

SWEDEN

Agri-food chain integration & quality

Location

Västra Götaland-region

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P3 - Food chain & risk management

Measure

M16 – Cooperation

Funding

Total budget 4 534 957 (SEK)
RDP contribution 4 081 461 (SEK)
Private / own 453 496 (SEK)

Project duration

2019 to 2021

Project promoter

Agroväst

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Website

<https://agrovast.se/eu-projekt/avslutade-eu-projekt/kortare-livsmedelskedjor-och-starkt-konkurrenskraft/>

A CAP-funded project aimed to build the capacity of small-scale producers to reach the regional market and shorten the region's food chain.

Summary

The Västra Götaland region was experiencing growing demand for high-quality local food of known origin. This may create new business opportunities for agricultural companies, food processing enterprises and regional restaurants and grocery stores, but capacity, marketing and collaborative working are key. Two non-profit organisations cooperated with the County Administrative Board to build capacity across the sector and shorten the region's food chain.



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Project Results

A total of 55 local small-scale producers participated in the project. The project has been successful in facilitating collaboration across the sector, and several regional grocery stores are now dedicated to selling local products.

Out of the 210 participants in the seminars, study visits and workshops series, 76 were men and 134 were women.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Recruit people to the project team who have experience in the food industry. Their detailed knowledge about how the industry works has proven invaluable to this project.
- ❑ When planning for networking activities, find the right people with the right level of decision-making authority and influence.
- ❑ People's working patterns and conditions may not allow time for in-depth or intensive training; be open to the idea of planning shorter, flexible sessions/modules.

Context

Shorter food chains are seen as an important component of achieving a sustainable food supply and vibrant rural areas. Sweden's Västra Götaland region was seeing a growing demand for high-quality local food of known origin, creating new business opportunities for agricultural companies.

Two non-profit organisations (Agroväst (AV), focused on agricultural production, and Lokalproducerat i Väst (LPIV), which processes locally produced ingredients) cooperated with the County Administrative Board (CAB) to shorten the region's food chain. The targeted groups were small-scale food processing enterprises, as well as regional restaurants and grocery retail entities.

This project came about as a continuation of an Interreg project called "REFRAME", which was focused on small-scale food production and took place between 2016 and 2019.

Objectives

The overall aim was to shorten the food chain, improve the capacity of smaller food producers to reach the regional market, and promote greater cooperation on marketing, sales, and distribution.

Activities

- Established and strengthened collaboration between 55 small-scale agricultural and horticultural companies and local grocery stores and restaurants in order to promote and increase the demand for local food.
- Organised food fairs to bring restaurants, grocery stores, and small-scale producers together for networking opportunities.

- Provided advice and financial subsidies (up to 70 %) to agricultural and horticultural companies wishing to strengthen their brands.
- Provided training to grocery stores on how to find and work with smaller producers, as well as guidance for producers on meeting the demands to sell to grocery stores.
- Supported direct collaborations between different actors in the food chain to reduce waste and increase the availability of local foods in restaurants. Four networks were established for collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Developed and adapted a set of industry guidelines for stronger implementation of food legislation in small-scale food production.
- Supported regional agricultural and horticultural companies to scale up their production from small-scale to more industrial production (process efficiency). Fourteen small companies received advice and training regarding flows, processes, equipment, and types of investment support.
- Offered a series of 14 seminars, study visits and workshops to agricultural and horticultural companies, with the aim of creating a platform and meeting space for skills development and networking.

Main Results

The project was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the team still found effective ways to work under the circumstances.

The largest of the food fairs included 110 purchasers (restaurants and retailers) and 22 small-scale producers, and during the pandemic, 6 'mini-fairs' at grocery stores brought together 5-25 local producers each.

A total of 55 local producers participated in the project, 30 SMEs received marketing guidance, and 14 small-scale producers received advice on how to scale up their production to more industrial levels (process efficiency).

Out of the 210 participants in the seminars, study visits and workshops series, 76 were men and 134 were women.

The project partner Lokalproducerat i Väst will carry the project results and lessons forward in their ongoing work to promote locally processed products.

Key lessons

- Recruit people to the project team who have experience in the food industry. Their detailed knowledge about how the industry works has proven invaluable to this project.
- The grocery store 'mini-fairs' proved to be very good learning opportunities for store owners and local producers as in working closely together to organise the events, they learned about each other's needs, conditions, and perspectives.
- When planning for networking activities between local producers and grocery stores, take time to find the right people with the right level of decision-making authority and influence. The project leader emphasised that this requires time, but it pays off.
- The project had initially planned to provide training and development for grocery store employees, but although store managers were positive about the idea, it proved difficult to find enough time for the employees to participate all at once. Plan for shorter, flexible training sessions/modules

Additional sources of information

n/a