



EAFRD-funded projects

Mein Schwein (My Pig)

Engaging customers and farmers in sustainable pig farming

Launched by two young farmers and business owners, 'My Pig' offers opportunities for farm development and digitalisation and an informed discussion on animal slaughtering and animal welfare, as well as the digital possibilities of direct communication between farmer and consumer.

The project 'My Pig' pursues an innovative approach towards higher animal welfare. Consumers who want to know where the pork they consume comes from will find a digital, future-oriented offer. The use of digital possibilities for the transparency of pig fattening is new and important for the image of agriculture. The system 'My Pig' is a growing one and interested pig farms can use and implement it without high investment costs.



Location

Eschenau (Austria)

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P6 - Social Inclusion and
Economic Development

Measure

M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 150 000
EAFRD 60 000
Private 90 000

Project duration

2019 - 2022

Project promoter

Agro Media GmbH

Contact

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Website

meinschwein.at

Results

A model barn was set up and operations started in 2020.

There are currently seven pig-keeping member farms in the 'My Pig' programme.

Currently around 30-40 pigs are sold to private customers per month, and around 75% go to the 25 participating catering establishments and canteens (up to four more companies are expected to join this year). The catering establishments can connect live to the farms via a QR code to see how pigs are reared.

The project sets new standards in meat production, making animal welfare one of its priorities.

It uses digital possibilities for direct communication between farmers and consumers towards a resilient future of agriculture.

It offers new possibilities for small farms in a 'crisis-prone' agricultural production sector. It also enables cooperation among agriculture, gastronomy, community catering and other sectors.

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Context

The project is the initiative of full-time farmer Markus Kriegner and his brother Hannes, a self-employed computer scientist. Together, they founded the Agro Media GmbH to implement the 'My Pig' project.

The Kriegner farm, located in Eschenau (Austria), had to decide about investing in conventional pig fattening. However, the owner decided to look for a new model for pig rearing, different from the conventional ones.

The project takes place in the LEADER area of the LAG Mostlandl Hausruck. Priorities of the region include support to income diversification for farms and raising awareness about the sustainable use of natural resources.

If small-scale farming structures can be economically viable again, this benefits the whole region, its cultural landscape and its inhabitants. In addition, small farms generally fulfil ecological functions to a high degree.

The region offers opportunities for cooperation between agriculture and other trades (particularly gastronomy, food trade).

The LAG Mostlandl Hausruck supports this project to foster the economic development of an existing company (farm), thus keeping and creating jobs in the region, as well as to strengthen a new company in the development of its new and innovative idea towards a more resilient future of farming.

Objectives

The project addresses the need to ensure the sustainability of small farms in the region and in Austria by offering a new product for conventional, full-time farmers.

The project aimed to offer high transparency to consumers and to contribute to improving the image of agriculture, especially pig finishing. To this aim, it offers consumers a 'transparent' observation and participation in feeding, e.g. through webcams. It fosters an informed discussion on (pork) meat consumption among consumers and focuses on animal welfare.

The initiative aimed to create a new offer for the consumer, as customers can buy their own piglet from a registered «My Pig» farm and then care for it and monitor it. The project aimed to increase awareness about sustainable meat production and animal welfare.

Finally, the project aimed to establish the 'My Pig' brand, with the aim of 'My Pig' businesses being eventually represented in every Upper Austrian district or throughout Austria. To this aim, the project established cooperation with regional businesses such as gastronomy, butchers and community catering.

Activities

Thanks to the project, customers can buy their own piglet from a registered 'My Pig' farm and then virtually feed it and follow its evolution 24/7, until slaughter. Consumers get a chance to know where their food comes from and how the animal is treated, in a fully transparent manner. In addition, the project shows that all parts of an animal are valuable (the animal is not just a 'product') and that animal welfare is important.

This shows young people, especially young farmers, a sustainable, careful and animal-friendly approach to pig farming.

The company Agro Media GmbH was established with the role of managing the project and operations. Farmers who set up a 'My Pig' business will act as franchisees and pay a license fee per pig to the company.

Project activities included accounting, administration, telephone support for consumers, farmers and cooperation partners (butchers), as well as communication (e.g. coordinating customer requests and feedback with farmers and implementing new developments).

A digital platform and an app were developed and the required background software was implemented. This software will be used by all 'My Pig' farms and only requires small adjustments to be adapted to each farm.

The company coordinates the purchase of feed for the subscribing farms. Some farmers will have to buy a part of the feed mix like soy, corn meal, milk, potato etc., feeds used will be exchanged among the 'My Pig' farms, so that the origin is transparent and guaranteed.

A 'pilot barn' was built in cooperation with Schauer Agrotro- nic, a company located in the region (unique pilot project) and technical equipment with webcams was provided (through private funding).

Marketing and PR activities were developed, including the public identity of the company, the development of a marketing concept and public relations.

Logistics and cooperation were established in the background with local stakeholders: veterinarians, regional butchers - who prepare the meat for a business or take the surplus meat - and home delivery companies that deliver the packaged meat.

In the LEADER region 'Mostlandl Hausruck' in Upper Austria, the first 'My Pig' model farm started operating in 2020.

Main results

Thanks to the project, the farmers who subscribe to the 'My Pig' initiative benefit from a ready-made concept and the negotiated prices of a barn. Farmers are better able to calculate the costs accurately.

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There are currently seven pig-keeping member farms in the Mein Schwein programme.

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The project sets new standards in meat production, making animal welfare one of its priorities.

It offers new possibilities for small farms in a 'crisis-prone' agricultural production sector. It also enables cooperation among agriculture, gastronomy, community catering and other sectors.

The project helped establish a new form of pig fattening. The consumers find a new alternative approach and the farmers can generate a higher added value.

The playful use of digital possibilities (watching animals) sets new standards in livestock transparency and enhances direct communication between farmers and consumers towards a resilient future of agriculture. The original use of digital means for direct communication with customers promotes a positive image of agriculture and pig farming, as well as enhancing credibility, transparency, and sustainability.

With this project idea an offer for many further agricultural enterprises was created, thus also contributing to the preservation and resilience of small agricultural operations in Austria.

A new, innovative product was created alongside novel offers for consumers, young future farmers and their customers.

The project strengthens the economic resilience of a specific rural region in Austria, where traditional pig farming is approached differently.

The project offers added value through digital networking of farms and consumers, as well as other commercial customers. It creates a new kind of network and works well to reach out to young consumers, increasing their awareness of animal welfare and sustainable meat consumption.

This project is implemented by young farmers themselves and shows future possibilities of (pig) farming, especially when it comes to transparency and animal welfare.

The initiative involved the Young Farmers Association in Upper Austria and the agricultural school Waizenkirchen through excursions and participation in the project.

The system is designed as a franchise system and can therefore be used not only throughout Austria, but throughout the EU and for other sectors, besides pig farming, to increase transparency and create an innovative approach to farming for young consumers, farmers and suppliers.

Additional sources of information

meinschwein.at

[Instagram](#)

This project has been categorised under 'Digital futures' by the nominating National Rural Network