily on externally sourced feed rather than rangelands;
- crop production systems not integrally linked to rangeland-based livestock management;
- downstream processing, manufacturing, or retail activities beyond the rangeland production stage, unless explicitly referenced for alignment or engagement purposes.

2.6 Applicability to Different Rangeland Systems

The RSC Standard is applicable across a wide range of rangeland systems, including:

- privately managed rangelands;
- communal, customary, or collectively governed rangelands;
- state-owned, leased, or concession-based rangelands; and
- mixed or mosaic landscapes comprising multiple tenure and governance arrangements.

The Standard does not prescribe or favour any particular land tenure or governance model. Requirements are designed to be applied in a manner appropriate to the ecological, social, and institutional context of the rangeland system, with flexibility in how sustainability outcomes are achieved.

Guidance on context-specific application, including alternative pathways for meeting requirements in different governance and tenure contexts, is provided through applicability notes and annexes.

3. Terms and Definitions

Certificate Holder (CH)

The individual or organisation that holds certification and is accountable for conformity with the RSC Standard across the defined Management Unit.

The term “Certificate Holder” is used throughout the Standard for consistency, but may also refer to the responsible entity applying the Standard in non-certification contexts.

Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)

An independent third-party organisation responsible for evaluating whether a Certificate Holder and its Management Unit comply with the requirements of the RSC Standard. The CAB conducts audits, verification, and certification decisions in accordance with defined procedures, ensuring impartiality, technical competence, and consistency in the assessment process.

Management Unit (MU)

The defined rangeland area or areas, and associated activities, that fall within the scope of certification and for which the Certificate Holder is responsible.

Operational Units (OU)

A distinct component of a Management Unit where standard requirements are implemented and assessed, which may be spatially fixed or seasonally mobile and does not need to correspond to legal land parcels.

Group Certification

A certification approach whereby multiple independent producers or Operational Units are covered under a single Certificate Holder with internal management arrangements.

Pastoralism

A livelihood and land-use system based primarily on extensive livestock grazing of rangelands, often involving mobility, seasonal use of resources, and adaptive management in response to environmental variability.

Pastoralist

An individual or group whose livelihood is primarily based on pastoralism, including the management of livestock and rangeland resources, often within communal, customary, or mobile systems.

Rangelands

Extensive landscapes dominated by natural or semi-natural vegetation, where land use is primarily extensive grazing and ecological processes are shaped by climate variability and natural disturbances.

Rangeland Management Plan (RMP)

A documented plan describing objectives, management practices, monitoring, and adaptive management approaches for the Management Unit.

Landscape Initiative

A multi-stakeholder initiative operating at a landscape level to align goals, coordinate actions, and monitor outcomes across multiple land users and interests.

4. Application Pathways: Certification Model

The RSC Standard is designed to support multiple application pathways. This section describes how the Standard may be applied within a certification system. Additional guidance on other application pathways (e.g. benchmarking, policy alignment, investment frameworks and landscape initiatives) will be developed in future iterations.

4.1 Overview of Certification Model

The RSC Standard applies across a wide diversity of rangeland governance, tenure, and management contexts, including private, communal, customary, state-owned, leased, and co-

managed systems. The certification model is designed to accommodate both mobile and sedentary rangeland production systems, as well as shared, seasonal, and overlapping land use arrangements.

When applied within certification systems, the RSC Standard follows a management-system approach, whereby a clearly defined responsible body holds accountability for conformity with the Standard across a defined rangeland management scope.

The unit of certification under the RSC Standard is the Management Unit, for which the Certificate Holder holds responsibility.

The certification model distinguishes between:

- **the Certificate Holder**, which holds overall responsibility and accountability for conformity with the Standard;
- **the Management Unit**, which defines the rangeland area or areas and associated activities within scope of certification; and
- **Operational Units**, where requirements are implemented and assessed in practice.

Put simply:

Certificate Holder = responsibility

Management Unit = scope

Operational Units = participation

This structure enables the Standard to be applied consistently across individual, group, and collective arrangements, while maintaining a clear and auditable unit of certification.

4.2 Certificate Holder

The Certificate Holder (CH) is the individual, organisation or legally recognised body that:

- enters into a certification agreement,
- assumes responsibility for conformity with the RSC Standard across the Management Unit, including oversight of participating Operational Units, and
- is accountable for the implementation, monitoring and continual improvement of practices within the certification scope.

The Certificate Holder may take different forms depending on context, including but not limited to:

- an individual landowner or pastoral producer;
- a family enterprise or household;
- a cooperative, producer group, or association;
- a customary or traditional governance institution;
- a company or concession holder;
- a public or semi-public entity with management responsibility; or
- another legally or socially recognised body with decision-making authority.

The Certificate Holder shall have sufficient authority, legitimacy or mandate to implement the requirements of the Standard within the defined scope, either directly or through agreed internal arrangements.

For consistency, the Standard uses the term “Certificate Holder” throughout the requirements, but this should be understood as the responsible entity applying the Standard in any context, not only certification.

4.3 Management Unit

The Management Unit (MU) is the defined rangeland area or areas, and associated activities, that fall within the scope of certification.

The Management Unit:

- may consist of a single contiguous area or multiple spatially distinct areas;
- may include seasonal, rotational, or mobile grazing areas;
- may encompass shared or overlapping use areas, where the Certificate Holder holds recognised access or use rights; and
- defines the geographic and operational boundary for assessment, monitoring, and reporting.

Where use rights are seasonal, customary, or shared, the boundaries and conditions of access shall be described and documented in a manner appropriate to the local context.

A Management Unit may include rangeland areas used or accessed by multiple users, not all of whom participate in certification. Certification applies only to the practices, responsibilities, and commitments of the Certificate Holder and participating Operational Units. The presence of non-participating users within a Management Unit does not, in itself, preclude certification.

4.4 Operational Unit

Operational Units are the distinct operational components within a Management Unit where rangeland management and livestock production practices are implemented and assessed.

Operational Units may include, for example:

- pastoral households or herding camps;
- seasonal grazing units or pastures;
- ranches, paddocks, or sub-properties;
- satellite operations or remote use areas;
- infrastructure or service locations relevant to rangeland management.

Operational Units do not need to correspond to legal land parcels or fixed locations and may be seasonal, mobile, or overlapping, provided their scope and management responsibilities are clearly described. Their purpose is to enable proportionate implementation, monitoring, and assessment of the Standard at an operational level.

The Certificate Holder shall define the roles and responsibilities of the Operational Units within the management system.

4.5 Group Certification

Where certification is sought by multiple independent producers or Operational Units under a single Certificate Holder, group certification may be applied. In such cases, the Certificate Holder shall establish appropriate internal management arrangements to ensure conformity with the Standard across all participating Operational Units. The complexity and formality of internal arrangements shall be proportionate to the scale, risk and context of the Management Unit.

4.6 Relationship to Governance & Tenure Contexts

The RSC Standard does not prescribe or require any particular governance or land tenure arrangement.

The Certificate Holder shall:

- clearly describe the governance and tenure context in which the Management Unit operates;
- document the rights, responsibilities, and limitations associated with land use and management; and
- demonstrate how requirements of the Standard are implemented within those constraints.

Where multiple users operate within a Management Unit, the Certificate Holder is not required to exercise control over non-participating users, but shall demonstrate how stewardship outcomes are pursued within the limits of their responsibility and influence, including through engagement, coordination, and transparency where appropriate.

4.7 Applicability Across Rangeland Contexts

This certification model is designed to apply consistently across:

- single-operator or privately managed rangelands;
- communal, customary, or collectively governed systems;
- state-owned, leased, or concession-based rangelands; and
- mixed or mosaic landscapes with multiple tenure and governance arrangements.

Relevant applicability notes are provided in the guidance sections for each theme, outlining how requirements may be met in different contexts, without altering the core requirements of the Standard.

5. Principles, Themes & Requirements

Principle 1: Effective Management

Intent: Ensure entities engaged in rangeland stewardship have clear roles, accessible processes, collaborative planning structures, and adaptive learning cycles that fit pastoral realities, support collective governance, and enable continual improvement without undue administrative burden.

Theme 1.1 - Administration & Coordination

Minimum requirements

- 1.1.1. A management representative responsible for the Standard implementation is identified.
- 1.1.2. The rangeland areas included within the Management Unit, including seasonal, mobile or shared use areas, are identified in a manner appropriate to the local context.
- 1.1.3. The Certificate Holder is recognised through formal legal structures or acknowledged through customary or locally recognised governance arrangements relevant to the Management Unit
- 1.1.4. Roles and responsibilities for meeting the requirements of the Standard are clearly understood and agreed among participating Operational Units, through written or verbal arrangements.
- 1.1.5. Any change in designated management representative is communicated to the RSC and relevant CAB as soon as practicable and within 30 days.

Improvement requirements

- 1.1.6. Additional roles supporting effective management and inclusive decision-making are in place, where relevant.
- 1.1.7. Simple administrative or communication tools are used to support coordination, such as shared calendars, seasonal meeting schedules, basic note-keeping or locally appropriate technologies.
- 1.1.8. Contingency arrangements are in place to maintain coordination and communication during foreseeable disruptions, including illness, seasonal absences, migrations or emergency events, and are reflected in the Participatory Risk Management Template (Resilient Livelihoods Principle).

Guidance – Theme 1.1

Effective administration and coordination are necessary for implementing the Standard across all rangeland contexts, but the formality and structure of these functions will vary widely depending on governance arrangements, scale, mobility and capacity.

Administrative coordination refers to the ability to organise, communicate and maintain responsibility for certification-related activities. This does not require a permanent office or formal organisational structure. Coordination functions may be fulfilled by individuals or groups and may be formal or informal, fixed or rotating, seasonal or combined with other roles.

Examples of coordination and management roles may include, where relevant:

- administrative coordination or record keeping
- liaison with the CAB, RSC, or buyers
- coordination of the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP)
- communication across Operational Units
- representation of women, youth, elders or customary leaders
- conflict resolution or access coordination
- risk, emergency, or contingency coordination

Roles and responsibilities may be documented or verbally agreed, consistent with local governance practices. “Acknowledgement” under 1.1.3 does not require formal legal registration; it may be demonstrated through customary recognition, community acceptance, local authority awareness or other locally legitimate arrangements.

Identification of rangeland areas under 1.1.2 should reflect how land is actually used and accessed within the Management Unit. This may include seasonal areas, shared or overlapping lands, corridors, or customary use zones and may be demonstrated through maps, sketches, seasonal calendars, verbal explanation or reference to the RMP.

Where multiple Operational Units are involved, agreements under 1.1.4 may be written or verbal and should ensure shared understanding of responsibilities for meeting the Standard’s requirements. The emphasis is on clarity and accountability rather than formal contracts.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by the Certificate Holder or representatives, observation of coordination practices, simple records, meeting notes, customary agreements, or other locally appropriate means.

Theme 1.2 - Record Keeping and Documentation

Minimum requirements

- 1.2.1. The Certificate Holder maintains basic records sufficient to support implementation of the Standard and demonstrate responsible management within the Management Unit, in formats appropriate to the capacity, scale and context of the system.

Records may include, where relevant:

- a) use or storage of hazardous substances;
 - b) identification of Operational Units employing hired labour;
 - c) training, awareness or information-sharing activities undertaken;
 - d) meetings, decisions, agreements and customary arrangements relating to the Management Unit;
 - e) periodic summary of actions taken toward meeting the requirements for the Standard;
 - f) purchases, sales, and payments relevant to certification; and
 - g) negative or unintended impacts related to implementation of the Standard.
- 1.2.2. Herd health, reproduction and mortality patterns are described accurately, with basic records kept in written, verbal or visual form sufficient to monitor animal welfare over time.
- 1.2.3. Records are retained in an appropriate format for a period sufficient to demonstrate ongoing compliance and improvement, typically at least 3 years.

Improvement requirements

- 1.2.4. Morbidity, mortality, birth outcomes and treatment use are tracked to support animal health planning and welfare improvements.

Guidance – Theme 1.2

Record-keeping practices in rangeland systems vary widely depending on governance, scale, literacy, mobility and access to infrastructure. This theme focuses on ensuring that information needed to support effective management, accountability and learning is retained and accessible, without requiring formalised or written record-keeping systems.

Records may be maintained in written, verbal, visual, digital or practice-based forms, and may be held centrally by the Certificate Holder or distributed across Operational Units. What is considered “basic” or “reasonable” record-keeping should be proportionate to the context of the Management Unit.

Examples of proportionate approaches include:

- simple notebooks, logbooks or calendars
- verbal explanations supported by observation of practices
- sketches or maps showing use areas or activities
- photographs, symbols or tally marks
- digital records where access allows

For 1.2.1, records should focus on information relevant to certification and management decisions. Not all listed record types will be applicable in every context. For example, records related to hired labour, hazardous substances or financial transactions are only relevant where such activities occur.

Animal-related records under 1.2.2 may be high-level and descriptive, particularly in extensive or mobile systems. Monitoring trends over time (rather than precise counts) is sufficient, provided that information allows animal health and welfare issues to be identified and responded to.

Retention of records under 1.2.3 should reflect local realities. Where long-term written records are not feasible, continuity of knowledge may be demonstrated through consistent explanation, repeated observation of practices or reference to past events and responses.

Improvement under 1.2.4 may involve progressively more systematic tracking of animal health outcomes where capacity allows, but does not require formal veterinary or digital systems.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by responsible persons, observation of practices, examples of records in any appropriate format or demonstration that information is known, shared and used to inform management decisions. The emphasis is on usefulness and credibility rather than volume or formality of documentation.

Theme 1.3 - Understanding & Learning

Minimum requirements

1.3.1 Participants involved in rangeland management, including contract workers where applicable, have at least annual opportunities to learn and share knowledge about:

- a) RSC and the certification process;
- b) the requirements of the Standard;
- c) applicable Country Guidelines;
- d) chain of custody requirements;
- e) traditional knowledge and practices recognised by the local community as essential to sustainable rangeland management.

1.3.2 Participants involved in rangeland management, including contracted workers where applicable, receive health and safety training appropriate to their roles, based on identification of relevant risks.

This includes, where relevant:

- a) role-specific hazards and appropriate control measures;
- b) actions to be taken in the event of an accident or emergency;
- c) fire safety and emergency procedures;
- d) first-aid responsibilities training for designated representatives; and
- e) workers' rights and responsibilities to stop or refuse unsafe work and to report hazards.

1.3.3 Learning and information sharing under this theme are delivered in accessible formats, including verbal, visual and participatory approaches, to ensure understanding regardless of literacy level.

1.3.4 Where multiple Operational Units are involved, at least one representative from each Operational Unit participates in learning or training activities relevant to their roles.

Improvement requirements

1.3.5 Knowledge gained through learning or training activities is shared within Operational Units through peer learning, mentoring or on-the-job practice.

1.3.6 Learning effectiveness is strengthened through participatory approaches that provide participants with opportunities to ask questions, practice skills and provide feedback, which is used to improve future learning activities.

Guidance – Theme 1.3

Learning in rangeland systems is often experiential, seasonal and embedded in everyday practice. This theme is concerned with whether people involved in rangeland management understand their roles and relevant responsibilities, rather than how learning is delivered or documented.

Learning activities may be formal or informal and may occur through:

- peer learning, mentoring or on-the-job practice;
- seasonal meetings, demonstrations or shared problem-solving;
- verbal explanation or storytelling grounded in local knowledge.

Where multiple Operational Units are involved, participation by at least one representative supports internal sharing of knowledge. This does not require all individuals to attend the same learning activities or sessions.

For assessment purposes, CABs should focus on **practical understanding and application**, not recall of specific wording or attendance records. Understanding may be demonstrated through explanation of practices, correct application of agreed procedures, or observation of safe and informed behaviour in daily activities.

Health and safety learning should be proportionate to the roles and risks involved. In many contexts, practical risk awareness and shared norms are more relevant than formal certification or written procedures.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation by participants of how they carry out their roles;
- observation of practices consistent with stated understanding;
- examples of peer learning or mentoring;
- simple notes or records where used.

The emphasis is on accessibility, relevance and shared understanding, rather than formal training programmes or standardised materials.

Theme 1.4 - Continual Improvement

Minimum requirements

- 1.4.1 At each reassessment, progress toward improvement is demonstrated through implementation of improvement actions, adaptive management or maintenance of performance in response to external factors outside of the Certificate Holder's control.
- 1.4.2 A simple improvement plan identifying priorities and intended actions is maintained and periodically updated.
- 1.4.3 When issues or non-conformities are identified, corrective actions are taken within a reasonable timeframe.

Improvement requirements

- 1.4.4 The Certificate Holder contributes to shared learning, knowledge exchange or innovation related to rangeland stewardship, animal welfare, cultural knowledge, or community wellbeing, as appropriate to its context.

Guidance – Theme 1.4

This theme focuses on adaptive improvement over time, recognising that maintaining effective practices or responding to external constraints may represent appropriate progress in rangeland systems.

Improvement planning and review may be formal or informal and should reflect local governance, tenure, mobility and capacity. What matters is that priorities are identified, experience is reflected on and responses are adjusted where feasible.

Progress may be demonstrated through:

- changes made in response to monitoring, observation or seasonal outcomes;
- adaptation following shocks such as drought, conflict or market disruption;
- learning from unsuccessful actions and adjusting accordingly;
- maintaining practices that continue to perform well under changing conditions.

CABs should recognise that **maintenance of performance** can represent improvement where external constraints limit change, and should not expect visible modification at every reassessment.

Contribution to shared learning may take many forms, including:

- herder-to-herder exchange or peer support;
- sharing local knowledge through community mechanisms;
- mentoring youth or new rangeland users;
- participation in collective reflection or innovation where feasible.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by responsible persons, observation of adaptive practices, examples of reflection or peer engagement, or simple improvement notes where used. The emphasis is on responsiveness, learning and proportionality rather than formal improvement plans.

Theme 1.5 - Collaborative Rangeland Management

Minimum requirements

- 1.5.1 The Certificate Holder ensures that rangeland management within the Management Unit is guided by a documented Rangeland Management Plan (RMP) appropriate to the governance, tenure and landscape context.
- 1.5.2 Where a shared, jurisdictional, or landscape-level RMP exists, the Certificate Holder seeks alignment with relevant elements of that plan and participates where feasible, or

otherwise demonstrates awareness of the plan and intent to engage when feasible. Where no such plan exists, an RMP is developed for the Management Unit that reflects its rangeland context and external interactions.

Note: an RMP template is provided as an annex to the Standard

1.5.3 The RMP applicable to the Management Unit:

- a) reflects relevant governance arrangements, including customary or statutory systems where applicable;
- b) addresses seasonal use, livestock management practices, water access and risk planning;
- c) identifies all rangeland users and land uses that interact with the Management Unit, including non-participants, and considers coexistence or coordination where relevant;
- d) identifies simple monitoring indicators for ecological, human and animal health;
- e) includes a plan for monitoring these indicators;
- f) outlines indicative timelines for key actions, aligned with seasonal cycles where relevant; and
- g) is reviewed at least annually.

Note: Seasonal use and mobility patterns are documented under the RMP in line with customary land governance systems (Principle 2) and applied through adaptive grazing practices (Principle 3).

1.5.4 Where multiple Operational Units or land users are involved within the scope of the Management Unit, opportunities are provided for meaningful participation in the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the RMP, appropriate to the local context.

1.5.5 Monitoring results relevant to the Management Unit are reviewed and used to inform adaptive management and improve production practices.

Improvement requirements

1.5.6 The Certificate Holder, together with participating Operational Units where relevant, actively contributes to the co-creation or review of shared or landscape-level rangeland management initiatives.

1.5.7 Monitoring and learning related to rangeland condition, animal welfare and social outcomes are strengthened through shared learning processes, peer exchange or community-based processes.

1.5.8 Climate-adaptation strategies identified in the RMP are aligned with risk-planning under *Principle 4: Resilient Livelihoods* and adaptive management under *Principle 3: Regenerative Management & Ecosystem Health*.

1.5.9 Restoration activities identified under *Principle 3: Regenerative Management & Ecosystem Health* are integrated into the RMP where relevant.

1.5.10 Where feasible and appropriate, the Certificate Holder engages in broader landscape or jurisdictional planning processes, including customary, community or government-led forums relevant to rangeland stewardship. *Note: Climate- risk collaboration is assessed under Principle 4: Resilient Livelihoods.*

Guidance – Theme 1.5

Effective rangeland management often extends beyond individual decision-making, but collaboration can take different forms depending on governance, tenure, scale and landscape context. This theme is concerned with whether appropriate coordination and collaboration are in place to support coherent rangeland management across relevant scales, rather than with the formality of planning processes or the existence of documented agreements.

Under the Standard, the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP) is intended as a practical coordination tool for collaborative management. It may be formal or informal and should reflect how management decisions are actually made and adjusted over time.

In individually managed or privately held systems, collaboration may focus on:

- alignment with neighbouring land users,
- awareness of wider plans or constraints, and
- internal planning for seasonal or long-term management.

In communal, customary or shared-use systems, collaboration may be reflected through:

- customary decision-making processes,
- seasonal agreements or norms, or
- representative or delegated coordination arrangements.

Participation with wider landscape or jurisdictional plans is encouraged, but absence or lack of access to such processes does not preclude conformity.

Monitoring and review under this theme may be collective and qualitative. Discussion of observations, seasonal outcomes or emerging issues is sufficient where formal monitoring systems are not appropriate.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by responsible persons, observation of coordinated practices, simple planning materials, or demonstration that management decisions are informed by shared understanding and external interactions. The emphasis is on coordination and coherence, rather than on formal planning structures or documented

PRINCIPLE 2: Responsible Land Governance and Tenure

Intent: Ensure that rangeland use is grounded in legitimate and transparent governance and tenure arrangements that recognise customary and statutory rights, support inclusive decision-making, prevent conflict and strengthen long-term security of access for pastoral livelihoods.

Theme 2.1 - Clear and Legitimate Land and Resource Use Rights

Minimum requirements

- 2.1.1 The Certificate Holder demonstrates that access to and use of rangeland resources within the Management Unit is legitimate and recognised through applicable statutory, customary or locally recognised governance arrangements.
- 2.1.2 Simple records describing the nature, basis and extent of land and resource use rights within the Management Unit are maintained, in formats appropriate to the local governance context.

Guidance – Theme 2.1

Rangeland governance and tenure arrangements are highly diverse and may include private ownership, customary tenure, state-managed land, shared or overlapping use or combinations of these. The intent of this theme is to ensure that rangeland use occurs with a clear understanding of rights, responsibilities and access arrangements relevant to the Management Unit.

Understanding of tenure and access may be demonstrated in different ways depending on context. In some systems this may involve formal titles, permits or leases; in others it may rely on customary rules, seasonal norms, verbal agreements or long-standing practice recognised by relevant authorities or communities.

In contexts where land rights or access are shared, overlapping or contested, conformity may be demonstrated by showing awareness of these dynamics and by managing use in ways that avoid avoidable conflict or harm. The Standard does not require the Certificate Holder to resolve tenure disputes or to substitute for state or customary governance processes.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation by customary leaders, landholders or representatives;
- maps, sketches, or seasonal calendars showing access and use;
- reference to customary rules, permits, or agreements (written or verbal);
- observation of practices consistent with described access arrangements.

For CABs, assessment should focus on whether land access and use are understood, legitimate within the local context and transparently reflected in management decisions, rather than on the formality or legal status of tenure arrangements.

Theme 2.2 - Inclusive and Participatory Land Use Planning

Minimum requirements

- 2.2.1 Affected land users and rightsholders relevant to the Management Unit are informed of, and have opportunities to engage in, decisions related to rangeland use where such decisions may affect their access, livelihoods or customary rights.
- 2.2.2 Patterns of rangeland use – including seasonal use, rest areas and mobility routes where relevant – are identified and documented in ways appropriate to the grazing system and governance context.

Improvement requirements

- 2.2.3 Where overlapping or shared access exists, cooperative or community-based approaches are used to support fair access, coordination and conflict prevention.

Guidance – Theme 2.2

The intent of this theme is to ensure that decisions about rangeland use, access and mobility are made through inclusive and context-appropriate processes that recognise shared resources, overlapping interests and seasonal dynamics, helping to reduce avoidable conflict or exclusion. Recognising that planning in rangeland systems often occurs through informal dialogue, negotiation and customary processes rather than formal plans, this theme focuses on whether relevant land users and rightsholders are meaningfully considered in land-use decision-making.

Planning may take different forms depending on context, including:

- seasonal discussions on grazing, rest areas or movement routes;
- customary decision-making through elders or community forums;
- informal coordination among neighbouring users.

Where overlapping or shared access exists, planning is often iterative and responsive, adjusting to environmental or social change rather than setting fixed allocations.

CABs should assess whether:

- affected parties are aware of, and have opportunities to engage in, relevant decisions;
- patterns of use are understood and communicated in locally appropriate ways; and
- planning processes help reduce avoidable harm or exclusion.

This theme does not require written plans, mapped boundaries or formal consultation processes. Lack of documentation does not indicate non-conformity where planning occurs through established local practices.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation of how decisions are discussed and agreed;
- observation of seasonal or shared-use practices;
- reference to customary norms, calendars or agreements;
- sketches, maps or notes where used.

The emphasis is on awareness, dialogue and responsible coordination, not formal planning instruments.

Theme 2.3 – Conflict Resolution and Grievance Mechanisms

Minimum requirements

- 2.3.1 Accessible and culturally appropriate mechanisms exist for addressing disputes relating to land or resource use affecting the Management Unit, including customary, administrative or judicial processes.

Improvement requirements

- 2.3.2 Where conflicts occur, outcomes and lessons learned are documented or shared in appropriate ways to support transparency, learning and prevention of future disputes.

Guidance – Theme 2.3

Rangeland systems often experience disputes related to access, mobility, resources or external pressures. This theme is concerned with whether appropriate and accessible mechanisms exist to address such issues, rather than on outcomes or formal procedures.

Conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms may be:

- customary or community-based;
- administrative or judicial where accessible;
- informal but socially recognised and trusted.

What matters is that affected parties know how concerns can be raised and that mechanisms are culturally appropriate and usable in practice.

CABs should assess whether:

- mechanisms are known to those affected;
- there is clarity on how issues can be raised;
- management practices do not knowingly escalate disputes.

The Standard does not require the Certificate Holder to resolve structural or historical conflicts, nor to intervene beyond their legitimate role or capacity.

Sharing of outcomes or lessons learned may occur through discussion, reflection or local communication, rather than formal reporting.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation of grievance or dispute processes;
- reference to customary or local practices;
- observation of how issues are handled when they arise;
- simple records or shared accounts where used.

Theme 2.4 – Equitable Access and Participation

Minimum requirements

- 2.4.1 Decision-making related to land and resource use within the Management Unit takes account of the interests and perspectives of women, youth, contract workers and minority or marginalised groups, where relevant to the context.

Improvement requirements

- 2.4.2 Where grazing areas, water points or other resources within the Management Unit are shared or subject to overlapping use, clear and understood approaches for managing access are maintained and periodically reviewed.

Guidance – Theme 2.4

Access to land and resources, and participation in related decisions, take different forms across rangeland systems. The intent in this theme is to ensure that relevant interests are considered in management decisions, without prescribing specific governance or participation models.

How this may be applied in practice depends on context:

- In individually managed or privately held systems, consideration may involve household members, family workers or contracted labour.
- In communal, customary, or shared-use systems, this may occur through customary norms, community dialogue or representative arrangements.

Where grazing areas, water points, or other resources are shared or subject to overlapping use, approaches for managing access may be:

- formal or informal,
- written or verbal,
- seasonal or situation-specific.

The emphasis is on clarity, fairness and avoidance of harm or exclusion, rather than on uniform access or fixed allocation rules.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation of how interests are considered in decisions,
- observation of access arrangements in practice,
- reference to agreements, norms, or customary practices.

CABs should assess whether access and participation are managed responsibly in relation to the local context, rather than against predetermined governance structures.

Theme 2.5 – Transparency & External Pressures

Minimum requirements

- 2.5.1 External developments or activities that could affect access or rangeland condition within the Management Unit are identified.
- 2.5.2 Basic information is maintained describing how such external pressures interact with rangeland use, grazing patterns or mobility routes

Improvement requirements

- 2.5.3 Where external pressures negatively affect rangeland access or condition, impacts are recorded and, where feasible, raised through appropriate community, customary or administrative channels.
- 2.5.4 Participation occurs, where feasible, in community or multi-stakeholder discussions that address external pressures and support fair land-use decisions.

Guidance – Theme 2.5

Rangeland management is often affected by external developments and decisions beyond the control of the Certificate Holder, which may influence access, mobility, land condition or livelihoods within the Management Unit. The purpose of this theme is to support awareness, documentation, and responsible response, rather than to require resolution of impacts created by third parties or the state.

External developments may include, for example:

- mining or energy projects,
- infrastructure development,
- agricultural expansion,
- tourism facilities,
- conservation zoning,
- urban growth, or
- policy-driven land-use change.

Documentation of external pressures may be proportionate and context-appropriate and may include notes, maps, sketches, community statements, participatory assessments, or verbal accounts. Evidence may also be demonstrated through explanation of how such pressures are considered in management decisions, planning or engagement with relevant actors.

The emphasis of this theme is on transparency and learning, including recognition of constraints and risks, rather than on control over external processes or outcomes.

Theme 2.6 – Integration with National & Regional Frameworks

Minimum requirements

- 2.6.1 The Certificate Holder maintains awareness of relevant land-use designations, regulations or planning instruments applicable to rangeland use within the Management Unit.
- 2.6.2 Rangeland use practices do not knowingly conflict with applicable statutory requirements or recognised customary arrangements.

Improvement requirements

- 2.6.3 Where feasible, rangeland management practices are aligned with national or regional rangeland strategies, climate or drought frameworks or land-degradation neutrality targets.

Guidance – Theme 2.6

Rangeland use operates within wider legal, policy, and planning contexts that influence access, mobility and land condition. These frameworks vary widely in quality, coherence and implementation across regions.

Alignment under this theme does not require full compliance with all external frameworks, particularly where these are poorly implemented or beyond the control of the Certificate Holder. The emphasis is on awareness, avoidance of harm, and constructive alignment where feasible.

Awareness may include relevant frameworks that affect rangeland use within or around the Management Unit, such as:

- protected areas or conservation zoning,
- pasture-use regulations or grazing permits,
- migration route protections,
- water buffer zones or watershed plans,
- regional or district land-use plans,
- Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets or strategies.

Where feasible, management practices should be coherent with relevant frameworks and should not knowingly undermine agreed land-use objectives. This theme does not require the Certificate Holder to resolve gaps, conflicts, or failures in external governance systems, nor to substitute for state responsibilities.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation of relevant policies or plans and how they are considered,
- maps or sketches showing affected areas,
- observation of practices consistent with stated awareness,
- documentation where available.

CABs should assess whether relevant frameworks are known and taken into account in management decisions, rather than evaluating legal compliance or policy effectiveness.

Principle 3: Regenerative Management & Ecosystem Health

Intent: Strengthen rangeland health through adaptive and context-appropriate land and grazing management practices that protect soil, biodiversity, water, and vegetation diversity and contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality. This Principle recognises rangelands as dynamic and variable ecosystems shaped by climate variability and pastoral management, and promotes regenerative practices informed by both local knowledge and scientific understanding and guided by inclusive learning processes.

Note: Practices under this principle are planned, implemented, and monitored through the Rangeland Management Plan described in Principle 1: Effective Management.

Theme 3.1 - Adaptive Grazing Practices

Minimum requirements

- 3.1.1 **WHO grazes WHERE and WHEN:** The Certificate Holder ensures that grazing use within the Management Unit - including seasonal areas, access arrangements and patterns of use - is documented in the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP) and agreed upon where multiple users are involved. Decisions draw on locally relevant knowledge and remain flexible in response to climatic, ecological, or social conditions.
- 3.1.2 **WHAT practices are ecologically appropriate:** Land management practices applied at the Management Unit or landscape scale are identified that are consistent with the ecological characteristics, seasonal dynamics and carrying capacity of the rangeland.
- 3.1.3 **HOW the grazing system is designed for recovery:** Mobility, rotation, resting of areas, or other context-appropriate grazing strategies are incorporated into grazing management to enable pasture recovery and long-term rangeland resilience.
- 3.1.4 **HOW households implement agreed plan:** Grazing practices are implemented at the Operational Unit level, with the Certificate Holder maintaining oversight through communication, observation, seasonal review or other locally appropriate means.
- 3.1.5 Grazing decisions *respond* to observed rangeland condition, as identified through ecological monitoring and local observation.

Improvement requirements

- 3.1.6 The RMP is periodically updated to reflect outcomes, lessons learned and improvements to grazing management based on experience, monitoring results and inclusive reflection.
- 3.1.7 Opportunities for collaborative grazing planning and shared learning with neighbouring land users or community institutions are pursued where relevant. These may include joint trials, demonstration areas or other collective learning on regenerative practices.
- 3.1.8 Contingency measures for climatic or environmental shocks are identified in the RMP and implemented when needed, in alignment with risk-planning under *Principle 4: Resilient Livelihoods*.

Guidance – Theme 3.1

Sustainable grazing in rangelands depends on adaptive decision-making that responds to environmental variability, seasonal change and local conditions. The intent of this theme is to ensure that grazing management decisions maintain or improve rangeland condition through adaptive planning, flexibility and feedback, appropriate to variable rangeland environments. Rather than prescribing specific grazing systems, the focus is on whether grazing practices are deliberate, informed and responsive over time.

How grazing decisions are made and documented will vary by context. In some systems, this may involve formal plans and mapped areas; in others, it may rely on shared understanding, seasonal norms or customary practices reflected in the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP).

Where multiple users or Operational Units are involved, agreement on key aspects of grazing use helps reduce conflict and support coordinated management. In individually managed systems, agreement may be internal or implicit within household or enterprise decision-making.

Adaptive grazing approaches under this theme may include, where relevant:

- seasonal movement or rotation of livestock,
- variation in timing or intensity of use,
- resting of areas to allow recovery,
- adjustment of practices in response to rainfall, forage condition or social factors.

Flexibility is central to this theme. Management decisions should allow for adjustment when conditions change, rather than requiring fixed schedules or stocking patterns.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation of grazing decisions and adjustments, observation of grazing practices, reference to seasonal plans or norms or demonstration that grazing management responds to observed conditions. CABs should assess whether grazing is actively managed and adaptive, rather than evaluating compliance with predetermined grazing plans.

Theme 3.2 - Conservation of Natural Habitats and Biodiversity

Minimum requirements

- 3.2.1 The Certificate Holder identifies key natural habitats, biodiversity values, and wildlife considerations relevant to the Management Unit, and reflects appropriate management actions in the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP).
- 3.2.2 Conversion or fragmentation of natural rangelands within the Management Unit is not undertaken, and wildlife corridors or movement pathways are maintained.

Note: Limited exceptions may apply only where conversion is unavoidable, legally authorised, and does not undermine habitat integrity or wildlife movement, including corridors, such as for essential infrastructure, human or livestock safety, or restoration and conservation purposes.

- 3.2.3 Wildlife is not intentionally harmed, persecuted, or displaced as part of rangeland management activities, except where necessary to protect human or livestock safety and where consistent with applicable law.
- 3.2.4 Where livestock-wildlife interactions result in conflict, preventive and non-lethal management approaches are favoured and indiscriminate control methods are avoided.
- 3.2.5 Livestock management practices are implemented in ways that minimise risk of disease transmission wildlife, where feasible and appropriate to the context.

Improvement requirements

- 3.2.6 Locally appropriate measures are taken to prevent the introduction and spread of alien or invasive species within the Management Unit.
- 3.2.7 Information on habitat condition, wildlife sightings and locally relevant biodiversity indicators is gathered through locally led observation and monitoring and used to inform updates to the RMP.
- 3.2.8 Management practices are adapted over time to enhance habitat quality and ecological connectivity, including through restoration activities, enrichment planting, rotational resting or other context-appropriate measures.
- 3.2.9 Areas of high ecological or cultural significance are identified and managed to limit disturbance where appropriate, through seasonal restrictions, agreed access arrangements, or other locally appropriate approaches.

Guidance – Theme 3.2

Rangelands commonly support both livestock and wildlife, often within the same areas and across different seasons. This theme focuses on how rangeland management recognises and responds to this shared use in practice, rather than on establishing conservation zones or excluding pastoral use. It aims to safeguard biodiversity and key ecological processes while maintaining habitat connectivity and enabling coexistence between wildlife and livestock-based livelihoods.

For assessment purposes, this theme follows a simple logic: relevant biodiversity and wildlife considerations are first identified, then avoidable harm and fragmentation are prevented, interactions are managed responsibly and practices are strengthened over time. CABs should assess whether this progression is evident in management decisions.

Biodiversity and wildlife considerations may be identified through locally relevant knowledge, observation or experience, and do not require formal surveys or technical studies. In many contexts, understanding of wildlife presence, movement or habitat use is seasonal and adaptive, and is applied through everyday management choices.

Application of this theme may look different depending on context, for example:

- recognising areas that wildlife regularly use and avoiding unnecessary disturbance;
- maintaining open movement routes where relevant;
- adjusting grazing, infrastructure placement or access near sensitive habitats;
- using herding, deterrents or husbandry practices that reduce conflict without lethal control;
- applying practical animal health measures to reduce disease risks to wildlife where feasible.

Measures to prevent the introduction or spread of alien or invasive species should be locally appropriate. Identification of such species should be based on national or regional definitions where available, or developed through participatory processes under the RMP where these do not exist.

Improvement over time may involve better observation of habitat condition or wildlife presence, adaptation of practices to enhance habitat quality or connectivity or gradual strengthening of locally led monitoring approaches.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by rangeland users, observation of practices on the ground, reference to local knowledge or experience, simple sketches or maps, or documentation where available. CABs should focus on whether biodiversity and wildlife considerations are meaningfully taken into account in management decisions, rather than on the presence of formal conservation plans or quantitative indicators.

Theme 3.3 - Soil, Water and Plant Communities

Minimum Requirements

- 3.3.1 The Certificate Holder identifies areas within the Management Unit showing signs of soil, vegetation or water degradation and tracks condition over time using locally led observation or monitoring, supported by technical information where available.
- 3.3.2 Grazing and water access are managed to maintain soil cover, vegetation structure and diversity and water infiltration, while preventing avoidable erosion, gully formation and sedimentation of watercourses.
- 3.3.3 Natural watercourses, wetlands and riparian areas are managed to prevent from excessive disturbance that would undermine soil stability, vegetation condition and water quality.
- 3.3.4 Where degradation is identified, feasible restoration or rehabilitation actions are undertaken to address underlying causes, consistent with local capacity and ecological context and, where appropriate, in collaboration with relevant partners.
- 3.3.5 Restoration priorities and actions are documented in the RMP and implemented progressively in line with available capacity, resources and seasonal conditions.
- 3.3.6 Where fire is a relevant ecological or management factor, locally appropriate fire management practices - including prevention, controlled or cultural burning, and post-fire recovery actions - are planned and implemented to support soil stability, vegetation regeneration and habitat resilience.
- 3.3.7 Indicators of soil, water and vegetation condition are monitored and used to inform grazing and land use adjustments, including adaptive practices addressed under Theme 3.1.

Improvement Requirements

- 3.3.8 Practical measures are applied to regenerate perennial vegetation, maintain or enhance forage diversity, improve soil cover and water infiltration, and avoid chronic grazing pressure that could undermine long-term rangeland condition.
- 3.3.9 Monitoring and restoration practices are strengthened over time through learning, knowledge exchange or collaboration with other land users, customary institutions or technical partners, integrating local knowledge and, where available, scientific information.
- 3.3.10 Where relevant and feasible, restoration and management efforts contribute to broader landscape or catchment-scale objectives, such as land restoration, watershed protection or other locally appropriate initiatives.
- 3.3.11 Monitoring information collected under this Theme demonstrates stable or improving trends in agreed indicators of land condition over a multi-year period appropriate to the rangeland context. Where declining trends are identified, corrective actions are defined, implemented, and reflected in updates to the Rangeland Management Plan (RMP).

Guidance – Theme 3.3

The intent of this theme is to maintain and restore the ecological integrity of rangelands by sustaining the interactions between soil, water and vegetation that underpin productivity and resilience. Rangeland soils, vegetation and water systems are often shaped by high climatic variability, episodic disturbance and long recovery timeframes. In many dryland systems, changes in rainfall, temperature or extreme events may exert a stronger influence on observed rangeland condition than management interventions, particularly over short or even medium time horizons.

This theme therefore focuses on responsive and informed management, rather than on demonstrating short-term improvements in biophysical indicators. Certification is not dependent on showing measurable improvement in rangeland condition within a defined period. Where short-term improvements are observed, these are positive outcomes, but should be interpreted cautiously, recognising that they may reflect climatic drivers rather than management change alone.

Identification and tracking of land condition may rely on locally led observation, seasonal review or simple indicators, supported by technical information where available. What matters is that:

- changes in condition are noticed and discussed;
- potential causes (including climate, grazing pressure or external factors) are considered; and
- management responses are adjusted where feasible and appropriate.

In practice, application of this theme may include:

- adapting grazing or water access in response to observed stress or recovery;
- prioritising areas for rest or restoration following adverse seasons;
- maintaining effective practices where condition is stable under variable climate.

CABs should assess whether land condition information is **used to inform decisions**, not whether trends show consistent improvement. Stable condition, reduced rates of decline or appropriate response to deterioration may all indicate good stewardship.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by rangeland users, observation of land condition and management practices, seasonal reflections, RMP references or monitoring summaries. The emphasis is on learning, responsiveness and long-term stewardship, rather than short-term performance metrics.

Theme 3.4 - Pollution Prevention & Waste Management

Minimum requirements

- 3.4.1 Activities and waste from rangeland and livestock operations - including fuels, chemicals and animal treatments - are managed to avoid contamination of soil, water or vegetation within the Management Unit.
- 3.4.2 Chemical, medical, biological, and veterinary waste - including carcasses and feed-related contaminants - are not disposed of on rangeland in ways that could harm livestock, wildlife, water, or vegetation. Disposal follows locally approved procedures and, where applicable, is coordinated with relevant veterinary or environmental authorities.
- 3.4.3 Human waste is managed safely to prevent contamination of soil and water and reduce risks to human and animal health.
- 3.4.4 Fertilisers, pesticides, or veterinary products are used only when necessary and in ways that minimise risks to human health and the environment.

Improvement requirements

- 3.4.5 Where contamination or waste accumulation is identified, reasonable restoration or remediation actions are taken to address affected areas, consistent with local capacity and context.
- 3.4.6 Where relevant and feasible, collaboration with other land users, communities or local actors supports improved waste management practices, including shared systems, training or infrastructure.

Guidance – Theme 3.4

Waste, chemicals and other potential contaminants in rangeland systems must be managed responsibly to prevent harm to soil, water, vegetation, livestock, wildlife, and people, and contamination addressed where it occurs. This theme is applied with recognition of the highly variable conditions under which rangeland management occurs, including differences in mobility, remoteness, infrastructure, climate and governance. Assessment should focus on whether practices are effective in preventing exposure to contaminants, rather than on the presence of formalised systems or infrastructure.

Appropriate practices will vary by context and may range from simple, customary approaches to more formal systems. When evaluating suitability, consideration should be given to:

- the likelihood of waste, chemicals, or biological materials entering water sources, grazing areas, or living spaces;
- proximity to people, livestock, wildlife, and sensitive ecological areas; and
- the scale and intensity of inputs used within the Management Unit.

In remote or mobile systems, acceptable approaches may rely on locally established norms, practical containment methods, or seasonal practices, provided these demonstrably reduce risk. In more settled or accessible contexts, alignment with formal procedures and engagement with relevant authorities is expected where practicable.

The theme also supports a **precautionary approach** to chemical and veterinary inputs. Auditors should look for evidence that use is deliberate and controlled, and that handling, storage, and disposal practices are consistent with minimising cumulative or downstream impacts, rather than focusing solely on individual applications.

Where issues are identified, improvement is assessed based on the **reasonableness and proportionality of the response**, taking into account local capacity and constraints. This may include incremental changes, trialling alternative practices, or participation in shared solutions with neighbouring land users or community actors.

Evidence may be qualitative or observational and does not need to be record-heavy. Conformity and improvement can be demonstrated through:

- visible practices on the ground;
- explanations from those responsible for day-to-day management; and
- examples of learning, adaptation, or collaboration over time.

Overall, the emphasis is on responsible stewardship, risk awareness and continuous strengthening of practices in line with local realities, rather than compliance with prescriptive waste management models.

Principle 4: Resilient Livelihoods

Intent: Strengthen the resilience and wellbeing of rangeland livelihoods by supporting risk awareness, adaptive planning, and responsible diversification that enhance the capacity of rangeland users to respond to environmental, climatic, economic, and social change, while sustaining pastoral systems, cultural practices, and ecological integrity.

Theme 4.1 – Risk Awareness and Planning

Minimum requirements

- 4.1.1 The Certificate Holder identifies the main livelihood and income sources associated with the Management Unit and key risks that could affect their continuity, including environmental, climatic, market, social or policy-related risks.
- 4.1.2 Approaches to reducing, managing or responding to identified risks are discussed and, where feasible, documented in a form appropriate to the governance, scale and context of the Management Unit.

Improvement Requirements

- 4.1.3 Risk awareness and response approaches are periodically reviewed and adjusted based on experience, seasonal learning or changing conditions.
- 4.1.4 Where relevant, locally held knowledge and external information (e.g. forecasts, advisory services, scientific or technical inputs) are combined to strengthen anticipation of risks and decision-making.
- 4.1.5 Where feasible, collaboration with neighbouring land users, communities or institutions supports shared understanding of risks and coordination of responses.
- 4.1.6 Groups or individuals who may be disproportionately affected by shocks are identified and reasonable measures are taken to support equitable access to assistance or coping strategies.

*Note: The **Participatory Risk Planning Template** (Annex X) may be used as a tool to support risk identification, mitigation and adaptive learning process, but other culturally appropriate approaches are equally acceptable.*

Guidance – Theme 4.1

Rangeland livelihoods are exposed to multiple, interacting risks that are often outside the direct control of the Certificate Holder. Rather than requiring formal risk management systems or comprehensive plans, this theme promotes awareness and preparedness in ways that are appropriate to rangeland realities.

Risk identification may be informal or formal and may draw on:

- local experience and seasonal knowledge;
- community discussion;
- external information such as forecasts or advisory services where available.

Not all risks must be mitigated. Recognising constraints, trade-offs or limits to response is acceptable and should not be treated as non-conformity.

Risk responses may include mobility adjustments, reserve pasture use, stocking flexibility, savings or asset strategies, social support mechanisms, diversification where appropriate or collective responses with neighbours.

CABs should focus on whether risks are understood and considered in decision-making, rather than on completeness of risk coverage or documentation.

Evidence of conformity may include:

- explanation of key risks and responses;
- seasonal plans or reflections;
- observation of adaptive practices;
- community discussions or shared understanding.

The emphasis is on learning, anticipation and responsiveness over time.

Theme 4.2 – Responsible Diversification

Minimum requirements

- 4.2.1 Where livelihood or income diversification activities are undertaken in relation to the Management Unit, they are consistent with ecological sustainability, local governance arrangements, and cultural practices, and do not undermine rangeland condition, mobility, or community wellbeing.
- 4.2.2 Diversification options considered as part of risk planning are discussed within the Certificate Holder's decision-making structures and, where relevant, with affected stakeholders to assess feasibility, cultural appropriateness and potential impacts.

Improvement Requirements

- 4.2.3 Where feasible, diversification activities contribute to improved livelihood resilience or income stability without increasing pressure on rangeland resources.

- 4.2.4 Opportunities are created, where appropriate, for women and youth to lead, participate in, or benefit from diversification initiatives.
- 4.2.5 The contribution of diversification activities to risk reduction or livelihood stability is periodically reflected on and used to inform future decisions.

Guidance – Theme 4.2

Diversification is widely recognised as an important strategy for strengthening the resilience of rangeland livelihoods, particularly in contexts of climatic variability, market uncertainty and external pressures. This theme promotes diversification where it supports pastoral livelihoods and long-term system resilience, while recognising that it may not be appropriate, feasible or desirable in all contexts.

This theme focuses on how diversification decisions are made and reviewed, rather than on the scale, type or financial performance of activities. Diversification may take many forms depending on ecological conditions, mobility patterns, governance arrangements and cultural norms, and may evolve through experience rather than advance planning.

Diversification should be approached in a considered and inclusive manner. For assessment purposes, CABs should look for evidence that:

- options are discussed within existing decision-making structures, such as households, camps, cooperatives or community forums;
- potential ecological, social and cultural implications are understood, including effects on rangeland use and mobility; and
- opportunities for participation or benefit-sharing, including for women and youth where locally appropriate, are considered.

Where diversification is undertaken, proportionality is central. Small-scale, seasonal or experimental activities may be appropriate and effective pathways for building resilience, particularly where risks and returns are uncertain.

Improvement is demonstrated where experience with diversification contributes to learning, informs future decisions and strengthens livelihood stability over time without increasing pressure on rangeland resources.

Conformity and progress may be demonstrated through explanation of decisions taken, observation of activities and outcomes, or evidence of reflection and adaptation.

Principle 5: Rights, Equity & Inclusion

Intent: Ensure that rangeland management respects human rights, cultural identity, and dignity; supports equitable participation and benefit-sharing; protects workers and vulnerable groups; and enables pastoral livelihoods to be sustained across diverse governance, tenure, and labour contexts. This principle recognises pastoralism as both a livelihood and a cultural system, while also accommodating larger enterprises that rely on hired labour.

Applicability Note: The Standard distinguishes between two categories of Certificate Holders for Principle 5:

- **Tier A:** Pastoral households or community labour systems relying primarily on family or customary labour; and
- **Tier B:** Enterprises that structurally rely on hired labour (permanent or recurring seasonal workers).

Tier A and Tier B are applicability categories, not performance tiers, and shall be determined and documented by CABs at the outset of certification. Further guidance on Tier determination, assessment implications and examples is provided in **Annex X**.

Requirements for Themes 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5 apply to all Certificate Holders (Tier A and Tier B). Themes 5.3 and 5.4 include requirements that are only applicable to Tier B Certificate Holders. For these themes, requirements are structured in two parts: requirements that apply to all Certificate Holders (Tier A and Tier B), followed by the additional requirements for Tier B Certificate Holders.

Theme 5.1 - Empowered Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities

Minimum requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.1.1 Indigenous and local pastoral communities' customary institutions, land-use systems, culturally significant sites, values and knowledge are recognised and reflected in management and monitoring processes.
- 5.1.2 Cultural identity, mobility traditions, language, and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) are respected and supported.

Improvement requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.1.3 Intergenerational transfer of pastoral knowledge, skills and cultural practices is actively supported where feasible.
- 5.1.4 Where relevant, participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities occurs in landscape- or jurisdictional-level discussions affecting land use, mobility or cultural heritage.

Guidance – Theme 5.1

Rangeland livelihoods are shaped by multiple, interacting risks, including climatic variability, market fluctuations, policy change, social dynamics and environmental uncertainty. The intent of this theme is to ensure that risk awareness and planning support the continuity, resilience and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), while protecting customary rights, cultural practices and long-standing relationships with rangeland landscapes.

This theme recognises that risk awareness in rangeland systems is often grounded in locally held knowledge, lived experience and collective memory, rather than in formal risk assessments. Planning may therefore be informal, iterative and embedded in everyday decision-making, seasonal discussions or customary governance processes.

Assessment under this theme should focus on whether:

- key livelihood and income risks are recognised and discussed within appropriate decision-making structures;
- responses to risk are considered in ways that respect customary rights, cultural values and community priorities; and
- decisions support continuity of livelihoods, cultural practices and intergenerational knowledge, rather than undermining them.

Risk responses may include mobility strategies, grazing adjustments, diversification, collective coping mechanisms, reciprocal support systems or engagement with external institutions where appropriate. Not all risks can be mitigated, and acknowledging constraints or limits to response is acceptable.

Where relevant, combining Indigenous and local knowledge with external information - such as forecasts, advisory services or technical inputs - can strengthen anticipation and decision-making, provided this is done in a way that respects local authority and knowledge systems.

Collaboration with neighbouring land users, communities or institutions may support shared understanding of risks and coordinated responses, particularly where impacts cross boundaries or disproportionately affect certain groups.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation of risks and responses by community members or leaders, observation of adaptive practices, seasonal reflections, or examples of collective learning and adjustment. CABs should assess whether risk awareness informs decision-making and supports resilience and self-determination, rather than whether formal risk management tools are in place.

Theme 5.2 - Inclusive Participation, Gender Equity & Non-Discrimination

Minimum requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.2.1 Decision-making processes related to rangeland management take account of the perspectives and interests of women, youth, and marginalised groups, where relevant to the context.
- 5.2.2 Discrimination, harassment, or violence - including gender-based violence - is not tolerated (ILO C111 and C190).

Improvement requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.2.3 Proactive measures are taken to reduce barriers to participation or leadership for women, youth, or marginalised groups, appropriate to the governance and cultural context.
- 5.2.4 Participation and leadership opportunities for under-represented groups are strengthened over time through locally appropriate approaches.

Guidance – Theme 5.2

Inclusive participation is a vital component of fair and resilient rangeland management. The intent of this theme is to ensure fair participation, safety and benefit-sharing in rangeland management, with particular attention to women and marginalised groups, while recognising that decision-making structures and social norms vary widely across contexts.

Participation does not require formal representation or standardised governance structures. Taking account of perspectives may occur through:

- customary, household or community decision-making processes;
- informal consultation, dialogue or consensus-building; or
- other locally appropriate arrangements that allow relevant voices to be considered in practice.

This theme also emphasises the importance of safe and respectful participation. Discrimination, harassment or violence - including gender-based violence - is not tolerated. Reasonable and context-appropriate measures are expected to:

- prevent such behaviour within the Certificate Holder's sphere of influence; and
- respond appropriately if incidents occur, taking account of local capacity and constraints.

Efforts to strengthen participation, leadership or benefit-sharing for women, youth and marginalised groups may be informal, incremental and adaptive. These efforts may include:

- reducing barriers to participation;
- supporting leadership or representation over time; or
- ensuring fair access to benefits linked to rangeland management.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by responsible persons, observation of participation practices, examples of decision-making or benefit-sharing arrangements, or documentation where available. CABs should focus on whether participation is meaningful, safe and progressively more equitable, rather than on the existence of prescribed structures or formal representation.

Theme 5.3 - Fair Work & Labour Rights

Note: Child safeguarding is covered by Theme 5.5.

Minimum requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.3.1 Forced labour, including coercion, debt bondage, deceptive recruitment, restriction of movement or retention of personal identity documents is prohibited (ILO C29 & C105).
- 5.3.2 Where paid or exchange-based labour is used, terms are clear, mutually understood and considered fair by the parties involved; terms may be written or verbal.
- 5.3.3 Wages or value exchange meet legal minimums or customary fair rates agreed by both parties, and payments are made in a timely and transparent manner.
- 5.3.4 Equal pay for equal work and fair treatment for all, regardless of gender, social identity, age (where legally allowed to work) or migration status (ILO C100 & C111).
- 5.3.5 People contributing labour (family or hired) are treated with dignity and respect and can raise concerns without retaliation; culturally appropriate dialogue and grievance channels are available.
- 5.3.6 Labour responsibilities are organised in ways that support the wellbeing of pregnant or vulnerable herders, consistent with pastoral cultural practices of support and care.

Improvement requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.3.7 Awareness of labour rights and responsibilities improves through informal learning, peer exchange or community dialogue.
- 5.3.8 Efforts are made to prevent overwork and support rest during peak periods (mobility camps, shearing, drought response).

Additional minimum requirements (Tier B only)

- 5.3.9 Workers receive written contracts in a language they understand, covering duties, compensation, rest periods, and housing/food if provided.
- 5.3.10 Working hours and rest days follow national law or customary fair pastoral norms, and overtime is voluntary and compensated.
- 5.3.11 Reasonable adjustments are made to support pregnant or vulnerable workers in line with health, safety, and wellbeing needs.
- 5.3.12 Payroll records or documented payment evidence are maintained and accessible to workers.
- 5.3.13 No recruitment fees are charged to workers; recruitment is transparent and fair.
- 5.3.14 Workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining are respected, including the right to organise, join worker organisations, or engage through representatives of their choosing (ILO C87 and C98).

Additional improvement requirements (Tier B only)

- 5.3.15 Worker representatives or trusted intermediaries participate in dialogue on workplace issues, where culturally appropriate.
- 5.3.16 Regular orientation is provided for new, seasonal and migrant workers.
- 5.3.17 Worker accommodation and facilities progressively improve beyond legal minimums.
- 5.3.18 Systems to monitor working conditions (hours, pay, safety) evolve in line with enterprise scale and capacity.

Guidance – Theme 5.3

Labour arrangements in rangeland systems range from family- and customary-based pastoral work to enterprises relying on hired labour. The intent of this theme to protect dignity, fairness, and fundamental labour rights without imposing formal employment models where they are not appropriate.

For all Certificate Holders, forced labour, coercion, and discrimination are prohibited under all circumstances. Where labour beyond household or customary obligations is used, expectations around work, compensation, or exchange should be clearly understood by all parties. Agreements may be written or verbal, and fairness may be demonstrated through explanation, customary practice, or observation rather than formal documentation.

Grievance processes do not need to be formal systems. Concerns may be raised through culturally appropriate dialogue, trusted intermediaries, elders, supervisors, or other locally accepted mechanisms, provided concerns can be raised without retaliation.

Tier B requirements apply only where enterprises structurally rely on hired labour. In these contexts, additional safeguards are expected to reflect higher levels of control, scale, and risk. Written contracts, payroll records, and defined working conditions support transparency and worker protection, and should be implemented in ways appropriate to local capacity and legal frameworks.

Evidence of conformity may include worker interviews, verbal explanations, observation of practices, contracts or records where applicable, and confirmation that workers understand their rights and terms. The emphasis is on proportionality, respect, and continuous improvement rather than formalisation for its own sake.

Theme 5.4 - Safe Working & Living Conditions

Minimum requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.4.1 Common herding risks (animals, terrain, weather) are understood and basic precautions are taken to prevent harm.
- 5.4.2 Safe animal handling practices appropriate to local herding systems are used to avoid injury to people and livestock.
- 5.4.3 Workers and helpers have reasonable access to drinking water and opportunities for rest during herding activities, appropriate to mobility, remoteness, and local conditions.
- 5.4.4 Pregnant or vulnerable herders are supported and not asked to perform hazardous or overly strenuous work.
- 5.4.5 Basic first-aid knowledge or access to local emergency support is available, appropriate to remoteness and mobility.
- 5.4.6 Basic hygiene practices appropriate to pastoral life are used to reduce risks from communicable and zoonotic diseases.

Improvement requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.4.7 Steps are taken over time to improve tools, equipment, tools, and herding practices to reduce risk of injury and support wellbeing.
- 5.4.8 Opportunities are provided for skill development and safe participation in herding tasks, especially for women, youth, and new herders.
- 5.4.9 Where housing is provided for seasonal help or apprentices, conditions are improved over time to support safe and clean living.

Additional minimum requirements (Tier B only)

- 5.4.10 Basic first-aid supplies are available at worksites and housing locations, and workers know the emergency contact and response plan appropriate to remoteness and mobility.
- 5.4.11 Workers receive practical instruction and demonstration on safe livestock handling, machinery use (where applicable), and emergency procedures before performing high-risk tasks.
- 5.4.12 Personal protective equipment (PPE) required for specific tasks (e.g., shearing, fencing, machinery) is provided at no cost and maintained in usable condition.
- 5.4.13 Where accommodation is provided, workers have safe, clean sleeping areas with adequate ventilation, weather protection, basic privacy and safe cooking and food storage areas.
- 5.4.14 Workers have access to sanitary toilet arrangements and basic hand-washing facilities appropriate to pastoral conditions.
- 5.4.15 Workers have reliable access to clean drinking water and basic washing facilities at herding sites and accommodation locations.

Additional improvement requirements (Tier B only)

- 5.4.16 Emergency preparedness systems expand over time (e.g., radios/satellite phones, first-aid kits in vehicles, emergency contacts visible, evacuation plans).
- 5.4.17 Worker accommodation, sanitation, and hygiene facilities are progressively improved beyond minimum requirements to enhance safety, privacy, cleanliness and wellbeing, using locally appropriate solutions.
- 5.4.18 Zoonotic disease prevention and awareness is strengthened through training and access to information, veterinary support, vaccination campaigns and safe handling practices.
- 5.4.19 Safety awareness, learning and continuous improvement are strengthened over time, with incidents, near-misses, worker feedback and practical training informing adjustments to working practices, equipment and emergency preparedness.

Guidance – Theme 5.4

This theme recognises that rangeland work involves inherent risks linked to livestock handling, terrain, weather, remoteness and mobility, and seeks to ensure safe, healthy and dignified working and living conditions. The focus is on reducing avoidable harm and supporting wellbeing through practical, context-appropriate precautions, rather than requiring formal occupational health and safety systems.

Basic precautions in pastoral systems may include practices such as awareness of animal behaviour, choosing appropriate routes and timing, adjusting tasks to weather and terrain conditions, using suitable tools or tack, sharing labour during higher-risk activities, ensuring rest and hydration, and knowing how to seek help in an emergency. What constitutes a reasonable precaution depends on mobility, remoteness, cultural practice, and available resources.

Evidence of conformity may be demonstrated through observation of practices, verbal explanation by herders or workers, or practical measures in use, rather than written procedures. Evidence should be appropriate to pastoral mobility and cultural context and need not be formally documented unless required under Tier B.

Tier B requirements apply only where hired labour is a regular feature. In these contexts, additional safeguards are expected, including access to first-aid supplies, PPE for higher-risk tasks, safe accommodation, sanitation, and practical safety instruction. These measures should be proportionate to enterprise scale, remoteness, and capacity.

Under 5.4.6, improvement in tools, equipment, and practices may include gradual upgrades that reduce physical strain or injury risk and support wellbeing. Examples may include improved saddles or harnesses, safer fencing or handling equipment, better lighting or shelter, or protective gear for tasks involving machinery or vehicles. The emphasis is on practical risk reduction over time, not on adopting uniform equipment standards.

Improvement requirements also encourage progressive strengthening of housing, sanitation, hygiene, emergency preparedness, and learning from incidents or near-misses. Evidence may include observation, explanation, worker feedback, or documentation where appropriate. The emphasis is on proportional risk reduction, dignity, and continuous improvement rather than prescriptive standards.

Theme 5.5 - Child Rights & Pastoral Learning

Minimum requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.5.1 Children are protected from harm and hazardous work or the worst forms of child labour (ILO C138 & C182).
- 5.5.2 Where children participate in pastoral activities or cultural traditions, such participation is age-appropriate, voluntary, supervised and conducted in ways that protect their safety and wellbeing.
- 5.5.3 Children's participation in pastoral life does not compromise their education, rest, play or healthy development.

Improvement requirements (all Certificate Holders – Tier A and B)

- 5.5.4 Intergenerational transfer of pastoral knowledge and cultural heritage is encouraged through safe and supervised activities such as storytelling, mentoring, observation or traditional practices.
- 5.5.5 Where feasible, families take steps to support children's access to education suited to pastoral life, such as seasonal schooling, flexible attendance, distance learning, tutoring support or mobile schooling where available.
- 5.5.6 Children are gradually introduced to pastoral skills, where relevant, in ways that build confidence and understanding while ensuring safety, rest, and age-appropriate limits.
- 5.5.7 Efforts are made, where appropriate, to support safe play, recreation and social interaction for children within pastoral households or communities.

Guidance – Theme 5.5

Children’s presence and learning within family and community life are integral to pastoral systems. At the same time, children must be protected from harm, exploitation and hazardous work. This theme seeks to safeguard children’s wellbeing while supporting their rights to pastoral learning, cultural identity and education suited to pastoral life, and to clearly distinguish between child labour and age-appropriate participation in pastoral and cultural activities.

Children’s involvement in pastoral life should be:

- voluntary, supervised, and appropriate to age and development;
- compatible with education, rest, play and wellbeing; and
- free from hazardous, exploitative or harmful work, which is not permitted under any circumstances.

Support for pastoral learning and cultural transmission may include:

- storytelling, observation or mentoring;
- participation in safe, everyday activities; or
- other informal practices consistent with local culture and norms.

Formal training programmes or structured learning systems are not required.

Access to education may take different forms depending on mobility, remoteness and local provision. Flexible, seasonal or alternative education arrangements are recognised where they support children’s learning and healthy development.

Evidence of conformity may include explanation by caregivers, observation of practices, or demonstration that children’s safety, education and wellbeing are prioritised in practice. The emphasis is on protection, care and healthy development rather than formal compliance mechanisms.

Principle 6: Animal Welfare

Under development

Intent: Ensure that livestock and working animals in rangeland systems experience good welfare throughout their lives, consistent with ethical responsibilities, pastoral realities and ecological conditions.

This Principle will establish a comprehensive, outcome-focused framework for animal welfare that is applicable across diverse rangeland systems and aligned with the **Five Domains of Animal Welfare**, while providing a global benchmark against which other animal-based standards and assurance schemes can be aligned.

Annex: Guidance on Tiers under Principle 5

Note: This annex is explanatory and does not introduce additional requirements beyond those set out in Principle 5.

Purpose and Rationale

Pastoral entities operating in rangeland systems vary in both how labour is organised and the scale at which operations are conducted. Some rely primarily on family or customary labour within pastoral households or communities, while others structurally rely on hired labour, including permanent employees or recurring seasonal workers. Larger-scale operations typically involve more people, more formal labour arrangements and greater potential for social risk and therefore carry a greater degree of responsibility and accountability in relation to rights, safety, participation and equity.

Within the RSC Standard, the Certificate Holder is the pastoral entity responsible for conformity across a defined Management Unit. For Principle 5 (Rights, Equity & Inclusion), the Standard distinguishes between **Tier A and Tier B categories** based primarily on the Certificate Holder's **structural reliance on hired labour**, with scale considered where it affects accountability.

Tier A and Tier B are applicability categories, not performance tiers. They are used by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) to interpret and assess requirements in line with the Certificate Holder's labour model and resulting sphere of influence, and do not represent higher or lower standards of compliance.

Tier A: Pastoral Households and Community Labour Systems

Definition and characteristics

Tier A applies where the Certificate Holder:

- relies primarily on family, household or customary community labour; and
- operates at a scale where labour relationships are embedded within household or community structures, rather than formal employment arrangements.

Occasional, short-term or reciprocal labour support does not, on its own, place a Certificate Holder in Tier B.

Typical Tier A contexts may include:

- pastoral households or family-run operations;
- customary or communal pastoral systems where labour is shared among members; or
- small-scale community arrangements without recurring hired labour.

Assessment implications

For Tier A Certificate Holders, CABs should focus on whether:

- rights, dignity and safety of those involved in pastoral work are respected;

- participation and decision-making reflect local norms and customary practices;
- discrimination, harassment or violence are not tolerated within the Certificate Holder's sphere of influence; and
- reasonable efforts are made to support inclusion and equity over time.

Assessment should recognise that Tier A Certificate Holders generally have limited ability or need to formalise labour systems, and should prioritise observed practice, behaviour and local accountability over documentation.

Tier B: Enterprises Structurally Relying on Hired Labour

Definition and characteristics

Tier B applies where the Certificate Holder:

- structurally relies on hired labour, including permanent employees or recurring seasonal workers; and/or
- operates at a scale where labour arrangements are organised, planned or managed beyond household or customary structures.

Structural reliance refers to labour arrangements that are integral to normal operations, rather than occasional or exceptional.

Typical Tier B contexts may include:

- larger commercial ranches or pastoral enterprises;
- companies, producer groups or cooperatives employing workers; or
- operations that engage recurring seasonal or migrant labour.

Assessment implications

For Tier B Certificate Holders, CABs should expect:

- a higher level of accountability for working conditions, safety and fair treatment of workers;
- active measures to prevent discrimination, harassment, exploitation or unsafe practices;
- appropriate mechanisms to support participation, grievance handling and benefit-sharing; and
- particular attention to risks faced by women, migrant workers or other vulnerable groups.

Assessment should reflect the greater sphere of influence and responsibility associated with both structural reliance on hired labour and larger operational scale, while remaining proportionate to context.

Determining the Applicable Tier

The applicable Tier should be determined at the outset of certification, based on:

- whether hired labour is a structural and recurring feature of operations; and

- the scale of the enterprise, insofar as it affects the Certificate Holder’s ability to influence labour conditions and social outcomes.

CABs should:

- assess actual labour practices rather than legal form alone;
- document the rationale for Tier determination; and
- review the Tier if labour arrangements or scale change over time.

Where uncertainty exists, professional judgement should be applied, guided by the principle that greater reliance on hired labour and larger scale imply greater accountability.

Key Points for Conformity Assessment Bodies

- Tier A and Tier B are applicability categories, not performance levels.
- Tier A is not a “lighter” version of Principle 5, and Tier B is not optional.
- Evidence may be written, verbal, observational or practice-based, depending on context.
- Assessment should focus on reasonable action within the Certificate Holder’s sphere of influence, recognising differences arising from labour model and scale.