

SLOVENIA

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location
Ljubljana

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2014 – 2020

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P2 – Competitiveness

Measure
M1 – Knowledge transfer
and information actions

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Project promoter
Slovenian Forest Service

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A series of theoretical and practical training courses on work safety for small private forest owners and forest users.

Summary

As cutting trees has increased in Slovenia in the period of economic crisis and after ice-break damage in 2014, the number of fatal accidents among non-professional workers has also increased. It was thus necessary to address the need to improve skills of non-professional workers, such as small-scale private forest owners and forest users, to perform forestry operations safely.



A series of theoretical and practical training courses were conducted on how to work safely and efficiently with a chainsaw and a tractor, reaching over 3 200 participants.

Results

114 training courses amounting to 1 584 hours provided training to 3 226 participants in 2015 and 2016.

A high level of satisfaction was reported by participants who appreciated the knowledge and skills that they acquired.

In 2018, 750 participants are expected to receive training in how to safely use a chainsaw and 380 a tractor.

The training made an important contribution to increasing work safety in forests for non-professional workers.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Implementing successfully such a training programme requires good planning and organisation, as well effective communication channels to reach out to potential participants.
- ❑ Specific attention should be placed on the training methods. Demonstrations, visiting good practice examples and workshops were found to be more appreciated by participants than lectures.
- ❑ The training was free of charge, which meant that the number of participants who applied was greater than the number who actually attended. Perhaps a small participation fee would ensure that those interested do in fact attend.

Context

Slovenia is the third most forested country in EU, after Sweden and Finland. Forests cover 58.3% of its territory. Three quarters of the total 1 182 278 ha of forests (2016) in Slovenia are privately owned by around 461 000 owners. Private forest estates own on average around just 2.5 ha, which are often split into several separated plots.

Such fragmentation makes optimising forest management and ensuring proper safety at work challenging, especially for non-professional workers, such as small private owners, forest leaseholders or other forest users. The Slovenia Forest Service (SFS) has been collecting data on forestry accidents involving non-professional workers since 1998. From 2000 to 2006, deaths from forestry accidents decreased from 13 a year to three.

The downtrend was partly the result of a strong economy that served to lower the interest of private owners in cutting down individual trees, with the exception of those who regularly generate income from this activity and who are also more skilled. But during the economic crisis gradually felling increased to secure additional incomes. In 2014 moreover, Slovenian forests suffered from severe ice-break damage. Unfortunately, these circumstances reversed the trend and the number of fatal accidents among non-professional workers increased to 18 in 2011 and the same number in 2014.

Environmental conditions do not always allow for the use of modern and safer felling technologies, so in many parts of the country the common practice of felling using a chainsaw and tractor will continue. The SFS has continuously worked on information and preventive activities.

The Slovenian Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 enabled the beneficiary to reach out to non-professional workers in forestry in a more systematic way. The Managing Authority annually, on the basis of public procurement, selects contractors to carry out training courses across Slovenia.

Objectives

The objectives of the training organised were to increase safety at work in the forests with a chainsaw and a tractor, with an emphasis on reducing the number of accidents among forest owners and unprofessional forestry workers.

Activities

The SFS in cooperation with a partner organisation, the secondary school for forestry and a wood processing company in Postojna, organised training sessions under two contracts for 2015 and 2016. The sessions covered two main topics:

1. Working safely with a chainsaw (16 hours, 24 hours), including;
 - Theoretical (8 hours)
 - Practical training (8 hours)
2. Working safely with a tractor (8 hours) providing:
 - Theoretical
 - Practical demonstration.

In addition, theoretical parts of all modules contain some basic information on forest management, some information on Natura 2000 and basic information about the consequences of climate change.

The SFS was responsible for the preparation of the training materials, for publicity and inviting potential candidates to participate in the training, and their organisation across Slovenia.

In order to ensure the quality of implementation under both contracts, the SFS organised a preparatory training for the instructors from both co-operating parties. Part of the training focussed on the technical aspects of implementation and reporting, as the SFS had developed its own application in which data on the implementation should be inserted and later processed. 54 participants attended the training in 2015 and 79 in 2016.

The SFS also prepared a training plan, which was published on its own website and the site of the RDP. Announcements were also made in the national and regional media, and through the SFS's own network and other relevant organisations, such as the chamber of agriculture and forestry and the association of forest owners.

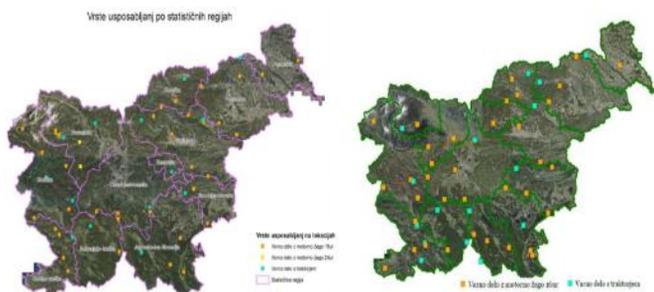
Participation was free of charge for the participants. Each participant filled in a questionnaire after the training completion.

The training materials are available in the e-library on the website of the Slovenian RDP.

Main Results

Under the two contracts, the following was achieved:

- In total, 114 training courses of 1 584 hours were delivered, providing training to 3 226 participants in 2015 and 2016.
- The majority of the training concerned working safely with the chainsaw. In total, 82 trainings were held and attended by 1 447 participants, while the training on working safely with the tractor comprised 32 courses attracting 779 participants.
- A more detailed analysis was made in 2016. The majority of trained participants were men; out of 1 080 participants, 10 were women. 75% of the participants were under 50 years old and 55% under 40. Participants also had a favourable education status, 34% had vocational education, 35% secondary level education and 22% higher education or university degree.
- A high level of satisfaction was reported by the participants who appreciated the knowledge and skills that they acquired. At the training, they expressed interest in related topics, such as forest care, sustainable forest management, forest conservation, and forest tree diseases.
- The training made an important contribution to increased work safety in forests for non-professional workers.
- In 2018, 750 participants are expected to receive training in how to work safely with a chainsaw and 380 with tractor.



Geographical overview of implemented trainings in 2015 and 2016
(source: SFS Implementation reports)

Key lessons

- Implementing successfully such a training programme requires good planning and organisation, as well effective communication channels to reach out to potential participants.
- Specific attention should be placed on training methods. Especially the theoretical parts should be carefully designed and presented in order to retain the interest of a public with diverse educational backgrounds. Participants appreciate interactive sessions, and it is important to provide a good combination of theory and practice. Demonstrations, visiting good practice examples and workshops were more valued than lectures.
- The training was free of charge, but the SFS believes that this resulted in a discrepancy between the number of participants applying and the number actually attending the training. Perhaps a small participation fee would improve attendance.
- Based on the achieved results, the Managing Authority complemented the training programmes for 2018 with additional topics related to sustainable forest management, management in protected areas, and conservation of forests. Considering that Natura 2000 sites cover 37% of Slovenia's territory and 70% of this area are forests, such training can add value to better understanding the importance and vulnerability of forests, especially in the context of climate change.

“Most effective are the measures that effect the change in the mindset of the non-professional forest workers, while understanding the risks involved in felling, the importance of the strict use of self-protecting equipment and appropriate use of the chainsaw or tractor.”

Jurij Beguš, SFS



Additional sources of information

www.program-podezelja.si/sl/component/finder/search?q=Gozdarstvo&f=1&Itemid=741