

Germany

Innovation & cooperation

A CAP-funded educational programme raises awareness about agriculture among school students and creates a new income stream for farms as providers of educational services.

Summary

Since 2018, the Chamber of Agriculture of Rhineland-Palatinate has been implementing the project "Lernort Bauernhof" (Farm as a place of learning) in cooperation with agricultural enterprises. The project created an extracurricular learning opportunity for school children and promoted further training for teachers and farm managers. The aim is for pupils to gain insights into modern agriculture and learn where food comes from and how it is produced.



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Location

Bad Kreuznach

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P1- Knowledge transfer & innovation

Measure

M01 – Knowledge transfer & information actions

Funding

RDP budget 469 500 (EUR)

Project duration

2017 – 2022

Project promoter

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Project Results

Between 2018 and 2022, 111 participant farms delivered 762 teaching sessions to 12 928 pupils.

At the end of the project in 2025, it is expected that 100 of the participant farms will have actively established themselves as extracurricular learning providers, continuing to offer educational services in order to diversify their income and maintain this public-facing aspect of their farming practice.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ An important success factor of this project is the good cooperation between the ministries involved (education, climate, and economy) within the framework of a steering committee that brings together professional associations, representatives of the educational partners, and working groups in connection with the learning farms.
- ❑ Contractual agreements between the municipalities, schools and farms ensure mutual understanding and sustainable partnerships.

Context

Farm-based education is a great way to transmit competences in the field of sustainable development. Farm educators do valuable work bringing children and young people closer to the everyday realities of running a farm and producing high-quality food. This kind of opportunity may inspire them to pursue a future career in the "green professions".

During the 2007-2013 programming period, EAFRD funds were used to deliver a farm-based educational programme for schools in Rhineland-Palatinate. When it ended, the 75 participating farms continued to offer a reduced programme of educational services to schools thanks to some short-term funding from the Rhineland-Palatinate Ministries of Agriculture and Environment. Additionally, the Chamber of Agriculture was able to support the personnel costs involved with coordinating the programme during the time between the funding periods. However, with so many farms wishing to resume offering a full programme, and having had such success the first time around, a longer-term source of funding was needed to accomplish this.

Objectives

The aim of this educational project is to enable school pupils to gain insights into modern agriculture and learn where food comes from and how it is produced. It is also aimed at developing a business model that can go on to provide an additional source of income for participant farms.

Activities

Since March 2018, this project has used support from the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme to finance extracurricular learning opportunities for schools and continuing professional development for teachers and farm managers. The participant farms receive a subsidy for the educational programmes they offer and the schools pay the remaining share. The teacher training programme supports and encourages teachers to integrate farming and farm visits into their lessons as enrichment activities, and farm managers are given the opportunity to qualify as farm educators. Currently, 57 farms from all parts of the country are recognised as "Farm Learning Sites" and they have

initiated 22 advertising campaigns to inform the public. The project was initially due to run until February 2022, but due to its success, it has been extended until September 2025 and new farms can join at any time.

The Rhineland-Palatinate Chamber of Agriculture (LWK RLP) was commissioned to implement the project and oversee public relations. They deliver the farm educator training and certification in partnership with the Hofgut Neumühle Teaching and Research Institute for Livestock Husbandry; the Protestant Agricultural Youth Academy in Altenkirchen; the parents' initiative Freie Montessorischule; and the Hohenberg Estate, along with several other farms. The teacher training programme is run in cooperation with the State Pedagogical Institute.

Main Results

Between 2018 and 2022, 111 participant farms delivered 762 teaching sessions to 12 928 pupils.

By the end of the project in 2025, it is expected that 100 of the participant farms will have actively established themselves as extracurricular learning providers, continuing to offer educational services in order to diversify their income and maintain this public-facing aspect of their farming practice.

An expected side effect is that agriculture will retain its important status as an attractive workplace for young people.

Key lessons

An important success factor of this project is the good cooperation between the ministries involved (education, climate and economy) within the framework of a steering committee that brings together professional associations, representatives of the educational partners, and working groups in connection with the learning farms.

Educational farms should also develop programmes for pre-schools, intergenerational family groups, and adult groups (either special interest or with specific needs) because many people stand to benefit from opportunities to experience farming and rural life. Contractual agreements between the municipalities, schools and farms ensure mutual understanding and sustainable partnerships.