

Supporting change for mountain people's livelihoods



FAO/23396/A. Mihich



Project addresses policy issues, bolsters institutions

In the world's mountain regions, 80 percent of the population live below the poverty line and 270 million people lack food security. An innovative new project on mountain policy is working to improve this unacceptable situation.

Under the auspices of FAO, local, national and international groups are joining forces to work for sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountain regions. The project goes to the heart of public policy. What is working in favour of mountain people and what is not? But beyond analysis, the project will build the capacity of local institutions and actors, the critical first step towards accelerating sustainable development of such regions.

International awareness of the need for a global drive to improve the lot of mountain people first was stirred at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. The International Year of Mountains followed in 2002, as did the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Now it is time to foster action.

Did you know?

- ▶ Some 720 million people, 12 percent of the world's population, live in mountain regions.
- ▶ Mountains cover 22 percent of global land surface.
- ▶ Eighty percent of the world's mountain people live below the poverty line.
- ▶ Mountain areas provide freshwater to half of the world's population.
- ▶ As much as 78 percent of the world's mountain area is unsuitable for growing crops.
- ▶ In Ethiopia, about half of mountain people are particularly isolated living more than 5 kilometres from roads, in Afghanistan and China, one third and in Peru, one fifth.





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Mountain regions: building on potential

Mountain people are more exposed to poverty, hunger, social or political marginalization and conflicts and are generally behind in development. On the other hand, mountain areas have significant potential and provide a wide range of goods and services to the rest of society.

These were the observations of an international conference on sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountain regions organized by the Swiss Government in collaboration with FAO at Adelboden, Switzerland in June 2002.

The conference provided the impetus and means to begin formulating the Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions, also known as Mountain Policy Project or SARD-M Project.

Under the FAO umbrella, leading civil society groups, international organizations and governments that had shown a commitment to improving mountain conditions, formulated and in 2005 launched the project, which will run until 2008. Activities will take place all over the world at country level, marshalling the all-important good will, skills and knowledge of people and organizations. The SARD-M project will build on existing structures, networks, projects and programmes, and will create a network of regional focal points to manage the project on the ground.

Based on the principles of the Adelboden Declaration, the project will:

- ▶ **Raise public understanding** about mountain ecosystems and the need for incisive sustainable development policies;
- ▶ **Build the capacity** of governments and other stakeholders with local power bases to promote SARD mountain-relevant policies and develop ways of analysing strengths and weaknesses of existing mountain policies;
- ▶ **Support the implementation** of SARD policies by advocacy work, regional and inter-regional workshops and exchange of experiences.

The project contributes to the attainment of the first Millennium Development Goal, to cut extreme poverty and hunger in the world by half by 2015, and the eighth, creating a global partnership for development.

Examples of policy changes that could help mountain people

A recent case study carried out in Honduras by the Evolution of Farming Systems for SARD Project identified some of the policies that could be fostered by the Mountain Policy Project for achieving sustainable development in mountain areas:

- ▶ **Improvement of water access and management, soil fertility management and promotion of high-value commodities and off-farm activities;**
- ▶ **Promotion of financial services that are more accessible to mountain people, such as appropriate rural finance instruments, pooled risk and reduced intermediaries' costs;**
- ▶ **Support for research, extension and farmer training with a focus on the agri-food chain and integrated productive and ecological objectives;**
- ▶ **Strengthening rural communities, farmer organizations, cooperatives and associations through entrepreneurship, economies of scale for key services, business management and accountability.**

Some project profiles

Central America



In Central America, FAO will work with the Programme for Sustainable Agriculture on Sloping Lands in Central America (PASOLAC) among the mountain people of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Independent analysis of each of these countries will determine how current policies affect farmers and other rural stakeholders living on hillsides and analyse the environmental services provided by the mountain regions. Three national and one regional

workshop involving representatives of government institutions, civil society, municipalities, academics, growers' associations and community representatives will share the findings of this analysis. They will discuss ways of strengthening local institutions to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development.

The Carpathians



In the Carpathians, the project will be directed by the United Nations Environment Programme's Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention in collaboration with Euromontana, an alliance for sustainable development between European mountain territories. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic and Ukraine will participate. Activities will be similar to those in Latin America mentioned above.

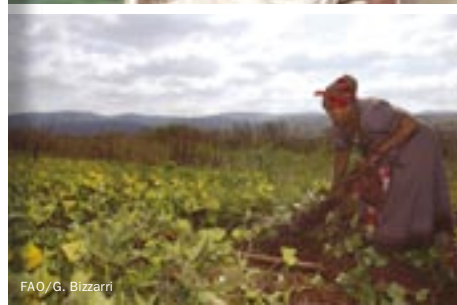
The Mediterranean



In the Mediterranean, the project will introduce a mountain perspective to the Building Capacities Project for SARD Implementation in Mediterranean Regions by developing training packages and fostering mechanisms to encourage dialogue among stakeholders. The Building Capacities Project is being implemented by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute (IAM). Albania, Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Syrian Arab Republic and Serbia and Montenegro are expected to participate.



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What is SARD?

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) is a concept that is important for the simple reason that rural areas are home to 70 percent of the world's poor and hungry people. Such areas need development that will provide a better living for rural people today without destroying the resource base on which future generations must depend.

Sustainable development is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, culturally appropriate, humane and based on a holistic scientific approach. SARD inherently addresses not just agriculture, but also natural resources, the environment and health, as well as social, institutional and economic dimensions.

“The problems we are facing in the world's mountainous regions ... have the same characteristics. Good and bad examples of policies or frameworks or support can be exchanged.”

Dr Manfred Bötsch
Director
Federal Office of Agriculture
Switzerland

Mountain Policy Project participants

The SARD-M Project is being implemented by FAO with the support of France, Japan and Switzerland and the participation of:

Governments or regional groups

Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, China, Colombia, European Community, Finland, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Peru, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey.

Civil Society

Euromontana, Istituto di Ricerca per l'Economia e l'Ecologia Applicate alle Aree Alpine (IREALP), major groups of farmers, NGOs, women, workers and trade unions, PASOLAC, Plan Bleu, Rotary Italy.

International organizations

Centre International de Hautes Etudes Agronomiques Méditerranéennes (CIHEAM), International Potato Center (CIP), FAO, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Carpathian Convention.

The project team will continue discussions with potential donors including governments, development banks and funds, international organizations and the private sector.

For more information, please contact:

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Sustainable Agriculture
and Rural Development
MOUNTAIN POLICY PROJECT



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