Added Value of Networking:

Provision of networking activities for advisors & innovation support services

Story name: Increasing the Efficiency and Competitiveness of Dairy and Meat Sectors

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Background to the networking/innovation support activities

Animal husbandry accounts for 45.22% of all agricultural production in 2010. Today it is not uncommon for production costs to exceed income, meaning that farming is no longer cost effective – it costs 0.33 EUR to produce 1 litre of milk and at the same time the average price paid by dairy processing companies ranges from 0.26 to 0.29 EUR.

Farmers lack sufficient knowledge both in the preparation of high-quality forage and in feeding efficiency to improve the competitiveness of the livestock sector and reduce production costs, both in Latvia and also the EU.

Ruminants represent the largest share of agricultural animals in Latvia. The cheapest feed for ruminants is pasture grass and forage made from grass. However many farmers still lack knowledge on grassland management and preparation of forage.

Purpose and description of the networking/innovation support activities

Aim: Set up a focus group bringing together scientists, advisors, farmers’ organisations and farmers.
The tasks of the focus group were:

1. To carry out scientific research in the areas of feeding, breeding and housing of ruminants.
2. To create a database / catalogue / of research publications in animal husbandry and ensure that they were available for practical use.
3. Organise on farm demonstrations, providing the transfer of research knowledge and showcasing a variety of "good" management practices.
4. Develop effective management models for dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goat farms.

Who benefited from the activities and how
Any size farms of dairy and beef, sheep and goat cattle that focus on efficient / competitive production.

Main results of the networking/innovation support activities & added value of the chosen delivery approach

The focus group was established. Representatives of the Latvia University of Agriculture (scientists), Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (advisors and experts), farmers’ organisations and farmers and Ministry of Agriculture are involved in the work of the focus group.

The aim of the focus group is to promote and implement activities aimed to provide professional knowledge transfer in animal husbandry.

The most active work is at a national level; however the focus group is ready to take part at EU level EIP focus groups and sharing of information in Europe.

In 2014 it is planned to establish a network of demonstration farms in 4 sectors - dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goat.

Success factors
The project is focused on implementation of the EIP ideas at the national level - researchers, advisors and farmers working together on a specific issue - exploring, testing and informing the public.

The willingness of researchers, advisors and farmers to work together clearly demonstrates that the chosen topic is relevant to farmers and that scientists are interested in practical use of their research.

Description of NSU and other partners contribution
The NRN involved livestock expert Anita Silina to develop the project idea, which was presented to potential partners – Latvia University of Agriculture and Ministry of Agriculture. Regional advisors of
Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre animal farmers were also involved. The creation of the focus group is based on the expert's reputation and extensive knowledge in this field. The NRN plays an essential role in the coordination, collection of information and technical support to operate the focus group.

### Additional information and useful resources
n.a.

### Pictures
n.a.

### Last Update
March 2014