

ITALY

Implementing cooperation projects

Location

Quistello

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

Measure

M421 - Implementing
cooperation projects

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 441 000
EAFRD 400 000
National/region. 41 000

Project duration

MAR 2012 – MAR 2014

Project promoter

LAG Oltrepò Mantovano
Scarl (Lead partner);
LAG Valtellina; LAG Garda
Valsabbia; LAG Colline
moreniche del Garda; LAG
Lomellina; LAG Oglio Po
terre d'acqua; LAG Golem
Sebino Valtrompia.
Provinces of Mantova,
Cremona, Sondrio, Pavia and
Brescia.

Contact

Carmelita Trentini
coordinamento@galoltrepopmantovano.it
tel. 0039 348 4591055

The seven LAGs of the Lombardy region cooperated within an inter-territorial cooperation project to create the “Fair trade economic district”, an innovative development model to promote economic and cultural growth of rural areas in the region

Summary

Rural areas in Lombardia are characterised by beautiful landscape and rich biodiversity, and they count numerous traditional agricultural and craft activities. Nevertheless most part of rural enterprises were not economically viable.

Given these premises, the seven LAGs of the region agreed that a common development strategy could better help finding possible solutions. Thus, the idea to cooperate within an inter-territorial cooperation project to create the “Fair trade economic district” (in Italian Distretto di Economia Solidale), an innovative development model to promote economic and cultural growth of rural areas in the region. Within the “Fair trade economic district”, enterprises should produce respecting the principle of environmental and ethical sustainability and have the opportunity to cooperate and access new markets, increasing their competitiveness



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Results

- Creation of The Agri Bread Farm, a social farm based on the creation of a local short supply chain related to production of organic bread.
- Creation of local labels that improve local producers opportunities to access new markets and market their products, both at local and regional level.
- Organisation of the organic short supply chain.
- Permanent food education programmes delivered in local schools.
- Creation of a database of local producers, which includes information per farmer such as products offered and market channels used (local shops, farm markets, restaurants, etc.).
- Definition of rules and guidelines to set-up bilateral and multilateral contracts.
- Participation to Horizon 2020 with the implementation of a project that highlight the importance of small and family farms to contribute to food security and food education. This project will be probably developed through the set-up of an EIP operational group.
- Definition of dissemination materials.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Involvement of local stakeholders since the very first phases of the project. This helped to better analysed the state of play and better tailored the activities to be implemented on local actors' needs.
- ❑ Ensure good coordination of planning activities and financial management. This enabled to better support the activities implemented and improve their organisation.

Context

Rural areas in Lombardy are characterised by beautiful landscape and rich biodiversity, and they count numerous traditional agricultural and craft activities, which ensure an important potential for their economic development. In spite of these favourable conditions, most part of rural enterprises were lagging behind and they were not economically viable. Lack of local entrepreneurs' awareness about their own potential and capacity to cooperate with others, to network and to market their products were identified as relevant causes of this difficult situation, magnified by the effects of the economic crisis. Furthermore, the low level of integration between agricultural and craft enterprises and potential customers was seen as an important obstacle to the economic development of the area. Important negative side-effect was the abandon of rural areas by young people and the increasing loss in terms of local culture and traditions.

Objectives

Main goal of the project was to support a better matching of supply to demand of local products, as a basis to promote economic growth and competitiveness of local producers, both from agricultural and craft sectors. Developing new economic models, such as short supply chains or fair-trade groups to sell agricultural products, could help creating new marketing channels to be used as an alternative to traditional ones that often impose to local entrepreneurs conditions not economically convenient and require quantities that usually they cannot ensure.

Promoting conscious, informed and sustainable consumption models was another important objective of the project. Educating also consumers to adopt purchasing and dietary habits more sustainable ethically and environmentally was considered complementary to the attempt of improving economic viability of local enterprises.

Finally, the project aimed to build common knowledge about the economic, social and cultural conditions of the area in order to better support cooperation between different actors and promote integration between consumers and entrepreneurs.

Activities

The implementation of the project involved the seven LAGs partners and many other stakeholders active in the area, in particular 200 local enterprises, 4 consortia of enterprises, managers of 4 school canteens, 2 local health service departments, 10 schools, some 500 students and 500 citizens.

During the first phase of the project a detailed analysis of the local economic system was undertaken. Particular attention was given to the identification of i) entrepreneurs that could offer products and services to identify the main characteristics of the local offer (farmers producing organic and quality food products; local markets; farms organising direct sales, etc.); ii) customers and their needs in order to better define the nature of the demand in the area; iii) opportunities to create common labels within the area to improve products' marketing and access new markets; iv) common communication strategy to promote local products and local touristic offer.

Based on the results of this analysis, a number of additional activities were planned, in particular:

- Definition of rules and guidelines to set up bilateral or multilateral contracts, including public procurement, to supply products and services in the area of the project.
- Set-up of food education programmes for kids (involving local schools) and adults.
- Creation of an association of producers aiming to preserve and promote local products and agricultural landscape. The association created a processing laboratory to be used by members and a specific label '*Terra & Saponi*' under which local products could be identified.
- Communication and dissemination activities. Organisations of workshop and conferences to inform about the activities undertaken by the projects and possibly involved other local producers.



Additional sources of information

<http://www.galoltrepomantovano.it/distretto-di-economia-solidale/>