Ben Norton Biography

Recovery of Rangeland Resources in Central Asia: A case study to address the global problem of degradation, erosion and loss of biodiversity

Brien (Ben) Norton is an Australian/American who completed his education in Australia and joined the Department of Range Science at Utah State University in 1971. He has worked on twenty projects in fifteen countries, including two years in Jordan, a year in Syria, and 6 years in Western Australia as Director of the Centre for Management of Arid Environments, advocating for improved management of grazing land to reduce erosion and enhance ecological recovery. In the last twelve years he worked on projects in Ethiopia and Namibia in Africa, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. He is currently advising an NGO in Armenia. The talk this afternoon will focus on the rehabilitation of degraded rangeland in Tajikistan following the adoption of rotational grazing practices that Dr. Norton recommended during a consulting mission to an IFAD-funded project in 2014-15. IFAD is the International Fund for Agricultural Development based in Rome. Its motto is to help the poorest of the poor, and in implementing the Pasture and Livestock Development Project (LPDP) in Tajikistan, 400 participating villages were identified based on certain criteria including per capita income of less than $2 per day. According to an Impact Analysis carried out after the LPDP project ended, cattle weights increased, milk yield doubled and household income substantially increased. Follow-up interviews in participating villages indicated that livestock owners continued to practice improved grazing management after the LPDP had ended, and in many cases were voluntarily reducing their herd size because of higher productivity of individual cows.