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# TGI – OUR STRENGTHS TO CONTRIBUTE TO WESTERN BALKANS



## THEMATIC/TECHNICAL STRENGTHS

- Participatory Rangelands (Grasslands, Meadows, Pastures) Conservation & Management
- Transhumance, Pastoralism, and Shepherds-Owned Self-Governance
- Sustainable/Organic Agriculture Development; Climate Smart Agriculture
- Micro Watershed Management (Integrated) and Ecological Restoration
- Conservation of Biocultural Heritage, Biodiversity Heritage, CCA (community served area)
- Land Rights, Resource Rights and Multi-Stakeholder Advocacy

## METHODOLOGICAL STRENGTHS

- Project Planning, Writing, Execution, Management & Monitoring {Organizing the Local People as Primary Stakeholders [project oriented]}
- Capacity Building and Training of Project Stakeholders [multiple skills & disciplines]
- Process Writing, Documentation and Communication
- Advocacy, Media Advocacy, Skill Training
- Participatory and Action Research
- Curriculum Design and Mainstreaming in School & Higher Education Institutions



# WESTERN BALKAN REGIONAL GATHERING OF PASTORALISTS

To observe IYRP 2026, The Grassroots Institute facilitates the Regional Gathering and calls for Partners and Collaborators in all 6 countries of the Western Balkans region. We are in the process of constituting Organizing Committees at the national, zonal, local levels. Interested stakeholders, including shepherd groups/ associations, national or local NGOs, municipalities, government departments, regional authorities, academic institutions, animal products business federations, farmers' cooperatives, youth groups, colleges/schools, and others, are invited to contact us.



**SHKODËR**  
**ALBANIA**



**25-26 APRIL 2026**



**IYRP**  
**2026**  
INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF  
RANGELANDS AND  
PASTORALISTS

[www.iyrp.info](http://www.iyrp.info)



Photo Courtesy: Nina Martinelli



# Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Rangelands, Transhumance and Pastoralism

[Preparatory Workshop for Regional Gathering]



Elbasan, Albania





GENESIS OF MAJORITY OF PROBLEMS OF PASTORALISTS  
*begins with*

Dilemma of Deep Ecologists Treating Grazing as  
an Enemy of Natural Ecosystems



# The Myth of the “Pristine Nature”

- Deep ecologists tend to romanticize wilderness as a state untouched by humans. But globally, *no landscape is truly pristine*. Pastoralists — from Mongolian herders to Sahelian Fulani and Albanian shepherds — have *co-created* ecosystems for millennia.
- The European Alps’ meadows (natural heritage) are in fact human-made through centuries of grazing. With abandoned grazing, flower-rich meadows turn into dark spruce forests — *biodiversity collapse*. In Balkan mountain pastures, biodiversity declined after grazing stopped.
- The “natural” state is often an *artifact of pastoral human history*. Removing herders in the name of wilderness restoration can *destroy* the ecological complexity that humans helped create.
- Grazing is not degradation — it’s the memory of ecological co-creation.





# Deep Ecology's Colonial Blind Spot

- Deep ecology preaches “nature without local people”
- Indigenous and pastoral communities are displaced/ evicted for “fortress conservation” projects across Africa, Asia, other poor countries. Restrictions imposed on pastoralists in Albania and Balkans.
- Commodification of nature for consumer tourism.
- Guardian pastoralists are made trespassers and criminalized, dispossessed, alienated, repressed
- Deep ecology replicates a **colonial logic** — privileging elite, urban ecological purity over the ecological knowledge of local people.
- The real ecological violence often comes from removing those who sustained the landscape.





# Grazers or Shepherds as Ecosystem Engineers



- Traditional transhumant grazing maintains soil fertility, prevents woody encroachment, and sustains pollinator diversity.
- Livestock act as “ecological movers”: distributing seeds, recycling nutrients, shaping habitat structure.
- Transhumant grazing prevents shrub invasion and maintains open habitats for birds and pollinators.
- The true ecological threat: industrial agriculture, feedlots, monocultures.
- Pastoralism, in its traditional form, represents *the antithesis of industrial agriculture*: decentralized, regenerative, adaptive, non-extractive.



# Pastoralism







- ❖ Pastoralism as the coexistence of dependence on livestock with spatial mobility.
- ❖ Nomadic or mobile pastoralism a sustainable livelihood in a diverse range of countries
- ❖ Herders' ability to move manages risk in marginal landscapes where domesticated animals efficiently convert limited ecological productivity into sustenance.
- ❖ Extensive (not intensive) livestock grazing is an excellent example of managing biodiversity and soil fertility.
- ❖ Transport of seeds and insects by livestock, the migration of pastoralists and their flocks supports habitat connectivity and biodiversity



# Productive lifestyles



- ❖ Pastoral production occurs in 25% of global land area from dry lands of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to the highlands of Asia, Latin America and the Arctic parts of Fennoscandia and Russia ;
- ❖ In sub-Saharan Africa alone, > 50 million people live as nomadic pastoralists;
- ❖ Main livestock species kept by pastoralists are cattle, donkeys, goats, sheep, alpaca and llamas (in Andes), camels, horses, buffalo, reindeer and yak;



- ◆ Simel (2009) and Hesse (2009) have shown that pastoralism is more productive per hectare than commercial ranching or sedentary livestock keeping in similar environmental conditions.
- ◆ High productivity of livestock in pastoral systems not only supports millions of pastoralists but also contributes significantly to other sectors of national and regional economies





- ◇ 200 million pastoral households produce 10% of the world's meat
- ◇ Compared to settled farmers in Africa, pastoralists produce 50-70% of all the milk, beef and mutton
- ◇ In Iran, pastoralists keep 25% of the national herd. Economies of countries like Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan depend on livestock herders







## **Issues Challenging Pastoralists**

- (1) subjugation of pastoralists by state policies,
  - (2) civilized ideology encourages the sedentarization,
  - (3) military pacification and political control, and
  - (4) recent phenomenon of globalization
- ◊ **Borders closed for landscapes and grassland ecosystems**
  - ◊ **Hostile attitude of governments to pastoralism**
  - ◊ **Marginalization, Social Exclusion and Disenfranchisement**
  - ◊ **Non-Recognition of Customary Land Rights**





- ◇ Fragmentation of Rangeland Habitats and Disturbed Migratory Routes
- ◇ Massive Conversion of Rangelands to Industrial/Urban Uses
- ◇ Enclosure of Common Lands, incl. forests, meadows, parks
- ◇ Encroachment of Pasturelands by powerful elites, mining, factories, government departments, politicians, etc.
- ◇ Breakdown of Traditional Village Institutions protecting the commons
- ◇ Atrocities, Exploitation, Prosecution of Nomads by Police





- ◇ Changing Weathers and Increasing Uncertainties
- ◇ Increased Veterinary Diseases and Lack of Animal Care
- ◇ Changing Occupations and Declining Population of Herders (Invisibility, Unrepresentation, Deliberate Exclusion)
- ◇ Mass (commercial) Tourism to destroy nature and culture

Sara Randall (2015). Where have all the nomads gone? Fifty years of statistical and demographic invisibilities of African mobile pastoralists. *Pastoralism* 5 (2015).



# International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists – IYRP 2026



Western Balkans Regional Gathering of Pastoralists

25-26 April 2026 | Shkodër, Albania

# Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

## 1. Disease Prevention and Control

- ❖ Support community-based animal health systems that combine formal veterinary science with traditional herders' disease recognition methods (e.g., local observation of animal behavior, coat, and appetite).
- ❖ Coordinate vaccination and deworming adapted to **transhumant mobility patterns** between high summer pastures (bjeshkët) and lowland wintering areas.
- ❖ Monitor endemic diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, brucellosis, and parasitic infections, incorporating **shepherds' seasonal disease calendars** into surveillance systems.





# Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

## 2. Breeding and Genetic Conservation

- ❖ Support the preservation and selective breeding of **native livestock breeds** like the Ruda sheep and Busha cattle, valued for their disease resistance and adaptation to alpine terrains. Documentation of traditional breeds of livestock.
- ❖ Combine veterinary genetic techniques with **herders' selection knowledge** based on behavior, stamina, and milk yield under natural conditions.
- ❖ Promote participatory breeding program involving both veterinarians and shepherd communities.





# Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

## 3. Mobile & Community-Based Veterinary Services

- ❖ Establish **mobile veterinary units** to reach remote highland areas during transhumance seasons.
- ❖ Train **Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs)** or **Para-Vets** among youth herders, enabling first-response treatment and disease reporting. [TGI has conceptualized this project]
- ❖ Use mobile phones and digital tools to link pastoralists with veterinary centers in Kelmend, Tropojë, Puka, Elbasan, etc.





# Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

## 4. Integration of Ethnoveterinary Knowledge

- ❖ Document and validate **traditional herbal remedies** (e.g., use of garlic, juniper berries, or mountain herbs for internal parasites and wounds).
- ❖ Encourage collaborative research between veterinarians and local elders to catalogue effective **folk veterinary practices**. (FRLH model)
- ❖ Incorporate **ethnoveterinary** approaches into national animal health extension materials and shepherd training programs.



# Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

## 5. Capacity Building and Pastoral Training

- ❖ Train shepherds in improved animal health, hygiene, and nutrition management while valuing their indigenous expertise.
- ❖ Organize participatory workshops linking herders, veterinarians, and agricultural universities (e.g., Agricultural University of Tirana, Agri Colleges).
- ❖ Encourage intergenerational knowledge exchange on animal care, grazing routes, and environmental stewardship.





# Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

## 6. Research, Innovation, and Resilience

- ❖ Conduct participatory field studies on disease ecology, nutrition, and climate resilience in mountain pastures.
- ❖ **Internships** to learn local wisdom of livestock management from shepherd families
- ❖ Explore the role of **traditional plant-based remedies** in veterinary pharmacology.
- ❖ Innovate in **climate-smart veterinary services**, blending indigenous and modern science for sustainable pastoral systems.



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## **Country Mobilization Team:**

- 1- Mobilizing Shepherds (2-3)
- 2- Mobilizing NGO/CSO (1-2)
- 3- Mobilizing Academia and Research Institutions (1)
- 4- Mobilizing Trade Networks (1)
- 5- Mobilizing Media and PR (2-3)
- 6- Handling Social Media (3)
- 7- Solving Logistic Arrangements (1-2)
- 8- Mobilizing Volunteers (1-2)
- 9- Moderation with Government (1)
- 10- Main (Country) Coordinator (1)

## **What is expected from team members?**

- a) Inspiration & motivation to contribute to shepherds;
- b) Ability to contribute time voluntarily to help the shepherds' movement;
- c) Competency and capacity to deliver the assigned function

How will you contribute?