The timeless rural villages of Azerbaijan boast lush orchards and grassy hillsides, ringed by the dramatic peaks of the Caucasus mountains; but climate change is eroding that timelessness. Exacerbating the human-caused degradation, climate impacts are degrading pastures in the Greater Caucasus.

The Caucasus region and especially its mountain ranges with their predominating grasslands are rich in species, with many of them endemic to the region. Overgrazing is one of the primary reasons that the pastures are being degraded, which has negative consequences for the broader ecosystem and the farming communities that depend on them.
With UNDP support and EU funding, the Clima East Pilot Project in Azerbaijan, “Ecosystem-based approach to climate change”, is working to establish sustainable pasture management practices, improve the fertility of pastures and forests, and prevent soil erosion and landslides.

Since 2013, the project has worked to monitor and create an inventory for 3,000ha of summer pastures. A vegetation map was created through the use of satellite imaging and remote sensing applications. The collection of this data has helped to clarify where and how restoration work needs to happen.

The pasture inventory has been completed on 3,000ha of land in target zones. After completing the inventory, restoration activities in the pastures have been working to demonstrate best practices for the sustainable use of pasture resources and better erosion control measures.

The project demonstrated several experimental restoration treatments to enhance carbon pools, including the sowing of more than 20ha of degraded soil with seeds, completion of 12 demonstration plots with plantings and erosion prevention measures, and the establishment of rotational grazing systems for 16 farms of approximately 3,000ha.

By the end of the initiative, more than 3,000ha of summer pastures have been restored, allowing the timeless practices of pastoralism in Azerbaijan to persist.

Clima East is a European Union funded project package assisting the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia in approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The seven countries involved, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine, are working to complement the ecosystem-based climate change mitigation and adaptation activities of UNDP, the Global Environment Facility, and regional partners.

For more information please visit the Clima East website: www.climaeast.eu