

## BELGIUM

### Implementing local development strategies

#### Location

Sint-Laureins

#### Programming period

2007 - 2013

#### Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

#### Measure

412. Environment/land  
management

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 69 850  
EAFRD 13 620  
Regional 15 078 (Flemish) +  
16 703 (provincial)  
Private 8 500 (SVAL)  
Other 15 947 (sponsors)

#### Project duration

JAN 2012 – JUN 2014

#### Project promoter

Samenwerking voor  
agrarisch landschap (SVAL)

#### Contact

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#### Website

<http://energieklandschapshout.be/>

LEADER support was used to exploit the potential of using as energy source the large quantities of waste wood from landscape conservation.

### Summary

In LEADER area Meetjesland, large quantities of waste wood from landscape conservation are discarded outdoors or burned without energy recovery. In parallel to the loss of this valuable resource, the cost of maintenance of landscape elements and fuel for farms is increasing. This project looked at how these three factors could be aligned to deliver green economy benefits.



Part of the project was funded using LEADER funding as well as Flemish and provincial grant support. In addition, a novel approach to sourcing funding was used through a foundation which brought together around 25 different sponsors and partners. The funds were used to buy a chipping machine. The machine is used for landscape works for about six months every year while for the remaining months it is used to process other waste wood. The project also provided awareness campaign for providing information to farmers on the most appropriate use of hedgerow management for energy purposes.

### Results

The project has helped to enhance the conservation and management of the rural landscape in the area by providing an economic benefit to farmers maintaining their pollard willows and other woody hedgerows. Around 25 farmers actively taken part in the programme and their number is still growing.

Active participation in reducing CO2 emission: around 8 tonnes of CO2 savings per year per residential installation.

Generating new economic added value in rural communities. Several farmers as well as regular households have made the switch to an installation on wood chips because of the economic benefits.

This was a small-scale pilot project that has helped to create more awareness about the theme and currently several similar initiatives are being taken to upscale the approach.

### Lessons & Recommendations

When transferring the example, it's essential to make proper agreements with users of the chipper. The initiator of this project had to learn from mistakes and misunderstandings. Their experiences could help others to avoid these from the beginning.

## Context

In large parts of the LEADER area Meetjesland, woody landscape elements, such as pollard willow trees (*Salix* sp.) are very typical and many different actors (farmers as well as rural residents) are concerned with their conservation and management. Until a century ago, this wood was an important source of energy and there still exists a tradition in the area of using the landscape elements to supply this need.

Large quantities of waste wood from landscape conservation are still discarded outdoors or burned without energy recovery, despite its potential and value as an energy source. In parallel to the loss of this valuable resource, the cost of maintenance of landscape elements and fuel for farms is increasing. This project looked at how these three factors could be aligned to deliver green economy benefits.

## Objectives

The general aim was to make energetic use of residual wood from landscape management, in cooperation with local rural residents. The primary goal being to reintegrate the valuable residual wood from landscape management back into the rural economy. Through the use of these residues, and the added value they create, the project aims to enhance the management of the landscape whilst also making it more profitable, generating a new economic approach in rural areas.

By enabling the collection and processing of the residual wood for energy purposes, the project sought to bring the rural community closer together and be partly self-sufficient in heating fuel. With residual wood now providing local added value there is an incentive for rural people to be involved in the management of their landscape. The exchange of knowledge and experience in these activities is also hoped to connect different actors and people within the community.

The use of residential heating systems based on woody biomass there can lead to savings on fossil fuel. Combined with scraps and waste from their own landscape management around 8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> savings per year per residential installation are envisaged (based on an assumption of 2 500 litres of heating oil per year).

## Activities

The initiator and champion of this initiative is Samenwerking voor agrarisch landschap (SVAL) (the Cooperation for Agricultural Landscape Association). A

voluntary organisation, whose main goal is to work on sustainable management of the agricultural landscape. In particular they work on raising awareness through good examples and sharing of specific machines, working methods and organisation.

The project began in January 2012 with an awareness raising campaign to inform local residents of the project. This was announced through newsletters, information sheets and demonstration days. An example of a residential heating system, based on dry wood chips, was available for viewing by appointment, as well as a brochure on the use of woody biomass for heating and links to an information website. In December of the same year, a specific wood chipper was purchased to be able to process the types of wood arising in the region.

In order to provide financing to purchase the chipper and fund the awareness raising and information provision, the project looked to LEADER funding as well as Flemish and provincial grant support. However, one condition of the funding was that there would be matched financial resource for the landscape works. As SVAL is a voluntary organisation without its own financial capital, the project used a more novel approach to sourcing funding through the King Boudouin Foundation grant. The Foundation provides tax-deductible support to a variety of projects. Sponsors make a donation to the Foundation, which then provides the grant money direct to the project. Around 25 different sponsors and partners contributed to the project in a variety of ways.

The chipping machine is intended to be in use as long as possible and only for public use. For landscape works it is available over a period of six months a year and is used to process other waste wood during the remaining months. The machine has been designed so that it can only be used to process residual landscape elements and therefore is unable to be used for other means, removing any competition for different uses. It can be booked online through a calendar-based booking service.

Beyond the duration of the project a minimum running cost of 25 EUR per hour of actual use (machine switched on) will be charged in order to cover servicing and maintenance costs for the chipper. A discount on this cost of 4 EUR/m<sup>3</sup> of woodchip that is taken to the depot, dried and used to supply local biomass plants, can be applied.

The awareness campaign and support to farmers provides information on the most appropriate use of hedgerow management for energy purposes, including the harvesting cycle and the potential to replace lost or damaged hedgerows with energy hedgerows with the specific purpose of producing biomass for energy.