

Rangelands Rising: Investing in Sustainable Management and Restoration

Fast facts and additional information for media

Key figures at a glance

- Rangelands cover 54% of the Earth's land surface.
- 500 million pastoralists depend on them.
- They hold roughly one third of the world's key biodiversity areas.
- Ecosystem services are worth an estimated US\$21–47 trillion a year — about US\$5,000 per hectare (the range reflects how much land is counted as rangeland). That is up to nearly half of the global GDP.
- Restoration typically returns US\$4–6 per dollar invested — and up to 36:1 where public benefits such as water supply are counted.
- Restoration costs range from about US\$20/ha (grazing management) to over US\$70,000/ha for severely degraded land.
- Rangelands appear in the national climate plans of just 24 countries, against 181 for forests.
- As of 2025, the private sector provides only about 6% of global financing to combat land degradation and drought.

The economic case — examples

- **Jordan (al hima grazing revival):** returned 0.8:1 to the herders who bore the costs but 18:1 to society as a whole, mostly through groundwater recharge — a vivid illustration of why the people restoring land cannot capture the value they create.
- **Tunisia (modelled restoration programme):** projected to return 8:1 to 12:1 over ten years, with the initial investment recovered within three to five years.
- **Niger (farmer-managed natural regeneration):** over 5 million hectares restored and more than 200 million trees regenerated, lifting forage yields from around 350 to 1,500 kg/ha — largely by protecting natural regrowth rather than planting.
- **China (large-scale restoration):** one of the world's largest restoration portfolios (~US\$235 billion), candidly assessed — moderate destocking paid off, while aggressive destocking caused income losses.
- **Relief versus resilience:** every US\$1 of timely assistance is worth an estimated US\$3 in later humanitarian spending; drought relief reached about 7% of GDP in Niger in 2021, with aid often arriving six months into a crisis.

Rangelands and food

- Rangelands make a significant contribution to food production, particularly high-value animal protein, from land that cannot support crops without heavy inputs.

- In Sub-Saharan Africa, pastoralism contributes an estimated 5–10% of national GDP and 15–40% of agricultural value added; counting indirect benefits (manure, traction, savings and insurance functions) raises livestock's economic contribution by around 50%.
- Multi-species pastoralism has been found to be 2–10 times more productive than single-commodity meat production on the same land.

Rangelands and climate

- Healthy grasslands act, globally, as a net carbon sink, holding much of their carbon in the soil; degradation releases it.
- Rangelands are one of the most effective natural defences against drought — improving water infiltration and recharging aquifers.
- Forest-centric restoration targets risk afforesting grasslands that never had trees, damaging ecosystems restoration is meant to repair.
- Nuance: the report's climate case rests on extensive pastoral systems on natural rangelands, not intensive grain-fed production.

The report calls on:

- **Governments** to recognise pastoralists' land and resource rights and include rangelands in national climate, biodiversity, restoration and economic plans;
- **Donors and development finance institutions** to invest in the governance, institutions and public infrastructure needed to attract responsible long-term finance;
- **Investors** to recognise rangelands as a major investment opportunity and work in partnership with the communities who manage them; and
- **Restoration programmes** to prioritise locally led approaches that strengthen pastoral systems rather than displacing or replacing them.

Methodology:

- The report synthesizes the latest peer-reviewed research, global evidence, and international case studies on rangelands. Using an adapted Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) framework, it assesses the ecological, economic, social, and governance dimensions of sustainable rangeland management and restoration to identify practical investment opportunities.
- This work was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Read the full report here: <https://www.ilri.org/rangelands-rising-investing-sustainable-global-restoration>