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Bearbeiter/-in: Theresa Herbold

Sprechpunkte

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Sprecher*in:	BMZ R104, Theresa Herbold

ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT.

Grußwort

Dear State Secretary Schweizer,
Dear Professor Schneider,
Distinguished representatives from academia, politics, civil society and international cooperation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, I would like to express my sincere thanks for the invitation to the DEAB Autumn Conference on the occasion of World Food Day. As a graduate of the University of Hohenheim, it is a particular pleasure for me to speak to you today at my alma mater.

This year’s World Food Day reminds us that life still means hunger and malnutrition for many, far too many people. The human right to food remains unfulfilled for millions:

- 645 million people suffer from hunger.
- One in four people has no secure access to sufficient and adequate food and is therefore considered food-insecure.

World Food Day also reminds us that food security is about much more than a full plate. Food security means health, dignity and participation. It is a prerequisite for economic development, social cohesion and peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“*Thinking globally, herding locally – for climate, food security and strong women farmers*.” Under this motto, this year’s Autumn Conference highlights two international years:

- 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists;
- 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

Germany actively advocated at the United Nations for the proclamation of both International Years. These initiatives provide important impetus for advancing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They also shine a spotlight on economic systems and actors that are often overlooked in our common understanding of agriculture, yet make a vital contribution to food security in many parts of the world. Their contributions deserve our utmost respect and recognition.

Rangelands cover more than half of the world’s land area, making them the largest agricultural production system in terms of area. An estimated 500 million people worldwide depend on pastoralism, from the Andean highlands and the mountain regions of Europe to the African savannas, the heights of the Himalayas and the grasslands of Mongolia. Pastoralism sustains livelihoods and secures food supplies in areas where crop production is often barely possible. But livestock provides not only highly nutritious foods such as meat and milk, but also wool, hides and dung. Rangelands are habitats for rich biodiversity and serve as an important carbon sink.

The message of the International Year is clear: if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – ending poverty and hunger, ensuring sustainable land use, and protecting climate and biodiversity – the sustainable use of rangelands is essential.

As the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, we are particularly committed to food security and nutrition on the African continent. In doing so, we also focus on rangelands, which in Africa account for almost half of the land area. Our work focuses on pastoralist communities that are at home in 36 African countries – that is, in two-thirds of all African states. From the Sahel to the Horn of Africa and down to Southern Africa, pastoralism is a cornerstone of local economies and food systems. In East Africa, pastoral herds supply more than 90% of the meat consumed and over half of all milk produced. This underscores why protecting and sustainably managing rangelands is so important.

Yet it is precisely in these regions that the global challenges of our time converge, as if under a magnifying glass:

- Recurrent droughts and climate change;
- Land degradation, often as a result of overuse;
- Conflicts over land and water, exacerbated by unclear land tenure and user rights.

German development cooperation supports, together with its partners, the preservation of rangelands and pastoralist practices by strengthening secure land tenure and user rights. We promote regional cooperation and local knowledge, support sustainable livestock management and, together with partners, invest in the protection and restoration of rangelands.

What does this commitment mean in practice?

For example, we are working with the regional organisation “Intergovernmental Authority on Development” (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa to make livestock farming more resilient to crises and natural disasters. We support IGAD in strengthening regional systems for the early detection and monitoring of livestock diseases. We also promote the legal protection of cross-border livestock migration routes and support mediation efforts to resolve conflicts over grazing land and water.

At this year’s UNCCD COP17, the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, rangelands were a particular focus. Through the newly established UNCCD Rangelands Flagship Initiative, which Germany also supports, efforts are underway to promote sustainable rangeland policies and mobilize public and private investments to combat land degradation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2026 is also the International Year of the Woman Farmer.
For German development policy it is beyond question that women play a key role in the fight against hunger and poverty. Under our so-called “three R approach”, we are committed:

- first, to ensuring equal rights,
- second, to enabling fair access to resources such as land and water, and
- third, to guaranteeing women’s representation in decision-making processes.

All too often, women’s rights are restricted, their access to resources such as land or finance is limited, and their voices go unheard. Yet we know that equality is effective: if women in agriculture had the same access to productive resources as men, yields could increase by up to 30% and up to 45 million people could be freed from hunger.
Empowering women is therefore a powerful lever for improving food security and nutrition.

That is why it is so important to address gender equality on World Food Day, particularly in the context of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. More than 50% of pastoralists are women. Empowering women and strengthening pastoralist systems are therefore closely intertwined.

I am very much looking forward to exploring this intersection with you during today’s conference. I look forward to inspiring presentations,

stimulating discussions and learning from your diverse experiences from Germany and around the world. Let us see these two international years as a starting point for continuing our joint engagement for women in agriculture, and for just, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems well beyond 2026 – in the spirit of today's motto: *for climate, food security and strong women farmers*.

Thank you very much.