

UNITED KINGDOM

Farm performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location

Biddenden

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

Measure

M6 – Farm & business development

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 182 748.10
RDP support 84 654.72
Private 98 093.38

Project duration

2016 – 2017

Project promoter

Biddenden Vineyards

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Website

<https://biddendenvineyards.com>

Expanding a viticulture business to meet market demand by investing in modern and efficient equipment.

Summary

Biddenden Vineyards is a small business located in Ashford, Kent. The beneficiary identified that in order to expand and meet market demand it needed to invest in modern and efficient equipment.



The new equipment enables the beneficiary to offer juices and pressing services to other local small farmers and producers. This will in-turn allow other producers to expand their ability to take their products to market. There is a growing market demand for this service and the business was previously unable to meet this demand.

Results

A profit of nearly 10% has been generated since the funding, this suggests the beneficiary is gradually benefiting from the investment.

Positive environmental impacts from reduced water and electricity use - it is expected that the company will use 750m³ less water in the bottling and pressing process.

A number of local business are benefiting from the installation of new equipment at Biddenden as the business offers a fruit pressing service to other small businesses.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ A regional partnership between vineyards with tourist board Visit Kent strengthens their marketability as a tourist destination, and is expected to increase brand awareness and sales. This is a good example of rural networking.
- ❑ The beneficiary said that without funding it would have needed to scale back on other areas of the business that bring additional benefits to the rural economy, e.g. hosting placement students from other countries who are interested in viticulture.

Context

With 7 key wineries, the Kent region is gaining recognition for its production of high quality English wine and its reputation as 'The Garden of England'. These businesses are experiencing increased demand from independent pubs and restaurants, and custom from wine tourism to the area. Biddenden already produce a range of award-winning wines, cider and juices which are available through its online and vineyard shops.

As a form of diversification, the new equipment was purchased to expand production in the cider and juice side of the business, and to ensure high-quality products. These are produced using fruit from Biddenden's own orchard and from local small farms.

The new equipment ensures juices are of high quality, a key selling point of the company's products, some of which have received Great Taste awards.

Objectives

The beneficiary developed a long-term investment plan which involved purchasing new and efficient equipment, including a tipper, washer, double belt press, and cross flow filter, to thereby:

- increase efficiency of drink production and meet growing market demand
- improve the quality and choice available in the local drink sector
- bring its own new products to market
- reduce water consumption

Activities

As part of a long-term investment plan, the company installed a new press together with a new crossflow microfiltration, bin tipper and mill.

The equipment purchased is high-quality and efficient allowing Biddenden to process more fruit more quickly whilst ensuring quality. The Voran double belt is capable of pressing 7 tonnes per hour whilst producing juice yields of up to 80%. Its rotary belt cleaning brush system is expected to significantly reduce water consumption.

The ability to produce high quality juice using this new press is what appealed to local grower AG Thames, which owns the exclusive rights to grow Red Love® apples. The collaboration sees the apples grown at East Malling Research Centre, then pressed, bottled and sold at

Biddenden Vineyards. The result has been 2 new products, a naturally red juice and cider, which have received Great Taste awards.

Biddenden has also since launched a new range of apple juices 'Clearly Juice' which are marketed as a dinner party non-alcoholic drink choice.

Main results

The benefits of the scheme include the following:

- a profit of nearly 10% has been generated since the funding, this suggests the beneficiary is gradually benefiting from the investment
- positive environmental impacts from reduced water and electricity use - it is expected that the company will use 750m³ less water in the bottling and pressing process.

A number of local business are benefiting from the installation of new equipment at Biddenden:

- there is now capacity to meet increasing demand for the pressing service, enabling small businesses to bring their own drink products to market
- Fruit grower AG Thames has collaborated with East Malling Research Centre to grow Red Love apples which are pressed and bottled at Biddenden Vineyards

Key lessons

The project took place in a region with an established industry for fruit production, vineyards and wineries. This offers a good opportunity for building relationships with fruit-growing suppliers, and other vineyard businesses.

A regional partnership between vineyards with tourist board Visit Kent strengthens their marketability as a tourist destination, and is expected to increase brand awareness and sales. This is a good example of rural networking.

The business is also conveniently placed for a collaboration with grower AG Thames, which own the rights to the unique strain of naturally red-fleshed Red Love® apples.

The beneficiary said without funding it would have needed to scale back on other areas of the business. These others areas bring additional benefits to the rural economy. For example, each year the company hosts placement students, usually from France, with a business interest in viticulture. This encourages international rural networking, knowledge sharing and generational renewal.