

## Grassland and savannah dialogue 3: Notes from the breakout sessions

10<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### Agenda

- Update: The motion *Protecting and restoring endangered grassland and savannah ecosystems* was successfully confirmed by IUCN World Conservation Congress.
- An update on the global rangeland data platform, from Fiona Flintan
- An up-date on the International year of rangelands and pastoralists, planned for 2026, from Ann Waters-Bayer
- Rangeland video (2 min)
- An update: Grassland/ Rangeland and UN DECADE on Restoration, and results of the GLF Rangeland Session from Nicole Harari / Hanspeter Liniger
- Short presentation on identifying priority grasslands and savannahs ecosystems from Nigel Dudley
- Breakout Groups (1 on the Global rangeland data platform, and 2 on identification of priority grassland ecosystems)

Presentations are available on the website. The following notes draw on discussions in the various breakout sessions and on the meeting chat

### Rangeland mapping

A group discussed next stages on the project, now that ILRI has obtained funding to take the mapping exercise forward.

The session explored what global/regional (and national) big data sets or data platforms on rangelands currently exist

- **ILRI:** has so far created three filters: (i) rangelands map from SRM/University of Idaho; (ii) grasslands & savannahs; and (iii) drylands; and used these to harvest from other data sets such as global protected areas, key biodiversity areas, FAO production systems and land degradation neutrality to produce maps of these themes in rangelands, drylands and grasslands. Focus of this first iteration is on global and regional data but hope later on to be able to connect with national level later.
- **LandMark**, mapping of community lands, has been explored but there is a general lack of data on rangelands
- **WOCAT** is working with Conservation International (Trends Earth); on trends and indicators. A global database on land management serves many different audiences; selecting an interface useful for each is challenging and makes the costs high; feedback is requested.

#### Other systems mentioned:

- Land Potential Knowledge System (LPKS)
- Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN)
- Sophie Reinermann described a remote sensing platform from Germany, and it was suggested she join the subgroup looking at remote sensing options. *Question:* can imaging go back in time or is it just current? Sophie thinks it can go back a few years

**Discussion:** covered a range of topics and raised some questions

- **Requirements:** need to understand what people require from the data and who the end users are; a survey may be needed to find the information and help to establish priorities, although the existing UNEP gap analysis might be useful
- **Data needs:** related to this, what new data should be collected and what should be prioritized? It may be worth including data on people as well as land resources, along with economic data and information on beef and sheep production

- **Partnerships:** What ideas are there for new partnerships and/or funding to increase scope of the global rangelands data platform? People involved in the datasets mentioned above and additionally perhaps the Global Restoration Observatory

### Criteria and indicators

These notes combine input from two discussion groups and the meeting chat.

The overall goal is to identify grassland and savannah hotspots around the world. Currently although many indicators are fairly clear, there is a serious challenge relating to availability of data. A number of issues will be particularly critical; e.g., the extent to which non-native species dominate. There is some thinking on approaches, particularly related to the High Conservation Value framework, although this does not usually analyse conservation potential. Several existing global analyses could be useful reference, checking material and backstopping, such as Key Biodiversity Areas (which will anyway be an important indicator), Global 200 ecoregions, the Centre of Plant Diversity analysis, and the CI Global hotspots. Some are quite old now; all will be useful for checking for gaps in any analysis.

**Criteria:** several additional criteria were suggested:

- **Economic potential:** can be a powerful criterion helping inform decision makers, particularly relating to ecosystem services, meaning that criteria reflect not only *protective* but also *productive* aspects, although this needs careful evaluation of benefits and impacts. But some ecologically important areas have little direct economic value, and/or few people living there
- **Livelihoods:** was suggested as an alternative to economic indicators, in case the latter were too complex or confusing
- **Governance type:** would also be a useful criterion of overall habitat condition. It may also be worth distinguishing between **importance** and **feasibility of acting**, in using criteria and indicators in a planning process
- **Threats of invasive species:** particularly plant species
- **Fragmentation:** including its impacts on pastoralists

Several other suggestions made, and questions raised

- Should measurement be on a national or regional level? Would it be possible to produce a harmonized system with local and national partners? What would national partners do with such a list? There were concerns about making a system too complicated.
- Any system needs to be quick and simple to use; we can learn from the experience of putting together a prioritization process for North American grasslands.<sup>1</sup>
- The result of such an exercise would probably not be one list, but a series of different lists, selected by people and organisations with different priorities

**Next steps:** the following steps are all needed

1. Initial identification of interest and collaborators
2. Agreement on a draft list of indicators
3. Collection of existing or easily obtainable information to supply data for indicators
4. Application of these to draw up an initial list of priority sites
5. Checking against existing global datasets for obvious gaps
6. Thorough review and finalisation

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CEC. 2005. *North American Grasslands Priority Conservation Areas*. Karl, J. and Hoth, J. (eds.). North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation and the Nature Conservancy. <http://www3.cec.org/islandora/es/item/2568-north-american-grassland-priority-conservation-areas-en.pdf>