

**MANDATE OF THE**  
**Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry**  
**Working Group**  
**FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026**  
**(BETWEEN THE XVIII AND XIX MEETINGS OF THE ALPINE**  
**CONFERENCE)**

## 1. Introductory remarks

Importance of the issues selected and relevance of the proposed way to tackle them, including reference to the Alpine Convention and its Protocols and further strategic documents

The sustainable management of Alpine territories is of great importance in environmental and social terms, even more than economic terms. The production activities that involve these territories (supply chains connected to fruits, cereals, and derived products; livestock supply chains linked to milk, cheese, meat, and processed products; supply chains of construction, carpentry and craft wood and by-products for heating purposes) are of fundamental importance for the vitality and permanence of local populations in the mountains.

At the same time, these activities constitute, on the one hand, a tangible cultural heritage in which populations recognise identifying community values, while, on the other hand, allowing diffuse maintenance and management of territories most of the time with traditional techniques, with very positive effects also on the landscape. These are actual ecosystem services whose economic value, not easy to quantify ex-ante, becomes evident ex-post in the presence of damage related to abandonment, landslides, fires, extreme weather events, and production losses, with possible risks also for the downstream territories.

Furthermore, the adoption of agricultural and forestry techniques respecting those delicate balances can reduce the risks associated with climate change, environmental degradation, and the loss of biodiversity, all issues of significant importance for achieving the sustainability objectives also targeted by the European Green Deal by 2030.

The two previous mandates completed by the Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forests (MAMF) Working Group had a plurality of objectives in line with the implementation of the priorities of the multi-annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference 2023-2030, which identifies biodiversity and ecosystems, climate change and quality of life in the Alps among its main objectives.

In particular, the 2021-2022 mandate tackled topics related to the evaluation of the diffusion of organic agriculture (TASK 1 Stocktaking on organic agriculture in the Alps) and its possible prospects (TASK 2 Developing organic agriculture scenarios for Alpine regions) in the Alpine Convention countries; and to the identification of the most significant value chains for the Alpine territories (TASK 3 Study on the status of value chains in mountain regions and selected sectors of agriculture and forestry).

In the 2023-2024 mandate, the topics focused on the dynamics of the abandonment of Alpine territories and the possible political and administrative interventions to counter them, the

introduction of circular economy processes, and technical and technological innovations in small businesses in the Alpine area and the multifunctional activities in the mountains for the sustainability of the alpine environment (livestock, carbon farming, pastoralism, agroforestry and sustainable food systems).

These are highly strategic issues that deserve further study to better define the technical, agronomic, and forestry methods to ensure long-term sustainability of alpine primary productions and transformation systems, together with the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and an effective fight against climate change (mitigation and adaptation) so to ensure a good quality of life for local populations.

In the current mandate, the Working Group will focus on three topics: the management and protection of water resources, opportunities and limits of information technologies (Agriculture 4.0 and Climate Smart Forestry) and the issue of land fragmentation and generation change in mountain areas. Furthermore, the WG will discuss alternative formats of delivering the WG results to the relevant stakeholders.

This mandate, therefore, has a more general objective linked to the possibility of improving the performances of agriculture and forestry in terms of sustainability and adaptation to climate change and also from an economic perspective, paying attention to the land management and social aspects of local populations. At the same time, we want to promote the adoption of production, management and conservation approaches that also protect the ecosystems in which agricultural and forestry activities occur.

## 2. Planned topics and activities

### Topic No. 1: Managing and protecting water resources in mountain areas

Topic outline and objective until the XIX Alpine Conference (knowledge sharing, policy setting etc.)

The Working Group will delve into the evolution of the Alpine agriculture and forestry concept in reference to managing and protecting water resources in mountain areas, to contribute to an improvement of the relationship between these economic activities and the water resource.

Objectives:

- Better definition of functioning relationships between agricultural and forestry activities and the management and conservation of water;
- Consideration of the role of mountain agriculture and forestry on the availability of water downstream, given that, in particular, the protection and sustainable management of forests and mountain watersheds is a key factor in ensuring water quality and prevention of floodings and damages downstream;
- Mitigation and adaptation in mountain agriculture and forestry re. changes in the water cycle related to climate changes.

Envisaged activities (desk research, collection of good practices, workshop etc.)	
<i>Description</i>	<i>Tentative timeline</i>
Workshop with presentation and collection of good practices	October 2025
Expected outputs (statement, report, brochure, exhibition etc.)	
- Report of the Workshop with “take home” messages, outline of good practices and recommendations	
Potential follow-up after the XIX Alpine Conference	
- Potential contributions for a shared water policy and management in Alpine areas considering climate change with the double side of intensification of the water cycle and increased frequency of droughts	

<b>Topic No. 2: Agriculture 4.0 and Climate Smart Forestry: opportunities and limits of information technologies in mountain areas</b>
Topic outline and objective until the XIX Alpine Conference
<p>Modern technologies can represent a tool for improving and simplifying labour activities. Nevertheless, in mountain areas there could be limits and/or barriers for an effective and fruitful use of information technologies in the agriculture and forest sectors (topography, coverage of communication network, cloud cover for satellite images, small-sized properties, variable land cover/use in relatively small areas).</p> <p>This topic builds on the activity performed in the 2023-2024 mandate (Workshop), focusing on the evaluation of the "Agriculture 4.0" and "Climate Smart forestry" approaches in Alpine agricultural and forestry activities for a parsimonious and efficient use of natural resources (maintenance of biodiversity and guarantee of ecosystem functionality, as well as protection of naturalness where possible).</p> <p>In particular, there is the intention to explore the potential and critical issues related to using information technologies in Alpine and mountain areas.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of possibilities of improving the performances of agriculture and forestry in terms of sustainability and also from an economic perspective;</li> <li>• Adoption of production, management and conservation approaches that also protect the ecosystems in which agricultural and forestry activities occur;</li> <li>• Collaborative actions for sharing the burden and cost of advanced technologies in mountain areas.</li> </ul>
Envisaged activities (desk research, collection of good practices, workshop etc.)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Tentative timeline</i>
Workshop with presentation and collection of good practices	March 2026
Expected outputs (report, brochure, exhibition etc.)	
- Report of the Workshop with “take home” messages, outline of good practices and recommendations	
Potential follow-up after the XIX Alpine Conference	
- In depth analysis of “Agriculture 4.0” and “Climate Smart forestry” approaches in Alpine area for the efficient use of natural resources useful for future sustainability of mountain areas	

<b>Topic No. 3: Land ownership fragmentation and generation change in Alpine areas: actions and cooperation for win-win solutions</b>	
Topic outline and objective until the XIX Alpine Conference	
<p>Building up on the findings of the mandate 2023-2024 regarding depopulation and land abandonment, the Working Group will deepen the themes of the fragmentation of land and generation change existing in the Alpine areas, including the possible effects in social (abandonment, decreasing number of farms), demographic (depopulation, attractiveness for young people), and physical (lack of care of the territory, environmental risks) terms. The ultimate goal is to evaluate the possibilities, from the legal point of view and taking into account real experiences conducted in some specific areas (Food Communities, Green Communities, Land Associations, Forest Association) to recover and merge areas once permanently used for mountain agriculture and forestry and now permanently abandoned for lack of a farmer/owner willing to carry out an economic activity.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of how land ownership and management impact the socio-economy of mountain communities;</li> <li>• Sharing of success stories in community-sharing of land management;</li> <li>• Addressing the problems of generation change in mountain agriculture and forestry and farm succession.</li> </ul>	
Envisaged activities (desk research, collection of good practices, workshop etc.)	
<i>Description</i>	<i>Tentative timeline</i>
Workshop with presentation and collection of good practices	May 2025

Expected outputs (report, brochure, exhibition etc.)
- Report of the Workshop with “take home” messages, outline of good practices and recommendations
Potential follow-up after the XIX Alpine Conference
- Proposal for possible schemes of putting together land and properties to preserve mountain primary production, landscape protection and maintenance - Proposal for targeting the problems of generation change (increasing attractiveness)

### 3. TWB meetings schedule

Tentative dates and settings of meetings (month or quarter, online/in presence)
<p>The Working Group will continue to meet regularly to coordinate activities and maintain focus on topics and objectives of interest across individual events.</p> <p>During the mandate, it is recommended that at least two meetings are organised in presence. The format of meetings is then reported for the 1<sup>st</sup> and last WG meetings and for the two proposed in presence meetings – the format of the remaining will be decided at the 1<sup>st</sup> WG meeting.</p> <p>Meetings and workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- February 2025 – 1<sup>st</sup> WG meeting – online</li> <li>- May 2025 – 2<sup>nd</sup> WG meeting</li> <li>- October 2025 – 1<sup>st</sup> Workshop – Topic 1 in presence</li> <li>- January 2026 – 3<sup>rd</sup> WG meeting</li> <li>- March 2026 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop – Topic 2</li> <li>- May 2026 – 4<sup>th</sup> WG meeting – in presence</li> <li>- May 2026 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Workshop – Topic 3</li> <li>- June 2026 – 5<sup>th</sup> WG meeting – online</li> </ul> <p>June 2026/July 2026 - finalisation of the report, elaboration of new Mandate and final approval of the results of the Working Group</p> <p><b>Working modalities:</b></p> <p>Considering that the Alpine territory is not homogeneous with respect to the problems highlighted above, the organization of thematic workshops lasting a maximum of one day is proposed for the activities of the Working Group.</p> <p>During each thematic workshop, the aspects that most influence the identified themes will be analysed in order to allow the members of the Working Group to collect sufficient elements to draw up a report on the current state and the prospects, which can be identified in each</p>

country and the Alpine Convention area for each of the themes.

Each Delegation and Observer will be asked to identify at least two speakers (one for the agricultural sector and one for the forestry sector) who will present cases of good practice, projects and examples of activities and/or be invited to round tables.

Depending on the relevance of the theme of the individual workshops and hoping for good cooperation from the individual Delegations/Observers, the organisation of the specific event will be entrusted to one or more Delegations/Observers, under the supervision and coordination of the Working Group Chair.

After each workshop, the Delegation(s) responsible for the organization will deliver a report on the topics explored during the thematic workshop. The report will include also summary points to be considered in the WG final report/output.

The final output of WG activities will be a report edited by the various Delegations involved in the organization of the workshops, which will collect the outcomes and results that emerged during the thematic workshops. The Presidency of the Working Group will coordinate the preparation of the report, while its contents will be the responsibility of all Delegations and all Observatories.

Possible other formats of outputs will be discussed (see 5. Communication).

#### 4. Cooperation

Planned cooperation with other Alpine Convention bodies and further relevant partners and processes, and the expected benefits

The Working Group will collaborate with bodies, groups, and initiatives within the Alpine Convention, particularly with the Alpine Climate Board (implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2.0) and the Alpine Biodiversity Board (contribution to the elaboration of the Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan). It will contribute to the activities of the Italian Presidency. As in previous periods, the WG will cooperate with further Thematic Working Bodies, also with possible common meetings on themes of shared interest. It is also planned to further explore cooperation with EUSALP, in particular with Action Group 6, which deals with agri-food and forestry issues, and to potentially involve thematic projects of the Alpine Space Programme.

#### 5. Communication

Communication objectives, targets and respective planned measures

- Presentation of work programmes and results during discussions with other partners and platforms.
- Advertising of the workshops coordinated between the Working Group and local organisers.
- Publicising the Group's main events and activities through support of the Permanent Secretariat.
- Use and contribution to social media communication

- In the 1st or 2nd meeting, the WG will also discuss the format of delivering the WG results. The approach of presenting best practices is valuable but the objective is to ensure that results and messages reach the relevant stakeholders (possible formats to be discussed: reports, executive summaries, factsheets, white papers, dedicated groups, etc.).

## 6. Link to the Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023-2030 of the Alpine Conference

Contribution of the activities to some or all of the priority areas of the MAP 2023-2030 (interlinkages, synergies, and trade-offs with the specific objectives below)

**MAP Priority area 1 – Biodiversity and ecosystems:** *Contribute to the achievement of the European and international objectives to protect, preserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystems in the Alps; Strengthen the Alpine Convention's own biodiversity and ecosystem-related activities and integrate the topic into the work of all its bodies*

MAMF Topic 2. A more efficient use of resources in agriculture implies lower residues in the environment, both for fertiliser and for other chemicals (preserving biodiversity and ecosystems);

Adaptation of agriculture and forestry to climate change with the help of modern technologies: preserve ecosystems.

Topics 1 and 3 also respectively contribute to protecting and restoring biodiversity.

**MAP Priority area 2 – Climate action:** *Implement the Climate Action Plan 2.0 on the way to reach climate-neutral and climate-resilient Alps by 2050; Pursue cross-sectoral activities and look for cooperation beyond the environmental and climate sector*

Topic 1: better water management in changed climate

Topic 2: reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to improved efficiency on inputs and potential reduction in crop and tree growth losses

**MAP Priority area 3 – Quality of life:** *Further the Alpine Convention's knowledge on the quality of life of people in the Alps, acknowledging and respecting territorial and individual differences; Promote the inclusion of quality-of-life measures in public policy-making processes at all territorial levels*

Topic 1: reduction of water losses; protection from flooding

Topic 2: improved, more efficient and less heavy labour

Topic 3: reduction of land fragmentation for sustainable economy, possible actions for generation change

## 7. Chair

The Chair will be held by Italy.