

Cooperatives and innovation in agriculture - communicating good practices

Providing agricultural cooperatives with information on diversifying and innovating their technologies to contribute to economic, social and environmentally sustainable development effectively.

EAFRD-funded projects

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Measures: M20 - Technical assistance

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	EAFRD	35 277 (EUR)
	National/Regional	9 378 (EUR)

Timeframe: 01/10/2022 - 30/04/2024

Project promoter: CONFAGRI, CCRL

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Summary

The project focused on raising awareness about the importance of rural cooperatives and innovation in agriculture. In collaboration with selected local cooperatives, the National Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Credit of Portugal (CONFAGRI) produced five videos, three leaflets and three open webinars showcasing good practices in energy efficiency, production organisation, digital agriculture and circular economy. The key message was that agricultural cooperatives are drivers of rural development and innovation stimulating income generation, quality of life, and retention of people and services in rural areas.

The collaborative partners jointly identified suitable and transferrable projects, activities and experiences that clearly impacted agricultural, livestock, and forestry activities. This work informed the coordination, selection, and production of the promotional material for which a video production company was commissioned.

Project results

- Results consisted of an awareness-raising and dissemination campaign on large communication platforms and events. This included the production and dissemination of five videos, three webinars, three leaflets and the creation of a webpage to publicise the project materials.

- The participation and reach of beneficiaries of the actions were estimated as follows: the CONFAGRI website and its social networks have around 300 000 visits annually, and the national fairs where the project activities were exhibited welcomed more than 150 000 visitors.

Key lessons and recommendations

- The importance of innovation in agriculture is becoming increasingly evident for achieving improved efficiencies and economic profitability, food quality, environmental protection and health, efficient use of resources, environmental improvements and biodiversity. These matters are increasingly important and farmers are concerned and interested in adopting good practices in this regard. This is why it is essential to promote and disseminate relevant information effectively.

Context

Being aware of the need to move agriculture towards an economic model that is more sustainable, less dependent and more efficient in its use of raw materials, energy and natural resources, the National Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Credit of Portugal (CONFAGRI) had the idea of developing and disseminating good practice that would address this need, inspire and encourage local farmers.





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The examples needed to show local cooperatives and agricultural organisations how they can use new technologies effectively to contribute to the Portuguese countryside's economic, social and environmental sustainable development.

It was also relevant to demonstrate that Portuguese cooperatives already have a wealth of good practices across all agricultural, forestry, agri-food and other rural development sectors.

Considerations involved decisions about the specific examples to choose, the best medium to select for dissemination and the length of stories to be told. Finally, the agreement was to focus on five important themes and produce short- and long-form promotional videos.

In addition, CONFAGRI also wanted to counteract the public idea of agriculture being perceived as archaic by demonstrating the extent to which innovation and technological evolution have already transformed the agri-food sector. It was essential that CONFAGRI changed this outdated misperception and show how farmers, technicians and managers have increasingly become crucial agents of change in many areas, including energy, intelligent agriculture, precision agriculture, efficient and sustainable use of resources, use of biomass, climate change adaptation and reduction of pollutants etc.

Objectives

The overall objectives of the project were to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of farmers' organisations by raising awareness of the existing agricultural technological innovation in Portugal.

The aim was to transfer good practices, dynamic solutions and new knowledge that would inform the intervention of rural development agents and encourage them to participate and collaborate.

The project was designed to contribute to the aims of rural development policy measures.

Activities

The main project activities encompassed four means of communication: videos, webinars, leaflets, and a website.

The production of five videos. The videos (short and long versions) were accessible online and used in workshops, events, and fairs. The five topics of the videos included the presentation of cooperative products, Producer Organisations and meat from native breeds, agricultural cooperatives and the energy transition, organisations and adaptation to climate change and extreme phenomena, and (e) cooperatives and the digitalisation of agriculture.

Organisation of three free webinars in June 2024. The webinar topics included circular and digital agriculture, organisation and promotion of production, animal health and sustainable food, and energy transition and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The production and dissemination of three information leaflets on the topics of circular and digital agriculture, organising and promoting production, and the agro-energy transition.

A project web page that was created on the CONFAGRI website hosted and publicised project materials (videos and information leaflets).

Main results

- Results consisted of an awareness-raising and dissemination campaign that utilised large platforms and events. This included the production and dissemination of five videos, three webinars, three leaflets and the creation of a webpage to publicise the project materials.
- The level of participation is estimated as follows. The CONFAGRI website and its social networks counted around 300 000 visits annually. The national fairs where the project activities were exhibited welcomed more than 150 000 visitors. It can, therefore, be conservatively estimated that more than 20 000 people watched the project videos and learned about the good practices and innovative actions presented in them.

Key lessons and recommendations

- > The importance of innovation in agriculture is becoming increasingly evident, both for achieving improved efficiencies and economic profitability, as well as for improving food quality, environmental protection and health. Essentially, innovation is key for the efficient use of resources and environmental improvements and for positively impacting biodiversity. These matters are increasingly important, and farmers are concerned and interested in adopting good practices in this regard. This is why it is essential to promote and disseminate relevant information effectively.
- > This project addressed five areas where innovative approaches to the various challenges in Portuguese agriculture were developed. At the same time, many other good examples were identified that are worthy of being replicated and mentioned in similar projects.

Quote

“Agricultural cooperatives are drivers of rural development, and innovation plays a fundamental role in this development”.

CONFAGRI

Additional information:

Website:

www.confagri.pt/

Project website:

www.confagri.pt/as-cooperativas-e-a-inovacao-na-agricultura/

YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZpRTAR79d8&list=PLoigJCqMJu9Ywn--fOXMDNVb0-liH1LoW

