

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES IN THE MOUNTAIN AREAS, AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIA

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**Abstract.** *Considering the fact that mountain areas occupy an important area of our country but also a considerable area at the European level, the paper approaches their role with a special analysis on the development of the sustainability of the area by increasing the number of mountain producers, mountain products and local gastronomic points. the legislation and some activities specific to the mountain area in our country are analyzed in comparison with some European countries. the legislative framework for carrying out and monitoring specific activities, existing successful activities in the mountain area and strategies for the development of mountain areas are analyzed in particular, with an emphasis on mountain producers and products.*

**Keywords:** mountain area, mountain products, development strategies, legislative framework, Romania, Europe

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### 1. Introduction

The mountains represent the backbone of our country from a geographical but also a social point of view. Geographically, the whole country is spread around the mountains and socially the mountains were the ones that contributed to the preservation and formation of the Romanian people, the mountains being shelter, source of food and places of defense against the waves of peoples that devastated our country throughout the ages.

The mountain area in our country is 90.24 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, which represents 37.9% of the total area of the country, being in the 14th place in Europe, compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> place Norway (91.3%), the 5<sup>th</sup> place Austria (73.4%), 9<sup>th</sup> place Bulgaria (53.3%), 11<sup>th</sup> place Sweden (50.6%). In 2008, the population living in the mountainous areas of our country was 5.54 million, representing 24.9 of the country's population [10].

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Currently, the mountainous areas of our country face numerous constraints such as: population density, migration, education and economic development that have the lowest income [12].

## **2. Materials and methods**

The mountain area in most countries is defined according to the directives resulting from CEE 75/268, regarding altitude and slope and other criteria such as climate, number of inhabitants.

The present study was carried out based on the analysis of a rich informational material related to the legislation on mountain areas in the European Union and in our country. The quantitative data comes from the ANZM report from 2021, and refers in particular to the period 2017-2021.

The indicators used in the analysis process were trend indicators (percentage increase compared to one year as a base and annual growth rate) and structure indicators (percentage share).

By Order No. 174/2021, of the MADR, the mountain product is a product intended for human consumption in which the raw materials come from the mountain areas, the animal feed comes from the mountain areas and in the case of the processed products, they come from the mountain areas [6].

Local Gastronomic Points (PGL), authorized, are represented by private kitchens, where food is prepared according to culinary recipes specific to the area, which are served directly to the final consumer [9].

## **3. Results and discussions**

The results of the researchers followed three directions: 1. The legislative framework for the implementation and monitoring of activities in the mountain area; 2. Analysis of the existing activities in the mountain area and 3. Strategies for the development of mountain areas.

### ***3.1. The legislative framework for the development and monitoring of activities in the mountain area***

The development of mountain areas throughout Europe lagged behind the development of hill and plain areas as a result of the facilities offered by them, especially the transport network, population density. This made the mountainous areas lose their attractiveness for the activities carried out in this geographical space. That is why measures were needed to analyze the mountain areas and draw up strategies for the development of these mountain areas.

A study at the level of the European Union, groups them into three categories according to the measures they undertake for the development of activities in the mountain area [15].

- a) Countries where the policy of mountainous areas cannot be identified: in countries that do not have mountains such as Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and the Netherlands; in countries with few mountainous areas such as Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg where mountainous areas are included in rural development policies and predominantly mountainous countries where mountain development is part of the country's general development;
- b) Countries with regions considered as the environment of mountainous areas with sectoral development programs oriented towards agriculture, tourism and environmental protection, such as Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and Slovakia;
- c) Countries that seek to develop a multi-sectoral policy in mountain areas, for the development of territorial planning, for the development of tourism. This group of countries includes Germany, Spain and Austria, which has had such a program since 1960;
- d) Countries that try to promote a global policy of mountain areas in which France, Italy and Switzerland are located and countries that try to establish the legal framework for the implementation of these policies for mountain areas.

Regarding the degree of development of the mountain areas, the study shows that it is very diversified, but that it largely depends on the proximity to an urban network and the degree of existence of satisfactory local services (education, health).

In the European Union, the development of mountain areas is at different levels of development, which depended on how the states proposed such objectives. The countries that have developed specific legislation and very large investments in mountain areas are highlighted, such as Switzerland (Law 1974), Italy (Law 1971 and 1994), France (Law 1985), Spain (Law 2002). As an aspect of the development of mountain areas, we mention that in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes area, located in the Alps and the Massif Central, there are 197 resorts with 120,000 direct jobs and 400,000 indirect jobs [3].

In Romania, until 1990 there was no legal framework for the specificity of the mountain. In 1990, the Mountain Zone Commission was established, and in 1991, the Institute of Montanology – Cristian, Sibiu. There are several attempts to draft a law specific to the mountain and it succeeded in 2018, through Law no. 197, which "regulates the methods of protection and sustainable and inclusive development of the mountain area by: valuing natural and human resources, increasing the level of living" and that through appropriate measures "to preserve

the living conditions in the mountain area, to encourage and support the sustainable management of forests, to preserve the ecological balance and the protection of the natural environment" [4].

In order to put into practice the provisions of Law 197/2018, the National Agency of the Mountain Area was established by GD no. 1036/201, by reorganizing the Mountain Area Agency, as well as establishing measures regarding regional centers and mountain development offices.

At the central level, efforts are being made to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development by running the project "Strengthening the administrative capacity of MADR for strategic planning, with an emphasis on the mountain area" [7].

Also interesting are the impact studies regarding the implementation of the development mechanisms in the territorial profile of the mountainous area in Romania, "with an emphasis on the evaluation of the forms of local and regional impact induced on the mountainous territorial structures", as a result of the application of the rules of functional reorganization, through the paradigmatic approach of dysfunctions" [4], which highlighted the "inaccuracies/shortcomings of mountain policies".

### ***3.2. The analysis of the existing activities in the mountain areas***

Activities carried out by ANZM, with a view to the superior valorization of mountain products, by producers: support for the establishment of the "Mountain Products" Association; support for the establishment of the agricultural cooperative "Cooperativa Agricola Montană"; consultancy and information provided to farmers, producer groups and associations; supporting producers with mountain products to participate in fairs and exhibitions; promoting mountain products in the mass media (broadcasts dedicated to producers in the mountain area (ANZM, 2021). These objectives were put into practice by 239 GALs that operated in the mountain area during 2014-2020 [2].

From the multitude of activities in the mountain area of our country, we will try to develop the aspects regarding the mountain product and LGP (Local Gastronomic Points), which have had a laborious development in recent years.

In the period from 2017 to 2021, the number of producers whose products have the quality of "mountain product" was 1164. There was an increase from 9 mountain producers in 2017 to 696 in 2021, with an annual growth rate of 196.2%, representing a 77-fold increase (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Evolution of the number of authorized mountain products and the number of mountain producers, grouped according to the delimitation of the mountain area (Order 97/2019), for the period 2017-2021

Specification	MU	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total	Annual rhythm (%)
Mountain producers	No.	9	14	88	360	693	1,164	196.2
	%	100.0	155.6	977.8	4,000.0	7,700.0	x	x
Mountain products	No.	30	49	372	1,083	1,613	3,147	170.8
	%	100.0	163.3	1,240.0	3,610.0	5,376.7	x	x

Source: ANZM, 2022 [1][2].

There is also a corresponding increase in the number of authorized mountain products to a total of 3147 in 2021, from a number of 30 in 2017 to 1613 in 2021, respectively an increase of 53 times, with a growth rate of 170.8%.

In the structure, the number of mountain producers, depending on the mountain products, stand out mainly those who produce vegetable products 509 (43.73%), milk and milk products 446 (38.32%), bee products 162 (13, 92%), meat and meat products 25 (2.15%) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The structure of the number of producers and mountain products that acquired the quality of "mountain product" in the period 2017-2021

Product/MU	Mountain Producers		Mountain products		No. products/producer
	nr	%	nr	%	Nr
Meat and meat products	25	2.15	80	2.54	3.2
Milk and milk products	446	38.32	936	29.74	2.1
Eggs	9	0.77	9	0.29	1.0
Bread, bakery products and pastries	4	0.34	4	0.13	1.0
Fish and fish products	9	0.77	25	0.79	2.8
Bee products	162	13.92	398	12.65	2.5
Vegetable products	509	43.73	1,695	53.86	3.3
Total general	1,164	100.00	3147	100.00	2.7

Source: ANZM, 2022 [1][2].

On average, the number of authorized agricultural products per mountain producer is 2.7 products per agricultural producer, with limits between 3.3 for vegetable products and 1 product for bread, bakery products and eggs.

**Table 3.** Evolution of LGP (Local Gastronomic Points) in the mountain area during 2018-2021

Specification	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total	Annual rhythm(%)
No.	4	27	37	67	135	155.9
%	100.0	675.0	925.0	1,675.0	x	x

Source: ANZM, 2022 [1][2].

**Table 4.** The share of LGP (Local Gastronomic Points) in the mountain area within the counties located in the mountain area, in 2021

County/MU	LGP/county	From which: mountain area	
	No.	No.	%
Alba	8	8	100.0
Argeş	2	2	100.0
Bistriţa Năsăud	3	3	100.0
Braşov	68	67	98.5
Cluj	3	1	33.3
Covasna	1	1	100.0
Gorj	5	4	80.0
Harghita	3	3	100.0
Hunedoara	6	6	100.0
Maramureş	11	10	90.9
Mureş	1	1	100.0
Neamţ	3	2	66.7
Prahova	3	3	100.0
Sibiu	16	14	87.5
Suceava	8	7	87.5
Vâlcea	3	3	100.0
Total	144	135	93.8

Source: ANZM, 2022 [1][2].

Along with the increase in the number of mountain producers and mountain products, the number of "Local Gastronomic Points" (LGP) also increased, from 9 in 2017 to 693 in 2021, with an annual growth rate of 155.9%. (Table 3).

In the counties with mountainous areas, there were a number of 144 PGL, of which 135 in the specific mountainous area. The most are in the counties of Braşov (67), Maramureş (10), Sibiu (10), Alba (8), Suceava (7) and Hunedoara (6).

The increase of Local Gastronomy Points, represented a great advantage for the valorization of local mountain products and for the development of Agricultural guesthouses in particular and mountain tourism in general, "encourages the community to adopt ecological behavior, promotes a sustainable and circular production system, reduces outsourcing in transports and contributes to the maintenance of biodiversity and the development of varieties in danger of extinction" [8].

### ***3.3. The development strategies of mountain areas***

Through the Mountain Law, no. 197/2018, our country has a national strategy to follow in the development of mountain areas that constitute a "territory of special, strategic, economic, social and environmental national interest"[5].

Law 197/2018 encourages the diversification of the local economy and the creation of jobs through: exemption from agricultural tax for 5 years from establishment and 50% of income, in the following years, for those who raise animals in equivalent 5UV; activities of collection, processing of forest by-

products: mushrooms, forest fruits, medicinal plants; creation of a crediting, microcrediting program, especially for the mountain area, with a value of 24.3 million lei [5].

The main economic activities in mountain areas are related to the exploitation of local resources, namely: forest resources; natural grassland resources, which can develop animal husbandry, especially bulls and sheep; resources of useful mineral substances (manganese, sulfur, iron, uranium, other substances); mineral water resources; tourism, as a result of the particularly picturesque natural setting, with favorable conditions for practicing winter sports [14].

An important role in the development of mountain areas is played by theLAGs( Local Action Group) that operate in this mountain area. Thus, Târnava Mare LAG through the "Program for the encouragement of activities in the mountain area" includes investments for: the establishment of centers for the collection, washing and primary processing of wool and hides; establishment of small capacity units for animal slaughter and/or meat processing in the mountain area; establishment of mountain herds; the establishment of centers for the collection and primary processing of forest fruits, mushrooms and/or medicinal and aromatic plants from spontaneous and/or cultured flora in the mountain area [11].

For the year 2022, ANZM has planned as objectives: Increasing the economic competitiveness of farms in the mountain area; Increasing the degree of training and information of farmers; Increasing the attractiveness of the mountain area and stabilizing the mountain population; Encouraging the diversification of economic activities in the mountain area; The revitalization of mountain tourism on the principles of sustainable tourism; Improving the quality of environmental factors in the mountain area and preserving biodiversity; Consolidation of the strategic, legislative and institutional framework [2].

A main component of mountain strategies is knowledge and research in the field. The Cristian-Sibiu Mountaineering Research-Development Institute proposed conducting studies on mountain infrastructure, studies on the organization of farmers' professional organizations; integrated marketing studies for the valorization of agricultural products, the impact of tourism and its complementary activities on the mountain environment that will aim at the sustainable, socioeconomic development of the mountain area [11][13].

In the National Strategic Plan 2021-2027, the financial support of the "mountain product" is encouraged to counteract the depopulation and abandonment of agricultural activities in the mountain area and to support these products by promoting them on the domestic and international market [12].

## **Conclusions**

(1). Due to the important potential of mountain areas in terms of population, agricultural and environmental products, they have acquired a special importance in the economy of sustainable development in the countries of the European Union.

(2). Following the provisions provided in the Mountain Law no. 197/2018, specific programs are needed for the development of these mountain areas which can constitute real pillars of economic-social development, of sustainable development in our country.

(3). The achievements of recent years in the activities regarding mountain producers, mountain products and LGP demonstrate the existence of a consensus in the development of mountain activities with an impact on general sustainable development and on raising the standard of living of the population in this area.

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