Chestnut Flour – A Tuscan heritage and a local pride

Topic
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The chestnut flour industry in the Northern Apennines is a vital heritage for local communities, influencing economic, environmental, and social aspects.

Historically integral to the Tuscany Apennines since the 11th century, despite competing with more profitable sectors like marble extraction and seaside tourism, the chestnut flour sector economically supports small-scale farmers, provides jobs, and combats rural depopulation. Environmentally, chestnut cultivation prevents soil erosion, boosts biodiversity, and aids in carbon sequestration and water retention. Socially, it strengthens community ties and preserves cultural heritage. Climate change and depopulation affects chestnut flour production both directly and indirectly by decreasing chestnut yields and increasing chestnut groves abandonment, respectively. Stakeholders agreed on a scenario characterized by a well-balanced coexistence of new inhabitants and wild nature to preserve the natural environment and promote a sustainable living. This includes political and institutional support in building up a framework to sustain firms that choose to invest in the area, to incentivize sustainable resource management promoting community responsibility and environmental stewardship (e.g., the “Custodi della Montagna” initiative, civic use rights of collective-owned goods), to promote the collaboration with regional parks, to support small scaling agroecological farming practices, trainings for farmers, and to promote the institution of local technical committee for addressing the specific challenges and needs of rural communities.

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