

## FRANCE

# Promoting economic development in rural areas

### Location

Aude valley

### Programming period

2014 - 2020

### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local  
Development

### Measure

M19 – LEADER

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 58 172  
EAFRD 34 903  
National/Regional 10 471  
Other 12 798

### Project duration

2016 – 2018

### Project promoter

Association 3.EVA

### Contact

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### Website

[www.3eva.org](http://www.3eva.org)

RDP-funding helped improve a meat supply chain in Aude, France, boosting breeders' income.

## Summary

In 2013 an area in the Aude Valley, France was designated a 'local hub for economic cooperation' – a scheme designed to foster innovative economic initiatives for local development. Under the scheme, the meat supply chain was identified as needing better organisation and promotion.



LEADER funding was used to hire a facilitator for one year, working for an organisation called 3.EVA. The organisation coordinated improvements to the meat supply chain, focussing on traceability and better meat quality.

## Key results

Higher meat – mostly beef and sheep - quality

Better traceability via labels helping to improve marketing

An increase in breeders' revenue.

An Economic and Environmental Interest Grouping (EEIG) hosted by the local slaughterhouse in Quillan was established.

A joint programme for on-farm young organic feeder cattle coordinated by BioCivam, was set-up.

## Main Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ A facilitator can help restructure the meat supply chain by hiring local traders, and providing advice and training.
- ❑ The 'local hub for economic cooperation' scheme allows for collective and innovative ideas and projects created by local stakeholders.
- ❑ The project is transferable to any agricultural region willing to improve its local meat sector.
- ❑ Using digital tools for marketing creates added value.

### Context

#### A short history of local hubs for economic cooperation

In France, the social economy movement and associated policies have been flourishing since the turn of the century. This was accelerated in 2013 when the national pilot scheme supporting 'local hubs for economic cooperation' (Pôles Territoriaux de Coopération Economique' - PTCE) was launched via 2 calls for projects financed by the Ministry of Economic development, under its social economy priority.

According to the national ministry in charge of Economy and Finance, the sector represents 10% of France's GDP, with around 200 000 enterprises and 2.38 million staff.

A local hub for economic cooperation can be defined as a grouping of social enterprises, conventional enterprises, public entities and education and training organisations. In a specific local area, this grouping designs and delivers a joint and sustainable cooperation strategy in order to foster innovative economic initiatives for local development. The approach can be compared to competitiveness clusters, but in the field of the social economy (Economie Sociale et Solidaire – ESS), targeting deprived areas. It also resembles the LEADER approach with a strong focus on entrepreneurship and business creation.

A first call for projects was launched at national level in 2013 with a budget of 3 million EUR. Of the 182 applications, 23 projects were retained, with a 3-year financial plan between 72 000 EUR and 290 000 EUR. The second call (2015) had a budget of 2.7 million EUR. Only 14 projects were selected out of 125 applications, including the 3.EVA project.

#### The background of 3.EVA in the upper Aude valley (Occitanie – France)

The Aude Département (sub-regional administrative unit, similar to the County in UK or the Province in Italy) is located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Pyrenees mountains. Limoux, a town centre with 11 000 inhabitants is the gateway to the upper valley where a LEADER strategy has been in place since 2008. Its proximity to Southern European cities such as Toulouse, Montpellier and Barcelona helped this rural area open up to potential economic opportunities following last century's decline of the mining industry.

The beginning of 3.EVA partly finds its origin in a thriving cooperative set up some 28 years ago (1989), called SAPIE. The idea was to provide an entrepreneurial framework for rural activities (including agriculture and

forestry) while developing local development dynamics. Over the years SAPIE has grown in the area and in South West France. Another essential founding member of 3.EVA is the agricultural cooperative La Cavale. With its 700 members and 40 staff, it has been engaged in the circular economy for several years now in local wine and spirit production.

The 3.EVA partnership started in 2014 with three women from the area, mentored by a fourth lady, the State delegate of Limoux (sous-préfète). They got together to form a core group and apply for the 'local hub for economic cooperation' call for project.

The name requires a little explanation:

- 3 goes for the digital dimension of the project (with reference the expression 'web 3.0');
- Triple E: Ensemble, Expérimenter et Entreprendre (Experimenting and Initiating Together);
- VA: abbreviation for the name of the area (Vallée de l'Aude).

The project has 3 main strategic goals and 2 horizontal fields of intervention:

Rural entrepreneurship	Local skills	Promoting local resources and heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational practice (start'ups)</li> <li>• New services (tutorship, one stop shop, etc.)</li> <li>• Open spaces (coworking, tiers lieu)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training to digital culture</li> <li>• Fab Lab integration workshop</li> <li>• Pooling training offers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Waste</li> <li>• Local agrofood chains</li> </ul>

In January 2016, the 3.EVA project was successfully retained as a local hub for economic cooperation getting around 500 000 EUR over 3 years. The funding entities are as follows:

- State / Ministry of Economic Development (Social Economy) & Caisse des Dépôts (national public bank): 50%
- State / Land planning and territorial development fund (Fonds national d'aménagement et de développement du territoire - FNADT), EDF (French Electricity Company) & local authorities: 50%.

### Objectives

In March 2017, LEADER funding was allocated to one project of the third strategic goal mentioned above, with the aim to better structure the local meat supply chain.

### Activities

In May 2016, an audit of the local slaughterhouse highlighted some weaknesses in the procedures. The activity could be continued provided that some small equipment and further vocational training was ensured.

Concomitantly, a local workshop organised by the 3.EVA partners on the promotion of local resources confirmed the need to facilitate a better structuring of the meat sector. A survey was conducted during the winter of 2016, in partnership with the local Chamber of Agriculture, involving 20 livestock farmers and 15 stakeholders from the meat sector (butchers, supermarkets, mass catering companies, etc.), in order to assess their difficulties and expectations. The outcome of this study revealed an obvious need for intermediary support in order to better organise, structure and promote the whole supply chain.

LEADER support is dedicated to the hiring of a facilitator for a one-year duration, in order to accompany these changes. 3.EVA, as an entity devoted to local economic cooperation, takes over this responsibility and recruits an agronomist with some experience in livestock breeding. The facilitator's contract is signed through an umbrella company (portage salarial) in order to sustain the position through a shared contribution from the local stakeholders involved in the initial project, such as the breeders groupings, 'Plein Champs' farm shop, the two local cutting plants, the mass catering entities, local authorities and the local chamber.

### Main Results

Two of the immediate operational outcomes are (i) the setting up of an EEIG (Economic and Environmental Interest Grouping) hosted by the local slaughterhouse in Quillan and (ii) the joint programme for on-farm young organic feeder cattle coordinated by the BioCivam, both working in complementarity to the existing groupings coordinated by the local chamber.

The ultimate result is to raise the quality of meat (mostly beef and sheep), its traceability (labels) for a better marketing chain, allowing for an increase in the breeders' revenue.

### Key lessons

The 'local hub for economic cooperation' scheme allows for collective and participatory dynamics to take place, unleashing innovative ideas and projects stemming from local stakeholders, with the aim to boost local economic development. It is a determining factor for accompanying change in a difficult context such as the breeding and meat sector.

The project is transferable to any agricultural region willing to improve its local meat sector.

There are at least two innovative dimensions:

- Social innovation, through a bottom-up and pragmatic decision-making process, getting everyone on board on a level footing, hiring specialised facilitation expertise in order to tackle complex issues related to people, practice and technical processes in a strained economic context;
- Technical innovation through the introduction of digital tools for marketing purposes, creating added value.

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#### Additional sources of information

[www.coop-cavale.fr/](http://www.coop-cavale.fr/)

[www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000029313296&categorieLien=id](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000029313296&categorieLien=id)

[www.economie.gouv.fr/ess-economie-sociale-solidaire](http://www.economie.gouv.fr/ess-economie-sociale-solidaire)