XIV European Mountain CONVENTION
30 June - 2 July 2026 | Sallanches

Event report

XIV European Mountain Convention

Securing the future of extensive livestock farming in mountain territories

30 June - 2 July 2026
Sallanches, France



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The XIV European Mountain Convention took place from 30 June to 2 July 2026 in Sallanches, in the mountains of Haute-Savoie, and was co-organised by Euromontana and Suaci Montagn'Alpes.

Featuring field visits, political and thematic plenary sessions and workshops, the 500 participants from across Europe helped to secure the future of extensive livestock farming in mountain areas.

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Plenary report

To launch the 14th European Mountain Convention, welcome addresses were shared by Laura Gascón Herrero, President of Euromontana; Christophe Léger, President of Suaci Montagn'Alpes; Sylvia Perruchione-Kunegel, Mayor of Sallanches; Olivier Amrane, Vice-President of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, responsible for agriculture and Martial Saddier, President of the Haute-Savoie Departmental Council.

Laura Gascón Herrero, President of Euromontana warmly welcomed the participants and outlined how timely the Convention is happening, discussing pastoralism during the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists declared by the United Nations. She reminded the audience that pastoralism and extensive livestock farming are not images from postcards but are living systems that provide safe and high-quality food, keep grassland open and protect biodiversity, but yet are under several pressures.

Christophe Léger, President of Suaci Montagn'Alpes and farmer shared the honour of welcoming participants to his territory, outlining the importance of men and women behind the scenes who fight every day to keep these pastoral systems alive and provide the highest quality products.

Continuing on how the people makes mountain communities thrive, Sylvia Perruchione-Kunegel, Mayor of Sallanches highlighted how shepherds, herders, cheesemakers and craftspeople manage the land while facing local realities and shared challenges. She reminded how the European Mountain Convention is an opportunity to connect, exchange experiences, inspire one another and build a shared long-term vision for mountain areas.

Georges Morand, Departmental Councillor for the canton of Sallanches added on the

fact that the Convention is taking place at a particularly important policy moment, as debates on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy are ongoing in Brussels. Moreover, he add on how securing the future of extensive livestock farming is about ensuring that future generations can liv eon a planet with a high-quality environment. He concluded by stating that supporting pastoralism is a strong political choice.



Keynote speech

The History of the Alps and pastoralism | Séverin Duc, Historian of the Alps provided a keynote speech which by guiding the audience through history, helps to understand today's challenge for the farming sector. Through the lense of "what can mountains offer?", Séverin Duc highlighted what is not immediately visible: mountain areas are not the problem but are part of the solution.

His proposition has three dimensions: 1) long term resilience: mountains represent stability and safety; 2) dignity: preserving the dignity of mountain communities; 3) a positive vision: what kind of future can mountains offer?

The presentation argued that mountains should not be viewed as peripheral or problematic regions, but as strategic territories that offer solutions to some of the defining challenges of the 21st century, particularly climate change, resilience, and sustainable development.

Drawing on historian Fernand Braudel's framework of historical analysis, the speaker distinguished between short-term events, medium-term trends, and long-term structures. While political crises and economic cycles dominate public attention, mountain territories should be understood through the lens of long-term structural continuity. Pastoralism was presented not merely as an economic activity, but as a living heritage that embodies centuries of knowledge, territorial organisation, and adaptation to challenging environments.

The presentation challenged romanticised or exotic perceptions of mountain life, arguing that mountain communities have historically been characterised by strong social organisation, practical knowledge, and collective resilience. Grasslands, livestock, and farming systems were



described as the foundation of both mountain livelihoods and broader food systems, illustrating the deep connection between territory, ecology, and human life.



Mountains were also identified as repositories of strategic resources, including water, energy, biodiversity, landscapes, and cooler climates. As these resources become increasingly valuable, mountain territories face growing pressures from external interests seeking to exploit or redesign them. In response, the speaker argued that mountain communities must retain control over their resources, territories, and cultural practices, framing these as essential components of local sovereignty.

The concept of the "intelligence of the mountain" was presented through three guiding principles: emancipation, encouraging communities to pursue their own long-term vision rather than responding to external pressures; elevation, calling for mountain regions to develop their own language, ideas, and intellectual frameworks; and rootedness, emphasising the importance of active farming, stewardship of the land, and policies grounded in local realities.

The presentation concluded by describing mountains as living systems whose health has consequences far beyond their boundaries. Strong mountain communities generate resilience through strategic reserves, enduring institutions, and cultural traditions that preserve collective knowledge and identity.

The speaker emphasised that the value created in mountain environments increases with the level of environmental constraint and the expertise required to overcome it, summarised by the formula V = C × M, where value is determined by the intensity of constraints multiplied by the level of mastery. This framework highlights the exceptional knowledge, skills, and resilience developed by mountain communities and reinforces the importance of supporting them as vital contributors to Europe's long-term sustainability.



Rountables

Who will farm tomorrow? Becoming a livestock farmer in mountain areas

The panel explored what motivates people to become pastoral farmers today, the realities of working in mountain and pastoral regions, and the conditions needed to ensure the profession remains attractive and viable for future generations.

While each speaker brought a different perspective, they shared a common conviction that pastoralism is not simply an occupation but a way of life rooted in communities, landscapes, and intergenerational knowledge.

Flavie Melendez, livestock farmer described the paradox of farming in the highly touristic Pays du Mont-Blanc. Although tourism creates a market for high-quality local products, it also increases pressure on land, making farm succession and access to grazing areas more difficult. She stressed that tourism and agriculture should be viewed as complementary, noting that the landscapes visitors value exist because they have been maintained through generations of farming.

Reflecting on recent animal disease outbreaks in France, she highlighted the strength of community solidarity and crisis response while calling for better preparedness, particularly in veterinary services. She also criticised the administrative burden placed on mountain farmers, arguing that bureaucracy, rather than the physical demands of farming, is increasingly driving people away from the profession.

Ellen-Sara Sparrok, Vice-President of the Saami Council and Board Member of the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry shared the experience of Saami reindeer husbandry. She explained that the activity is a cross-border activity needing deep knowledge of the land, and collective responsibility. She emphasised that traditional knowledge cannot simply be documented or searched online but is passed through language, observation, and practice over generations. Adaptation, she argued, has always been part of living with nature, and today's environmental and geopolitical uncertainties reinforce the importance of maintaining multiple options and preserving cultural knowledge. She underlined that tourism can contribute to economic viability but should never replace the broader ecological and cultural role of pastoralism.

Aude Geiger, French Young Farmers offered the perspective of a newcomer to farming, having entered agriculture without a farming background. Now managing cattle, sheep, and vineyards, she described discovering a passion for pastoral farming through mentorship and practical experience. She highlighted the growing challenges posed by drought, particularly the difficulty of producing sufficient hay and maintaining transhumance systems. Looking ahead, she stressed the importance of making the profession more accessible through mentorship, openness to newcomers, and innovation introduced with humility and respect for existing knowledge.

Tom Jones, President of the European Rural Community Alliance focused on the social dimension of farming and the need to strengthen rural communities. Drawing on the example of a UK farmers' choir established to raise awareness of mental health challenges in agriculture, he illustrated both the pressures faced by farmers and the emergence of new, diverse pathways into the profession.

He argued that attracting new generations requires more than financial support: it demands holistic rural policies, vibrant communities, and measures that facilitate both farm succession and retirement. He also pointed to opportunities to increase the value of pastoral products, such as wool, and emphasised that European policies must continue to support innovation while protecting traditional knowledge and heritage.

During the discussion, speakers repeatedly returned to the importance of passing knowledge between generations. Ellen-Sara Sparrok explained that Saami pastoralism



depends on every generation learning its role within a complex social and ecological system, while Aude Geiger emphasised the value of experienced farmers willing to mentor newcomers. Participants agreed that the future of pastoralism depends as much on knowledge transfer and community support as on economic incentives.



The audience discussion highlighted concerns about the future of pastoral farming in the face of climate change, political uncertainty, and increasing administrative complexity. Responding to questions about the lack of political support, Flavie Melendez called for policies that recognise the specific realities of mountain farming, including higher production costs, coexistence with tourism, water management challenges, and predator protection. She argued that existing support schemes often fail to reflect the workload required in mountain systems and warned that excessive bureaucracy is discouraging farmers from remaining in these regions.

Throughout the session, speakers emphasised that pastoralism delivers benefits far beyond food production, including landscape management, biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage, and resilient rural communities. Ensuring its future will require long-term political commitment, stronger support for young and new farmers, recognition of traditional knowledge, and policies that reflect the realities of pastoral life.

Markets, risks and resilience: can the system deliver for future farmers?

This panel examined how market dynamics, climate change, and animal health are reshaping mountain livestock farming, while exploring the policies and business models needed to strengthen the resilience of pastoral systems. Speakers agreed that mountain livestock farming delivers significant environmental and social benefits but faces structural disadvantages that require stronger recognition and targeted support.

Ivana Mardešić, Pastoralism Specialist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) opened the discussion by presenting the objectives of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), launched following Mongolia's proposal to the United Nations. She highlighted the global importance of pastoralism, noting that pastoralists are among the world's largest land managers despite persistent gaps in official statistics.



Europe has emerged as one of the most active regions in the IYRP initiative, demonstrating strong cooperation among pastoral organisations. While pastoral systems face challenges such as predation, undergrazing, and land abandonment, she praised the strength of European pastoral

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organisations, cooperative structures, specialised training, and legislative initiatives that help secure access to grazing land. She also stressed that product differentiation, collective investment, and public support are essential tools for increasing the value of pastoral products and sharing risks among producers.

Yves Grandemange, member of the Mountain Committee of the French Dairy Interbranch Organisation (Cniel) outlined the current situation of the French dairy sector, where production has steadily declined over the past decade, with mountain farms facing particularly acute challenges. Although quality schemes such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) create additional value for mountain cheeses, rising production costs, climate pressures, and shrinking herd sizes continue to threaten the sector. He emphasised that mountain farms operate on a more human scale but are increasingly vulnerable to drought and extreme weather, making resilience more difficult to achieve. Beyond food production, he highlighted the wider economic role of mountain dairy farming in sustaining local employment throughout rural supply chains.

Sabrina Kogler, Analyst at the DG AGRI, European Commission placed these challenges in a European policy context, explaining that extensive livestock systems generally generate significantly lower incomes than intensive systems despite delivering important environmental services. Mountain areas face additional natural constraints, making direct comparisons with national averages misleading. She noted that mountain regions are considerably more vulnerable to climate change and increasing predator pressure, while extensive grazing systems contribute to biodiversity conservation, wildfire prevention, and landscape management. Although the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) already targets some of these vulnerable systems, she argued that future policies should better recognise and reward the public goods and ecosystem services provided by extensive livestock farming.



Mario Grillo, First Vice-President of Euromontana, Cia-Agricoltori Italiani reflected on his own journey from shepherd to banker and back to farming, illustrating how entrepreneurship and innovation can strengthen mountain agriculture. Returning to his family farm, he diversified production, invested in marketing, developed a geographical indication for local products, and embraced digital tools to reach consumers directly. He encouraged younger generations to combine traditional knowledge with technology, arguing that innovation, renewable energy, artificial intelligence, and improved training can reduce labour demands while increasing farm profitability.

At the same time, he stressed that financial support alone is insufficient without community engagement, investment in skills, and recognition of the value generated by mountain farmers.



Throughout the discussion, speakers agreed that differentiation and quality labels remain among the strongest opportunities for improving profitability in mountain farming, although these approaches require time, investment, and collective organisation. Product quality, territorial identity, and consumer awareness were repeatedly identified as key factors allowing mountain producers to distinguish themselves in increasingly competitive markets.

The panel also highlighted the growing importance of recognising ecosystem services within agricultural policy. During the audience discussion, speakers argued that farmers should be rewarded not only for food production but also for maintaining grasslands, preventing wildfires, conserving biodiversity, and preserving rural landscapes. While new approaches to valuing these services are emerging, participants noted that methodologies remain under development and must avoid unintended consequences such as land speculation or land grabbing.



The discussion concluded with a shared message of cautious optimism. Mountain livestock farming will continue to evolve, adopting new technologies, adapting to climate change, and responding to changing markets. However, its long-term future depends on public policies that recognise its environmental, economic, and social contributions, support innovation alongside tradition, and ensure that mountain farmers receive fair remuneration for the value they create for society.

High level policy panel
What place for mountain livestock farming in the post-2027 CAP?

The final day of the European Mountain Convention opened with remarks from Marie-Louise Donzel-Gonet, Vice-President of the Haute-Savoie Departmental Council, responsible for agriculture, forests and food and Sébastien Dubourg, regional councillor and chair of the Mountain Commission, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region.



They reflected on the discussions held throughout the Convention and reaffirmed the commitment of regional authorities to supporting mountain communities and pastoralism. Marie-Louise Donzel-Gonet thanked the organisers, volunteers, farmers who had welcomed participants onto their farms, and the town of Megève for its hospitality. She stressed that the exchanges during workshops, field visits, and informal discussions had strengthened confidence in the future of mountain areas.

Sébastien Dubourg reaffirmed the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region's strong partnership with Euromontana and highlighted the central role of mountains in the region's economy, culture, and identity. He underlined the contribution of mountain farmers to food production, biodiversity conservation, and landscape management, and presented the Region's pastoralism plan, supported by regional and European funding, as a key instrument for improving working conditions in the sector. Looking ahead to the CAP reform, he called for a more ambitious policy that fully recognises

the specific needs of mountain territories and enables people to continue living and working in these regions.

The subsequent high-level policy panel examined how the post-2027 CAP can better support mountain livestock farming, ensure fair incomes, and encourage generational renewal. Speakers agreed that mountain farming delivers essential public goods, including food sovereignty, biodiversity conservation, landscape management, and rural vitality, but requires stronger recognition through targeted European policies.



In a video message, Annie Genevard, French Minister of Agriculture, Agri-food and Food Sovereignty emphasised that mountain farming is central to Europe's food security, cultural heritage, and environmental resilience. She highlighted the growing pressures facing young farmers, from climate change to predator management, and stressed that mountain areas are living territories where Europe's future is being shaped. She underlined the French Government's commitment to supporting adaptation, innovation, and generational renewal through dedicated public policies.



Herbert Dorfmann, Member of the European Parliament, member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development was firstly asked about the new CAP structure, and if it should be seen as a threat or an opportunity. He argued that maintaining livestock farming in mountain areas is essential to prevent land abandonment and preserve Europe's landscapes. He warned that when livestock disappears, landscapes deteriorate and communities decline, ultimately increasing pressure for more intensive farming elsewhere.

Looking ahead to the CAP reform, he called for stronger targeted support for mountain livestock systems, higher payments for farms in areas with natural constraints, and greater involvement of regional authorities in designing CAP Strategic Plans. He stressed that mountain regions cannot rely solely on national decision-making if their specific needs are to be properly reflected. He called for ring fencing money in less favoured areas and safeguarding regional competences in the development of the partnership plans. Additionally, he stressed the risk that mountain areas will not be represented if decision and power are given to the member state at national level.



Dominique Fayel, Vice-President of Euromontana, Chair of the Copa-Cogeca Beef Meat Working Party, FNSEA, was asked to react on the Commission's proposal. While remindding the evolution of the CAP, he said that member states should be able to determine what is specific and needed for the local.He highlighted the need for a stable and adequately funded CAP that provides long-term certainty for farmers and pastoralists. He described pastoralism as an integrated system linking animals, landscapes, environmental management, local economies, and rural communities, making it impossible to separate agricultural production from the wider territory. He argued that livestock farming faces structural challenges across Europe and called for stronger recognition of the ecosystem services provided by mountain farming, alongside dedicated support for regions facing natural constraints. He also emphasised that future environmental transitions must be developed with farmers rather than imposed upon them.



Representing the European Commission, Gaëlle Marion, Head of Unit, Environmental Sustainability, DG AGRI outlined how the proposed CAP reform seeks to provide Member States with greater flexibility while strengthening support for farmers operating in areas with natural constraints, extensive livestock systems, and permanent grasslands. She explained that the new policy architecture includes stronger provisions for maintaining grazing systems, supporting environmental and climate objectives, and promoting generational renewal, for exmaple a 5% ringefenced budget that can be used fo land abandonment. While acknowledging that negotiations are ongoing, she stressed that the Commission intends to ensure Member States consult stakeholders when developing their strategic plans and that future guidance will encourage better recognition of rural and mountain needs.



Speaking on behalf of young farmers, Aude Geiger welcomed the European Union's growing recognition of generational renewal but stressed that ambition must be matched by dedicated funding. She argued that young people entering mountain farming need access to targeted financial support, investment in infrastructure such as water storage, and stable income mechanisms that reflect the realities of farming in mountain territories. She also called for support schemes that reward farmers who adopt sustainable production systems and recognised that no single measure will solve the challenges facing the next generation of pastoralists.

The audience discussion focused on ensuring that the future CAP better recognises the value of permanent grasslands and the multiple ecosystem services provided by mountain livestock farming. Speakers broadly agreed that support for mountain pastures should become a stronger and more consistent feature of the CAP rather

than an optional measure left to Member States. Participants also highlighted the importance of rural proofing across European policies to ensure that the needs of sparsely populated mountain regions are fully considered in future funding and legislative proposals.

The session concluded with a shared message that the post-2027 CAP represents a critical opportunity to secure the future of mountain livestock farming. Dedicated funding, stronger territorial targeting, meaningful support for young farmers, and greater recognition of the environmental, economic, and social value of mountain pastoral systems will be essential to ensure that mountain regions remain vibrant places to live and work.

High level policy panel
Keeping mountain areas alive: what policies, at which levels of governance?

The final policy panel explored how European, national, regional, and local governance can work together to ensure that mountain areas remain vibrant places to live and work, additionally to the common agricultural policy. Speakers agreed that maintaining mountain communities requires integrated policies that go beyond agriculture to include public services, infrastructure, housing, mobility, and territorial development.

Mr. Michel Fournier, French Minister Delegate responsible for Rural Affairs stressed that mountain policies must reflect the realities of daily life in these territories. While questioned on the interdependency on mountain and lowland rural areas, he stressed that access to healthcare, schools, transport, and other essential services is more challenging in mountain areas and requires coordinated solutions adapted to local circumstances rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. While France's Mountain Law already provides a dedicated framework, he argued that future reforms, including the post-2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), must continue to recognise the specific needs of mountain regions. He emphasised that rural territories should be valued not only for their population but also for the strategic resources they provide, including water, forests, agricultural land, and food production. Calling for greater decentralisation, he argued that local authorities and organisations such as Euromontana are best placed to identify problems and develop practical solutions that national governments can help implement. He recognised the need for a European Pact for Mountain.



Jérémy Decerle, Member of the European Parliament, member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development argued that keeping mountain areas alive is both a European and a national responsibility.



While the European Union should continue to provide a common policy framework and the financial tools needed to support mountain farming, Member States and regions must retain sufficient flexibility to adapt measures to local realities. He underlined that mountain regions provide benefits that extend well beyond their borders and therefore deserve continued European support. Looking beyond agriculture, he stressed that maintaining viable mountain communities also depends on investment in public services, mobility, water management, and access to essential infrastructure. Mountain regions and islands are not only assets for their own countries, but for Europe as a whole, and without any EU support, there would be very little, if any, mountain farming. But the common framework of the CAP is what gives its strength, and it should remain a genuinely common policy. In addition, once the CAP is agreed, support must also be provided for its correct implementation.



Xavier Roseren, member of the French National Assembly for Haute-Savoie's 6th constituency, Vice-President of the National Association of Mountain Elected Representatives highlighted that mountain territories require policies designed around their unique characteristics, including altitude, accessibility, and exposure to natural risks. Rather than introducing additional legislation, he argued that existing public policies should more consistently integrate mountain-specific considerations across sectors such as housing, healthcare, and land management.

He also addressed the growing challenge of coexistence with large carnivores, noting that while the wolf's protection status has evolved, many mountain farmers continue to face significant practical and emotional challenges in protecting their livestock.



Nicolas Evrard, Mayor of Servoz, Chair of the Europe and International Working Group of the Alpine Massif Committee emphasised the diversity of mountain territories across both France and Europe, arguing that policies must be sufficiently flexible to reflect local circumstances. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that European frameworks, including Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, translate into tangible benefits for mountain communities. Climate adaptation, he noted, can only succeed if solutions are designed and implemented locally, with pastoralism remaining closely connected to the social and economic life of mountain municipalities. He underlined the need to avoid working in silos, improve communication and responds to the real needs expressed by people on the ground, as demonstrated the field visits.

Throughout the discussion, speakers repeatedly stressed the importance of moving beyond political declarations towards concrete implementation. They argued that the future of mountain

territories depends on better coordination across levels of governance, stronger involvement of local actors, and continued advocacy to ensure that mountain issues remain visible in European policy debates. Participants also highlighted the need for closer cooperation between Members of the European Parliament, regional authorities, national governments, and organisations such as Euromontana to carry forward the commitments emerging from the Convention.

The audience discussion focused on improving support for farmers facing climate change, predator pressure, and economic uncertainty. Speakers called for CAP payments that prioritise active farmers rather than simply land ownership, arguing that public support should reward the people maintaining mountain landscapes and producing food. They also stressed that supporting young farmers is essential for both generational renewal and climate adaptation.

In his concluding remarks, Michel Fournier emphasised that mountain communities must have a stronger voice in political decision-making. He argued that rural territories cannot continue to be governed by policies designed without sufficient understanding of their realities and called for greater democratic representation to ensure that future legislation reflects the needs of those living and working in mountain regions.



Workhops report

Workshop 1

Understanding generational renewal and attractivity in agriculture across European mountain ranges

Co-organised by Euromontana and the Alpine Convention, this workshop explored how to support generational renewal in mountain agriculture, building on recent work by the Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry Working Group of the Alpine Convention. After an introduction by Guillaume Corradino, Euromontana Director, and Thomas Bunel, Deputy Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, Giorgio Matteucci presented the findings of an Alpine Convention questionnaire on generational renewal.

The questionnaire provided a valuable overview of the situation across Alpine countries and the different approaches being implemented to support generational renewal. Overall, the findings show that the main challenges are shared across countries (access to land, quality of life, and farm viability). However, the specific context and needs vary considerably between countries and even between local regions.

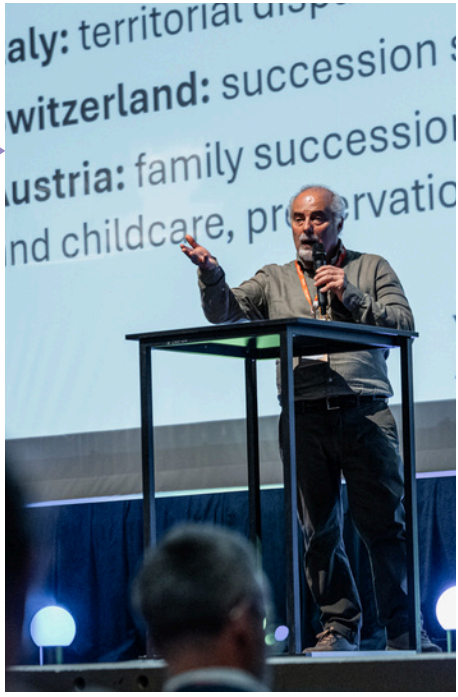
Key summary

Innovative practices

Several promising policy measures and innovative practices were highlighted, including advisory services, targeted support for young farmers, training programmes, and locally driven initiatives. Promoting these experiences and facilitating the exchange of good practices between countries is essential to improve the effectiveness of generational renewal initiatives across the Alpine region and other mountain regions.

Farm succession

The main message was clear: generational renewal cannot be reduced to farm succession. It is a systemic transition. Young people will not enter or remain in mountain farming unless farms are economically viable, socially attractive and rooted in mountain areas where it is possible to build a life. This calls for action not only on agriculture, but also on land, training, services, housing, infrastructure, advisory support and territorial development. Participants stressed that succession must be anticipated much earlier. Preparing outgoing farmers is as important as supporting new entrants, especially when transmission takes place outside the family. Succession involves trust, knowledge transfer, emotional attachment to the farm and integration into the local community. Matching platforms, advisory services, mentoring schemes and regular follow-up between outgoing and incoming farmers were identified as useful tools.



Workload emerged as one of the strongest barriers to attractiveness. Mountain livestock farming is still too often associated with personal sacrifice, while young people expect a decent income, recognition and a more balanced life. Collective models, such as group farms, pastoral groups and cooperatives, can help share responsibilities, but require proper management and training. Other innovating way of working, including monitoring tools and digital applications, can also reduce workload if adapted to mountain realities.



Key summary

Access to land

Access to land, capital and finance remains a major obstacle, particularly for newcomers from outside farming families. High establishment costs, fragmented land, competition for resources and administrative complexity can discourage new entrants. Participants called for long-term training, practical placements, mentoring and dedicated support for non-family succession.

Economic viability

Economic viability was closely linked to diversification and the recognition of public goods. Local value chains, collective processing and marketing, direct sales, tourism and multifunctional farming can strengthen resilience. Participants also stressed that mountain farmers and pastoralists provide food, maintain landscapes, support biodiversity and contribute to food security. These services should be recognised and remunerated as part of the economic model.

Attractiveness

The workshop also underlined that generational renewal depends on the broader attractiveness of mountain areas. Housing, childcare, schools, healthcare, transport, digital connectivity, social life and employment opportunities for partners and families are all decisive. Participants called for territorial diagnoses developed locally and shared across governance levels, leading to integrated policies.

The workshop concluded that future policies must move beyond isolated measures for young farmers. Generational renewal in mountain agriculture requires coordinated support across the whole farm life cycle: early succession planning, access to land and finance, training, advisory services, collective organisation, fair remuneration, suitable innovation and attractive living conditions in mountain areas.

Workshop 2

Ensuring better working and living conditions

The workshop explored how access to services, rural development support and decent living and working conditions influence the attractiveness and long-term viability of mountain livestock farming.

The session opened with a presentation by **Gabriele Barichello** (Head of Legal and Labour Department of the Trentino Federation of Cooperation), who shared the experience of the dairy cooperative model in the Autonomous Province of Trento. His presentation focused on two major challenges affecting mountain livestock farming: labour shortages and generational renewal, and the heavy workload associated with year-round farming activities. These challenges are reinforced by the structural constraints of mountain agriculture, including difficult terrain, high production costs, and climate change impacts, among others.

Gabriele presented the cooperative model as one possible response to these challenges. Through cooperatives, farmers can improve the value of mountain products, reach markets more easily, share resources, and improve the economic situation of their farms. This approach helps improve working conditions and makes the profession more attractive for younger people.

Key summary

Housing and broader level than the farm

During the discussion, participants agreed that living and working conditions depend on more than what happens at farm-level. One of the main challenges highlighted by the participants was housing. In many mountain areas, it is becoming harder to find affordable and suitable housing for farmers and their families. Poor housing conditions, the lack of accommodation in remote areas, and the absence of suitable facilities for shepherds hinder working and living conditions. Participants stressed the need for stronger cooperation with municipalities, more public support for housing renovation, and the need of finding solutions adapted to farmer's needs.

Challenges in mountain areas

Participants also discussed other challenges linked to mountain territories, especially access to land and the management of common resources. They pointed out that mountain pastures are shared resources that benefit the whole society by supporting food production, protecting biodiversity, and maintaining mountain landscapes. At the same time, participants stressed that the work of farmers in managing these landscapes is not fully recognised nor adequately supported. Concerns were also raised about increasing competition for land with other activities.



To sum up, the discussion underlined that improving the living and working conditions of mountain livestock farmers requires action in several areas, such as better access to housing and services, support for young farmers, greater recognition of the role of pastoralism, stronger cooperation between farmers, and policies adapted to the specific needs of mountain communities.

Workshop 3

Biodiversity, grasslands and climate resilience in mountain livestock systems

The workshop explored the role of extensive livestock farming in maintaining biodiversity, preserving mountain landscapes and strengthening climate resilience. Through contributions from the European Commission, ERSAF (Italy) and HAZI (Basque Country), participants examined why mountain grazing systems remain under pressure despite their environmental and societal benefits.

The presentations highlighted both the structural challenges facing European grasslands and practical examples demonstrating that extensive grazing can simultaneously support biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services and viable agricultural production when appropriate governance and territorial conditions are in place.

Key summary

Grassland and Livestock Dynamics

Sabrina Kogler (DG AGRI, European Commission) set the scene by presenting the main findings of the Analytical Brief "Grassland and Livestock Dynamics". She outlined the structural trends affecting European grasslands, highlighting the growing pressures on extensive livestock systems, including land abandonment, climate change and socio-economic challenges. Her presentation also explored current policy questions and future challenges for ensuring the long-term support of mountain grasslands. Irene Benedetti (ERSAF, Italy) presented practical examples from mountain grazing projects demonstrating how extensive livestock systems can simultaneously support biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and viable agricultural production. She highlighted operational tools such as grazing plans, discussed the factors that enable successful implementation, and reflected on the barriers that often prevent environmental policy objectives from translating into effective action on the ground. José María Fernández García (HAZI, Basque Country) shared experiences from the Basque Country, illustrating how mountain grazing systems can combine productive farming with ecosystem restoration and biodiversity protection. His presentation focused on the territorial governance, monitoring approaches and collaborative mechanisms that make these integrated systems successful, while emphasising the importance of long-term support, knowledge transfer and continuous engagement with farmers.

The interactive discussion invited participants to identify where policy objectives fail to translate into practice and to reflect on the barriers preventing proven management approaches from becoming routine across European mountain regions. The following key ideas emerged from the discussion.





Strengthening long-term support for mountain pastoralism: Participants stressed that extensive livestock farming delivers public goods far beyond food production, including biodiversity conservation, wildfire prevention, carbon storage and landscape management. However, existing funding remains fragmented and often too short-term to secure the future of pastoral systems. Several participants argued that preserving mountain grasslands should become a stronger political priority at both national and European levels. Public funding alone may not be sufficient, and innovative financing mechanisms involving private actors could complement existing CAP instruments. Long-term investment is needed to ensure continuity rather than relying solely on short project cycles.

Key summary

Adaptation to mountain realities

Adapting agricultural policies to mountain realities: Discussions highlighted that many policy instruments do not fully reflect the diversity of mountain territories. Participants pointed to the higher vulnerability of mountain farming to land abandonment, climate change, predation and demographic decline, while farm incomes remain significantly lower than in lowland areas. Examples such as alpine wetlands illustrated the difficulty of applying uniform eligibility criteria across Europe. Participants called for more place-based approaches that recognise local ecological conditions while maintaining coherent European objectives. Better territorial adaptation would improve both environmental outcomes and the viability of mountain livestock systems.

Improving monitoring

Reliable local data were repeatedly identified as essential for designing effective policies and demonstrating the value of extensive grazing systems. While European-level monitoring provides important trends, participants noted that it often fails to capture local realities and territorial differences. Speakers emphasised that better monitoring should not only collect ecological indicators but also evaluate the long-term impacts of management practices. Strengthening evidence at the regional level would help justify future policy adjustments and provide stronger arguments for continued investment in mountain grasslands.



Bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and practical implementation: Although numerous methodologies, grazing plans and ecosystem service approaches already exist, participants agreed that they are not yet widely implemented in everyday farming practice. Several speakers highlighted the importance of translating scientific knowledge into practical guidance that farmers, advisors and citizens can easily understand. Existing networks, including the European CAP Network, provide valuable opportunities for exchanging experiences, but greater efforts are needed to organise, disseminate and adapt knowledge for different regional contexts.

Balancing harmonisation with territorial flexibility: The discussion recognised the need for shared European objectives while acknowledging that a single solution cannot address the diversity of mountain regions. Successful grazing systems depend on local governance arrangements, ecological conditions and socio-economic contexts. Participants concluded that European policies should establish common goals while allowing regional authorities sufficient flexibility to adapt implementation to local needs. This territorial approach was considered essential for reconciling biodiversity conservation, agricultural production and rural development across Europe's mountain areas.

Ultimately, the workshop confirmed broad agreement that extensive livestock farming remains indispensable for maintaining healthy mountain ecosystems and vibrant rural communities. However, significant gaps persist between policy ambitions and implementation on the ground. The exchange highlighted the value of bringing together policymakers, researchers and practitioners to create feedback loops between field experience and policy development, ensuring that future support measures are both environmentally effective and economically viable for mountain livestock farming.

Workshop 4

Access to Land and Finance and support structures, removing barriers for new entrants

Key summary

The workshop, held on Wednesday 1 July 2026, assessed barriers to land access and start-up finance for new livestock farmers, the role of collective support structures, and relevant policy tools, through two presentations from France, followed by audience questions and discussion. Euromontana's introduction flagged the core challenges, including loss of access to resources and mobility through land competition, fragmentation, privatisation, loss of commons, and land abandonment, all of which undermine the resilience of pastoral systems and heighten their exposure to risks such as climate change and economic vulnerabilities.

Collective land management tools.
Bruno Caraguel (Alpages 38) kicked off the presentations with an overview of the collective land management tools in France, framing "pastoral land" around two pillars: pastoral activities (grazing recognised as being of general interest under French rural law) and pastoral spaces (largely natural areas carrying general interest stakes such as water, biodiversity, and heritage). He traced this to the 1972 French Pastoral Law, which introduced three tools: Associations Foncières Pastorales (grouping fragmented landowners to entrust pastures to herders), Groupements Pastoraux (state approved herder associations with shared accounting and access to aid), and Conventions Pluriannuelles de Pâturage (multiyear grazing agreements bypassing standard rural leases).



Bruno weighed up the assets of agro pastoral installation (meaningfulness, low start-up investment, reduced environmental impact, societal services) against its constraints (low economic value added, predation, difficult family life, climate change, negative societal perceptions, labour regulation burdens), summarised as "pride in serving the general interest" versus "contradictory demands imposed by the general interest."

He noted that public support (investment aid, MAEC environmental payments) helps, but presence-based schemes likDPB direct payments can be counterproductive, penalising new entrants and young animals in agro pastoral systems. He concluded by stressing that collective action is essential in pastoralism, given resource abundance, multiple stakes, hazards, and shifting societal views, and that acting alone is difficult if not impossible, calling for dedicated public policies to help structure and support collectives.

Key summary

Finance and transition tools, the banking perspective

Jean-Pierre Touzet (Crédit Agricole) presented the bank's financing solutions for farmers' adaptation and development challenges, noting structural pressures: half of French farmers will retire by 2030, agricultural production is increasingly polarised, and banking competition is intensifying. Crédit Agricole positions itself as the reference bank for agriculture (81% penetration, 69.5% market share, €51.6bn in outstanding credit). To meet an estimated €8.4bn investment need and €3bn annual support need, the bank has segmented its offer around installation, investment/support, and crisis management, including a zero interest installation loan (PTZ), new quasi equity funding, expanded guarantees, machinery and supply chain financing tools, and flexible repayment options built into all credit products, alongside state backed structural loans and a network of 2,500 advisors. He closed by flagging insurance and farm succession as major areas of untapped potential, given the large volumes of land and farms changing hands annually.

Questions, discussion and conclusions

Questions and discussion at the workshop centred on several recurring themes: firstly, on the distinctive nature of land access for pastoral farming, where land is not a fixed asset but tied to seasonal movement, up the mountain in summer, down in winter, often shared across many farmers managing animals together. Participants pointed to real solutions already emerging, such as in Savoie, where land previously never rented is now being brought into use through collective approaches that share land, costs, and management. Yet real contradictions persist, including that farmers must adapt to climate change, but financing tools have not caught up, often leaving the farmer to carry all the risk alone.



Money emerged as a serious obstacle, with support calculations seen as too complex and CAP tools not always fitting mountain realities, pointing to a need for more flexible financial instruments, including European guarantees designed specifically for mountain farming under the post 2027 CAP. Underlying this was a recognition that mountain livestock farming serves the general interest, providing public goods such as landscape, biodiversity, and fire prevention, and that policy and finance need to adequately reflect these challenges, a key message within the Sallanches Declaration. The importance of social collaboration, participation across the agricultural value chain, and the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change, were key concluding reflections. The concluding message from the workshop was clear: local solutions already exist, and what is now needed is the political and financial will to support them together.

Workshop 5

What potential for technological innovation?

The workshop assessed the added value of technological innovation for productivity, resilience, and ecosystem services in mountain areas, sharing best practices from three speakers before opening to audience discussion on the potential, accessibility, risks, and solutions linked to technological innovation for extensive livestock farming in mountain areas. Euromontana opened the workshop, with an introduction noting that digitalisation can boost efficiency and cut production costs in disadvantaged mountain conditions where circumstances allow, provided investment is matched by digital upskilling and a sufficient enabling environment at EU and national level. Euromontana highlighted that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, as challenges remain contextual.

Key summary

Total Agri Management, Calabria

Mario Grillo (Vice President of Euromontana, CIA–Agricoltori Italiani) kicked off by presenting TAM (Total Agri Management), an Italian IoT and AI platform protecting extensive livestock farming in mountain territories. TAM helps against challenges like remote sites, labour shortages, thin margins, and climate and wildlife coexistence challenges. It does so by integrating field sensors, secure EU cloud ingestion, AI-driven alerts, and multi-device access across nine modules (barns, grazing, milking, HACCP, safety, HR, IoT units, voice, traceability), featuring ruminal bolus health sensors and autonomous drones/robotic "Shepherd Dogs". Reported benefits include a 30% reduction in animal losses, 24/7 coverage, efficiency gains, GDPR compliance, and support for rural territories. TAM is a scalable cooperation model, with a roadmap from 2026 pilots to a pan-European network by 2027.

INNOAlm project, South Tyrol

Astrid Weiss (Südtiroler Bauernbund) then presented INNOAlm, a 30-month, €280,000 CAP-funded project (May 2025–October 2027) involving 5 farmers, 2 research institutes, and 2 advisory partners, validating digital measures for alpine pasture management across 72,756 net hectares in South Tyrol. The project's goal is securing pastures' long-term survival by improving herd management, animal health, and network coverage, motivated by a 2023 WIFO survey showing farmers graze pastures mainly for non-economic reasons, while facing challenges like predation, fencing upkeep, and hiker/biker conflicts, with animal health an often-overlooked issue. The project tests GPS trackers, drones, satellite data, virtual fencing, and rumen boluses, and has completed tracker calibration, comparisons, and network planning, with ongoing interviews, legal research, antenna installation, and app development, aiming next at field trials, a study visit to Steiermark, and a digital grazing plan.





Key summary

Technological innovation in the Alpine Region

Giorgio Matteuci then summarized the Alpine Convention's workshop held in May 2026 on "Agriculture 4.0 & Climate Smart Forestry," covering forest monitoring and climate adaptation tools, plus digital farming and collaborative systems. Findings stressed that monitoring technologies offer strong insight but face data harmonization and deployment challenges, while adoption depends on affordability, trust, skills, and regulation; collaboration remains key to resilience and youth engagement. The workshop identified cross-cutting challenges (data fragmentation, climate uncertainty, regulatory gaps, costs, scaling) and issued five policy recommendations, including: interoperable infrastructure, transnational knowledge-sharing, innovative ecosystem-service financing, inclusive governance, and stronger innovation uptake.

Questions, discussion and conclusions

Questions and discussion at the workshop centred on several recurring themes: the importance of grounding digital innovation in real projects and integrated systems rather than isolated tools, and a recognition that social collaboration matters just as much as the technology itself. Participants raised the idea of an EU-wide network to connect technological projects across European mountain regions, while also flagging the major challenges of costs and affordability as persistent barriers to adoption. The conversation reflected on what the profile of the "farmer of the future" might and should look like, alongside pressing questions of data governance, such as who manages and controls farm data and the broader issue of acceptance among practitioners of different age ranges. Underlying all of this was an ethical and philosophical debate about the role of technology in mountain farming more generally, with significant implications for the future of extensive livestock farming in mountain areas.

Workshop 6

Economic viability in practice: structuring and expanding livestock value chains

This workshop explored practical ways to strengthen the economic viability and resilience of mountain livestock farming. Moderated by Guillaume Corradino and Valentine Neirinck-Fauvelle, the session combined two introductory presentations with discussions at two thematic tables: one on labels, quality schemes and product valorisation, and another on secondary value chains and multi-activity.

Stéphane Joandel, from the Association Altitude, presented efforts to relaunch and expand the use of the optional quality term "mountain product" in France. While many mountain products are marketed without any specific quality sign, the Association aims to give greater collective visibility to mountain production across different agricultural sectors. A consumer survey presented during the workshop showed significant potential: products carrying the mountain designation generated stronger purchase intentions and higher perceived value, with consumers considering prices around 13% to 15% higher than for comparable conventional products to be acceptable.

At the same time, awareness of the designation remains limited and consumer understanding of what it guarantees is still unclear. The presentation therefore highlighted both the commercial potential of the mountain identity and the need for credible communication, collective promotion and greater public recognition.

Athanasios Ragkos, from ELGO-DIMITRA, presented research into the socio-economic performance of pastoral systems based on 76 farms across seven countries. His analysis challenged simplistic assumptions that pastoral farms are necessarily unproductive or economically unviable. Results showed considerable diversity between production systems and confirmed that farm size or production intensity alone do not determine viability. Economic resilience can instead depend on a combination of pasture use, cost management, diversification, certification, local processing, cooperation and new activities. The presentation also highlighted opportunities linked to new pastoral products, agritourism, ecosystem services, technological innovation and the valorisation of underused resources and co-products.

Secondary value chain and multi-activity

The discussion on secondary value chains and multi-activity focused strongly on wool. Participants stressed that wool should be considered a co-product rather than a waste material, but that its valorisation remains hampered by fragmented value chains, small volumes and a shortage of local washing and processing facilities. Initiatives to revive spinning and weaving demonstrate potential, but also reveal the complexity of matching different wool qualities and breeds with suitable markets. Participants cautioned against developing new outlets that would eventually depend on imported wool rather than strengthening local production.

The key message was that successful valorisation requires collective organisation and a full assessment of the requirements and externalities of setting up new value chains, in order to ensure true economic viability and avoid a form of economic maladaptation. Individual livestock farmers rarely produce sufficient volumes or have the time and expertise needed to develop new markets alone. Cooperatives, producer organisations and other collective structures can help with collection, sorting, traceability, processing and market development. Participants also underlined the importance of aiming for higher-value uses, rather than applications such as fertiliser or pellets that may generate too little return for farmers, or applications requiring vast amounts of resources.



Multi-activity and agritourism were also discussed as potential sources of additional income. However, participants stressed that diversification should remain an opportunity rather than becoming a necessity for the economic viability of every farm. Agritourism requires specific skills, investment, training and professionalisation, and returns are not guaranteed. Cooperation between livestock farmers and tourism operators may therefore sometimes be more realistic than expecting farmers to develop and manage tourism activities themselves. More broadly, participants called for better networking and training to help farmers move beyond primary production and capture more value from products, services and experiences linked to mountain livestock farming.

Regarding the labelling table discussion, Participants discussed the opportunities and limitations of product labelling as a tool to improve the economic viability of mountain farming. The exchanges highlighted the importance of ensuring fair remuneration for producers, increasing consumer understanding of mountain products, and adapting quality schemes to future challenges, particularly climate change.

A representative of a Reblochon producer presented an initiative inspired by the French "C'est qui le Patron?!" model, which aims to ensure fair remuneration for farmers through greater price transparency. The initiative brings together 75 producers from the Pays du Mont-Blanc and clearly communicates to consumers what proportion of the final retail price returns to the farmer. Participants stressed that if mountain farming is to become less dependent on public subsidies, products must generate sufficient added value through the market, with prices reflecting the true cost of production.

The discussion also explored the role of quality schemes, particularly Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) labels. Representatives from INAO noted that the higher market value of milk produced in Savoie and Franche-Comté is largely explained by the demanding production specifications attached to PDO schemes, which generate additional production costs. However, participants acknowledged that the growing number of labels can confuse consumers and reduce the effectiveness of quality communication.

Product differentiation

Several examples illustrated the diversity of approaches to product differentiation. Representatives from the Savoie Chambers of Agriculture presented initiatives such as hay milk certification, while participants from the Hautes-Alpes questioned whether formal specifications are always necessary or whether locally differentiated products without official labels can also succeed. Experiences shared from the Mountain Pork sector showed that simply adding new requirements to product specifications does not automatically increase value. Successful initiatives combined strong marketing, clear product identity, and well-designed production standards. A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the gap between consumers and agricultural realities. Participants emphasised that improving consumer knowledge remains essential to communicating the added value of mountain products and justifying higher prices linked to sustainable production methods.



Climate change adaptation

It emerged as a major challenge for quality schemes. Participants questioned how production specifications can remain sufficiently robust to protect product identity while allowing farmers to adapt to increasingly frequent droughts and other extreme climatic events. Experiences from the Comté and Salers sectors illustrated the tension between maintaining traditional production rules and ensuring the resilience of farming systems during exceptional circumstances. The table of discussion concluded that future quality schemes should preserve their high standards while incorporating greater flexibility to respond to climate-related disruptions. Participants suggested that specifications could include predefined adaptation measures applicable during exceptional events, allowing producers to remain compliant without compromising product integrity or long-term resilience.

The workshop concluded that there is no single pathway towards greater economic viability. Mountain livestock farms differ greatly in their production models, resources and local contexts, and solutions must reflect this diversity. Nevertheless, several common factors emerged: the need to capture more value from mountain products, strengthen collective organisation, develop suitable processing capacity, support diversification where appropriate, and ensure that any additional value created ultimately reaches farmers.

The discussions also highlighted a wider message: pastoralism and mountain livestock farming are not static production systems. They are evolving, adapting and capable of innovation. Public policies and value-chain actors should therefore create enabling conditions for new products, activities and forms of cooperation, while safeguarding the characteristics that make mountain farming distinctive and valuable.

Workshop 7

Extensive livestock as a territorial activity: interactions with tourism, nature and energy

The workshop explored how extensive livestock farming can coexist with other uses of mountain areas, including tourism, nature conservation and energy production. Discussions focused on the challenges linked to multiple uses of mountain resources, examples of good practices, and the role of territorial governance in finding balanced solutions.
The workshop kickstarted with two inspiring presentations to set the tone and give the participants some context for the interactive discussion.

First, Lauren Mosdale (co-director of CIPRA France) presented the Pastoralisme × Tourisme project, which aims to strengthen cooperation between Alpine territories by sharing experiences, building common perspectives and improving collaboration between stakeholders. The project focuses on improving coexistence and mutual understanding between pastoral activities and outdoor tourism. Lauren highlighted the importance of local governance, dialogue spaces, mediation and awareness-raising to manage shared mountain spaces and anticipate future tensions.

The second presentation opened the view outside of the French context and make us realise that sheperds all around Europe are facing similar challenges but do not have the same capacity to fight them. A very interesting view was brought by Martine Wolff (Eco-antropologist at Université Paul Valery Montpellier), who presented the situation in Albania. Her speech emphasised on the poor conditions of shepherds in Albania, where pastoralism competes with hydropower, solar energy, tourism development, recreation activities and intensive agriculture. She highlighted that shepherd communities, despite their crucial role, remain largely invisible in law and policy, facing systemic violations of their fundamental rights.

After the presentations, participants were invited to discuss around the coexistence of extensive livestock farming with other activities, particularly tourism, nature and energy. Hereafter, the main highlights of the discussion:

Extensive livestock farming and tourism

Tourism can provide opportunities through agritourism, promotion of local products, employment and improved infrastructure. However, challenges include visitor pressure, conflicts over space and resources, rising land prices and lack of awareness of pastoral activities. Mediation, education, communication campaigns and clearer rules for sharing mountain spaces were identified as key solutions.

Extensive livestock farming and nature

Participants highlighted the positive role of pastoralism in maintaining mountain ecosystems, including biodiversity conservation, landscape management, fire prevention and avalanche prevention. Yet, tensions arise around grazing management, competition for natural resources (especially water), land pressure and the presence of large carnivores. They stressed the need for dialogue, locally adapted solutions, better communication and awareness-raising, as well as stronger support and training for shepherds. Successful approaches rely on local knowledge, cooperation between stakeholders and recognition of pastoralism's contribution to mountain territories.



Extensive livestock farming and energy: Participants discussed tensions linked to hydropower and photovoltaic energy, and especially how energy infrastructure competes with agricultural land and water resources. In this line, the solutions discussed included the installation of photovoltaic panels on walls and roofs, instead of on the grasslands, as well as developing energy projects that respond to local agricultural needs.

Across the three topics, participants identified common needs: stronger dialogue between stakeholders, locally adapted governance, better awareness of pastoral realities and adequate support and recognition of the ecosystem services provided by pastoral systems.

Workshop 8

The role of pastoral schools beyond education

This workshop aimed to present the technical dossier on European pastoral schools developed within the LIFE ShepForBio project and to stimulate collective reflection on the broader role of pastoral schools beyond vocational education and training. After opening with an introduction to the LIFE ShepForBio, SHEP4ECO and EU4SUPA projects, highlighting their shared commitment to strengthening pastoral schools and vocational education and training (VET) as key tools for the future of pastoralism in Europe, to launch the fishbowl conversation, two video contributions illustrated the broader role that pastoral schools already play in different European regions.

Tommaso Campedelli (DREAM Italia, Technical Coordinator of LIFE ShepForBio) presented the experience of the Casentino Shepherd School, highlighting how pastoral schools create strong professional networks connecting aspiring shepherds with experienced practitioners. He also emphasised their contribution to improving the public image of pastoralism by showcasing its environmental, cultural and social value beyond agricultural production. Maria Díaz de Quijano Barbero (School for Pastors of Catalonia, Spain) shared the experience of the Catalan pastoral school, illustrating how it contributes to rural repopulation, facilitates generational transfer between retiring farmers and new entrants, and raises public awareness of the role of pastoralism in biodiversity conservation, wildfire prevention and food sovereignty through strong communication and outreach activities. These experiences provided the starting point for an open discussion on how pastoral schools can contribute to mountain communities beyond education and training alone. The fishbowl brought together representatives from a wide range of organisations active in pastoralism, agricultural education, advisory services and rural development,

Key summary

Pastoral schools as territorial actors

A recurring message throughout the discussion was that pastoral schools have evolved beyond their original educational function. Participants described schools as platforms that connect farmers, aspiring shepherds, researchers, local authorities and environmental organisations. Through these networks, schools facilitate knowledge exchange, strengthen professional communities and increase the visibility of pastoralism within local development strategies. Several examples illustrated how schools actively contribute to regional development by supporting innovation, applied research and collaboration across sectors such as tourism, forestry, landscape management and nature conservation.

Supporting generational renewal and rural development

The discussion highlighted the indirect impacts generated by pastoral schools on rural areas. Beyond training future shepherds, schools contribute to maintaining the population in remote areas by supporting newcomers, former students, who decide to establish their professional activities locally.



Experiences from different countries showed that many schools also facilitate farm succession, connect retiring farmers with new entrants and offer practical support during the transition into professional activity.

This way prevents animals from these older farms from being sent to slaughter. These services help address structural barriers such as access to land, professional integration and the transfer of knowledge.

Key summary

Awareness raising and framing the profession

The importance of presenting a realistic image of pastoral work was emphasised. While pastoralism is increasingly recognised for its environmental and social value, participants stressed that training must also prepare students for the physical, economic and organisational challenges associated with the profession. Often, schools contribute to representing the profession in the media, and to disseminate key messages to the wider community about the importance of pastoralism in fire prevention, the protection of biodiversity and food sovereignty. Yet, pastoralism continues to face challenges related to difficult working conditions, limited social recognition and economic uncertainty. Improving the profession's attractiveness requires structural changes beyond education, including better working conditions, stronger professional recognition, adequate remuneration and supportive public policies. Short courses on communication, the relation with employees, and role management for farmers were suggested as a priority, and the organisation of 'job dating' sessions, featuring role-reversal exercises to foster mutual empathy, was proposed.

Beyond technical skills

Participants underlined that today's pastoral schools teach a broad range of competences extending beyond livestock management. Training increasingly includes biodiversity conservation, wildfire prevention, climate adaptation, ecosystem management, communication with the public, business development and conflict management, such as in the case of tourism. Some schools offer field workshops to help communities understand each other's expertise and needs, thereby facilitating future decision-making and land management in mountain areas. Several contributions highlighted the growing importance of interpersonal skills, particularly communication between employers and shepherds, mediation with recreational users of mountain areas and collaboration with local stakeholders. Continuous professional development and short training courses were identified as valuable tools for both new entrants and experienced professionals.

Schools as centres for innovation and lifelong learning

Examples demonstrated that pastoral schools increasingly function as centres for experimentation, applied research and lifelong learning. Schools collaborate with research institutions to test climate adaptation practices, grazing systems and innovative management approaches while also responding to the evolving needs of practitioners through short, specialised courses.

Participants highlighted that continuous training is becoming increasingly important as shepherds face new environmental regulations, technological developments and changing societal expectations. For instance, the CASDAR Amber project produced a series of videos showing shepherds at work and reflecting on their actions, capturing complex knowledge such as flock dynamics and sheepdog handling.



Strengthening professional recognition

Participants discussed the diversity of qualification systems across Europe and recognised the need for stronger recognition of pastoral competences. Although national approaches differ, pastoral schools could contribute to developing common competency frameworks and strengthening the professional identity of shepherds across Europe. The discussion also emphasised that shepherds should increasingly be recognised not only as livestock managers but also as landscape managers delivering valuable ecosystem services.

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