

UNITED KINGDOM

Short Supply chains

Location
Scotland

Programming period
n/a

Funding (EUR)
Scottish Government
£2 500 000

Duration
2013 – 2016

Implemented by
Scottish Government

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The Think Local development programme focuses on developing collaboration in short supply chain, by bringing together existing initiatives on farmers' markets, farm retail, food tourism, regional food and drink networks and in developing added value for rural producers.

The challenge

A number of co-operation activities have taken place among and between farmers and SME producers in short supply chains and local food over the past.



A proposal was made to establish a collaborative federal structure of specialist agencies and organisations to work together to grow Scotland's local and regional food economies by delivering a dedicated three year development programme.

The framework was broken down into five areas: Regional development; Added Value development; farmers' markets; farm retail and collaborative delivery. There is crossover between the areas, as there was an intention to grow the development to the extent that there is greatly enhanced collaboration between each of the areas.

As regards grouping of activities under a single initiative – 'Think Local' would involve two strategic aims:

- Changing behaviour in food and drink production, promotion, procurement and ultimately in consumer purchasing towards local, Scottish choices
- Developing the quality and added value propositions of food and drink producers to meet the demands of consumers, retail and foodservice (both public and private) customers

Main steps and features

The core concept in the delivery of Think Local was to be as inclusive as possible. The project was delivered as an additional component of the advisory service in food marketing, a specialist service in developing added value for rural producers in Scotland delivered by SRUC, Scotland's Rural College in partnership with co-operative organisation SAOS and food quality certification body SFQC. This new programme looked to bring together a number of growing delivery areas – the development of farmers' markets, farm shops and food tourism, the interest in local food from consumers and the growth in regional networks, although some had declined in activity.

There was an existing partnership for food and drink in Scotland – Scotland Food & Drink, and it was decided that Think Local would work under this umbrella organisation to add value to the delivery. It was also important to create links with organisations such as Farm Retail business clubs, the National Farmers' Union, the national tourism agency VisitScotland and business development organisations and other stakeholder representatives.

The main delivery aspects concentrated on national co-ordination, regional delivery, but concentrated on the development of short supply chains. Funding was available (through a Community Food Fund) for groups to develop and deliver new activities, including new networks, trails, events and promotional activity.

Collaboration was a core component – enabling producers to work together to create events. There were a number of major opportunities to showcase local food through the 2014 Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup for golf being held in Scotland, and support was given to enable producer attendance.

A key component was in developing producer skills, and a

series of workshops were initiated on the theme of added value. These had been piloted prior to the programme, and had resulted in growth in the number of new businesses and in new farmers' markets taking place regionally. The focus for these was in developing collaborative relationships between producers and improved access to market.

Support was also given to redevelopment of food networks, including food trails aimed at the tourism market. This also focussed on developing relationships between farm retail outlets, and considering the further development of EU protected food names in Scotland.

Results

As of September 2014, funding of £500k had been distributed to over 60 applicants. 13 new or revived food networks had been supported, and over 10 new businesses had been supported in developments.

Support was given to a 'Local Food Village' held at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, to producers attending other major events, and to the development of new business associations for producers of Rapeseed Oil (including a PFN application), Distilled Products and Craft Beer. New 'food trails' were launched for seafood, chocolate, berries and ice cream across Scotland, and four new applications for EU protected status were lodged (with support for further approvals).

The programme is ongoing, and has also considered and supported Community retailing in many of the most rural areas of Scotland, and improving food access in urban areas. The launch of the 2015 'Year of Food and Drink' in Scotland also meant significant support in developing new activities, while public procurement will be an ongoing issue for development.

Challenges and lessons

- ❑ The objectives of the original programme were very broad, and in some areas the lessons have been in supporting others rather than developing new delivery streams. There were also challenges in delivering a new programme in a period where no new EAFRD funding was available.
- ❑ An important lesson was also in the ability to adapt to market needs, with tourism activity providing the potential to move away from the more traditional farmers' market format to enabling producers to create 'street food' offerings. There was also the identification of a new strand of development away from regional food networks, with small scale producers of added-value products prepared to work together to increase market access through collaborative supply, promotion or food tourism.