

FINLAND

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location

Pori

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

Measure

M16 - Cooperation

Funding (EUR)

RDP contribution 550 000

Project duration

2015 – 2019

Project promoter

Union of Agricultural
Producers and Forest
Owners, the Satakunta
Province

Contact

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Website

[www.mtk.fi/liitot/satakunta/
varavoimaa/fi_FI/varavoimaa/
a/](http://www.mtk.fi/liitot/satakunta/varavoimaa/fi_FI/varavoimaa/)

The project has created entirely new operating models to improve the well-being of agricultural entrepreneurs and how they can cope with difficulties.

Summary

In recent years, poor physical and psychological well-being, fatigue, and depression have become more common among farmers and their family members. The financial situation of a vast majority of farms has worsened while the workload has increased. Shame, fear and uncertainty about what help is out there, were some of the issues that needed to be addressed.



The project seeks to ensure farmers receive adequate psychological support at a sufficiently early stage to prevent the situation from worsening. Potential problems are resolved by discussing solutions, sharing information and collaborating. The project team offers personal help and assistance to farmers, facilitates cooperation and communication on well-being issues and organises well-being events.

Results

In total, the project has provided personal assistance to more than 350 farms and more than 600 farmers and their family members (nearly 10% of farms). Operating in two out of fifteen regions, it covered one third of dairy farms, one third of other livestock farms and one third of arable farms.

The project organised nearly 350 events in 3 years, with over 9 000 participants.

There are now similar projects all across Finland. The Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) provincial projects cover two thirds of Finnish farmers and the "Take Care of the Farmer" project covers one third of Finnish farmers and is organised by the farmers' Social Insurance Institution, MELA.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Networking and the activities within the network have been the cornerstone of the project's success.
- ❑ Without a viable, collaborative network of more than 300 people and more than 100 organisations, the results would have remained modest.
- ❑ The need for similar projects in other European countries is clear, yet there are no such projects outside Finland despite the fact that the operational models of the project are easily transferable.

Context

In recent years, poor physical and psychological well-being, fatigue, and depression have become more common among farmers and their family members.

The financial situation of almost all farms has worsened and the workload has increased leading to an increased burden and less resources for the farmers. Many have seen their problems accumulate and the end result has been instability and some very tragic individual and farm-specific issues.

Shame, fear and uncertainty about what help is available, were some of the issues that needed to be addressed.

Objectives

The project seeks to help farmers receive support for well-being issues at a sufficiently early stage, before they turn into problems.

Potential problems can be resolved by discussing solutions, sharing information, and collaborating. To ensure farmers receive the help they need at the appropriate time there needs to be better co-operation between different types of helpers and farmer associations.

The aim is to encourage farmers and stakeholders to find their own ways to seek help.

Activities

Personal help and assistance to farmers

- For each farm in the project, an overview of the situation and a continuation plan were drawn up looking at where to start and how to proceed;
- The project provides support for change, or other transition preparations: generational change, other

changes in ownership, future investments, changes in production and divestments. Special attention is paid to young farmers; and

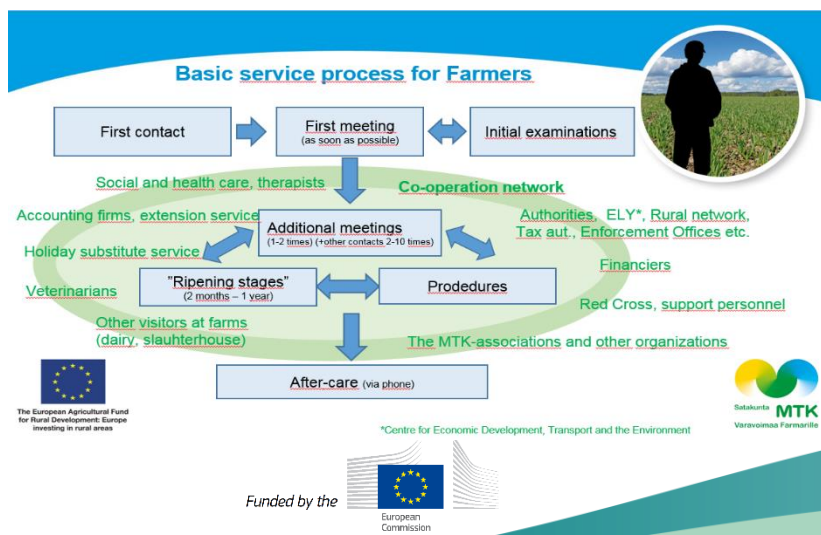
- The project worker acts as a listener, encourages change, and creates hope.
- If necessary, the project worker will help with getting in contact with different authorities and helps with getting assistance.

Well-being events for farmers

- Farmers' Well-being Days are organised, which involve hundreds of people. These events create a sense of rejuvenation and togetherness while going through matters of well-being; the model has now spread all over Finland; and
- Farmers' mental health 'ABC' group training sessions are now organised in every province across Finland. Topics broached include relationships and interaction, emotional skills, life and stress management, crises and getting through them, and where can one find help for welfare.

Co-operation and communication on well-being issues

- The goal is to lower the threshold for seeking help, promote well-being at work and prepare for and adapt to the changes needed;
- Continuous and working collaboration with different stakeholders. The co-operation network in the Extra Energy for Farmers project covers over 100 different organisations with more than 300 people; and
- The project has also been covered extensively through different media: in municipal and national info-leaflets on where to get help with the co-operation partners, publications (brochures, emails, information packages, articles in numerous magazines), Facebook and a dedicated website.



Main Results

In total, the project has provided personal assistance to more than 350 farms, with more than 600 farmers and their family members (nearly 10% of farms). Operating in two out of fifteen regions, it covered one third of dairy farms, one third of other livestock farms, one third of arable farms. The project has organised nearly 350 events over 3 years, with over 9 000 participants.

The co-operation network is a great success. Different co-operation partners are talking to farmers about difficult issues with more confidence. They now know how to guide them to the right sources of help.

Various events for farmers' welfare have been organised. Whether the subject was physical, mental or economic well-being, there have been plenty of farmers eager to participate, often more than the venue could accommodate. The farmers are now hoping for more events to take place.

At the beginning of the project, there was only one project worker in Satakunta province. Now in Satakunta there is a great team with various agricultural, economical, healthcare and therapy experts. There are now also colleagues in other similar projects all around Finland. The nationwide network is working well. MTK provincial projects now cover two thirds of Finnish

farmers and the 'Take Care of the Farmer' project covers one third of Finnish farmers and is organised by the farmers' Social Insurance Institution, MELA.

The network and the method will continue after the project. As the need for help and face-to-face meetings with beneficiaries is still very much needed, funding for this type of initiatives will need to continue.

Key lessons

Networking and the activities within the network have been the cornerstone of the project's success. On average, the project has less than two full time equivalent job holders per year.

Without a viable, collaborative network of more than 300 people and more than 100 organisations, the results would have remained modest. All of the partners in the network have helped support farmers and their families, improve their welfare and help with their difficulties.

The need for similar projects in other European countries is clear yet as far as we know, there are no similar projects in Europe. The operational models of the project are easily transferable to different countries. Financial difficulties, relationship issues, sudden crises, great workload and exhaustion are unfortunately very common for all European farmers.

Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/VaravoimaaFarmarille/