

# The Scenario for Rural Development Projects in the Mediterranean

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# What is Meant by Rural

The term rural universally refers to a physical, social and cultural concept that is the opposite of urban.

➤ In Europe, each Member State has worked out its own definition of rural area based on social and economic guidelines (main economic activity of the area, population density)

➤ In Italy:

▪ Rural development means the social and economic development of extra-urban areas with competitive disadvantages in terms of territory, services, know-how and opportunities

▪ A territory is considered rural when its “main part” is used for agriculture and for non-urban economic, cultural and leisure activities and for residential purposes even though the extra-agricultural elements are becoming increasingly important and coordinated

At both European and Mediterranean level, housing density is the most frequently guideline used for defining urban and rural areas.

# Characteristics of Rural Areas

- Relatively low population density, ageing population , uneven demographic structure, loss of skilled young people, etc.
- Relatively strong agricultural sector, declining employment and farming activity, pressure on land from nearby urban areas, threats to the environment, etc.
- Widely varying levels of wealth, increasing number of people in a vulnerable situation, increasing isolation due to the demise of certain business and community services, etc.

# The Euro-Mediterranean Countries

**UE-Med:** Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta,  
Portugal, Spain

**PSEM:** Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel,  
Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia,  
Turkey

**Maghreb:** Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco

**Machrek:** Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon

# Demographic Trends

The population of the Mediterranean represents 7% of the world population: **420 million (42% - EUMed and 58% - PSEM )** out of **6 billion** inhabitants. A slight reduction of **6.7%** is estimated for 2015 and **6.5%** for 2030 against an increase of circa 20% of the world population, mainly because of:

- Improved living conditions
- Access to education and its longer average duration
- Late marriages also because of economic crisis and unemployment
- Policies and laws for the social protection of women (access to education and work, prohibition of polygamy, definition of minimum age for marriage, legalization of abortion)

# Urban and Rural Population

One of the most frequently used indexes for assessing a country's development is the weight of the rural compared to the urban population: the higher the urban share the greater the country's level of development:

- The rural population percentage is greater in the PSEM than in the EUMed countries
- In the Euro-Mediterranean countries, the urban population is 70% against the over 83% of northern and central European countries
- The countries with an urban population of less than 50% are Albania (42.9%) and Egypt (42.7%)

*The analysis of the rural and urban population reveals significant differences between the Maghreb – Machrek Mediterranean countries and some Middle East countries (Lebanon and Israel) which, because of political circumstances and different geographical features, have a high urbanization index, even higher than that of many European countries*

# Active Population

The countries with a greater rural population also have high levels of unemployment (e.g. Jordan, Algeria, Albania). In addition, in many countries the official figures often do not correspond to the real rate of unemployment. Generally, in these situations:

- a high percentage of the population is employed in sub-activities not included in the calculation of the employed
- In the agricultural areas of southern countries there are few activities of a non-agricultural type (industrial, semi-industrial, crafts)

In the PSEM, the low activity level is caused by the absence or insufficiency of rural development policies specifically aimed at encouraging the diversification of economic activities and it is difficult to find policies promoting rural industrialization.

In the north European countryside, the rate of unemployment is often lower than the national one; this is because for thirty years the European Union has strengthened and promoted rural activities through direct aid to agricultural-driven activities such as crafts and tourism.

The factor that has the most influence on employment levels is indubitably the country's global economic policy :

- in Algeria, for example, over the last thirty years industrial policies have taken on an important role and this has had repercussions on the balance between agriculture and other economic activities
- on the other hand, in Albania, policies after the end of the Socialist era encouraged the agricultural sector with an important land reform
- in Turkey, finally, significant investments in agriculture and the agricultural development of some densely populated regions explain the high percentage of active agricultural population in the total active population

# Education

The Mediterranean population is a numerous and young population that needs training and culture. The Mediterranean has a high profile in the present context and its cultural identity and particular receptivity are a precious resource that has to be nourished and rejuvenated.

The rate of illiteracy is still very high in some countries. Although in the north the average is 3%, for the countries in the south and east Mediterranean it drops to 22% (e.g. over 30% of the adult population in Algeria, between 20% and 30% in Libya and Syria). The illiteracy rate is much higher among women, where it is more than double that of the male population.

# Economic Trends

In general, economic activities started to diversify at the end of the Eighties in the rural areas of the EUMed countries; industrial, craft and service enterprises appeared, as well as activities linked to agriculture, such as the transformation of agricultural products or agri-tourism

Instead, in the PSEM agricultural activity remains the main source of employment and income. Hence the global development and, above all, the agricultural and rural development policies of these countries - and their repercussions on the socio-economic conditions of the rural populations - are still profoundly different from those of the countries closer to the northern shore

# The Use of Land

Overall, the region occupies 850 million hectares, of which:

- 30% is arable land (crops and permanent crops) and pasture
- 8% forests and woodland
- 52% is for other uses (urban and industrial)
- the remaining 10% is desert

On the 117 million hectares of cultivated land there are annual crops such as cereals (wheat, maize and barley), oleaginous plants (sunflowers and rape), vegetables (potatoes, tomatoes and onions) and pulses.

France, Turkey, Spain and Egypt are the main cereal producers.

There are some 18 million hectares with permanent crops, almost equally distributed between fruit and olives. Citrus fruits take first place, followed by vines, peaches and apples. The main producers are Italy, Spain, France, Turkey and Egypt.

# Venice Conference (2004)

In the conference conclusions, the agricultural ministers of the countries on the opposite sides of the Mediterranean stressed the importance of agricultural cooperation in the area, pinpointing three major initiatives:

- Promotion of rural development, also involving environmental topics and the management of resources and the territory (from water resources to fighting desertification)
- Quality production achieved through exchanging information, the transformation and marketing of quality goods to maximize profits on typical Mediterranean products, the promotion of research and the introduction of regulations for identifying quality food products
- Promotion of biological agriculture in the Mediterranean area to publicize procedures for the mutual recognition of the certification process

The basic concept of the Venice conference was the complementarity of European agriculture with that on the southern shore of the Mediterranean: two agricultures on opposite shores aiming at the common development of the European agricultural model based on its quality and revitalization

# The Future of the Rural World (1988)

With an innovative approach, it highlights the existence of three macro-typologies of rural areas and consequent problems:

-***Pressure from modern evolution***, appearing in rural areas close to the big urban centres or anyway easily accessible from them with environmental problems caused by the intensity of modernization processes in agriculture and by anthropic pressure

-***Rural decline***, typical of the territories in which the undoubtedly significant role of agriculture is affected by natural and structural handicaps causing less than optimal living conditions with out-migration and relative depopulation

- ***Marginalization and difficulty of access***, where opportunities for diversification are limited and where the basic development needed for such diversification is particularly difficult to achieve

Diversified intervention strategies have been proposed for these three macro-typologies such as the protection of the environment, forestation, small and medium enterprises (SME), services, research and training

# The Cork Conference (1996)

- Rural development must be put at the top of the agenda of the European Union, to meet the needs of rural areas by improving their quality of life and the dissemination of services preserving their natural resources
- Rural development policy must be multi-disciplinary in concept, and multi-sectoral in application, encouraging the diversification of social and economic activities. It must apply to all rural areas in the Union, also through the differentiation of co-financing for those areas which are more in need.
- It is essential that local communities participate in defining and validating their own development paths based on clearer and simpler regulations integrated into a single reference framework and a single programme design.
- Rural development must complement agricultural policies, becoming an instrument which will:

- enable structural changes in the agricultural sector to give competitiveness by reducing production costs and consequently reducing prices
- promote an environmentally sustainable agriculture and anyway of quality
- encourage maintaining and developing the social and economic fabric of rural areas through diversification of agricultural activities, providing services to the population, establishing infrastructure, incentivising tourism and craft activities and creating new jobs

# Rural Development Policies in PSEM

A considerable percentage of the population still lives and works in rural areas, often in serious and widespread conditions of poverty. In these countries, the industrialization process that has solidly contributed to the development of Europe appears held back by various factors. Some difficulties are caused by unfavourable geographic and climatic conditions:

- Extremely fragile agro-ecological systems
- Infertile land, subject to serious desertification
- Limited water resources
- Frequent and lengthy periods of drought or violent flooding
- Increasing pressure on natural resources caused by persistent and high rates of demographic growth

# Rural Development Policies in PSEM(2)

Other obstacles for the rural poor have an institutional origin; they include:

- lack of legally guaranteed access to resources (land, water, credit, information and technology) and to markets
- respect of rights such as health, the possibility of correct nutrition, of studying and acquiring skills
- profound economic and social inequalities, especially to the detriment of women
- modest participation of the most disadvantaged social groups in the management of resources and exercise of power in local development processes

In the EU, rural development policies aim at improving the quality of life of the rural population in terms of income for agricultural producers and services for residents. However, in the PSEM one of the prime objectives is that of guaranteeing the survival of rural populations and especially of the more vulnerable groups (small producers, farm workers, those without land). These latter live in extremely precarious conditions because of the variability of the climate, the fluctuation of world prices of imported and exported agricultural products, the reduction of jobs in oil extraction countries and the closing of European borders

## Diversification in the PSEM Rural Areas

- In the PSEM, pluriactivity is above all a survival strategy for the poorer families without much land who diversify their means of support to minimize risks (of drought for example) and provide income at difficult times and during inactive seasons when there is less work available on other people's land
- The more traditional non-agricultural rural jobs, of a craft nature for example, based on skills handed down in the family, coexist with a more modern and dynamic non-agricultural sector, in expansion thanks to an increased local demand in the building, commerce and transport sectors
- To enable families in rural areas to start up non-agricultural activities it is necessary to build the capacity of individuals and create a local context that offers everyone (even the poorer categories and women) sufficient stimuli, guarantees and opportunities

# The Challenges of Globalization

For rural territories, globalization represents both a threat and an opportunity

A threat because it tends to eliminate geographical and juridical barriers linked to identity, etc. that guarantee protection of the craft and cultural products and traditions of the rural world; an opportunity because specific products and services can be promoted and marketed despite isolation and distance

It enables new types of short circuits to be created, bypassing intermediaries and distributors. Many agricultural or typical specialty producers are discovering the new potentialities of e-business, especially if belonging to a network

## The Challenges of Globalization (2)

For this reason, the first challenge for rural territories is the capacity to guarantee a presence in the spaces created by globalization where new forms of exchange, transfer, solidarity, etc. can become levers for relaunching the area, so that actors can:

- get to know one another and start up exchanges of experiences and good practices, establishing contacts and relationships
- benefit from experiences carried out elsewhere, also in urban areas
- share certain services and make them more profitable, exploiting them in different territories
- recognize complementarity among territories
- create solidarity, in particular with the most disadvantaged areas

## The Challenges of Globalization(3)

To meet the challenges of globalization, rural territories must adopt a twofold approach:

- 1.assert the importance of the local dimension to experiment new responses to the transformations of markets, of relationships, of forms of citizen expression
- 2.develop instruments for guaranteeing integration in other spaces, such as real and virtual networks, to emphasize the distinctive elements of “proximity”, widely perceived as offering guarantees, security and quality

In this context, rural territories are obliged to reposition themselves on the market using their “traceability” (identification, along the entire production and distribution line, of the origin, producer, production methods, etc. ), in other words highlighting the qualitative differences in products

## The Challenges of Globalization(4)

For example, the measures for combating the desertification trend in some Mediterranean countries (decreasing water resources and vegetation, soil erosion) entail a global competitiveness, that is :

- making consumers aware of quality products from production systems that combat desertification (*from local to global*)
- creating forms of solidarity and transfer among territories tackling this type of problem (*interlocal*)
- capacity to establish a dialogue with other levels (regional, national, European) to adapt related policies (*local-global coordination*)
- application at local level of international agreements, in particular the UN charter to combat desertification (*from global to local*)

# Importance of Cooperation among Rural Territories

Four types of inter-territorial relationships can be considered:

- Relationships based on geographical proximity, relationships established with neighbouring territories
- Relationships based on thematic proximity, relationships created with other territories that share similar preoccupations or aims, to achieve exchanges, cooperation projects or lobbying
- Relationships of solidarity and transfer, established with territories that are not necessarily close either on the geographical level or on that of intervention themes, but with whom it is possible to create solidarity relationships and/or start up a know-how transfer process
- Relationships established inside a geographical unit (region, country, Europe) to strengthen the capacity for the policy consultations essential for dialogue between the local level and national, regional and/or European administrations

# Importance of Cooperation among Rural Territories (2)

Establishing relationships with other territories is a wide-ranging process involving various stages, of which four can be distinguished :

- Identifying the common interest – in this stage the actors discover their similarities, differences and aims that can lead to cooperation projects
- Defining a joint strategy - for example designing a series of common actions for developing new activities or consolidating existing ones
- Carrying out the action plan – passing from the idea to action often implies a new learning process so that consultation will still be necessary
- Obtaining recognition – common strategies reveal new collective positions and new actors, requiring the creation of structures, consortia, brands, quality regulations, etc. Lobbying is often necessary to achieve recognition

# Conclusions

1. A concept shared by different territories is a tool for occupying the spaces created by globalization, exploiting the resources of each area by creating new fields, strong points and capacities and helping areas to position themselves in the global context through market areas and communication
2. A concept shared by various territories enables new dimensions, real or virtual, to be achieved also in the case of resources thought to be irretrievably lost
3. A concept shared by various territories allows activities to be started up in new sectors

In addition, transfers and exchanges underpinned by forms of solidarity enrich LEADER groups know-how and knowledge

## Conclusions (2)

- Planning appropriate technical solutions: preparing a local product often requires research and development activities that a single territory or a group of producers can find it difficult to implement alone
- Mutual training: to work out joint responses to a series of challenges, whether they be technical (training courses, know-how exchanges), promotional or commercial (collective participation in fairs and shows, commercial export actions) agreements are needed between local enterprises and associations of producers
- Identification of common needs and joint research into targeted solutions: mainly expressed with strategic actions aimed at establishing common regulations for creating new references; integrating international norms and agreements in local practices; designing tools for making citizens aware of the need to respect the rural environment; making consumers in urban areas understand that a greater consideration of the environment improves quality; safeguarding biodiversity
- Creating forms of solidarity through a learning process: cooperation among territories in which groups of local actors help to define suitable strategies for purely rural areas as well as identifying and informing inhabitants on the challenges in their respective territories

# The LEADER MED Project

- In December 2005 the Puglia Region with IAM-Bari started up a transnational cooperation project between the Puglia LAGs and Mediterranean partners within the framework of the Leader project
- The aim of this project is to combine the complementarity and reciprocal advantages of typical Mediterranean products to boost their competitiveness in the global market

*Italy, and Puglia in particular, for its geographical position, history and culture, can play a crucial role in relaunching Euro-Mediterranean policies*

# Partner Countries

## Italian Partners

9 Puglia LAGs: Alto Salento (lead partner), Capo S. Maria di Leuca, Daunofantino, Gargano, Luoghi del Mito, Meridaunia, Piana del Tavoliere, Terra d'Arneo, Terre del Primitivo.

## Foreign Institutional Partners

- Turkey (Izmir Governorate)
- Syria (Generale Commission for Agriculture)
- Lebanon (Ministry of Agriculture)
- Malta (Ministry of Rural and Environmental Affairs)

## Foreign Socio-Economic Partners

- Turkey (Karaburun Women Agro-Tourism Cooperative)
- Syria (Idleb Chamber of Commerce)
- Lebanon (Friends of Byblos Association)

## Main Objectives

- Foster the exchange of know-how between Mediterranean EU and non-member countries, aimed at sharing a common regulatory context for environmental protection, food safety and animal welfare by transferring and sharing rural development policies carried out at European level and, specifically within the framework of the Leader programme and LAG model
- Foster new governance methods that can stimulate forms of integration and synergies among local enterprises, encouraging their gradual consolidation and at the same time giving the enterprises and the territory development opportunities and tools in line with their respective economic, social, productive and organizational features

## Actions

1. An institutional network has been set up between the Puglia Region, the LAG leader and institutional representatives of the Mediterranean non-member countries as well as a network between the LAGs and equivalent structures of non-member countries, with the aim of fostering exchanges
2. Communication initiatives are in place as well as joint activities to encourage meetings and cooperation between the territories and actors; the aim is to build a pathway towards the common Mediterranean area
3. Four Mediterranean pathways have been implemented for revitalizing rural areas (*pilot projects*) using local typical products as a catalyst theme
4. Various participations in international fairs have been organized (Mediterre, BIT of Milan, etc.) with representatives from both the Puglia LAGs and MNC

## Pilot Project

## LAG

## MNC

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Mediterranean pathways for the revitalization of olive oil

Alto Salento, Terra d'Arneo

Syria

Mediterranean pathways for the revitalization of typical products of mountain and hill areas

Capo S. Maria di Leuca,  
Meridaunia

Malta

Gargano

Lebanon

Mediterranean pathways for the integrated revitalization of rural areas

Daunofantino, Luoghi del Mito,  
Piana del Tavoliere, Terre del  
Primitivo

Turkey

## Mediterranean Pathways for the Revitalization of Olive Oil

- Organization of two thematic pathways, the *Road of the Centuries-Old Olive Trees Park in Upper Salento* and the *Road of the Olive Trees of the Idleb Region*, integrating and exploiting the main attractions of the two territories (sites of natural, historic, cultural and archaeological interest, centuries-old olive trees, underground oil extraction plants, rock dwellings, craft workshops, restaurants serving local dishes, etc.)
- Creation of a development agency on the LAG model in the governorate of Idleb (to be carried out by the LAG Terra d'Arneo) based on a public-private partnership for promoting rural development delegated to the Road management
- Identification of financial support for the agency that could come from both public funds and the Road management

## Mediterranean Pathways for the Revitalization of Typical Products of Mountain and Hill Areas

- Technical visits to Malta by Puglia representatives, participation in training courses and study-tours in Puglia in LAG partner facilities and participation in international fairs
- Organization of seminars and thematic workshops in the Maltese Ministry of Agriculture, meetings with local producers to share information, express specific needs and create opportunities for exchanges among the different actors in the territory
- Organization of a Mediterranean pathway for revitalizing typical products of the mountain and hill areas of Gargano and Lebanon through the ancient Roman Appian Way that links the two countries: starting from Rome it ends in Brindisi to take up again in Byblos
- Organization of various meetings and common events with Lebanese actors in the agri-food and catering field, mapping out further activities in the agricultural, cultural and tourism sectors

# Mediterranean Pathways for the Integrated Revitalization of Rural Areas

- Promotion of tourist packages for rural areas consisting of an international itinerary and individual eco-tourist, food and wine and historic-cultural itineraries
- The Puglia LAGs have collected numerous demonstrations of interest from single enterprises, companies and consortia working in the agri-food and craft sectors, SMEs in the tourism sector, public authorities, associations managing museums, sites or monument of particular historic, cultural or natural interest
- Drafting and signature by all the authorities and enterprises supporting the project of a Tourist Charter to satisfy users' needs respecting the principles of courtesy, equality, participation, impartiality and efficiency

## Results

The transfer of exchanges of experiences, strengthened by forms of solidarity, has enriched the Puglia LAGs knowledge and know-how, enabling them to :

- a) Work out the appropriate technical solutions for complementary exchanges of know-how and establish contacts with specialist centres prompted by a new level or more recent needs
- b) Work out joint responses to a series of challenges both of a technical (e.g. training) and promotional or commercial nature
- c) Establish common regulations for creating new positions, integrating international norms and agreements in local practices, creating tools for making citizens aware of the need to respect the rural environment, protect ingbiodiversity
- d) Identify more suitable strategies for purely rural areas, as well as identifying and informing inhabitants on the challenges in their respective territories

**Thank you for your  
attention!!!**

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