

## THE MOUNTAIN PRODUCT - THE VISIT CARD OF THE MOUNTAIN AREAS

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### Abstract

*The paper presents the path of the linear economy to the circular economy for sustainable development and growth. Moving to a circular economy generates opportunities such as: reduced environmental pressures; increased security of the supply chain of raw materials; increased competitiveness; innovation; growth and development of new jobs. In this way, small farmers and producers who use the results of research studies in the production process, in the manufacture of products or the packaging process gain added value, which enables them to be better value on the domestic or foreign markets. The sustainability and resilient development of mountain rural communities can be made by increasing the use of local resources to mitigate/stop village depopulation and local natural heritage degradation requires the identification of existing structural and functional connections between existing resources and their use by local communities. It is thus possible to establish measures for the sustainable use of natural resources, reducing environmental pressures, enhancing the security of raw materials supply; use of biotechnology's advantages; increased competitiveness, increasing the quality of life of the population.*

**Key words:** bioeconomy, circular economy, mountain product, sustainable development, small farmers, agriculture.

### INTRODUCTION

Providing consumers with high-quality food products, from mountain areas, has always provided a support to small-scale farmers to develop and ensure working conditions and life make them continue their activity in these areas, keep and pass on to future generations the knowledge, customs and traditions of these areas, while complying with food safety and security requirements.

Food products that are produced in the mountain areas, labelled with the phrase "mountain product", guarantees the quality of the raw materials used, thus meeting the requirements of citizens and consumers around the world, increasingly demanding both quality products and traditional products, being also concerned with maintaining the diversity of agricultural production, meeting the demands of consumers, has shown the need to create a legislative framework that allows small farmers to develop and promote their products. This

situation generates a demand for food products with certain identifiable characteristics, especially with regard to the geographical origin of the ingredients and their quality (Muscalu et al., 2015).

### THE CONCEPT OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The circular economy is increasingly becoming a way to resource management, including in the agri-food industry. It is essentially linked to the environment, industrial ecology, technological innovation, re-use, and resource recycling. This has to be addressed in the general context of organizational development, focusing on business and operational management principles, technological innovation promoted by all means, leading to efficient resource management, but also to the role that the state has in creating a framework of regulations to boost the implementation of the circular economy (Muscalu & Mateescu, 2016).



Figure1. Mountain area - Vatra Dornei, Suceava county  
Source: Personal archive

Bioeconomy offers alternative solutions to manufacture products other than using fossil fuel or energy and can contribute to the circular economy.

In order to prevent food waste production and to cope with situations that can vary from one country to another and from one region to another, it is essential to take action across the value chain.

In this context, Romania has achieved targets at European and international levels, with regard to: the circular economy, the reduction of food waste (by 50% by 2030) and the reduction of carbon footprint.

The transition to a low-carbon economy is one of the objectives of rural development, the achievement of which contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and favourable growth, focusing on the following:

The efficiency of water use in agriculture;

- the efficiency of energy uses in the agri-food sector;
- the facilitation of the supply and use of renewable energy sources, by-products, waste and residues and other non-food raw materials, in order to achieve bio-economy;
- reducing greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture;
- promoting sequestration and carbon sequestration in agriculture and forestry.

In order to cope with global population growth, rapid resource exhaustion, increased environmental pressures and climate change, in line with the EU Bioeconomy Strategy, Europe has to radically change its approach to production, consumption, processing, storage, recycling biological resources (Zaman, 2019).

By the specifics of the activities carried out, the research, development and the innovation in the field of bioeconomics at the national level should develop on the same priority directions, consistent with those enumerated at the community level, namely investing in research, innovation and skills for bio-economy;

The Europe 2020 strategy advocates bio-economy as an essential element for smart, green growth in Europe. Progress in bio-economy research and innovating will enable Europe to improve the management of its own renewable bio-resources and open up new and diversified markets for food and bio-products. The establishment of bio-economy in Europe has special advantages: the ability to maintain and generate growth and jobs in rural and industrial areas to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and to increase the economic and environmental sustainability of primary production and manufacturing (Suciu, 2015).

## AGRICULTURE OF THE MOUNTAIN AREA

In Romania, about 30% of the country's territory is classified as a mountain area, amounting to 656 administrative-territorial units (ATUs). The mountain range is recognized for its low pollution level, which gives the food coming from this area more value.

On 05.02.2019, it was published in the Official Gazette, Part I, no. 90, Order of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development no. 49 of 14.01.2019 amending and supplementing the annex to the Order of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development no. 52/2017 approving the procedure for checking the conformity of the data contained in the tender dossier in order to grant the right of use of the "mountain product" option and to verify the compliance of the European and national legislation by the economic operators who have obtained the right of use of that mention (Mountain Product, Retrieved from

www.madr.ro/industrie-alimentara/sisteme-de-calitate-europene-si-indicatii-geografice/produse-agricole-si-alimentare/produs-montan.html).

The mountain farming is the result of the:

- developing markets and competitiveness in the bio-economy sectors through a sustainable increase in primary production through the conversion of waste streams into value-added products and through mutual learning mechanisms to improve production and resource efficiency;
- enhance policy coordination and stakeholder involvement, by setting up a bio-economy group, a bio-economic observer, and by organizing stakeholder conferences on a regular basis.



Figure 2. Logo "mountain product"

Source: National Legislation, Order of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development no. 49/14.01.2019

Products that possess the optional label "mountain product" are marked with a national logo (logo, trademark, symbol). The "mountain product" logo is used exclusively on the labels of products that meet the requirements of Regulation (EU) no. 1151/2012, Delegated Regulation (EU) no. 665/2014 (Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament - EUR-Lex, Retrieved from <https://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ>. A number of sectors such as mountain farming face specific challenges in the context of the cyclical economy, given the particularities of their products or their value chains, their environmental footprint or their dependence on materials outside of Europe. A clearly targeted approach is needed in this sector to ensure that interactions between the different phases of the

interaction between traditional culture, gastronomy and the livelihoods of peasant farms in the mountainous countryside. It is imperative to develop optimized models on product groups as well as the analysis of economic, social and cultural aspects that contribute to the capitalization through short chains of production, acquisition, storage and marketing of mountain products for reviving and increasing household profitability and of mountain agricultural holdings (Isachi & Chitiga, 2016).

## PROMOTING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Due to the global economic climate, Romanian agri-food products have to cope with strong competitive pressure from imported products, which in some cases do not meet the high standards of European food quality and safety, being delivered at prices below the production costs of Romanian products, thus creating a competitive gap to the detriment of Romanian farmers (Alexandri, 2016).

The marketing of locally grown food, short chains, and local markets should become an important component of the agri-food sector in Romania.

Supporting and encouraging the development of short supply chains is necessary for terms of opening up market opportunities to active farmers by promoting and selling products in the vicinity either individually or jointly. In this context, the marketing of agri-food products can make a significant contribution to the development and relaunch of the agricultural sector, based on a product promotion policy, and consequently on exports tailored to the real needs of the Romanian agricultural sector.

Combined with the promotion of offensive interests on third-country markets, and taking into account the crisis situations that persist in certain sectors of agriculture at national and European level, especially in the dairy, pig meat cycle are fully taken into account throughout the value chain (Gavrilescu et al., 2016).

For this purpose, for better visibility and valorification of the mountain area potential, it is necessary to develop guides for processors regarding the use of modernized traditional

technologies to ensure the reproducibility and food safety of the mountain products made. Action plans for local authorities to create local fairs/markets for consumer information and awareness on the quality and safety of Romanian agro-food products, and last but not least, awareness-raising campaigns to change consumer behaviour.



Figure 3. Promoting agri-food products from the mountain area to the Green Week in Berlin, 2019  
Source: Personal archive

Thus, the emphasis will be on increasing the presence of Romanian products and improving/strengthening the position on the markets of interest at European and National level.

Also, the implementation of trade and cooperation agreements with third countries will create a competitive advantage for the agri-food sector in Romania by obtaining tariff concessions on imports in these countries, thus favouring the growth of agricultural exports and high value-added exports with impact positive and fruit and vegetables sectors, Romania must maintain a high degree of protection for imports of agri-food products, mainly for the following products: beef, poultry and pig meat, sunflower and rapeseed, cereals (wheat, corn and barley), grain and oil soybeans, sugar, tobacco and cigarettes, in order to protect the domestic production and the competitiveness of Romanian farmers on the European and international market.

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In this context, Romania needs to register as many agri-food products as possible on European and National quality schemes, in order to capitalize on the potential of our country.



Figure 4. Romanian food products  
Source: Personal archive

## CONCLUSIONS

Romanian agriculture must reach a level of development comparable to that of other European Member States that already have modern agriculture, steps must be taken to achieve sustainable growth. These stages depend on economic growth, creating new jobs and improving competitiveness at international level.

Romania needs to focus on manufacturing high value-added products that meet environmental, animal health and animal welfare and quality requirements in line with European standards. In addition to national quality legislation, Romania implements European legislation on quality systems. These systems allow consumers to identify products that have specific qualities due to their origin and/or production methods.

In order to make consumers trust the legitimate nature of label labels, compliance with the

product specification is monitored by public authorities or a private certification body.

Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality systems for agricultural and food products and Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011, on information to consumers on foodstuffs, amending Council Regulation (EC) 1924/2006 and (EC) No. 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Commission Directive 87/250/EC, Directive 90/496/EC Council Directive 1999/10/EC, Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council the European Parliament and the Council, Commission Directives 2002/67/EC and 2008/5/EC; Council Regulation (EC) No 608/2004 of the Commission.

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