



Sustainable Agriculture
and Rural Development
MOUNTAIN POLICY PROJECT



CIHEAM
IAM BARI

SARD-M Policy Assessments in the Mediterranean Region

The overall situation in the **South and East Mediterranean rural areas** is characterized by:

- **Accelerated growth of the rural population** over the past ten years;
- **Increased pressure on natural resources** through significant **increases in the number of farms and the area of cultivated and grazing land** and a corresponding **decrease in the area of forest**;
- **Deterioration of the environment**, to be seen in the dynamics of diminishing pasture areas, stagnating or falling yields of rain-fed crops as more and more marginal land is farmed;
- **Deterioration in living conditions and standards**, and **increasing of poverty**.

In contrast with many other regions in the world, the rural population continues to grow at a steady rate (around 1.5 % per year). The area farmed per inhabitant has fallen sharply in the past thirty years, as has the area farmed per farmer/agricultural worker.

These problems are **particularly acute in the mountain areas**, where **40-60% of the population is vulnerable to food insecurity**. Difficulties exist for the productivity and maintenance of natural resources; access and relative isolation of many areas, the degree they are integrated into national societies and economies. Lack of crop diversity and limited access to current information and knowledge about good nutrition and health care practices expose mountain people to high rates of malnutrition and disease. Attitudes and beliefs lead also people to maintain land-use practices that are no longer suitable to evolving conditions in mountain environments. In many places, **traditional livelihood strategies are no longer sustainable** because of mounting demographic pressure, rapid deforestation, erosion and loss of soil quality. Conflict over control of increasingly scarce resources has become frequent.

Morocco and Lebanon

▪ Morocco

Mountains cover 26% of the national territory (190 000 km²) and are home to about 30% of the population (over 8 million), with a higher population density than the national average (40/km² compared with 37). Over half the *douars* (villages) are in the mountains together with 75 urban centres (61% of the national total). The mountainous lands are the country main water reservoir, supplying 70% of the surface water resources.

The Moroccan mountains are **an economic heritage of great potential** even though the arable land area is small. Local crop varieties grown on communal land, and handicrafts and tourism could be major sources of revenue in the future. The mountain lands offer a **rich variety of natural landscapes or landscapes fashioned by agriculture**. They also constitute a **historical and cultural heritage**: mountains have been the centre of power in various periods of history, while in other periods they have served as a bastion of robust resistance. The mountains are also characterised by **multiple identities** expressed in the ways the natural resources are used (water, forests, rangelands, farmlands), and the languages and different forms of cultural expression (architecture, handicrafts, arts, oral literature, celebrations and games), etc.



Despite the importance of the mountains and their inhabitants, these essential components of the national territory were marginalised. The awareness of the need for comprehensive development incorporating the fragile areas, which includes mountains, only emerged at the end of the last century.

Morocco does not have a mountain policy as such, and the attempts that have been made to draft one have not yet been implemented. Conversely, it does have agricultural and rural development policies. While applying to the whole of the country, some of them have specific components including mountain areas, and others apply indifferently to all areas without any specific distinctions. In both these cases, there is an intention to integrate the environmental, economic and social dimensions, consistently with the spirit of the Rio Earth Summit and Agenda 21, and their current extensions.

▪ Lebanon

Lebanon covers a total of 10,452 km² with a highly urbanized coastal strip and most of the rural areas situated in the mountains. Since the end of the war in 1990, Lebanon's main challenge has been to rebuild its economy. Most of the agriculture and all of the forestry is concentrated in mountain areas and in the Beqaa Valley. Farmers in rural and mountain areas need capacity-building to upgrade their farming practices to develop new practices, such as organic farming practices that are more economically and environmentally sustainable.

The **consequences of desertification** are extremely serious and often dramatic to the poor, especially in mountain areas. The most generally widespread survival strategies is to **intensify exploitation** of the most readily available natural resources. The second strategy is **increasing rural migration**: this may simply involve men and young people leaving for a seasonal or longer-term job in other country areas or going to other countries; or a more severe migration possibly leading to a population exodus. These survival strategies are often accompanied by breakdowns in the integrity of communities and sometimes families.

Several line-ministries and public bodies are contributing to rural development, natural resources conservation and combating land degradation through proposing and implementing the necessary strategies, policies, programmes and specific projects within the framework of sustainable development. Although Lebanon is fulfilling its commitments towards the international conventions and agreements, there is yet **no Sustainable Development Strategy**. There are on-going efforts at different levels and in different ministries, but no mechanism has yet been created. **Even without a specific focus on mountains**, the Government and its bodies are **implementing policies and processes** aiming at the development of mountain areas. In addition to the recently finalized Agricultural Strategy, the Ministry of Agriculture is developing laws, legislation and projects aiming at the development of the agricultural sector; the food industries; the conservation, promotion and management of the forest and tree resources.

Diverse entry points of Mediterranean policy assessments

In **Morocco**, the aim was to understand how the national policy for **watershed management** is matching SARD principles through the example of the **Lakhdar wadi watershed management pilot Project**. In **Lebanon**, the implementation of pilot activities for initiating **Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD)** processes in mountain territories, in the framework of the forthcoming new Lebanese Agricultural Strategy, was assessed.

Recommendations of the Project Regional Workshop

The important suggestions that found frequent mention in the assessments and during the SARD-M Project Regional Workshop involving representatives of government and civil society from the Maghreb and South East Europe countries are listed below.

Policies

1. Policy formulation should take into consideration the **cultural heritage** of mountain communities and their wealth of knowledge in order to **valorise mountain specificities** that contribute to improving mountain livelihoods in a sustainable way.
2. Policies should target issues related to **mountain communities' vulnerability** due to their sensitivity to stress, shocks and economic negative trends.

3. Policies should support the strengthening of the linkages that **connect uplands to lowlands** and well serviced areas.
4. Policies addressing and/or impacting mountain areas should promote **diversification of economic activities** considering the diverse nature of mountain livelihoods.
5. Diversification of mountain economic activities should be analyzed and promoted with a view to understand how to **reduce migration flows and encourage mountain populations not to abandon their households**.
6. Policies should support the establishment of the process for the **recognition of the quality** related to mountain typical products, in order to better valorise the products potentialities by the creation of specific labels and contribute to enhance the income level of mountain populations.
7. In order to make resources accessible, minimizing geographical and logistic constraints, policies should allocate adequate financial resources for and **promote the building of infrastructures** such as roads, pipeline systems, telephone lines, electricity, etc.).
8. In order to guarantee the implementation of policies targeting mountain regions, clear **implementation procedures and action plans should be integrated into the legislative act without any delay**.

Institutions

9. **Transnational cooperation** should be encouraged and supported by the identification of common objectives aiming at improving mountain livelihoods.
10. Mountains are impacted by several sectoral policies and, in some cases (Tunisia) are addressed by specific policies. **Coordination among the different levels of political actions** should be ensured in order to achieve coherence and efficiency in the varied range of interventions targeting mountains.
11. In order to reduce the gap between the adoption and the implementation of **decentralization and local development strategies**, a **clear definition of the linkages between territories and local institutions** should be ensured.
12. Mechanisms for **empowering local administrations** should be put in place and **competencies to master participatory approaches** involving stakeholders at different levels should be devised.
13. **Capacity building** should be promoted within the **local institutions** aiming at providing the competencies necessary to set up appropriate and operational mechanisms that can support participatory approaches within the policy process, from formulation to monitoring and evaluation.
14. National Agricultural Research and Extension Services (**NARES**) should underpin their strategies with a participatory and territorial approach in order to **integrate mountain territorial specificities and people livelihoods** in their activities. For example, the Macedonian Agricultural Advisory Services Programme should be investigated to evaluate the possibility of similar developments in other mountain contexts.

Processes

15. Cooperation should be **promoted through regular meetings and workshops** where experiences and best practices can be shared and common interventions targeting mountain areas can be defined.
16. **Communication** among decision-makers should play a major role in **facilitating coordination** among the different levels of political actions. Communications facilities (i.e. electronic platform that would strengthen the linkages among the stakeholders and including tools for knowledge sharing and retrieval) should allow information, experiences, best practices sharing and promote dialogue at different levels.
17. Mechanisms for **dissemination of mountain-related knowledge**, including an institutional map of the stakeholders concerned should be activated in order to raise civil society's awareness on mountains.
18. In Algeria, SARD-related strategies and mechanisms impacting mountain territories are in place and their functioning should thus be investigated to understand the possibility of **transferring or adapting them to other contexts**.



FAO/23783/G. Diana



FAO/13982/J. Isaac



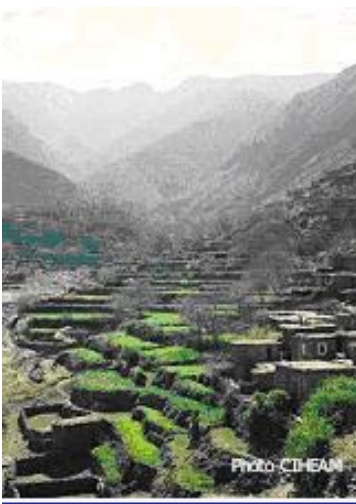
FAO/22938/J. Micaud

19. Since policies specifically addressing mountains are showing positive impacts on territories concerned (such as the case of Tunisia), **studies and surveys in the socio-economic and environmental domains** should be promoted and implemented in order to provide a framework for policy-makers to develop targeted policies that focus on the mountain livelihoods and natural resources conservation.
20. Policy makers should promote case studies in mountain regions for the **assessment of impacts of policies and for adjusting policy efforts**.
21. **Conventions**, which emerged as a requirement **for specific areas** like the Atlas, should be promoted in the wake of the one established in the Balkan region.
22. Further steps of investigation on the **reasons** why **policy implementation mechanisms** do not work, even if the policy preparation has been accomplished, are recommended.

Proposals for follow-up activities at the Mediterranean region level

1. Promote mechanisms for the establishment of specific **Regional Conventions** for SARD in mountain areas, such as in the Atlas region, and to connect to other evolving SARD processes, such as in the South East mountain region.
2. Support **networking mechanisms** among existing mountain conventions at the level of Mediterranean countries for the exchange of experiences and mutual support. This could also lead to the promotion of a Mediterranean strategy for the development of the mountain areas.
3. Support the networking of key country stakeholders in order to promote the implementation of **case studies** focused on the analysis of policy processes. This is an important step to acquire lessons for SARD in mountain areas (e.g. the Sustainable Rural Development Strategy of Algeria, the Macedonian Agricultural Advisory Program, or others).
4. Support the establishment of a Mediterranean multi-stakeholder working group to transform the lessons learned and recommendations raised in the Mediterranean into an **action plan** to be discussed during a second regional workshop to be held in the South East Europe mountain area.
5. Development of a network and organization of workshops to promote **coordination and exchange of experiences among existing projects** related to SARD in mountain areas.
6. Prepare **training programmes** for institutional strengthening on SARD implementation in mountain areas. Training packages targeting trainers and concerning the assessment of SARD policy processes in mountain areas should be prepared in order to enable country and local mechanisms to gather information useful to underpin policy processes (formulation, monitoring and evaluation, implementation).
7. Creation of a **knowledge hub**, accessible to all the stakeholders, for collection of case studies, projects in mountains, significant stories, research findings and including a database in partnership with different international organizations, whose aim would be to share and develop knowledge and experiences, disseminate information, promote new interventions specifically targeting mountain areas.
8. Support to **country mechanisms** that would facilitate the stakeholders' access to information/experiences produced by the SARD-M project and that would favour the stakeholders networking at all levels and the promotion of concerted activities. These activities could start in Morocco and Lebanon where two case studies have been already implemented.

Contact Information



▲ Regional focal point

Contact: Annarita Antonelli
Address:
 CIHEAM / IAM-Bari
 Via Ceglie 9
 70010 Valenzano,
 Bari, Italy

Phone: (+39) 080 460-6318
Fax: (+39) 080 460-6206
E-Mail: annarita@iamb.it
Website: www.iamb.it

▲ SARD-M Team

Contact: Jean Gault
Address:
 Economic and Social Development
 Department
 Food and Agriculture Organization of
 the United Nations (FAO)
 Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
 00153 Rome, Italy

Phone: (+39) 06 570-54204
Fax: (+39) 06 570-52004
E-Mail: jean.gault@fao.org
Website: www.fao.org/sard/sard-m