Towards the creation of a global mountain label
20-21 May 2015 - Rome, FAO HQ

Executive summary

The *Climate Change and Mountain Forests* project, funded by the Government of Italy in the framework of the Mountain Partnership, organized with the support of the MPS a workshop to discuss the creation of a global labelling scheme for mountain goods and services. The discussion was supported by the Rural Infrastructures and Agroindustries Division (AGS) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

A number of representatives of governments and non-governmental organizations, already working on this issue or with a high potential or interest in this activity, were invited. Participants discussed the models that could be adopted for the labelling scheme and focused on issues such as: label types (product vs. territory), core values to promote (the combination of values that makes mountain products unique), governance and certification mechanisms and the role of the MPS.

A background research developed by AGS with support from an external consultant reviewed and presented different types of labeling systems. Most participants concurred that a territorial label (i.e. a label granted for mountain areas) administrated by a private (non-governmental) entity could be more suitable as it would allow for:
a) sufficient flexibility, making the label available for use by small local producers, and
b) the inclusion of both goods and services under the umbrella of a global mountain label.
The project coordinator invited the MPS to further investigate such option and to coordinate the overall label creation process.

Participants stressed that, as mountain regions are characterized by ancient and deeply rooted local cultures and traditions, the message conveyed by the label could be adapted to allow for customization and valorisation of local identities.

Compliance of the scheme with all international treaties, laws and regulations is an essential and mandatory requirement, which will be ensured through the assistance of the FAO Legal Office.

The workshop, of a technical/consultative nature, has attracted the interest of a number of members sufficient to suggest that a new area of work could be developed in the framework of the activities of the MP dedicated to this theme. To this end, and on request of the Italian project, a taskforce could be established by the MPS to develop the overall process and the project roadmap.

The workshop report and all power point presentations will be shared on the MP website with all members, in order to collect applications from those interested in participating in the project and its task force. The outcomes of the project are to be considered on a voluntary basis, not binding on members who do not wish to participate.

The role of the task force will be to:
− give feedback on the workplan proposed by MPS;
− support the implementation of the field analysis at national level and in selected local areas in collaboration with MPS members – including collecting information on local legislations/certification schemes;
− establish a relationship with local authorities/institutions, even at the informal level;
− establish links with local actors (both producers/consumers and other buyers); and
− assist at national and local level in awareness raising before and during the process.

The MPS will define the roles and responsibilities of the task force, seek and share advice from the FAO legal office, define the resources available for each step and select the sites for field research and pilot implementation. When possible, the planned activities will rely upon the support of the concerned MP members and local actors.

Multiple locations will be identified for field research in collaboration with MP members, while pilot implementation will start in the most promising two/three sites.

The project will run for two years, until March 2017, when lessons learned will be disseminated and the possible scaling up of the project evaluated (see workplan in Annex 2).

Conclusions and next steps:

On request of and in close collaboration with the Italian project the MPS will be responsible for:

- Providing a summary of meeting;
- Establishing a geographically balanced task force;
- Providing a draft of tasks and responsibilities for the task force;
- Clarifying its own role and responsibilities;
- Seeking and sharing advice of FAO legal office;
- Defining the resources available for each step;
- Selecting the sites for field research and pilot implementation.

The task force will closely collaborate with the MPS and in particular work on:

- Carrying on an awareness raising campaign before, during and after the process;
- Sharing global guidelines and current good practices;
- Providing feedback on the workplan;
- Starting the relationship with local authorities/institutions, even at informal level;
- Collecting information on local legislations;
- Defining criteria for the identification of pilot sites.
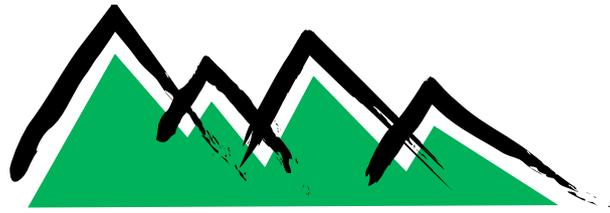
Towards the creation of a global mountain label

Opening
Opening remarks - Thomas Hofer (FAO, MPS coordinator) and Giorgio Grussu (FAO, project coordinator)
SEE PRESENTATION

Introduction and remarks from participants (tour de table)

SESSION 1: SETTING THE STAGE
The Mountain Partnership and role of mountain products in improving mountain livelihoods
Rosalaura Romeo (MPS-FAO) talked about the importance of mountains worldwide. Mountains cover 22% of the earth's surface and thus are an important part of the global ecosystem. 14% of the global population lives in mountains and they are among the most vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity, a condition that has even worsened due to global changes including climate change. Mountain offer to all humankinds goods and services such as biodiversity, food, energy and water. 60 to 80% of freshwater comes form the mountains.
The workshop responds to a request by MP members to the Secretariat, to develop a project component to promote mountain economy and products. Mountain peoples need to have a fair gain from their produce. The question is how can mountain communities get fair compensation for their work?
SEE PRESENTATION

Labels, voluntary standards and certifications: options and issues
Emilie Vandecandelaere (FAO Agribusiness economist, AGS/TCI) described the different technical issues involved with the establishment of the label and related standards, starting from the principles and the conditions and key success factors for their setting up and implementation, and introduce the types of approach that would be presented during the workshop as well as the questions to be discussed in the work group. A label is associated to certain standard, and in the case of mountain labelling, the aim is to inform consumer (B2C, business to consumer) about the specific quality of the product (or service) and through a voluntary approach (not compulsory). Such a label should be considered as a means of communication to the consumer: it needs to be meaningful and credible, i.e. a guarantee system has to be set up to ensure product to be conform to the "promise" provided by the label. In this case, and if associated to an adequate marketing strategy and producers coordination, it will bring benefits to the producers. The labelling system has to respect the national and international rules in force, especially related to trade.

The key factors for a label to be successful are: coordination along the value chain and between public-private sectors, clear identification of the market, and consumer recognition.

When establishing a voluntary labelling system, it is important to consider the scope (label for mountain area or label for mountain product?), the value(s) signalled/promoted by the label (and to be supported by the standard requirements), the type of regulation (public or private), and the type of guarantee system (first, second, third party certification).

The examples presented during the workshop will allow illustrating these different elements. In conclusion, and towards the establishment of the label, it is important to bear in mind three elements:

i)   a right balance to find between inclusion (low requirements for a maximum of farmers, especially with less capacity) and exclusion (the differentiation strategy is based on an exclusion principle: higher quality requirements imply higher differentiation);

ii) the need for a stepwise approach (for the setting up, different steps to go deeper in the definition and testing of the model; and for the implementation, consider first a light system that may become more sophisticated over time);

iii) such labelling strategy is based on collective action, it is not only about products or services, but more importantly about people, and social construction takes time.

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Thereafter this presentation, the question was raised on which type of consumer the mountain label is intended to attract, whether local or foreign. In addition, it was specified that the label should also serve as a means to protect the producer and not only benefit the consumer.

SESSION 2: EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

GIAHS

Mary Jane de la Cruz (FAO GIAHS) presented the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). GIAHS was introduced in 2002 and since then the features to identify an agricultural heritage site have been conceptualized.

These systems are implemented at global level through identification, selection and recognition of GIAHS, at national level through capacity building and at local level through the empowerment of local communities and technical assistance. GIAHS has 32 sites in 14 countries. "Consumers are becoming more and more conscious of the food they are eating" said Mary Jane de la Cruz. This system also fights to conserve and protect special landscapes. The GIAHS label has to follow the regulations set by the country. Successful implementations include those in Algeria where younger people have remained in the rural areas and in China where workers have started returning from the urban areas to the rural ones. It is a complicated process but worth pursuing.

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Questions were raised over the efficiency of the GIAHS system with regards to the benefits of the people. However, this system allows for the use of the land by the people in a sustainable and traditional way. Furthermore, various questions were posed on how this labelling is done.

Grassroots Development Foundation

Anita Paul (Grassroots Development Foundation) presented the organization's work in Central and Western Himalaya. In this area mountain enterprises are small scale, there is a lack of formal employment and adequate social protection. Innovative micro-enterprises are necessary in order to address this situation. There is a need to define entrepreneurship within the mountain context. Anita and Kalyan Paul have formed a Producers Company called UMANG, led by people for people. Thanks to the work of mountain women, the company produces crafts and is also trying to link traditional crops with markets by implementing cash crops such as strawberries and chamomile tea for the benefit of the producers.

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Participants were interested in knowing about the logo and the interaction between the producers. Producers decide on the price of the products and thus, the role of the NGO Grassroots Development Foundation is also capacity building.

Euromontana

Andreja Borec (Euromontana) presented the example of Euromontana. The organization aims to engage in helping mountain peoples overcome their challenges lobbying at political and policy level - mainly European, sharing information about European Union (EU) policy, exchanging experiences and knowledge though conventions, developing and managing projects and expertise.

Their work on a regulation for mountain products has started 15 years ago. First was the launch of the European charter of mountain products, which was then supported by the European Parliament. After the charter was launched, negotiation and lobbying with the European Commission started for protecting the term "mountain quality". The third step was a study on how the food chain should work with mountain products. Finally, in 2012 the European Parliament has officially approved a new regulation that specifies the conditions of use of the optional quality term 'mountain product'.

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According to Alfredo Guillet this label (at EU level) is the most similar to the one that would be created by the Mountain Partnership and its members (at global level) even though Euromontana had to deal with the European Union institutions, which is an extremely difficult job.

Afternoon

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION 3

Olivier Beucherie (FAO consultant) described two approaches of labelling schemes – labelling of products or of territories - and how the strategy should change according to the selected option.

The "product label approach" has as the main advantage that all products must respect exactly the same criteria, so it is straight for consumers to understand it. The main constraint is that criteria may be strict and thus can be difficult to adapt the specification to the realities of each territory or each product category.

The "territory label approach" permits to identify, and so to promote, the whole area, with all its components, and includes both goods and services. The main constraint is to propose

a homogenous level of quality. It can be associated to additional specification for categories of products and services in order for them to bear the label, in this case it is important to ensure consistent specifications for all the products of each area.
Other questions to be discussed during the wok group are:
- how to delimitate mountain area at global level?
- what are the key values of the product? What is the message the label will convey?

SESSION 3: FACILITATED GROUP WORKSHOP:
WHAT TYPE OF MOUNTAIN LABELLING APPROACH?

Exploring the different options and key values
Brainstorming on:
− product versus territorial approach
− key values

Participants organized in two groups proposed many qualities and values embedded in mountain products (and services), and covering many aspects (image, intrinsic quality, impacts…). It was highlighted the fact that such values would concern two important elements:
− the communication: how they are conveyed to consumers;
− the specifications: how they are translated into requirements in the standard and be certified (or at least controlled) for the credibility of the system.

In addition, it was mentioned in echo to the introductive presentation in the morning, that the more requirements are considered, the higher is the differentiation but also the possible exclusion, and a right balance has to be found.

At the end of the session it was suggested to adopt a territorial approach and main key values to promote associated to mountain goods and services were identified (Annex 1).

Discussion and wrap up of the first day
Many qualities of a mountain product were identified (see annex 1, and their categorization under 6 categories) and participants agreed on recommending the adoption of a territorial label approach (a label for mountain areas) as it will allow also for the inclusion of both goods and services coming from the mountains, and as it could be associated to additional specifications for labelling of products and services coming from the labelled area. The group work represents just a preliminary step towards the definition of relevant values to be promoted and criteria for the standard, showing a certain convergence and multiplicity of values combined by mountain area/product/services.

SESSION 4: EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND GOVERNANCE

Federal Office for Agriculture, Switzerland
Paolo De Giorgi (Federal Office for Agriculture, FOAG, Switzerland) presented the Swiss regulatory framework for mountains. In Switzerland the promotion of mountain products is regulated by the Federal constitution and the Agricultural law. The Federal Council defines official labels, whose utilization is on a voluntary base. The terms «Mountain» and «Alp» (or "high Pasture") can be used only when legal requirements are fulfilled, including the certification by a third part.
A more recent regulation also defines the use of related official logos (owned by FOAG). The logos for Alp products and Mountain products look similar, with different colour and text. This legislation only covers food products.
SEE PRESENTATION

Slow Food
Laura Ciacci (Slow Food International, SFI Foundation for Biodiversity). Slow Food works on the promotion of products that are "good, clean and fair". The three elements are meant to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability at the same time. The Slow Food certification is called "Presidia" and targets small-scale sustainable producers. The Presidia support quality production at risk of extinction, protect unique ecosystems and save local varieties. Currently, 450 Presidia have been established, with 13.000 producers. The idea of Presidia is to promote a new type of agriculture, that sustains quality, animal welfare, sustainability, health and customers pleasure. "The aim is to give food the right recognition" said Laura Ciacci.
In order to guarantee the correct functioning of this system, Slow Food helps farmers to create associations and elaborate a production protocol. A third party certification is not required, as it is considered too expensive and not necessary. Self-certification and annual controls are coordinated and organized by SFI in collaboration with local or national committees. Presidia can be cancelled if the do not respect the protocol.
An innovative aspect of the Slow Food labelling is the development of a product narrative label that gives the consumer a more complete and transparent information on each specific Presidia. The narrative label does not replace any legal label but it is an important part to valorise the mountain product because it adds an emotional element to the identification of the product. Economic impact of Presidia: a higher, yet sustainable production (in some cases, up to +900%); higher market price (up to +250%).
SEE PRESENTATION

SESSION 5: FACILITATED GROUP WORKSHOP: EXPLORING THE DIFFERENT GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL OPTIONS
Olivier Beucherie (FAO consultant) explained the differences between two different approaches for the labelling scheme and role of MPS:
− a global standard and scheme for the Mountain label developed by MPS and implemented locally;
− or a set of recommendations/guidelines provided by MPS for the establishment of mountain label at local level.
The first is to be used by local stakeholders in compliance with the specifications (requirements) which are global and defined in the centralized system. In this case, the

central body (MPS) being the owner of the label should ensure, in coordination with the partners, the compliance in the use of the label (the requirements becoming compulsory when the user decide to engage the voluntary approach to use the label).

The second are guidelines to stakeholders for the development of detailed specifications for the use of a customized label at local level. In this case, being guidelines, the compliance to the recommended specifications is not compulsory and this risk is to have a situation of various types of labels and related standards.

The approach to be developed may be a combination among these two extreme positions.

Brainstorming on:
-legal options
-strengths and weaknesses of approaches
-regional issues and objectives
-role of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat

The expert suggested the option to create a global label overseen by the Mountain Partnership (MP) under which each mountain territory, bio-region, country, decides on its own specificities according to local needs and requirements. A system has to be designed to ensure the quality of the product/service, i.e. the compliance to the standard (public authority and/or private certification system).

The role of MPS and local/national stakeholders has been roughly discussed and the first orientations below have been shared.

The MP Secretariat role would be to:
• design the minimum standard for mountain areas (and recommendations for additional product/services specifications) and a roadmap for guaranteeing the system;
• set guidelines for local/national authorities and civil society, members of the MP or not;
• approve the customized local labelling system proposed by members for the use of the global mountain label for mountain areas – and when it is the case the additional specifications for the product/services located in the area;
• promote the label and disseminate clear messages/terminology;
• monitor the use of the label at global level and inform MPS members.

Instead the role of the regional/local actor would be to:
• specify the labelling system at local level on the basis of the common standard for mountain area (and additional specification for product/service when it is the case);
• request authorization for using the label for the mountain area, based on the customized labelling system;
• ensure the conformity of mountain area and products/services bearing the label to the common and customized standard (organize the certification system);
• monitor the use of the label and inform MPS on the results.

The importance of preserving the local identity was underlined as well as the benefit that adding a narrative label would offer. Legal implications were carefully considered and whatever the final scheme will be, it will need to be compliant with all international laws,

treaties and regulations; thus the proposed framework will be assessed and validated by the FAO legal office.

Possible logos were presented (Annex 3) as well as a proposed timetable for implementation (Annex 2).

Annex 1 – Values associated to mountain goods and services

EQUITABLE	SUSTAINABLE	PURE	QUALITY	TRADITIONAL WISDOM & PRACTICE	CUSTODIANS OF BIOCULTURAL HERITAGE
Fair price	Balance between quality and quantity	Natural, pure, no GMOs	Health (food safety)	Respect tradition of innovation of mountains	Biodiversity (mountain production system preserve traditional complex system based on local race and variety and preservation of local ecosystem, producing more tasty food!)
Help economic actors to live and stay	Sustainability of cultivation of farmers techniques	Pure (as mountain environment if highly natural and green and clean)	Good health	Terroir (relationship between man/women territory and tradition)	Correlation with preservation of ecosystem services
	Sustainable	Purity (nature first!)	High quality (is related to the raw materials or ingredients produced in pristine mountain environments)	Traditional (as knowledge on how to produce the products has been developed during decades)	Nature, communities
	Sustainable products	Pure & safe	Quality	Safe heritage, preserve people and natural values	Protection of the landscape
			Food quality	Traditional production systems, differentiate products from one another	Definition of identity
				Culture, tradition	Unique (otherwise not unique to mountain) to mountains pool of values social, cultural, environmental, quality, diversity
				Tradition	Origin (coming from a specific and defined area)
				Knowledge	Ownership
					Family farming
					Live in community
					Evaluation of hard work of mountain people

Annex 2 – Workplan and timeframe

Period	Objective	Activity	Output
April – Aug 2015	Review of existing practices	*MPS*	Report
May 2015	Discuss issues and options	Workshop	First orientations about the approach
June- Sept 2015	Discussion about workshop output and options taken	*Task force*	Final agreement about the general approach and MPS role
Sept 2015- Jan 2016	Identify values/specifications and institutional frame most adapted in local context	Field research	Adequate labelling scheme defined in some specific mountain areas
Feb-April 2016	Fine-tune the global scheme based on the local/national schemes experience	*Task force* Validation workshop(s)	Global labelling scheme defined (governance and specification)
Mar 2016- Mar 2017	Test the global-pilot schemes	Pilot implementation *(local and MPS)*	Lessons learnt from the pilots
Mar 2017-…	Dissemination of lessons learnt	Publication	Scaling up

Annex 3 – draft logos

Wording still needs to be defined