



Rangeland
Stewardship
Council

RSC STANDARD

SIMPLE LANGUAGE SUMMARY

FORWARD

Rangelands cover a huge part of the world and support the lives and cultures of many pastoral families. These lands are shaped by changing weather, seasonal movement, and the long relationship between people, livestock and nature. They are also important for wildlife, climate, and shared natural resources.

Even though rangelands are so important, many sustainability standards have not worked well for pastoral systems. Most have been designed for settled farming on private land, which means mobile, communal and customary grazing systems are often left out or misunderstood.

The RSC Standard¹ (previously the Global Rangelands Standard, GRS) has been developed to help fill this gap. It aims to describe what good rangeland stewardship looks like in a way that works across different countries and systems, while still reflecting the realities of pastoral life.

Why the Standard is based on pastoral systems

The RSC Standard is built around how rangelands actually work. These landscapes change a lot with weather, seasons and grazing patterns, and they often cover large areas. Because of this, flexible and adaptive livestock management - moving animals, adjusting grazing, and responding to conditions - is often the best way to care for the land.

Pastoralism has developed over generations as a way of managing animals in these changing environments. People may describe themselves in different ways - pastoralists, herders, farmers, ranchers, producers - but many use similar approaches in practice. The Standard recognises that all rangeland users share a common role as stewards of the land.

Purpose of the Standard

The RSC Standard is designed to describe what good rangeland stewardship looks like in a way that can work across different countries and grazing systems. It focuses on the results we want to see - healthy land, secure livelihoods, well-cared-for animals and fair decision-making - rather than telling people exactly how they must manage their land.

The Standard recognises that rangelands change with weather and seasons, and that improvement takes time. Certification does not mean land conditions must improve every year. Showing that people are learning, adapting, working together and managing responsibly can also demonstrate progress.

¹ 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.

The Standard is also intended to act as a shared reference for rangelands globally. It can help different programmes, organisations or standards work in a more consistent way and avoid duplication. It may be used on its own or alongside other initiatives that already exist.

Scope of the Standard

The RSC Standard is designed for rangeland livestock systems anywhere in the world. Rangelands are natural landscapes like grasslands, savannas, shrublands, deserts, mountains, tundra and open woodlands - places areas where animals mainly graze on natural vegetation and livestock and wildlife often coexist. When these lands are healthy and well managed, they support livelihoods locally and provide important benefits for the planet, such as storing carbon and protecting biodiversity.

The Standard can apply to many different ways of managing animals, including:

- Pastoral and agropastoral systems
- Ranching systems
- Mobile, nomadic or transhumant grazing
- Settled or mixed systems that rely mainly on rangeland grazing

It does not matter whether land is privately owned, communal, customary, leased or state-managed - the Standard is designed to work across all these situations.

The focus is on activities directly related to managing land and livestock, such as grazing practices, animal care, water use, planning and monitoring. It does not apply to feedlots or intensive systems that depend mostly on purchased feed, or to processing and manufacturing after animals leave the rangeland system.

The RSC Standard looks at sustainability in a broad way. This includes:

- Land and ecosystem health
- Livelihoods and economic resilience
- Rights, culture and wellbeing
- Governance and decision-making
- Animal welfare

All of these together help describe what good rangeland stewardship means.

Certification as one pathway for applying the Standard

The RSC Standard can be used in different ways to help recognise and reward good rangeland stewardship, while also supporting improvement and learning over time. Depending on what communities, organisations and countries need, it could support people to understand good rangeland stewardship, guide improvements in management, inform policies and investments and help track progress over time. It may also be used - if stakeholders choose - as the basis for independent verification or certification.

Certification is therefore one possible way the Standard could be used, not the only one. The following section explains how the Standard would work if it were applied within a certification system.

How certification would work

We're designing the RSC Standard to work in many different situations, including private land, communal land, customary systems, leased land, and shared grazing areas. It would also work for both mobile and settled livestock systems.

The certification model would be based on three main parts:

- **Certificate Holder** - the person or group responsible for meeting the Standard
- **Management Unit** - the land area included
- **Operational Units** - the households, herding groups, camps or sites where activities happen

The Certificate Holder could be:

- an individual herder or farmer
- a family or household
- a cooperative or producer group
- a community or customary authority
- a company or organisation
- another recognised body responsible for the land

The land included in certification can be:

- one area or several areas
- seasonal grazing areas
- mobile grazing routes
- shared land with other users

Certification only applies to the people who choose to participate. Other users on the same land do not prevent certification, as long as responsibilities are clear. Groups of producers can also be certified together under one responsible organisation.

The Standard does not require any particular land ownership system. It is designed to work across private, communal, customary, or state-managed land, recognising that rangeland management often involves shared use and different rights.

The Six Principles of the RSC Standard

Each principle describes an important aspect of good rangeland stewardship. The themes underneath each principle group related topics or areas within the Standard.

PRINCIPLE	INTENT	THEMES
1. Effective Management	Ensure that people responsible for rangeland management have clear roles, simple planning processes, and opportunities for learning and improvement that fit pastoral realities and support long-term stewardship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration and coordination - Record keeping and documentation - Understanding and learning - Continual improvement - Collaborative rangeland management
2. Responsible Land Governance & Tenure	Ensure that rangeland use is based on legitimate and transparent land and resource rights, supports fair access and participation, and helps prevent conflict while strengthening long-term security for pastoral livelihoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear and legitimate land and resource use rights - Inclusive and participatory land use planning - Conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms - Equitable access and participation - Transparency and external pressures - Integration with national and regional frameworks

3. Regenerative Management and Ecosystem Health	Strengthen rangeland health through adaptive grazing and land management practices that protect soil, vegetation, biodiversity and water, while recognising that rangelands are dynamic systems shaped by climate and pastoral use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptive grazing practices - Conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity - Soil and vegetation health - Water resources and hydrological function - Restoration and recovery
4. Resilient Livelihoods	Support pastoral households and communities to manage risks, adapt to change, and maintain viable and resilient livelihoods in the face of environmental, economic and social challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk awareness and planning - Economic resilience and viability - Diversification and adaptive capacity - Health, safety and wellbeing
5. Rights, Equity & Inclusion	Respect human rights, cultural values and traditional knowledge, and promote fairness, inclusion and participation for all people involved in or affected by rangeland management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human rights and responsible labour - Participation and inclusive decision-making - Cultural values and traditional knowledge - Equity and non-discrimination - Community relations and social responsibility
6. Animal welfare (under development)	Ensure livestock and working animals are cared for responsibly, with attention to their health, wellbeing and humane treatment throughout their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animal health and nutrition - Handling and husbandry practices - Living conditions and environment - Transport and slaughter - Working animals

Feedback and further Information

The RSC Standard is still being developed, and your knowledge and lived experience as stewards of these lands are essential to making sure it works on the ground. We invite you to share your feedback and help shape something that will provide real value to rangelands and pastoralists around the world.

If you would like to read the full standard draft, have any questions for our team or wish to share your feedback, please contact us at: consultation@rangelandstewardship.org