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[Mountain rural development through the lens of value chain: The case of Iberian Ham PDO Los Pedroches (Andalusia, Spain)]

[Mountains are home to 16% of Europe's population, cover 36% of the European area, and deliver key ecosystem services. However, they are significantly exposed to challenges such as climate change and depopulation, among others. In the present study, which is part of the [MOVING H2020 Project](#) (2020-2024), we apply a novel conceptual approach (Moretti et al, 2021), interrelating two theoretical concepts: value chain (VC) and social-ecological system (SES) (Berkes and Folke, 1998). In contrast to the conventional VC approach that is mainly focused on economic valorisation, MOVING analyses mountain VCs as SESs; i.e. how natural resources provide the basis for the VC; and how traditional and innovative social practices shape and maintain the landscapes. MOVING perspective lets us analyse and illustrate: 1) how the natural resources shape VCs; 2) which types of value (not just economic, but also, environmental, social, and cultural) are created at different stages of the VC; 3) the *who* dimension; i.e. who else and from which scale contribute to the creation of the values and who else and from which scale benefit from the created values; 3) what and how challenges impact different stages of the VCs; and finally 4) how the governance approaches and policy environments can be designed to better support those VCs that contribute to the resilience and sustainability of the mountain regions. For the empirical analysis, here we present one of the 23 mountain VC case studies of the MOVING, which is focused on Iberian ham Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) Los Pedroches, as a VC in Sierra Morena Mountain range in Cordoba (Spain). This VC represents a key social practice and a high value-added final product associated to a unique agroforestry system of the Iberian Peninsula, called *dehesa* (in Spain) or *montado* (in Portugal). Specific Iberian pig breed, being grazed freely in the *dehesa* system, and being fed with acorns (nuts from holm oaks) and pastures, lead to a fat marbling and unique healthy, delicious, and highly valorised final product. We have carried out a participatory case study approach, in which we have first created a local and regional multi-actor platform (part of the European MOVING community of practice for mountain VCs) to work together with the stakeholders and co-create knowledge. We have applied several techniques such as interviews, participatory workshops, participant observation, and desktop analysis to understand this VC and its grounding in the biophysical and socioeconomic reality of the territory. The results show that the establishment of an EU quality scheme (PDO – Los Pedroches) in 2010, with the requirement of having every step of the production, processing, and preparation stages to be taken place in the specific region of Los Pedroches, has played a key role in the territorial valorisation of the product. Producers and industries ascribed to the PDO are increasing continuously, and this means more employment and income for the territory as well as a better guarantee for the continuation of VC's traditional social practice that is key to the multi-functionality and biodiversity of the high nature value farming system of *dehesa* (Pinto-Correia et al., 2018). The presence of one of the biggest Spanish Cooperatives in the region has been key in joining forces, providing relevant horizontal links within the governance system, and triggering the emergence of the PDO. However, climate change (drought and short rain fall effect on holm oaks), difficult access to land, intermittent and long-term revenues, and generational renewal, are some of the key challenges that threaten the future of this VC. The study highlights the need for an updated conducive enabling environment (infrastructure, policies, and governance approaches) to support this VC and its contribution to the resilient and sustainable mountain rural development.

Bibliographic references

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