

United Kingdom

Restructuring and
developing physical
potential and
promoting innovation

Location

Aberystwyth

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

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

Measure

M124 - Cooperation for
development of new
products, processes and
technologies

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 2.5 m
EAFRD 1.6 m
National /regional 836 524
Private 44 000

Project duration

2009 – 2014

Project promoter

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The Cywain Agriculture Project is an agri-food support scheme looking to develop innovative ideas in adding value to Welsh produce.

Summary

Cywain Agriculture is a project dedicated to adding value to produce grown or reared on Welsh farms.



This is achieved by developing new products and facilitating access to new markets in order to sustain a future for the sector. Cywain Agriculture provides support from dedicated Development Managers, expert advice from key individuals within the food sector and a quality one-to-one mentoring service with the strong emphasis on adding value. The project is seen by beneficiaries to be a very accessible form of support without any 'formal' application form. In the early stages of the process the Development Manager's role is very much a 'hand holding' one. When the Development Manager thinks the time is right the Clients is granted access to a wide variety of expert Mentors to guide them in the development of their products and or markets.

Results

The project supported 64 groups, 751 primary producers, supported the development of 511 new markets or new products, created 24.5 jobs and helped sustain another 29.5.

Beneficiary businesses stated that they would not have been able to make the changes and improvements to their businesses without the Cywain support.

Clients have learnt new skills and gained confidence. Support of the Development Managers is crucial and the access to markets through the Test Trading events has proved a major benefit.

The Cywain project works with a large number of food producers across Wales and as such is in an ideal position to help network and introduce complementary businesses.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The real value from such projects comes from the one to one business support from the dedicated and knowledgeable advisors.
- ❑ The introduction of Client contributions to the costs of the Mentors was a positive factor as it encouraged Clients to become more engaged in the whole process, it forced them to take responsibility for driving the changes in their businesses and to deliver outcomes identified in their Action Plan.
- ❑ The simple and straightforward application process was considered as another success factor.

Context

In Wales there are different schemes that work with farmers to generate and identify innovative ideas to add value to Welsh primary produce. However there was no follow-on support to help farmers translate these ideas into viable and profitable businesses.

Objectives

Cywain Agriculture is a project dedicated to assist the agri-food sector in developing and increasing the added value the primary producers receive from their current production, whether by developing new products or markets. The specific aim of the project is to boost the confidence of participants and help them to venture into new markets, to develop and grow their businesses, whilst responding to market demand.

Activities

The original Cywain Agriculture project was launched in August 2008 and ran till April 2012. Following a positive evaluation in 2011 a slightly modified version of the scheme was funded from April 2013 to June 2015.

Cywain Agriculture was developed to encourage and aid cooperation within the farming industry. This was done by supporting innovative individuals with the potential to see a growth in successful collaborative initiatives and thereby achievement of the vision for Wales set out by the Welsh Government in 'One Wales' (2007). The project has been available over the whole of Wales.

The assistance available through Cywain Agriculture project includes support from dedicated Development Managers, expert advice from key individuals within the food sector and a quality one-to-one mentoring service with the strong emphasis on adding value. There are six Development Managers, some of whom work on a part-time basis, spread geographically throughout Wales and with support from an administrative team, a Project Manager and a part-time Project Director.

Cywain Agriculture is seen by beneficiaries to be a very accessible form of support as there is no 'formal' application form as such. An initial review meeting takes place between the Client and a Cywain Development Manager to discuss their ideas. Following on from this an Action Plan is developed and agreed which outlines the different roles, responsibilities and outputs for the supported business. In the early stages of the process the Development Manager's role is very much a 'hand holding' one.



When the Development Manager thinks the time is right they are able to provide Clients with access to a wide variety of expert Mentors to guide them in the development of their products and or markets. The types of mentoring support offered to Clients is bespoke to their business need and includes services such as graphic design, web site design, branding, manufacturing processes etc. Assistance is also made available with completing Business and Marketing Plans.

There is support in developing a new product from concept to commercialisation which can include access to specialist centres such as the Food Technology Centres and there is also access to market intelligence.

Cywain Agriculture also promotes collaboration in the supply chain for Welsh produce and between individual producers in Wales at events and through publicising successful ventures. Linkages with exemplar businesses are encouraged and there are opportunities to view similar products and market developments and discuss what the implications will be to the Client business.

Following the evaluation of the project in 2011 some new features were introduced and some features were withdrawn.

A key new feature in the 2013-2015 project has been the introduction of a financial contribution from the Client towards the costs of the Mentor. This still means that the majority of the support is offered free to businesses, to maintain the demand for the project. However, the Client making a contribution of 25% of Mentor's costs was seen to be an important way of securing buy-in from the businesses and ensuring that support is focused on those determined to create successful and profitable businesses.

The main element withdrawn from the project was the generic provision of market intelligence. Although it is still seen as important, it became clear that the information needed to be more tailored to meet the needs of individual businesses and cover specific geographical areas. In its place research is now commissioned on an ad-hoc basis when required.

Another new element of Cywain Agriculture is the support to producers and processors in identifying cost effective distribution models for their businesses and exploring the feasibility of target markets for collaborative distribution ventures. This had been highlighted, during the 2011 evaluation, as a major barrier to Welsh producers accessing wider markets.

Additional funding was approved in May 2014 which will deliver five additional work streams. The five new work streams introduced in 2014 were:

- Labelling Support – Getting businesses' labels right from the start, with one to one guidance;
- Test Trading – A structured approach providing an opportunity to test trade new products at different events and locations;
- Cywain Hops – investigative work to establish the viability of growing hops in Wales;
- Cywain Bees – working to increase the volume of honey produced and processed in Wales; and
- Public procurement for smaller producers- a feasibility study.

Main Results

The quantitative results generated from the Cywain project can be seen below:

- ✓ Groups supported: 64
- ✓ Primary producers supported: 751
- ✓ Number of new markets or new products developed: 511
- ✓ Number of jobs created: 24.5
- ✓ Number of jobs sustained: 29.5

The original Cywain project exceeded all of its targets for the 2008-2012 phase of the project and was on target to exceed its revised targets.

The Cywain project has definitely met the gap in support identified at its outset. There are many testimonials from beneficiary businesses stating that they would not have

been able to make the changes and improvements to their businesses without the Cywain support.

The confidence within the Client base has increased through the process of being involved with Cywain. They have learnt new skills and focused 'on' their business, and not purely working 'in' it. The support of the Development Managers is crucial and the access to markets through the Test Trading events has proved a major benefit.

The Cywain project works with a large number of food producers across Wales and as such is in an ideal position to help network and introduce complementary businesses.

Key lessons

The real value from this project has come from the one to one business support from the dedicated and knowledgeable Development Managers and the ability to access high quality bespoke mentoring advice.

The introduction of Client contributions to the costs of the Mentors is seen to have increased the buy-in of Clients in the Cywain Agriculture project. It has encouraged Clients to become more engaged in the whole process, it puts the onus on them to take responsibility for driving the changes in their businesses and to deliver outcomes identified in their Action Plan. With a greater buy-in the capacity is also increased and this can lead to the ability to add more value.

One of the features most valued by the businesses is the simple and straightforward application process.



Additional sources of information

n/a