



Ecostep - Implementation of a Integrated Managementsystem for small and medium enterprises

LIFE04 ENV/DE/000052



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Project description:

Background

The current environmental management systems available on the market such as EMAS (the EU Eco-Management & Audit Scheme) or DIN EN ISO are not suitable for SMEs because they were designed in the first place for large companies, because SMEs generally do not have the financial and personnel resources to introduce them, and because SMEs are an extremely heterogeneous group. On the basis of this, in 2001 the Hessen Environmental Alliance, an agency within the Hessen Ministry for Environment, Rural Regions and Consumer Protection, took on the task of designing a management system tailor-made to suit the needs of SMEs. EcoStep was developed between then and 2004. This is an integrated management system which takes into account such aspects as environmental protection, quality assurance and labour protection on an equal par with the operational work sequences of a company. By the end of 2004 EcoStep had not only been tried in theory but also in practice. However, at this time there were still some decisive aspects missing. These were developed with financing through the EU Life Programme from 2004 to 2007. EcoStep is a system for SMEs (up to 50 employees) combining environmental, quality and labour protection management. The system is supported by a new financing concept known as 'Management Contracting'. The idea is to keep the costs for environmental health and safety (EH&S) at current levels for the client company for a number of years (payback period), and to have the contractor invest in optimising the EH&S processes (management and technical). The contractor then receives the savings of these optimisations during the payback period as amortisation for the initial investment. After the payback period, the client gains the savings and the

contractor exits the engagement.

Objectives

The project was to introduce the EcoStep management system to selected SMEs through workshops and consulting. This would be a first step towards making EcoStep operational across the entire European SMEs sector. A secondary objective was to make EcoStep Viticulture the accepted model for the small-scale agriculture sector. EcoStep was to be the model for family and supplementary income enterprises in the agricultural sector. Lastly, the project envisioned that EcoStep would ultimately enable participating businesses to obtain additional accreditation, in particular EMAS, with little supplementary expenditure.

Results

The project team developed the first integrated, process-oriented management system for SMEs to full maturity and implemented it across some 50 businesses. It offers quality environmental performance improvement and labour security in one system – including external audit – for a fixed price. It has also been granted so-called system certification, making it a real alternative to ISO, EMAS and OHSAS certificates. These participating businesses were in the viticulture sector in Germany, Italy and France. Impressively, the project showed that an integrated management is possible and reasonable for SMEs even of very small sizes (companies with 5 to 25 employees). What made the process innovative above all is the broad support it received regarding joint development across ministries, consultancies, business associations, universities, and other sector stakeholders, for the purpose of adjusting things to a manageable process for ‘real’ SMEs. Differences and advantages of EcoStep compared to other integrated approaches:

- EcoStep is the first certifiable integrated management system.
- It is open to further specific standards (e.g. International Food Standard [IFS] for wineries)
- There are minimum external and internal costs for implementation and minimum "paper work".
- An extremely low price for external certification has been negotiated. Furthermore, the EcoStep process has proven its transferability to different sectors and also to different countries. Its flexibility to adapt to and take on board further standards is one of its key features.

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Industry-Production - Agriculture - Forestry
Environmental management - Certification
Industry-Production - Food and Beverages

Keywords

integrated management, EC regulation on eco-management and audit

Target EU Legislation

- Environmental management & assessment
- Regulation 761/2001 - Allowing voluntary participation by organisations in a Community eco-manage ...

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Hessisches Ministerium für Umwelt, Energie, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz
Type of organisation	Regional authority
Description	The beneficiary is the Ministry for Environment of the State of Hessen. Its department "Forschungsanstalt Geisenheim", an institute for viniculture, supplies the viniculture knowhow, whereas the Ministry itself covers project management, quality and financial management as well as dissemination activities.
Partners	Der Senator für Bau, Umwelt und Verkehr der Freien Hansestadt Bremen (SBUV), Germany Regione Emilia-Romagna, Assessorato ambiente, agricoltura e sviluppo sostenibile, Italy Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 7: Wirtschaftswissenschaft, Germany IHK Dillenburg und Wetzlar, Germany RKW Hessen GmbH, Germany Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine, France RKW Bremen GmbH, Germany Hessen Energie, Gesellschaft für rationale Energienutzung mbH, Germany

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE04 ENV/DE/000052
Duration	15-MAR-2004 to 15-MAR -2007
Total budget	1,495,783.00 €
EU contribution	746,892.00 €
Project location	Bremen(Deutschland) Hessen(Deutschland) Aquitaine(France) Emilia-Romagna(Italia)

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Read more:

Leaflet	Title: "Ecostep LIFE" (135 KB) Editor: Umweltallianz Hessen No of pages: 2
Leaflet	Title: "Ecostep : Un système de management intégré" (330 KB) Editor: Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie et de Physiqu No of pages: 2
Project web site	Webpage
Publication: Article-Paper	Title: "Ecosphäre März 2007 : Ecostep - Ein Managementsystem wird erwachsen" (669 KB) Year: 2007 Editor: Umweltallianz Hessen No of pages: 12
Publication: Guidelines-Manual	Title: "Le système de gestion intégré Ecostep" (3.094 KB) Editor: Unternehmensführungssysteme und Umweltmanagementsy No of pages: 91
Publication: Guidelines-Manual	Title: "Il sistema di gestione integrato Ecostep" (2.771 KB) Editor: Alleanza per l'ambiente dell'Assia No of pages: 91
Publication: Guidelines-Manual	Title: "Il sistema di gestione integrato per imprese di piccole dimensioni Ecostep per il settore alimentare/vitivinicolo sviluppato nell'ambito del progetto LIFE" (3.554 KB) Year: 2007 Editor: Hessisches Ministerium für Umwelt, ländlichen Raum No of pages: 156
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report (DE) Year: 2007 No of pages: 54
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report (EN) Year: 2007 No of pages: 54

Publication: Pedagogical tool	Title: "Best-Practice, Kommunikation und Effizienzfalle: Ein Problemaufriss der Transferschwierigkeiten von Umweltmanagementsystemen in die Praxis" (468 KB) Author: G. Müller-Christ, B. Behrens, B. Nagler Year: 2005 Editor: artec – Forschungszentrum Nachhaltigkeit, Universi No of pages: 93
Slides Presentation	Title: "Was versprechen sich Unternehmen von EcoStep ?" (752 KB) Author: G. Müller-Christ, B. Behrens Editor: artec – Forschungszentrum Nachhaltigkeit, Universi No of pages: 14
Slides Presentation	Title: "Das Managementsystem EcoStep der Umweltallianz Hessen : Ein gemeinsames Projekt von Hessen und Bremen" (261 KB) Author: Günter Lanz Year: 2007 Editor: Hessisches Ministerium für Umwelt, ländlichen Raum No of pages: 19
Slides Presentation	Title: "Betriebliche Beratungsstelle zur ökologischen Effizienz : Ecostep Ausblick" (70 KB) Author: Martin Schulze Editor: RKW Bremen No of pages: 10

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