



AUSTRIA - WALDVIERTEL

Production and promotion of organic potatoes

The project is intended to position the region with the agricultural leading product 'potato'. Through professional potato marketing and distribution, as well as the development of package deals in tourism the value added in the region, particularly in the agricultural sector should be increased and so businesses and jobs should be permanently protected. The project has aimed to secure positive developments in the region (in the form of increased agricultural value added, an increased awareness of the region, sustainable tourism and the emergence of new opportunities for regional gastronomy) by strengthening cooperation between organic farms in the region, restaurants and lodging businesses, and by expanding and further professionalizing the project (well-directed co-operation, combined with an intense marketing for the region as a potato-growing region).

1. Project details

Nature of the project

Purpose: To secure positive developments in the region by strengthening cooperation between regional organic farms, restaurants and lodging businesses, and by expanding and further professionalising the project.

Content: Strengthening and training the participating companies: exchange of internal experiences, strengthen cooperation between gastronomy and farmers, on-farm school projects, address customer service.

- Production related measures: acquisition of new seeds and other potato varieties; advisory services for on-farm improvements (e.g. potato storage), extension of area under potato cultivation.
- Marketing: development of adequate logistics, installation of an online distribution system, optimization of farm gate sales by using a corporate design, further development of contacts with customers and dealers, involvement of regional trade.
- Professional market performance: production of photographic and film material, advertisements in trade media, participation in fairs and presentation events, conducting own profile events with top chefs, open farm events, potato tasting with farmers and innkeepers, producing a regional potato-cooking book, mailings to customers and restaurants.
- Development of merchandising products: potato chocolate and potato vodka;

Inspiration: The project was an idea of the Lainsitztal tourism work group, which later was the basis of the Lainsitztal consortium.

Policy coherence: The project is coherent with the strategic aims of the main region Waldviertel (regional development concept) and of the federal state Lower Austria (WIN-strategy), especially



the aim to increase the value added in the region by initiating and strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation projects, by securing high quality in education and training of manpower, by developing high-quality tourism, as well as on the aim to further develop innovative high-quality products and organic products. The strategic aims are also compatible with the Leader 2007-13 programme of the regional LAG (Waldviertler Grenzland).

Links between agriculture and the rest of the economy

Main agricultural sub-sectors involved: The main agricultural sub-sector involved is organic potato production. Other economic sectors involved are the gastronomy and lodging sub-sectors.

Description of these links: Establishing links between the agricultural sector, the local food industry, trade and the gastronomy and lodging sector was the main objective of the project. The aim was to develop a marketing concept as a potato growing region including all of the above sectors. The project was realised in the framework of the broader initiative "potatoes of the Waldviertel" (*Waldviertler Erdäpfel*). The potato region Lainsitz (*Erpfiregion Lainsitz*) is a member of this initiative.

Scale of the project

Size: Currently 18 organic farmers, 7 caterers, 2 lodgings (Lainsitztal consortium)

Time scale:

- (a) Previous projects:
 - a. Strategy development, 2004/05
 - b. Implementation, 2005/06
- (b) This project:
 - c. Expansion and Professionalisation, 2008/09

Coverage: regional (Lainsitztal = 6 municipalities)

Beneficiaries and supporters

Beneficiary: Lainsitztal consortium

Supporters: From the beginning the project was supported by the involved municipalities.

Finance

Funding:

- (a) Previous projects: Leader plus tourism support programme
- (b) This project: Austrian Rural Development Programme (RDP), measure 313 "Encouragement of tourism activities".

Budget:

- (a) Previous projects - Total costs:
 - a. 25,000 EUR, of which 19,000 EUR public contribution
 - b. 43,000 EUR, of which 34,000 EUR public contribution



- (b) 2008-09 project - Total costs:
c. 25.000 EUR, of which 10,000 EUR public contribution

Results

Direct results: The project has opened up new regional and national markets and new marketing strategies, such as internet sales, sales to large customers, farm-gate sales, new product development, cookbook, holiday guide, etc.

Through extensive public relations and marketing activities (advertising folders, events, e.g. gastronomic events), sales of the farmers were guaranteed.

Due to positive developments of potato sales, a new sales stall was built. Some farmers built new storage facilities, and decided to increase their range of potato varieties.

The region has established itself as a potato region, in particular with its product variety (2008: cultivation of 50 different potato varieties).

Main target: Regional organic potato growers, gastronomy and lodging sector

Wider benefits: The project has positive spill-over effects on other farmers, who benefit from the project without being part of it. In the regional population the pride of regional products increased.

2. Relevance of case study experiences for others

Problems: Problems arose in the order listed:

- (a) People - Intensive discussions were necessary to motivate stakeholder participation.
- (b) Institutions – It was difficult to convince the institutions of the importance of the project for the development of the region.
- (c) Funding - The long-term funding is unsettled. The cooperation consists of small-scaled companies, the membership fees are low. The municipalities are withdrawing from the project.

Transferability and mainstreaming potential: The project can be replicated successfully elsewhere. It needs to be adapted to regional circumstances. Other regional developments were affected by the project, mainly the tourism sector.

Innovation: The project is considered innovative. the increase in value of the product “potato” and the value increase of the manufacturing and processing companies are particularly noteworthy elements.

Institutional aspects: The project partnership was organized by panel decisions in preparation by the project management. The municipalities as partners were involved rather indirectly. They supported the project’s success financially and by their trust in the project. Rather little inputs came from the Gourmet region Waldviertel; however, the project itself positively influenced activities of the region. The local LAG “Waldviertler Grenzland” supported. Special feature of the



project is that very small agricultural companies participated to the projects and very few enterprises.

Social aspects: The project has contributed to the creation of new job opportunities in a disadvantaged region, but may also have created new jobs in the regional catering sector and helped to secure employment in processing companies. In the beginning the project was dominated by men, but in the course of the project when developing the cookbook more and more women have been involved (supply of potato recipes).

Environmental aspects: The project has contributed to the environment and its protection, as the involved farms are 100% organic. In the region 30% of the farms are organic.

Sustainability: The project is expected to be sustainable and self-sufficient when the present funding ends. It is expected to create durable links between agricultural and other economic sectors involved.

Lessons to pass on: An important success factor of projects like this with many partners involved is that all project partners mutually give confidence. In this case, they need to be confident in the high quality of the products of their partners. This is especially true for the municipalities as financial supporters of the project.

References: Interview with the project-coordinator (12.05.2010)

<http://www.erpfi.at/>