

## CASE STUDY SI-3

### Agricultural based development strategies for areas hits by economic crisis (Slovenia)

#### BRIEF PROFILE OF THE CASE STUDY

- The case study focuses on the hilly Pomurje region in north-eastern Slovenia (200-450 m elevation); mainly on 11 municipalities, representing 46 200 ha and 26 700 inhabitants. The majority of the territory falls in the area of the **Landscape park Goričko**.
- The local economy relies on **agriculture**, it is poorly diversified since the collapse of industry which led to massive unemployment, emigration, an ageing population, low level of education and rural poverty. Daily commuting to Austria for work helps mitigate poverty but exacerbates the **downfall of traditional farming** and landscape preservation. Agriculture is currently undergoing consolidation and intensification; but there are some good practice examples (cheese factory, social farms, winemakers).
- Farming conditions are not good; mainly characterized by fragmented structure and small holdings, unspecialised family (subsistence) farms; overgrowth. Recently, waves of young ‘start-up’ farmers have immigrated bringing fresh ideas and some creative potential.
- Key environmental and social benefits: **Maintaining rural vitality, habitat conservation and food production** (traditional Goričko meadow most endangered, but inseparable from people).
- Actors: Farmers and SMEs, institutions (municipalities, LAGs, public services, Landscape park), successful individual entrepreneurs.



Typical landscape of Goričko

#### KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Public policies (EU & national) are not stopping negative trends despite a broad array of measures and funding such as: lack of fine-tuning and tailoring to local needs; partial solutions and misapplication of funds; design of key conservation measures that do not meet real conditions, but constrain agriculture, with questionable environmental effects; inadequate spatial planning leading to illogical allocation of land-use units and loss of biotic and cultural diversity; no direct environmental control.
- Human element: no collective vision and cooperation, perceived conflict between environment and conventional agriculture (inertia from transition); slow response to market changes and lack of entrepreneurship & creative leading individuals
- General reluctance to follow good examples, innovate, connect; mistrust and passivity dominate; slow response to market drivers and weak private initiative;
- Increasing appreciation of region, tourism potential.

#### EMERGING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- How to keep permanent grasslands while neither abandoning nor intensifying farming practices? Stronger development of environmentally friendly land management practices; farmers could make better use of representation through the park, its existing collective trademark; use comparative advantages; develop stronger, labour-intensive value chains to enable market valuation of environmental and social benefits, e.g. social entrepreneurship; intensive and organised work with young people needed: education, training, cooperation.
- Innovative solutions needed in land management, organisation, value chains, nature protection.
- Tailoring of policy measures is required.
- Perception that agriculture and conservation are contradictory must be overcome.



Successful practices exist

