

**ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE
Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forests Working Group
FOR THE PERIOD 2023-2024
(BETWEEN THE XVII AND XVIII MEETINGS OF THE ALPINE CONFERENCE)**

1. Overview of the mandate given by the XVII Alpine Conference

Summary of the objectives according to the 2023-2024 mandate

Obj. 1 – Define the future role of mountain agriculture in sustainable food systems, considering also livestock that, on one hand is connected to the rich and specific biodiversity, landscape quality and cultural heritages (“Alpage”), while, on the other hand can be a pressure and it is subject to climate risks.

Obj. 2 – Understand new opportunities for mountain territories in terms of: agricultural and forestry productions and management approaches that favour or are already in line with ecological transition and circular economies; sustainable agricultural and forestry productions that allow to recover abandoned areas; initiation and development of Alpine districts.

Obj. 3 – Understand which physical (e.g. climate change), social (e.g. abandonment, loss of knowledge) or demographic (e.g. depopulation, ageing) risks threaten mountain agriculture and forestry and related actions to be implemented.

Obj. 4 – Evaluate the introduction of technical (e.g. low-impact management techniques) and technological innovations (e.g. smart farming/forestry and precision farming/forestry) in small and medium sized farms and forest activities targeting a good balance of innovations and traditional practices, an efficient use of inputs and favouring reduction of greenhouse gases emissions or increase in GHG sink.

2. Meetings

Summary of the meetings held (date, place, main topics and milestones)

- **February 23rd, 2023 - 1st meeting (online):** Brief introduction from the Slovenian Presidency; Presentation of mandate 2023-2024; Discussion on the four Objectives and tasks; start of planning for the workshops (including reporting).
- **June 26th, 2023 – 2nd meeting (online):** Discussion on the three planned thematic workshops, with particular focus on the 1st one (topic: “Depopulation and abandonment of Alpine areas: role and opportunities offered by the agri-food and forestry economy”); scheme of the proposed reporting formats (and basic contents).
- **January 30th, 2024 – 3rd meeting (online):** Presentation of the results of the first thematic workshop “Depopulation and abandonment of Alpine areas: role and opportunities offered by the agri-food and forestry economy” (by Austrian and Swiss Delegations); discussion on the two following workshops, with particular focus on the 2nd one (topic: “New forms of circular economy in the mountains: examples and good practices in Alpine areas” and sub-theme “Smart farming and forestry in mountain regions”); Presentation of the proposal for a Regulation on EU Forest Monitoring adopted by the European Commission in November 2023 (by Marco Onida, Senior Expert – EU-Environment Directorate General).

- **June 10th, 2024 – 4th meeting (online):** Presentation and discussion of the draft mandate 2023-2024 of the Working Group; presentation and discussion on quasi-final programme of the 3rd workshop (topic: "Peatlands and carbon farming, pastoralism, forestry and multifunctional activities in the mountains for the sustainability of the Alpine environment").
- All meetings were organised online, with the efficient use of the Alpine Convention Webex platform.

3. Activities carried out

Activities carried out with their outputs and results, highlighting their contributions to the relevant priorities of the [Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023-2030](#)

Within the 2023-2024, WG MAMF adopted a "workshop" mode of operation. The objectives of the mandate were tackled by organising three thematic workshops. The outcomes and reports of the workshops were collated in the final report of the activities. In general, the workshops were organised with a first session with keynotes and setting-the-scene presentations, the second with best practices and examples.

October 10th, 2023 (online): Workshop 1. "Depopulation and abandonment of Alpine areas: role and opportunities offered by the agri-food and forestry economy", organised by the Austrian and Swiss WG MAMF delegations, with reference to objectives 3 of the Mandate.

The aim of the first thematic workshop was to get an overview of trends in land abandonment and population development in the Alpine countries. Policy approaches in Austria and Switzerland were compared and good practice examples were presented.

March 22nd, 2024 (online): Workshop 2. "Circular economy and smart technologies for mountain agriculture and forestry: an overview of the current trends in the Alpine countries", organised by the Italian delegation, with reference to objectives 2 and 4 of the Mandate.

The purpose of the workshop was to understand to what extent and with which strategies it is possible to increase the implementation of virtuous economic choices and smart technologies to reduce the impact and increase production of agricultural and forestry activities in Alpine environments.

June 21st, 2024 (online): Workshop 3. "Peatlands and carbon farming, pastoralism, forestry and multifunctional activities in the mountains for the sustainability of the Alpine environment", organised by the German and Slovenian delegations, with reference to objectives 1 of the Mandate.

The target was an analysis of multifunctionality in mountain agriculture and forestry (carbon farming and peatlands in the Alps, restoration, climate change mitigation and sustainable agriculture) and the identification of opportunities for mountain farmers while preserving traditional and cultural mountain agricultural heritage closely linked with innovative supply quality schemes and biodiversity.

4. Cooperation

Cooperation developed with other Alpine Convention bodies and further relevant partners and processes, and resulting benefits

- 30/11 to 01/12/2022: meeting of the TWB chairs (Mutters, Austria)
- 02/05/2023: Italian Alpine Convention Coordination table (Verona, Italy)
- 10-11/10/2023: Crossroads Biodiversity (Milan, Italy)
- 07-08/11/2023: Permanent Committee meeting (Bolzano, Italy)

- 08/04/2024: Workshop in the Alpine Biogeographic Region and the EU Forest Strategy 2030 (Turin, Italy)
- 14/05/2024: Meeting of Thematic Working Bodies' Chairs (Maribor, Slovenia)

5. Communication

Communication measures and outreach activities carried out, specifying their respective target groups

- Wide dissemination of the workshops' programmes and invitations. All workshops had >30 participants – Target: technical and institutional (local/regional level)
- Use of social media (Twitter/X and Facebook) – Target: wide public active on social platforms

6. Attachments

List of the documents attached to this report, such as papers proposed for approval by the XVIII Alpine Conference (thematic reports, guidelines, statements etc.) and supporting documents (workshop proceedings, survey reports, communication materials etc.).

Final Report of the activities of the 2023-2024 mandate *Towards agricultural and forest management in line with the ecological transition of Alpine areas* with three annexes.

The Annexes are the reports of the three workshops held during the mandate (see above for basic details of each workshop and refer to the Annexes in the final reports for details)