

## **SMART ERA – Summary of the participatory process report in Val di Sole**

This report retraces the participatory path that unfolded in Val di Sole, Trentino, Italy, as part of SMART ERA project. It covers three distinct moments, from early exploration to operational planning, through which the focus of the local intervention took shape.

Everything started in autumn 2024, when a first workshop in Malé gathered 32 stakeholders with very different profiles: farmers, technicians, institutional representatives, research bodies, tourism operators, associations, forestry professionals, and managers of the valley's protected areas. Working around facilitated thematic tables, participants mapped out challenges, untapped potential, and long-term perspectives for the two supply chains considered strategic for the territory: dairy and forestry.

On the forestry side, discussions pointed to climate change impacts, rigid regulations on forest management, a shortage of skilled labour, and the fact that the ecosystem services provided by forests still lack proper economic recognition. The dairy sector, meanwhile, painted a picture of mounting difficulties: alpine pasture management is increasingly complex, production costs are rising, bureaucracy weighs heavily, finding staff is hard, wildlife pressure is growing, and the social image of farming has lost much of its appeal. Yet alongside these issues, participants also saw real opportunities, the farmer's multifunctional role as a guardian of the landscape, the chance to better communicate the quality and distinctiveness of local products, and a shared appetite for a model grounded in traditional practices, animal welfare, and environmental care.

In January 2025, after further reflection within the project team (Fondazione Bruno Kessler, the Autonomous Province of Trento, and local administrations), the decision was made to channel the first phase of implementation into the dairy supply chain, seen as more ready for a targeted, concrete intervention.

A second workshop followed in Pellizzano in February 2025. With 22 participants from the dairy world, the conversation went deeper into co-design. What emerged was a rich articulation of the sector's core values: pasture and transhumance not just as farming practices but as biodiversity drivers, the daily attention to animals as something that defines the profession, the family ties with the alpine hut as a way of passing down knowledge, and cheese itself as something that carries history, skill, and genuine passion.

The third workshop, back in Malé in April 2025, marked the shift towards action. Participants converged on a structured plan organised around four pillars:

1. Supply chain visibility: building a traceability system that narrates the product's journey from pasture to table.
2. Producer storytelling: developing video interviews, alpine hut diaries, and multimedia content that bring out the human dimension behind each product.
3. Cultural memory and identity: collecting objects, photographs, oral testimonies, and family stories through community-driven initiatives, creating a living archive of dairy heritage and alpine culture.
4. Youth engagement: reaching younger generations through creative contests and educational projects run in partnership with local hospitality schools, reconnecting them with the territory and its traditions.

A wide range of tools will support these actions: traceability technologies, video and infographic content, interactive maps, QR codes, apps, school activities, travelling exhibitions, public events, and a digital storytelling platform currently being planned.

What comes next is translating all of this into practice, assessing feasibility, securing resources, identifying the right partners and realistic timelines. The ambition is to turn what has been a genuinely collective effort into actions that are coherent, effective, and rooted.