



**IX<sup>th</sup> European Mountain Convention**  
**Quality for the mountains: prosperity from people and territories.**

**Bilbao, Basque country, (Spain), 23-24 October 2014**

**DECLARATION OF BILBAO**

We, the representatives of Euromontana, gathered in Bilbao on 23-24 October 2014, declare:

*Local products offer a significant investment opportunity for territories and are a key element contributing to the prosperity of the population. They are the result of the history and traditions of our regions and they often represent a sector of excellence. They are considered the synthesis of a production process based on local resources that directly link the product to the territory. This cultural heritage must be preserved, defended and promoted at European level.*

*Local products provide several economic, social and environmental benefits and in particular: they support the local economy by providing employment as well as income that is often spent locally; they develop a direct relationship of trust between consumers and producers; they promote social cohesion and community spirit; they encourage the community to adopt environmental friendly behaviour; they often promote more sustainable productions and circular systems, reduced externalities in transport; they contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity and promote the development of products varieties in danger of disappearing.*

*This is most relevant for mountain quality products that have specific characteristics because of the production environment, the quality of natural resources and the traditional techniques and know-how used for their production and processing. Quality mountain products are an integral part of mountain territories' image and thus constitute an asset for the development of these territories.*

*The actors in mountain products supply chain can finally enjoy, in addition to other labels and certifications, the optional quality term "mountain product" approved under the Regulation No 1151/2012 and the associated delegated act. This optional term provides recognition of these products and a new opportunity which could attract, in many of our mountain areas, both producers and the general public, as consumers associate the term "mountain" with the idea of purity, authenticity and quality. This will enable mountain chain actors, while respecting the criteria regarding the origin of food and raw materials and the place of production and processing defined in the delegated act, to have access to a new market segment and thus promote mountain products throughout the EU and elsewhere.*

*Through this optional term, it will be possible to promote whole territories, as these products represent their entire heritage: landscapes, customs and traditions.*

*Family farming is an important model of mountain farming and is the basis of territorial and socio-economic development in many regions and countries. This "family" dimension should be valued positively in labelling and product promotion strategies. This support should continue well beyond this International year of 2014 dedicated to family farming by the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO) and Euromontana will continue to work with FAO, the World Rural Forum and the Mountain Partnership in order to promote and support this agricultural production model.*

## THE 6 DIMENSIONS OF MOUNTAIN SUPPLY CHAINS DEVELOPMENT.

### 1) Mountains Innovation:

Innovation is a key priority of Europe in the new programming period and mountain supply chains have a major contribution to make to the innovation agenda. Developing high quality specific products through innovation is a way to compensate for handicaps, invest in new sectors and new markets and maintain a vibrant mountain economy. Mountain people are inherently innovative as they have to face the geographical challenges, climate, communication (physical and virtual) and often the distance from markets and services.

To effectively support innovation in the mountain value chain, Euromontana believes that:

- **Cooperation and collaboration between actors' mountain streams can be the catalysts for innovation** by sharing a wide range of ideas. In this sense, instruments and mechanisms to support cooperation between mountain actors should be developed at European, national and massive level. new policy instruments similar to the European Innovation Partnership **'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability'** and **H2020 programme** could promote such cooperation and enable reconciliation between researchers, farmers and other stakeholders as well as accelerate technology transfer between science and agriculture and provide a more systematic feedback concerning the practical needs of farmers.
- **Policies at regional, national and European should support innovation** through **appropriate funding**, create specific measures to encourage collaboration between actors and provide practical support to develop and implement new ideas. In this sense, Euromontana will follow the process of "brokerage Innovation" at regional level and support its members to position themselves for an innovation focused on mountains.

### 2) Territorial approach of mountains products:

Cross-fertilising effects of product promotion and promotion of places help to increase the attractiveness of mountain areas. The reputation of the territory often has a positive impact on the products that are derived therefrom, and a well-known mountain product increases the attractiveness of a mountain area. The new optional quality term « mountain product » adds value to the territorial dimension of mountain supply chains.

In order to benefit from these cross-fertilising effects **Euromontana**, states that:

- **Location of all production steps in the mountain area is crucial for consumers.** The impact of their purchasing act on the local economy is one of the major drivers for consumers to buy mountain products. The possibility to describe as a 'mountain product' products processed as far as from the production area in a in a totally different environment, presents a major risk for the credibility of the scheme. States are called upon to assess the situation of their own mountain product market, supply chains and territories and to **restrict the use this derogation by adopting a shorter distance** where the impact of these derogations on product quality and territorial image will exceed the effects of a distorted competition with States applying the full derogation.
- The **development of "Quality Charters within a territory must be promoted:** these charters, by imposing quality standards and the use of local products, can help to add value to mountain

products and thus facilitate their sale to consumers. **The European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products can help to play this role and should therefore be promoted.**

- At regional and local levels, **common territorial approaches should be encouraged between farmers, actors in charge of territorial development and tourism.** A coordinated approach will enhance a better knowledge of the products in a territory and promote the territory itself.

### 3) Socio-economic impact of mountains supply chains

Mountain agriculture and the development of mountain products, have a high socio-economic dimension. Short mountain food supply chains grow more and have a better impact at local level by generating income. The products require constant improvement in quality and more specific knowledge to be applied to their manufacture. This quality improvement process could provide new jobs for youth (youth entrepreneurship) and attract qualified people who want to move to the mountain areas.

To improve the socio-economic impact of mountain products **Euromontana** was urged to:

- Pay **special attention to the role of youth in the socio-economic development of mountain areas.** Young people are essential to ensure the prosperity of these territories, and are particularly affected by unemployment (which is also linked to the difficulties they face in starting their own business activities).
- **Facilitate the organization of study tours and exchange of experiences** between producers of quality mountain products.
- **Sensitize local authorities to a greater consideration of mountain food products** in tenders at local level; bids should take into account not only the criteria of the lowest price, but also quality and local development criteria (income, jobs, environmental impact).

### 4) Environment and mountains heritage

In the coming years, agriculture will have to produce more with less environmental impact. In this context, it is important to create synergies between measures for agri-environment, climate, organic farming and marketing of products; it must also foster the ecological character of mountain products and give add value to products promoting the heritage.

Agriculture guarantees the maintaining of biodiversity, keeping the mountain areas open, and avoiding the clearing and the desertification of these areas.

In addition, respecting biodiversity and environment can foster increasing quality of mountain products: the quality of grass affects for instance the improvement of the nutritional quality of mutton/lamb or milk for cheese production.

To promote synergies between environmental and heritage protection and mountain agriculture **Euromontana** recommends:

- **Recognizing farmers for the environmental services they provide** (farmers are producers of public goods not only food). The new CAP has started to move in this direction with the new “greening payment”, but we encourage the European Commission to go further to pay for the services provided by the farmers to maintain biodiversity.

- **Encouraging and recognizing** farmers who are really respecting the environment: member states should organize substantial communication campaigns to encourage the general public to recognize the work already accomplished and to stimulate more farmers to go further in enhancing biodiversity and the environment.
- At local and regional levels, farmers should use **the added value, provided by their respect for environment and biodiversity**, as an additional marketing tool for consumers, who are increasingly concerned about respecting the environment.

## 5) Marketing strategies for mountains products

Marketing is essential for developing mountain areas and to enable small producers to be more competitive in the market. In particular, the adoption of the new optional quality term "mountain product" is a powerful tool for mountains producers in order to increase the added value of products able to attract more consumers. Marketing strategies for mountain products must take into account the profile of the different types of consumers to whom they are addressed and must adapt to their different perceptions of mountain products. Mountain products, which are not always local, are normally associated with the idea of authenticity, origin and quality, as well as the heritage and culture of a region. They bring a history and "savoir-faire" that have an emotional impact on consumers. The use of designation of origin, geographical indications and traditional terms can help to remind consumers of the mountains. These current certification instruments must, however, be made accessible to all producers in order to make them aware how to use them.

To allow mountain producers to better utilize marketing tools in order to promote their products, **Euromontana** was called upon to:

- Create a **toolkit** addressed to mountain producers and providing them with **marketing tools**, that by emphasizing the **territorial dimension**, allow them to better sell quality products, especially in urban territory.
- Establish a **working group** within Euromontana that could be aimed at analysing the **successes and failures of mountain products** and to facilitate the dissemination of information and experiences.
- Promote the **exchange of information** on the existence of current **certification instruments** and their use.

## 6) Tools for mountain products quality and traceability.

Quality is one of the most important factors for mountain products. Its improvement and enhancement through a clear traceability and control can help to create a competitive, high quality product from mountain farming. Nowadays, optimization and adoption of modern tools to ensure quality throughout the supply chain is essential.

Mountain farming, because of its wide variety of products with origin designations and its generally small production volumes, faces several difficulties in relation to the certification of quality.

To improve mountain products' quality control and traceability, **Euromontana** highlights:

- The need for an **integrated implementation of traceability and certification process** throughout the supply chain at regional and local level to avoid discrepancies between the original product and the final one.
- The need of public **support** at European, national and regional level **for the effective implementation of the traceability** of mountain products and of the optional quality term "mountain product".
- The need for a **standardisation of rules** at European and national level to reduce the costs of quality certification and traceability and give more clarity and visibility to consumers about the existence and application of these tools.
- The need for **raising awareness and communication improvement with consumers** to highlight the quality and origin of mountain products.

## THE WAY FORWARD FOR MOUNTAIN SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT.

### 1) Improve networking and cooperation between mountain products supply chains actors.

The organization of the various actors around mountain supply chains at local and regional level is essential for their development. The networking of supply chain actors will allow not only the connection of different actors, but also will improve their competitiveness through the adoption of the optional quality term "mountain product". This will also be an instrument enabling stakeholders to discuss common problems and find common solutions in order to enhance mountain products' supply chains.

To facilitate networking and cooperation between mountain supply chain actors, **Euromontana** was asked to:

- Establish a European mountains supply chains network through the **creation of a platform** that will aim at exchanging experiences, discussing common problems, disseminating information, developing projects in order to enhance the products' competitiveness, to explore the potential of mountain products, to monitor and extend the scope of the "mountain product" optional term.
- Integrate the other mountain supply chain actors such as **universities, businesses, traders and consumers** in this platform, which will be a virtual exchange forum within Euromontana by a **"bottom-up" approach**.
- Revise the **European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products** by integrating the new legislative framework and by involving other stakeholders (such as industry, trade, consumer organizations).

### 2) Develop better synergies between mountains supply chains and tourism.

There is a huge potential tourism market in mountain areas and the valorisation of quality mountain products can enhance this tourism offer. In fact, the promotion of the territories is essential to promote the local economy. Mountain products can improve economic profitability for local communities and increase their income. In that sense, we should encourage and develop synergies between mountain actors, in charge of tourism and of mountain products supply chains, to see how they could collaborate and strengthen the tourism offer.

To facilitate and encourage synergies, **Euromontana** recommends that:

- Tourism policy (managed by DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) and agricultural and rural development policies (managed by DG Agri) should work more closely together. DG Internal Market and DG Agri should work together to better **encourage and support agro-tourism** in rural and mountain areas.
- Cooperation should be encouraged at regional and local levels between farmers and tourism actors. In order to achieve this, it is essential to **learn from others, adapt to local circumstances and transfer t good practices** from other regions, as well as to **create and develop local business networks on agro-tourism**.
- At European level, a **collection of good practices on agro-tourism, virtual and physical study visits** and the **creation of a Euromontana forum on tourism and mountain supply chain should be established**.

### 3) Preparation of local development strategies including ambitious plans for the development of mountain products.

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 from other EU funds and should reinforce the links between rural, urban and fisheries areas.

To promote the implementation of the new local development programmes and facilitate the use of these new instruments, Euromontana considers that:

- Policies at national and regional level need to address the **development of mountain short supply chains, the setting-up of instruments** and provision of training to the young people who want to establish or return to rural areas.
- **Local development strategies should be established with a more collaborative approach**, by involving all relevant local actors.
- **The bureaucracy and the administrative charges for cooperation between Local Action Groups (LAGs) of different countries should be reduced**, thus facilitating exchanges between LAGs at massif level and between massifs. The European Commission could have a role in that process, by publishing calls addressed to LAGs international cooperation. National Rural Networks should also find a way to cooperate on common issues and promote mountain LAGs' collaboration.
- **Linkages between rural and urban areas should be developed**, to make citizens aware of the benefits to their lives provided by the rural mountain areas.
- **Local development of mountains** should be more prominent in the **European, national, regional political discussions**.

In conclusion, we, Euromontana, are committed to:

- **Explore ways in which the new European policies can contribute to structure sectors and territories** around brands and labels valorising mountains.

- **Provide a space for exchange with local mountain action groups** so that they can compare and improve their draft local development strategies regarding the issue of territorial marketing and enhancement of mountain product value.
- **Explore the possibility of developing projects** that contribute to better achievement of the points mentioned above and particularly in research and innovation, tourism, rural development and territorial cohesion.
- **Prepare the contributions to the Milano World Expo 2015 'Feeding the Planet: Energy for Life'** by supporting the position paper on "Promotion of European local food systems."