

GERMANY

Biodiversity's restoration, preservation & enhancement

Location

Berlin-Brandenburg

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P4 – Ecosystems
management

Measure

M16 - Cooperation

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 916 036
EAFRD 906 785
National/Regional 9 251

Project duration

2018 – 2022

Project promoter

Fördergemeinschaft
Ökologischer Landbau
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A cooperation project to develop an innovative, area-specific model of nature conservation advisory services.

Summary

The intensification of agriculture is a major contributor to the loss of biodiversity and the extinction of many species, and between them, existing agri-environmental programmes and the private agricultural extension services are often not able to fully address the issue.



To address this gap in advisory services, the Fördergemeinschaft Ökologischer Landbau Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. (FÖL) set up an advisory programme in cooperation with different authorities in Brandenburg. Through it, farmers can receive free advice on how to improve their nature conservation practices, while at the same time learning 'peer-to-peer' from a group of demonstration farms about new conservation ideas and options.

Results

The project has resulted in a comprehensive and widely accessible nature conservation advisory programme specific to the agricultural landscapes of Brandenburg.

A set of policy recommendations for improving the competence of nature conservation advisors in Brandenburg has also been developed.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Successful cooperation projects rely upon excellent relationship management and regular stakeholder engagement. The structures and processes which facilitate and mediate discussion are therefore of great importance.
- ❑ The requirement to pre-finance project expenses is a major challenge. Some adaptation of rules would allow smaller or less flexible organisations to participate in such valuable programmes.



Context

Species extinction and loss of biodiversity are a significant threat to agricultural landscapes across Europe. Contributing factors in this process include the intensification of agriculture, increasing pesticide use, large-scale maize cultivation, the decline of hedgerows and small water bodies, and the abandonment of crop rotation. Existing agri-environmental programmes are not universal and privately organised agricultural advisory services have so far been unable to always effectively address environmental issues because they primarily focus on productivity.

In this context, expanding nature conservation advisory services in Brandenburg was deemed necessary in order to change the current production model in agriculture.

The lead partner in this project was Fördergemeinschaft Ökologischer Landbau Berlin-Brandenburg (FÖL) e.V. cooperating with the German Association for Landscape Conservation, the State, Environmental Office of Brandenburg, five demonstration farms and other associated partners.

Objectives

The aim of this cooperation project was to develop an innovative advisory model that would enable farmers to maintain their productivity while contributing to biodiversity protection and the preservation of natural habitats and agricultural landscapes.

Activities

The project activities included:

- An analysis of the different biodiversity-related advisory service approaches used in Germany and a situational analysis in Brandenburg. The project has run 20 discussions on approaches to nature conservation in Brandenburg and in other federal states.
- The development of training modules for farmers, concerning biodiversity-related advisory services for farmers. These modules were tested and evaluated by a team of 13 advisors.
- The preparation of policy recommendations for improving biodiversity, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and with feedback from the project's advisory board.
- The organisation of annual training event, public meetings and the creation of a pool of demonstration farms to promote as best-practice examples.

- The facilitation of open exchanges and networking via bi-monthly video conferences for all nature conservation advisors in Brandenburg.
- A dedicated website and the production of promotional material (flyers, press releases).

Main results

The project has resulted in a comprehensive nature conservation advisory programme specific to the agricultural landscapes of Brandenburg. Subject matter includes:

- Agri-environmental measures, compensation, contracted nature conservation.
- Managing flowering areas and strips, field margins, greening, establishing hedgerows and wild herb fringes. Mowing methods for grasslands and species-rich reseeding.
- Protecting small bodies of water (ponds) and riparian strips.
- Protecting individual species including meadow and ground-nesting birds, birds of prey, amphibians, and insects.
- Applying on farm nature conservation approaches including nesting boxes, green roofs.

A set of policy recommendations for improving the competence of nature conservation advisors in Brandenburg has also been developed.

By the end of 2022, 60 farms will have received advice and the 5 demonstration farms will have planned and hosted 10 field days. The project has so far delivered 11 training courses for advisors.

Key lessons

This is a cooperation project which aims to establish new structures in the federal state of Brandenburg. Regular stakeholder engagement is of critical importance to ensure that there is common understanding about everyone's roles and responsibilities at each point of the project's implementation. One year after launch, the project team set up an advisory board with about 20-30 representatives from the stakeholder organisations.

The requirement to pre-finance project expenses was a challenge for an association like FÖL. Some adaptation of rules would allow smaller or less flexible organisations to participate in such valuable programmes.