

**Speech at the Committee of the Regions on the opinion on Agropastoralism  
(17th of June, 2019)**

***Commission for Natural Resources (NAT)***

We assure our full support for this opinion paper as it raises so many crucial issues on maintaining this part of Europe's living heritage which is related to pastoralism.

We would emphasize the following completions

Maintaining pastoralism is vital not only for farming across the EU, but also for achieving biodiversity conservation targets as well as local knowledge types related to landscape management. Pastoralism is an essential slice of High Nature Value farming.

The implementation of an ecologically and economically sustainable, nature friendly and economically viable pastoralism is hampered by a range of difficulties. Some of these difficulties are related to current definitions of policies (especially CAP), such as those related to the lack of recognition of the value of sparse trees and shrubs in **enhancing the resilience**, natural and economic potential of pastures, and enhancing the relational values of pastures for the local community (community gatherings, communal management).

The support for economic viability and natural values of pastoral systems should be based on understanding **the social and ecological resilience of these systems** also in the context of increasing climatic extremes. With a resilience approach to pastoral management, the mentioned disregarded features of the grazed ecosystems like the presence of non-herbaceous vegetation, wood pastures and silvopastoral practices will receive new recognition, because of their roles in regulating microclimate and erosion (regulating ecosystem service), as sources of extra nutrients and food for

livestock and people (option values, provisioning ecosystem services), aesthetic-cultural (cultural ecosystems services) and natural values (biodiversity).

Regarding the proposed term "permanent pasture" caution should be used so as not to exclude other forms of complex land uses related to pastoralism such as high nature value hay meadows, that can also include sparse trees and non herbaceous vegetation.

We have to bear in mind that pastoralism includes and is organically connected to hay making and hay meadows in many mountainous areas as sources of winter fodder, that represent a special cultural and biodiversity value. Extensive hay meadows are often even more threatened than pastures by abandonment and land use change, therefore deserve special attention, also when it comes to setting up terminology.

We fully support taking up the concept of silvopastoralism, as traditional pastoralism is much more complex than current definitions of agricultural areas. Caution should be applied that increased support does not lead to unsustainable practices like overgrazing.

While guard dogs are very important for pastoralism, it is necessary to promote responsible shepherd dog management, because without such a component, guard dogs represent a threat for tourism and biodiversity/game management.

We fully support the recognition of ecosystem services provided by farmers and pastoralists in mountainous/rural areas also for the resilience and heritage reasons mentioned above.

Increasing investments in pastoral areas, especially regarding mechanised access. However, such investments should be carefully planned so as to avoid excessive spendings and negative effects on biodiversity and landscapes.

Pastoral land associations and collective land management also exist in Transylvania, playing major role in agriculture, forestry and landscapes. Such models should be analysed using complex approaches and carefully designed aid schemes should be applied for their promotion and continued functioning.

We agree that the development of brands connected to pastoralism should be fully supported ideally under the umbrella of wider brands.

We fully support the plea for the recognition of the difficulties caused by predators and of the need for protection of livestock. Member states should fully use the financial tools offered by the CAP to promote investments to prevent damages and support pastoralism, especially in areas with high large carnivore populations. Local and regional platforms on coexistence with large carnivores should be supported as they allow for bottom-up initiatives and better integration of policies.

We agree that cross-border cooperation could enhance solidarity and would deepen the perceptions of the biocultural heritage role and functional resilience role of pastoralism.

Decisions need to be based on the best available knowledge in the field of natural and social sciences and agronomy, moreover, academia should be encouraged to seek direct relations to the field and towards continuous transdisciplinary research.

Regarding the using of world heritage as a tool to enhance the economic and social sustainability of rural areas in Europe, we would encourage taking up the usage of

the term biocultural heritage to properly capture both the biodiversity related and cultural related values inherent to pastoralism.

Raising the profile of this occupation within and beyond the farm sector, also through increasing the European Structural Funds funding allocated to vocational training in rural areas. Improving the living and working conditions in mountain pastures and in farming areas, is a crucial component of mountain economies also in the Carpathians as we witness the rapid decline of available and properly trained workforce.