

BELGIUM

Diversification and job creation

Location

Lierneux

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion and local development

Measure

M16 - Cooperation

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 491 500

EAFRD 258 037.50

National/Region. 233 462.50

Project duration

2017 – 2019

Project promoter

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Supporting vulnerable people and facilitating their re-integration into society through small volunteer jobs on local farms.

Summary

Belgium has a longstanding tradition of hosting people with disabilities on farms: an approach that is commonly called 'social farming'. A specialised hospital in Wallonia developed such a project in order to facilitate the re-integration of their patients into the local community by supporting their participation in farming activities.



The RDP support mainly covers the cost of having two supervisors in the hospital centre; in charge of liaising between the farmers and the patients, developing the network and advocating the benefits of the scheme.

Results

After running the project for one year, there are now 12 farms enrolled in the scheme. They support the participation of 13 vulnerable people, who each engage in farming activities one day per week.

Longer-term objectives (2017-2022) are set, aiming to (i) sustain the network of participating farms over time, (ii) design a specially-adapted tutoring scheme in cooperation with agricultural partners, and (iii) raise the profile of social agriculture in Wallonia.

Lessons & Recommendations

- The success of such projects depends upon the development of good relationships, mutual assistance and the exchange of knowledge.
- Everyday farming duties that may seem unexciting - like mulching, feeding, etc. - can be valuable activities for many people.

Context

Rural Belgium has a longstanding tradition of hosting people with disabilities in villages and farms. It is commonly called 'social farming'. In Wallonia, the hospital centre in Lierneux - founded in 1884 and located 50 km South East of Liège, in upper Ardennes - is famous for its dedicated work in the field of psychiatry. Over more than 100 years of operation, the hospital has diversified its activities, which nowadays consist of three main sectors: (i) mental health; (ii) specialized care, including geriatrics, rehabilitation and palliative care; and (iii) accommodation and services for the elderly.

In the 2007-2013 programming period, a pilot project called 'social inclusion farms' was successfully coordinated by the LAG 'Haute-Sûre Forêt d'Anlier'. That project formed the basis and inspiration for a larger-scale follow-up project.

Objectives

This project aims to support vulnerable people and facilitate their re-integration into society through small volunteer jobs on local farms.

Activities

The grant mainly covers the costs of having two 'Positive Agritude' supervisors in the hospital centre (recruited in February 2017). They are in charge of developing the farmers' network and advocating the benefits of the scheme to both the patients and the farmers.

The supervisors' day-to-day work consists of creating the conditions that will allow each participating patient or vulnerable person to spend one day per week on one of the network's farms. In particular, the two supervisors are responsible for:

- monitoring the support provided to vulnerable people
- finding new farms that are willing to sign a partnership agreement
- conducting farm visits with potential beneficiaries
- designing operational tools (log books, leaflets, etc.)

The most important step is the initial meeting between the farmer and the programme participant. They meet at the farm, accompanied by the Positive Agritude staff. They sit down together over coffee and get to know each other.

During this introductory discussion, each party speaks about his/her expectations, hopes, concerns, etc. They visit the farm together and the farmer explains the activities that the person would participate in if they agree to join the scheme. It is only after the visit that an agreement is formalized, including practicalities such as schedules, transport, food and clothing.

The Positive Agritude scheme is closely linked to the hospital's care programme, which serves around 90 people.



Main results

After running the project for one year, there are now 12 farms enrolled in the scheme. They support the participation of 13 vulnerable people, who each engage in farming activities one day per week.

This social link is an added value for the farmer too. Taking on a temporary assistant alleviates some of the solitude of farm life and provides an opportunity for farmers to talk and explain their work to someone.

Longer-term objectives (2017-2022) are set, aiming to (i) sustain a network of 15 participating farms, (ii) design a specially-adapted tutoring scheme in cooperation with agricultural partners, and (iii) raise the profile of social agriculture in Wallonia in partnership with the '[Accueil Champêtre](#)' network.

Main lessons

The success of such projects depends upon the development of good relationships, mutual assistance and the exchange of knowledge.

Everyday farming duties that may seem unexciting - like mulching, feeding, cleaning, painting, trimming a hedge, etc. can be of enormous value for many people. Being in contact with nature and animals; being in a family setting and finding a rhythm of work; boosting one's abilities with seemingly simple gestures: these are all activities that can provide meaning and motivation for a whole range of people.

Additional sources of information

www.televesdre.eu/www/video/info/societe-tye/-/positive-agritude-a-lierneux-quand-le-travail-a-la-ferme-aide-les-personnes-fragilisees_94439_89.html