



European Commission
Agriculture and
Rural Development



Leader as a driver for Rural Europe: workshop for new LAGs 19-20 January 2011 Brussels, Charlemagne

Video message from Commissioner Dacian Cioloş

Hello,

Unfortunately I cannot be with you in person. But I really want to be present at least via this message because the subject you are discussing, and the Leader programme in general, is of great importance to me as a Commissioner. I also think that it is a Community initiative project model which has been well integrated by the Member States.

It really is a successful Community initiative which has taken root on the ground. I think that in future we must build on the experience gained through the Leader programme, the Leader networks and the rural development networks in the European Union and use that experience to increase the scale of the local initiative idea even further.

You are meeting today to exchange experience, from what I understand based on approximately 300 recently-established local action groups. I would say that you are a select club in terms of skills, knowledge and ideas relating to rural development issues.

I wish you every success in what you are doing and I also want to reassure you. This idea of Leader-type local initiatives will clearly be at the heart of future rural development policy.

Local action centred around a local action group is essential for the development of many local communities. It is, I believe, where the added value lies. The specific nature of this type of initiative means that local players should not be considered simply in terms of their size or budget, or their turnover or economic importance, but taken into account and integrated in terms of their importance as regards the ideas which they contribute to the development of society and the local community.

This partnership between the public and private sector, between the public and administrative sphere, the community and the economic sphere, also brings added value to this type of local initiative.





Local action groups are good for local communities; these groups will therefore be at the heart of future rural development policy. But, looking beyond that, I wish to emphasise the importance of networking your local experience at European level because this balance is important for Leader-type programmes. On the one hand, there is the local initiative and the capacity to mobilise and develop local resources for the good of the community but, going beyond that, in this type of action you acquire skills, knowledge and know-how which it is important to share with others. And that is another equally important aspect of the Leader programme's added value: the ability to derive maximum benefit from the knowledge and ideas acquired and to share them with others, thereby creating a snowball effect so that what started out at local level can ultimately be applied on a Community scale.

I therefore encourage you in future not to think of cooperation only with local action groups within the same region or Member State. Take the European dimension into account too. You are at the heart of a European policy and it is important to be aware of this dimension and to apply it to this policy, including through the type of action which you are now taking.

I hope that you will be able to derive future benefit from your discussions with each other during this meeting, from the detailed information, pointers, advice and guidance which my colleagues from the Directorate-General for Agriculture will be able to give you during the meeting, and from the experience which already exists within the rural development network at European level. Once you have returned to your countries, regions and local action groups, you will be able to take this ambition beyond action at local level, in future years you will become more involved in action across the European Union so that the added value of what you have gained at local level can also be used by others and, perhaps, you too will have new ideas about what you wish to do.

I would therefore say that, within the framework of the common agricultural policy after 2013, Leader-type local initiatives will remain at the heart of rural development policy; our objective is not only to strengthen this type of initiative but also to expand it, in as far as possible more than is currently the case, in organising the structure of local agriculture and the development of local products, the development of new measures involving closer cooperation between agriculture and non-agricultural economic and social activities, but also the relationship between the rural and urban environment, because often the rural areas are around urban areas; this cooperation often creates opportunities which can be better utilised by this type of local initiative than by top-down initiatives.

We are in the process of considering new ideas and we would welcome yours via the rural development networks; we are looking for ideas and experiences which can be capitalised on through the common agricultural policy, which is currently being adapted and reformed for the period after 2013.

I therefore wish you continued success and hope that you will be very open to one another during this meeting; I am convinced that your work will make a positive mark in the European rural sphere and that, through your work, we will be able to say that in rural development policy there is clearly unity in diversity.

Good luck, every success, and I hope to see you soon.

