

>> SYNTHESIZE MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

## Submitted Abstract

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## Abstract

In the Italian Alps, in the Val Camonica, a subset of new, long-term, and returning farmers propose a model for the future of their valley that is based in agriculture. Their perception is that the dominant model of development grounded in industry and tourism is not successfully promoting the economic development of the valley nor is it contributing to the preservation of the valley's unique natural and cultural heritage, a heritage intimately tied to an agricultural past. The sustainable development of the valley going forward depends on agriculture and the realization of a new Alpine foodscape. This paper presents the elements of a new foodscape in Val Camonica as described by the farmers who live and work there and analyzes the factors that have contributed to its emergence. The paper then provides an example of a project underway aimed at realizing this new foodscape, addressing the project's successes and the challenges it has faced.

At the core of the new foodscape is the idea that agricultural activities should contribute to the appearance and functionality of the landscape and to individual well-being, social transformation, and environmental preservation. Farmers advocate for agriculture that is based in traditional methods and products and that prioritizes the preservation and protection of Alpine natural and cultural heritage. Economic viability is fundamental. Product prices must reflect the cost of their production. Consumers must be educated on the true value of products from the mountains, and what these products give back to the environment. Building greater community support for agriculture is essential. Subsidies should be redesigned to reflect the many ecosystem services mountain agriculture provides and political and bureaucratic requirements should be streamlined.

The Biodistretto of Valcamonica and its Paesaggi Resilienti project are active in realizing this new foodscape. The Biodistretto is an association of farmers, citizens, associations, and public administrations dedicated to the sustainable management of local resources, with a focus on agriculture. The Paesaggi Resilienti project has the specific goal of counteracting agricultural abandonment by bringing together diverse stakeholders capable, "of using agriculture for development, social cohesion, and participation as well as a tool for improving well-being, collaboration between public and private sector, and the protection and maintenance of the landscape." Thirteen farms are involved in the project, with more farms hoping to join. Their efforts are transforming the foodscape of the Val Camonica in ways that could prove critical to the future of mountain farming.