

ITALY

Restructuring and
developing physical
potential and
promoting innovation

Location

Calangianus

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 1 – Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors

Measure

M122 - Improvement of the economic value of forests

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 986 4734

EAFRD 236 753

National/Regional 355 130

Private 394 591

Project duration

2014 – 2015

Project promoter

Molinas Peppino&Figli
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A cork-producing plantation confronted high production costs due to increasing cost of raw materials. To tackle this issue, the company used EAFRD support to restore its own forest and improve its productivity.

Summary

Italy is one of the leading countries in world cork-production and is third in terms of quantities of cork processed after Spain and France. To maintain these high volumes of production, big quantities of raw materials are imported. The company 'Molinas Peppino&sons', which is the biggest in the Calangianus area, was facing increased production costs due to high prices of imported raw materials combined with the period of economic crisis.



The company owned a forestry area of 127 ha, which was abandoned and facing some health problems that needed to be solved quickly before spreading to other forest areas. Restoration activities carried out included clearing cuttings around the cork trees to reduce the risk of fire and to better reach the trees. Young cork-oak trees were trimmed to facilitate their proper development and to improve their future produce. First decortications on trees 1,30m tall to improve cork production. The road network within the entire area was improved. Good conditions of roads are important to ensure proper forest management and to enable accessibility both for work reasons and in case of fire.

Results

The 127 ha forest area is now in a good condition. Its economic value has certainly increased since all cork-oaks, including young trees, are now productive. After the restoration and cleaning of forest roads, the forest has become accessible and risks of fire have been reduced.

Benefits from the implementation of the project are not only for the company, but also for the environment, the landscape and the local economy, considering the number of small companies active in the cork industry.

The project employed 45 people. The activities carried out were directly related to increased production of the forests, which represent a source of raw materials and allowed to slightly reduce cork imports. The beneficiary considered this factor important particularly in a period of economic crisis during which without public support it would have been difficult to find the financial resources to restore the forests' potential.

Lessons & Recommendations

Finding professional experts that can undertake the restoration activities in the forest (such as pruning or cutting the reproduction cork) is crucial to avoid any negative consequences for the well-being of the forests.

In addition, when planning the implementation of the project the possibility of delays due to meteorological issues should be considered to avoid bureaucratic problems. For this reason, more flexibility would be required from the Managing Authority.

Context

Italy is one of the main world producers of cork and third for quantities of cork processed, after Spain and France. Italy is the third country in terms of processed cork-made products, and to reach this result big quantities of raw materials are imported, which explains the importance of supporting financial intervention to increase cork production. 60% of the national production comes from an area of some 900 km² in north-east Sardinia (Gallura). In 1991, this area was officially recognised as an industrial district, being the most part of economic activities related to cork production and processing. Some 130 companies are involved in the cork industry in Sardinia, the most part of which are SME and micro-family enterprises. More than 1,500 people work within the industry and this influences economic activities all over the island.

The Company Molinas Peppino&sons, the biggest in the area, was founded in 1985 and employed some 250 people. As all other companies in the industry it has to deal with increasing costs production due to high prices of imported raw materials combined with the period of economic crisis. The company owned a 127ha forestry area, which was mainly abandoned and was also facing some health problems that needed to be solved quickly before spreading to other forestry areas. These restoring interventions had been postponed for some years, due to some economic constraints, being them rather expensive. The opportunity offered by the RDP to have financial support for undertaking these interventions could contribute on the one hand to reduce the dependency on imported raw materials and also to improve environmental conditions in the forest, making it productive and available again also for recreational purposes.

Objectives

Main objective of the project was to restore a forestry area of 127 hectares, which had been left abandoned for a certain period. Some trees had been attacked by parasites and there was a huge risk of this disease spreading all over the area. Brushwood had grown without control, making the forest not accessible for people, reducing the capacity production and increasing the risk of fire, an unfortunately already high risk not only in that area but in the entire island. A combination of

economic and environmental motivations were the basis for the implementation of this project and also its main objective. As related objective there was also the possibility to slightly decrease dependency on imported raw materials, which could contribute to reduce production costs.



Activities

Different types of intervention were planned and undertaken to achieve the objectives of the project.

- Initially, some disengagement cuttings were carried out mainly around the cork trees, to reduce the risk of fire and to better reach the trees. These intervention were done carefully to avoid any negative effects on forest renovation. These cleaning activities were done mainly manually with strippers and when possible with specific machines. Salvage feeling interventions targeted those cork-oaks affected by a disease or in the areas where trees were too numerous, while the more general cutting targeted holm-oaks and flowering ashes that could be an obstacle to cork-oaks.
- Young cork-oak were trimmed to facilitate their right development and to improve their future production. Trimming was done by experts to avoid infections and diseases.
- First decortications on trees 1,30m tall to improve cork production.
- Improvement of the road network within the entire area. Good conditions of roads are important to ensure the forest management, to enable accessibility both for work reasons and in case of fire risk.

Additional sources of information

n/a