

Modernisation of the “Los Caserinos” dairy products factory

LEADER funds to diversify production and enhance the farm visits programme of an organic dairy company

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Grases, Asturias, Spain

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion & local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding:

Total budget	225 791 (EUR)
EAFRD	65 028 (EUR)
National/Regional	16 253 (EUR)
Private/Own funds	144 508 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2018 to 2019

Project promoter: S.A.T Los Caserinos

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Summary

Los Caserinos is a family dairy processing company with organic certification. LEADER funds were used to enhance visits and direct sales on site and to diversify its production. In 2018, the company applied for support to improve their facilities and create a classroom to enhance the guided visits and school workshops delivered on the farm. In 2019, LEADER funds were used again to set up a new production line for the production of organic blue cheese

Project results

- The new organic blue cheese production has opened up the possibility of exploring new markets while also leading to an overall increase in production.
- The creation of the classroom facility has improved the quality of the school visits. It is now possible to organise school excursions during the school year.
- Approximately 22 000 people visited the farm in 2022. The guided tours generate significant added value through direct sales, which, in 2022, accounted for 33% of total turnover.
- These investments have led to the creation of new jobs and made the existing ones more stable.

Key lessons and recommendations

- The greatest success of the project has been the increase in farm visits. Receiving people in situ allows the company to sell its products directly and ensure its profitability.
- The bureaucracy associated with this type of support is a barrier to entrepreneurship initiatives in rural areas, which would benefit from simpler access procedures.

Context

Los Caserinos is a family-run processing company that uses its own dairy production to make cheese, yoghurts and rice puddings in an artisanal way. Its production is certified as organic. Located in the heart of the Cider region, in the village of Grases (Asturias), Los Caserinos is run by four brothers who wanted to stay in their village and decided to take over the dairy farm that their parents had been running since 1983. In 2004, the low profitability of milk sales motivated them to start producing added value products such as yoghurts and desserts. This activity was further expanded in 2006 through the production of cheese. Both development projects were financed by the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme of Asturias.

Continuing with the idea of diversifying and adding value to their core business, in 2018 the farmers used further EAFRD funding to open a new processing room for organic blue cheese and create an educational classroom to support the launch of a farm visits programme.



Objectives

The aims of this modernisation process were:

- To diversify and add value to the company's activities through the development of new organic dairy products (blue cheese).
- To explore new market channels, both nationally and internationally, based on the new organic blue cheese product, which is closely linked to the gastronomy of the north of the Iberian Peninsula and is in great demand on some international markets.
- To increase the added value and the percentage of direct sales in the facilities themselves.
- To directly promote the farm's products through a programme of farm visits.
- To improve the facilities in order to enhance the quality of farm visits and to develop an educational programme for school children.
- To transmit, in an educational way, the values of the rural environment and the traditional culture of the region.

Activities

Two consecutive LEADER grants were received from the ADRI Comarca de la Sidra Local Action Group in 2018 and in 2019, allowing respectively:

- The installation of a classroom area to expand the farm's capacity to host guided visits (widening the catchment audience to include schools). EAFRD funding was used to purchase the necessary furniture and equipment, in addition to the production of a marketing video that explains and promotes the visits.
- The design of a production process for making organic blue cheese. This involved: the design and installation of a specialised manufacturing facility with a separate production line, to avoid cross-contamination with the rest of the company's products; and the acquisition of all the necessary machinery, utensils and furniture.

Main results

- The new line of organic blue cheese has opened up the possibility of exploring new markets. The brothers hope to start exporting their products outside the EU.
- The diversification of the activity has led to an overall increase in production, which has grown considerably. Currently, in addition to their cheese production, the company produces around 3 000 jars of rice pudding and 500 yoghurts per day.

- The creation of the classroom facility has improved the quality of visits. It makes it possible to organise school excursions during the school year and carry out educational work around the benefits of sustainable production, local and healthy food and the values of the rural environment.
- Approximately 22 000 people visited the farm in 2022. The guided tours contribute to the local tourism offer and generate significant added value through direct sales, which, in 2022, accounted for 33% of total turnover.
- These investments have made it possible to create new jobs and to give greater stability to existing ones. The company employs 12 people on permanent contracts and several more via temporary contracts during the peak visitor season.

Key lessons and recommendations

- The greatest success of the project has been the increase in farm visits. Receiving people *in situ* allows the company to sell its products directly and ensure its profitability.
- To maintain interest in these visits, it is important to innovate and to add new elements and themes every year.
- The bureaucracy associated with this type of support is a barrier to entrepreneurship initiatives in rural areas, which would benefit from simpler access procedures.

“The [guided tours] activity has given a bit of life to the people of the village. Our village is like all the others, aged, and almost everything rural has disappeared, the vegetable gardens, the cows...”

S.A.T Los Caserinos

Additional information:

N/A



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