

**Appendix 2.** Comparison of vegetation condition on pastures in the Thaba Nchu SES (continuous grazing practice) to pastures on adjacent commercial farms used as benchmark system due to rotational grazing practice. Rangeland condition on piosphere and pasture plots is derived from the relative abundance (rel. %; mean  $\pm$  SD) of the palatable bunchgrass *Themeda triandra*, following van der Westhuizen et al. (1999). Letters indicate significant differences between sites (Tukey's HSD;  $P < 0.05$ ). Note that only the three piosphere plots closest to the water point were considered to stay congruent with the assessment of soil resilience.

SES; tenure	Site	Piosphere			Pasture		
		n	<i>T. triandra</i> (rel. %)	Rangeland condition	n	<i>T. triandra</i> (rel. %)	Rangeland condition
Thaba Nchu; communal	Sediba	3	2.28 $\pm$ 3.85	Very poor	10	42.7 $\pm$ 19.1 <sup>a</sup>	Reasonable
	Middeldeel	3	6.06 $\pm$ 10.41	Poor	11	77.5 $\pm$ 17.2 <sup>b</sup>	Excellent
Benchmark; commercial	Lieftefontein	3	5.62 $\pm$ 6.96	Poor	13	58.7 $\pm$ 19.9 <sup>ab</sup>	Good
	Rustdam	3	17.4 $\pm$ 16.99	Poor	12	73.6 $\pm$ 18.9 <sup>b</sup>	Good
	Hellerfontein	3	2.17 $\pm$ 4.29	Very poor	11	73.0 $\pm$ 15.2 <sup>b</sup>	Good
	Ems	3	4.10 $\pm$ 3.18	Poor	14	74.4 $\pm$ 15.3 <sup>b</sup>	Good