

Jesús Gómez Hernández - Receiving direct payments for livestock and agriculture

A small family farm used CAP funding to increase its competitiveness and ensure its long-term viability

EAGF-funded projects

Location: Tornavacas, Extremadura, Spain

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: /

Focus Area: /

Measures: /

Funding:

Basic payment for farmers (decoupled direct payment) 25 015.81 (EUR)

Payment for farmers observing agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment (decoupled direct payment) or 'green payment' 12 906.54 (EUR)

Voluntary coupled support scheme 13 309.18 (EUR)

Decoupled voluntary payment for farmers in areas with natural constraints 6 526.55 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2022 to 2022

Project promoter: Jesús Gómez Hernández

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Summary

A small family farm in Extremadura (Spain) used CAP funding to develop its agricultural and livestock activities; helping it to adopt environmentally friendly practices. The payments helped the owners to diversify their income, improve production through innovation and add value to their agricultural produce (including the certification against the regional protected denomination for their cherries). Their participation in two cooperatives (one for agriculture and one for livestock) also ensures better market prices for the farm's products.

This project is a model that can be replicated in other rural areas in the European Union to tackle important topics such as: farming



Photo Jesús Gómez Hernández farm

diversification; cooperation and producer organisations; generational renewal, depopulation and demographic challenges; environmental sustainability; innovation and new technologies. Similar initiatives can improve the quality of life in rural villages, support environmental protection and promote fairer food value chains for producers and consumers.

Project results

- The project optimised the farm's production capacity and yields, increasing the volume and the quality of the of milk and meat produced.
- CAP funds created additional direct and indirect income for the farm. The CAP funding itself contributed to making the farm more competitive.
- The project created a full-time job for Jesús on the farm and is expected to create a second full-time job for his wife Carolina.

Key lessons and recommendations

- Cooperation in the agrarian sector, as part of the food value chain, is essential for competitive agriculture and livestock farming.
- Population maintenance in rural areas - including attracting new residents - requires multiple support actions from the public administration.
- Farm diversification contributes to competitiveness in any farm business.



Context

After losing his father to a work accident in 2018, farmer Jesús Gómez Hernández, together with his partner Carolina, decided to continue running the family farm in the north of Extremadura (Spain). Both Jesús and Carolina graduated in Business Administration and the couple have a one-year-old baby. However, the region is facing issues of depopulation and a lack of generational renewal.

The farm is located in the municipalities of Tornavacas, Cañaveral and Malpartida de Plasencia. It includes high mountain areas next to Sierra de Gredos and grasslands in a Natura 2000 area (SPA – Special Protection Areas for Birds) in the Monfragüe National Park.

In the mountain areas, the farmers grow cherries certified by Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) and GLOBALGAP (a worldwide private quality certification based on good agricultural practices). In the grasslands, they breed animals (520 cows and 200 goats) for meat and milk.

Jesús and Carolina consider cooperation to be essential for ensuring competitiveness and for guaranteeing fair market prices for their products. Thus, they joined two cooperatives, respectively for their cherry production and their livestock activities: Agrupación de Cooperativas Valle del Jerte (a cooperative of cooperatives, which is also a recognised Fruits and Vegetables Producer Organisation), and the livestock cooperative Cooprado, which provides them with a good value supply of feed (as a result of collective price negotiation) and which also negotiates the market prices of the milk and meat they produce.

Innovation, hard work and respect for the environment are key aspects of their day-to-day work.

Objectives

- To improve the competitiveness of the family farm so that it can provide a sustainable livelihood to this young family.
- To promote cooperation in the food value chain through participation in cooperatives.
- To improve the environmental impact of the farm's agricultural and livestock activities.

Activities

The beneficiary of the project is an individual small farmer. EAGF funding from the CAP 2014-2020 (received in 2022) has been used for the following activities:

- Livestock activities: breeding, feeding, milking, etc. Transhumance in particular allows cattle and goats to graze in different pastures, which increases the quality of their milk and meat.
- Developing the cattle herd, including a local cattle breed that is in danger of extinction (Retinta).
- Equipping each goat with GPS to geo-locate them in the grasslands. This allows the animals to graze securely in a wider area, which in turn enhances the quality of their milk.
- Payment for farmers who observe agricultural practices that are beneficial for the climate and the environment (decoupled direct payment) – namely transhumance of livestock. Transhumance is a sustainable activity, which keeps the cattle in the grasslands during the winter and moves them to the mountain pastures during the summer. In addition, goats are an important and sustainable ally in the fight against forest fires as they feed on the scrub vegetation which could trigger wildfire proliferation.
- The cultivation of cherry trees in high mountain areas. This production is marketed by the Fruits and Vegetables Producer Organisations (FV PO) to which the farmers belong, which manages their Operational Programmes for investments in the agrifood industry and farms.
- The farmers are working to adopt the digital Farm Notebook, which will come into force in 2024.

In addition to the EAGF funds, the farm indirectly receives funds from EAFRD, under the 2014-2020 RDP of the Extremadura region. The agricultural cooperative of which the farmers are members received funds during this period from RDP Measure 16 - Cooperation, with the implementation of a sectoral Operational Group of the EIP-AGRI, for the innovation project GO CEREZA, to improve the competitiveness of the cherry sector in this region.



Main results

- The project optimised the farm's production capacity and yields, increasing the volume and the quality of the of milk and meat produced. However, the combination of a sharp increase in the price of inputs (mainly animal feed and vaccines) and of the drought and high temperatures of recent years is a challenge for the farm.
- CAP funds led to additional direct and indirect benefits for the farm. Indirectly, it encouraged participation in two cooperatives (agricultural and livestock) and thus improved the farm's representation in collective commercial negotiations.
- Membership of the two cooperatives has enabled the promoters to enhance their position in the food value chain since the cooperatives negotiate input prices and the market prices for their products, sharing management costs with all the members of the cooperatives.
- In a rural area facing demographic challenges such as depopulation, this family farm has become more viable. The project has created a full-time job for Jesús and is expected to create a second full-time job for Carolina when their baby grows a bit older.
- Other general achievements of the project include the development of a successful family project, more trust in the public administrations (that have proven to be ready to listen and to help farmers through difficult times), and the enthusiastic continuation of the family business of Jesús's father.



Photo Jesús Gómez Hernández farm

Key lessons and recommendations

The factors to be taken into account when transferring this example are as follows:

- Cooperation in the agrarian sector, as part of the food value chain, is essential for competitive agriculture and livestock farming and for increasing the capacity for collective commercial negotiation and shared input costs.
- Membership of a recognised Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisation helps to increase the competitiveness and efficiency of an agricultural activity.
- Support actions such as direct payments from the CAP help to prevent outmigration in rural areas.
- Diversification is an important factor for competitiveness in farming practices.
- Technology can be part of daily farming activities, e.g. the use of digital field notebooks, GPS for goats, etc.
- Environmental protection is a key part of this farm's activities: transhumance of cattle, livestock activity in Natura 2000 protected areas, agricultural production in high mountains, fire prevention by the goat herds, GLOBALGAP certification of the agricultural production (standard based on good agricultural practices), etc.

Additional information:

n/a



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