



ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE



Mountain environment and heritage

In the coming years agriculture will need to produce more with less environmental impact. In this context it is important to analyse how to create synergies between agri-environmental-climate/organic farming measures and marketing of products, how to promote the environmentally-friendly character of mountain products and how to add value to products highlighting heritage. One of the answers could be the valorisation of public goods delivered by mountain production regimes.



Assessment of the current situation:

Remarks and suggestions of concrete measures to improve links between environment /heritage and mountain products:

- We need to keep the human population in mountain areas while preserving biodiversity: we need effective measures to support people who live in these preserved ecosystems.
- The 3 initiatives showed actions with respect to a "visible" biodiversity but there is also a "less visible" biodiversity such as the soil, which is essential for production and quality: we spend too much time looking at the ground and not beneath it.
- Sustainable agriculture guarantees the maintaining of biodiversity, keeping the mountain areas open, and avoiding the clearing and the desertification of these areas.
- Farmers need to communicate better with the public: agriculture is not your enemy, but the contrary, especially when the agriculture is based on the preservation of biodiversity.
- Maintaining biodiversity consistent with quality agricultural production provides an additional positive image that can help win new markets and make a difference where the recipient is sensitive to the environmental aspects (as in the example of the Douro wine).
- Protecting the environment can reduce natural hazards, particularly by limiting erosion and fire risks (also avoiding the indirect negative effects of the abandonment of agricultural activity in some mountain areas).
- Preserving the mountain environment provides a restorative place for areas outside: being for instance a reservoir for the lowlands and many urban areas, and being a rich pool of biodiversity and the landscape. In addition, in producing quality products, farmers act as providers of public goods.

The main difficulties encountered so far are the following:

- Sustainable farming may abandon areas resulting in desertification (a reality in many mountain areas).
- It is often difficult to adapt global policies, designed without taking into account local conditions, at the local level.
- It is sometimes difficult to find markets willing to pay more for a quality product, which values biodiversity more. This approach is easier for products like wine or cheese but remains difficult for fruit and meat, for example.
- It is often difficult to find a balance between environmental concerns and production constraints.



Co-financed by the Directorate General
for Agriculture and Rural Development
of the European Union

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Recommendations

To improve the links between environment and mountain products, we recommend:

A new CAP
Mountains of
opportunities

At EU level:

- **Public policies on agriculture and the environment must be developed in a more participatory manner** in order to take more account of the local specifics; and, global policies should be adapted since measures and guidelines cannot be uniformly applied to the local mountain areas (it is often the source of multiple contradictions vis-à-vis the desired objectives and therefore the failures). To improve efficiency, we must encourage (as far as possible) the flexibility between farming and the preservation of biodiversity in each valley and mountain range and to seek to act for the long term.
- **Recognising farmers for the environmental services they provide** (farmers are producers of public goods not only food). The new CAP has started to move towards this direction with the new "greening payment", but we encourage the European Commission to go further to pay /compensate for the services provided by the farmers to maintain biodiversity.

At national level:

- The example of the "flowering grassland" showed a win - win approach with real added value for the products with an impact not only on prices but also on biodiversity. **These approaches linking biodiversity and the quality of food should be encouraged.**
- **Greener public procurement:** according to European directive [Green Public Procurement](#) means a supplier must be chosen based on several criteria. One of them is respect for the environment. But too often the only criterion taken into account is the price at the expense of environmental compliance. We therefore call on the Member States and regions to implement this directive, giving more value to environmental criteria and selecting food suppliers that respect biodiversity.
- To encourage and recognise farmers, who are really respecting the environment, states should organise **substantial communication campaigns for general public** to recognise the work already accomplished and to stimulate more farmers to go further in the valuing of biodiversity and the environment.

At regional and local levels:

- Respect for biodiversity and the environment can improve the quality of mountain products: the quality of grass affects for instance the improving of the nutritional quality of mutton/lamb or milk for cheese production. **Farmers should use this added value as an additional marketing tool for consumers, who are increasingly concerned about respecting the environment.**
- Cooperation with universities and research institutes should be strengthened to promote the **transfer of innovation in the field** in order to combine agriculture with the preservation of the environment. The innovation transfer among farmers themselves should be encouraged.

Action plan for Euromontana

Action 1: Euromontana should look for examples of good practices which promote coherence and dialogue with agricultural production (farmers) / protection and environmental conservation actions (associations, ecologists ...) / regulatory applications (Administration), in order to strengthen knowledge between mountain products and the environment.

Timetable: 2015 by Euromontana secretariat, helped by members to collect actual examples.

Action 2: Euromontana should strengthen its lobbying at European level to encourage a more participatory approach and that mountain issues are better taken into account in agricultural approaches.

Timetable: from the end of 2014 and on-going the following years by Euromontana secretariat.



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