

EU CAP Network Focus Group

'Competitive and resilient mountain areas'

Mini Paper 4

Value - chains innovations for competitive and resilient mountain areas

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June 2024



Funded by
the European Union

Disclaimer

This Mini Paper has been developed within the frame of the EU CAP Network Focus Group 'Competitive and resilient mountain areas' with the purpose of providing input to the Focus Group discussions and final report.

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If you wish to cite this Mini Paper, please refer to it as 'Annex to the [final report of the EU CAP Network Focus Group 'Competitive and resilient mountain areas', 2024](#)'.



Part 1. Introduction	3
Part 2. Study Cases	4
1. Case-study: Nod Verde, Romania.....	4
2. Case-study: El Hato y el Garabatos short supply chain, Arribes del Duero, Spain.	6
3. Case-study: Käsestraße Bregenzerwald (Cheese route Bregenzerwald), Austria	8
4. Case-study: Giglance on Adlegg Stiftung, Germany	10
5. Case-study: enhancement of Tuscan Traditional Agri-Food Products (TAPs) trough creation of an interactive label, Italy	13
6. Case-study: Regional Development Projects (PRE) in Switzerland.....	15
7. Case-study: GEOFood, Portugal.....	18
Part 3. Lessons learned and research needs.	19
1. Lessons learned – success factors:	19
2. Lessons learned – potential fails factors.	19
3. Research needs.....	20
Part 4. References	21

Part 1. Introduction

A short food supply chain (SFSC) involves a limited number of economic operators, committed to cooperation in a specific geographical location. SFSCs promote strong social relations between food producers, processors, and consumers (EU Regulation 1305/2013). There are several key characteristics of the SFSCs that allow producers to better communicate how and where a product is realised, and hence better valorise it:

- Geographical proximity – the physical distance travelled by the products from the place of production to the final consumption;
- Social proximity – strong mutual trust between producers and consumers;
- Organizational proximity – with low number of intermediaries between the producer and consumer. Usually there is only one maximum intermediary in the chain.

SFSC are a viable alternative to increase the value of the mountain products. Income increase is a strong motivation for farmers, contributing to the farm resilience. Thus, this mini-paper objectives are:

- to describe examples of innovative short-value chains that support competitive and resilient mountain areas;
- to identify success/failure factors for different value-chain structures.

The main focus of the mini-paper are:

- short-value chains in terms of the number of actors and/or proximity; where possible to identify niche products (local varieties; handicrafts; new crop/animal varieties etc.).
- types of value-chain organization:
 - short digital value chains (on-line market; social media selling approach etc.);
 - local direct sales (direct sales from the farm; local markets etc.);
 - direct sales in nearby cities – proximity (contract farming; local markets, etc.) .



Part 2. Study cases

1. Case-study: Nod Verde, Romania



Nod Verde is a food hub that collects local products, aggregating the efforts of several farmers around Cluj-Napoca city, Romania. Following the processes of connection with the market and promotion as a package, products are offered for consumption either to customers directly or to public catering institutions, such as restaurants, canteens.

Figure 1.1 Nod Verde's logo (Source: [Nod Verde's website](#))

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas' positive externalities:

How to build product/producer reputation

Product reputation was built in time (2 to 5 years) using a combination of branding activities and social media/events campaigns to reach consumers located in Cluj-Napoca, the second important Romanian city. The reputation of the products was developed around story telling activities. They focus on the location of the product (mountain area) and the positive externalities. The stories were promoted via social media campaigns that reached above the average income consumers coming from multi-national companies (especially located in the IT sector).

How to present/communicate positive externalities to consumers; Type of positive externalities.

The positive externalities (especially biodiversity and cultural landscapes) were communicated using story telling movies or videos from farms. Such materials were promoted via the web and social media campaigns.



Figure 2. Products in the Nod Verde portfolio (Source: [Nod Verde's Facebook page](#))

b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation:

The project was funded by the Romanian-American Foundation (RAF) and was called, generically, 'Food Hub'. Through this project, a study visit was made to the USA, where delegations from 5 Romanian NGOs visited regional food hub initiatives. Nod Verde represents one of the 5 pilot projects within the RAF program, that resides in Cluj County, Romania, and was developed by the Civitas Foundation- as innovation broker.



c. Value-Chain organization:

Actors involved in the chain –from producer to consumers;

Nod Verde is a food hub that started in 2018 as an online shop. The project's activity consists of collecting the products, mainly based on the orders received on the on-line shop, followed by delivery directly to each address specified in the orders. The products come from small and medium-sized farmers, or producers in 150 km around Cluj-Napoca. The principles by which producers are integrated into the network are based on the locality of the activity and quality.

Logistic organization: product variety and availability; quantity; transport; distribution

The product range includes fresh agricultural produce in their natural state (vegetables, fruits, microgreens), as well as in a processed state (artisanal drinks, canned products, bakery products, oils, etc.), but also animal products (fish, meat products and derivatives). Also, there are multiple organically certified products, likewise products that come with a Mountain Product certification. The group of producers is made of either small family businesses or cooperatives, with no additional costs for them. All the products are gathered in the working centre of Nod Verde, which is a warehouse with a cooling system. The sales model relies mainly on home deliveries, including nationwide, using a cooling van. Its packaging consists of environmentally friendly boxes, whose return is recommended, to be subsequently recycled.

Indicate how innovation deal with this increasing workload

On the contrary, it saves the time they would spend trying to sell their own products. The farmers deliver twice a week their products to Nod Verde centre. Also, other than customizing their cart and ordering it, no significant workload for customers either.

d. Advantages for farmers:

Three fundamental functions of a food hub: aggregation, marketing, and distribution. These are obvious added-value aspects for an agribusiness, especially start-ups, for whom reaching the market may be difficult. Secondly, another considerable advantage is the capacity to provide consultancy services, on the technical, and agriculture-related aspects, or on the business development side.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks:

The obstacles that seem to extend beyond purely economic factors are encompassing social and bureaucratic dimensions. This situation introduces uncertainties concerning the strategies required to effectively reach potential customers. Large retail networks and physical markets remain the primary channels for acquiring agri-food products;

f. Success/fail factors:

A significant factor in the food hub's success was due to the RAF Foundation that acted as a national catalyst supporting 5 Romanian NGOs with knowledge and funding. There was applied a long-term approach in knowledge support and funding. Periodically there were formal and informal meetings between the local catalysts to share problems and to find solutions.



2. Case-study: El Hato y el Garabatos short supply chain, Arribes del Duero, Spain.

El Hato y el Garabato produces high-quality artisan wines from autochthonous grape varieties in over 30 small mountain old vineyards, less than 10 hectares, from 80 to 110 years old. The winery has built a high reputation in a competitive market. The philosophy aims to protect genetics, uses and landscape. The family has worked in short chain development from its establishment in 2015, with the objective of 30% of production being sold directly in the cellar by 2026.

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas' positive externalities:

How to build product/producer reputation

The winery has implemented three quality **labels**: organic farming, GPO Arribes del Duero (<https://doarribes.es/>), and The man and the Biosphere (<https://www.biosferamejetaiberica.com/es/es/la-diversidad-de-la-region-en-imagenes>).



Figure 2.1. El Hato y el Garabato quality labels

How to present/communicate positive externalities (public goods) to consumers; Type of positive externalities;

Promoting local heritage and biodiversity by telling compelling story, sharing behind-the-scenes into the winemaking process, the heritage of the indigenous grape varieties, and the land in local and national wine **events** and **social media**

<https://www.instagram.com/elhatoyelgarabato>



Figure 2.2. Story telling activities

Developing **co-creation** products with two Portuguese wineries and two Spanish prestigious winemakers. And **cooperating** with local organization as vice-president of Arribes Apellation and manager of Ruta del Vino Arribes. The winery is also involved in environmental projects (<https://www.variedadesminoritarias.es/>)



Impact at the regional level

All these tools have helped to increase the area reputation and recognition, leading the amended of Appellation regulations in 2022 allowing local grapes, previously excluded, to be used legally in wine production. Endangered local varieties are now being grown by 12 farmers.

b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation

Farmers/Group of farmers/Associations/ Policymakers; NGOs etc

Two wineries in the region, two National wineries, 10 farmers, Arribes appellation GPO and Ruta del Vino Arribes association.

Innovation broker; Catalyst;

The innovation led by El Hato y el Garabato winery has involved a collaboration with vineyard owners who cultivate native grape varieties. The denomination of origin has amended its regulations in 2022 to allow these previously excluded varieties to be used legally in wine production, acknowledging vines that are over 100 years old and indigenous to the territory.

c. Value-Chain organization :

Actors involved in the chain

From the winery owners directly to visitors.

Logistic organization -product variety and availability (throughout the year); quantity; transport; distribution;

A year-round availability of wine exists at the winery.

Indicate how innovation deals with this increasing workload

Time is a significant constraint to manage this effectively, team training has been needed.

d. Advantages for farmers – value-added maximization; cost reduction; time reduction etc

Development of this chain has mitigated risk and promoted stable growth. Advantages are maximization of transaction value, customer advocacy, increased wine purchased per client, customer loyalty, immediate feedback, and a deeper connection with consumers.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks

The investment required to facilitate short channels are comparable to the needed for any other channels.

f. Success/fail factors

Potential fail factors involve growth in a slower progression, seasonal fluctuations in sales, lack of local cooperation and time constraints.

g. Remaining challenges - Research needs/Potential EIP operational groups

Challenges include further customer preferences and behavior understanding, production processes optimization and marketing strategies improvement.



3. Case-study: Käsestraße Bregenzerwald (Cheese route Bregenzerwald), Austria

<https://www.kaesestrasse.at/>

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas positive externalities:

At 15 small valley dairies and 90 Alpine dairies ("Sennereien") of the Bregenzerwald (Vorarlberg – Western Austria), mountain and alpine cheese is produced in an old traditional way. The "Käsestraße Bregenzerwald" is a path along which you can buy this traditionally produced cheese, but also a brand for this rural region and an association for the promotion of Bregenzerwald cheese culture. The declared aim of KäseStrasse Bregenzerwald is to preserve small-scale agriculture and product diversity in the Bregenzerwald and to consolidate the region's added value. Communication centres on the beautiful landscape, traditional production by alpine dairies and small dairies in the valleys and the traditions of the region. The cooperation developed a label. All members can use this label. The special value of the products and the region within the brand is communicated via a website, social media and at events.

b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation:

The first starting point for the development of the Bregenzerwald Cheese Route project was the "First Vorarlberg Cheese Summit" in Bezau in 1994. Around 80 representatives from the fields of agriculture, tourism, dairies, catering, trade, and commerce discussed the future of the regional cheese culture. The Bregenzerwald Cheese Road (Bregenzerwälder Käsestraße) then was founded by a group of dedicated individuals (especially by a mayor, a hotelier, and a grocer) and organizations within the Bregenzerwald region of Austria. The EU's Leader programme and regional politicians supported the foundation. The initiative continues to be supported structurally and financially by local and regional politicians.

c. Value-Chain organization:

The Association was founded in 1998 and currently has 180 members. Members include farmers - direct marketers, 65 alpine dairies and 16 valley dairies, inns and hotels, craft businesses, museums, the cable car industry, tourism associations and other partners such as regional food retailers, breweries and local businesses.

The heart of the cooperation is the cheese cellar in Lingenau, which was founded by shareholders like dairies and marketers. The cheese cellar is a storage and maturing center for alpine and mountain cheese with a capacity of up to more than 50.000 loafs of cheese. Alpine dairies and small valley dairies have the option of maturing their mountain cheese in the shared cheese cellar for a fee and then selling it to the association or marketing it themselves. The amount of cheese sold by the association is 70 tonnes. Currently they sell about 30 different kind of cheese.

d. Advantages for farmers – value - added maximization; cost reduction; time reduction etc ;

Shared infrastructure like the cheese cellar reduces costs for farmers and small dairies. The cooperation creates synergies and the sense of community.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks;

The membership fee for farmers is €90 per year. Dairies also pay a contribution based on the amount of milk processed.



f. Success/fail factors;

One of the reasons for the initiative's success was certainly the fact that it was founded using a bottom-up approach and was driven by respected individuals from the local community. In addition, the founding and ongoing operation of the initiative was supported by public funds from the EU, the national states and the federal state.

g. Remaining challenges - Research needs/Potential EIP operational groups

The interaction between agriculture and tourism is often not ideal. Working groups and studies on the best possible cooperation between these two sectors could lead to valuable insights.

Figure 3.1: Around 30 different cheeses are now marketed under the "Käsestraße Bregenzerwald" brand.
Source : <https://www.kaesestrasse.at/>



Figure 3.2: The Bregenzerwald cheese cellar is the heart of the organisation and the administrative headquarter; Source : <https://www.kaesestrasse.at/>



4. Case-study: Giglance on Adlegg Stiftung, Germany

<https://www.adelegg-stiftung.de>

The Adlegg foundation offers an innovative concept for landscape conservation and preservation of a unique cultural landscape. The introduction and use of goats for landscape conservation and the processing of milk, cheese and goat meat from the region with strong community involvement and direct customer contact are the basis for a success that is based on a common interest and commitment of all partners in the concept.

The foundation was set up in 2008 involving the people of the region aiming at using former abandoned land in hilly region at the border of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. Label related to ecologic and mountain farming.

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas positive externalities:

How to build product/producer reputation;

- bioland; organic farming label
- linking pictures and images on the landscape
- marketing based on the link to landscape, images, emotions

How to present/communicate positive externalities (public goods) to consumers; Type of positive externalities

- Document clear numbers about biodiversity (amount of specific plants,...); offer space for research work.
- Use schemes to calculate common goods/ services <https://www.regionalwertleistungen.de/about-us/>.
- Spread the word about these facts and added value in social media, press articles, personal contact -Speak about "added value to society".

Impact at regional level

- Cooperation on horizontal as well as on vertical level along added value chain.
- Foundation is trying to make the costumers and people of the region stakeholders.
- The Foundation cooperates and collaborates well with regional farmers, direct marketing initiatives and municipalities for selling in local farmers' markets and directly on the farm.



Photo 4.1 Images from ADLEGG STIFTUNG, GERMANY



b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation:

Farmers/Group of farmers/Associations/Policy makers; NGOs etc

- The leading farmer got broad support in the regional population for the grazing project and the foundation. The foundation was established by 46 founding donors, including 16 farmers and landowners.
- -Additional marketing in the cooperative Tischgenossen with cattle from 12-13 farmers cooperating.

Innovation broker; Catalyst;

- Office of Agriculture; Bioland Association; ProRegio

Testimonials:

Quote and Recommendation of the leading farmer: 'Think carefully about what makes your location different from others. Both positive and negative. Then work out the positive features and strengthen them!'

Basic idea: "Agriculture is loyal to its location".

c. Value-Chain organization:

Actors involved in the chain

- 60 dairy goats and offspring herded in the hilly region surrounding the barn as well as pension cattle
- cheese dairy processes 30.000 liter of milk per year. Produce sold directly to the consumers.

Logistic organization

- important key: not only optimize production and processing but as well optimize logistics and bundle up resources, capacities, skills and money in bringing the products, goods and services to the people.

Indicate how innovation deals with this increasing workload

- The farm will continue to combine tradition and innovation. The next crucial step for the whole initiative and the Foundation will be generational change and the handover of responsibility. The overall strategic wish and need is to let the next generation take over.

d. Advantages for farmers – value - added maximization; cost reduction; time reduction etc

- Very strong settling in the region based on the approach of an association, in this case even foundation.
- Self employed "feeling" in the system and frame of a foundation.
- A work "together" and with the people of the region.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks:

- Same situation as all farming in Europe. Low chance to make an economic living without subsidies.
- At the same time strong arguments for "public money for public goods"
- In case of redesign or even stop of the public money flow: good starting position for regional established, accepted business.



f. Success/fail factors:

- Most important Success factor: the link to landscape and biodiversity and cultural landscape revitalizing abandoned land and therefor high acceptance of the regional people
- Due to mountainous farming, more work load and higher effort per unit. Therefor no chance in competition for lowest price for standard quality.



5. Case-study: enhancement of Tuscan Traditional Agri-Food Products (TAPs) through creation of an interactive label, Italy

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas positive externalities:

How to build product/producer reputation (Labels; Social media interaction; Events etc)

The Tuscany Region is working to create an interactive label for TAPs, drawing inspiration from the experience of the OLE' label already created by the Liguria region for mountain products or those coming from natural parks.



Figure 5.1. Examples of OLE label used by Tuscany region in Italy

At the moment OLE' is used and accessible on the "La mia Liguria" website by more than twenty-five companies, but many others have already been involved.

How to present/communicate positive externalities (public goods) to consumers; Type of positive externalities;

A continuously evolving project started by the mountain livestock sector and which will also extend to other sectors. OLE' consists of a paper part with a QR Code connecting to the LAMIALIGURIA website and app which opens a series of simple and engaging insights on companies and products. Furthermore, 3 pictograms that the companies themselves have chosen from a large series indicate, already on the paper placed on the products, the 3 values that most represent them. More info:

<https://www.regione.liguria.it/homepage-fondi-europei/cosa-cerchi/interreg-liguria/interreg-italia-francia-alcotra/interreg-alcotra-2014-2020/cooperazione-alcotra-pitem-piter2018/pitem-biodivalp/ole.html>

b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation:

Farmers, agricultural trade associations, food communities, consultant agronomists, biodistricts and rural districts, universities and agricultural institutes, Tuscany Region, direction for agriculture and rural development, industrial association.

c. Value-Chain organization:

Encourage the presence of TAPs in school canteens, to convey awareness of them. Increase presence in restaurants and agritourisms;



Develop logistics support infrastructures for the aggregation and distribution of TAPs;
Create local sales points;
Promote sales through platforms by meeting the demand of sensitive consumers such as
“community group buying”.

d. Advantages for farmers – value - added maximization ; cost reduction; time reduction

The center of expertise intends to create a network of information and sharing of good practices to support farmers.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks

No investment was required from the farmers, the Tuscany region's initiative was financed with EU funds.

f. Success/fail factors

Among the many successful examples of TAPs is that of the “Valdichiana Aglione”. This garlic was almost disappearing, by will of local administrations and some farmers, a valorization consortium was created and in a few years production (and farms) tripled. Today the Aglione della Valdichiana can be found in many restaurants in the area and is available in local markets as well as in large-scale retail trade. The main success factor was the spirit of collaboration between farmers and local administrators. <https://www.aglionevaldichiana.net>.

g. Remaining challenges - Research needs/Potential EIP operational groups

The qualification granted by the EU to "mountain products" represents an example for a valid valorisation system based on the self-control of producers and the verification of the authenticity of what is indicated on the label by public administrations. The participatory guarantee that is emerging around food communities and rural districts is certainly an opportunity to be explored and systemized also for the TAPs.



6. Case-study: Regional Development Projects (PRE) in Switzerland

Regional Development Projects (PRE) are an instrument of Swiss regional policy under the responsibility of the Federal Office for Agriculture (BLW). One such PRE is *100% (Bio) Valposchiavo*. It has set itself the goal of being the first valley in the mountains to produce exclusively certified organic food and to sell most of it within the valley in the spirit of short cycles. The tourism organisation takes part in this project as well as the gastro and tourist sector, both sourcing most of their food from the valley.

The project was triggered by the plans of the regional hydropower operator, to expand the high-altitude reservoir into a pumped storage plant (approved, but postponed as currently not profitable). If it were built, valuable cultivated land would disappear. Local stakeholders looked for alternatives to increase value adding. 11 enterprises (all relevant economic and public stakeholders of the food sector) worked out a charter of cooperation.

Figure 6.1: Key data of 100% Poschiavo. All information of this case study is based on Stettler/Mayer, 2023, the BLW and the Associazione 100% (bio) Valposchiavo (<https://www.valposchiavo.ch/en/>).

Focus	Processing, refining, and marketing of regional organic dairy, meat and herb products as well as fruits to increase added value in agriculture.
Territory	Val Poschiavo
Body	Associazione 100% (bio) Valposchiavo
Schedule	Start implementation: 21.01.2020; end of Project: 31.01.2027
Financing	Whole project costs: 15'924'113 CHF; Federal contribution: 4'288'362 CHF
Two labels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>100% Valposchiavo</i>: ingredients exclusively local, 100% according organic farming criteria • <i>Sü in Valposchiavo</i>: Made in Valposchiavo, at least 75% of the ingredients must be local.
Website	"100% Valposchiavo" - Valposchiavo mailto:francesco.vassella@regione-bernina.ch

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas' positive externalities:

- *How to build reputation*: Swiss population shares two basic attitudes: a positive one about the background of the agricultural past and their own personal memories, and a critical attitude towards agriculture as a polluter and destroyer of water quality and biodiversity. Territories in which the actors can consciously distance themselves from the negative image by meeting the requirements of the environment, animal welfare and working conditions enjoy an advantage of trust as long as they remain credible and authentic. In Valposchiavo, the positive argument is that actors from different sectors cooperate, that they have been active in organic farming for a long time and that the focus is not primarily on the business idea but on the quality of the products and the idea of valuing farming as a sense-making activity.

- *How to present positive externalities (public goods) to consumers?* By communicating with prudence and restraint. The proportion of "stories" is kept to a minimum (because they are quickly perceived as exaggerated): A sure instinct is required when working with professional advertising agencies to avoid fake stories. In other Swiss projects have proven successful: consumer sponsorships for certain endangered animal breeds (for an annual social event);



Open Days with family programme; full transparency with admitting mistakes; collaboration with environmental NGOs.

- *Impact at the regional level:* So far, it has been possible to make long-term investments and run the farms in a stable manner (Stettler/Mayer, 2023).

b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation

The *innovation brokers* were farmers and food processors. All relevant players in the food and hospitality sector are involved: The *agricultural producers*: from milk and cheese production in the upper valley to the cultivation of specialty crops (berries and herbs) in the low parts. Traditional cereal cultivation, almost disappeared, is gradually being planted again. *Processing*: Great importance is given to the local production. All the relevant trades are involved: Butchers, dairies, a mill. *Distribution and services*: All major tourism and gastro enterprises, as well as the Val Poschiavo tourism organization and the retailers. *Social services* have come, e.g. services for the rehabilitation of people in trouble. They are integral part of the PRE.

c. Value-Chain organization

Due to the pronounced staggered altitude (2338–535 masl), dairy products are produced all year round. Storable products are sold also outside the valley as regional specialties. The berries are sold nationwide during the harvest season. Val Poschiavo is connected to St. Moritz and to Tirano/Italy by a narrow-gauge railroad/tramway with a one-hour clock-face scheduling. Due to PRE, they could hire a coordinator and a marketing professional. Cooperation is important: it enables the more rational use of machinery (mutual exchange) as well as the division of labour in processing (slaughtering, meat drying); it counteracts anonymization and promotes informal relationships to increase mutual learning; it buffers in case of a sudden drop in sales.

d. Advantages for farmers – value-added maximization; cost reduction; time reduction etc

Cost reduction is possible by balancing out fluctuations in demand by sales within the valley and exchange of labour capacities. Reduction of transportation costs results from short circuits. Many farmers want to increase but not to maximize value-adding.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks

No investments beyond the usual scope.

f. Success/fail factors

- The small-scale and small-scale commercial production structure in the valley with an agricultural sector that had already largely converted to organic production with a high degree of mutual trust.
- Farmers do not strive for maximised value-added: a majority of the interviewees (Stettler/Mayer, 2023) do not want to grow but deliver quality and operate stably.
- The willingness of consumers in Switzerland to buy organic products with a market share of 11.2% in 2022 (2021: 10.9%).
- Protection by distance due to the peripheral location, favouring short value chains.



g. Remaining challenges - Research needs/Potential EIP operational groups

- For a generalization it must be considered the specific position of Valposchiavo: sparsely populated, already near-nature/organically cultivated. Furthermore, the strong position of Swiss agriculture (protection) in a prosperous high-wage country that is not that much tied to the EU CAP.
- It remains the huge task to bring producers in mountain regions and consumers in urban milieus into dialogue with each other to overcome the mutual lack of understanding. This concerns above all the environmental services (and destructions) caused by agriculture as well as the justified and unjustified expectations of consumers regarding the food supply (which have become too much and too cheap).



7. Case-study: GEOFood, Portugal



Figure 7.1. GEOFood Labels (<https://geofood.no/>)

a. Closing the divide between producers and consumers by supporting the mountain areas' positive externalities:

- How to build reputation:

GEOfood is a global initiative for strengthening cooperation in local communities in mountain areas, within UNESCO Global Geoparks for developing sustainable strategies. In practice, these organizations with their local partners are set to develop small value chains in different locations across the Unesco GeoParks. Across Europe GEOfood, is already in 11 countries. As part of logo campaign addressing mountain areas there is one that stands out there is the GEOfood logo. In Portugal, GEOfood is part of the GeoPark Association.

b. Actors involved in the innovation implementation

1. Farmers (Partners of GEOfood) / GEOfood /Geopark Municipalities/Restaurants
2. Implementation of partnerships with restaurants and other stakeholders;
3. Quinta dos Chapaceiros has a partnership with GEOfood since 2023;

c. Value-Chain organization :

The GEOfood as part of Serra Estrela Association, buy their partner products with the requirement, that those were produced in the GeoPark. They gather the products. The selling is done by local partners as restaurants, hotels, tourist sites and rural tourism.

d. Advantages for farmers – value-added maximization; cost reduction; time reduction etc

The association gathers the products of the farmers going to their farms, reducing the time they would pass in local markets.

e. Investment (additional costs for farmers)/risks

Farmers need to adapt their products logos for GEOfood logo.

f. Success/fail factors

Has a success the association that is in an early stage gathered about 25 farmers and partners, most of them would never be in contact otherwise. Local products from the region are put together under the same logo that aims to make a specific region stronger in terms of marketing and valorization.

g. Remaining challenges - Research needs/Potential EIP operational groups

Similar branding could also be designed to national park throughout Europe, this would require cooperation with the different parks to converge in one logo.



Part 3. Lessons learned and research needs

1. Lessons learned – success factors:

- Cooperation between local actors and co-development of the project is essential to trigger community involvement. In the process of project development and implementation, catalysis play an important role in offering access to know-how;
- Different local stakeholders can be easily engaged when common goals and interests are clearly identified (e.g. better incomes or local reputations; cultural heritage protection; biodiversity conservation etc);
- Income diversification through different touristic activities support such initiatives (accommodation; restaurants; touristic mountain trails; skiing activities etc.);
- All case studies promote high-quality products linked with local cultural reputation and/or cultural identity. They communicate such characteristics using labels, on-line story-telling photos and videos, farm-walks etc. Social media is a very powerful tool to promote the link between food production and mountain areas values. Products are certified by national or international awards;
- Several cases studies focus and promote local varieties or local breeds. They communicate such attributes to final consumer using digital tools;
- The case studies bring real advantages for farmers like: maximization of transaction value, customer advocacy, increase purchased value per client, customer loyalty, immediate feedback, and a deeper connection with consumers; co-creation of solutions to common problems.
- Costs in terms of time and money can be reduced by sharing transportation costs and storage. Also, the distance between production and consumption is reduced through digital apps;
- All case-studies propose a long-term approach in terms of funding, cooperation and know-how sharing. It is not possible to reach community involvement in a short-time approach.
- There is sometimes a holistic valley approach to find consumers locally. Actors focus on what a region is producing (offer diversification). There is a combination of value chains to bring complementarity. Actors work with multiple chains in the same time in order to present synergies between different products and value chains;

2. Lessons learned – potential fails factors.

- Actors and communities can quickly lose their interests because they do not find immediately real benefits (sales; revenue; time consumption reduction);
- There are important fluctuations in sales due seasonal offer or demand, especially in the regions that are highly depended to touristic activities;
- Low stakeholder involvement in the co-creation and development of the program can alter and decrease cooperation between actors;
- Undertreated customer preferences and behaviour can reduce the efficiency of such measures;
- Lack of long-term funding resources and long-term vision will reduce the positive impacts of short marketing chains;
- Sometimes farmers are reluctant to get involved due to high bureaucracy burdens of the traceability system. Digital apps can help to reduce traceability and logistic costs.
- Consumer confusion/trust in understanding quality signs. Such labels need extra time and money to create consumer awareness at regional, national or EU level;



3. Research needs

Production and Transformation

- Assess the EU, national and regional regulations related to mountain food production and transformation. There are differences between Member States related to such regulations. It is thus important to understand these differences in order to harmonise and simplify them. For some countries, with low AKIS structures, the standards need to be better transferred and understood by producers;
- Identify and share viable business models for multi-chain products development. Stakeholders need to work with a combination of value-chains to bring an attractive offer on the market. They need real-time solutions about what to produce, to what cost and when to deliver such as to respond to the consumer demands;
- Propose replicable models of small-scale processing facilities adapted to short marketing-chains. In mountain areas farmers work in remote areas and the farmers are usually smaller in terms of size in comparison with the mainstream farming. The existing processing technical solutions are not adapted to local needs that can drastically vary between regions and countries. Thus, Operational Groups can develop or adapt such technical solutions to lower investment needs by farmers;

Short – marketing economy

- Understand cost and benefit at different chain levels in a comparative approach short versus long chains. Such results can help stakeholders to better engage in collective short marketing chains.
- There is the need to develop a simple but in the same time scientifically sound methodology able to incorporate the positive externalities of the mountain products in the final price. Such methods have to be understood in the same time by consumers and producers.

Demand side

- Develop tools to assess and adapt to customer's needs. The farmers are located in remote areas but they need resources to continuously adapt their products in terms of assortment, weight, shape, packaging, labeling etc to consumer's expectations;
- Identify efficient solutions about how to market mountain products for the young/new generations. The new generation needs different approaches when communicating mountain values that need to be better identified and understood.
- Assess customer willingness to pay for mountain products and associated positive externalities. EU wide studies about how consumers value the positive externalities associated to mountain products are mostly missing.

Further research needs coming from practice, ideas for Operational Groups and other proposals for innovation can be found at the final report of the focus group, available at the FG webpage:

https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/focus-group-competitive-and-resilient-mountain-areas_en



Part 4. References

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