

SPAIN

Innovation & cooperation

Location

Antequera

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P1 – Knowledge transfer & innovation

Measure

M01 - Knowledge transfer & information actions

Funding

Total budget 140 103.21 (EUR)

EAFRD 112 082.57 (EUR)

National/Regional 28 020.64 (EUR)

Project duration

2017 to 2017

Project promoter

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A knowledge sharing programme initiated by a cooperative to improve the position of small producers in the value chain.

Summary

DCOOP, is a multi-sector agri-food cooperative in Antequera, in the province of Malaga. It is mainly dedicated to the production of olive oil, table olives, almonds, and wine, and since 2015 has been recognized as a Priority Associative Entity. In 2017, the cooperative developed a Demonstration and Information Program for small producers with the aim of promoting their integration into agri-food sector cooperatives.



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Project Results

More than 3,770 farmers and stockbreeders participated in the programme which represents 94% of the total number of targeted producers.

A stronger cooperative network was achieved with a noticeable growth in industrial transformation and digitalisation, plus new direct marketing channels in several production and sales sub-sectors.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Word of mouth, in the form of positive recommendations from programme participants, has been a major factor in the growth and success of this programme.
- ❑ A precise needs analysis and sound knowledge of the sector and the territory has meant that this project was built upon a good understanding of the limitations that hinder the integration of new members and the consolidation of cooperatives.

Context

A large proportion of the Spanish agri-food sector, and in particular the cooperative sector, consists of small and medium-sized enterprises. These operators face serious difficulties accessing the domestic and export markets and are at a competitive disadvantage compared to the large distribution chains and agri-food industries.

DCOOP is a multi-sector agri-food cooperative based in Antequera, in the province of Malaga. Primarily dedicated to the production of olive oil, table olives, almonds, and wine, it has been recognised as a Priority Associative Entity since 2015.

In 2017, DCOOP developed a Demonstration and Information Programme for small producers with the aim of helping them to work together to combine their resources and create a competitive offer for the markets.

Objectives

The aim of the programme was to promote the associative integration, within the agri-food sector, of small producers through a programme of information and training that promotes economic, social, and territorial cooperation.

Activities

The EARFD funded Demonstration and Information Program included the following actions, which took place at a wide range of locations:

1. Awareness-raising information days focused on sharing supply and market information concerning the cooperative olive production sector. Sessions highlighting the fact that cooperatives that produce and sell olive oil in bulk miss opportunities to promote their product in an international context.

2. Information sessions and facilities/holdings visits for farmers, with a special focus on olive, winemaking and almond-growing, to learn about different types of associative model, sectorial activities, and marketing approaches in different provinces and territories.
3. Specific activities to inform women about the agri-food market integration of cooperatives and associations, to encourage their participation in the sector itself and also in decision-making bodies, governing councils, boards of directors and assemblies.
4. Practical demonstrations concerning the setup of supply stores at cooperatives in Granada, where alliances were created with a local distribution and marketing company to replicate its model.
5. Knowledge transfer actions for olive and olive oil farmers/producers; focusing on quality, traceability, regulations, and food safety in relation to the international market.
6. Information and demonstrations aimed at improving business culture and international market orientation without losing sight of the producing territory and the cooperative model.

All the activities of this programme involved the participation of technical teams, sector professionals, researchers, as well as the workers and managers of the cooperatives themselves.

Main Results

The 48 actions were attended by more than 3,770 farmers and stockbreeders. This represents 94% of the total number of targeted producers.

A direct effect of this programme has been the growth of industrial transformation, digitalisation and new, direct marketing channels which have emerged in the sector. Specific results have included:

- Several projects were launched to raise funds for the construction of cooperative olive mills (Andalusia and Extremadura).
- Winegrowers in 15 cooperatives incorporated wine bottling into their production processes, allowing for direct marketing without intermediaries.
- Several agro-shops were created to sell the cooperative's own products and to facilitate market access for other products grown by producers in the vicinity.
- DCOOP consolidated their position as the main developers of information and demonstration programmes in Spain, holding meetings in territories where they had previously had no presence.

Key lessons

The dedication, effort and tenacity of the technical team was key. Their precise needs analysis and sound knowledge of the sector and the territory meant that the project remained realistic and managed expectations with a good understanding of the kinds of limitations (local idiosyncrasies, personal interests, and specific market circumstances) that hinder the integration of new members and consolidation of cooperatives.

Programme participants speaking positively of their experiences of the 2017 actions amongst peers increased demand and allowed DCOOP to deliver further training programs in 2018 and 2019.

"Cooperatives have to exist, because that way, there is a reference price for farmers and for members. Everyone can exert more strength if they are united than if they go their own way."

DCOOP

Additional sources of information

n/a