

NETHERLANDS

Innovation & cooperation

Location

South Holland

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P1 – Knowledge transfer & innovation

Measure

M1 – Knowledge transfer & information actions

Funding

Total budget 98 542 (EUR)
EAFRD 29 468 (EUR)
National/Regional 29 469 (EUR)
Private / own 39 605 (EUR)

Project duration

2018 to 2021

Project promoter

Stichting Biologisch Goed Van Eigen Erf

Email

iris@vaneigenerf.nl

Website

<https://vaneigenerf.nl/>

A CAP-funded knowledge sharing project to promote direct marketing and to bridge the gap between producers and consumers in the Netherlands.

Summary

This knowledge sharing project financed a series of training sessions in which organic farmers shared practical information and experiences regarding direct marketing, agroecological management, culinary activities and consumer engagement. It included a series of wider communication actions that disseminated information to a wider audience through agricultural industry media outlets.



© Maria van Bortel

Project Results

The goal was to share experiences and practical knowledge and to connect farmers with consumers on their farms. This was done successfully.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Having a knowledgeable contact person to support project application submission at local institutional level would contribute to smooth and swift processing.
- ❑ Upfront capital investment is beyond the financial means of many applicants.

Context

In the past, food was an integral part of society and its culture. Nowadays, it seems that food production and food consumption have become two disconnected processes. This project sought to reconnect farmers and consumers and to restore social cohesion in the food supply chain.

South Holland is a region in the Netherlands with around 3.6 million inhabitants. Capable of covering 40 % of its demand for dairy, vegetables, fruits and wheat, there is great potential for the region to promote the consumption of locally produced food by stimulating short supply chains and the creation of farm shops.

Organic farmers led the way, sharing their experience in direct sales, customer service, farm visits and nature management through agricultural practices with other local farmers and producers. This set the stage for greater collaboration in the sector and the development of new business models.

Objectives

The aims of this project were to develop new revenue models for farmers and to exchange practical knowledge and experience that would help them take up direct marketing.

Activities

The target group of the project included both organic and conventional farmers, as well as small traders who wanted to invest in direct marketing.

Two-day workshops were held at selected farms and covered subjects like customer engagement, direct farm sales, culinary activities, product innovation and nature management through agricultural practices. Participants were able to share their ideas and experiences, with a collective focus on how to finance their innovations and enter different markets. 298 farmers participated in the training workshops.

These workshops were followed-up with targeted training sessions delivered by an experienced adviser on how to develop innovations in agriculture.

Open farm demonstration workshops were also piloted, in which farmers and citizens could network and share their knowledge and ideas on a range of issues related to food production and supply chains. During two open farm days, a total of 340 citizens visited farms and 35 joined online meetings.

Online meetings were organised for all, allowing for greater sharing of experiences and networking. 75 meetings were held online.

Published one article and several news updates in an organic journal and a flyer about marketing perspectives. Five articles were also published about the participating farms.

Main results

The goal was to foster sharing of experiences and practical knowledge between farmers and to connect farmers and consumers on-farm. This was done successfully.

The initial plan was to make a brochure to showcase some top entrepreneurs. This became an extensive handbook in the form of a manual, which includes descriptions of six entrepreneurs and their working methods. 502 copies of the book have been sold so far.

Key lessons

The time and the requirements necessary to have this project application processed by the provincial administrative department absorbed a lot of energy. To receive RDP funds requires a lot of detail and evidence, resulting in an inefficient and bureaucratic administrative process. Correcting details in timekeeping and per-hour pricing, for example, may cost more than the difference won. Having a contact person with sector knowledge and a specific mandate would contribute to a smooth process and better adaptation in the face of changing circumstances or new opportunities. However, it is debatable whether paid time should be spent on this time-consuming bureaucracy when these hours are not (well) paid for grant recipients.

Pre-financing all eligible costs for a 1.5-year period is beyond the financial means of many applicants, especially farmers. Making the CAP subsidies (including pre-financing) more easily accessible would improve access and representation across the sector.

Additional sources of information

n/a