



Preparing local development strategies for mountain products development ACTION PLAN



In the new programming period, Community-led Local Development (CLLD) has been proposed as a tool for involving citizens at local level in developing responses to social, environmental and economic challenges. The new CLLD approach allows LEADER-type support to be better coordinated with local development support financed by other EU funds. It should reinforce the links between rural, urban and fisheries areas.

In this new scenario mountain LAGS and Local Development Strategies should make the best use of the new tools now available to create effective strategies and actions that would have a real impact and benefit for mountain societies and their environment.

To face the challenges in the local development strategies, Euromontana believes that:

1. Local Development Strategies should be developed in a more cooperative way involving all the relevant actors at local level.
2. The role of farmers and its benefits to the local society should be enhanced in the Local Development Strategies.
3. Administrative barriers for collaboration between Local Action Groups (LAGs) at international and mountain range level should be reduced.
4. LAGs should help to develop links between mountain farmers and the mountain community in general.
5. Young people are of special importance for mountain farming and they play a key role in reducing the risk of depopulation in mountain areas. Thus, local development strategies should pay special attention to them.

In the framework of our project “A new CAP – Mountains of opportunities”, one session on “Preparing local development strategies integrating ambitious plans for mountain products development ” was organised on 24th October 2014 during the European Mountain Convention. This action plan is the result of the work done during this workshop and focuses on how to use the new available measures for the effective local development plans in mountain areas and on how to improve cooperation between mountain local actors and LAGs.



Assesment of the current situation

In tackling mountain area development locally, farmers and other local actors encounter several difficulties. The following are the main barriers:

- **Depopulation:** many mountain areas in Europe are suffering from an increasing abandonment of the rural towns and villages and from an aging population. Therefore, there is a serious risk of disappearance of mountain towns and villages that could result in the loss of local traditions and culture.
- **Abandonment of land and decrease of the number of mountain producers:** the lack of profitability and attractiveness of farming activities results in an abandonment of land and farming activities in many European mountain areas. This is linked with the lack of generation renewal in farming in many mountain areas.
- **Lack of local product consumption:** Short supply chains are disappearing and are not sufficiently promoted. The link between mountain inhabitants and their territory has been broken or has been weakened in many mountain areas. Mountain farmers have noticed a decrease in their local sales and consumption, which puts mountain short supply chain survival in danger.
- **Lack of awareness of the importance of farmers in the local society.** Producers perceive that their role is not sufficiently valued in their communities and not perceived as important for the local society.

As a result, to improve the local development strategies, concrete actions should be encouraged to address the:

- **Need to raise awareness of the mountain farmers to highlight to the local society the value of their work for the local development.** At the same time this could improve the acceptance and marketability of their products, contributing to the local economy, the development of local supply chains, increase of farmers, generation renewal and increase of positive externalities. The new optional quality term “mountain product” could help in building these links between the mountain product and its community.
- **Need to increase the attractiveness and profitability of mountain farming—** especially for young people, to ensure a generation renewal in mountain farming. At the same time, the increase of the presence of young farmers in mountains will help the fight against depopulation.

Recommendations on policy and strategy to improve links between local development strategies and supply chain actors

We recommend:

- **Local Development Strategies should be developed in a more participative way.** Local Action Groups (LAGs) should cooperate with local stakeholders and relevant actors to identify together the main issues and find the solutions to tackle them.
- In the framework of the new CLLD, **linkages between different local actors should be developed**, paying special attention to the links between the producers and the rest of the local society. This would help to improve their visibility and the promotion of local mountain products.
- **The bureaucracy and the administrative cost of cooperation between LAGs of different countries should be reduced**, facilitating the exchanges between the LAGs at massif level and between massifs. The European Commission could have a role in this, publishing calls and financing projects for LAG international cooperation. Another option is to promote cooperation between National Rural Networks (NRN) to find common issues and promote LAG collaboration.
- **Rural-urban linkages should be developed**, to make citizens aware of the importance of rural and mountain areas in their lives and to ensure that urban inhabitants have understood the importance of rural areas and defend them.
- **Local Development Strategies should focus on the main strategic issues**; ensuring the selection of measures and actions that will have a real impact on mountain communities and their environment.
- **Support on training should be given to young people interested in farming activities in mountain areas.** This will contribute to generation renewal and in the areas facing depopulation it could be an instrument to fight it.

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Action plan



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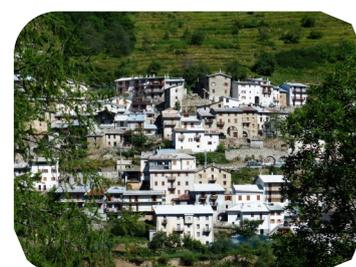
Action 1: Lobbying action at EU level: Euromontana should continue working to include mountains in the political agendas at different governance levels. It should also try to make the mountain dimension more visible in the different European policies to establish an appropriate scenario for exchanges and collaboration between different mountain actors at European level.

Timetable: On-going



Action 2: - Euromontana should encourage the National Rural Networks (NRN) and the LAGs of different countries to have a working group focusing on mountains. Euromontana should help NRNs from mountainous countries to establish a working group between mountain LAGs to discuss common issues and find solutions in a co-operative way.

Timetable: 2015



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