

## **Proposal of Session**

### **“Thinking Rangeland as Commons”**

#### **Debates on Rangeland Socio-Ecosystems and Alternatives for Development**

##### **Pitch this session to Forum attendees in one sentence**

Socio-ecosystem located in all climates and in all continents, rangeland could be considered as a common good in order to slow down and make more sustainable the advance of intensive agribusiness destroying its various functions, especially environmental ones.

##### **Brief session description (150 words)**

Rangeland is a set of diverse socio-ecosystems covering between one and two thirds of the world's land, in form of steppe, prairie, shrub and tree savannah. Rangeland has key human functions, especially in water cycle, erosion control, biodiversity and minerals reserves. Rangeland is usually grazed by extensive livestock managed by emblematic societies with strong identity. Rangeland is also seen as low productive areas that could be better used to sustain the territorial and national economy. This justifies the strong and global agriculture expansion in rangeland, through specified public policies favoring private and public agribusiness initiatives.

"Rangeland Dilemma" is the confrontation between conservation of socio-environmental functions and unsustainable territorial development based on agriculture expansion, at medium-long term.

Alternatives exist: public policies adapted to local contexts, zoning to identify the most fragile zones (to be protected), collective actions strengthening the mutual approach, etc..... even thinking of the rangeland as a common good.

##### **Detailed session description (500 words/3500 Characters)**

Rangeland covers between one and two thirds of the world's land, according to the authors, in the form of steppe, prairie, shrub and tree savannah. Rangeland is located in all five continents, in lowland, plain, mountain, desert and wetland regions, both in the polar, tropical, subtropical and temperate zones. Rangeland is essential in the territorial, national and global economy both for stored water (in soil, vegetation, aquifers and groundwater, glaciers, etc.) and due to underground minerals, especially in the mountains, since it is the main source of minerals off the seabed. Rangeland has key functions from an environmental point of view,

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for example, its role in water cycle, erosion control and as a source of rich and specific biodiversity.

At the same time rangeland is grazed by extensive livestock for various reasons, combining physical, climatic and human geo-history, especially migration, economy and globalization. However, this ranching seems to have little impact on environmental functions in the short, medium and long term. Always in relation to livestock, rangeland is the cradle of emblematic societies with strong identity, such as the Pulars in sub-Saharan Africa, the Mongols and the Tibetans in Central Asia, the Bedouins in the southern and eastern Mediterranean, the Basques in Europe, the Gauchos and the Cowboys in America, respectively in the south and north of the continent. In other words, on the planet, rangeland appears as a set of diverse socio-ecosystems, each with its own complexity.

In addition to these important functions for humanity and future generations, rangeland is also seen as large empty, low productive areas that could be better used to sustain the territorial and national economy. This justifies the agriculture expansion in rangeland areas, through specified public policies that favor private and public agribusiness initiatives. This agriculture expansion process is global, since it is found in the majority of rangelands, in all climate zones. In the cases of canola and barley in the western Canada Prairie, soybean and eucalyptus in the of south-American Pampa (Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil), soybean and sugar cane in the tropical savanna called Cerrado (Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay), groundnut in west-Africa Sahel, irrigated crops in Mediterranean and Central Asia, for example.

The problem of the agriculture expansion in rangeland area seems complex because, on the one hand, it is a significant contribution to economic development and, on the other hand, it destroys the socio-biodiversity, and drops the environmental services produced by the rangeland. It increases soil erosion, decreases water capture and sequestration and the drastically reduces biodiversity. We call "Rangeland Dilemma" the confrontation between the conservation of rangeland with its socio-environmental functions and unsustainable territorial development of agriculture expansion, from socio-environmental and economic point of view, in the medium and long term.

There are some alternatives based on: (i) public policies adapted to local contexts, (ii) zoning to identify the most fragile and/or high-risk zones that need to be protected, (iii) and above all collective actions and common initiatives aimed at strengthening the mutual approach, overcoming the individual treatment of constraints and challenges, even thinking of the rangeland as a common good.

**Design and format of your session (100 words)**

The session proposes to receive contributions on current or past experiences, successfully or not, in this topic in any rangeland, either at research or extension level. We already have case studies in Trentino/Tyrol, Alps (Italia/Austria), Great Prairie (Canada), Pampa (Uruguay and Brazil), Cévennes (France), Mediterranean (Lebanon and Egypt), Tibetan Plateau (China), Ferlo (Senegal), and Amazon Várzea (Brazil). We expect other case studies. After an introduction giving a general presentation of the problem at the global level, the case studies will be presented. A final debate will raise the main ideas to be placed within the book edited from the session.

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**Coordination of the Session**

Carine Pachoud (UIBK & UNIPD, Austria & Italia), Marie Opplert (UnB-CDS & Cirad-Green, Brazil & France), Tienne Barbosa (UFSM & Cirad-Green, Brazil & France), Peggy Strankman (Special Areas, Canada), Paulo Waquil (UFRGS, Brazil), Ruijun Long (LZU & ICIMOD, China/Nepal) Jean F. Tourrand (UFSM & Cirad, Brazil/France), Mabelle Chedid (AUB, Lebanon), Liz Wedderburn (AgResearch, New Zealand), Olivier Barrière (IRD, France)

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**Gender issue**

The session is coordinated by two young female scientists, Marie Opplert, 25 and Carine Pachoud, 26. Up to now, two thirds of the potential speakers are women.

**Young people**

The dilemma of the rangelands is an issue for youth because, on the one hand, young people constitute the largest part of the rural exodus and, on the other hand, they are most motivated by agribusiness expansion in which they see a job opportunity maintaining their rural activity. Considering rangeland as a common good, especially land, is a way of decoupling rural activity from land ownership, to which young people often have little access. Moreover, and for this reason, young people are many times at the starting point of existing alternatives, especially in the Pampa (Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil), the Cévennes (France), the Great Plains (Western Canada).