

The integration of environmental concerns in mountain agriculture

Study realised for
the European Commission
Directorate General XI, Environment,
Safety and Civil Protection.

SUMMARY

EUROMONTANA



Summary of the study

"The integration of environmental concerns in mountain agriculture"

Objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to analyse and assess the impact of Community measures on “the integration of environmental concerns in mountain agriculture”. In covering this topic, we plan to answer three questions:

- What production conditions are specific to mountain areas? are there special interrelationships between agriculture and the environment in these regions (complementarities and conflicts, differences and common points)?
- What is the environmental impact of the Community measures that influence mountain agricultural activities (analysis and summary)?
- How can the environmental dimension be better integrated in mountain agriculture (strategic options and proposals, improvement of existing measures and creation of new instruments, etc.)?

Organisation of the work

25 mountain areas have been analysed by universities, research centres and development institutes (see attached map and list).

The areas have been divided up into 6 geographical networks, each run by a network “head”:

- Mediterranean dry mountains
- Nordic regions
- Central and Eastern Alps
- Western Alps
- Ocean regions
- Central Pyrenees.

The areas of study cover twelve European countries¹. They have a wide variety of situations: dry and wet mountains, medium and high mountains, etc.

¹ Germany, Austria, Scotland, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Sweden. Mountain areas in Switzerland and Slovenia have been included.

The analyses and proposals are the result of the work done by some fifty scientists, researchers, engineers and technicians whose wide range of training and experience guaranteed a multidisciplinary approach².

One of the original features of this study is that it has also provided an opportunity to hear the views of several hundred eminent individuals from the regions who have recognised expertise in matters relating to the mountain environment and enabled officials from the areas and networks and representatives of Euromontana's members to meet.

A steering committee composed of 6 network "heads", representatives of Euromontana and of the study coordinating unit was responsible for overseeing the study, with the assistance of Pierre Godin, then Peter Billing, representing the European Commission (Directorate General for the Environment/DG XI).

The report is divided into three chapters:

- I. The situation as it stands
- II. Assessment of Community policy
- III. Proposals

Before presenting a summary of this, it would perhaps be useful to recall briefly some of the trends dominating the current context, because they inevitably interfere at a given moment in the relationship between agriculture and the environment and consequently affect the nature of the proposals put forward.

A lot has changed since 1975 when the European Community first decided to maintain "a minimum amount of farming" to preserve the environment in mountain areas³. There has been in particular:

- the worsening economic and social crisis and severely weakened job market against a background of European construction and economic results achieved in a number of sectors;
- generally speaking, the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment that has evolved according to the degree of intensification of production. This has resulted in a whole range of problems: pollution of ground water, even drinking water; agricultural surpluses; and more recently, the beef crisis, etc.;
- a public opinion that has become increasingly sensitive to the environmental challenges of agricultural policy and the need to safeguard nature and human health.

With Article 130R of the Treaty of Maastricht, the European Union has asserted its ambition to integrate the environment in sectoral policies.

The whole question is to determine to what extent the Community's objectives are gradually becoming or may become reality.

² The networks took advantage of the available results and used a number of concrete examples to illustrate their region's situation. These "working documents" - which total more than 700 pages - were sent to the Commission in the form of "regional brochures" (1 general brochure and 6 regional brochures in English and French). They are available upon request (information from Euromontana, Brussels). Some of the networks have published special documents (Central and Eastern Alps network, publication of the University "Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen" in Vienna).

³ Council Directive of 28 April 1975 on "mountain agriculture and agriculture in certain disadvantaged areas" (75/268/75).

CHAPTER I.

AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN MOUNTAIN REGIONS: CHARACTERISTICS, CHANGES AND CHALLENGES:

Question 1. The mountain environment

1) The physical environment, its relief (altitude, sloping land), the harsh climate (cold and humid, dry and stormy) influence in a sustainable manner the environmental quality of mountain regions, offer opportunities for human activities but impose strict limits on them, particularly in the case of farming.

2) The natural mountain resources that can be found in this hilly environment are particularly rich: quality air, water resources; variety of fauna and flora, renowned landscapes. In contrast, the soil is often poor, produces little and is very sensitive to erosion.

3) The major tendencies of mountain farming.

* a - Mountain regions are primarily used to make hay and raise grazing animals, particularly at high altitude. Wooded land covers between 40% and 70% of the areas considered. The percentage of arable land is rather low and tends to be declining. In the Mediterranean areas, the tradition of growing permanent crops on sloping land or in terraces continues and coexists with sometimes itinerant grazing practices.

* b - Situation of employment. The decline in the number of people working in mountain farming generally tends to be continuing.

In the Alpine region areas, the percentage of farmers is low to very low (from 3% to 10%). In the Nordic regions, this phenomenon is accompanied by a very low population density (3 inhabitants per km² and 4% farmers in the Cairngorms Mountains in Scotland).

In contrast, the percentage of farmers is still rather high in the areas of the Ocean regions network. It is even very high in certain dry Mediterranean mountains (over 20% and up to 40% for example in Southern Spain) whereas in these same regions, the unemployment rate may reach record levels (e.g. 25% in Penibetica, Andalusia).

* c - The farms are vulnerable:

- their size and the gross operating margins are very often below the national or Community averages;

- the rate of pluriactivity or multiple-job holding is often very high in the mountains, becoming a major factor of weakness when the multiple job holders are excluded from public aid, Community aid in particular (which is more often than not the case);

- the low income of mountain farmers is probably one of the primary factors of vulnerability (“the low level of income is in some cases just bearable” Terra Quente Transmontana, Portugal).

4) General socio-economic data

Generally speaking, all the areas studied are faced with problems of economic reconversion, falling living standards, employment, services or a declining population, which explains why the overwhelming majority have been eligible under Objectives 1 and 5b of the Structural Funds.

Question 2. Determining how agriculture and the environment interact in the mountains.

1) Over long periods of time, mountain farming has proved its great capacity to integrate the constraints imposed by an inhospitable environment (sloping land, soil often not very productive, high altitude land, harsh climate). In the course of this process of adaptation, “specific” farming practices have been developed.

- Both traditional and modern, these practices are still often very much alive today. For example, grazing and transhumance at high altitude, permanent crops on sloping land or in terraces are particularly well-known, familiar expressions of this. Complementary productions are frequent (agri-pastoralism in France’s Basque Country, sylvi-pastoral tradition in Spain’s Basque Country, olive- and vinegrowing combined with sheep or goat farming in some of the southern mountains), etc.

- The mountain systems as a whole are known for their extensive nature (small animal load per hectare, little use of inputs, etc.) which, contrary to intensive systems, normally offers good conditions to respect the natural balances (water, soil, fauna and flora), provided, however, that the practices are well suited to the characteristics and capacities of the environment (choice of forest species, leading of herds and flocks, etc.).

2) These mountain farming practices are aimed at preservation of the environment. Subtle and complex systems of management have been elaborated to assist in the development of habitats of high environmental value that are favourable to the presence of a rich biodiversity (Cairngorms Mountains, Scotland)⁴. This combination of agriculture with its “model” environment of “typical” and renowned landscapes helps stabilise fragile soil and can contribute to the protection of water quality.

A good example of this is the truly stunning landscapes of terraced vineyards in Val d’Aosta (Italy), Trento (Italy) and Valais (Switzerland). In the area of Beaufort, the variety of the flora can be seen on both sides of the mountains by the wide range of colours, and the neatness of the slopes depends on whether or not they are kept up by mowing.

In the Scandinavian massif, the notion of landscapes “in chequered pattern” is very familiar, the “agricultural openings” (dry or wet meadows/ grasslands in Finland, dairy farming in Sweden) offering a break from the monotony of the vast expanses of forest.

In Terra Quente Transmontana (Portugal) and in the Basque Mountains (Spain), the term humanised ecosystems is used (ecosystems “where humans leave their mark”). In Andalucia, in the northern hills particularly, the presence of cork trees with extensive pig farming using Iberian pigs traditionally raised outside, a little cattle and bull farming (for bull fights but also for consumption) contribute to the presence of a wide variety of wildlife (small game, lynx, large game, wolves) of great environmental value (the “dehesa” in Andalucia, the “montado” in Portugal) and renowned ecosystems.

In the Central Pyrenees (France), the combination of grasslands used for mowing and pastures used for grazing in the valley favour a particularly varied flora (over 200 species of plants recorded for a single valley in the Luchonnais).

In Scotland, planting native trees in appropriate areas favours a great diversity of habitats and rare and endemic species. These trees which are well suited to the environment preserve the image of traditional landscapes to which the local people are very attached.

⁴ Which does not mean that this is exclusive to the mountains (Scotland).

Some do not hesitate to use the words “cultural landscapes” and “historic heritage”, etc. which must be preserved at all costs (Tyrol Oberland, Finland, Sweden, etc.), especially since they could play the role of genuine “springboards” to rekindle the economic and social dynamism of these areas (Tyrol Oberland)⁵.

Mountain farmers are thus the keepers of specific traditions and know-how⁶. They are the living and active witnesses of this and can in this capacity make a decisive contribution to the continuation of this wealth of general interest.

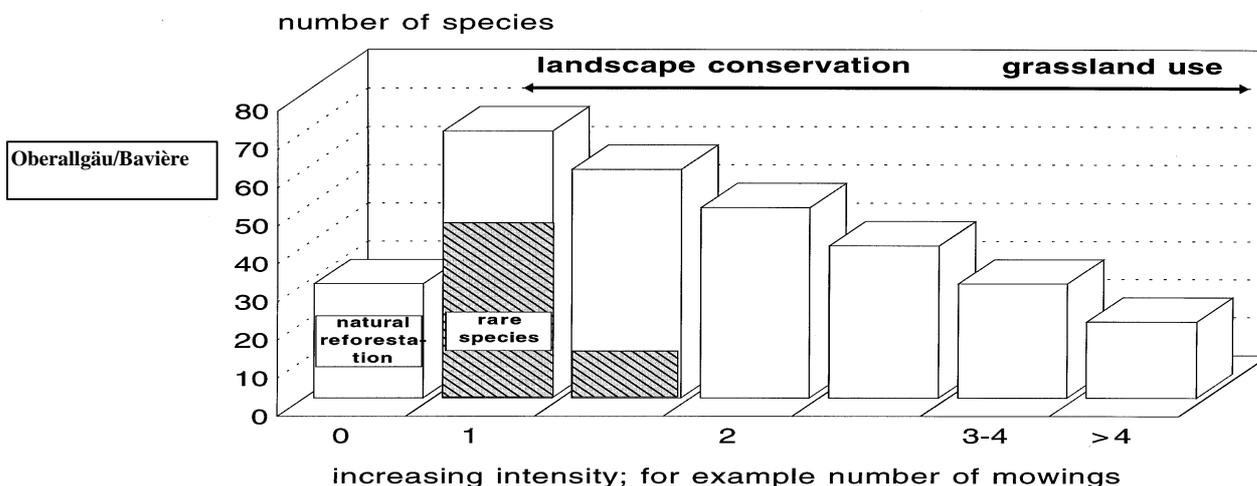
3). The search for quality products runs in the same direction, because the environmental dimension is integrated in all the phases of production (production, processing, distribution and sale). Quality “mountain” products are opening up new prospects to farmers who are becoming increasingly aware of the interest of embarking on this road (eco-products, search for local and regional markets, organic farming).

Question 3: Changes in farming practices and environmental impact ⁷.

1) The balance between farming and the environment is particularly fragile and unstable in the mountains. It depends on a number of parameters, particularly how well the practices are suited to the “capacities” of an extremely varied environment.

"In some regions (...) a less intensive use of the land seems necessary to achieve a good harmony with the capacities of the environment, (but) in other areas, substantial changes will not have to be made (...). The opposite tendency may exist, meaning that a too extensive use of the land can in turn cause problems of an ecological nature (Tyrol Oberland, Austria; excerpts from the final report and the brochure of the Central and Eastern Alps network).

The findings of a study on how the number of mowings can change the number of species (Bavaria).



Source: own figure; see also BRIEMLE, 1991

⁵ See chapter III

⁶ "There is no improvising when cutting grass on the steepest slopes, there where only the smallest scythe can be used (...) but soon there will no longer be anyone who knows how to do it..." (area of Beaufort)

⁷ Of number of areas and networks (Alps and Pyrenees in particular insist on the fact that the main “pressures” on the mountain environment come from non-farming sectors (tourism, industry, transport, urban life).

2) Natural resources can be overutilised, particularly at well located sites, even if this is no way near the dominant feature in the mountains.

Be it for lack of land (Crete and Greece), the search for profitability on large farms (Scotland), poor management of grasslands, the effects are harmful to the environment: too much organic manure on the flattest parts in Oberallgäu/Bavaria destabilises the soil in these areas while the slopes are neglected. The same type of phenomenon can be seen around the farming sites in the Cairngorms Mountains in Scotland where sheep flock together “spontaneously” at the expense of vast areas of remote grazing land, and sometimes in summer pastures and high mountain pastures.

The result is, depending on the case, water pollution, an overburdening of the soil which causes erosion, etc. In some southern areas, the soil is “exhausted” and no longer absorbs rainwater, worsening the problems of drought and, paradoxically, flooding when there are rainstorms (Crete). Some bad practices of grazing in forests are attributed to the lack of training of farmers (Spain’s Basque Mountains).

However, the mountains remain little concerned by pollution from intensive production practices (abusive use of chemicals, fertilizers, weedkillers) which are very widespread in the lowland areas, for example (except in a few cases: intensive forestry practices in the Scandinavian massif areas, pig raising independent of land in the canton of Appenzell/Switzerland). In the mountains, these phenomena generally occur at specific sites and have to do with a poor management of organic waste in areas where there is livestock farming⁸.

3) It is perhaps too often forgotten that it is total or partial underfarming that is one of the primary threats to the environment in most mountain regions. The abandoning of agriculture causes environmental deterioration: soil erosion, impoverishment of the landscapes and biodiversity, ageing forests, etc. Attention must be given to this phenomenon which appear in “rampant” fashion and which in the extreme can lead to “abandonment” (Tyrol Oberland).

4) But the most typical and widespread trends in the mountains, reported in practically all the case studies, appear in a simultaneous dual movement of underfarming and intensification.

This means that as the most difficult land is being abandoned or “losing its appeal” (remoteness, low productivity), agricultural production is being concentrated on the land most easy to farm with a certain intensification of practices. All these trends, poorly controlled, are jeopardising the quality of the environment (lower quality landscape, weakening of soil, decline in biodiversity, poor use of water resources, risk of landslides, fires, etc.).

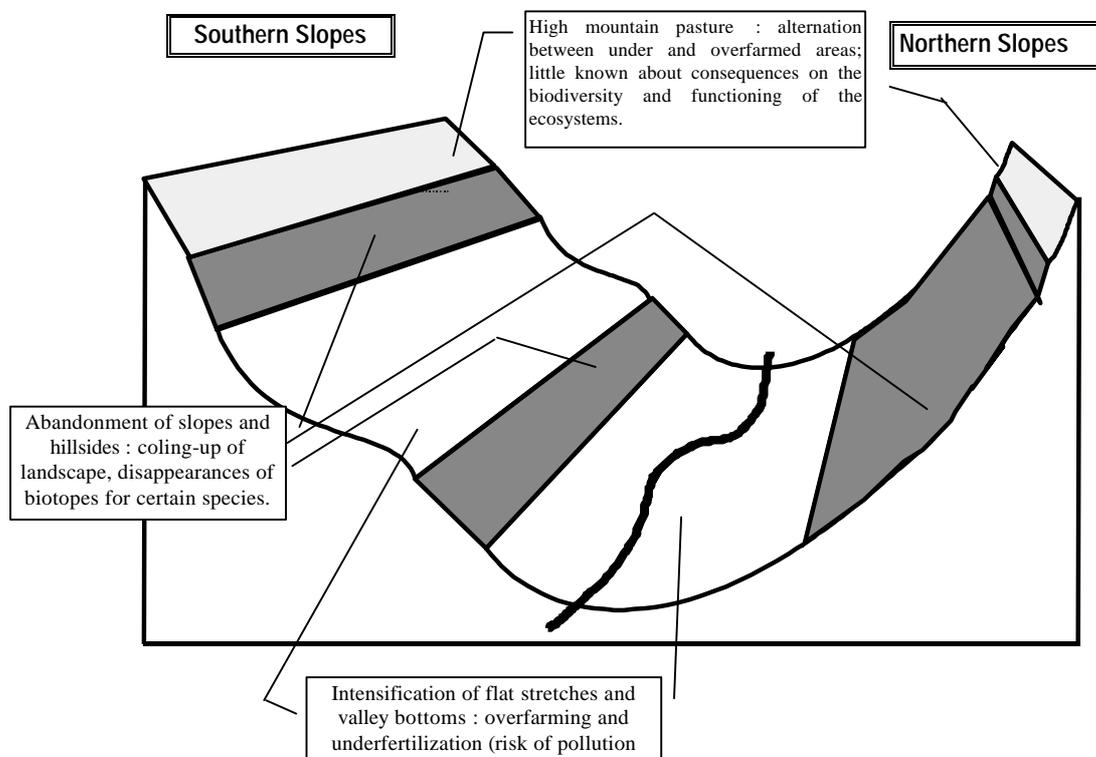
For example, in Vercors, France (Western Alps network), not only is the farming population growing old but more and more people are turning away from it, resulting in changes in the environment: modification of relationship between open and closed areas, main factor of the special harmony of the Vercors landscapes; less biodiversity because of the relaxation of agricultural pressure; disappearance of biotopes essential to the massif’s wildlife.

Meanwhile, production is being concentrated on the land most easy to farm with a certain intensification of practices. Impact: sometimes large amounts of water are being drawn for the irrigated areas in a karstic environment where water resources are relatively rare; agricultural pollution: organic in sectors where there is livestock farming because of spreading, nitrogen-related in sectors of major crops because of overfertilising, more “specialised” in the vineyards of Diois (chemical treatments). (excerpts from the brochure of the Western Alps network).

⁸ In Penibetica in Andalusia, studies on the growing of olive trees (considered well suited to the environment) show that the amount of agri-chemical and synthetic products used is on average 2 times less than the amount used for major crops (COP) in the EU.

The causes of these trends are diverse: very hard working conditions, insufficient income or attempt to save money (use of livestock feed produced at low cost), search for higher profits (particularly if the sector is “profitable”); lack of manpower⁹; lack of training (e.g. grazing in the forest, changes in the use of the land without sufficient preparation, etc.).

These movements are causing a kind of break-up of earlier systems that were based on the complementarity of the activities, enabling agriculture to assume without major difficulty the dual function of production and protection (e.g. livestock farming and the gathering of fodder = production and preservation of landscapes, soils, etc.).



" Worrysome trends if they are not brought under control on time" (area of Beaufortin)

The specific features of mountain areas have to do with the nature of the areas most exposed to abandonment or poor “management” (over and underfarming of the land simultaneously): sloping land, intermediate areas, areas at high altitude. The wealth (landscapes, biodiversity) and/or very fragility of the mountain environment (the soil) which for the most part is the result of farming are one of the specific features of mountain regions.

⁹ "the mountains are short-handed" (area of Beaufort/France) because the pay is too low.

The current trends bring with them a whole range of challenges, economic, social, environmental, cultural, but also territorial, because behind the movements to abandon and overfarm the land looms a kind of “bipolarisation” of the areas (Spain’s Basque Mountains).

Remark: the words and concepts lack to express all the characteristics of the agri-environmental situation in the mountains (- extensive nature of productions that favour environmental preservation, but contradictory trends of over and underfarming which are harmful to the balance of natural resources; - use of the land according to the needs of the environment, use of skilled labour, etc.)¹⁰.

Now the environmental impact of Community measures needs to be assessed to determine the extent to which these measures suit the specific problems of mountains.

¹⁰ Environment-friendly agricultural practices require skilled labour and jobs. This is what our Swiss partners express in the form of “extensive” systems at the local level but “intensive” systems in terms of employment.

CHAPTER TWO

ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF COMMUNITY MEASURES IN THE MOUNTAINS.

According to the needs as it has been possible to identify them, how can the environmental impact of Community measures in the short or longer term be assessed? What effects do these measures have and what conclusions can be drawn from them?

The study seeks to understand how Community regulations are interpreted and applied in the different Member States and/or by the Regions in order to get a better grasp of what favours efficiency or, instead, jeopardises it. Using concrete examples, we will simply mention the complementarities, consistencies and inconsistencies observed in certain areas between Community policies.

Methodology

As stated above, the assessment concerns a limited number of measures whose purpose is to “take advantage of” the available results in a disciplinary approach (and not to launch new studies), to give special attention to the experience gained on the “ground” and to take into account the point of view of local and regional actors.

The networks have analysed the objectives of the measure studied, the conditions of application (notably the various levels of expertise) and its effects on the various components of the environment.

Among the difficulties encountered in successfully completing this “exercise”, let us mention: the lack of hindsight, insufficient information and/or knowledge on the state of the environment (choice of criteria, definition of the qualitative approach to the environment, complex and costly systems of assessment).

Choice of the measures studied (2078/92 et 2090/92)

The study essentially concerns two of the main accompanying measures of the CAP reform of 1992 (2078/92 and 2080/92), one of which explicitly aims to integrate the environmental dimension. Because these measures are new, it is possible to begin testing the interest shown by the professionals (voluntary and contractual nature of the action) and to form an opinion on the possibilities of modifying or, instead, comparing certain agricultural practices favourable to the preservation of the quality of the mountain environment.

Can these accompanying measures be considered well suited and sufficient incentives to maintain or develop “extensive” mountain systems in all their complexity (eliminating in particular the dual phenomenon of “over” and “under” farming of the land which jeopardises the balance of natural resources).

Continuing along these same lines, we have quickly reviewed the impact of certain agricultural structural measures, rural development actions, the Leader programmes, etc, to identify, at least in specific cases, the complementarities or inconsistencies of the mechanism as a whole.

1. Council Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 of 30 June 1992

"concerning agricultural production methods compatible with the environment and the maintenance of natural areas".

1a. Objectives of the regulation and implementation

The regulation provides for 7 types of action¹¹. Their implementation is compulsory for the Member States in the form of projects elaborated by zone (if need be at national level). These operations are optional for farmers or other beneficiaries of the actions. The contracts are concluded for 5 years. The co-funding rate of the EAGGF-Guarantee Section is 50% or 75% of the expenditure (depending on whether the regions fall under Objective 5b or Objective 1).

1b. Actions and results.

The description of the actions contracted highlights both the diversity of the areas but also the similarity of the problems of mountain areas and environmental issues. The expected results are: protection of the great variety of landscapes, protection of biodiversity, elimination of the harmful factors that jeopardise water quality, protection of the soil, and particularly sloping land subject to erosion, etc.

Reducing overgrazing.

"Limit the overfarming of certain specific sites (Cairngorms Mountains/Scotland), "improve grazing practices in the forest by developing training programmes" and thus avoid cases of overburdening of the soil or damage to young shoots (Basque Mountains, Spain), "reduce the use of inputs (chemical fertilizers and pesticides) to protect the water and soil" (Oberallgäu/Bavaria), etc.

Successfully managing land at high altitude.

Examples: "For the return to a sound management of high mountain pastures and the rehabilitation of the role of shepherds" (Val d'Aosta); "continue to mow grasslands at high altitude and gather hay" (Tyrol Oberland). Expected effects: better protection of the soil, preservation of biodiversity.

Maintain sloping land and intermediate areas.

Examples: "for a good use of the land and the protection of landscapes and biodiversity" (Beaufortin, France). A number of actions of the same nature in Val di Cembra/Trento, Vercors/France (protection of water supply points by limiting the use of phytosanitary products); "Fight against declining interest in agriculture" and search for "extensive livestock farming systems capable of managing large areas at high altitude despite the reduced number of farmers" (Couserans/Central Pyrenees, France) for the preservation of the landscapes. "Clear the

¹¹ Excerpts from Council Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 of 30 June 1992

Objectives:

- a) favour the use of agricultural production practices that diminish the polluting effects of agriculture and also contribute to a better balance of the markets because of the reduction in production;
- b) favour an environment-friendly extensification of plant productions and cattle and sheep farming, including the reconversion of arable land to extensive grazing;
- c) favour the farming of land in a way that takes into account the protection and improvement of the environment, natural areas, the landscape, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity;
- d) encourage the maintenance of abandoned farmland and forests wherever this proves necessary for environmental reasons, because of natural or fire hazards, and in so doing prevent the risks related to the loss of population in agricultural regions;
- e) encourage the withdrawal of farmland in the long term for environment-related purposes;
- f) encourage the management of land for public access and recreation;
- g) promote farmers' awareness of and training in agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of environmental protection and the maintenance of natural areas.

sloping land”, make it grassland for animals, restore the quality of the landscapes, prevent soil erosion (Picos de Europa/Cantabrian massif).

“Protection of crops on steep slopes (almond trees) and in terraces (olive trees and vineyards)” (Terra Quente Transmontana, Portugal) to preserve the stability of the soil and the quality of the traditional landscape.

Organic farming.

A number of examples of actions in Penibetica, Andalusia; Terra Quente Transmontana, Portugal; Tyrol Oberland, Austria; the canton of Valais, Switzerland; etc. (see footnote on page...)- It is worth noting that in areas like those of Terra Quente Transmontana where “old” practices are still frequent, the conditions are favourable to the rapid adoption of organic practices, which is not without interest since demand from the market seems to be growing stronger¹².

Local breeds (well suited to the environment and not having undergone genetic engineering). Actions observed in Penibetica, Spain; Picos de Europa, Spain; Spain’s Basque Mountains.

In very few cases was the action implemented at national level (e.g. “grass premium” in France. It is simple and “popular but there is no modulation based on local characteristics”).

The results are presented case by case in the final report (favourable factors, factors limiting the action’s impact). Below is a summary of the main analyses.

Overall impression

Generally speaking, this measure was greeted with a certain interest. There does not seem to be any professed hostility except towards the long-term withdrawal of mountain farmland (20 years), particularly in the Apennine areas (Basilicata, Abruzzi in Italy). What stands out most is a certain skepticism regarding the efficiency of these measures in the long term in protecting and enhancing the environment.

Lessons of a general nature emerge that rise above the very great diversity of situations (nature of the problems to be solved, impetus given - or not given - by the proper authorities, design of the action and definition of the implementing conditions, etc.).

Factors favouring a good impact of the measure:

- the prior definition of a national or regional policy that does not take the authorities or professionals already familiar with agri-environmental problems “by surprise”. This way the objectives and means to be implemented can be rapidly defined (Tyrol Oberland, Val d’Aosta).

- the definition of clear objectives, good remuneration of the service rendered, “visible” results are all factors that play in favour of a positive impact on the environment. For example, clearing slopes for livestock embellishes the landscape (Picos de Europa, Spain). The measure, which also pays well, is appreciated and gives tangible results.

- simple administrative procedures, good compensation, no excluded people (multiple job holders, small farms) are all factors that enable effective action. This is the case in Val d’Aosta, for example, which

¹² This remark is made namely in the mountain region of Portugal. It should be noted, moreover, that in Tyrol Oberland, the percentage of organic farmers is as high as 30% and that in certain Swiss cantons, the objective is to have 50% of the productions organic by the year 2002.

encourages the hiring of shepherds in high mountain pastures or in Tyrol Oberland which successfully supports the mowing of slopes. In both cases, landscapes, biodiversity, soil preservation are improved.

In other words, certain conditions are required to obtain initial results that are “convincing”. But few areas have this.

Achievements

- awareness of environmental issues, development of partnerships creating “social dynamism”.

One of the undeniable achievements is having made farmers, government agencies, elected officials, scientists aware of the importance of environmental issues and demonstrated the need to overcome certain contradictions between agriculture and environment. The farmers, as well as the technicians and scientists, have learned to listen to one another and seek together the complementarities between know-how on the one hand, technical achievements on the other (Beaufort area). Information has begun to circulate, certain taboos have fallen, training programmes have been developed and farmers and consumers have become aware of organic farming, for example (Tyrol Oberland).

In a number of cases, a genuine partnership has been built, bringing with it local dynamism that should last over time (area of Beaufort, Causses and Mediterranean Pyrenees, Central Pyrenees, etc.). The idea of contractual agreements has gained widespread acceptance. Environmental education and training are recognised as key questions (priority underlined in a number of mountain areas).

Obstacles to the measure’s development

complexities, administrative burdens, term of payment

The effect of all this is several layers of procedures and channels to be observed, from the local level all the way to the Community level, including the regional and national levels, thereby discouraging in advance many farmers (loss of time and money). In some areas, the absence of clear proposals by the competent regional authorities has actually kept livestock farmers from benefiting from these Community measures (some dry mountain areas in the Apennines).

In other cases, it is instead the “wealth” and several layers of measures that pose a problem.

In Vercors, France (Western Alps network), “there are so many measures that are superposed, grass premium, Article 21, local agri-environmental measures, land acquisition operations, each time with different eligibility criteria, different procedures, that it creates an impression of incoherent spatial management”.

the amount of the aid: too often insufficient

In general, it is not possible with the aid proposed to offset the environmental constraints or pay for the additional work requested of the farmer:

- difficult work when sloping land or certain high-altitude meadows have to be mowed or cost of the purchase of suitable equipment, not to mention the fact that the fodder sold on the market is often at a better price;
- longer and more costly work for the farmer who accepts to reintroduce in his daily activity traditional practices that are environment-friendly, like terraced crops for example;
- loss of income for the farmer who agrees to reduce inputs when income levels are already low in the mountains;

skepticism of many farmers

who often are not convinced of the need to do anything other than what they have always been doing. Lack of conviction that it does any good to work on environmental issues. Impression of incoherence when they see all the measures that pile up.

"the excluded"

The refusal to enable multiple job holders and small farms to benefit from agri-environmental aid stems from national or regional decisions that are more restrictive than the Community regulation (in this specific case at least).

co-funding rates

The regions with the least amount of wealth find it difficult to grant farmers the maximum amount given the amount of the co-funding rates. A question asked in Spain's Basque Mountains was: why are market measures fully funded by the Commission when agri-environmental measures are only 50% or 75% financed (Objective 1)? The co-funding rate is also considered insufficient in the Penibetica area (and in Andalusia in general) where it is stressed that economic and budgetary priorities (convergence criteria for the single currency) limit the available funds the Region has in its budget.

insufficient knowledge

concerning the impact of certain agricultural practices on the environment and the lack of assessment systems (rather difficult to implement and costly).

competition and overlapping between Community measures

In certain cases, for example, in the Cairngorms Mountains or in the dry mountains in southern France, aid is directly in competition with COM sheep premiums (the sheep compensating premium is currently 16.8 ecus per heavy lamb, whereas aid granted in Scotland under measure 2078.92 only ranges from about 2 to 15 ecus per hectare. What is more, this aid has a ceiling on it). At the end of this chapter, we will return to the overlapping of a certain number of Community, national or regional policies.

making selective repairs, demonstrating that it is possible to "do" otherwise, convincing

In a number of cases, these programmes can be an opportunity to selectively repair some of the damage and to delay developments harmful from all points of view, such as the abandoning of land or the trend towards intensification. But it is highly unlikely that through these actions it will be possible to reorientate in any sustainable way production systems as they exist - besides, the question can be asked whether that is their role.

Limits

These accompanying measures 1) do not carry sufficient weight to avoid the trends that are continuing under the influence of market policies¹³; 2) Sustainable changes therefore should not be expected from

¹³ see analysis done in Vercors, Val d'Aosta, Beaufortin; Portugal, Andalusia; Central Pyrenees brochure (page 57 and following pages), etc.

these measures, meaning “accompanying” measures cannot be expected to do more than they are capable of.

Conclusion

This type of action continues to conflict with certain pervading ideas dominated by the logic alone that productivity should be strongly promoted. The change in mentalities will be especially fast, because environmental practices will be taken seriously and be credible, implying in particular the development of environmental education and training, and proper remuneration.

The implementation of actions well suited to the diversity of the environments calls for “decentralised” management. This direction is the right one. But, in view of experience, it is not the guaranteed or “automatic” solution to all the problems either. In the cases mentioned, it is the national or regional authorities who, except in a few instances, do not seem to go as far as the Community in its intentions (more restrictive application).

In contrast, it is at all levels that the complexity of administrative procedures needs to be tackled.

2. Regulation (EEC) 2080/92 of 30 June 1992 “setting up a Community aid scheme for forestry measures in agriculture”.

2a. Objectives and implementation

The aid scheme is aimed at:

- using farmland for afforestation as an alternative;
- developing forestry on farms.

There are various problems involved in the Regulation’s implementation:

- the choice of species and their impact on the quality of the soil, water and biodiversity;
- the incentive to plant forests can accelerate the decline of agriculture when it is essential in maintaining the landscapes and space.

Particularly in the mountains, it is not easy to reconcile the different objectives listed in the Regulation. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the actions go in the direction of environmental protection.

2b. Its impact.

This provision is not very appropriate for mountain areas. We would even be tempted to strongly advise against it, because it can speed up the decline of agriculture. This measure is skilfully implemented by certain regions which have a local forestry policy and know how to integrate it in their own mechanism. But even in this case, this measure is not entirely satisfactory, because it does not succeed in truly slowing down the planting of more profitable species which involves intensive practices harmful to the quality of the soil, or water.

In contrast, this could be an opportunity to urge the European Union to define a genuine policy for mountain forests.

3. The compensatory payment scheme for natural handicaps

The compensatory payment scheme for natural handicaps, as its name even states, aims to support farmers' income "to guarantee spatial maintenance" (even if this second objective, inseparable from the first, has been a little forgotten over time, at least as far as its most common interpretation is concerned). The not insignificant share that these represent in the agricultural income of mountain farmers is important and actually helps fight the partial or total abandonment of land, a priority of the mountains, because this assistance maintains extensive livestock farming systems which occupy areas that are difficult but often environmentally sensitive.

It must be heavily stressed, however, that there are contradictions between the objective that consists in wanting to maintain mountain areas through farming on the one hand, and refusing on the other hand aid for multiple job holders and small farms which make up the overwhelming majority and precisely exercise this function.

Thus we arrive at paradoxical situations: in certain areas, the environmental function of livestock farmers has become virtually dominant (maintenance of small plots of land and preservation of the landscapes in Tyrol Oberland by multiple job holders who are the overwhelming majority - nearly 80% of the farmers -; fight against the risks of fire on the land highest up in Penibetica because of herds and flocks, but 5% of the farmers are eligible for this aid because virtually all of them are multiple job holders; in Andalusia, seasonal workers are ineligible for compensatory payments).

Generally speaking, farmers in Mediterranean mountain areas (tree cultivation, fruit trees, etc.) receive little assistance in the form of compensatory allowances, and the differences between the amounts of the allowances for simple disadvantaged areas and mountain areas are not great enough.

Furthermore, the rules for allocating compensatory allowances are not entirely satisfactory. The current system tends to favour the increase of LUs per labour unit and does not assess the available labour capacity per hectare, which is not without consequence on the environment, especially if the farmers are in need of land (this is the case in Crete). On the other hand, the calculation per hectare which is sometimes mentioned, also has its drawbacks. It is in fact an incentive to enlarge (contrary to a policy of establishment, except in the case of particularly small farms) and a measure in favour of the largest farms, without any guarantee that the land will be maintained in a balanced fashion (this is the case in the Cairngorms Mountains).

4. Other agricultural measures.

As far as the other agricultural measures are concerned, including the policy of the common organisations of the market which is at the heart of the Community system, we expect in the best of cases "positive effects" for the environment, "indirect benefits". But there is still a lot to be done¹⁴. In short, this means that the main objective is "elsewhere", but that the environment should benefit from it. Without any additional constraint, it must be recognised that it is somewhat of a challenge. The reasoning is logical and reassuring, but it is to be greatly feared that the results will not entirely meet expectations.

¹⁴ It will be interesting from this point of view to follow the implementation of the recent reform of "fruit and vegetables" which incorporates "environmental obligations" in the programmes elaborated locally.

To begin incorporating the environmental concern in all of the European Union's agricultural decisions is an ambitious objective, but we have to begin trying. One of the first objectives could be to rectify some of the flagrant inconsistencies, either within the CAP itself or between the various agricultural, rural, environmental policies which too often respond to different logics, too often ignore one another and "live their own life" without always ensuring overall coherence.

5. On rural and regional development.

The examples mentioned do not show flagrant contradictions, at least for agriculture and the environment, which is not the case with all the economic sectors¹⁵. On the contrary, we are seeing actions that go in the agri-environmental direction. The problem would be rather one of a "loss of earnings" and insufficient initiatives. It is highly likely that the elaboration of a global development project with a definite environmental component would help catch up and reduce the actions in favour of agricultural activities that are closely linked to the preservation of landscapes, biodiversity, etc. However, the increase in sources of financing and applied rules is complicating and delaying the launch of programmes.

6 Subsidiarity.

The diversity of the local situations and the need to have the support of the local people and farmers are incentives to "delegate" as much power and jurisdiction to the local level as possible. It is quite clearly the only way possible. But it must be said that it is not always at this level that impetus is given, or that mentalities change the fastest. On the other hand, when the local will is there and there is a global concept of development, progress can be swift, although certain conditions have to be fulfilled: financial resources for example. In short, the examples given show that there can be obstacles or incentives depending on the case and on the way in which certain Community measures are interpreted and applied at the national, regional or local level. Yet, it is when there is close contact with the needs that it is possible to develop the most imaginative initiatives and a partnership that is appreciated and essential.*

General remark:

the impact of the Community measures (particularly agri-environmental measures) is especially effective because regional or national policies in favour of agriculture and the environment have already been adopted and implemented. This means that the European Union's initiatives, far from weakening the responsibilities specific to each institution (States, regions), instead strengthen them.

¹⁵ Virtually all the areas of the networks report that the main sources of pollution come from tourism, industry, urban pollution, etc., thus showing to what point the environmental dimension can be overlooked in the other sectors of economic activity.

CHAPTER III. STRATEGIES AND PROPOSALS

General options

To help ensure the balance of Europe's areas, support the many functions of agriculture, give priority to quality, promote rural development and local dynamics.

Some basic principles

a). search for complementarity and convergences between the general measures and the measures specific to mountain areas and/or to the environment.

These aspects are relevant to at least two levels: that of taking into account the specific nature of mountains, on the one hand, and that of the coherence between Community measures on the other.

- Preservation and strengthening of aid "specific" to mountain areas that has shown its worth (e.g. compensatory payments), subject to adjustments to be studied. For example, additional provisions that "positively encourage those who make efforts to improve their environment-friendly practices" (see proposal 4).
- Adaptation of general measures to the specific features of these areas (environmental wealth and weaknesses, specific features of mountain farming) at the Community, national or regional level. Flexibility, modulation and search for efficiency argue for the development of subsidiarity.
- Search for complementarity between Community measures to guarantee a convergence of efforts to preserve the quality of the environment (see, for example, proposals 6, 7 and 8). This should also lighten the administrative procedures.

b). sharing of competences and partnership, common points and diversity of mountain regions.

Subsidiarity offers good conditions for taking into account, close to the realities, the diversity of mountain regions (assistance and/or prevention of trends). Special care has to be taken: not to keep back those that are a little "ahead" of the others; strongly encourage those who are lagging considerably behind "to catch up".

But exercising subsidiarity implies that a certain number of conditions are met (see proposal 10).

Confirm and develop the contractual procedure, largely initiated through agri-environmental measures.

c). search for unifying factors for global and integrated rural development.

Combining the specific features of agriculture and the environment in the mountains helps "produce" sites and landscapes of great environmental and cultural quality, a particularly varied fauna and flora. From this stems the notion of "historic heritage", "natural and cultural heritage" or even "cultural landscapes" which actually could become one of the "unifying" factors of economic, social, environmental and cultural development. Some of the reflections are heading in this direction. The debate is open¹⁶

¹⁶ *To illustrate this, the Central and Eastern Alps network emphasizes the need to maintain mountain and high mountain grasslands, not only because they are useful to farmers but also because of their great environmental and social value. However, their existence is threatened because milk producers have to pay too many additional costs to use this land at high altitude. Public funds must therefore be sufficient and well suited to encourage these producers not to give up these practices which are closely linked to the utilisation of the natural environment. It is the only way to preserve "cultural landscapes" which thus become a central factor in the development of tourism, and beyond this, a factor of rural development.*

Thirteen proposals

1. Priority: awareness, information, training and research

Environmental awareness and information are becoming key issues. In most areas, emphasis is on the efforts to be made, not only by farmers, but also by consumers and the people in general. Indeed more and more, preserving the quality of the environment is becoming a shared responsibility, particularly at environmentally sensitive sites and in areas of high environmental and cultural value which the mountains generally are.

“Agri-environmental” training should be strongly promoted and made part of any new action (e.g. new role of shepherds).

The search should be clearly oriented towards knowledge of the environment with a view to its sustainable development through agriculture in forms compatible with the needs of economic and social development. Define assessment systems, etc.¹⁷

2. considerably strengthen agri-environmental measures, prolong the procedure

To make Regulation 2078/92 more effective, it would be necessary to increase:

- the amount of aid granted to farmers,
- the co-funding rate for regions with the least means,
- the amount of Community money which, even if payments have increased over the past few years, still remains very insufficient (less than 5% of the EAGGF Guarantee Section),
- the duration of contracts to more than five years if there are to be major changes in agricultural practices and there is not to be the feeling that the efforts made could be called into question “overnight”.

The practice of the “contract” offering proper remuneration in exchange for actions with an environmental purpose is largely approved in all the areas, but the amount of the premiums must be increased to truly compensate for the work requested (depending on the case: compensation for lost income related to additional work, for the cost of purchasing the suitable equipment; incentive payment for a service that would be abandoned if there were no payment, such as mowing the slopes, etc.). This would give full worth to the protection of landscapes.

Organic farming should be more clearly encouraged (care must be taken not to impose constraints that are excessive or poorly suited to the local conditions of production).

Two “courses of action” should be explored in particular:

- one concerns production systems that have remained “traditional” and which could, without lengthy and costly reconversion, incorporate practices complying with “organic” standards (e.g. in certain mountain areas of the Iberian peninsula);
- the other course has to do with priority and “voluntarist” choices (incentives adopted in Tyrol Oberland; decisions by certain Swiss cantons).

The agri-environmental actions should become “gratifying” from all points of view (additional training, acquisition of new knowledge, good pay, etc.). This would help overcome what is still tenacious resistance from certain quarters.¹⁸

¹⁷ see annex 11 of the final report

¹⁸ See excerpt from an article by Maxime Vailet , area of Beaufort, annex 9.

Lastly, it is important to ensure that other Community or national measures that are not subject to criteria conditional on the environment do not pay more and actually quash the efforts undertaken in favour of agri-environmental practices.

Whenever possible, “the set aside of land” should not apply in mountain regions, there where one of the main concerns remains precisely that of maintaining the presence of agricultural activities to preserve the soil and avoid landslides due to erosion, to preserve the quality of the landscapes, etc. This provision implemented in the mountains can have but a small impact on production volumes;

3. for a genuine policy on mountain forestry

The afforestation of land should be designed, generally speaking, as an alternative to abandoning farmland and not as a measure competing with farming (unless there be a clear unsuitability). It is therefore proposed that another purpose be introduced in the regulation, with the inclusion of explicit references to the environment (value of the landscape, biodiversity, the soil, etc.). In Mediterranean mountain areas, a whole specific policy should be defined to prevent the risks of fire or flooding, to take advantage of agricultural and forest landscapes that are special and original expressions of Mediterranean cultures.

Regulation 2080/92 should support as a matter of priority the species best suited to the environment, because they often grow slower and are therefore less profitable (amounts of aid to be increased). Whatever the case, be it slow growing species or more productive forests, the aid should be made conditional on practices that are truly compatible with the environment to prevent and avoid any intensification. The actions should also, whenever possible, be part of a regional forestry programme incorporating environmental needs, research on renewable energies. There too, a period of 5 years seems to short.

In the same vein, this measure should facilitate the maintenance of mountain forests, enable the renewal of existing and ageing forests, encourage the definition of specific policies, notably in favour of the Mediterranean forest.

4. adjust compensatory payments for natural handicaps

Beginning with the observation repeatedly made in the course of this study that agriculture very specifically helps maintain and take advantage of the mountain environment (landscapes, land at high altitude, steep to very steep slopes, prevention of fire risks, etc.), be it in wet mountains or dry mountains, some improvements in the system of compensatory payments could be considered:

- increase the Community ceiling on mountain aid (this would enable for example regions with high mountain areas to better help these areas if they consider it necessary);
- encourage the Member States or regions to modulate the allowances as best as possible according to the actual difficulties of farms (size, slopes, isolation, etc. see a few examples, pages 67 and 68);
- re-examine the entire compensatory payment “scheme” in favour of traditional mountain crops and Mediterranean hills which, because of the conditions of application in particular (administrative and financial), benefit only very little from these allowances;
- integrate multiple job holders in the mechanism, the amount of aid being modulable (according to standards to be examined, for example, in proportion to the time spent on the farm);

- study the status of small farms which have an undeniable environmental role, if not a priority role (see Tyrol);
- in keeping with the procedure of 2078/92 and without destabilising the current system, have an additional and sufficient margin with which it is possible to modulate and further encourage farms that make an effort in favour of the environment.

5. deliberately tackle paradoxical situations

These “paradoxical” situations reflect a delay in concept in relation to current needs. This is the case of multiple job holders who, in the mountain areas studied, are for the most part excluded from Community aid when they are often the first to satisfy the multi-functional objectives of agriculture, production, environment, tourism, etc. Recognition of occupational pluralism is very late in coming, and in a certain way, reflect the clash between two logics, one exclusively economic, and the other which seeks to promote a multidimensional approach.

The Community regulation should revise the current criteria when they are restrictive towards multiple job holders and no longer correspond to current needs (e.g. for the allocation of compensatory payments//mountain and disadvantaged areas) and allow the Member States to modulate the amount of aid from which they would benefit. This would at least have the advantage of not keeping behind the regions which are among the most advanced in this field, even if sometimes they can be generally thought of as *avant-garde*. The same approach could be taken for small mountain farms. This actually means an updating of the situation that is essential to ensure that public aid corresponds to current trends (decline in the number of farmers, inclusion of environmental needs and development opportunities offered by the mountain environment, etc.).

But there are also obstacles at the level of a number of Member States and regions. In fact they are the ones that decided in many cases to exclude multiple job holders from agri-environmental measures when the Community regulation does not impose it in any way whatsoever.

In Val d'Aosta, “agri-environmental and forestry aid are granted to everyone, without any exclusiveness or discrimination: maintaining occupational pluralism makes it possible in our region to go beyond a blind mentality of strongly promoting productivity and to maintain a certain presence of agriculture in the hills, that otherwise would be abandoned because they would no longer be capable of guaranteeing a sufficient income to a full-time farmer”.

The repeated request by mountain communities that pluriactivity be recognised has not yet been met.

The Commission could support awareness, information and experience-sharing campaigns in this regard which basically are a direct reference to the debates on the changing functions of European agriculture today, insisting on the environmental challenge in sensitive areas like the mountain regions.

6. food quality and environment

Mountain products have every chance of being appreciated as quality products, because agricultural production and processing practices will preserve the environment and guarantee food quality (see the growing rejection by consumers when they become aware of the harmfulness of the intensive practices used to produce food).

Identification with a region is an additional asset as an expression of culinary and cultural traditions. The search for outlets on local and regional markets is a factor that also comes into play in preserving the environment (see position of the area of Vindeln, Sweden).

The European Union's policy should:

- greatly increase its support for quality mountain productions, or "ecoproducts" which, during the production process, help maintain the environment;
- promote organic farming, particularly in regions where traditional practices are still very close to organic ones;
- support a great initiative in favour of European mountain productions so that they are recognisable as such;
- help introduce regional labels and labels for specific mountain massifs.

7. introduce an environmental aim in the COM¹⁹

The work carried out in the areas of study have often underscored the interest of Community measures such as agri-environmental measures, but also their limits. These measures cannot in fact in themselves modify in any sustainable way practices damageable and harmful to the environment, nor avoid the tendency towards intensification which has become "spontaneous" after decades of "farming based on high productivity".

The common organisations of the market (COM) are obviously at the heart of the Community system and are a decisive influence on the orientations of productions and on the way in which farmers produce as the history of the CAP has demonstrated. It is in the management of the COMs that the fundamental solutions are therefore to be found, solutions to the problems of intensification and overfarming of the natural environment in particular which also exist in the mountains even if there is no possible comparison with the situation found in the lowland areas.

The recent reform of fruit and vegetables shows that the integration of an environmental dimension (in the framework of specific programmes) can be adopted.

It is in the same vein that the area of Penibetica, for example, proposes introducing accompanying measures in favour of the environment, specific measures in the next reform of olive oil.

Furthermore, it is at the level of direct aid for all productions and particularly those that are known to cause massive pollution that matching environmental aid should gradually be introduced. Eco-conditionality should gradually become normal practice.

Switzerland has taken an original approach. Major changes in agricultural policy were begun in 1992 (decoupling of prices and income, etc.) and have translated into the creation of direct payments in particular.

But unlike the Community system, direct payments are divided between five types of action. Of all the sums reserved for direct payments for the whole of Switzerland, i.e. CHF 1.9 billion:

- *part goes to support income depending on price fluctuations (Article 31a Lagr), or 41% of the total,*

¹⁹ see proposals 8 and 9 on the integration of environmental concerns in structural measures.

- the four other types of direct payments have, depending on the case, an environmental or social aim, such as direct environmental payments (Article 31b Lagr) which enable compensation for the additional expenses incurred by more extensive forms of farming (16%), aid for integrated production and organic farming, aid for animal-friendly stalling systems, etc. Priority actions are being carried out to overcome the problems of deterioration of landscapes due to the decline of marginal areas.

8. seek convergences between quality, employment, preservation of the environment and cultural heritage

The reflections on agriculture and the environment in the mountains cannot be dissociated from the problems of society as a whole, particularly problems relating to employment and the future of young people, to the balance of the areas, etc.

In fact, it is an entire “building site” that has to be opened rapidly to:

- give priority to helping young people become farmers and maintaining (a minimum) fabric of farms,
- consolidate extensive systems while going beyond this notion to have the guarantee of sound land management,
- “track down the contradictions”, review all the measures so that they better support one another in the pursuit of these objectives.

Mountain farming “lacks manpower” to assume the various missions assigned to it. It is a characteristic that is found in wet mountains and in dry mountains. From this point of view, the presence of a sufficient number of agricultural jobs can become one of the guarantees that land and natural resources will be properly maintained. This means that an attempt should be made to set these objectively convergent needs into motion.

Proposal of the Western Alps network²⁰(excerpts):

- 1) introduce in the direct payments a reference to the number of workers or agricultural labour units needed to avoid a shift towards overfarming or underfarming, and correct the drawbacks of the current systems (aid per hectare/indirect incentive for enlargement; aid per head of livestock/indirect incentive to overgraze);
- 2) grant rights to produce in environmentally challenging areas (e.g. sloping land) and promote quality production, etc.;
- 3) combine aids 5a and 5b: grant an additional premium to the young farmers allocation for farms being set up that make their own fodder, increase the compensatory payments for farms that have local breeds, etc. These actions can be combined with rural development objectives (tourist activities, etc.).

The example of this network comprising Savoy in France, Val d’Aosta in Italy, etc. shows at the same time that only by applying the principle of subsidiarity is it possible to reconcile: the pursuit of common objectives at EU level, the adaptation to local needs, the respect of particular institutional features.

²⁰ See Western Alps brochure - p15

9. proposal for “life-size” experiment

In the same vein, those in charge of the study for the Beaufort area, in agreement with all the socio-professional partners concerned, propose that the Commission launch an experiment in their region with a triple objective based on the needs of the environment:

aid to help young people become farmers, the rehabilitation of rundown areas that jeopardise the quality of the landscapes and the soil, etc., support for quality productions “rooted” in the mountain environment.

The area of Beaufort proposes that the Commission test on its territory a policy of aid for the introduction of multi-functional agriculture (quality production, area-based management, environment, culture)²¹.

Examples:

- give young people who become farmers rights to produce and additional milk quotas in exchange for the rehabilitation of abandoned land (slopes, for example) whose use in farming is essential for the preservation of landscapes, the variety of biodiversity, etc. (environmental protection). “Environment quotas” or “green quotas” of some sort for environmentally sensitive sites;
- introduce matching environmental aid in the management of the common organisations of the market, for example as part of the direct payments (according to specific procedures that remain to be defined).

10. for integrated local and regional development

Since the functions of agriculture are currently being “redefined”, it is important to situate the challenges of farming in the context of a more global economic development stemming from local needs and potential. Thus, despite the sharp decline in the working farming population for the past number of years, mountain agriculture can again become an essential factor in local development, integrate qualitative dimensions and play an active role in the preservation of cultural heritage.

The quality of the landscapes and of an environment preserved from pollution (air, noise, living environment) is more and more becoming a decisive argument to promote tourism and other activities and create the related jobs.

The concept of integrated development (familiar in Tyrol Oberland, Austria) based on the environment, preservation of cultural landscapes and biodiversity as a result of the harmonious combination between agriculture and the environment is worth being popularised and discussed.

Question: at a given moment, could not the environmental and cultural values become the unifying factor of sustainable development? In the Cairngorms, there is insistence on the need to elaborate environmental projects and programmes specific to each region, while underscoring the interest of having agriculture (see proposals of this area of study).

Whatever the case, these objectives can only be achieved according to local priorities experienced as such, preservation “of cultural landscapes” in Austria, “cultural landscapes and architectural heritage” in the Central Pyrenees, “historic and cultural heritage” in Sweden, Portugal, Andalusia, “maintenance of an area” itself multi-functional in the French mountains, etc.

²¹ See Western Alps brochure - p41, proposal elaborated during the study and contacts made on this occasion.

11. subsidiarity, co-funding rate, partnership

The transfer of competences for a “decentralisation” of the application of common measures will only give the expected results if a certain number of conditions are fulfilled, including:

- an increase in EAGGF co-financing rates each time this proves necessary. It is essential to better take into account the actual financial capacities of the countries, particularly for agri-environmental measures, afforestation measures, compensatory payments. The increase by a certain percentage (in the order of 10% to 20% or more) should be granted to support environmental actions in very environmentally sensitive regions (this should first of all concern mountain areas for the reasons referred to throughout the report);

- the development of the partnership. This is a decisive component of the exercise of subsidiarity. The introduction of an environmental, social and cultural problem in the aim of the economic policies is an “innovation” because it implies active participation of those most concerned by the development of actions. The partnership facilitates decision-making based on direct knowledge of expectations and realities. It usefully participates in the social “mobilisation” and creates a climate favourable to the subsequent adoption of new initiatives. The “Leader” experiences very often demonstrate this.

In the canton of Valais (Switzerland) the promotion of the voluntary sector through the creation of the NAT association is from this point of view an original example, appreciated and recognised locally as a “representative” speaking partner, capable of proposing and taking part in the management of projects²².

Structuring relationships between mountain people

The need for permanent contacts and exchanges is strongly felt by many (in forms still to be defined) with the purpose of facilitating the dissemination of experiments carried out in mountain areas, of being more familiar with research findings, of arriving at a better knowledge of the interrelationships between agriculture and the natural environment of the mountains, of deepening the reflections on certain concepts such as “historic or cultural heritage”, “cultural landscapes”, etc. A whole field of activity is open and must be structured through cooperation at the interregional, cross-border ... level.

12. lighten the administrative burden

The burden and complexity of administrative procedures is often underlined. The many measures, each with their own system, their rules and criteria, even their different aims, cause an accumulation of procedures and controls that is very harmful to the clearness of the objectives and becomes “tiresome” for those concerned.

Simplifying the procedures and making them efficient means:

- updating the measures to make sure they are complementary (criteria, aim),
- having a concept that consists in lightening the too frequent controls to the benefit of a transfer of responsibilities,
- speeding up procedures: it takes too long to put together files, implement them, make payments, etc.

²² NAT comprises the socio-professionals (agriculture, tourism, etc.), the local authorities, environmental associations, etc. and attempts to settle conflicts by seeking compromises acceptable to all.

13. reorient the Community budget

The accompanying measures of the 1992 CAP reform account for about 5% of the budget of the EAGGF Guarantee Section (1996 figures) only part of which is for agri-environmental measures²³,

²³ See annexes 5 et 10a (already

which is very little if we want to tackle head on environmental issues: raise the amount of aid and certain co-funding rates, launch information and training actions, etc.

In addition, mountain agricultural income remains two to four times less than income in the lowland regions, a large part of which comes from the distribution of public aid.

These facts argue for a reorientation of the Community budget to support agri-environmental agriculture which preserves cultural heritage (landscapes, biodiversity), itself a factor of local development that is active, diversified, integrated, that endeavours to reduce the inequalities between the lowlands and the mountains.

By putting a significant ceiling on aid per farm, it would be possible to adopt a fairer and more effective distribution of public aid, to reduce the inequalities between the lowlands and the mountains and to instil new life (economic, social, environmental and cultural) into the European Union's agricultural policy.

In Switzerland,

farms whose agricultural income exceeds 50 000 ecus a year are not eligible for any public aid.

attachment: the map of the areas studied and the list of the bodies that carried out the study.

6 geographic Networks and 25 study zones

Dry Mediterranean Mountains

Head of Network : Prof. Nikolaos Stamou

- **Vardousia Mountains, Greece**
Professor Nikolaos Stamou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Vaios Blioumis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Dr.Dimitris Katsaros, Institute of Mountainous Rural Economics, Karpenissi.
- **Jochtas and Strouboulas, Crete Island, Greece**
Professor Nikolaos Stamou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Professor Athanasios Christodoulou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- **Sud Massif Central, Pyrénées Méditerranéennes, France**
Marc Dimanche, SIME (service inter-chambres d'agriculture Montagne Elevage) à Lattes
et Jean-Paul Chassany, INRA-ESR, Montpellier .
- **les Appenins, Italie :**
Dott. Domenico Mastrogiovanni, ingénieur forestier, Coordinateur des études.

Montagna degli Abruzzi

Dott.ssa Manuela Cozzi, Associazione Regionale ovi-caprini, Anversa

Montagna Lucana, Basilicata

Prof. Francesco Contò, Département d'Economie, Università di Agraria, Potenza

- **Penibetica, Andalousie, Espagne**
Dr. Pedro Ruiz Avilés., Coordinateur, Dr. Ingeniero Agrónomo y Sociólogo
Francisco Barea Barea, Asesor Técnico de I+D
José González Arenas, Biólogo
Dra. Marta Ulecia García, Dra. en Derecho
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Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo Agrario. Córdoba
- **Terra Quente Transmontana, Portugal**
Lívia Madureira, Departement of Economics, Tras Montes e alto Douro University, Villa Real.

Northern Regions

Head of Network: Dr Bob Crabtree

- **Cairngorms Area , Scotland**
Bob Crabtree, Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, Aberdeen.

- **Vindeln, Sweden**
Ulf Wiberg, Departement of Social and Economic Geography, Umeå University
Monica Johanson, Departement of Social and Economic Geography, Umeå University.
Erik Sondell, Centre for Regiona Science, Umeå University.
- **North Savo, Finland.**
John Sumelius, Stephan Baäckman, Departement of Economics, University of Helsinki
Asko Miettinen, Agricultural Economic Research Institute.

Central and Eastern Alps

Head of Network : Georg Wiesinger

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- **Oberallgäu, Germany**
Michael Köbler, Chair of agricultural Economics, Technical University of Munich.
- **Val di Cembra, Italy**
Elena Piutti, Claudio Chemini, Gianni Nicolini, Centro di Ecologica Alpina, Trento.
- **Canton d'Appenzell - Rhodes Extérieurs, Switzerland**
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Ecole polytechniquefédérale, Zurich
Paolo Di Giorgi et Jörg Wyder, SAB, Groupement suisse pour les régions de montagne.
- **Triglav National Park, Slovenia**
Tomas Cunder, Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, Ljubljana.
Marija Markes, Triglav National Parc, Bled.

Western Alps

Head of Network: Philippe Fleury

- **Zone « Beaufort », France**
Philippe Fleury, GIS Alpes du Nord (groupement d'intérêt scientifique) SUACI Montagne
Didier Curtenaz, SUACI Montagne Alpes du nord (Service d'Utilité Agricole à Compétences Interdépartementales)
- **Vercors, France**
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- **Vallée d'Aoste, Italie**
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- **Hauts plateaux du Jura, France**
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Oceanic Regions

Head of Network: J.A Gutierrez

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Eugenio Ruiz Urrestarazu, Universidad del País Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz.
Rosario Galdos, Universidad del País Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz

- **Zone Picos de Europa et ses alentours, Espagne**

Mario Sáenz de Buruaga et Amaya Arbulu, Consultora de Recursos Naturales S.L., Vitoria-Gasteiz.

- **Pays Basque français, France**

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- **Haut Sobrarbe, Espagne**

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- **Haut Couserans, France**

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Steering Committee

- The 6 heads of network : Bob.Crabtree, Ph Fleury, A.Gibon, J.A.Gutierrez, N.Stamoui, G.Wiesinger,
- Euromontana representatives : Charles Galvin, Robert Duclos, Andrea Negri, Jörg Wyder,
- Study co-ordinator: Annie Benarous.
Assistants: Gaëlle Marion, Jean Christophe Paoli.

The European Commission representative had been invited at all the meetings of the steering committee .

The final document was written by Annie Benarous,
read and modified by the heads of network and P.Ruiz Aviles, Livia Madureira, and JPChassany.
