



European Pastoralists Assembly

Koblenz, Germany, 26-28 June 2015

Koblenz-Ehrenbreitstein Declaration

We are pastoralists from all around Europe. From the Arctic tundra and the Atlantic islands to the Mediterranean and Black Sea, from the lowlands and dykes of northern Europe to the mountains of the Alps and Carpathians. We come from 17 countries and a rich diversity of herding cultures: crofters, transhumants, nomadic herders and other extensive forms of livestock farming. We keep sheep, cattle, goats and reindeer — often local breeds that are highly adapted to their local environments.

Pastoralism makes Europe a better place

We have all come together here in Koblenz, in this 3rd meeting of the European Shepherd Network, to celebrate our many contributions to culture, society, the environment, healthy food and the economy:

- We create **economic value** by supplying a range of high-quality products for consumers: meat, milk, cheese, wool and hides.
- We protect the **environment** by preserving valued ecosystems where threatened plants and animals can survive, preventing the spread of shrubs and reducing the risk of fires. We use areas that are unsuited for and complementary to other forms of farming. Grazing helps store atmospheric carbon and mitigates climate change. We successfully manage natural resources, because we live from them, keeping them for future generations.
- We contribute to **society** producing wholesome food, valuable products and attractive landscapes, nurturing local economies and fixing population in remote and mountain areas, keeping the environment alive and rural areas vibrant, enriching these areas, and enhancing the quality of life for both local residents and visitors.
- We embody a **rich cultural heritage** coming from ancient skills and knowledge. Our culture encompasses material and intangible heritage, gastronomy and animal breeds. It preserves rural populations and societies and represents an opportunity for young people to earn income and live a meaningful life that has its own values.
- Our production system is unique and different from conventional intensive farming, with different needs.

Pastoralism under threat

Our way of life has existed since time immemorial, evolving together with the landscape. It lies at the heart of European culture. But today pastoralism is threatened as never before by the **forced industrialization of livestock farming**:

- Our cultural richness is in danger. Our identity is being eroded as policies fail to sufficiently include, understand or even recognize the existence of pastoralism. We are losing our freedom and capacity to keep our traditional systems.
- Low economic returns and a lack of recognition mean that young pastoralists in some areas feel forced to leave our way of life or switch to more intensive forms of farming. For young people, it is often difficult to gain **access to land**.

- We are losing grazing land due to competing types of land use: infrastructure and energy development, mining, nature reserves, leisure housing, biofuel crops, intensive farming, forestry, fragmentation, etc. That makes it more and more difficult for us to maintain our traditional systems, especially where these depend on moving animals from place to place throughout the year.
- Our identity is often expropriated by large-scale producers and agri-food corporations that sell pale, industrially produced imitations of our products. That makes it difficult for us to differentiate the special qualities of our products in order to get a fair price for them. Rising costs make it ever harder for us to compete with intensive, industrial farming. In some areas, the cost of access to private pastures is becoming prohibitive.
- The **sympiotic balance** between pastoralism and the environment is put in danger by wrong policy decisions that are not including pastoralists in the decision making process, such as the creation and management of protected areas without consultation with pastoralists. The re-introduction and the policy-driven increase in the number of predators are causing damages to our flocks. The costs of these damages are incurred by pastoralists but unrecognized and under-compensated. Damage (such as predation) is sometimes hard to document in a way that is acceptable to the authorities. However, we want to work together with environmentalists in forms of prevention of attacks, population monitoring and compensation.
- Policy decisions are made with little or no consultation of local communities. We are the traditional land users, but we are systematically excluded from decisions on land management. This **lack of consultation** extends to all levels: local, national, regional and EU. The Common Agricultural Policy, in particular, fails to recognize the specific features of pastoralism, putting this production system at an economic disadvantage. **Bureaucratic requirements**, biased towards intensive livestock production, impose a huge and unrealistic burden of paperwork on pastoralists.

We strive to succeed

We fight these trends and maintain our way of life by continuously innovating and improving. We use local breeds to adapt to a changing environment. We try to raise awareness among consumers and to sell directly to them. We are using new media to promote our cultural traditions and organize festive events. Some of us have negotiated contracts to prevent fires, maintain heritage landscapes and provide other environmental services. We are ambassadors of local cultural heritage and nature-friendly farming.

All across Europe, we are getting organized into federations, building regional networks and gaining international recognition from leading institutions. We strive to defend the interests of local producers and to increase our political representation. We are creating research centres, teaming up with scientific institutions, training our young people and building our capacity.

Our demands to policymakers

We urge our governments and policymakers, at local, national and European levels to:

- Recognize the **special nature of pastoralism and its products**, adapting legislation to promote the artisanal production of traditional foods.
- Set measures to assure **fair prices** for pastoralist products, enhance local markets and innovative marketing systems, and consider a **labelling system** that can distinguish them.
- Respect pastoralists' own **effective existing methods** of managing breeding and identifying animals.
- Develop a common framework and repository of heritage, and recognize intangible cultural heritage.
- Include pastoralists in the making of decisions that affect them and the areas where they raise their animals.
- **Recognize grass-root pastoralist organizations** across Europe as partners and support them so they can effectively represent their members, build their capacities and implement the **action plan** decided in this assembly.
- The **Common Agricultural Policy** reform currently being implemented perpetuates many of the mistaken assumptions about pastoralist systems we have suffered for years. "Pastures" are eligible for

subsidies, but vast areas of historical grazing land, open forests and rocky areas where grazing is a major environmental asset are excluded. Similarly, the value of grazing in preventing fires and in using **non-arable marginal land** is ignored. Pastoralists provide many environmental benefits that are not currently recognized - and they are the only ones who are able to provide these services. The rules need to be revised with the involvement of pastoralist representatives.

- Penalties regarding divergence from cross-compliance with CAP requirements should be re-considered.
- **Stop the loss of grazing land, "land grabbing"** and the restrictions on mobility that make it impossible to maintain a viable pastoralist system. We support the designation and protection of a **European network of transhumance trails**.

Signatory organizations:

Associazione dei pastori transumanti del Triveneto, Italy

Associazione Regionale Produttori Ovicaprini, Abruzzo, Italy

Asociația Transhumanța, Romania

Bulgarian Biodiversity Preservation Society Semperviva, Bulgaria

Bundesverband Berufsschäfer, Germany

Collectif des Races locales de Massif, France

Collectif pour la Liberté de l'élevage, France

Cooperativa Terra Chã, Portugal

Ένωση Μετακινούμενων Κτηνοτρόφων Ηπείρου (Association of Pastoral Farmers of Epirus), Greece

European Shepherd Network

Federación Estatal de Pastores, Spain

Finnish Saami Reindeer Herding Organization, Finland

Fundacja Pasterstwo Transhumancyjne, Poland

Greek Network of Transhumant Farmers, Greece

International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry

Landelijke Werkgroep Professionele Schapenhouders, Netherlands

Red de Pastores de Catalunya, Spain

Shetland Animal Health Schemes, UK

