

Good rangeland governance: Bringing Tunisian land tenure systems under one umbrella

Developing participative methodologies for enhancing rangeland governance under different land tenure systems.



Photo credit: Mouldi Gamoun, ICARDA.

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When ICARDA and the Institut des Régions Arides de Médenine – also known as IRA Médenine – brought stakeholders together for a workshop in south of Tunisia this summer, rangeland governance was on the agenda along with an invitation to spearhead discussions on the role of policy and guidance in this field.

Good rangelands governance is critical to deliver sustainable conservation and restoration results. In many dryland areas, rangelands are managed through collective land tenure systems meaning that land owners and land users are not always the same and are represented differently in decision making processes on rangeland use and management. This can often hamper ambitions to create good rangelands governance because of lack of self-organization.

The role and importance of social practices – such as equal participation and the chance to voice specific concerns - are therefore central to the process. The earlier in the process, the better, in order to identify stakeholders and bring them on board to enable broad participation in a democratic process.

Engaging stakeholders in policy development

It is known, that the more attention to social practices and better targeted investments there are, the better are chances that joint efforts can lead to improved rangeland governance and result in actual conservation of pasture lands.

Yet evidence-based guidance on policy and investment priorities to leverage rangeland governance is limited. Essential to initiate the process is the development of reliable advanced participatory

methodologies and analytical approaches to identify and highlight the most influencing governance factors and the way they can be improved.

Previous work of ICARDA and its national partners in Tunisia, in the framework of the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Livestock and the CRP on Policies, Institutions and Markets (PIM), was focusing on developing appropriate methodological tools and approaches for assessing and providing metrics of good rangeland governance under different land tenure contexts. Some of these indicators corresponds to the existence of restoration and rehabilitation programs of rangelands in a given area; the coherence and coordination level across key rangeland actors (owners and users), etc.

Within this framework, the workshop in Tunisia in June 2018 brought different stakeholders from three governorates, Médenine, Tataouine and Kebili located in the southern arid regions of Tunisia, including farmers, community and agricultural organizations, and local authorities together to test and apply participative methodologies for rangeland governance assessment and analysis.

The initiative aimed at identifying conditions for enhancing rangeland governance, and to quantify their respective impacts. This includes the identification of the specific impact and effect of land tenure systems and local rangeland users' associations.

Organized jointly by the Tunisian IRA Médenine - and ICARDA, the workshop was designed to capitalize on previous ICARDA and IRA work on rangeland governance under the both Livestock and PIM CRPs. These previous efforts have run since 2017 and included local stakeholders from both public and private organizations. This time, bringing stakeholders together in June aimed at validating research results and testing participatory scenarios from local partners who have been involved since the early design of the current research activity. One of the significant outputs from the workshop, the participants developed and simulated future scenarios as a way to jointly test means and tools to enhance participation in future rangeland governance.

Rangeland governance scenarios

Participants were very active in suggesting different scenarios for potential improvement of rangeland governance in their areas. Their suggested scenarios were instantly simulated in an interactive way, using a Bayesian Belief model (BBN) as a participatory decision-making tool. The BBN provides a probability distribution that helps identifying the most enabling (economic, environmental, and institutional) conditions stimulating good rangeland governance under different local constraints (such as a given land tenure system that is difficult to change).

Participants had the chance to comment and validate some of the generated results issued from the scenarios they suggested. Particularly, it became clear that the improvement of rangeland governance in collective rangelands is highly feasible and can be comparable to rangeland governance in private rangelands, if certain requirements are met. Among these requirements are effective farmer's organization and enhanced management capacities of local institutions. It was also found that the social capital of farmers' and their capacity to organize, in addition to the homogeneity of the group of farmers in terms of size and annual income, is highly and positively influencing governance.

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