



**High-level Political Forum 2015 (under the auspices of ECOSOC): Sustainable consumption and production.**

9<sup>th</sup> meeting, July 2, 2015

I am Swati Shresth (Center for Grassroots Development and The Global Forest Coalition, India) speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group.

I Recognize local knowledge and food production traditions especially those that provide greater security to women.

For instance current development in livestock industry have led to unsustainable agro-industrial production patterns and corporate-led trade liberalization in the livestock industry. This is undermining the livelihoods of pastoralist communities that have until now succeeded to combine food sovereignty strategies with biodiversity conservation. Current industry practices are characterized by land grabs and pollution of neighboring areas. While there has been both private and state incentivisation of this kind of large scale livestock practices, other traditional practices of pastoralists and their knowledge of animals and their biodiversity is undervalued and discriminated against.

For instance free range grazing has been demonstrated to be a highly specialised and efficient adaption to many arid and semi-arid areas of the world. Repeated interventions by development and government agencies had undermined the resilience of this system. The underlying presumptions that 'overgrazing' and 'unregulated open access grazing' by pastoralists is responsible for large scale degradation is part of mainstream discourse and resonates strongly with arguments used to control pastoralist populations in large parts of African and the Middle-Eastern grasslands. Pastoralists however, speak of culturally defined norms that regulate herder access to different parts of the grazing lands, they talk of failed experiments with fenced exclosures (and point to both higher species diversity and higher productivity outside these exclosures); they also assert that

the pastoralism is fundamentally tied to herder access to the grasslands to enable opportunistic use of sparse, scattered rainfall events. Misguided intervention in the form of stall feeding and cold storage dairies to improve these so-called wastelands is detrimental not only to ecology but also substantially increase the workload of women who often become responsible for stall-fed cattle. For a culture and livelihood so intrinsically connected with the land, it is essential to value patterns of interactions between ecological and social variables across time and space. This is particularly important given the general misunderstanding the pastoralist/ecosystem interface, has remained a key reason for the continued marginalization of pastoralists, for continually declining access to commonly managed grazing lands that dispossess, disempower and push these communities into poverty globally.

In this context ICCAs Indigenous peoples and local community conserved territories and areas (ICCAs) can be an effective Means of Implementation of the many targets under the Sustainable Development Goals, including the targets under SCP.

#### Sustainability standards and certification

Given that sustainability standards endow many sectors with a sense of legitimacy, there is a strong need to critique the idea of standards. Standards cannot account for indirect impacts such as speculative land grabs, loss of culture and tradition or differentiated impacts on women. Neither do they necessarily pay adequate attention to livelihood needs of resident communities. Like much of emerging bioeconomy, standards do not question the pattern of over-consumption that has fuelled environmental degradation all over the world. Instead certification and standards have become an industry that allows business-as-usual. It is essential to be cautious of potential greenwashing the idea of standards enables.

Think of locally driven solutions where CSOs are strengthened to monitor private and government activities in keeping with commitments under the SDGs.