EUROMONTANA

XIV European Mountain CONVENTION
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SALLANCHES DECLARATION

Securing the future of extensive livestock farming and pastoralism in mountain areas

Presented during the XIV European Mountain Convention in Sallanchhes - Haute-Savoie on 2 July 2026

EUROMONTANA

Sallanches Declaration: XIV European Mountain Convention

Halfway through the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists and the International Year of the Woman Farmer, we, mountain stakeholders gathered in Sallanches, pay tribute to extensive mountain livestock farmers, pastoralists and women in agrifood systems.

Why it matters

Pastoralism and extensive livestock farming are inseparable from mountain identities and cultures, rights, landscapes and ways of life. They provide safe, high-quality food, keep grasslands and rangelands open, protect biodiversity, sustain local breeds and knowledge, and contribute to fire prevention, water regulation and rural livelihoods. These are not practices from the past: they are living systems, rooted in mountain areas, and carried by women and men whose work keeps communities, landscapes and local economies alive.

The challenge ahead

Pastoralists and extensive livestock farmers face declining economic viability and pressures from markets that do not sufficiently recognise the costs and constraints of mountain production. In mountain areas, agricultural productivity is 40% lower and incomes are 20.4% lower than in lowlands, contributing to farm closures driven by market and land consolidation, competing land-use pressures, biodiversity loss, climate change, and animal health and coexistence challenges. As a result, up to 11% of agricultural land in Europe is at risk of abandonment. Local breeds are disappearing, while precious skills and traditional knowledge are at risk of vanishing forever.

These pressures reveal a wider territorial challenge. Farms are lacking successors, workers are hard to find, and access to land, finance, mobility, housing, training and services remains fragile or inadequate. Livestock farmers' families also need schools, care, jobs and community life if they are to stay and build a future in mountain areas. The stakes reach beyond the farm: without pastoralists and extensive livestock farmers, many grasslands disappear; without healthy grasslands, extensive systems cannot survive, and with them go biodiversity, wildfire prevention, water regulation and the landscapes on which society depends.

Recognition and renewal

This diversity of territories, practices and products is a source of strength, but all levels of governance must now collaborate to protect and renew it. Europe's pastoralists and extensive livestock farmers must be **recognised as strategic assets**, both for the food they produce and for the wider functions they perform. Many of these functions — biodiversity protection, grassland management, wildfire prevention, water regulation, climate and social resilience, cultural heritage, and their role as sentinels of remote mountain landscapes— are public goods that markets fail to reward. Society relies on them, yet livestock farmers too often carry their cost alone. They must therefore be remunerated collectively, through public policy and funding at European, national and regional levels, as a fair payment and investment for work that benefits everyone.

The objective is to move beyond compensation, towards a secure and viable profession that continues to produce, manage and care for mountain areas. The way forward is not to freeze pastoralism in the past, but **to renew the profession itself**. This renewal starts with today's farmers and shepherds, whose expertise must be protected and passed on, including through pastoral schools and stronger European cooperation between training programmes.

Future generations of mountain pastoralists and extensive livestock farmers must be able to earn a decent living, build a life in their territory, and choose this profession with dignity and pride. They must be recognised and supported as skilled professionals at the heart of pastoral systems and mountain areas, able to care for animals, maintain grasslands, preserve ecosystems, anticipate risks and keep territories alive, while combining traditional knowledge with training, cooperation, research and appropriate innovation. Making the profession attractive,

resilient and sustainable should not be an afterthought: it is the necessary condition for keeping mountain areas alive and ensuring that extensive livestock farming remains a pillar of mountain life.

Our recommendations

Now is Europe's chance to show its citizens a bold vision, a vision where the mountains truly matter, by committing to mountain livestock systems and pastoralism in Europe. From a strong, independent Common Agricultural Policy for farmers and rural areas, to a cohesion policy that offers prospects for all regions, Europe needs policies and multi-level governance adapted to the realities of its European territories. **We call upon Europe, Member States, Regions and other levels of governance to:**

1. **Recognise extensive livestock farming and pastoralism in mountain areas as strategic for Europe**. Coherent policy support at EU and national level, including via the upcoming EU Livestock Strategy, is the first step. We call for a **European Action Plan for Pastoralism**, focused on labour, training, land access, mobility, and risk management.

2. **Make the profession of extensive livestock farming more attractive through adequate investment, training, promotion, innovative research** and, where useful, carefully tested digital and AI tools**,** at national and regional level. Without investing in the next generation of farmers, pastoralists, women, or young people in our territories, the profession will not become the economically viable, attractive and future-ready way of life it can be. Shepherd schools and pastoral training programmes that enhance traditional knowledge transfer for generational renewal require targeted financial support.

3. **Keep economic value within mountain areas, regions, and territories and support economic viability at local level.** Support fair and short value chains, quality mountain products, strong agricultural promotion policies, Geographical Indications, public procurement, local processing, cooperation, and circular bio-based activities. The synergies between farming, tourism, public services and local cooperative economies must be leveraged for their innovative potential.

4. **Recognise, protect and remunerate the public goods delivered by extensive livestock farming and pastoralism in mountain areas at European level**: including food provision, biodiversity protection, grassland management, water regulation, climate resilience, wildfire prevention and cultural heritage. Whether spontaneous herbaceous vegetation or cultivated grasslands, Europe must better support what is already being done, whilst restoring nature, biodiversity, and permanent grasslands in mountain areas.

5. **Guarantee a strong post-2027 CAP for extensive livestock farming in mountain areas.** Europe and its Member States must support mountain agriculture with earmarking of 15% in areas with natural constraints and accelerate generational renewal, in line with Euromontana's position. In this spirit, we support better targeting of aid, notably through capping and degressivity, as well as specific consideration of mountain areas within CAP tools, including coupled support, investments and compensation for the additional costs linked to remoteness and natural constraints. The CAP should maintain the capacity to produce safe, diverse, and high-quality food, via healthy animal farming systems that ensure a stable and sufficient level of income, whilst managing natural resources sustainably and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

6. **Defend the right to stay, work, and build a future in mountain areas**. An EU Right to Stay Strategy must tackle underinvestment in public services and employment opportunities in mountain areas. Addressing depopulation and land abandonment at local level requires sustained investment, and targeted support for young people, women, and cooperatives, to drive the green, just, and digital transitions.

7. **Put place-based territorial diversity at the heart of future EU policies and the next long-term EU Budget.** We call for mountain-specific approaches that respond to the distinct strengths of our regions. This requires policy coherence, meaningful regional and local governance structures that are participatory, bottom-up, rural-proof and mountain-proof. Mountain areas need real territorial governance, with fully financed, clear and measurable objectives at EU level.

8. **Build coherent and future-oriented mountain policies**, connecting EU agriculture, forestry, cohesion, rural development, climate, biodiversity, animal health, housing, mobility, pastoral mobility, energy, tourism, digital innovation, and territorial governance frameworks**. A European Mountain Pact** is a crucial part of this vision, designed and implemented with and by mountain communities, respecting the principles of partnership and subsidiarity, across all European policies and programmes.

Our commitment

Finally, we, Euromontana, are committed to shaping the future of pastoralism and extensive livestock farming in the mountains by committing to:

- **Enhancing policy dialogue** with European, national, and regional decision-makers on the future of extensive livestock farming and pastoralism in mountain areas, and to raise awareness of its specific challenges, the changing situation on the ground, and to suggest specific solutions.
- **Promoting cooperation** between farmers, shepherds, researchers, local authorities, civil society, young people, and women in agriculture, to increase dialogue, social cohesion, and collaboration.
- **Continuing to build knowledge through the research and development of good practices** on extensive livestock and pastoralism in mountain areas across Europe, in collaboration with scientific networks.
- **Supporting and monitoring the implementation of current and future EU policies impacting** extensive livestock farming in mountain areas, including the EU Livestock Strategy, the post 2027 CAP, and cohesion policy, and the Right to Stay Strategy, providing territorial recommendations, data, and examples from Euromontana's network of mountain stakeholders.
- **Connecting existing pastoral training programmes across Europe** and explore the development of a European Network of Pastoral Schools, with a shared curriculum and high educational standards, combining traditional knowledge, digital skills, ecosystem services management and animal welfare.
- **Leveraging the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists and the International Year of the Woman Farmer in 2026** and maintaining momentum for further activities to strengthen European mobilisation for pastoralism and mountain livestock systems.