AMBOSELI CONSERVATION PROGRAM

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AMBOSELI ECOSYSTEM OUTLOOK

Current situation report

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Preface

Our Amboseli Conservation Program (ACP) Outlook Report gives the state of pastures, livestock, and wildlife health across the Amboseli ecosystem as of the end of June. Our ground monitoring and satellite imagery of the pasture and vegetation give an extremely good outlook in the coming dry season through to the short rains later in the year.

The consistent rains from late 2024 through May 2025 produced an excellent crop of grass and strong bush and tree growth. Livestock health and milk yields have recovered fully since the 2023 drought, and market prices for cattle have reached the highest on record due to the shortage of animals and strong national demand for beef. The body condition of wildlife has also fully recovered, signaling a healthy rangeland and steady population recovery now that animals have resumed calving.

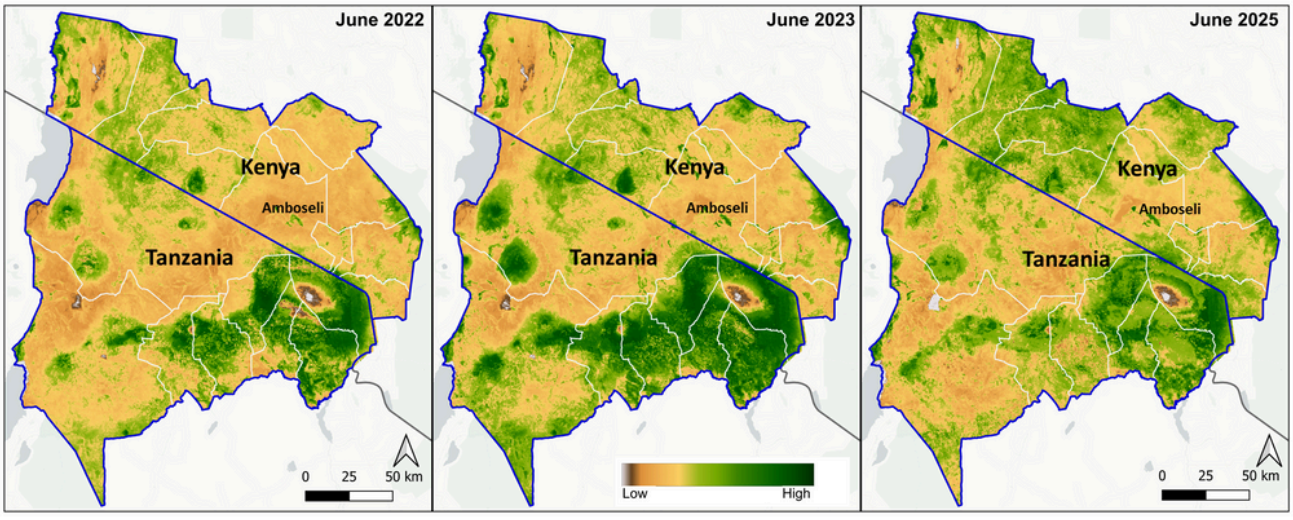

Figure1: Changes in vegetation greenness (NDVI) across Amboseli in southern Kenya and the adjacent cross-border areas of northern Tanzania spanning livestock and wildlife migratory movements. In June 2025, greenness conditions are very favorable on the Kenyan side compared to the drought of 2022 to 2023. Ground monitoring within the Amboseli basin area, including the swamps, indicates that pasture levels remain in the green zone (see Figure 2 below).

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Long-term pasture levels

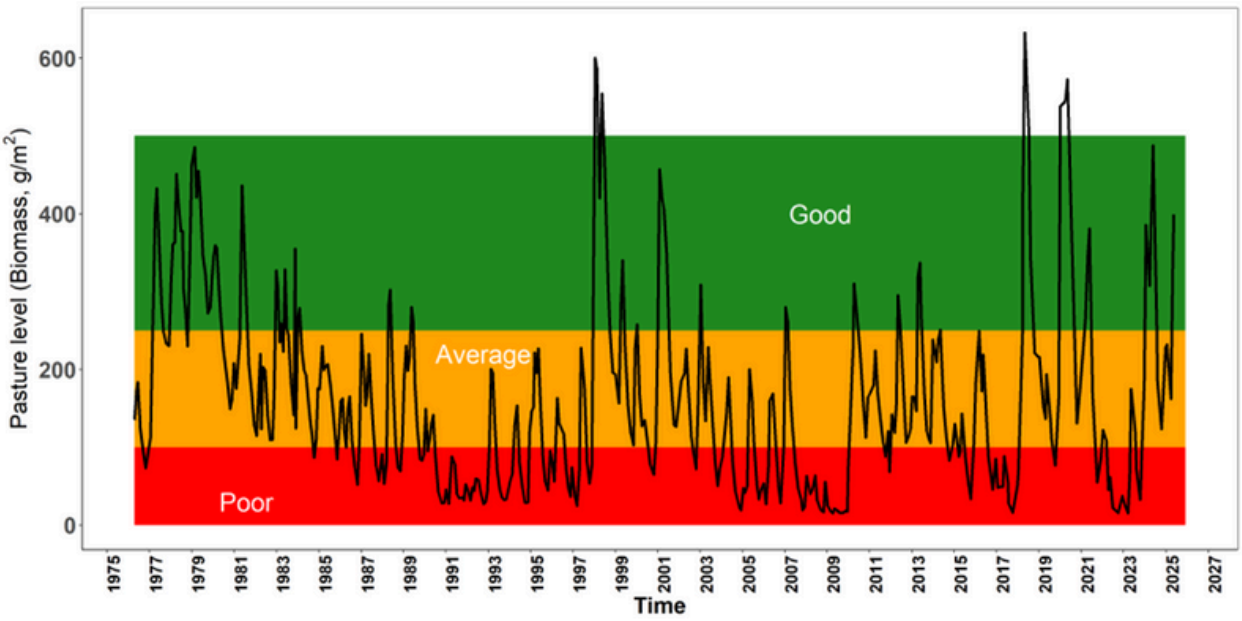

Figure 2: The Amboseli Pasture Barometer shows a strong recovery from the 2023 drought. Pasture conditions moved into the green zone following the good rains since late 2024. The recovery was boosted by a low grazing pressure over the last two years, following heavy losses of livestock and wildlife in the 2022-2023 drought.

Vegetation monitoring plots show abundant grazing at the start of the July dry season.

Grazing pressure gauge

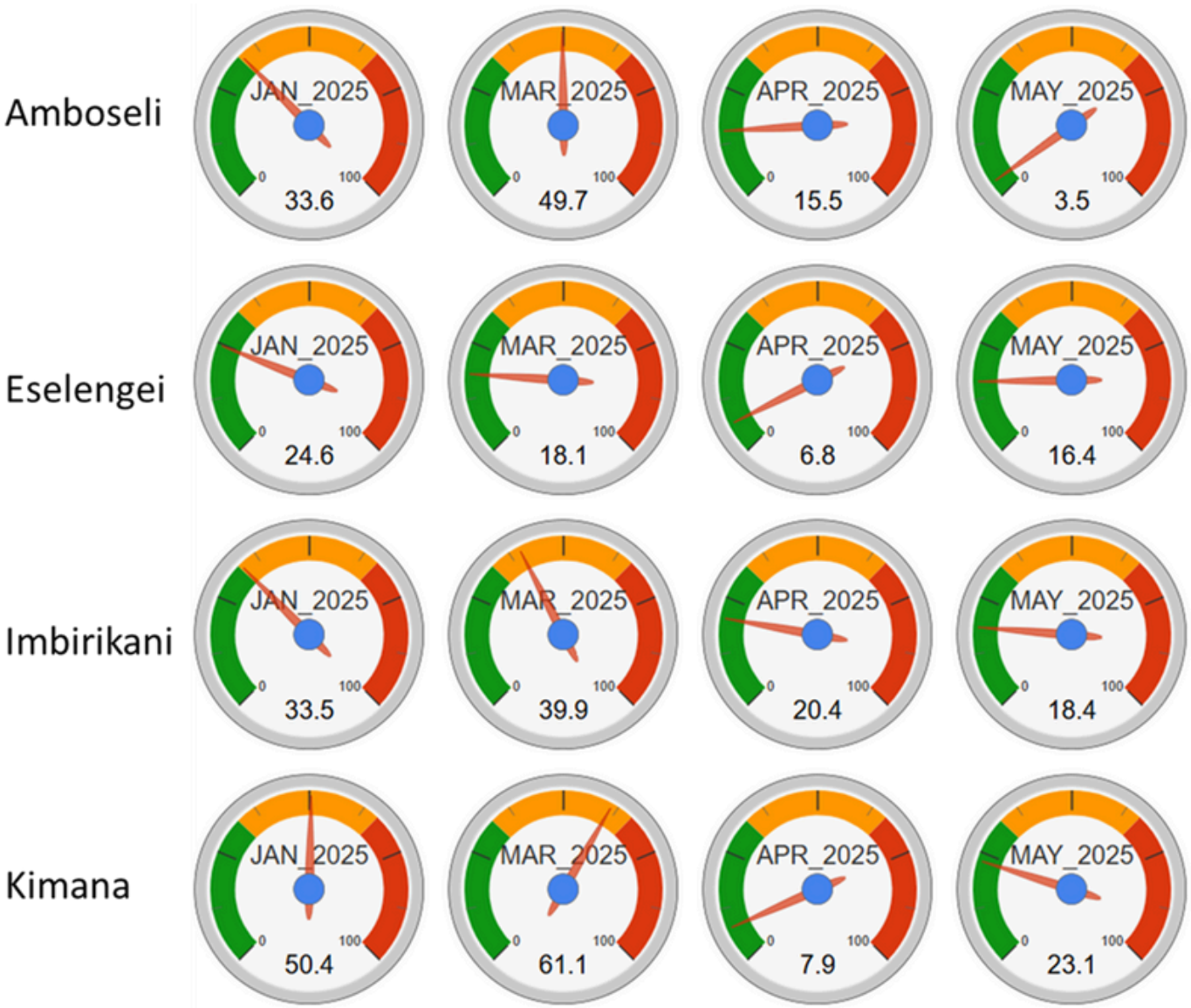

Figure 3: Grazing pressure across the Amboseli ecosystem has remained low since December 2024, creating favorable conditions for pasture recovery. The outlook after the long rains in May is excellent for the coming dry season.

Milk yields, body condition scores and market prices

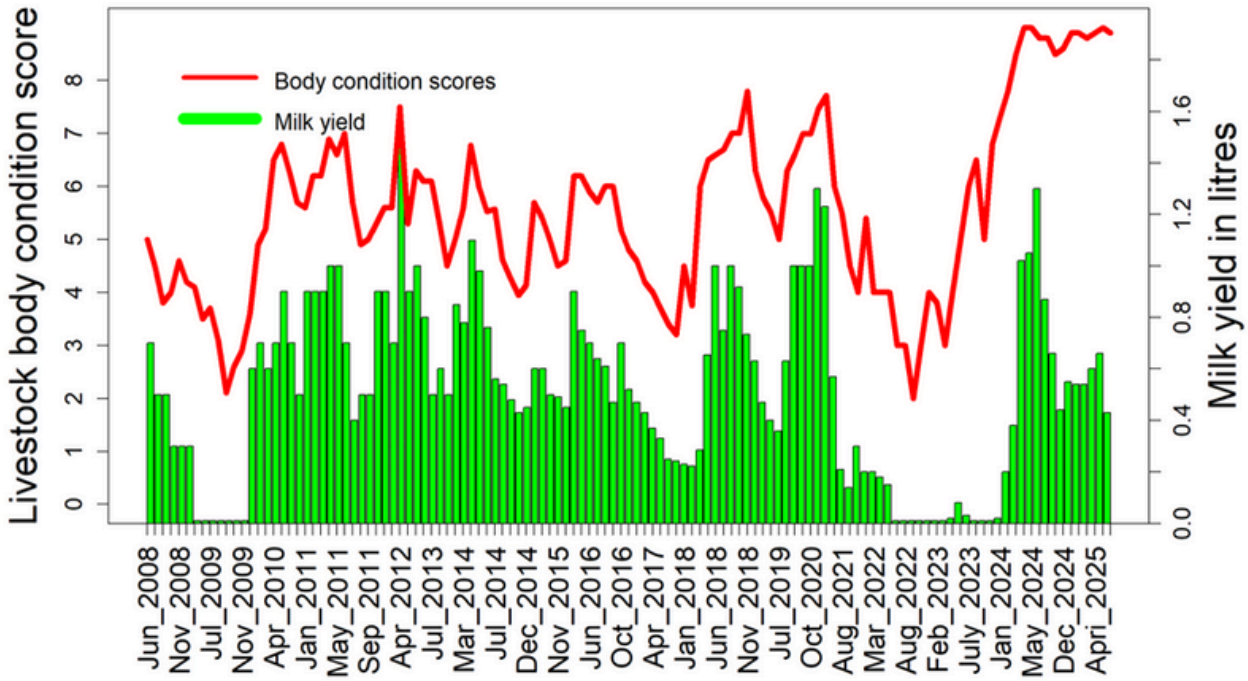

Figure 4: Livestock body condition scores have reached the highest level since monitoring began in 2008. Milk yields remain high but have fallen since the peak of breeding after cattle recovered from the 2022-2023 drought in 2024. The drop is due to calves weaning after the peak breeding season.

Livestock is in peak condition in Amboseli, driving market prices to an all-time high, given the shortage of cattle after the 2023 drought and strong national demand for beef.

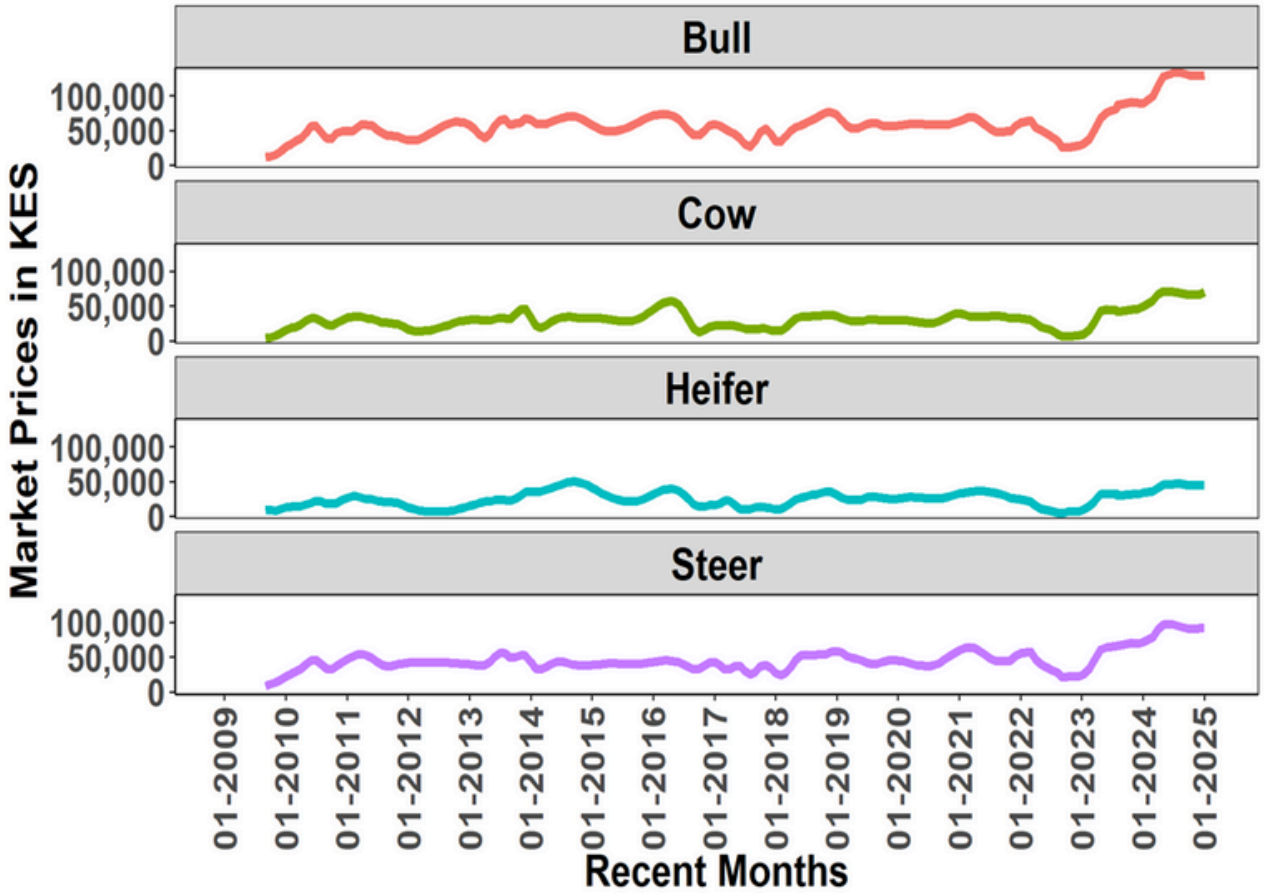

Figure 5: Livestock market prices have reached the highest levels on record due to the excellent condition of cattle, shortage of animals after the drought, and strong national demand for beef.

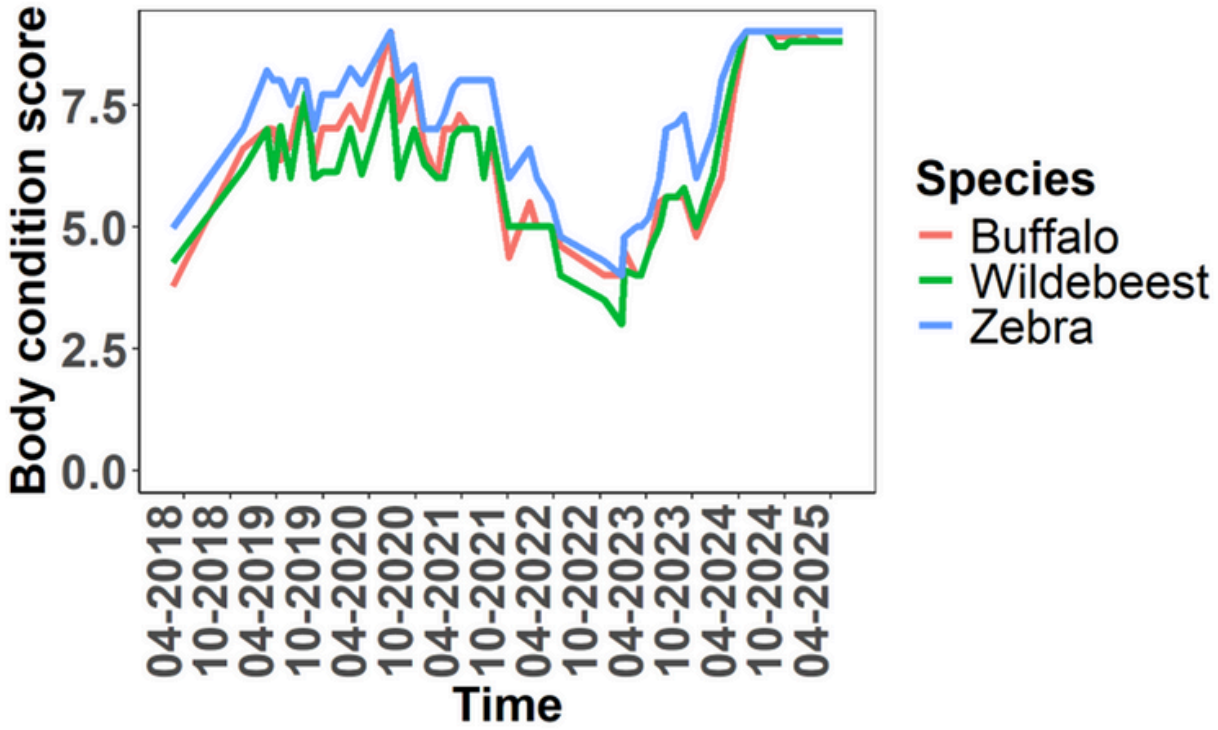

Figure 6: Buffaloes, wildebeest, and zebras are now in excellent health following the prolonged rains over the last nine months.

Outlook for July to October dry season

The condition of pastures, livestock and wildlife give an excellent outlook for the coming dry season from July through to the short rains later in the year. The heavy loss of livestock and wildlife during the 2022 to early 2023 drought resulted in a low grazing pressure over the following two years. Coupled with the good short rains in 2024, short dry season in early 2025 punctuated by unseasonal rains, and good long rains, pastures have recovered strongly across Amboseli. The Amboseli swamps in particular have expanded with the flood waters running into Amboseli national park.

Wildebeest calving in February and March was excellent. Coupled with the prolonged migrations out of Amboseli when predation on the herds was low, wildebeest numbers increased substantially this year. Zebras have also had a good foaling year, and the buffalo herds have a large number of small red calves. Elephants dropped a large number of calves in the first half of the year after the protracted post-drought slow-down in births.

The recovery of vegetation, livestock and wildlife post-2022-2023 drought gives the Amboseli community an opportunity to restore areas degraded by heavy grazing pressure over the last twenty years. The intense persistent grazing since herders shifted from seasonal settlements and migrations in the late 1980s to permanent settlements has greatly reduced pasture production, grass quality and seen drought losses of livestock and wildlife alike increase sharply.

Setting aside degraded areas for a year or two of rest and natural recovery will produce far more reserve pasture than any other method of mechanical restoration. ACP urges the group ranch grazing committees to take the opportunity to set aside restoration areas on the most degraded pastures, and is ready to work with local resource assessors and community representatives to do so.

The heavy growth in the swamp pastures of the Amboseli Basin in early July ensures there will be abundant forage to see wildlife and livestock through the coming dry season.

Lessons for combatting future droughts

The ACP report, "Post-Drought Perceptions of Herders on Livestock Production in the Amboseli Ecosystem: Impacts, Coping Strategies, and Future Sustainability" by Sakimba Kamiti captured herders responses to the 2022–2023 drought. Herders say they learned much from their far heavier losses in the 2009 drought when over two thirds of their livestock died. They benefitted from the early warning alert from ACP giving them time to destock and buy supplementary feed. Many herders transported water to their animals to reduce the stress of long-distant walks, and gave them more grazing time. Others kept their best animals at home and fed them supplementary hay. The survival rates of cattle, sheep and goats were far higher in the recent drought as a result.

Despite the 2022-2023 drought severity, many herders retained a core herd and breeders, allowing them to rebuild faster after the drought and cash-in on the current peak market prices.

The survey underscores the importance of a multi-pronged approach to drought management. ACP's early warning system based on available pasture, livestock grazing pressure, animal body condition and market prices, alerted herders to destock and sell livestock before markets collapsed and animals succumb to starvation. Early sales at better prices avoid heavy stock losses, damage to the range, and ensure faster subsequent recovery of pastures and herds. Better prepared, herders can move livestock to richer locations before animals are too weak to move.

The drought measures successful herders adopted in 2022-2023 were largely individual and can be greatly improved for the community as a whole by forming cooperatives. Cooperatives can gain greater traction and bargaining power in setting aside drought pastures, arranging water deliveries, negotiating food supplements to avoid price gouging, and gaining grazing access to less drought-hit locations.

Cooperation in planning and managing the rangelands as landowner associations will curb the heavy grazing, pasture degradation and heavy livestock and wildlife losses of over the past three decades caused by range loss and sedentarization.

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