

ITALY

Agri-food chain integration & quality

Location

Lorenzana

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P3 - Food chain & risk management

Measure

M16 – Cooperation

Funding

Total budget 499 950 (EUR)

EAFRD 193 279 (EUR)

National/Regional 256 000 (EUR)

Private / own 50 671 (EUR)

Project duration

2016 to 2018

Project promoter

FLORA s.r.l.

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Website

<https://floraromaticasantaluce.bio/>

A cooperation project contributed to the development of a local value chain and created new diversified income opportunities in agriculture and agritourism.

Summary

Based on a detailed scoping process this cooperation project set up a new value chain centred on aromatic herbs (lavender). The project activities contributed to the creation of new sources of income in the area both from agriculture and agritourism.



Project Results

Local farms now collectively produce approximately 800 litres of essential lavender oil annually with an average gross margin of EUR 1 000 per ha.

Lavender cultivation has created a new agritourism dynamic with some 1 000 tourists a day visiting the area during the six-week flowering period of the lavender crops.

Two of the farms which are part of the project partnership have converted to organic farming.

Lessons & Recommendations

- Thorough scoping based on a clear methodology ensured that this project was designed with a strong understanding of local needs.
- Developing a single farm or business using CAP funds can have a positive impact on a much wider territory.



Context

Cereal crop production became less profitable in the predominantly arable farmlands of central Tuscany. A lack of collaboration between local actors and only a fledgling agritourism sector meant that farmers and producers had few opportunities to diversify or supplement their core business activity.

In this context, a local essential oils and perfumes manufacturer ('Flora slr.') was having to import lavender flowers from Piedmont, which is some 450 km away, but hoped to find a solution closer to home.

Objectives

The aim of this project was to optimise the whole local value chain for producing high quality aromatic herbs and to support the diversification of farming activities (e.g. agritourism and educational initiatives) and the conversion to organic farming by strengthening ties between the local agricultural sector and other economic actors (health care, food, commercial services, etc.).

Activities

The EAFRD financed activities included:

- Organising farm visits and conducting a survey. Focus groups were created to identify the needs of local farmers and support them in the sharing of their experiences and the tourism offer of the area was also examined.
- Establishing new lavender cultivations on approximately 10 hectares (followed by another five hectares in a later phase of the project).
- Setting-up an integrated value chain based on lavender cultivation, through the provision of training and technical assistance to farmers.
- Organising dissemination and promotional activities including the design of a specific brand identity for local lavender-related products, social media marketing, video production and the launch of a website.

- Initiating joint agrotourism services such as a booking service during the lavender flowering period, with an offer based on the 'experience tourism' model.

Main results

Four years on, the network is still active and the local farms that were originally involved remain contracted to provide lavender to the main beneficiary, which brings each of them an average gross margin of EUR 1 000 per ha: well above the margins of most other crops.

Lavender cultivation has created a new dynamic within the local agritourism offer. For six weeks each year while the herb is flowering, some 1 000 tourists visit the area every day, spending money on accommodation, food, souvenirs, etc. and providing a reliable source of additional income for local farms and businesses.

The farms in the area now produce approximately 800 litres of essential lavender oil, worth some EUR 200 000 per year.

Two of the farms that form part of the project partnership have converted to organic farming.

Key lessons

Key success factors were the very detailed assessment of the initial situation and the clear methodology that underpinned the project design.

Promoting a 360-degree innovation and testing model for new ideas proved to be both possible and rewarding. This approach incentivised local stakeholders to participate in joint actions and initiatives, although this required time and patience.

The success of this project underlines the fact that developing a single business using CAP funds can have a positive 'knock on effect' upon a much wider territory.

Additional sources of information

<https://flora.bio/it/>