

SLOVENIA

Agri-food chain integration & quality

Location

Zagorje ob Savi

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P3 - Food chain & risk management

Measure

M04 – Investments in physical assets

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 60 591.80

EAFRD 17 336.86

National/Regional 5 778.95

Private 37 475.99

Project duration

2018 – 2020

Project promoter

Uroš Macerl

Contact

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Website

n/a

Setting up a slaughterhouse on-site helped the beneficiary and other nearby organic lamb breeders to increase their profitability through direct marketing.

Summary

Organically bred sheep and goats can play a key role in preserving the landscape and biodiversity in the steeper meadows and pastures in Zasavje, a picturesque valley in the Sava Hills in central Slovenia. However, local breeders were facing difficulties in selling their meat due to the low prices and the lack of interest in such meat from consumers since there is a lack of knowledge about it.



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The beneficiary, the organic breeder Mr Uroš Macerl, used Rural Development Programme (RDP) funds to set up a slaughtering facility on his farm. In this way, the quality of meat would be improved as the animals would go through less stress. This would also open new opportunities for him and other local breeders to sell their high-quality meat directly to consumers and improve their profitability.

Results

The farm can sell more animals and they have increased their herd from 169 to 198 animals, almost reaching the planned annual processing target of 220 lambs.

Consumers' interest in quality organic lamb meat has grown and is continuing to increase beyond expectations.

Meat is available for customers throughout the year, and they can also enjoy it under the Hay Rack – a new tourist facility on the farm, which can host up to 50 guests at a time.

The local breeders and the beneficiary have become even more independent during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have found new consumers, often individuals who purchase meat on the farm, or in shops which sell their lamb meat.

Context

Organic breeding sheep and goats can play a key role in preserving the landscape and biodiversity in the steeper meadows and pastures in Zasavje, a picturesque valley in the Sava Hills in central Slovenia. However, local breeders were facing difficulties in selling their meat due to the low prices and the lack of interest for such meat from consumers as there is a lack of knowledge about it. These organic farms struggle to survive and certain farms had to stop breeding sheep and goats.

Therefore, organic breeders needed to focus on taking advantage of the special features of the high-quality lamb meat produced in the area. Suitably aged meat which can be pre-prepared for cooking, could be provided directly to customers and restaurants. This would be the only way for consumers to experience the quality of such meat, and as a consequence the meat from organically bred animals would become more sought after in the market.

To optimise meat quality, slaughter should cause the animals a minimum of stress. This can be achieved if they are slaughtered on site, meaning no long transportation and waiting periods in slaughterhouses. This results in a higher quality of muscle meat. Making this service available to other organic lamb and goat breeders would also be important to build a common sales strategy.

Objectives

The overarching objective of the beneficiary, Mr Uroš Macerl, organic farmer and breeder, was to preserve the organic breeding of sheep in Zasavje valley. This would require making the activity profitable by providing high quality lamb meat to individual customers, shops and restaurants.

Activities

Mr Uroš, together with a building designer and a specialist meat processing adviser, prepared a plan for the facilities in a separate part of an existing barn. Local agricultural advisers helped him to submit the application for investment support from the RDP. As soon as the positive decision was received, the work began on the flooring, plumbing, electrical installations, drains, walls, and installing the necessary equipment. The final approval was given by authorised inspectors from the Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection (UVHVVR).

When selecting contractors and equipment providers, Mr Uroš selected local entrepreneurs to support the local economy. The facility includes an area where the animals are received, the main slaughter area, and areas where the carcasses cool after slaughter. There is also a place for cutting and shipment, and an area for the by-products of the slaughtering.

Main results

The slaughter process today depends on the amount of orders received which are in abundance despite the COVID-19 situation. Meat is available for customers throughout the year, and they can also enjoy it under the Hay Rack – a new tourist facility on the farm, which can host up to 50 guests at a time.

The slaughter and meat cutting process is available as a service for nearby breeders, who can also contact customers through Mr Uroš' farm. This indicates additional cooperation between breeders, similar to a few years ago when farmers successfully united to fight industrial polluters from a nearby town.

Consumers, either directly (coming as consumers or guests to the farm), or indirectly as clients of shops, restaurants and hotels, get to know meat from organically bred animals.

The local breeders and the beneficiary have become even more independent during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have found new consumers, often individuals who purchase meat on the farm, or in shops which sell their lamb meat.

The farm can sell more animals and have increased their herd from 169 to 198 animals, almost reaching the planned annual processing target of 220 lambs. Consumers' interest in quality organic lamb meat has grown and is continuing to increase beyond expectation.

Slaughtering costs have been reduced – there is no need to transport the animals to faraway slaughterhouses, and much time is saved from not having to use external slaughterhouses. Mr Uroš used to spend quite a lot of time driving to and from a slaughterhouse – first to have animals slaughtered and again to pick up the carcasses. Now he uses the extra hours saved more productively by working with animals on the farm and communicating with consumers.

Additional sources of information

n/a