

NETHERLANDS

Facilitating
diversification, creation
and development of
small businesses as well
as employment

Location

Woerden

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 - Social Inclusion and
Economic Development

Measure

M19 – Support for LEADER
local development (CLLD)

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 402 692

EAFRD 100 000

National/regional 100 000

Private 58 612

Other 144 080

Project duration

2016 – 2017

Project promoter

Foundation Kaaspakhuis
Woerden

Contact

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Website

<http://boerenmarktstad.nl/kaaspakhuis/>

Setting up an innovative enterprise in a historic building to strengthen the regional and local agricultural economy, while promoting employment and tourism.

Summary

Cheese production plays a central role in the Woerden area. Thus in 2014, local stakeholders decided to create a cheese academy to provide training for workers and make them employable in the sector and serve as a tourism attraction. Governments, educational organizations and entrepreneurs signed a declaration of intent to work together for that purpose.



Support under the LEADER measure supported the conversion of a historic building, into the experience centre. Other activities supported include developing the training programme, creating a network of enterprises and organisations as users of the facility for educational purposes, etc.

Results

The conversion of an old cheese warehouse into the experience centre was completed;

The management organisation as a foundation was set up including volunteers and a coordinator;

In the first year after opening there are at least 2000 paying visitors.

Lessons & Recommendations

- Never start a project before the subsidy has been allocated or officially confirmed.
- Implementing a project is very often linked to entrepreneurship, which means that the financial viability of the investment must be ensured.
- The complexity of these grants also required expertise that were often absent from the initiators of such projects and should therefore be hired and thus paid, etc.

Context

The agricultural sector and in particular cheese plays a key role in the economy of the region. Due to the importance of cheese for the area, in 2014 an initiative was launched to establish a cheese academy. The objective is to match the need for well-trained workers for the cheese sector with the educational offer. Governments, educational organizations and entrepreneurs signed a declaration of intent to work together for that purpose. However, training facilities were still needed to be found.

Objectives

The main objective of this project was to set up an innovative contemporary enterprise in a historic building, with social and commercial goals that strengthen the regional and local agricultural economy, employment and tourism.

Activities

A historic building in Woerden, was developed as an experience centre, a physical location where visitors can learn to make cheese in practice. The process of turning the building into the experience centre comprised of the following steps:

During the **preparation phase** the project promoters established the foundation and appointed the board members and project team. They defined the training programme requirements and developed the plans of the experience centre, including cheese storage and offices spaces. In addition they arranged financial issues and licenses.

In the **realisation phase** from October 2016 till April 2017, the contractor carried out the conversion of the building according to the new lay-out and design.

Activities carried out during the **pilot phase** involved:

- developing a practical education course to teach young students how to make cheese with the support of local schools and cheese makers;
- creating a social work place for the integration of people outside the labour market with local cheese enterprises;

- set up a network of organizations who will use the experience centre as a classroom for educational purposes;
- set up a tourist Info-point at the ground floor of the Cheese Experience Centre in cooperation with the local Tourist Info Office.

Communication activities carried out involved building a dedicated website, promotion through social media as well as news Letters, press releases etc.

Main results

- The conversion of an old cheese warehouse into the experience centre was completed;
- The management organisation as a foundation was set up including volunteers and a coordinator;
- In the first year after opening there are at least 2000 paying visitors.

Key lessons

- Never start a project before the subsidy has been allocated or officially confirmed;
- Implementing a project is very often linked to entrepreneurship, which means that the financial viability of the investment must be ensured;
- Although the award of the Leader grant was considerable, the amount of 100 000 euros was not in proportion to the work that this entails. The complexity of these grants also required expertise that were often absent from the initiators of such projects and should therefore be hired and thus paid, etc.

Key Success Factors included:

- the commitment of local authorities, as the municipality of Woerden is an important stakeholder and keeps supporting by offering advice, granting permits etc.
- creating a sense of ownership for among stakeholders by appointing responsibilities, and asking them to complete them in concrete terms.

Additional sources of information

www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6Wz_PszIDg

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdcR02CyS8c