

SWEDEN

Implementing local development strategies

Location

Suderbyn

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 158 484

EAFRD 74 347

National/Regional 31 823

Private 52 314

Project duration

2009 – 2013

Project promoter

Suderbyn Permaculture

Ecovillage

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An ecovillage was developed on Sweden's Gotland island using EAFRD funding, providing a model for environmentally-friendly accommodation, waste water treatment, food and energy production. The site is also a template for non-consumerist approaches.

Summary

The ecovillage was developed on an old farm on the Swedish island of Gotland. The site was far enough away from urban areas to experiment with alternative water management infrastructure, but close enough for inhabitants to benefit from services such as transport and waste collection.



The Swedish cooperative used EAFRD funding to put in place the basic infrastructure of the ecovillage and initial landscaping such as planting trees and moving soil. A permaculture forest food garden was created. Equipment such as a solar cooker was also installed, while the site was made accessible to visitors.

Results

The ecovillage's basic infrastructure was developed including a permaculture forest food garden.

Initial landscaping was completed such as planting trees and removing soil.

It provided an educational model for environmentally-friendly accommodation, wastewater treatment, food and energy production.

Links were developed with other eco-villages and other projects with a focus on sustainability and environmentalism.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The project had a positive experience of cooperating with public authorities, finding it easier to achieve a private-public collaboration within the framework of an EU-funded project.
- ❑ The project proposal can be an opportunity to network with diverse actors in the region.
- ❑ An applicant for funding should be sure they are ready to be the lead in a project with all the administration that entails. Joining a project as a junior partner could work better for smaller organisations.

Context

The ecovillage site was developed on an old farm property just outside Visby, the main town on the Swedish island of Gotland. The site was far enough away from urban areas to experiment with alternative water management infrastructure, but close enough for inhabitants to benefit from services such as public transport and waste collection.

Ecovillages are a response to the environmental challenges faced by today's society, form a model for an alternative approach to consumption, community-living and sustainable development. The project could provide new innovative approaches to living sustainably in the countryside.

Objectives

The project aimed to provide a living demonstration site for learning about sustainable rural development and an educational model for innovative approaches to living in an environmentally-friendly manner. The project also sought to demonstrate the values of communal solidarity through a participatory democracy approach and increased social interaction.

The initiative aimed to create sustainable systems for waste collection, energy and food production using renewable technologies. They also sought to use a community-led approach to the development of the village, proving the value of social innovation. The village rejected a consumerist approach, working in the pursuit of non-materialistic sources of meaning and happiness.

Activities

The initial 2009-2013 leader project put in place the basic infrastructure of the ecovillage as well as the initial landscaping, which included planting hundreds of trees, moving 3 800 cubic metres of soil to create seven large sun traps and four ponds.

The site was also made accessible to visitors through installation of signs and benches, while key equipment was also installed such as a Scheffler Reflector solar cooker. The site is unique in Sweden in its use of man-

made giant sun traps, composed of horseshoe-formed windbreaks pointing south, designed to create a favourable microclimate.

The project also includes construction of Sweden's largest permaculture forest food garden, a space-efficient perennial garden of edible plants. The ecovillage seeks to ensure inhabitants have at least one common meal per day, waste is avoided and purchased food is bought in bulk from local farmers or wholesalers.



"We started out with a lofty vision of an ecovillage. By the end of the project our vision had become a lived reality"

Robert Hall, Suderbyn Ecovillage, President Global Ecovillage Network of Europe



Main Results

The project put in place the basic infrastructure of the ecovillage, including the initial landscaping. It made the site accessible to visitors through signs and benches. A permaculture forest garden was built.

It provided an educational model for environmentally-friendly accommodation, wastewater treatment, food and energy production. The project also received unemployed citizens for training, helping meet their social goals.

They developed a link to other eco-villages in regional and international networks, international volunteer schemes such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and Service Civil International (SCI), as well as other projects with a focus on sustainability and environmentalism.

Key lessons

The project started as a residential development but transformed into a living and learning centre by the end. They had a positive experience cooperating with public authorities, finding it easier to achieve a private-public collaboration within the framework of an EU-funded project.

The project proposal is an opportunity to network with diverse actors in the region. Many organisations are seeking to be involved in a good project. The organisation should be sure it is ready to be the lead applicant in a project with all the administration that entails. Joining a project as a junior partner could work better for smaller organisations.



Additional sources of information

n/a