

Innovation, Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI



Competitive and resilient mountain areas

Which innovative approaches and innovations linked to agriculture, forestry and the bioeconomy can foster the competitiveness and the socio-economic and environmental resilience of mountain areas and their communities?

Mountain communities face significant environmental, societal, economic, and migratory challenges, which render them ecologically and socially vulnerable, as well as fragile. A Focus Group of 20 experts has looked for innovative ways for mountain areas to remain competitive and resilient in the long term.

The key findings from the Focus Group on 'Competitive and resilient mountain areas' are:

- The most promising opportunities in mountain areas are the growing markets for specialised local niche products, the high quality of mountain products, local breeds, sustainable tourism, a quiet and remote environment, green care and social farming activities, the existence of beautiful landscapes, unique biodiversity, and a range of further common goods, as well as living traditions and historic buildings.
- Agriculture, forestry and the bioeconomy in mountain areas operate in a complex and dynamic human-nature system, and long-term and transformative solutions are needed to increase resilience at the regional level.
- Social innovation can play a key role in this transformation, alongside the innovation in products, processes and marketing.

- The success of innovation in rural (mountain) areas is challenged by the lack of scale in terms of population and industrial base, and the distance from economic partners and centres of consumption, which makes the diffusion of innovation and knowledge more difficult.

Finally, the drivers for innovators and the public policies to guide innovation are, as yet, not fully understood. In order to unlock this knowledge, the members of the Focus Group have identified several factors that are responsible for the successful implementation of innovations in mountain areas, in terms of organisation, strategic planning and management, as well as access to infrastructure, funding and other resources.

“For good governance, historical prejudices and barriers are broken down in favour of common work.”

Juan Antonio Lázaro,
Expert at the EU CAP Network Focus Group
'Competitive and resilient mountain areas'

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Ideas for Operational Groups

The experts proposed project ideas that could be advanced through Operational Groups:

- Developing mini processing units (for meat and/or milk) adapted to mountain areas
- Attracting young people by understanding and promoting new mindsets and the attractiveness of rural territories
- Business models and tools for better access to the market of mountain niche agri-products
- Development of auction platforms for sustainable products (from wood to wool)

Knowledge gaps and research needs

In addition to those below, more gaps and needs relevant to mountain areas are listed in the final report.

On economic topics:

- Cost/benefit analysis of a) public goods and sound business models, b) short value chains
- New business models to overcome the higher production costs and lower technological innovation in mountain areas. Economic models for small-scale processing facilities
- Marketing to capitalise the quality of mountain products. Assess customer willingness to pay for mountain products and positive externalities
- Participatory approaches governing mountain communities and farming engagement

Social and cultural topics:

- Analysing emigration/immigration in mountain areas (including motivations)
- Rural-urban relationships (including development strategies, second-home owners, etc.)
- How to tackle farms' generational succession? Gender and youth mainstreaming to mitigate inequalities
- Living a modern way of life without harming traditional ("retro") agri- and cultural practices

Other topics:

- Agro-ecological practices mitigating climate risks
- Technology systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for agriculture and forestry in mountains
- Long-term impact of initiatives promoting balanced development, resources and well-being
- Comparison of governance models. Analysing the potential for collaboration between mountain regions with similar characteristics

More information

- [Focus Group webpage](#)
- [EU CAP Network Focus Group "Competitive and resilient mountain areas" final report](#)
- [Annex 2: Mini Paper 1: Good governance for managing sustainability and resilience in mountain areas](#)
- [Annex 2: Mini Paper 2: Social resilience in mountain areas](#)
- [Annex 2: Mini Paper 3: Agro-ecological approaches for sustainable agri-culture and forestry for competitive and resilient EU mountain regions](#)
- [Annex 2: Mini Paper 4: Value - chains innovations for competitive and re-silient mountain areas](#)

Inspirational ideas

- [Showcasing the added value of ecosystem services of farming in mountain areas in Austria](#)
- [Sheep grazing making a come-back for the restoration of mountain areas in Poland](#)
- [EIP-AGRI Challenge: Competitive and resilient mountain areas in Romania](#)

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Feedback and questions:

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