

Netherlands

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location

Arnhem

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P2 - Competitiveness

Measure

M16 - Cooperation

Funding

Total budget 238 000 (EUR)
EAFRD 44 000 (EUR)
National/Regional 44 000 (EUR)
Private 150 000 (EUR)

Project duration

2019 – 2021

Project promoter

The Linen Project

Email

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Website

www.thelinenproject.online

CAP funds help identify opportunities for improving localised linen production.

Summary

The Linen Project was a learning-by-doing project that brought together various stakeholders to develop and reactivate vital knowledge required for linen production. It focused on the cultivation and production of organic flax and linen in EU countries. Actions involved setting up a stewardship initiative and developing a consortium for future small-scale flax spinning facilities. The project also funded an open-source knowledge exchange to help facilitate localised linen value chains.



Project Results

This project attracted 50+ members (aged between 19 and 62) to the stewardship team which raised awareness about environmentally sustainable farming and the role of EU consumers in clothing and fabric production chains.

Lessons & Recommendations

- Nowadays, there is a growing awareness that clothes production can have a major impact on the environment. At the same time people are concerned about risks of unethical labour conditions in the textiles and clothing industry, and their own responsibilities as consumers. It is important to respond to this by sharing knowledge about sustainable clothes production.

Context

Textile production offers development opportunities for the EU's agri-food sector and 80% of global flax-production takes place in the western part of Europe (Netherlands, Belgium, Northern France). This flax is shipped to Asia to be processed (mostly in China) after harvesting. Many of these yarns and fabrics return to Europe in the form of clothes, household fabrics, etc. Much of the added-value potential from EU flax production has therefore been lost outside the EU and socio-economic possibilities exist to revive previous EU skillsets in processing textiles.

Flax fits very well into crop rotation, thus encouraging a revival of local textile production may help positive environmental impacts from improved crop rotations, such as for carbon farming and regenerative agriculture.

Objectives

The project aimed to raise awareness about options to revitalise EU flax and linen production.

This required investigating all the steps that are needed for EU production of flax and linen and other related (more innovative) products.

Activities

The Linen Project was implemented by an EIP Operational Group.

To realise its aims, the Linen Project initially searched for partners interested in producing flax and linen on a wider scale and were willing to join the project activities. The goal was to involve multiple stakeholders in the creation of a durable, local, and transparent value chain for textiles where everybody gets a fair price and the carbon footprint is as low as possible.

In 2019, the project team started working together with two biodynamic farms (de Lingehof and de Horsterhof) close to Arnhem, who grew 1.2 hectares and 0.4 hectare of flax respectively, with (in the case of Lingehof) and without (in the case of Horsterhof) the aid of agricultural machinery. The raw material was then processed by Dutch company Van der Bilt Zaden en Vlas; spun by Polish company Safilin and woven by Dutch company Enschede Textielstad.

Resulting in approximately 800 meters of woven linen.

In 2020, the Linen Project launched a shared stewardship community with a group of 30 people who managed this community of practice. The years 2020 and 2021 were challenging for flax production, with many commercial farmers essentially losing their crop. The stewards used this time to learn spinning, weaving, papermaking, basketry, etc. and started co-design workshops to make clothes, they gave spinning lessons and started to make new products like felt.

The Linen Project was presented two times at Dutch Design Week (online in 2020 and live 2021) (<https://thelinenproject.online/community/presentations>).

Main Results

The project attracted 50+ members (aged between 19 and 62) to the stewardship team which raised awareness about environmentally sustainable farming and the role of European consumers in clothing and fabric production chains.

The Linen project established networks with different stakeholders and set up the foundations for a new production chain, involving specialists and amateurs in an exchange of knowledge about organic flax production.

International students are increasingly interested in the project's methodology and in getting involved in its activities.

Key lessons

Nowadays, there is a growing awareness that clothes production can have a major impact on the environment. At the same time people are concerned about risks of unethical labour conditions in the textiles and clothing industry, and their own responsibilities as consumers. It is important to respond to this by sharing knowledge about sustainable clothes production.

A significant barrier to the re-establishment of linen production in Europe is a lack of small-scale spinning facilities. The project's next goal is to connect European small-scale flax producers and establish more spinning mills in Europe.

Additional information

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<https://thelinenproject.online/the-linen-economy/shared-stewardship/>



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