

CZECH REPUBLIC

Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness

Location
Černov

Programming period
2014 - 2020

Priority
P2 – Competitiveness

Measure
M04 - Investments in
physical assets

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 1 109 878
EAFRD 238 069
National/Regional 242 878
Private 628 931

Project duration
2015 – 2016

Project promoter
Rozvodí, spol. s r.o.

Contact
rozvodi@seznam.cz

Website
www.rozvodi.cz

EAFRD funding helped renovate a dairy farm boosting animal welfare and making farm work more efficient.

Summary

Rozvodí farm is a dairy farm in the Czech-Moravian Highlands. It operates a 'closed herd' system meaning it must raise its own calves to expand its herd. Existing sheds for young cattle on the farm offered a poor standard of animal welfare. Rural development funding helped renovate cattle sheds as well as a milk cooling and storage facility.



Farm workers were trained and working methods were reorganised increasing farm efficiency. Animal welfare and health improved, boosting yields and improving the quality of milk production.

Results

New buildings and their equipment provided a substantially higher level of animal welfare.

Working conditions of livestock farm staff improved tremendously.

Manure is now stored in line with environmental standards.

The milk cooling and storage unit was renovated.

Lessons & Recommendations

- It is important to pay due attention to non-economic factors like animal welfare and the organisation of working practices. Even though it is more costly (at least in terms of time), it pays off later in the form of better animal health and more efficient work. These factors are projected to lead to a higher farm income later.

Context

Rozvodi farm s.r.o. (a private limited liability company) specialises in dairy production. The farm is situated in the Czech-Moravian Highlands, 130 km south-east of Prague. It cultivates about 1200 hectares of agricultural land and meadows constitute one third of the farm area.

The dairy herd includes 530 cows and 450 young cattle from calves to heifers. Male suckler calves are sold to beef cattle farmers. The dairy production is complemented by a biogas station using slurry from cowsheds.

In common with most Czech farms, the Rozvodi farm applies a closed herd turnover – a practice which limits the number of cattle bought in to expand a herd and keeps cattle within boundaries. The existing sheds for young cattle on the farm offered a poor standard of animal welfare. Although some essential changes in raising calves were introduced in the 1990s, if the farm wished to achieve better results new knowledge needed to be implemented.

The housing for young animals was the last step of the renovation of the farm. The veterinary service suggested that calves need to be separated from cows early, and heifers deserved better welfare conditions - both suggestions aim to assure animals are raised healthily.

Objectives

The objective of the investment was to change the unsatisfactory situation with raising heifers and improve the technology in calf raising. A high standard of welfare and sanitary conditions enhances the health of animals which is critical for higher yields and a higher quality milk production.

The farm owners concerns centred on i) improving health of calves and heifers through better monitoring, safer and larger boxes, more space for movement of heifers, easier cleaning, etc.; ii) achieving higher labour productivity through better organisation of work and efficient mechanisation.

Activities

The project involved building two new sheds for young cattle - one for calves and a second one for heifers selected for cow herd replacement. The other part of the project involved renovating a milk cooling and storage unit.

The latter was a simple refurbishment of the room and the purchase of the new equipment. However, the housing was more demanding, even in the preparatory phase. A lot of emphasis was put on preparation work and the involvement of animal welfare specialists. Also, the management carefully selected the investment provider, and checked its capacity and reputation in providing the young cattle housing.

The completely new technology used required training for farm workers and managers. In September 2016, the first animals moved into the new sheds - starting the 3 month pre-operational phase in which technology was tested and organisation of work and working practices were set to the optimal level. Since January 2017, the new housing of young animals has been fully operational.



Main Results

New buildings and their equipment provides a substantially higher level of animal welfare.

The working conditions of livestock farm staff improved tremendously.

Manure is stored in line with environmental standards (manure management was part of the project)

The milk cooling and storage unit were renovated

Key lessons

The main lesson of this project is that giving more consideration to the non-economic factors like animal welfare is more costly (at least in terms of time), but it pays off later in the form of better animal health and the a better organisation of work. These are projected to lead to a higher farm income later.