MOVING
MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth

Policy Brief

# SPANISH PYRENEES | Vignerons de Huesca

Photo credit: Alejandro Ascaso and Antonio Palacios

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MOVING
MOUNTAIN VALORISATION THROUGH INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND GREEN GROWTH

# Vignerons de Huesca in Spanish Pyrenees

*Ekaterina Kleshcheva, Antonio Palacios, Alejandro Ascaso*


## Summary

The region of Hoya de Huesca is a transition zone between the pre-Pyrenean mountains and the Ebro valley. A newly reborn mountain wine value chain is now in its first development stages. Progressive depopulation and labour shortage have pushed farmers towards a dominant grain monoculture system, though not competitive at national and global scale. Vineyards were abandoned to make room for less demanding crops. Recently, some farmers decided to replant vineyards in the area, taking advantage of climate change. Viticulture and wine production remains marginal for Huesca, but it's the only farming activity that grants sufficient income to farmers and may help the social revival of villages. The peculiarity of this reborn wine region is the absence of external investors, while the initiative relays on few entrepreneurial local or neo-rural producers, gathering actors along the entire value chain, setting synergies with tourism and creating quality brands for the development of the whole territory. The community interaction is a main feature of the value chain.

Figure 1: Winter landscape with Bodega Edra vineyards

## Key Policy Messages

- ☞ Attract younger generations of professionals to live and work in mountains
- ☞ Develop infrastructures
- ☞ Easing the administrative burden on the farmers
- ☞ Uptake of economic diversification opportunities

## 1. *Mountain wine production by Vignerons de Huesca: young but promising Value Chain*

The region of Hoya de Huesca is a transition zone between the pre-Pyrenean mountains and the Ebro valley. The Huesca region is located in the so-called "depopulated Spain" (España vaciada). About half of the province's surface is flat arable land occupied by intensive culture of cereals and animal breeding.

Mountain wine production in Huesca province is a relatively young value chain, but based on a strong historical background. Progressive depopulation and the shortage of labour have pushed farms toward a dominant grain monoculture system, which is not competitive on the national and global markets. Vineyard production has been reduced to make room for less demanding crops. Recently, some farmers have decided to replant vineyards in these mountainous

regions, trying to take advantage of the benefits offered by climate change.

The community synergy and interaction is among the main features of the value chain.

The area has a high level of vulnerability caused by the abandonment, emigration and climate change.

## 2. Value chain contribution to resilience and sustainability

The Wine production in pre-mountain areas is a traditional activity developed along centuries. It established a sustainable relationship between natural resources exploitation and the human communities needs and their culture. Hoya de Huesca, the door from Pyrenees, since Romans time, have therefore contributed to the management of forests and water basins essential for downstream activities and ecosystem services. Vineyards are a clear example where traditional productions innovated for facing contemporary market, so allowing local population to stay in places where it is possible to develop a virtuous relationship between nature and man with both local and systemic economic and environmental advantages. It allowed the development of resilience initiatives, fit to face contemporary challenges (environmental, economic, etc.).

Local wines and foods with a traditional character or image are often perceived by consumers as of higher quality. This region has maintained ancient genotypes and traditional recipes of typical food specialities.

Nowadays, the combination of geographical origin and typical food is a useful tool to increase the touristic appeal of the area, if supported by acknowledged high quality standards. Information on the origin, intrinsic properties (e.g., nutritional value) and sensory traits can be conveniently explored as tools to be combined for communicating typical food quality.

The value chain is a virtuous example of the combination of traditional and innovative productions for the contemporary market, allowing the population to integrate agricultural incomes with other economics activities. Up to 50% of activities of the VC take place in the area and up to 70% of value generated by wine production stays in the territory and the local community

## 3. Policy experiences

The use of National and European funds offers an opportunity to develop and support such initiatives and to replicate best practices. At the same time, the complex procedures for accessing European funding and the need to identify elements of innovation in response to contemporary challenges are limiting factors, requiring skills that are often not present among the actors in the area. This often leads to the fact that only large industries and big private companies can become direct beneficiaries of different policy initiatives.

## 4. Recommendation for future policies

- **Economic actions:**
  - Subsidies for interesting projects that bring the added value for the territory.
  - Review of environmental standards and **easing the administrative burden on rights and permits**;

easing environmental regulations for business and pioneer settlements for the first years after establishment.

- Tax incentives for entrepreneurs and deductions in social security contributions.
- Investment in **infrastructure**: roads, ruts, electricity and quality water network, sewerage, internet, broadband, digital fiber, social networks, leisure and cultural centres, playgrounds, spaces for families, restaurants, pharmacies, grocery stores.
- Investment in the **communication** and dissemination of private projects to be undertaken through common enterprise brand efforts.
- Creation of interpretation centres of agriculture in general and especially of mountain viticulture subject in rural areas.
- Legal definition of a new category of mountain and/or landscape wines and provide free planting rights for young farmers willing to join at the rural territory.
- **Facilitate the substitution of less profitable crops by vineyards**, which can also facilitate the control of forest fires.
- Creation of PACs that affect producer farmers instead of landowners.

➢ **Social actions:**

- Organisation of **courses related to mountain wine projects and investment** in solvent rural training centers.
- Facilitate the arrival of foreigners to rural territories.
- **Training in R+D+i** for the business network, especially young entrepreneurs.
- Construction of public housing at affordable prices and creation of autonomous and pleasant residential areas. Aid for social rents and the formation of social cooperatives.


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## Authors

*Ekaterina Kleshcheva*
*ekaterina.kleshcheva@vinidea.it*

*Antonio Palacios*
*apalacios@labexcell.es*

*Alejandro Ascaso Sarasa*

*edra@bodega-edra.com*