

The AgriTech Makeathon 2023

A 'makeathon' event promotes innovative projects, services, and products in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Ozolnieki, Ozolnieku pagasts, Latvia

Programming period: 2014–2020

Priority: P1 – Knowledge transfer and innovation

Focus Area: Innovation and cooperation

Measures: M20 – Technical assistance

Funding:

Total budget:	20 650 (EUR)
RDP support:	14 808 (EUR)
Private/own:	300 (EUR)
Other sources:	5 542 (EUR)

Timeframe: 28/04/2023 – 30/04/2023

Project promoter: Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre Ltd.

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Summary

The AgriTech makeathon fostered the development of innovative projects, services, or products in agriculture, fishery, and forestry. It brought together different actors, including students, engineers, programmers, etc., to create new solutions for existing problems in the sectors concerned. The organisers, the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (LRATC) and the Latvian University of Life Science and Technologies (LULST), provided the premises, the materials and a team of coordinators to host the event, as well as inviting speakers such as financiers, entrepreneurs, business advisors, farmers, etc. In their teams, participants were asked not only to create solutions, but also to calculate their costs, and to present their ideas at the end of the event. 10 teams participated; all of them finished their prototypes and presented their concepts to a jury of experts.



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Project results

- The makeathon resulted in 10 prototypes which could be developed further in the service of agriculture and forestry.
- Six to seven of the prototypes developed could have a positive impact on climate and the environment.
- Five to six potential new businesses emerged.
- One of the teams continued working with LRATC in its incubation program on a promising innovative product.

Key lessons and recommendations

- Organising makeathons requires a team of collaborators who are willing to take on multiple tasks, as this type of event requires a substantial amount of planning and promotion.
- Participants should be prepared for the fact that, after the process of development and analysis, they may well discover that their idea is not completely new, or that there are still many aspects that would need further research and prototyping before starting a business.



Context

The project holder, the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (LRATC), is a rural advisory organisation that provides support, guidance, and training to farmers and rural entrepreneurs. Its partner in this project, the Latvian University of Life Science and Technologies (LULST), is the only university in Latvia that focuses on agriculture and forestry.

In order to foster innovation and explore new developments in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, LRATC joined forces with LULST to bring together stakeholders from different fields who were willing to share their creativity and explore innovative solutions that might address the needs of these sectors. A makeathon is a brief but intensive event where people gather to hack/build/tinker, and create something new on a specific theme. Depending on the mix of skills and ideas among the participants, the outcomes of a team's makeathon can be anything from the elaboration of a new concept or design, a new plan or prototype, the outline of a new product or app, or even the design of software or hardware. Anyone over the age of 18 could participate in the AgriTech makeathon, as long as they had an interest in seeking viable solutions for agriculture.



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Objectives

The aim of the AgriTech makeathon was to identify new rural economic development opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship by creating the conditions for possible new innovations in agriculture. Makeathons enhance collaboration and networking between participants, creating new possibilities for such innovation and entrepreneurship.



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Activities

The makeathon participants included farmers, foresters, advisors, scientists, engineers, programmers, entrepreneurs, marketers, designers, students, business and finance professionals, etc., all involved either as experts/mentors, team members or coordinators. Project activities involved:

- Organising a first online meeting for team building. The idea was that each team of at least two participants would begin their collaboration in advance of the makeathon.
- Organising a 48-hour face-to-face event: two days where the teams would work on their prototypes and present the outcomes to a jury. During the event, they could receive advice from mentors and get support from the team facilitators. (The makeathon facilitators used the Horizon project "i2connect" methods).

The face-to-face event was held at the LULST premises, and the organisers provided all of the necessary materials and tools for prototyping. On the first evening, LRATC's most experienced trainers delivered a lecture illustrating the various stages in the development of an initiative and the co-creation process; helping participants to understand the different stages of innovation and their own roles within that.

This theoretical framework also provided the basis for the documentation worksheets and business model canvas that the teams used throughout the process of developing their ideas. The makeathon facilitators supported the teams to make use of these tools so that the focus was not only on the prototypes themselves, but also on the planning, the team dynamic, and the all-important pitch to the jury.



Main results

Some of the ideas that the participants worked on included: a healthy nutrition app; manufacturing pet toys from natural materials; developing vegan meat alternatives from organic raw materials; using apple pressure residuals; establishing an efficient and modern system for forest management; developing a sweet recipe based on hemp seeds and organic honey; designing a modular sensor system for plant and environmental monitoring; developing vegan and high-protein drinks; predator repellents for sheep, goats, and cattle herds, etc.

- > The makeathon resulted in 10 prototypes which could be developed further in the service of agriculture and forestry.
- > Six to seven of the prototypes developed could have a positive impact on climate and the environment.
- > Five to six potential new businesses emerged.
- > One of the teams continued working with LRATC in its incubation program on a promising innovative product.

Key lessons and recommendations

- > The participant teams at makeathons tend to be very focused on their prototypes, and can easily forget about the planning element. It is very important that the organisers and mentors actively help the teams to think ahead about the future development of their business ideas.
- > Organising makeathons requires a team of collaborators who are willing to take on multiple tasks, as this type of event requires a substantial amount of planning and promotion.
- > Participants should be prepared for the fact that, after the process of development and analysis, they may well discover that their idea is not completely new, or that there are still many aspects that would need further research and prototyping before starting a business.



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Quote

“Our goal with this event is to promote innovations and co-creation in the agriculture, fishery and forestry sector. We are trying to show the stakeholders that it is important to bring together actors from various fields and to find a way to interact with each other and make creative, innovative solutions for real issues in the sector.”

Makeathon AgriTech organisers

Additional information:

www.meikatons.lv

www.lkc.lv

www.facebook.com/Meikatons.AgriTech/

