Grassland dialogue: Generating Ideas for the UN Food Systems Summit

The dialogue considered eight themes, and solutions, strategies and actions for each. The distinction between these three was sometimes blurred; in this initial outline they are mainly treated together.

**Degradation:** proposals were overwhelmingly for solutions based on (better) cultural management: agroforestry, regenerative grazing, farmer-managed natural regeneration, etc., with invasive woody scrub removal. Strategies range from national and corporate commitments (e.g., Land Degradation Neutrality) to dialogue with pastoralists, focusing on resilience-based approaches (climate-smart, Disaster Risk Reduction), traditional farming systems, and reintegration of livestock and agriculture.

**Biodiversity:** proposals were more varied: prioritising protected areas in grassland, holistic, regenerative agriculture, ecological corridors and strategic rewilding. At a practical level this includes integrating wildlife and protected areas in corporate commitments to protect high conservation values and to sustainability schemes and conservation-production models, always working with the pastoralists involved. One key aim is to include grassland and savannah into the new CBD targets.

**Greenhouse gases:** the key message here was to gain better recognition (and understanding) of the role of grasslands and grassland soils in carbon storage and sequestration. This links with the other ecosystem services (e.g., water filtration). More work needed to reduce uncertainty about grassland carbon stocks. Lobbying to include grasslands in REDD+ schemes is a key step needed here.

**Impacts on society:** a strong reaction against demonising pastoralists (and meat eaters), and for diversified, labour-intensive, gender sensitive production systems working with wildlife. The need to differentiate intensive and extensive systems was highlighted, and. Different rangeland systems need to be tackled separately, in collaboration with pastoralists. Next steps include maps of ecosystem services in grasslands, indicators of cultural values and understanding of trade-offs.

**Knowledge gaps:** included especially many aspects of carbon sequestration and restoration, awareness of “conversion fronts” for grasslands and on-site, off-site impacts of different systems. There were some specific asks, including work on a grassland definition (with respect to the FAO definition of a forest). Filling knowledge gaps was proposed through MOOCs, better coverage in academic institutions and documentation of good practices.

**Policy responses:** related to altering agricultural support, linked to initiatives such as Thousand Landscapes, building an enabling environment for sustainable management and restoration. It is important to have livestock producers at the table as part of multijurisdictional partnerships. Increased regulation of financial and corporate sustainability is often required, along with the elimination of a range of perverse incentives. Support for the International Year of Rangelands.

**Investment:** innovative and catalytic strategies blending public and private finance are needed, the former often to kick-start sustainable processes. Steps towards this include evidence-based support tools, seed enhancement and native seed production, support from the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and better links to carbon-credit schemes. Bundling smaller project together to access Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) and other funding would often be valuable.

**Freshwater:** was less well addressed, although the needs for ecological flows and linking clean water and healthy grasslands in PES schemes were noted. Policy briefs and videos are needed.