

Food awareness for kids

LEADER funds help Swedish schools teach children about the links between farming and food sustainability.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Eksjö municipality, Sweden

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion and local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER CLLD

Funding:	Total budget	325 467 (SEK)
	EAFRD	162 733 (SEK)
	National/Regional	55 330 (SEK)
	Private/own	107 404 (SEK) - (LAG)

Timeframe: 12/05/2022 - 31/10/2023

Project promoter: Eksjö municipality

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Summary

Within this project, the children, pupils and staff of preschools and schools in the Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd LAG area grew vegetables together with help from a gardener to raise awareness about food production and demonstrate a sustainable model of coexistence between nature and humans. The aim of this project was for participating children to gain a better understanding of the journey of vegetables from farm to fork in a fun and educational way and to promote a sustainable way of living.

Project results

- 130 children and 44 teachers participated and learned how to grow vegetables, harvest and process them. Participants also gained practical knowledge about the environment and nature's cycles, which is the basis for understanding sustainability.
- A cultivation calendar was created as a record of experiences gained from the project and is now available for other organisations to use in the implementation of similar initiatives.

Key lessons and recommendations

- The cultivation of vegetables as a training activity offered the children different perspectives on the natural cycles of the environment around them. Nature connection is known to afford many well-being benefits and this was certainly observed in both the children and the adults who were involved in this project.
- Agri-food educational projects require effort to establish trust and cooperation between all actors involved.

Context

There is great interest in using the cultivation of fruits and vegetables as an educational tool within schools. Some schools in the LEADER area of Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd run their own kitchen garden projects on a small scale. However, in addition to the fact that teachers are short on time, there is also a lack of understanding about how to integrate the gardening activity across the curriculum and link it with the children's learning in other areas.





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Additionally, there is limited in-depth knowledge among teaching staff about vegetable cultivation, so opportunities to cover interesting topics are often missed, such as soil preparation, choice of crops, soil health, plant nutrition, preserving seeds for the next season and making use of the harvest. There was an identified opportunity for training and support.

Objectives

This project was conceived to establish collaboration and create synergies between schools, farmers, and environmental education associations so that local youngsters could share knowledge and experience of growing and producing food.

The project aimed to stimulate interest in farming in a fun and creative way, improving youth's understanding of the journey their food takes from farm to fork. Through active participation and hands-on learning about local food production, this project aims to promote healthy and more sustainable ways of life.

Activities

Project activities included:

- Setting out pedagogical objectives and an activity plan.
- Disseminating information about the project, and contacting and selecting kindergartens and schools.
- Establishing cultivation plans including dates for sowing, pre-cultivation, replanting, transplanting, fertilising and harvesting.
- Purchasing seeds and seedlings. Pre-cultivating activities.
- Contacting the selected schools and preschools to present the conditions, opportunities, and obstacles for cultivation at each preschool.
- Planning meeting content throughout the season.
- Visiting participant schools to discuss the educational plans e.g. choice of location for cultivation and solutions for irrigation.
- Pre-cultivation and replanting of pre-cultivated crops.
- Procuring cultivation materials (e.g. pallet collars, soil, fertilisers and plant support).
- Starting in mid-April until the end of September, school workshops were held every week. The content was linked to the goals of the activity and included practical elements where the children could participate in sowing, planting, harvesting, etc. The scope and frequency of the meetings depended on the conditions of the activity. The grower was responsible for planning and implementing these meetings in consultation with the teachers. Meetings in July took place at preschools that were open for the summer. Local associations involved in the cultivation/production of food or raw materials were invited or visited.
- Pre-cultivation of fast-growing crops which were planted in August.
- Conducting the project evaluation based on feedback received from pre-schools, schools, the municipality and growers.
- Preparing a report about the project results.

Participants in this project included the Eksjö municipality, local library and local beekeeper association.

Main results

- Knowledge increased about farming and food's farm to fork journey, both among the pupils and the adults who participated. The children can share and discuss this knowledge.
- 130 pupils (aged 1-12) and 44 teachers participated in the project activities. Participants learned how to grow, harvest and process vegetables. They also gained practical knowledge about the environment and nature cycles, which helped them understand sustainability.
- A cultivation calendar was created as a record of experiences gained from the project and is now available for other organisations to use in the implementation of similar initiatives.

- > The project has made other municipalities curious about cultivation education for children. Interest exists in similar projects in the LAG area.

Key lessons and recommendations

- > Educational projects in agriculture require time to establish trust and cooperation between all actors involved. This requires both time and resources and should be kept in mind throughout the process. The project had a relatively small budget, but the working time allocated to the project manager could have been greater and included more time for contact and collaboration with other organisations.
- > Agricultural projects can be affected by unforeseen factors. At the beginning of the growing season, the weather was very dry and irrigation bans were introduced which could have affected the crops. Initially, a plan was put in place to use rainwater, but based on how the summer weather developed these plans did not need to be implemented.
- > The cultivation of vegetables, as a training activity, offered the children different perspectives on the natural cycles of the environment around them. Nature connection is known to afford many well-being benefits and this was certainly observed in both the children and the adults who were involved in this project.

"I have received a resounding 'woooow' from the children this week when we checked on the progress of our early sowings in the cold frames, when spinach, dill, cabbage and lettuce seeds have sprouted in large quantities".

Project manager Linnea Granath

Additional information:

[Project website](#)

[Project information](#)

