

Estonia

Local development

Location

Jõgevamaa

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding

Total budget 17 298.00 (EUR)

EAFRD 8 303.04 (EUR)

National/Regional 2 075.76 (EUR)

Private 6 919.20 (EUR)

Project duration

2019 – 2019

Project promoter

Ruupa Puukool OÜ

Email

ruupapk@gmail.com

LEADER funds help improve production and supply of forest seedlings in Estonia.

Summary

The family-owned Ruupa forestry nursery (Ruupa Puukool OÜ) provides private forest owners in Estonia with locally-produced forest plants. Seeds had previously been sown manually by the nursery but this made the sowing process time-consuming and labour-intensive. It could also result in an inconsistent quality of seedlings. LEADER helped co-finance the purchase of modern sowing machinery to address these productivity issues.



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Project Results

Positive business benefits from the CAP funding involved reduced manual labour, shorter sowing time, improved plant quality, and an increase in the percentage of germinated seeds.

Wider positive benefits included less use of consumables and a reduced need for imported forest plants and seedlings.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Knowledge sharing and networking can be useful to upscale good practices. This project has promoted the exchange of knowledge between forest plant growers and stakeholders.

Context

A main cause of climate change is excess carbon in the atmosphere and an effective way to reduce CO₂ is to increase forest areas and renew old forests. Therefore, it is important that forest owners contribute to the new life cycle of their forests, because young and growing forests can fix more carbon from the air than mature forests.

Ruupa Nursery (Ruupa Puukool OÜ) is a family business run by three siblings. What started as a hobby turned into a business supporting private forest owners in Estonia to renew their forests with local forest plants. The business responded to the lack of forest plants grown in Estonia. For example, in 2018, when the Estonian Central Association of Private Forests needed two million forest plants, one million of them had to be imported.

39-year-old Kermet and his sister Signe (30) both graduated from the Rāpina Horticulture School, while their younger brother Andre (24) graduated from the Luua Forestry School's nursery management programme. Every year they take part in training visits to other nurseries in Estonia and abroad to improve their knowledge and skills in growing forest plants. Kermet is currently studying small business marketing at the Võrumaa Vocational Education Center.

Before this project, tree seeds at the nursery were sown manually. The three-week, labour-intensive sowing process resulted in an inconsistent quality of seedlings, so the siblings decided to invest in innovative technology to improve plant growth and reduce manual labour at the Ruupa Nursery.

Objectives

The aim of this investment project was to improve the supply of forest seedlings in Estonia by developing a family business through investment in a modernised nursery production process.

Activities

A business analysis revealed that it was advantageous to automate the sowing process in order to improve production efficiency.

With support from the Jõgevamaa Koostöökoda LEADER Local Action Group the siblings were able to install an URBINATI KAPPA 65 Compact sowing line in July 2019 and undertake their first automated sowing of seeds in 2020.

Main results

The investment helped to reduce manual labour, improve plant quality, and increase the percentage of seeds that germinate.

Sowing by machine has reduced the sowing time by 25% and plant growth has stabilised.

The seeding machine helps to reduce consumables, which is important both for the financial side of the business and for a more efficient use of resources in general.

The investment helped to increase the production of high-quality forest plant seedlings, which contributes to business sustainability.

Since young and growing forests bind more carbon from the air than mature forests, this project contributes to the mitigation of climate change and reforestation by enabling forest owners to increase forest areas and renew old forests.

Replacing imported forest plants and seedlings with locally-produced ones reduces CO₂ emissions from transportation.

Key lessons

Knowledge sharing and networking are of great importance. This investment has attracted the interest of many other Estonian nurseries and promoted the exchange of knowledge between forest plant growers and forestry stakeholders. In 2020, Ruupa Nursery, together with other forest plant growers, founded the United Estonian Forest Plant Growers NGO. Members of this network have gone on study trips to learn about the experiences of forest plant growers in other countries (Germany, Finland, Latvia, and Italy), and they have also participated in study groups within Estonia, where they exchange working methods and experiences.