

Portugal

Local Development

Location

Portugal interior

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 - Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding

Total budget 161 318.53 (EUR)
EAFRD 55 671.05 (EUR)
National/Regional 9 824.29 (EUR)
Private 95 823.19 (EUR)

Project duration

2018 to 2022

Project promoter

Pinhal Maior - Associação de Desenvolvimento do Pinhal Interior Sul

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A LEADER funded project to stimulate the local economy of a remote and depopulating area through the promotion of organic farming.

Summary

In a remote, inland region of Portugal with an aging population, a non-profit association used EAFRD, LEADER funds to increase the production of certified organic fruit and vegetables in the area. This was achieved through supporting local farmers to adopt organic farming practices and by improving the marketing of local produce.



BIOBERÇO DA LUSITÂNIA
PRODUÇÃO, TRANSFORMAÇÃO E COMERCIALIZAÇÃO
DE PRODUTOS BIOLÓGICOS

Project Results

50 hectares of land are now farmed organically, with a plan to increase both the number of hectares and the number of active farmers.

This project stimulates both the creation of direct and indirect jobs, and the fair payment of agricultural products, thus reducing economic drivers of depopulation.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Developing a similar initiative would require the appointment of an organisation to identify market opportunities and support local farmers to convert to organic; to oversee the marketing and coordination of produce sales; and to support farmers with the administrative and financial aspects of adapting smallholder businesses.

Context

Five municipalities (Mação, Oleiros, Proença-a-Nova, Sertã and Vila de Rei) of the Pinhal region in Portugal, cover an area of 1.905,75Km². Population density is low and the area has the highest proportion of inhabitants over the age of 65 years of anywhere in the EU.

Located far from urban centres that can provide a market for local produce, the ageing population has increasingly struggled to make a living from agriculture and this has led to lands being abandoned and to depopulation.

“Pinhal Maior – Associação de Desenvolvimento do Pinhal Interior Sul” is a private sector non-profit enterprise founded in 1994 which operates in the five municipalities mentioned above. Its mission is to make this territory more attractive and competitive through the preservation of its environmental heritage and cultural identity, and by limiting further depopulation through supporting new and sustainable business activities in the area.

Objectives

The ‘Bioberço da Lusitânia’ project is funded through the LEADER (and promoted through the Pinhal Maior Association). It aims to enhance and improve local agricultural activity by promoting organic farming; training farmers to use culturally and environmentally sustainable practices; and improving farmers access to the market.

Activities

A major and critical element of the project is the implementation of activities that build consumer confidence. This includes the marketing of certified products under the brand ‘Bioberço da Lusitânia’ and establishing a closer relationship between producers and consumers through the direct participation of producers in the monthly farmers’ market ‘Os Quintais nas Praças do Pinhal’. This market takes place on the second Monday of every month on a rotating basis across the five municipalities within the project area. Members also participate in national events.

As previously there was no local Producer Organisation to focus production and market the fruit and vegetables, the Pinhal Maior Association conducted the following activities aimed at supporting farmers.

Seven organic farming training courses designed and delivered, attended by 150 participants.

Assistance provided to farmers to help them acquire organic certification for their products.

Technical follow-up and provided to farmers following certification, to ensure the implementation of organic farming practices.

Provision of a pan-municipal collection point for produce (financed separately by the Rural Development Programme), where it is washed, weighed, packaged.

The processed fruit and vegetables are then sold in local markets and other points of mainly direct sale, ensuring that producers receive a fair price for their products.

Main Results

40 farmers are now practicing organic farming and others are in the process of converting to organic farming.

Currently, 50 hectares are farmed organically, with a plan to further increase both the number of hectares and the number of active farmers.

The variety and the quantity of fruit and vegetables available for local sale has been increased.

This project stimulates the creation of jobs both directly and indirectly, and the fair payment to producers for agricultural products. The marketing campaign raises the competitiveness of the territory since it promotes the relationship between the two key enablers of the local economy: producers and consumers. Thus, the project reduces economic drivers of depopulation.

Key lessons

For a project such as this to succeed, key success factors identified are:

The appointment of an organisation (in this case Pinhal Maior), to make the connections between farmers and to oversee the marketing, coordination and payments to the farmers.

The identification of market opportunities through an understanding of local consumer preferences for fruit and vegetables.

The provision of technical assistance to farmers; to convert to organic farming, to access the market, and to support the administrative and financial aspects needed to adapt traditional smallholder businesses.