

BELGIUM

Local development

Location

Commune de Modave

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 150 000
RDP support* 50 000
Federal Fund for the social economy & Marshall Fund: 100 000

Project duration

2016 – 2021

Project promoter

LAG Pays des Condruses

Contact

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Website

<http://espace-test.be/>

* Corresponding to 1/5 FTE for 5 years

Creating a testing area for young entrepreneurs wishing to work in organic market gardening or horticulture, where they can receive training and advice.

Summary

The Local Action Group (LAG) Pays des Condruses provides free access to land for young entrepreneurs, for a period of 18 months, as well as training and advice on organic market gardening or horticulture. Test areas between 0.1 ha and 1 ha are available where they can improve their skills and start their business. The LAG has assigned a part time project manager to coordinate the scheme. Partnerships with local and regional service providers are also established to provide technical and advisory services to the new entrepreneurs.



Results

Between 2013 and 2017, the test area hosted 11 candidates, of which, 6 started successful organic farms in the area.

This initiative is the first one in Wallonia and has proven efficient both in terms of socio-economic performance, as well as of local development, since it enables young talents to remain in the area.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ In order to develop a successful test area for young entrepreneurs, it is important to pool infrastructure and equipment; to support each trainee individually; to offer step by step support during the preparation phase; to improve their management, commercial and communication skills; to test new projects in real life conditions; and to provide trainees with support on how to seek funding opportunities etc.

Project partners

- LAG Pays des Condruses
- ASBL Devenirs
- CTA de Strée, Centre des Technologies Agronomiques
- Créa-Job

Context

Back in 2011, the LAG Pays des Condruses supported the creation of a farmers' cooperative called 'Point Ferme'. The LAG offered facilitation and engineering assistance (e.g. organised meetings between producers, supported them in designing their business plan, helped them in selecting the most appropriate statutes, gathering financial shares for creating the equity capital, etc.). Thanks to this assistance the cooperative was officially formed in September 2011. It was then incubated within the LAG's structure for 18 months before reaching autonomy.

In the follow-up to this successful initiative, the need arose to assist young farmers accessing farmland. In June 2013, the LAG launched the initiative in Strée-Modave. This is the first test area in Walloon that is dedicated to people wishing to start a business in market gardening or horticulture. The municipality provided the LAG with a 4-ha site. The LAG purchased a tiller and its accessories, set up a greenhouse and an irrigation system, constructed a rainwater fed reservoir, storage areas, etc.

Objectives

As a continuation of the LAG's previous efforts, the current project aims at encouraging the economic development in the area by supporting the setup of small-scale local farming businesses by young people.

Activities

Test areas between 0.1 ha and 1 ha are available for free to beginners in organic market gardening, for a period that can vary between 1 to 3 seasons. The land occupied by a participant can evolve over time as well, e.g. 0.3 ha in year 1 and 0.5 ha in year 2. A greenhouse is available for use and a meeting room has been set up to host workshops, training sessions or conferences.

The LAG has assigned a part time project manager to coordinate the scheme. The EAFRD support is mainly used to fund the work of the part time project coordinator.

Partnerships with local and regional service providers are established to provide technical and advisory services to the new entrepreneurs - agricultural services for the Liège county from the training entity 'Devenirs' and 'Crea-Job' for enterprise creation. The local agronomic technology centre is contributing to the preparation of the new farm

businesses by offering advice on tilling, organic soil amendment, sowing green manure, etc. Once a week, the entrepreneurs can sell their produce at a specific space that is available on site.

Main results

The benefits can be measured through the number of jobs created and the surface of farmland converted into organic farming once the new entrepreneurs have successfully launched their activity.

Between 2013 and 2017, the test area hosted 11 candidates, of which 6 have settled in organic farming in the area, namely:

- [Les sentiers du potager](#), Renaud Devries in Strée;
- [TairrEau](#), Thomas Bastas in Fallais;
- [Aux jardins du Grand Duc](#), Jeremie Denis in Haltinne;
- Rouliberwète, Catherine Legros in Anthisnes;
- [Cycle-en-Terre](#), Fanny Lebrun in Havelange;
- [Api Flora](#), Séverine d'Ans in Solières;
- Estelle Dumont continues her strawberries production on 0.1 ha of the test area.

Following a second call for projects which was launched in October 2017, five new project promoters joined the test area. These include two market gardening projects, one 'slow' plant nursery project, one herbal tea project and one cosmetic oil production project.

Less tangible, but real benefits, are the innovative dynamics injected into the local agricultural economy and the unleashed social capital through the collaborative scheme, bringing together creative talent and professionals.

This initiative is the first one in Wallonia and has proven efficient both in terms of socio-economic performance and local development as it enables young talents to remain in the area.

The LAG is actively contributing to the working group on test areas created by the Wallonia Rural Development Network, called "RAW'ET maraîcher". The idea is to create a network of spin-offs at regional level, designing a shared methodology to accompany the pathway to successful test areas. The ambition of the Raw'et network is:

The 'Point Vert' experience - test areas for beginners in market gardening

- to create a community of practice, gathering project promoters and other relevant stakeholders to design a vocational training scheme;
- to design a pathway model for test areas, including economic, organisational, legal, financial, and institutional aspects; and
- to make proposals for legal adjustments for test areas, regarding access to land.

The Raw'et network of Wallonia is working hand in hand with [RENeTA](#), the French network of test areas, with around 80 initiatives nationwide.

Key lessons

The main features to develop a successful test area can be summarised as follows:

- Pooling of infrastructure and equipment;
- Accompanying each project promoter, individually and collectively:
 - o Preparation phase: step by step, putting the project into perspective, planning and structuring;
 - o Improving management, commercial and communication skills;
 - o Testing the project in real life conditions for 18 months;
 - o Seeking funding opportunities;
 - o Benchmarking the initiatives against other businesses in the same sector;

- o Creating value chains in terms of processing, marketing, and selling;
- o Networking with partners (Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, banks, etc.); and
- o Monitoring the performance once the enterprise is created.



Test areas for market gardening represent a major asset for beginners who are willing to launch their own activity. It creates positive dynamics both to the project promoters but also for the rural areas.

“The issue of access to land was debated in several circles and we had a partial solution for facilitating this access to land for people who are not in the farming sector. The other missing links were solved with the partnering of Devenirs (training and social inclusion) and the creation of the sales outlet ‘Point Ferme’.”

Jean-François Pêcheur - LAG manager

Additional sources of information

www.pointferme.be/

www.facebook.com/GAL-Pays-des-Condruces-513992958688371/?ref=br_rs

www.galcondruces.be/realisations/point-vert-espace-test-maraicher/