

## Estrechando Lazos (Strengthening Links) - promotion of local products and commerce

Strengthening the link between local producers, traders and consumers through the use of new marketing know-how and digital technologies.

### EAFRD-funded projects

**Location:** Southwest Sevillian Serranía region, Spain

**Programming period:** 2014-2020

**Priority:** P6 – Social inclusion and local development

**Focus Area:** Local development

**Measures:** M19 – LEADER CLLD

**Funding:** Total budget: 79 999.98 (EUR)

EAFRD: 71 999.99 (EUR)

National/Regional: 7 999.99 (EUR)

**Timeframe:** 04/2022 – 03/2024

**Project promoter:** GDR Serranía Suroeste Sevillana

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### Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity to launch the 'Strengthening Links' project. It was developed by the regional development agency GDR Serranía Suroeste Sevillana in Andalucía, Spain. It aimed to deepen the knowledge of locally produced, quality products and to put local producers in contact with each other. It also sought to connect them with local shops, retailers and consumers. The ambition was to build a distinct connection with and within the territory of Serranía through a directory, digital platform and promotional information activities. The project built on the ingenuity of local businesses and sharpened their skills on short marketing circuits and social networks.

### Project results

- The project has raised awareness and strengthened linkages between the local population and producers.

- The project has increased the visibility of young entrepreneurs and artisans and boosted their businesses.
- Producers, merchants, and citizens have gained digital skills by using the platform to publicise their products or services and learned to engage with the digital economy.

### Key lessons and recommendations

- Once the first mapping exercise of producers had been concluded, it was important to continue mapping local businesses and connect them with each other.
- It is vital to clearly show the businesses the advantages of participating in a project and encourage them to do so.

### Context

The project 'Strengthening Links' operated in the southwest Sevillian Serranía region of Andalucía, Spain, where agriculture and agro-industry have dominated the local economy for centuries.



This area produces a large variety of high-quality products exported to international destinations and appreciated by consumers for their excellence. The wide product range includes table olives grown in traditional dryland olive groves, cereals, legumes and crops such as aromatic medicinal plants and forestry products. In addition, the region is known for its artisan food products, such as muffins, puff pastries, biscuits and sausages, as well as craft products made of wood, leather and wrought iron.

While Serranía products are in strong demand among consumers, the competition from large-scale industrial manufacturers supplying large supermarkets represents a growing threat to local producers. In addition, many producers find it difficult to reach a broader market of end consumers, mainly due to their limited internet presence and insufficient knowledge of how to explore and launch effective marketing initiatives that would help increase customers' awareness of their products.



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To address this challenge, the regional development group Grupo de Desarrollo Rural (GDR) Serranía Suroeste Sevillana developed a project that sought to stimulate the local economy and build the capacities of local producers to reach broader consumer groups through knowledge exchange and an exploration of new ways of marketing, such as short marketing circuits, a portal or digital space.

## Objectives

Overall, the objective of the project was to improve the competitiveness of local producers in the Serranía Suroeste Sevillana region. This was to be achieved by strengthening the promotion and marketing of local and organic products to increase their value appreciation through territorial identification.

The aim was to generate an increased awareness about the products and local consumption among large retailers.

It was important to connect local producers with each other to generate synergies, particularly for the dissemination and promotion of their products.

The project also sought to increase the visibility and value of women's roles in local ecological production and short marketing circuits.

The key stakeholders involved in the project included local producers, business associations, users of the virtual community, eight tourist offices, eight agricultural cooperatives and municipalities of Serranía.

## Activities

Project activities included:

- Identifying and mapping local producers, organic production, and organisations and companies related to short marketing circuits.
- Preparing a directory/catalogue of local and organic products in digital format.
- Creating the virtual community 'conect@serrania' and ensuring that it is well maintained and kept up to date in the future.
- Designing a communication plan (including corporate image, posters and merchandising). This included the preparation of material for dissemination to the general public. Relevant signs highlighting the project were placed at the entrance and exit of the eight towns: Arahál, Paradas, Marchena, La Puebla de Cazalla, Morón de la Frontera, Coripe, Montellano and Pruna.
- Organising guided visits to producers in the region for product tasting (local and organic).
- Organising project presentations at the Sevillana Academy of Gastronomy, the Andalusian Academy of Gastronomy, and schools in various locations, including product tasting sessions.
- Participating in the International Rural Development Congress that was held in Córdoba.
- Organising workshops, meetings, and informative events about local organic products and short marketing circuits.
- Participating in events to promote local and organic products as well as short marketing circuits.

## Main results

The main results included:

- The use of digital technologies and the implementation and maintenance of the virtual community improved the positioning of local products, thereby increasing the potential of gaining more customers and generating more sales.
- The project raised awareness and strengthened links between the local population and producers.
- Young people who are developing new products and marketing processes in their towns, along with young artisans who participated in the directory and virtual community, have been mapped and identified. The project provided them visibility and boosted their businesses; many were newly formed. Ninety-one local producers have been identified.
- Producers, merchants and citizens gained digital skills by using the platform to publicise their products or services while learning to engage with the digital economy. Four business associations were involved and are active users of the virtual community.
- Eight tourist offices and eight agricultural cooperatives promote their local products and tastings.
- Eight town halls have collaborated by providing spaces for the placement of billboards.
- The use of digital technologies improved the positioning of local products, thereby increasing their potential to gain more customers and generate more sales.
- Three production companies were visited.
- Six local producers participated in a video podcast.
- Contacts have been established between producers and traders.

## Key lessons and recommendations

- Once the first mapping exercise of producers was concluded, it was important to continue mapping local businesses and connect them with each other. Ample visibility needs to be given to showcase their work.
- It is vital to clearly show the businesses the advantages of participating in the project and encourage them to do so. This is difficult to achieve because they are mostly micro-enterprises with few workers and limited time available to dedicate to learning new business know-how and technologies.

### Additional information:

<https://serraniasuroeste.org/>

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffTbo9lw9sc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffTbo9lw9sc)

<https://serraniasuroeste.org/productoslocalesartesano2023html/index.html>

<https://conecta.serraniasuroeste.org>



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