

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN AREAS

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Summary

Mountain areas due to their specific character should be managed in that way, which delivers people from rural areas appropriate income, what enable preserving and maintaining social tradition, unique features of environment and cultural landscapes. Mountain areas and every activity connected with them are part of national heritage.

Maintain sustainable development of mountain areas requires continue of agricultural production and assuring appropriate economic conditions. Hence dwellers of mountain areas should have opportunity to earn in nonagricultural sources.

Development of mountain areas connected only with agricultural production would lead to the impoverishment of the local population. Hence to counteract this process, it is necessary to assure direct payments for farmers, and at the same time expand nonagricultural function of this region. It is necessary to enrich rural areas in the mountains by creating a diversity of natural and cultural landscape. And although may it be a conflict between the objectives of conservation and agricultural activity, it seems that they could be overcome against the benefits which such cooperation can bring people in mountain areas.

Keywords

Common Agricultural Policy • mountain regions

1. Introduction

The beginnings of the Common Agricultural Policy in Western European countries are dated for the early 50's of the previous century. This is when, after years of wars and anxieties related also to food shortage, it has been assumed, that the common objective of the Agricultural Policy in the countries heavily damaged by the war, would be food production increase, which will allow the consumers to achieve food security, which is a constant supply for a reasonable price. However, the official starting date of the Common Agricultural Policy is 14 January 1962, and the assumption of the policy was to ensure profitability of the agricultural section in the European Union. The growers were offered various kinds of support, including production contributions and a guarantee of high selling prices. This support was also an encouragement for the farmers to increase the

production amounts and to modernize the production process. They received financial support for restructuring of their activity; they were also offered free trainings. People were encouraged to speed up social and generational changes in the country and to pass on the burden of running the farms to the young people by retiring earlier.

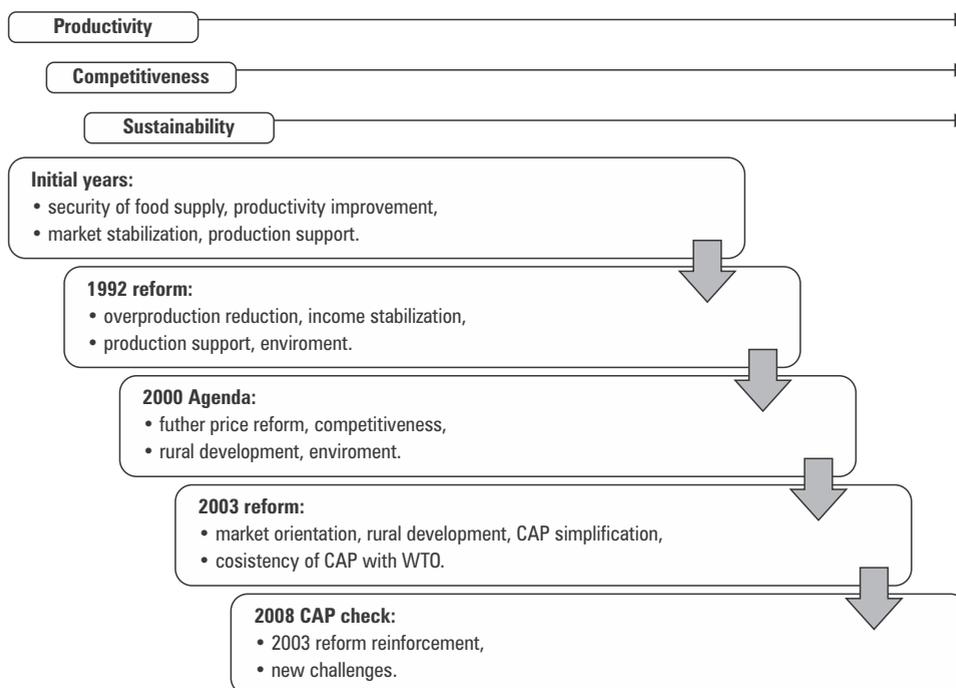
As the time passed and the formerly set objectives of the CAP were being realized, some of them were no longer applicable or were already accomplished. Presently, after more than 50 years of the CAP being in force, food security is still an important issue, but there are new objectives which are more relevant and adjusted to current conditions. They include such issues as diversified yet sustainable economic development of rural areas and meeting high standards related to environment protection and animals' welfare. The CAP's area of interest also included new problems, such as climate change or sustainable natural resource exploitation. For the consumers, used to the easy access to food, the product quality is becoming more and more important. The Common Agricultural Policy also evolves in this area, preparing the agricultural producers for high quality food production which will be easier to sell.

Change of Common Agricultural Policy objectives was accomplished through many reforms and thorough observations of the dynamically changing surroundings. The first corrections of the objectives were made already in the 60's, the so called Mansholt plan, which was aimed to improve agricultural structure by increasing the size of farms and liquidation of small, ineffective economically agricultural producers. The next agricultural reforms made by the EU supported innovations in agriculture and processing, however, they were focused mainly on producers, who had significant acreage and had a competitive innovation potential. The most important changes made by the CAP objective reform are shown in figure 1. Fundamentally, one can observe a tendency towards increase of production and its sustainability, while maintaining competitiveness of the activity.

Realization of the Common Agricultural Policy primary objective, which was ensuring food security, resulted in a shift of the area of interest of the EU member states from the agricultural aspects to other, which manifested in the expense structure of the EU budget. In the 70's, the CAP expenses absorbed almost 70% of the EU budget, presently it is estimated to be less than 40%.

In recent years, the European Union has been working on many reforms in the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy, particularly focusing on the sustainable agricultural development, innovations, scientific research and dissemination of knowledge. The aspect of fairness of the support system for European farmers is very often touched. A lot of attention is devoted to transformations in small-scale farms with small area, as well as among the farms that which have to deal with difficult and mountainous conditions. Small-scale farms are very often criticized for economic ineffectiveness and low competitiveness, in many of the EU member states they make up a significant part of food producers. According to one of the definitions used in the EU, small-scale farms have area below 5 hectares. Eurostat Data [<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>] for the year 2007 indicates that in that period there were 9.65 million of small-scale farms. It is worth noting, that the data obtained from the Central

Statistical Office [www.stat.gov.pl] indicate, that in the year 2011 in Poland there were about 1550 thousand farms of average area of 9.76 hectares of arable lands, 57.73 of which used from 1 to 5 hectares of arable lands [Żmija and Czekaj 2012]. The smallest farms functioned mainly in the mountainous, southeastern parts of the country.



Source: Rytko 2012

Fig. 1. Evolution of Common Agricultural Policy

The main objective of this study was to investigate the opportunities that receive entities operating in mountainous areas, in terms of applying for funding from the Common Agricultural Policy. This article presents the experience of selected countries of the European Union in the topic of supporting mountain areas, presented were problems in the development of these areas in Poland, followed by a review of the Common Agricultural Policy instruments used towards mountain areas in Poland.

2. Research materials and methods

The main source material used in the study was the data obtained from mass statistics and literature. This data regarded the European Union, Poland and voivodeships in which mountainous areas occur.

For the purposes of data processing and research material evaluation, we used such methods as: descriptive, comparative, tabular and graphical methods, SWOT analysis, causal method as well as deductive and inductive methods.

3. Common Agricultural Policy towards mountainous regions in selected EU member states

Almost until the half of the 1990's, the Common Agricultural Policy in the EU member states was not ready to deal with the needs of different kinds of agricultural producers, including those functioning in mountainous areas. On the other hand, the general assumptions regarding adjustments of production to the needs of the buyers and supporting the agricultural income did also apply to the farms functioning in mountainous areas. As time passed, the priorities changed, especially the ones regarding these areas. An increasing number of the EU member states began to incline towards the opinion, that keeping the arable lands in mountainous areas in use is more important, than their production function [Mountain Areas in Europe 2004].

Table 1. Criteria of designating mountainous areas in selected EU member states

Country	Mountainous area [altitude]	Criteria
Austria	700	Elevation over 500 m if terrain inclination is > 20%
France	700 600 (Vosges)	Terrain inclination > 20% on at least 80% of its surface
Greece	800	Elevation over 600 m if terrain inclination is > 16%, Below 600 m if terrain inclination is
Portugal	700 (north of Tejo river) 800 (south of Tejo river)	Terrain inclination > 25%
Germany	800	Elevation over 600 m if terrain inclination is > 18%
Spain	1000	Terrain inclination > 20%, elevation not lower than 400 m

Source: authors' study based on Mountain Areas in Europe Analysis of mountain areas in EU member states, acceding and other European countries, page 150

The actions taken in selected EU member states indicate that the help for mountainous areas and the farms located there is particularly important, and this cannot be treated marginally. Moreover, the support for the producers in problematic areas is diverse, depending on the difficulties occurring in a given country, and individual countries developed their own ways for supporting agriculture in these areas. Mountainous areas have not been clearly defined for all of the EU member states. There are a few particular documents regulating the issues of mountainous areas. These are the European Council Regulation (WE) 1257/1999 and the European Council Directive (WE) 1698/2005, which indicate, that mountainous areas are "the areas, where due to disadvantageous

climate conditions, resulting from the elevation, or due to slope inclination, the usage of arable lands is difficult. Mountainous areas therefore include areas north of the 62nd parallel and specified neighboring areas" [Czapiewski et al. 2008]. Such general definition of mountainous areas allows to freely designating them in various countries. Table 1 presents general rules of classifying areas as mountainous, applied in selected EU member states.

Presently, the mountainous area development policies in EU member states differ. In Austria, Germany and Spain, it is targeted at a multisector, transversal development of these areas. In these countries, the agricultural function of mountain areas has decreased in favor of development of other branches (such as tourism), which allowed for a stronger support for infrastructure and environment. On the other hand, in France, Italy and Switzerland the mountain policy is designed to contribute to the overall development of these countries [Mountain Areas in Europe 2004].

In Germany, despite the pressure on development of economically effective, large-scale producers, the agriculture in mountain areas is strongly supported. In the 80s, higher grants were assigned to the farms located in areas of difficult conditions (which includes mountain areas), and the support was mainly for agricultural producers, and not for the development of the areas they function in. In the year 2000, in some of the federal states, higher subsidizations were assigned to the grasslands, where the slope inclination exceeded 35%, under condition, that the production would be extensive. Grants in Germany are also given to mountain and alpine grasslands as well as wet meadows.

In the years 2000 to 2006 France implemented the so called National Plan of Rural Development, in the framework of which almost 20% of the resources meant for rural areas were assigned for support of areas under disadvantageous conditions and ecological limitations. In the next financial period (2007 to 2013) France has been implementing the so called Development Program for Metropolitan France (with exclusion of Corsica), consisting of 4 axes. The second axis supports the producers in mountain areas (Action 211). Comparing the public support prepared within this program for various actions in each axis, it turns out that Action 211 consumes most of the public funds [Wieliczko 2007].

Spain also has a policy, developed especially for mountain areas. These areas are especially important, as 40% of Spain's population lives there [Musiał 2007]. The first regulations regarding support for mountain areas in Spain, on the smallest subdivision level, appeared relatively early (e.g. 1983 in Catalonia). The next regulations in terms of support for mountain areas were prepared in Spain in the year 2002, during the International Year of the Mountains [Mountain Areas in Europe 2004]. As a part of the Common Agricultural Policy in Spain, the financial support (from the state funds) for rural development was increased, including compensatory payments for the areas, where disadvantageous usage conditions occur (such areas make up about 80% of the country's area). Simultaneously, new requirements were made for the agricultural producers applying for support [Dybowski 2008].

3. Development conditions for mountain areas in Poland

Mountain areas in Poland are almost wholly covered by different environment protection regimes. They are characterized by low percentage of arable lands in the total area, nevertheless, agriculture plays an important role in keeping their environmental and cultural assets. Mountain areas make up about 5% of Poland's area [<http://ksow.pl>].

In Poland, mountain areas were designated only in rural areas, characterized by difficulties in agricultural production, resulting from disadvantageous climate and terrain shape. In Polish legislature, it is assumed that mountain areas of disadvantageous areas include communes where more than half of arable lands is located over 500 m above sea level.

Mountain areas, aside from the agricultural function serve as forests and resorts. They also have recreational and hydrological functions. They are therefore extremely important not only for the regions they are located in, but also for the whole country.

In terms of agriculture, these areas are significantly behind the times when compared to other Polish regions. They are characterized by fragmentation of agricultural structure, large workforce resources, small production capital and much lower production profitability, when compared to lowlands. This results from higher production costs in mountain areas (30 to 50% in plant production and 20 to 30% in animal production), caused by the higher machine exploitation costs, shorter time of their usage, and lower equipment efficiency in these areas [Żmija 1999]. Lower economic effectiveness of mountains farms is also a consequence of shorter growing season, low soil quality and its susceptibility to water and air erosion, as well as a high percentage of permanent non-arable lands in the total area of farms [Żmija and Czekaj 2013].

Mountain farms are agriculturally fragmented, which is reflected in the small arable land area attributable to a single mountain farm along with a significant number of agricultural lands. In voivodeships in which mountain areas occur, it is reflected in low average arable land area per one farm – e.g. in Małopolskie it equals 3.8 hectares, and in Podkarpackie 4.4 hectares [www.stat.gov.pl]. These limitations, together with high “frozen” workforce resources in these areas result in such low work efficiency. Therefore it seems, that it will not be harmless for the mountain agriculture, to move some of its workforce to other activities, and basing further development of mountain areas on agriculture can increase poverty among their population [Żmija 1999].

A significant difficulty in agricultural production in mountain areas is the natural environment protection regime, mentioned before. The common EU laws are in force here, along with additional local regulations [Kielsznia 2010].

The discussed difficulties in agricultural activity in mountain areas imply for their inhabitants to search for different ways of making a living. It results in development of other, non agricultural functions of mountain areas. The unemployed seek employment in services, crafts, or food processing. Often, they work outside of agriculture while continuing to work in agriculture. Small-scale service, processing and production facilities start to emerge providing employment for the people retreating from agricultural activity that do not want to migrate. Non-agricultural activity in mountain areas can take different forms, such as:

- services, with use of own equipment that was left after cessation of own agricultural activity,
- services, providing care for children, the elderly and disabled,
- wood processing,
- aquaculture.

Mountain areas in Poland are perfect for tourism – the wealth of nature, landscapes, many easily accessible trails, proximity of state borders, all this results in a dynamic development of activities related to handling tourism in mountain areas.

4. Common Agricultural Policy in Polish mountain areas

Unfavorable conditions for agricultural production, which occur in mountain areas, can lead the farmers to cease their activity. Abandonment of land in turn has a negative impact on the natural environment and vitality of mountain areas, but also on the whole country. Cessation of agricultural production can influence air pollution level, climate changes, soil degradation, water contamination, hydrological changes and environmental biodiversity [MacDonald et al. 2013]. This is why additional subsidizations for farmers have been prepared, encouraging them to continue their activity. The subsidizations are aimed to compensate for the higher costs of production and for the income losses due to agricultural production limitations in a given area. Higher subsidizations for mountain farms sustain the agricultural production, maintain vitality and support sustainable development in mountain areas.

An important aim of supporting mountain areas is to decrease the depopulation of these areas. It is estimated, that the farms in the European Union provide employment for about 30 million people, the next 10 million is employed in the immediate vicinity of agriculture (e.g. cooperatives, suppliers, processing, distribution). It means, that employment of every sixth citizen of the EU is significantly dependent on agricultural production [www.copa-cogeca.be].

Properly prepared support programs are the most effective method of supporting mountain areas. The programs available for mountain farm owners in Poland include:

- Operation “Support for farming in mountain areas and other areas less favored” (LFA). This support is diverse, as it distinguishes the following: mountain areas, lowland zones I and II, and areas where specific natural difficulties occur. The amount of support for each category is updated annually. In the year 2013 it equaled: 179 zloty per hectare in lowland zone I, 264 zloty per hectare in lowland zone II, 264 zloty per hectare in difficult areas and 320 zloty per hectare in mountain areas [www.arimr.gov.pl]. The amount of LFA support is also dependant on the farm’s acreage and it is not entitled for plots of more than 300 hectares which are wholly or partially outside the LFA areas.

The data published on the website of The Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture indicate that the number of applications for LFA sup-

port, including mountain areas (Table 2), This tendency does not result from lower interest in the program, but rather from the structural changes in agriculture.

- Agri-environmental Program was available for agricultural producers nationwide. However, due to the offered ways of support, this program was often used by mountain farmers (e.g. it offered support for extensive exploitation of grasslands, or for ecological farming). The funds from the “Agri-environmental Program” covered 3.756 billion PLN of obligations for the years 2007–2013 [www.arimr.gov.pl].

Table 2. Number of applications for support within Action “Support for farming in less-favored areas RDP 2007–2013”

Area	Year							Year 2007 = 100%
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Poland	756 344	755 658	751 203	734 432	728 163	730 105	729 699	-3.5%
Małopolska	57 110	56 287	55 130	51 547	50 380	50 116	50 117	-12.2%
Podkarpacie	45 916	46 445	46 527	43 493	42 556	42 543	42 421	-7.6%
Silesia	20 085	20 713	20 422	19 490	19 041	19 004	18 982	-5.5%
Świętokrzyskie	40 850	40 346	39 522	37 312	36 197	36 102	35 829	-12.3%

Source: authors' study based on the data obtained from The Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture

- Subsidization for sheep and cows, paid since the year 2010. This subsidization is available for producers, whose herd's habitat is located in eligible voivodeships. Therefore, cow subsidization is available for producers having up to 10 milk cows which are at least 3 years old and whose herd habitat is in one of the following voivodeships: Małopolskie, Silesian, Świętokrzyskie, Subcarpathian or Lublin. Sheep subsidizations are available for farmers having at least 10 sheep, which are at least 1 year old, and whose herd habitat is located in one of the following voivodeships: Małopolskie, Silesian, Świętokrzyskie, Subcarpathian or Lublin.

Support for dairy cows in 2010 and 2011 was the highest total amount transferred to the beneficiaries of the Lublin and Małopolskie voivodeships (Table 3), and for sheep for farmers who farm in the Małopolskie voivodeship. The support for sheep plays an important promotional role for mountain economy in Poland – it contributes to sustaining traditional sheep cheese production registered as Protected Names of Origin. It is stressed, that recreating the state of breeding of sheep and other herbivorous animals in mountain areas in Poland, even to the level required for sustainable production systems, will be time consuming and may require additional support for the involved producers. Support for cows allows to sustain dairy, beef and veal production in small-scale farms located in economically and environmentally sensitive areas.

- Action “Farm modernization” targeted at all agricultural producers in Poland is aimed to increase economic effectiveness by a better management of production factors, reaching for new technologies or diversification of agricultural activity.

Maximal amount of support cannot exceed 300 000 zloty. These resources are given in the form of refunds for a part of eligible costs. The eligible costs have to be greater than 20 000 zloty, 40% of which is refunded. In case of mountain areas, the refunds cover 50% of eligible costs.

Table 3. The amount of the payments made for the special support of – Campaign 2010 and 2011

Voivodeships	2010 Campaign		2011 Campaign	
	Conventional	heaps	Conventional	heaps
Dolnośląskie	6 582.17	696 220.57	4 519.79	718 431.63
Kujawsko-pomorskie	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lubelskie	37 558 607.56	0.00	40 721 220.69	0.00
Lubuskie	346.43	0.00	0.00	0.00
Łódzkie	2 740.26	0.00	5 341.57	0.00
Małopolskie	25 966 008.06	3 414 793.47	29 113 306.50	3 841 441.21
Mazowieckie	28 005.40	0.00	45 867.65	0.00
Opolskie	3 117.87	126 668.36	4 108.90	148 482.68
Podkarpackie	19 289 811.89	1 028 141.46	21 132 079.98	1 069 264.29
Podlaskie	3 464.30	0.00	4 108.90	0.00
Pomorskie	1 039.29	0.00	410.89	0.00
Śląskie	8 727 596.33	517 804.58	9 634 192.32	561 566.85
Świętokrzyskie	19 343 959.18	0.00	21 362 756.77	0.00
Warmińsko-mazurskie	1 385.72	0.00	1 232.67	0.00
Wielkopolskie	692.86	0.00	3 287.12	0.00
Zachodniopomorskie	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	110 933 357.32	5 783 628.44	122 032 442.75	6 339 186.66

Source: authors' study based on the data obtained from The Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture. Data acquired on 31 July 2013

Financial support for mountain areas is assigned also for non-agricultural activity or for their startup:

- Action “Diversification towards non-agricultural activity”. The resources of this program could be used for a business startup in the fields of: services for farms, forestry, society, wholesale and retail, craft or handicraft, tourism, recreation, sport, construction and infrastructure, transportation, utilities, processing of agricultural products or edible forest products, storage of goods, obtaining energy resources from biomass, accounting, counseling or IT. Amount of support for which the beneficiary could apply was no more than 500 000 zloty, and the refund level could not exceed 50% of investment expenses.

- Action “Creation and development of microenterprises” aimed to help individuals running or starting-up a business in rural areas. The fields eligible for this support include: services for farms or forestry, social services, wholesale and retail, craft or handicraft, construction and infrastructure, tourism, sport, recreation, leisure, transportation, utilities, storage of goods, obtaining energy resources from biomass, except for substances covered by the 1st annex to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, accounting, counseling and IT.
- Action “Increasing the added value to agricultural and forestry production” targeted at small and medium processing companies that employ less than 750 employees or whose annual income does not exceed 200 million euro. Such companies can apply for partial refunds of modernization related costs, under the condition that the money will be spent on expenses related to food processing, storage or wholesale of agricultural products.

5. Opportunities and threats for development of mountain areas in Poland

Mountain areas are important not only for the country but internationally. Due to their functions they require special treatment. Development of mountain areas is determined by internal economic conditions, which either stimulate it or limit it. In order to determine the strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats for mountain area development in Poland, a SWOT analysis was performed.

5.1. Strengths

- clean natural environment,
- high touristic attractiveness of the area, preservation of most of the protected objects and perception of mountain areas as protected areas,
- diverse landscape and natural environment features,
- possibility of development of laborious production (e.g. berry plants, herb packaging, dairy processing), which on the one hand is highly profitable and on the other hand allows to manage excess workforce,
- financial support for agricultural producers in mountains areas,
- high demographic potential,
- farming traditions deeply rooted in the mentality of the mountain population, commitment to the “patrimony”, resistance and reluctance to fallow the land, or to the abandonment of land,
- maintenance and development of livestock, especially dairy cattle and sheep,
- advantageous location in the road network,
- rich historic and cultural heritage, strong feeling of local identity.

5.2. Weaknesses

- low integration of agriculture with its surroundings,
- high fragmentation of farm structure,
- disadvantageous land layout,
- need to incur higher costs per unit of production compared to the lowlands,
- small scale of production,
- low income of mountainous areas residents, which preclude or discourage the adoption of additional forms of activity,
- lack of strong cooperation between farmers,
- low education level and low professional qualifications of the rural population,
- technical condition, poor capacity and quality of roads,
- limited space for investments,
- proximity of urbanized areas, which may negatively impact the unique character of mountain areas,
- lack of properly managed marketing actions.

5.3. Opportunities

- resources obtained from national support funds and EU funds, especially those assigned for investments in the proximity of protected areas, meant to maintain the proper condition of protected objects,
- alternative possibilities of gaining agricultural income, e.g. development of agri-tourism,
- agricultural traditions, strong attachment to heritage, resistance and aversion towards abandoning of lands, all of these deeply rooted in the mentality of mountain population,
- formation of small food and agricultural processing facilities, including dairies, tanneries and fruit and vegetable processing facilities, that are environment friendly, and whose products are characterized by special, high quality,
- further development of tourism,
- technical infrastructure development.

5.4. Threats

- limitations related to natural conditions,
- limitations for agricultural production, resulting from the law that is in force in areas, where nature is under special protection,
- outdated technical infrastructure of villages,

- high unemployment level, among people whose education level is usually low,
- limited options for alternative forms of activities.

6. Conclusions

Mountain areas, due to their characteristics should be managed in a way that would grant reasonable income for the local population, which will allow to maintain and develop traditions as well as to protect the natural environment and cultural landscape. It should be kept in mind that mountain areas and any activities related to their protection are a part of national heritage protection policy.

Assuring a stable development for mountain areas requires the function of agricultural production, ensuring proper economic conditions for the population of rural areas, which is creating conditions that would enable them to earn reasonable income (both in agriculture and outside). The aforementioned aspects of agricultural activity in mountain areas should be consistent with the natural environment protection demands, and this can be accomplished by raising social awareness of the importance of mountain areas.

Basing the mountain area development only on agriculture, under current conditions, would lead to pauperization of local population. In order to prevent this process it is necessary to provide direct support for agriculture in these areas and to develop their non-agricultural functions. It is also necessary to enrich the mountain rural areas by creating cultural and natural landscape diversity. Although some contradictions may occur between the objectives of protection of natural environment and the functioning of farms, it seems that they are possible to overcome, as this kind of cooperation may be very beneficial for the mountain population.

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