

Added Value of Networking



Bottom-Up Consultation Process for RDP 2014-2020

Basic information	
NRN:	NRN Malta
Theme:	Success story
Coordinator:	Managing Authority
Partners:	CCRI, NRN committee, LAGS, NRN stakeholders
Beneficiaries:	Rural Development stakeholders
Resources:	n/a
Period:	08.2012 - ongoing
Main element of networking:	Building common understanding of common policies
Other elements of networking:	Effective stakeholder engagement Exchange of relevant experience and know-how amongst stakeholders

Background

On June 15th 2011 the National Rural Network organised a meeting for its stakeholders in which the University of Gloucestershire presented the preliminary findings of studies carried out on the local rural context. The consultation team studied the local scenario and came up with a vision for the future, a strategy and an Action Plan.

The report found that farming was a vulnerable sector facing new challenges and the general public remained unaware of its importance. It suggested that various aspects related to agriculture were explored further including water, planning and tourism. Also, it was observed that local agricultural holdings were small with most farmers working on a part time basis and therefore not giving agriculture the importance it required and agriculture was also not viewed as important by the general public.

A series of meetings and interviews were held with several rural stakeholders where several concerns were raised, for example most farmers believe that that the sector is not very profitable and there are problems with marketing their products. The links with the tourism industry is also rather poor, as is cooperation between farmers. Several representatives from most sectors stated that the cost of production was always increasing. Some sectors saw a rise in demand while others saw a decline. Competition from imported products has increased over the past years and the consumer cannot distinguish between local and imported produce.



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The six themes suggested by the consultation team were then described. These themes would then form the basis of the new RDP 2014 – 2020 and are interconnected. The six themes are:

Theme 1 - Increasing returns to the fresh produce sector and improving efficient input use

Theme 2 - Improving long term sustainability of the livestock sector in Malta

Theme 3 - Food-processing and adding value – establishing quality chains and new products

Theme 4 - Direct sales of fresh produce

Theme 5 - Making a high quality rural visitor experience

Theme 6 - Enhancing the landscape and adapting to future water challenges

Main activities

Since launching this consultation process in June 2012, stakeholders have been invited to participate in the discussion. The stakeholders that accepted the invitation were allocated one of the six discussion groups. Each group is made up of approximately fifteen members under the leadership of a stakeholder assisted by a facilitator from the Ministry. Each thematic working group meets on a monthly basis. The six thematic working groups have already met five times. The discussions so far have included a SWOT analysis and after evaluating the data collected the priorities for the stakeholder groups were identified. The identified priorities were then further discussed with one team choosing to dissect, streamline and prioritise them further.

Main results/benefits

The main benefit of this process will be the drafting of the new Rural Development Programme, which will be based on the input from the stakeholders that are participating in the discussion groups.

Success factors

The success of this approach has been based upon excellent communication, open discussions and the implementation of an effective bottom up approach. The initial research and the quality of facilitation have also supported the smooth running of the process.

Added value of networking

This networking approach has resulted in the new Rural Development Programme being built on solid foundations because of the valid inputs from a range of stakeholders. These inputs will become the basis of the new Programme.

Contribution of the NSU

The National Rural Network organised the first meeting at which the report findings were presented,



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ensuring all the appropriate key stakeholders were invited. The NRN has continued to support the process and the six discussion groups established.

Contribution of the partners

All the partners have been involved in the open discussions with much guidance and support provided by Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Institute.

Pictures



NRN Meeting, June 2012
Source: NRN Malta



One of the working groups

Last Update

May 2013