

SWEDEN

Diversification of the rural economy

Location

Nation wide

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 3 – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 465 945
EAFRD 191 354
National/Regional 233 877
Other 40 715

Project duration

2012 – 2015

Project promoter

Hushållningssällskapet
Skåne

Contact

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Website

<http://hushallningssallskapet.se/tjanster-produkter/foretagsutveckling/landsbygdsutveckling/gron-arena/>

On farm care is a new type of service which can help farms diversify while significantly contributing to a more natural rehabilitation process for people in need.

Summary

Nature assisted rehabilitation is very beneficial for people who suffer from mental illnesses or stress-related problems. This type of support is a good opportunity for farms to diversify and create new sources of income. Significant is also that public institutions will embrace this emerging type of care.



FÖR NATURLIG LIVSKRAFT

The project sought to promote this concept nation wide and for this it offered training courses to the participating enterprises and organised networking meetings. Training courses focused on preparing business plans, law, economics, public procurement procedures, developing new care products and techniques, etc. The project also arranged information meetings and study trips, and developed contacts through regional meetings with municipalities in order to promote this new business model.

Results

The project involved 160 rural enterprises of which 120 enterprises attended the courses.

It generated 15 – 20 new enterprises, and more than 30 new techniques and products for on farm care.

Half of the participating enterprises have applied for the certification.

The training will continue to be offered totally financed by course fees.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ There was a big interest for the project among farmers and rural enterprises, and is seen as a good way to diversify farms or start up rural businesses.
- ❑ A challenge in the project has been that the public institutions are sometimes moving slowly.
- ❑ Differences between municipalities can be considerable. It is therefore important to establish contacts between enterprises and municipalities at local level.

Context

The interest for nature assisted rehabilitation has become stronger and stronger in Sweden during the last couple of years and this has opened up for a new type of farm business. There is a big potential for this type of business on the Swedish countryside as public institutions get more and more interested in engaging farm entrepreneurs for rehabilitation and care.

The routine and predictability of farm work and the closeness to animals and nature, has shown to be very beneficial to people suffering from mental illnesses or stress-related problems. With the right education and support this can be a way to diversify farms, or for new entrepreneurs to start up businesses on the countryside.

The rural Economic and Agricultural Society in the county Värmland was first to realise this potential, and started up an advising project named “Grön Arena” in 2006. Since then the concept has spread to Agricultural Societies over the whole country. Some of the Societies had problems with establishing contact with public institutions so they needed a project at national level to establish the concept “Grön Arena” and develop education and support service for this new business concept.

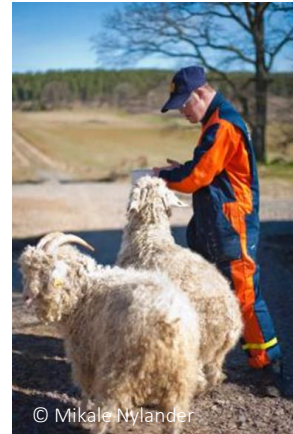
Objectives

This project aimed to give existing farms the opportunity to diversify and get a new source of income, but also to support new businesses. The target set was to reach at least 80 enterprises and provide them with education and the possibility to get a “Grön Arena” certification.

In addition the project would aim to establish the concept of rehabilitation and care on farms with the public institutions, and to engage in this at least 60 municipalities.

Activities

The rural Economic and Agricultural Societies are well-known actors among Swedish enterprises on the countryside. Before starting this new drive, and before applying for the whole project-funding from the EAFRD, a 6 months long promotion campaign was implemented to make sure that there was an interest among rural enterprises. The Societies advertised, arranged information meetings and managed to get a big article in one of the major Agricultural and Rural business magazines (ATL).



After this first marketing phase, a bigger number of enterprises than expected signed up to participate. The project offered basic or advanced education to the participating enterprises, depending on their background knowledge. The participants were also invited to regional networking meetings. The basic education consisted of 6 course days, with focus on making business plans, but also on law, economics, public procurement procedures, and of course on target groups and their needs. During the last 6 months of the project the participants could choose to apply for the certification and become a “Grön Arena” farm.

All the certified farms can be promoted through the project’s homepage, and are supported to build a network with other entrepreneurs with the same certification. As a part of the education they also get support to form new products and techniques for the new enterprises, such as different means of assistance on the farm, or specially adapted activities, for example horse-riding tours. The certification was granted after a control visit and a risk analysis of the farm.

To reach the public institutions the project arranged information meetings and study trips, and provided contact by special regional meetings where the municipalities could meet enterprises in their area. Because of the big interest from the enterprises the project had to put more time on the educations and meetings than planned. This meant that the planned national conference with the public sector was not conducted; instead the focus was put on regional networking with municipalities.

Results

The project hired two project leaders, but also used 10 local project leaders.

In total, the project involved 160 rural enterprises, and in the end there were 120 enterprises which attended the courses.

It generated 15 – 20 new enterprises, and more than 30 new techniques and products in form of adaption of the concepts to different farms.

Half of the participating enterprises have applied for the certification, which is something that the project leaders are very satisfied with.

A majority (108) of the enterprises in the project was run by women.

Since the interest was so big, and since the demand for “Grön Arena” services is slowly but steadily rising from public institutions, the Agricultural Societies plan to continue offering courses, now totally financed by course fees.

They will also continue to offer network meetings for the existing farms, and continue to administer the certification.

During the new programming period the Societies will apply for a new project, now directed towards continuing to establish the concept among the public institutions.

Lessons

There was a big interest for the project among farmers and rural enterprises, and is seen as a good way to diversify farms or start up rural businesses.

A challenge in the project has been that the public institutions are sometimes moving slowly.

It took two years for the project to start to establish the concept among them, but now the interest seems to be rising among the municipalities. Politics takes time!

The regional differences between municipalities can be considerable. It is therefore important to help establishing contacts between enterprises and municipalities at local level.

“I want to give people strength, stimulation and knowledge, by means of my farm; the animals, the plants and the surrounding nature”

Boel Åkesson

Additional sources of information

<http://hushallningssallskapet.se/hushallningssallskapet-fortsatter-arbetet-med-att-etablera-fler-gron-arena-verksamheter-i-sverige/www.jordbruksverket.se/amnesomraden/landsbygdfiske/branscherochforetagande/vardochomsorg.4.1cb85c4511eca55276c8000716.html>

www.kristianstadsbladet.se/hassleholm/gron-arena-ska-ge-ny-kraft/