



Inclusive pastoralism

Capability statement | May 2026



Climate change and competition over resources threaten pastoralist systems in African drylands and risk driving vulnerable communities further into poverty. SNV provides pastoralists and agro-pastoralists with the tools, knowledge and capacity to increase their resilience and build sustainable livelihoods.

The challenge

Livestock is a vital and valuable part of Africa's drylands, supporting the livelihoods of over 110 million people across the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Through the production and trade of meat, milk and skins, (agro-) pastoralists contribute significantly to the region's economy, and the demand for livestock products continues to grow. At the same time, drylands are also among the poorest regions, with an estimated 80% of all pastoralists in Sub-Saharan Africa living below the poverty line.

These challenges are, and will increasingly be, amplified by the impacts of climate change. It is expected that higher temperatures, more variable rainfall and an increase in extreme weather events will severely affect the pasture and water resources that are so critical for pastoralists. This makes it increasingly difficult for pastoralists to adapt to new shocks and move out of poverty. Without action, the number of poor and vulnerable people within pastoral communities is likely to increase drastically.

In its many years working with pastoral communities throughout East and West Africa, SNV has developed effective strategies to enable pastoralists to build resilient livelihoods and become part of profitable value chains. Our goal is to stimulate this demand-driven approach to poverty alleviation so that pastoralists can optimally benefit from the variety of advantages that livestock offers, including food & nutrition security, work, economic and social status, and a cash buffer against shocks. This infosheet highlights the different approaches and tools that SNV is implementing, along with examples illustrating what we have achieved in various countries.

Our impact

15 projects

7 countries

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Kenya, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique

Improving the lives of over

180,000 people

Approach

Despite the many challenges, there are growing opportunities in the livestock sector that can benefit pastoralists and drylands. Pastoralism has demonstrated its capacity to adapt to ever-changing environments and has the potential to contribute to meeting the growing demand for meat and milk, including in urban areas. SNV works at the producer level, the supply chain level and across the wider landscape to deliver livelihood benefits for pastoralists and achieve sustainable development at scale.

Landscape level and beyond. As the spatial dimension is so vital in the pastoral environment, SNV is exploring ways to improve pastoralists' access to information across the landscape and beyond borders. We work with geodata to map pastoral movements and resources to inform land use planning. Our latest innovation is a mobile information system that provides pastoralists with up-to-date information on where to find pasture and water resources, what weather to expect, which areas to avoid, and livestock prices at nearby markets. This ensures better decisions on herd movement, resulting in more sustainable resource use, improved livestock productivity, and reduced conflicts between farmers and pastoralists.

Value chain level. SNV has developed a Climate Risk Assessment tool, which we use at the beginning of projects to identify the main climate impacts, and the vulnerability of actors, resources and processes along value chains and across the landscape. Based on that, we formulate adaptation options that effectively tackle the underlying causes of the identified climate risks.

Livestock markets are one of the main entry points through which SNV improves the livelihoods of pastoralists. In our proven Co-Management Model, which we have widely applied in East Africa, public and private partners jointly take up the management and maintenance of livestock markets. We support the development of business plans to attract more buyers, improve market information, and enhance vital services, such as animal health services.

Pastoralists and rangeland communities are deeply connected to food systems, biodiversity, and climate resilience. They manage scarcity, adapt to change, and sustain social cohesion in some of the world's most fragile environments.

Local production. In conjunction with landscape-level natural resource management, SNV also works at the community and farm levels to improve the management of water, pasture, farmland, and trees. This is especially relevant for producers who combine livestock and farming (agro-pastoralists). In our work, we aim to create synergies between both systems. We stimulate the productive use of manure for biogas production or as organic fertiliser. Likewise, we integrate fodder trees and crops into farming systems, providing nutritious feed for animals and improving their health and productivity. Trees are an essential element in these systems based on their multiple benefits, ranging from improving soil fertility and biodiversity to providing (protein-rich) fodder, fruits, wood and timber.



Highlighted project experience

Dryland Sahel Programme (PRO-ARIDES) | Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger | Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DANIDA | €105M | 2020-2030

Pro-ARIDES' contributes to increasing the resilience, food security and incomes of agricultural and (agro) pastoral households through effective decentralised institutions that improve natural resources and land management. The programme covers nine regions in three countries. In the first three years of implementation, 63,000 hectares of agricultural and pastoral land were brought under sustainable management, 36,000 farmers successfully secured their land rights, 40,000 farmers adopted climate-smart practices, and 40,000 households diversified their income sources.

Peaceful Cross-border Pastoral Mobility and Social Stability in the Sahel (MOPSS) | Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso | SIDA, DANIDA | €20M | 2019-2026

MOPSS works to strengthen social cohesion in cross border transhumance zones in the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea by promoting resilience to climate and security shocks, peaceful livestock mobility and inclusive local economies. Recently, MOPSS facilitated a multi stakeholder dialogue to develop a pastoral management plan for the Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso (SKBo) border zone between Mali, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. The project has created 223 businesses in the dairy and livestock value chains, 220 of which are still in operation and 38% of which are owned by women. Current efforts are focused on mobilising funds to implement the plan with the partner UTCTE-SKBo.

Laikipia, Isiolo, and Samburu Transforming the Environment Through Nexus (LISTEN) | Kenya | FCDC, AGRA | €3.6M | 2020-2024

LISTEN promoted good agricultural practices across 60,193 hectares of farmland and rangeland in Northern Kenya, reaching 15,596 farmers with improved seeds, smart irrigation, and green technologies. SNV built a last-mile agriculture and livestock extension system: 169 village-based advisors linked to 33 agro-dealers creating a farmer-owned, commercial supply chain for climate-smart inputs. SNV developed a 10-year water resources management plan benefiting 13,399 people and formed clusters across 7 associations to end fragmented water governance. Most critically, SNV embedded the Nexus approach into county planning processes, operationalised the climate change acts in all three counties, and secured 2–2.5% of county development budgets for climate action—proving that policy translates into financing, physically rehabilitating 198 hectares of degraded land.



Mobile Data for Moving Herd Management MODHEM | Burkina Faso | €14M | 2015-2024 STAMP | Mali | €11M | 2015-2023 IDAN | Niger | €5M | 2021-2024

Climate change and insecurity are challenging traditional knowledge and are threatening farmers' and pastoralists' assets and sources of income. The SNV GARBAL information system aims to improve the resilience of climate-affected farmers and pastoralists in West Africa through access to and use of geosatellite-derived data in a bundled digital service. Pastoralists, for example, receive advice on the best grazing grounds or where to find water sources. GARBAL gives farmers and pastoralists livestock owners greater predictability with instant access to reliable information and production advice, increasing business opportunities and transactions and facilitating access to finance at a modest cost via SMS, airtime, and mobile data. So far, the agro-pastoralist information service has received 1.1 million calls and has more than 400,000 unique users. Of the more than 250,000 actionable calls, 30% were made by women, and 93% made decisions based on the information received.



Integrated & Climate Smart Innovation for Agropastoralist Economies and Landscapes In Kenya's ASALs (ICSIAPL) | Kenya | EU-DGIS Delegated Cooperation | €4.9M | 2021-2023

ICSIAPL project established 739 hectares of improved forage and brought a massive 62,556 hectares under sustainable grazing management—proving that rotational grazing and reseedling can work at landscape scale. As a result, 67.2% of households adopted concrete climate adaptation strategies, including fodder storage, income diversification, and water harvesting. This translated directly into economic gains for agropastoralists, achieving over a 20% increase in household incomes among project participants, while creating over 130 jobs for youth within livestock and forage value chains.

Accountable Local Governance Programme (PGLR+) | Mali | Embassy of the Netherlands | €20M | 2021-2026

The PGLR+ is a programme aiming to strengthen local governance mechanisms and leaderships to make them more inclusive, more effective and more gender and conflict sensitive. This programme is also focusing on the inclusive and effective participation of young people (women and men) in local governance emphasising youth social accountability and citizenship. The PGLR+ approach strengthens the social contract between the local authorities and the population and the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity between young leaders who come from different communities.

SNV is a global development partner deeply rooted in the African and Asian countries where we operate. With 60 years of experience and a team of approximately 1,600 people, we strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform agri-food, energy and water systems. Working on the core themes of gender equality and social inclusion, climate adaptation and mitigation, and strong institutions and effective governance, we tailor our approaches to different contexts to achieve large-scale impact and create sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

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