

## SLOVENIA

# Implementing Local Development Strategies

### Location

Litija

### Programming period

2007 - 2013

### Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

### Funding (EUR)\*

Total budget 228 610  
RDP support 149 531

### Project duration

2009 – 2014\*

### Project promoter

LAG 'The Heart of Slovenia'

### Contact

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\* Various projects

A series of different LEADER supported projects helped the development of distribution systems for producers as to improve market access and local food awareness.

## Summary

Seven partner municipalities at the east of Ljubljana and the three municipalities of Zasavje supported by the Local Action Group, set up a series of projects to develop entrepreneurship in these central areas of Slovenia. These initiatives focused on the development of distribution systems for producers as to improve the market access and local food awareness in Slovenia.



In one of the projects they worked closely with local schools and organised learning programmes for pre-school and school children. Another initiative focused on organic vegetable production and distribution by offering training, setting up a storage and distribution facility as well as carrying out promotion and information activities.

## Results

A consortium of 15 schools and kindergartens was established and a learning programme was designed for pre-school and school children on entrepreneurship, tourism, agriculture and local self-sufficiency.

The 'Heart of Slovenia' brand was established and over 100 local food providers joined.

The Ecological Farmers' Association completed the establishment of the distribution centre, and established a chain of suppliers for the collection and distribution of organic vegetables.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The supply of food to kindergartens and schools can be complicated for local producers because of public procurement regulations and the focus on cheapest price.
- ❑ The establishment of regular and reciprocal communication between stakeholders in the local food supply chain requires time and experience.
- ❑ The experience made farmers understand that if they work together they can promote themselves better.
- ❑ Running the distribution centre showed that seasonal production alone may not allow year round operation. Therefore increased availability and variety of produce may be required to secure uninterrupted commercial supply.

### Context

The Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia was founded in 2000 with the support of a local action group and consists of seven partner municipalities at the east of Ljubljana and the three municipalities of Zasavje. Its mission is to develop entrepreneurship in these central areas of Slovenia. The Centre launched a number of initiatives focusing on developing consumer awareness and food self-sufficiency.

One of these initiatives was the setting up of Rural Developmental Cooperative Jarina z.o.o. which started operating in 2004. Jarina has as its purpose to connect and offer professional education to local producers, help them in developing quality products and stable marketing channels and create job positions. Local markets in the area had already received LEADER funding to develop and build market stalls, and further market development activities were investigated. A number of objectives were considered to improve distribution and market access.

### Objectives

One project idea aimed to connect local food and drink suppliers with public food. This new market consisting of school and kindergarten kitchens would be accessed using an educational approach.

A secondary project focused on ecological food production and the need for co-ordinated distribution. Hence a number of objectives were identified in this area:

- increase the diversity of supply of ecological farms;
- increase the share of ecological farms in the area;
- increase the volume of production of ecological vegetables for the market;
- connect and organize local growers of ecological vegetables;
- increase storage and refrigeration facilities in the area.

### Activities

The first project sought to promote closer co-operation between local food suppliers and public food providers. The approach adopted was based on the understanding that school and kindergarten kitchens can also be used to provide education, in tandem with the general education offered to children. In this case, rather than adopting a simple 'farm-to-fork' consumer needs were put first. Thus a tailored 'fork-to-farm' approach was adopted. Jarina worked closely with local schools and organised learning programmes for pre-school and school children, with an

emphasis on the preservation of cultural heritage and the revival of 'forgotten' vocations such as beekeeping, shepherding, etc.

Another initiative was setting up the Ecological Collection and Distribution Centre for Vegetables, which was designed and implemented by organic farmers in the area. The association conducted animation workshops and offered professional education to growers on organic production of vegetables. Realising the need for greater distribution, the association set up a collection and distribution facility. This included the construction of a cold store, the purchase of equipment for packaging and distributing vegetables. In addition, an organic farm was built for educational and production purposes. The centre also presented itself at the Nature and Health Fair and created a brochure of its members' activities.

### Main results

The Jarina initiative helped set up a consortium of 15 schools and kindergartens and designed with them an extended learning programme. Lessons offered on entrepreneurship, tourism, agriculture and local self-sufficiency.

The 'Heart of Slovenia' brand was established. This increased the profile of local food producers and agricultural businesses. Over 100 local food providers have joined up.

The Ecological Farmers' Association completed the establishment of the distribution centre, and established a chain of suppliers for the collection and distribution of organic vegetables.

### Key lessons

The supply of food to kindergartens and schools can be complicated for local producers because of public procurement regulations and the focus on cheapest price.

It is also important to note that the establishment of regular and reciprocal communication between stakeholders in the local food supply chain takes time (and a great deal of experience) to establish.

The experience has made farmers understand that if they work together they can promote themselves better.

Regarding the distribution centre it became evident that seasonal production alone may not allow year round operation. Therefore increased availability and variety of produce may be required to secure uninterrupted commercial supply.

### Additional sources of information

n/a