

Modernisation of the Sita Nature Park Ltd.

Nature conservation contributions in Latvia from CAP investment funds for a deer farmer.

EAFRD-funded projects

Country: Latvia

Location: Silmalas, Litene pagasts

Programming period: 2014-2020

RDP Priority: P2. Competitiveness

Focus Area: Farm performance, restructuring & modernisation

Measures: M04. Investments in physical assets

Funding:	Total budget	48 600 (EUR)
	EAFRD	13 951 (EUR)
	National/regional	4 790 (EUR)
	Private/own	29 859 (EUR)
	Direct payments (2022)	107 724 (EUR)

Timeframe: 02.2020-06.2020

Project promoter: Sita Nature Park Ltd.

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Summary

Mr. Jurijs Prokofjevs is a deer and cattle farmer who owns the Sita Nature Park Ltd farm. The farm is located in a Natura 2000 area, so Jurijs is engaged both in the restoration of the floodplain meadows and the maintenance of sustainable forms of organic farming on them. His aim is to increase the land that he manages in order to protect the areas for future generations, but the work is intense and challenging. Since 2017, he has been successfully engaging in funding applications and partnership actions that support his environmental ambitions, increase the efficiency of his work and develop his business activity. In 2020, he used investment support to purchase a livestock trailer and a tiller, to clean up the bushes and increase the farm area, as well as a mower to speed up the mowing process.

Project results

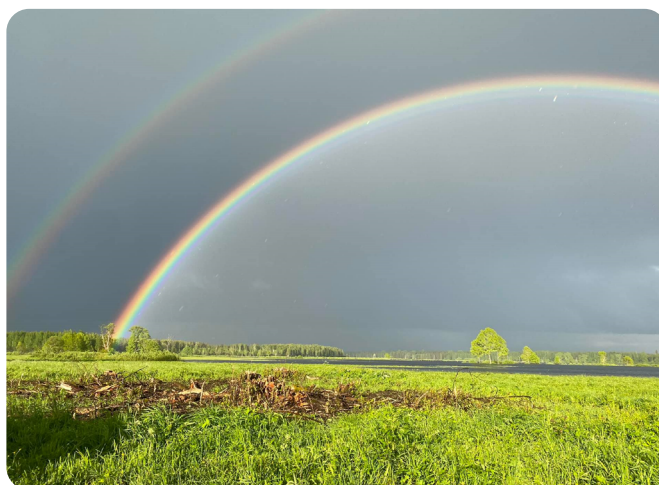
- The farm achieved an increase of at least 5% in net turnover compared to the year before receiving Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding for this investment.
- Equipment purchased with CAP support has enabled Jurijs to increase his farm's area and speed up the process of haymaking.

Lessons & Recommendations

- As a farmer of organic floodplain meadows, Jurijs believes that the preservation of biodiversity should be a high priority at both national (Latvian) and European level.
- Farms that operate within highly valuable natural habitats can provide useful ecosystem services to society.

Context

Jurijs Prokofjevs had been involved in deer farming and land management as a hobby for around two decades before deciding, in 2017, to begin the transition to a full time occupation. His farm, in which he owns shares, is located in the Sita and Pededze Floodplain



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nature reserve: a Natura 2000 territory that nurtures more than 50 plant species. Jurijs derives a great deal of pride from his role in maintaining an area of high biodiversity and natural value for future generations, but the work is challenging.

For instance, the summer haymaking season is much shorter than in other areas and, owing to its Natura 2000 status, the land requires intensive work during a very brief period of time. With no access to aid for the purchase of livestock and limited direct payments, Jurijs had been struggling to care for his 100 deer and six cattle alongside a full-time job.

After seeing some information about biodiversity conservation on social media, Jurijs requested a meeting with the GrassLIFE project team, which at that time was coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development and Environmental Protection. They encouraged him to cooperate with the Latvian Nature Fund (LNF), who were looking to develop pilot partnerships with small areas of farmland.

Objectives

This project set out to ensure more efficient and successful maintenance of the area and to boost the development of the farm itself.

Activities

Investment support from the Latvian Rural Development Programme was used:

- To purchase, in 2022, a livestock trailer and a tiller, to clean up the bushes and increase the farm area, as well as a 4m mower to speed up the mowing process as there is only a brief period of time when mowing is allowed due to nature conservation concerns;
- To purchase, in 2022, a bigger tractor to ensure even faster and more efficient mowing;
- To develop beekeeping on the farm, in 2022, thanks to the LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale) measure.

Support from the first pillar of the CAP involved:

- Receiving direct payments for 560 ha, from which around half is for pastureland and the other half is for mowing (EUR 107 724 in 2022).

Other LIFE funds were used for:

- Restoring floodplain meadows in cooperation with the Latvian Nature Fund and other farmers from different regions of Latvia. (2017-2023 this project also included opportunities for knowledge transfer on best practices for farming natural meadows);
- Supporting a collaboration with the Daugavpils University on 'park style' meadow renovation;
- Purchasing cattle that are suited to grazing floodplain meadows;
- Launching a project to construct a grass processing plant.

Main results

- The farm achieved at least a 5% increase in net turnover compared to the year before the submission of the first RDP funded project (implemented in 2020).



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- Equipment purchased with CAP support has enabled Jurijs to increase his farm's area by clearing up the bushes and to speed up the process of haymaking within the brief period that it is allowed.
- Overall, after six years of development and thanks to CAP support, the farm doubled its deer numbers (200), grew its cattle herd to 150 animals and established a set of beehives. Jurijs takes care of about 500 ha of land, of which more than 100 ha is natural meadow.

Key lessons

- As a farmer of organic floodplain meadows, Jurijs believes that the preservation of biodiversity should be a high priority at both national (Latvian) and European level.
- Farms that operate within highly valuable natural habitats can provide useful ecosystem services to society.

“Nature reserves require specific care of the area, like wider tires for farming machinery, later mowing periods, specific breeds of cattle and other actions adjusting farming to the rules of nature.”

Jurijs Prokofjevs



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