

NETHERLANDS

Farm performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location
Streefkerk

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P2 – Competitiveness

Measure
M4 – Investments in physical
assets

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 131 745
EAFRD 25 451
National/Regional 25 451
Private 80 843

Project duration
2017 – 2018

Project promoter
Booij Kaasmakers

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A cheese-producing farm used RDP support to set up a new plant for producing speciality cheeses and ensure its long-term financial sustainability.

Summary

Booij Kaasmakers wanted to develop new speciality cheeses using the milk from nearby farms. It needed the milk to go direct from the farm to the factory. To this end, the cheese farm established a cooperation with nearby farmers who could provide the raw material.



The company used rural development programme (RDP) support to build a new cheese-producing unit. This funding also enabled it to work with experts to bring close to market new types of cheese that were not produced locally.

Results

The company developed the only artisanal red flora cheese in South Holland.

The new production unit enables Booij Kaasmakers to process 10% more milk into specialty cheeses.

The high quality and added value of speciality cheeses makes farmers more financially independent. This extra income allows them to cover the costs of nature management and associated surcharges.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Entrepreneurs may think in a different way to people who evaluate applications for RDP support. Thus, it is necessary to use experienced consultants for the preparation of project proposals.
- ❑ Beneficiaries should be aware of the fact that financial support is only paid afterwards. This involves enormous financial risks and obstacles, which also can have a negative impact on the project.



Context

Cheese-making on dairy farms in the Netherlands is a tradition that is passed on from generation to generation. Booij Kaasmakers from Streefkerk in South Holland wanted to expand its production with the addition of speciality cheeses. In particular, hard blue mould cheeses similar to English varieties such as Stilton and Shropshire, which were not produced in South Holland. To this end, it also started a collaboration with local dairy farmers, including the dairy farm Brandwijk and the goat farm Zomerlust.

Objectives

The project aimed to strengthen the regional food chain by setting up a collaboration among farms that would take care of dairy production and sales in the region.

Thanks to this model, the cooperating partners can focus more on grazing and nature management, and thus strengthen biodiversity on their land.

Reinforcing cooperation and developing new speciality cheeses has made participating dairy farms more resilient, helping to ensure the long term financial sustainability of partners.

By directly supplying milk to the adjacent cheese dairy processing facility, the farmers can significantly reduce the number of transport movements for milk collection and delivery.

Activities

Booij Kaasmakers used RDP support to set up an energy efficient new cheese factory. The timeline of specific activities was as follows::

January 2017: construction of the casco roof / basement / floor / drainage and refurbishment of the dairy farm and expansion of the cheese production unit;

February-March 2017: establishment of a new cheese production unit for Gouda cheeses;

May-June 2017: establishment of a speciality cheese production unit and building ripening rooms for red flora and blue mould cheeses;

July-August 2017: development of new cheese products and maturation of cheeses under the guidance of a dairy technologist; development of product packaging and promotional materials.

September-December 2017: further development of cheese-tests with the support of the dairy technologist, customers and cheese-makers.

December 2017-March 2018: selection of the end product and development of a product name and packaging.

April 2018: delivery of the finished product – first sales.

Main results

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Open days are organised for consumers at least twice a year.

The new cheeses are promoted in the Alblasserwaard region.

Key lessons

Entrepreneurs may think in a different way to people who evaluate applications for RDP support. Thus, it is necessary to use experienced consultants for the preparation of project proposals.

Beneficiaries should be aware of the fact that financial support is only paid afterwards. This involves significant financial risks and obstacles, which also can have a negative impact on the project. On the other hand, RDP support also offers opportunities for innovation and can help farmers to achieve their goals.