Rangeland Stewardship Council

GLOBAL RANGELANDS STANDARD

VERSION 0.2 HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

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 Global Rangelands Standard 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.

HOW WE GOT HERE

The Global Rangelands Standard is an RSC-led initiative. It has been developed through an iterative and consultative process, with support from UNCCD, the Sustainable Fibre Alliance and the GEF-funded STELARR project, which is implemented by IUCN and executed by ILRI and partners.

Development has drawn on existing standards and good practice, scientific and technical expertise, practitioner experience and stakeholder consultation. Across the development process to date, 15 consultation and engagement activities have brought together perspectives from pastoralists, technical experts, civil society, industry and international organisations, with more than 630 comments and feedback points recorded and considered.

Version 0.2 reflects multiple phases of consultation, review and refinement. Key changes include strengthened recognition of diverse rangeland governance and tenure systems; clearer scope and application pathways; greater recognition of pastoralist and Indigenous rights and knowledge; strengthened requirements relating to participation and equity; clearer integration of ecosystem services, climate resilience and adaptive management; revised wildlife and biodiversity provisions; a stronger outcomes focus; and further development of the animal welfare principle.

Version 0.2 was launched at COP17 as the Foundation Standard for stewardship of the world's rangelands. It establishes the core global framework and normative requirements on which the next phase of development, testing and implementation will build. Its release is an important milestone, while recognising that further technical work, supporting systems and stakeholder engagement are still needed before full piloting and formal approval.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL RANGELANDS STANDARD

The Global Rangelands Standard is a globally applicable framework for defining, supporting and recognising responsible rangeland stewardship. It translates broad global and national sustainability ambitions for rangelands into practical expectations that can guide action at the landscape level. The Standard takes a whole-system approach, recognising that rangeland health is closely connected to the people and animals that depend on them, and the governance systems that shape their use.

At a high level, the Standard aims to:

- conserve rangeland health, biodiversity and ecosystem functions;
- respect rights, knowledge, culture and equitable participation;
- promote adaptive management, high animal welfare, resilient livelihoods and continual improvement; and
- help connect responsible stewardship with markets, incentives, finance and recognition.

WHO AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

The Standard is global in scope and is intended for livestock production systems where direct grazing or browsing of natural or semi-natural rangelands is integral to production. This includes pastoral, agropastoral and ranching systems, and mobile, transhumant, nomadic and settled systems.

It can work across private, communal, customary, state-owned, leased and mixed tenure arrangements. It does not prescribe one land ownership, governance or production model.

The Standard can support responsible production across the diversity of rangeland products, including fibre, meat, dairy, hides and other livestock-derived products. The current normative scope focuses on rangeland stewardship and associated livestock production. Feedlots, permanent confinement and other systems where rangeland grazing is incidental are outside scope, as are downstream processing, manufacturing and retail.

The same global requirements apply across contexts, but how they are demonstrated can vary. Country-level guidance will be developed for countries where the Standard is implemented. It will address relevant legal, tenure, governance, institutional, ecological and cultural contexts and support context-appropriate interpretation and application without altering the global normative requirements of the Standard.

HOW CAN THE STANDARD BE USED?

The Global Rangelands Standard can be used in different ways to recognise and support responsible rangeland stewardship, while also supporting improvement and learning over time.

As the Foundation Standard, Version 0.2 provides the common global framework from which these different application pathways can be further developed and tested.

Certification is one possible pathway, but it is not the only purpose of the Standard. Depending on the context, the Standard may be used as:

- a reference framework for defining good rangeland stewardship;
- a practical guide for improving management and learning over time;
- a benchmarking tool to compare, align or strengthen other standards and programmes;
- a basis for monitoring, reporting, landscape programmes or investment frameworks;
- a tool to support policy alignment, responsible sourcing, markets and finance; or
- a foundation for independent verification or certification.

Further guidance for application pathways other than certification will be developed as the wider RSC sustainability system is completed.

HOW THE STANDARD IS STRUCTURED

The normative Standard has three connected levels:

- **Principles** - the six broad areas of good rangeland stewardship;
- **Themes** - related topics grouped under each Principle; and
- **Requirements** - the specific expectations used to assess alignment with the Standard.

Each Theme also has a desired outcome and non-normative guidance. Requirements are divided into minimum requirements, which set baseline expectations, and improvement requirements, which provide pathways for strengthening practice over time. The Standard focuses on what needs to be demonstrated, while allowing flexibility in how this is achieved.

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.	- Administration and coordination - Record keeping and documentation - Understanding and learning - Adaptive management and learning - Collaborative rangeland management
2. Responsible Land Governance and 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.	- 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. Land 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.	- Adaptive grazing practices - Conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity - Rangeland condition and ecological function - Pollution prevention and waste management
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.	- Risk awareness and planning - Livelihood diversity

5. Rights, Equity & Inclusion	Respect human rights, cultural values and pastoralists' knowledge, and promote fairness, inclusion and participation for all people involved in or affected by rangeland management.	- Empowered Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities - Inclusive participation, gender equity & non-discrimination - Fair work and labour rights - Safe working and living conditions - Child rights and pastoral learning
6. Animal Welfare	Ensure livestock and working animals are cared for responsibly, with attention to their health, wellbeing and humane treatment throughout their lives.	- Animal health and disease prevention - Nutrition and access to water - Humane handling, living conditions and husbandry - Veterinary treatment and medicines - Transport and slaughter

WHAT WOULD CERTIFICATION LOOK LIKE?

Where the Standard is used for certification, it is designed to work with mobility, shared land and overlapping use. The model has 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

A Management Unit can include one or several areas, seasonal or mobile grazing areas, and shared or overlapping land. It does not have to follow fixed property boundaries. 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.

Group certification can allow multiple producers or Operational Units to participate under one responsible Certificate Holder, with internal arrangements proportionate to the scale and risk of the group.

WHAT IS STILL TO BE DONE?

Version 0.2 establishes the Foundation Standard, but the Standard itself is only one part of the system needed for credible implementation. The next phase will therefore focus on strengthening the Standard where needed and developing the supporting system required to put it into practice.

This includes:

- Further technical review and consultation to identify gaps, unintended consequences and areas needing refinement.
- Development of supporting tools and guidance, including the Rangeland Management Plan template, Participatory Risk Planning Template, country-level guidance and additional species-specific animal welfare annexes needed for pilots.
- Further development of the monitoring system, building upon the Global Rangeland Health Monitoring Framework (which covers biophysical outcomes) so that social, economic, governance, animal welfare and management and learning outcomes are also incorporated.
- Development of the assurance system, including how conformity will be assessed consistently across very different rangeland contexts.

- Further development of application, market and recognition pathways, including benchmarking with existing standards and links with responsible sourcing, finance and investment.
- Pilot testing in diverse rangeland systems, landscapes and value chains once the necessary monitoring, assurance and implementation components are sufficiently developed.
- Revision based on technical review and pilot learning, followed by RSC's formal approval process.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The release of the Version 0.2 Foundation Standard at COP17 marks the beginning of the next phase: testing, learning and strengthening the Standard and the wider system needed to support its credible application.

RSC is seeking continued input from pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, technical and scientific partners, governments, civil society, brands, buyers, value-chain actors, investors and potential pilot partners.

The aim is a Standard that people managing rangelands recognise as relevant to their own lives, that supports customary and other legitimate governance systems, and that can connect good stewardship with meaningful recognition, markets and investment.

The Foundation Standard provides the common starting point for that next phase. Its development will continue through technical review, stakeholder engagement, supporting system development and, in time, learning from application and pilots across diverse rangeland contexts.

We invite you to read Version 0.2, share feedback and get involved through the Rangeland Stewardship Council.

Contact: consultation@rangelandstewardship.org

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