



Mountain Partnership
Partenariat de la montagne
Alianza para las Montañas

CSD 17 Partnerships Fair working session

Promoting mountain economies: high value, high quality products for better lives

Organiser: Mountain Partnership Secretariat

Time and date: Wednesday 6 May, 15:00 – 18:00

Venue: Conference Room 6

Introduction:

Many mountain communities are plagued by poverty, food insecurity and a lack of economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. In some regions, food insecurity is due to harsh physical situations, out-migration and political instability. In other regions, however, periods of hunger arise as mountain farmers abandon traditional farming practices in favour of methods that are unsustainable on fragile mountain terrain.

A sustainable and integrated economy needs to be developed in mountain areas, which can promote and foster the wellbeing of local communities, granting access to a decent quality of life, reducing hunger, poverty and out-migration. Clearly, mountain agriculture cannot compete with the prices and volumes of lowland production and has to concentrate on high-value, high quality products in order to be economically viable.

Mountain people typically face many obstacles to producing, marketing and selling high-quality, high-value products; these obstacles include weak communication infrastructures; lack of information, training and expertise in new agricultural and other technologies; lack of registration, certification and labelling to protect products; inadequate marketing skills; lack of wider market access; high transport costs; and unfair trade.

The 'globalization of markets' is offering important new opportunities for competitive producers at the national, regional and international levels for products such as coffee, cocoa, honey, herbs, spices and handicrafts.

Although many of these sought-after products and services come from mountain areas, mountain people rarely exploit the market potential and reap the benefits. Indeed, they are often still engaged in producing staple commodities whose prices are declining and markets are being squeezed.

The potential for high-quality, high-value products to increase the incomes and improve the livelihoods of mountain farmers – and be a motor for local development of mountain communities - exists in every major region of the world. So how can we transform products from mountains into high-quality, high-value products? And how can we enable mountain people to access niche markets, compete in markets and fetch premium prices for their high-quality, high-value goods and services at home and abroad? How can we ensure that higher incomes from quality products will translate in significant broad-based local development and what are some of the constraints or impediments that need to be overcome to achieve this?

Objective:

To exchange experience on actions to support local economies in mountain regions in order to create greater awareness of the role of quality products in local development efforts.

Target audience:

Participants to CSD and in particular mountainous country delegations and other major group stakeholders.

Experts/trainer/instructors:

Speakers will include:

1. Dean Cycon from Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company and Solomon Mekonnen, an official from the Ethiopia Government presenting how local communities and private and public sectors are working together to develop fair-trade, high quality organic coffee production in Ethiopia in order to improve the income of small local producers and become a motor for local development.
2. Candra Day from Vista 360, an NGO working in Central Asia, linking local women's groups of felt producers to the high-end fashion market in New York and elsewhere.
3. Alison Griffith from the International NGO Practical Action presenting their work in Nepal on re-building dairy value chains after years of conflict, and in Cajamarca, Peru on the role of a multi-stakeholder forum in facilitating mountain cheese value chains.
4. Bob Davis from The Mountain Institute presenting their work in supporting cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants in eastern Nepal and traditional Tibetan potters in Yunnan, China.

Methodology of the session:

The session will be divided in two parts. During the first hour, four cases will be presented with concrete examples provided by the representatives of the private sector, local farmers and country representatives; the second part of the meeting will be devoted to questions and answers and constructive dialogue among participants.

Expected outcomes:

Participants of the event are expected to be better informed about the potential of a value chain approach to develop high-value products and local economies, the types of products or services that show promising results and the processes involved in contributing to successful ventures that feed into local development. Ideally participants will be in a position to promote such approaches in their own countries, understand potential constraints and how to overcome them, and be willing to foster strong enabling environments to support such actions.

Relevance to CSD: the event will be linked to the following thematic issues of CSD-17:

- Africa
- Agriculture
- Rural development

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