



CONSULTATION ON THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Euromontana is the European multisectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. It embraces regional and national mountain organizations throughout greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agricultural organizations, environmental agencies, forestry organizations and research institutes.

Euromontana's mission is to promote living mountains, integrated sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.

In order to achieve this, Euromontana facilitates the exchange of information and experience among these areas by organizing seminars and major conferences, by conducting and collaborating in studies, by developing, managing and participating in European projects and by working with the European institutions on mountain issues.

As the European Union is preparing to engage in budget talks that may prove difficult, Euromontana thinks it is important to define the objectives we wish to set for the future CAP, and then allocate a sufficiently ambitious budget to be able to meet those objectives.

Euromontana reiterates its commitment to a common, strong and ambitious agricultural and rural development policy that promotes European agriculture in its many functions and diversity.

Euromontana promotes three complementary objectives for the CAP, namely to:

- **Maintain the capacity to produce – economically, environmentally, socially and sustainably – safe, diverse and quality foods**, via systems that ensure that producers receive a stable and sufficient level of income.
- **Recognize and value the provision of public goods and ecosystem services** so as to manage natural resources sustainably and **allow for mitigation of climate change**.
- **Ensure balanced territorial development by contributing to the vitality of rural areas, in particular in mountain regions, so as to maintain and enhance the appeal of those territories and thus prevent the depopulation of those regions.**

These three objectives are elaborated in greater detail below.

- 1. Maintain the capacity to produce – economically, environmentally, socially and sustainably – safe, diverse and quality foods,** via systems that ensure that producers receive a stable and sufficient level of income.

Some regions are difficult to access, isolated, handicapped by geographic, historical, demographic and pedoclimatic characteristics. In many of them, agricultural production and often livestock breeding constitute the main alternative to the complete disappearance of economic or human activity. The presence of such production systems provides support for other economic activities, and that is where agriculture produces the largest quantity of positive externalities. To prevent the dismantling of production in these regions, the CAP must aim to encourage production in less favoured areas such as mountains, isolated or sparsely populated areas, by compensating handicaps and valuing the multifunctional character of farms.

The CAP must also ensure access to quality, safe and healthy food in sufficient quantity and at stable and affordable prices for all. More particularly, in mountain regions, it must stimulate the development of agricultural products and create added value through the protection of quality mountain agricultural products. The Member States must therefore be encouraged to implement the optional quality term for “mountain product”, which is still not used in most countries, although it was adopted in 2014.

Against the background of the globalization of trade and increasing competition, the future of the European agricultural and agri-food economy requires developing ways to organize the sectors. This development will have to aim towards a diversification of the sectors and their target markets, ranging from direct or local sales to exports, via an entire range of quality territorialized local or regional supply sectors. This will particularly be the case in mountain areas where maintaining a viable economy will be achieved through targeting and differentiating new markets by artfully combining the mountain attributes and the precise provenance of the products. The use of the optional quality term for “mountain product” must play a role to that end.

In order to create a market segment dedicated to mountain agriculture, the Commission must encourage the Member States to implement the legislation on the optional quality term and to disseminate information on the added value that the use of such a term can represent for mountain products. Euromontana therefore calls on the European Commission to implement its [European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products](#), which was already signed by more than 450 actors to perpetuate agricultural activity in mountain areas by supporting practices adapted to the territory and to natural constraints; protect mountain products against the fraudulent use of the term “mountain;” encourage the value and recognition of mountain products at the level of the European Union and on the international market and support sustainable development in mountain communities by offering a good quality of life.

Euromontana recognizes the efforts made in the policy to promote in particular products that have quality and origin certification. The reinforcement of such certification, with which consumers are not very familiar at this time, calls for ambitious promotion programmes and thus more extensive budgets than currently available. Euromontana therefore recommends increasing the programmes to promote all quality products, including on the internal market and not only on markets outside the European Union.

The CAP must seek to maintain the productive activity of farmers throughout the territory, by reserving its support for active farmers. Agricultural economic activity can be maintained only if the CAP creates the conditions for a stable market, so it must provide tools to deal with volatile market situations effectively. Without such support, the most vulnerable farms and often those which are in the most difficult areas will be the first to disappear, even though they are the ones that produce quality food and essential ecosystem services for society as a whole.

The CAP must be endowed with means and resources to support vulnerable production which is nonetheless important for maintaining the local socio-economic and environmental balances. The CAP must encourage production in less favoured areas by compensating extra costs inherent in those areas and giving them the means and resources for greater market efficiency by capitalizing on their winning assets. Euromontana therefore recommends maintaining the support for agriculture in less favoured areas and calls on the Member States to use this approach for all mountain areas.

Euromontana also insists on the fundamental role of small farmers, small multi-active structures in the economic balance of territories in which economic activities are closely inter-connected. Multi-activity is more developed in mountain areas than in the European agricultural sector on average. This is connected to the small size of certain farms, the seasonal nature of productions and the close link with other economic sectors, particularly tourism.

In order to have a longer-term vision, Euromontana recommends adopting in both pillars, an approach based on long-term commitments (at least 7 years) to enable the beneficiaries to devise viable farming projects and to change their farm management with a certain security as regards the remuneration paid for services rendered.

2. Recognize and value the provision of public goods and ecosystem services so as to manage natural resources sustainably and allow for mitigation of climate change.

When agriculture is geographically concentrated to meet competitiveness objectives, it can harm the environment, in particular by intensifying the use of chemical inputs. Conversely, an agricultural and agri-food activity distributed throughout the territory and endowed with appropriate infrastructures can make an active and effective contribution to maintaining and preserving the environment: sound biodiversity practices, rational use of resources, limiting impact on water, air and soil.

Euromontana is part of the [PEGASUS](#) research project which draws on 34 case studies to explore the different factors that promote the provision of ecosystem services in various European regions. These studies have shown the importance of a range of coherent measures and a balance between European, national, regional and private measures. Euromontana underlines in particular the important role played by agri-environmental measures and by the compensatory allowance for permanent natural handicaps (particularly in the case of Murau in Austria) and recommends reinforcing such support in future programmes.

Euromontana calls for better recognition of the ecosystem services that are provided in particular thanks to farmers and mountain forest owners and a better compensation of these ecosystem services provided for the well-being of the population as a whole. Euromontana insists in particular that support for ecosystem services is provided as a priority for ecosystem services that would be jeopardized in the absence of public policy.

Euromontana would like to draw attention to the key importance of grazing lands, which are highly productive of ecosystem services and also draw attention to their future in an uncertain economic context. Pastoralism is a traditional activity of extensive livestock breeding carried out particularly in mountain areas. This form of livestock breeding helps develop territories with a low agronomic value that are difficult to access or that are non-mechanisable, and thus to maintain an economic activity in these areas. Pastoralism is also interesting to maintain landscapes open, thereby playing a role for the development of tourism, for promoting biodiversity and for preventing natural disasters.

The areas most exposed to the risk of land being abandoned are heaths, semi-natural spaces, dry areas and highlands. It is difficult to farm these lands, shepherds are increasingly difficult to find, and producers may be tempted to abandon pastoral practices that are less and less remunerative. Moreover, climate change is moreover likely to encourage the ascent of the treeline and to accelerate the closing of landscapes. The renewal of livestock breeders and shepherds is uncertain and calls for particular ad hoc measures (specific support for areas with natural constraints, agri-environmental measures, support for investments for infrastructures and forest improvements). The landscapes maintained by production systems based on grass or mountain pastoral systems are part of this process, in the sense that these landscapes would close if no support were forthcoming.

As transhumance and pastoralism were part of the practices which produce most of the ecosystem services in terms of biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage and quality products, Euromontana calls for the recognition of their particular importance in providing ecosystem services.

Euromontana also calls for the adoption of a simple approach that remunerates the services rendered by the systems that provide ecosystem services, which are not restricted to compensating extra costs engendered by the change of practices, whether for first pillar ecological payments or for payments for environmental services.

This stronger support for ecosystem services is to be put in parallel with measures needed to attenuate and adapt to climate change – one of the Sustainable Development Goals to achieve by 2030.

Euromontana reiterates that mountains and mountain people, with their ability to adapt to difficult conditions, are a force to be reckoned with in the fight against climate change thanks to their ecosystems that contribute to the carbon storage, prevent soil erosion, slow landslides and are an important source of renewable energies.

Euromontana therefore calls for the reinforcement of regional production chains in agriculture, silviculture and the agri-foodstuff industry under the CAP to avoid useless transport of goods and in so doing to bolster the regional added value and recognize the specific role played by mountain agriculture in climate regulation.

Euromontana also calls for developing and selecting crops and varieties adapted to the expected longer seasons and available water resources, that are more resistant to the new rain patterns and seasonal temperatures, and to diseases and invasive species; for adjusting the timetable of agricultural operations such as sowing, mowing or harvesting; for encouraging the maintenance of grazing lands that constitute an asset for biodiversity and carbon storage; and for promoting local consumption through the promotion of short circuits and green public procurements for schools and hospitals in particular.

The mountain forests have extensive potential for protection against natural hazards, the production of biomass, protection against soil erosion or carbon storage. They are nonetheless imperilled by more extensive periods of drought. Euromontana therefore calls for conserving and preserving mountain forests that can capture CO₂ particularly by planning the regeneration of species in the long term and by reducing natural risks linked to forest fires and the invasion of insects, and encouraging the use of wood as a substitute for fossil fuels; for improving governance with concerted forest management in terms of production and land policy; and finally, for encouraging the use of biomass as a source of energy and as a building material.

3. Ensure balanced territorial development by contributing to the vitality of rural areas, in particular in mountain regions, so as to maintain and enhance the appeal of those territories and thus prevent the depopulation of those regions.

The citizens of Europe inhabit the entire territory (nearly 15% of the European population live in mountain areas) and expect EU policies to secure their future. The CAP must contribute in the same way as other European policies to maintaining the socio-economic fabric in rural areas and to that end aim to maintain the population and rural activity on all territories inhabited by European citizens. It is all the more essential that natural and cultural landscapes maintained in that way or through social agriculture allow for profitable economic activities and for developing a quality living space for permanent residents or holidaymakers.

The CAP must therefore table on a strong and ambitious project for rural and mountain areas through a strong rural development policy and a constructive plan committed to rural areas and to specific territories of the cohesion policy. This will entail in particular maintaining agriculture as an indispensable foundation for the local economy in the more vulnerable territories and promoting the development of rural economies, including these agricultural activities.

A significant complementarity must be sought with the cohesion policy. While Euromontana is satisfied with the approximation of the regulatory frameworks of all the European structural funds, it nonetheless wans against the divestment of structural funds in rural areas, particularly in mountain areas. Only 11.5% of the ERDF will be spent in rural areas during the 2014 – 2020 period (compared with more than 20% during the 2007-2013 period) according to a [study of the Committee of the Regions published in November 2016](#). In the entire multi-annual financial framework, taking EAFRD into account, only 21.3% of the expenditures are earmarked for rural areas, compared with 32.6% of the multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020.

This sharp drop is explained particularly by the very strong drop of ERDF. This divestment from rural areas is a danger for all the territories and for the balance between rural and urban areas. Only an integrated, multi-fund approach in all the various levels of governance can help the development of territories.

In order to have a balanced territorial development in all the rural areas, Euromontana therefore supports the call for a white paper for rural areas, alongside the many civil society organizations, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the members of the RUMRA Intergroup (rural, mountain and remote areas) of the European Parliament.

Euromontana also calls on the Commission to make the implementation of an integrated mountain policy compulsory (for Member States that have mountains) using in a targeted manner a substantial part of the tools made available (compensatory allowance for permanent natural handicaps, support to less favoured areas under the second pillar, specific subprogramme for mountain areas) and by allocating a budget commensurate with the importance of these territories. All the support mechanisms for mountain areas are optional. If the Commission wants to show that the territorial objective is as important as the food and environmental objectives, it must require the Member States concerned to adopt at least a part of these measures and to allocate sufficient budgets to ensure effective policies for maintaining production in mountain areas.

To ensure generational renewal, Euromontana calls on the Commission to increase aids for those who settle in mountain areas. As mountain farms are very often less competitive because of extra costs, isolated with difficult living conditions, certain areas are faced with the aging of the population and very significant depopulation risks. A very active establishment support policy must be implemented to ensure generational renewal. These increased aids must be accompanied by specific support measures for mountain areas.

Euromontana welcomed the Cork declaration in September 2015. It has shown that it takes an active part in the implementation of this declaration and has already prompted the European Commission to translate the priorities into a real action plan in a position paper: "[Implement the Cork Declaration: Solutions for and from mountain areas](#)." Nevertheless, Euromontana regrets the lack of ambition in implementing the action plan presented by the Commission up to now and encourages the future programming of the CAP to take better account of concrete proposals so as to give life to this declaration, as shown in our position paper.

The future CAP has to address the three objectives developed previously while simplifying its management for the beneficiaries and management authorities alike so as to make it clearer.