

SPAIN

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location
Solsona

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P2 – Competitiveness

Measure
M16 - Cooperation

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 567 500
EAFRD 383 600
National/Regional 95 900
Private 88 000

Project duration
2019 – 2020

Project promoter*
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A European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational group established a network of farm incubators in Spain to support young farmers who do not have previous family connections or a background in farming.

Summary

The barriers to entry for new farmers are high: land access, start-up costs, finding a niche in the market and a lack of social support all pose challenges. At the same time, a new type of entrant to the profession has appeared: new, prospective young farmers with neither previous family connections nor any background in farming.

This is a new issue in Europe and, therefore, policies need to be adjusted and new support tools adapted to ensure their successful integration into the sector.

Farm incubators are programmes that facilitate the progressive integration of new entrants into farming. This EIP operational group created the basis for a network of farm incubators and provided all the resources needed to create new farm incubators throughout Spain: namely, a guide to setting up an incubator farm; a support centre for starting and running incubator farms; and the implementation of two pilot incubator farms.



Results

The incorporation of two testers on the pilot farm incubators is expected within the following two years.

The project is also helping to set up new farm incubators. In the next two years, it is expected that ten more will be established around the country.

During the project, the organising team assisted 12 interested actors, and they plan to give assistance to 30 more people over the next two years.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ At a local scale, every new farm incubator is required to draw together a steering group involving public and private agents that might have an implication in promoting new farmers. On a larger scale, there is RETA (**Red de Espacios Test Agrarios/network of agrarian test spaces - RETA**), a network based on the cooperation of public-private actors to promote the creation of farm incubators and influence public policies to support new farmers.
- ❑ Previous to the GO RETA project, farm incubators already existed in France, Belgium, UK, Canada and USA. This proves that the initiative is transferable.

* The Project promoter/beneficiary is an EIP-AGRI Operational Group (<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en>)

Context

The generational renewal crisis is a recurring topic in all European countries, which deserves a holistic, interdisciplinary and transversal response. The barriers to entry for these new farmers are high: land access, start-up costs, finding a place in the market, and a lack of social support all pose challenges.

At the same time, a new type of entrant to the profession has appeared: new, prospective young farmers with neither previous family connections, nor any background in farming. Furthermore, this new group of entrants tends to favour organic, sustainable and direct-sale farming and production, all of which should be encouraged.

This is a new issue in Europe and, therefore, policies need to be adjusted and new support tools offered to ensure their successful integration into the sector. Farm incubators facilitate the progressive integration of new entrants into farming. These incubators help to overcome the lack of generational renewal as well as promote employment, landscape conservation and sustainable farming production models.

Up until now, in Europe, France has led the successful implementation of farm incubators. In Spain, experience is lacking and no monitored methodology has been established. Also, from a scientific point of view, there is not yet an official definition or robust evidence base concerning the impacts of farm incubators in Spain. This project wishes to help address that research gap.

Objectives

The general goal of the RETA operational group is to define a common innovative methodology to implement farm incubators to articulate a public-private network to support new entrants into farming. The operational group aimed to raise awareness about the positive impact and opportunities which farm incubators offer.

Activities

This operational group continued the work started at the EIP-AGRI Focus Group 'New Entrants to Farming: lessons to foster innovation and entrepreneurship', which concluded with the need to work on the creation of farm incubators and testing pilot models.

The project brought together the real-world experiences of practitioners in the highly specialised field of land-based training and support systems for small-scale sustainable farmers. Furthermore, it opened a window of opportunity for those new entrants who struggle to access the farming sector.

The partnership of RETA was made up of the regional network of local action groups (LAGs) of Catalonia (ARCA) and of Extremadura (REDEX), the School of Shepherds of Catalonia (Associació Rurbans) and of Extremadura (Cooprado), the University of Extremadura, the Network of land stewardship of Catalonia, LAG TAGUS and a local association to prevent wildfires (ADF).

Firstly, a methodology to implement farm incubators in Spain was created. It was inspired by the French example and the French network of farm incubators (RENETA – le Réseau National des Espaces-Test Agricoles). Its model was adapted to the Spanish legal and social context. A guide and other support materials were created and made available for public and private actors who want to create a farm incubator. During the project, technical support was offered, and the methodology was transferred to 12 actors who were interested in creating a farm incubator in Catalonia.

Apart from offering a practising ground to new entrants who wish to gain a first experience of farming, the philosophy of farm incubators is to offer integral assistance to future farmers in terms of advice and counselling services. This requires a network of experts on farming issues as well as business and commercial aspects, in addition to other skills that might be needed. Therefore, the project created a Support Centre to assist new farm entrepreneurs and which was tested with six new entrants in Catalonia and Extremadura. The participation of the Associació Rurbans shepherd school was crucial at this point.

In parallel, the project team created the basis for a Network of Farm Business Incubators in Spain, called RETA, by defining its mission, objectives and future activities based on the following principles:

- LEARN TOGETHER: generate and transfer knowledge
- BECOME A LOBBY: have an impact on public policies from social innovation
- COOPERATE TO INNOVATE: create a network of farm incubators in Spain
- ASSISTANCE TO BUILD: offer technical assistance to create farm incubators using innovative programmes that implicate society and public and private agents.

As a result, and using this innovative methodology, the project created the first two pilot farm incubators in Spain, both of them focused on livestock:

- Casar de Cáceres (Extremadura): connected with the Cooperative Cooprado and the School of Shepherds of Extremadura, designed to host 200 goats to produce milk and dairy products.

- Gandesa (Catalonia): to teach shepherds of extensive cattle farming skills with the aim of reducing wildfire risk, a very important issue in Mediterranean ecosystems. The incubator farms up to 300 goats for meat.

Finally, the project team implemented a 'Plan of Dissemination of the Farm Incubator Network in Spain' including the creation of a website, social networks and several information materials to raise awareness of the initiative available on the website. The team also organised the first public event of 'farm incubators of Spain', which attracted 274 participants from all over the country.

Main results

The incorporation of two testers on the pilot farm incubators is expected within the following two years.

The project is also assisting the creation of new farm incubators, with ten more expected to be set up in the next two years around the country.

During the project, the organising team assisted 12 interested actors and they plan to give assistance to 30 more people over the next two years.

Key lessons

At a local scale, every new farm incubator must set up a steering group involving public and private agents that might be able to promote new farmers. At a larger scale there is RETA, a network based on the cooperation of public-private actors to promote the creation of farm incubators and influence public policies to support new farmers.

Previous to the GO RETA project, farm incubators were already a reality in France, Belgium, the UK, Canada and USA. This proves that the initiative is transferable.

In Catalonia, the project is working with the managing authority to incorporate assistance and economic support for the creation of farm incubators and testers for the future.



Additional sources of information

n/a