

# Project RANGE



## Ranch Advisor Network for Grazing Enterprises

### Program Summary

Our global food system is facing growing demand, resource constraints, shifting consumer preferences, and climate change challenges. The beef industry is both a key contributor to some of these challenges and a potential lever to address them. For instance, beef represents the single largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture, primarily from enteric fermentation, and grazing takes place on 40% of lands in the United States. These biodiverse lands—some of which are under enormous conversion pressure or are degraded due to climatic changes or management challenges—deliver abundant ecosystem services, including providing food, clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, livelihoods for rural communities, and storing as much as 20% of global soil carbon.

The U.S. beef industry has a valuable leadership role to play in transforming the supply chain. The best-in-class beef supply chain strategy challenges supply chain actors to:

- Secure verified outcomes on 100% of grazing stage
- Expand verified outcomes to other production stages
- Ensure non-conversion across the supply chain
- Create enabling conditions

As part of this strategy, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is proposing to develop and implement a market-driven, scalable, technical assistance platform to empower the beef supply chain. Supply chain actors can help conserve grasslands and improve the livelihoods of rural communities that depend on them while also delivering upon sustainability targets and surety of supply by supporting the development of this platform.

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### The Challenge

Ranch operations are not equipped with the time to properly navigate available information and resources in a way that strengthens their business and delivers environmental outcomes. They require the delivery of consistent, trusted, and ranch-informed producer assistance to support them with this endeavor. Unlike row crop, dairy and forestry industries, there is not an extensive network of trusted advisors for the ranching sector. Also, each new project, including corporate sustainability initiatives, incurs high startup costs, suffers from non-reusable components, and requires a bespoke data collection framework, presenting inefficiencies and scalability challenges.

Ultimately, a market-driven network of trained and trusted advisors is needed to support ranchers to implement sustainable ranch management practices while also connecting them to relevant services, programs, and incentives to enable environmental outcomes for grasslands, economic outcomes for ranch enterprises, social outcomes for ranching communities, and sustainability and surety of supply outcomes for supply chain actors.

Fostering this network at the regional level, with targeted geographic considerations, will allow for greater scalability and replicability across the U.S.



## Our Vision

To build a network of independent ranch advisors to empower ranching enterprises, improve supply chain resilience, and achieve sustainability outcomes.

## Our Approach

To achieve this vision, the following actions must happen:

1. The beef supply chain invests collaboratively to facilitate the network. A collaborative funding model ensures one company or organization does not “own” or is not completely responsible for the success of the program.
2. Regional funding model drives systems-level change while taking into consideration targeted characteristics of unique ecological geographies. The project is currently focused on the Great Plains region but is expandable to the Southwest and Pacific Northwest.



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## TNC Is Positioned for Success

TNC is a leading global conservation organization working to make a lasting difference in 81 countries and territories. For more than 30 years, we have worked with producers and the larger agriculture industry throughout United States. With established critical partnerships with other NGOs, leading food and agriculture companies, and ranchers and farmers on the ground, TNC is committed to delivering transformational change in the agriculture industry to support people, climate, and nature and can leverage its unique position through the following means:

- **Direct management of grazing lands:** TNC—which owns more than 500,000 acres of U.S. grazing lands and has helped to conserve millions more through easements and collaborative management—has worked for years to develop strong, trusting relationships within the ranching community and the beef supply chain. We use our lands to work with and support neighboring ranchers and to develop and test cutting-edge, science-based management practices and technology.
- **Beef supply chain relationships:** TNC is on the board of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef—a multistakeholder initiative developed to advance sustainability in the U.S. beef industry—and has led improvement programs with major supply chain participants at all stages of beef production, from feed inputs to end retailers / food service. TNC can tap into and convene critical stakeholders through this initiative to deliver collaborative action and impact.
- **Experience in bringing market-driven projects from idea to shelf:** In other animal proteins, TNC has already developed innovative sourcing programs that are cost-effective enough to be adopted by retailers and deliver big sustainability outcomes. One such example is Pacific Island Tuna, a joint venture between TNC and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, which was designed to demonstrate the practices that were economically feasible but not yet being adopted in a very transactional supply chain.

**CALL TO ACTION:** Key players in the beef supply chain must invest in capacity to develop and facilitate a market-driven network of trained and trusted advisors to support ranchers in the successful adoption of sustainable practices for the benefit of people, climate and nature.

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