



# Added Value of Networking

## Success Story

Success Story title	<i>LEADER Marquee</i>		
Theme	<i>Network communications; Knowledge exchange; Cooperation</i>		
NRN	<i>Finland</i>	Coordinator	<i>Rural Network Unit of Finland</i>
Partners	<i>LEADER Local Action Groups and organisers of national agricultural fairs</i>		
Period	<i>2011 and 2012; Plans for 2013 under way</i>	Resources	<i>Approx. 25,000 Euro / per year</i>
Geo-location	<i>Pori (Satakunta) 2011, Oripää (Southwest Finland) 2012</i>		
Beneficiaries	<i>Entrepreneurs with LEADER funding, Local Action Groups</i>		

### Background

In late 2010, the Rural Network Unit organised a study trip to Ireland for LEADER Local Action Group experts. There were participants from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Agency for Rural Affairs and Finland's LEADER LAGs. During the trip, the delegates visited the Irish Ploughing Championship, and within the event a marquee in which more than 100 entrepreneurs with LEADER funding sold their products and discussed the significance of the funding for their business development. The Finnish delegates were unanimous in their wish to build a similar marquee in Finland. The first LEADER marquee was built in Finland at the Farmari agricultural fair, held in Pori from 1 to 3 July 2011. The next one will be at the OKRA farming fair in Oripää from 4 to 7 July 2012, and preliminary plans have been made for the Farmari fair in Seinäjoki in 2013.

### Main activities and contribution of the partners

Each of Finland's 56 LEADER LAGs is offered the opportunity to challenge one LEADER-funded entrepreneur or project in their area to sell products and present its operations in the LEADER marquee.

- The LAGs look after the advance marketing of the marquee event, as well as running the practical aspects of the marquee during the fair.
- The Rural Network Unit plans and organises the structural aspects of the marquee together with the fair builder and the LAG representatives.
- The Rural Network Unit takes care of marketing the marquee and ensures visibility for the entrepreneurs and projects included in it within the national communication channels of the Rural Development Programmes, including the maaseutu.fi website.
- The marquee includes an information desk where visitors can find information on LEADER funding and activities. The attending experts are mainly from the surrounding LAGs, although experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Agency for Rural Affairs and other LAGs are also invited.





- There is a get-together evening for the LEADER marquee's entrepreneurs, project operators and LAG representatives, in which they can network and share their thoughts on topical issues related to the LEADER process.
- People involved in LEADER activities in the area surrounding the next summer's farming fair are invited to visit the marquee, so that planning of the next year's activities can start immediately.

#### Contribution of the NSU

The Rural Network Unit coordinates the planning and implementation of the LEADER marquee initiative. It does this in collaboration with LAGs from the area. Follow-up of the initiative is done together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Rural Development Unit, the Agency for Rural Affairs and local operators.

The Leader marquee for 2012 will include representatives from almost all the administrative bodies within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, in their own sections. This means that the marquee presents the enablers of the funding under the same roof as the results achieved thanks to the funding.

#### Main results/benefits

- The good examples displayed in the LEADER marquee very concretely demonstrate the outcomes of the LEADER process to the general public and encourage rural entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs to make better use of rural funding.
- Visitors to the marquee can also buy high-quality products made in the Finnish countryside, which demonstrates the demand and opportunities that exist in rural areas.
- The marquee also provides a joint discussion forum for LEADER experts and all those interested in LEADER funding, allowing for sharing of thoughts and experiences while enjoying a pleasant summer event.

#### Success factors

- The objectives for the LEADER marquee are set centrally, but the implementation always highly local.
- The LEADER marquee is a very concrete way to display the outcomes of LEADER efforts. The impact of the funding is clearly visible in the products of the businesses in question.
- Young entrepreneurs and project operators can learn from more experienced colleagues, as the idea is for all participants to encourage and assist each other. This forms networks between the participants.
- The LEADER marquee is an easy way to demonstrate the diversity of rural business and enterprise.
- Visitors to the marquee can buy genuine rural products produced in the Finnish countryside, usually made from local raw materials.
- Rural development is often a major part of the lives of the LAG representatives and the attending rural entrepreneurs and project operators. This creates an atmosphere of natural excitement and enthusiasm that any visitor to the marquee can appreciate.
- The concept develops consistently because of the annual change in location and local organisers.

#### Additional information

<http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/leader/leader-telttä2012.html> (in Finnish)

