

Improved Institutions and Governance Mechanisms for Resilient Pastoral Policies in North Africa

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Introduction

Rangelands in North Africa provide vital ecosystem services and play an important role in absorbing CO₂. In Tunisia rangelands cover 4.5 million hectares – some 25% of the country's total landmass. The sustainable management of these arid areas presents complex challenges for local authorities and the communities that depend on them. For centuries, herders have relied on communal rangelands as an effective adaptation strategy for coping with drought. However, currently, civil legislation in Tunisia does not reflect the complexity of land tenure across communal rangelands; nor does it effectively support the needs of communities.

Traditional land tenure systems have now been replaced by a de facto 'open access situation,' - which means that access to rangelands cannot be managed or controlled in the traditional manner, resulting in uncontrolled barley cultivation and overgrazing.

A new ICARDA initiative is supporting authorities to ensure communal rangelands become more resilient through policy reform. The initiative is finalizing a pastoral law in collaboration with stakeholders and prioritizing a model of sustainable and decentralized natural resource management, which reflects traditional Tunisian rangeland management approaches and knowledge.



Methods

This policy initiative adopts a negotiated governance approach, maximizing society's ability to address common problems. The approach involves multiple institutional levels that include local communities, national governments and international actors. Furthermore, the approach aims to develop the capacities of stakeholders, focusing on building enabling skills that can activate and coordinate networks, particularly among women, youth and other marginalized groups. Skills development related to the governance of common natural resources is also included.

ICARDA is prioritizing facilitation, scientific advice and capacity development. Alongside the General Directorate of Forestry (DGF) of the Ministry of Agriculture, ICARDA will ensure that all concerned stakeholders – men and women - actively participate in discussions related to the new pastoral code.



Learning from the experiences of other countries

The drafting of a new pastoral law in Tunisia will be informed by the experiences of other countries in North and West Africa, including Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Morocco. Information about the process of elaborating these codes in other countries is reviewed and discussed.

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Results

Negotiation Process

To meet this objective a series of local and national workshops have been organized where all concerned actors are actively involved.

The engagement of different stakeholders in the negotiation process is being fostered, and the entire process could take up to two years before new legislation is approved by the general assembly. Tunisian decision makers and relevant civil society stakeholders will organize as many discussions and negotiation rounds as possible to agree on the text of the new pastoral code. ICARDA will support the process by sharing best practice scientific principles. At the same time a Tunisian lawyer will classify legal and regulatory texts pertaining to rangelands in Tunisia and identify legal limitations and adjustments to improve current regulations. These recommendations will then be discussed during stakeholder negotiation rounds.

Capacity Development

Capacity development focuses on enabling skills to activate and coordinate networks, particularly among women, youth, and other marginalized groups. Skills development related to the governance of common natural resources is also part of the process.

The process towards a New Pastoral Code

