

<b>Project title (Acronym)</b>	Sustainable cashmere
<b>LA / CSO (type)</b>	Cooperative organization
<b>Implementing Partner(s)</b>	AVSF Mongolia
<b>Country/countries, region</b>	Mongolia
<b>Budget (specify EU funding amount, if applicable)</b>	N/A
<b>Is it a Global Gateway project?</b>	N/A
<b>Funding modality</b>	Grant funding and co-funding
<b>Funding sources</b>	AVSF (France) and cooperative own funding
<b>Implementation period</b>	12 years
<b>Thematic development area (5 words)</b>	Sustainable cashmere, value chain and pasture management
<b>Short description, including target beneficiaries and their engagement/reactions thus far (300 words)</b>	<p>Sustainable cashmere value chain project was launched in 2014 with aim to introduce herders' initiative on sustainable pastoralism to local and international markets. Herders' cooperatives established and worked on improving breeding, promoting pasture use and rotational grazing, animal health and welfare, traditional herd composition, traceability system while enhancing herders' income. The cooperatives aim to create added value for livestock products certified as sustainably produced through environmentally friendly practices that prevent the risk of livestock loss due to severe winter disasters (dzud). It also seeks to increase members' income and profits, while contributing to the reduction of pasture degradation and desertification. The beneficiaries are 2200 herder men and women from 550 households in 9 primary cooperatives. The indigenous knowledge inherited by generations of the herders and interpreting it into practices helped herders to increase their income by 30 per cent and improved the value of the production</p>
<b>Lessons learnt, key messages and results relevant for future EU programming (300 words)</b>	<p>Key lessons learned from the implementation of sustainable cashmere and cooperative development initiatives in Mongolia demonstrate that community-based value chain approaches can generate both economic and environmental benefits when local ownership and market linkages are strengthened simultaneously. Organizing herders into cooperatives improved bargaining power, facilitated access to training, and enabled collective participation in certified and traceable value chains. This contributed to increased household income, better product quality, and stronger resilience among rural communities.</p> <p>A major lesson is that sustainability standards and traceability systems are increasingly important for accessing international markets, however It is too costly for the producer organization. Consumers and buyers are demanding environmentally responsible and ethically sourced products. Supporting cooperatives to adopt quality assurance, certification, and branding mechanisms enhanced competitiveness and created opportunities for value-added exports. Investments in local processing and product diversification also proved essential to retaining more value within rural communities</p>

	<p>rather than exporting raw materials only.</p> <p>The project further highlighted the importance of integrating climate resilience and natural resource management into economic development interventions. Sustainable pasture management, improved livestock breeding practices, and awareness raising on environmental stewardship helped reduce pressure on degraded grazing lands and contributed to climate adaptation efforts. Linking livelihood improvement with environmental conservation created stronger community commitment and ownership.</p> <p>Another key lesson is the importance of inclusive participation. Women and youth played critical roles in processing, entrepreneurship, cooperative management, and marketing activities. Their engagement increased innovation, strengthened local leadership, and improved social inclusion outcomes. Future EU programming should therefore continue prioritizing gender-responsive and youth-inclusive approaches.</p>
<p><b>Replicability (100 words)</b></p>	<p>The project model is highly replicable in other rural and pastoral communities where livestock-based livelihoods, environmental degradation, and limited market access are key challenges. The cooperative-based approach can be adapted to different agricultural and livestock value chains by combining sustainable production, local processing, traceability, and market-oriented product development. Key success factors include strong community participation, capacity building, access to finance, and partnerships with private sector actors and buyers. The integration of climate resilience, women's economic empowerment, and environmentally sustainable practices makes the model particularly relevant for future EU-supported rural development and green economy programs across similar contexts.</p>