

Social inclusion and organic farming

Improving the potential for blending social inclusion within organic production.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Waiern, Austria

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion and local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER CLLD

Funding:	Total budget	233 718 (EUR)
	EAFRD	62 590 (EUR)
	National/Regional	15 647 (EUR)
	Private	117 356 (EUR)
	Other	38 125 (EUR)

Timeframe: 01/01/2017 - 30/06/2018

Project promoter: Diakonie de La Tour gem. Betriebs GmbH

Email: michael.mellitzer@diakonie-delatour.at



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Summary

The 'Gartenhof Waiern' is an organic farm in Austria that employs people with disabilities. The employees are supported by staff of the charitable organisation 'Diakonie de La Tour' in Waiern which owns the estate. The organic farm produces and sells fresh vegetables and operates in line with an agroecology model that embraces the principles of sustainability, knowledge transfer, social inclusion, biodiversity and regional networking. Over the years, the farm attracted many customers and visitors, and demand for its products grew. The increased interest in the farm, its products and its social inclusion approach indicated gains from expanding the small farm store. In addition, infrastructure facilities needed improving and stables expanding. The creation of a suitable learning and training room was also needed to create a space for awareness raising, knowledge transfer events and exchanging experience. In 2017, a successful LEADER application was made alongside other funders.

Project results

- One new farm store and an integrated multi-purpose room with an area of 120 m² were created.
- The new meeting space led to the implementation of educational and awareness raising activities and guided tours. The seminar room is also increasingly booked by external companies and organisations.
- One new job (half-time) was created.
- The project triggered the development and sale of new products.
- Income generation was increased through sales and rentals (seminar room).
- The project improved the environmental performance of the farm using renewable energies.
- The promotional and communication activities about social inclusion through the active participation of people with disabilities are now more effective.





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Key lessons and recommendations

- The project helped the farm develop and become more professional. People with disabilities were involved in all development steps of the project creating a strong sense of 'ownership' and connection with its activities.
- The farm encourages visitors and customers to get into conversations and cultivate social interaction with the employees and volunteers of the farm. In this way, the farm has created a new meeting place for people with and without disabilities. This had a positive impact on the disabled people working on the farm.

Context

The organic farm 'Gartenhof Waiern' in Austria was created as an inclusive workplace targeted at people with disabilities and supported by staff of the charity 'Diakonie de La Tour' in Waiern, which runs a multitude of social services and owns the farm. The farm follows an inclusive approach that also extends to the relatives of people with disabilities, the regional population, children and young people. The farm fully embraces the principles of participation, inclusion, knowledge transfer, biodiversity, sustainability and regional networking.

Jointly with professional assistance, the farm workers grow and produce certified organic vegetables. The products are sold by the workers via the organisation's canteen kitchen as well as to external customers.

Over the years, the demand for the farm's products increased steadily from within and outside the organisation and the small, on-site farm store became too small and needed to expand. In addition, there was also an interest in extending animal husbandry into a year-round activity by expanding the existing stables to enhance the educational value of the farm. Furthermore, there was only limited space available for accommodating the increased interest in the farm and its model of operation. More room to facilitate the exchange of information and learning was needed.

In 2017, a LEADER application was made to help fund the expansion of the on-farm shop and the stables, and to create a seminar room for conducting interactive lectures and workshops.

Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to respond to the growing demand and interest in the farm by expanding the range of products and services offered and to create added value and jobs in the region. At the same time, it was crucial to uphold the principles of promoting an inclusive society and to further develop the innovative care and support services on offer while creating an attractive work environment for young people with disabilities. The main physical objectives were to:

- Expand the on-farm store.
- Build an extension to the existing stables to enable all-year animal husbandry activities.
- Build a meeting space to conduct learning, training, and awareness raising activities.
- Use sustainable building materials (especially wood) and maximise the use of renewable energy (for heating purposes) thereby contributing to environmental and climate protection.
- Cooperate with regional suppliers.



Activities

The project involved the following activities:

- Construction of the new farm store (conversion of the existing wooden barn into a winter-proof sales room, thereby creating space for a larger product range).
- Construction of a multi-purpose room adjacent to the farm store for workshops, seminars and lectures on topics, such as organic farming, sustainability, health, vital vegetable cuisine and crafts.
- Construction of all-abilities toilets.
- Construction of a paved access road and forecourt area of 410 m² for 15 car parking spaces to meet the increased numbers of customers and visitors to the farm.
- An area of 150 m² has been filled with a concrete foundation for the construction of a new, winter-proof animal stable to enable the farm to keep animals on a year-round basis for educational purposes.
- Implementation of project coordination and public relations tasks, including the employment of a new member of staff to coordinate and promote the new services of the farm.

Main results

- One new farm store with an integrated multi-purpose room covering an area of 120 m² was created and is operational.
- The new meeting space led to the implementation of educational and awareness raising activities. The seminar room is also increasingly booked by external companies and organisations.
- Access and parking facilities on the farm were improved to accommodate the increased number of customers and visitors.
- One new job (0.5 FTE) was created.
- The project triggered the development and sale of new products.
- Income generation was increased through sales and rentals (seminar room).
- The project has been enabled to meet the increased demand for affordable, organic vegetables in the region.
- The project has improved the environmental performance of the farm using renewable energies.

- The range of people with disabilities working on the farm was expanded (e.g. people in the autism spectrum).
- Implementation of an increased number of educational activities, lectures, and guided tours for families, children and students on topics such as healthy living, organic vegetables and sustainability, and collaborative activities such as cooking.
- The promotional and communication activities about social inclusion through the active participation of people with disabilities are now more effective.
- Increased interest has been generated in topics such as organic agriculture and sustainability from companies and organisations (e.g. educational institutions, insurance companies, adult education centres, professional groups).

Key lessons and recommendations

- The project helped the farm develop and become more professional. The people with disabilities were involved in all development steps of the project creating a strong sense of 'ownership' and connection with its activities.
- The farm encourages visitors and customers to get into conversations and cultivate social interaction with the farm's employees and volunteers. In this way, the farm has created a new meeting place for people with and without disabilities. This had a positive impact on the disabled people working on the farm. They now have more social contacts and are more active in wider areas and tasks on the farm providing them with a sense of pride about the products they produce.



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Additional information:

[www.diakonie.at/unsere-angebote-und-einrichtungen/
gartenhof-waiern](http://www.diakonie.at/unsere-angebote-und-einrichtungen/gartenhof-waiern)

[www.rm-mittelkaernten.at/gartenhof-waiern-der-diakonie-de-la-
tour-wird-zu-einem-bio-zentrum-ausgebaut/](http://www.rm-mittelkaernten.at/gartenhof-waiern-der-diakonie-de-la-tour-wird-zu-einem-bio-zentrum-ausgebaut/)

[www.bio-award.at/bio-award-kaernten/
bio-award-kaernten-2018/](http://www.bio-award.at/bio-award-kaernten/bio-award-kaernten-2018/)

<https://youtu.be/vZW8lvjrC0o>

Diakonie 

Hoffnung braucht dein Ja.

