

GREECE

Implementing cooperation projects

Location

Nationwide

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

Measure

421 - Inter-territorial and
Transnational Cooperation

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 321 000
EAFRD 304 950
Private 16 050

Project duration

2012 – 2014

Project promoter

Parnonas Development
Agency SA

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www.finestgreek tastes.com

Finest Greek Tastes is an ambitious LEADER cooperation project involving 21 Local Action Groups and more than 50 municipalities, working together to promote quality Greek products based on local culinary traditions and culture.

Summary

This LEADER cooperation project brought partners together from across Greece to promote quality Greek food and drink products and heritage as a means for stimulating rural development.

The partners worked together to showcase the many quality Greek products, but also the full range of skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols and traditions for producing, preparing and even consuming food in Greece.

The project supported the establishment of the 'Finest Greek Tastes Network' made up of LAGs, municipalities and institutions from across Greece and agreed a network strategy and action plan. Key activities developed by the network were: research and scientific presentation of the values of Greek cuisine; and promotion and marketing of quality Greek products to international markets, including through a marketing plan, videos, website, events and publicity material.



Results

A Finest Greek Tastes Network comprising 21 Local Action Groups, 55 Greek municipalities and three organisations: the Institute of Hellenic Food, Culture and Gastronomy; the Technological Research Centre of W. Macedonia; and the Agricultural University of Athens.

Development of the 'Finest Greek Tastes' concept for marketing purposes, coordinated promotional actions of around 80 partners across 21 regions, and an associated website hosting 21 videos of the foods available in each LAG territory..

Finest Greek Tastes will now become an autonomous non-profit entity, giving it a firmer basis to continue its work beyond the project funding.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The large number of interested participants created a significant administrative hurdle for the project because under Greek government regulations, funding support could only be shared between up to six partners. After negotiations with the Greek Ministry for Rural Development and Food, the project was designated as being of national interest. This enabled the large and ambitious inter-regional partnership to become eligible for support under the 2007-2013 RDP.
- ❑ For a project of this scale to be successful, a great deal of work must be done to motivate each of the partners and maintain their energy and commitment to the common goal. However, all of this must be done with patience because not all partners can run at the same speed. Together, the organisations need to create a working culture in which they become active communicators.

Context

Greece, a country blessed with millennia of history and culture, a unique natural environment and natural resources, is in the midst of a long economic and social crisis. The agricultural sector and primary production face many problems and many farmers have been profoundly impacted. However, there are many quality Greek products for which larger markets could be accessed.

The 'Finest Greek Tastes' inter-territorial cooperation project was born from a LEADER Local Action Group (Parnonas Development Agency SA) in Eastern Arcadia, southern Greece. The inspiration was that quality Greek food and drink products – based on the world-renowned Mediterranean cuisine - have the potential to be a key tool for the survival and recovery of rural areas and even to stimulate significant development.

Objectives

The LEADER cooperation initiative sought to preserve, enhance and promote Greek gastronomic culture through the concept of 'Finest Greek Tastes'. It evolved the idea to include all four axes of this culture, which were identified as: products; recipes and cuisine; areas of production; and ways of sharing, consuming and celebrating those fine tastes.

The project aimed to market this concept of 'Finest Greek Tastes' on an international level in collaboration with the local tourism industry in Greece. It wanted thus to showcase not only Greek foods and gastronomy, but also to exploit the full range of skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols and traditions for producing, preparing and even consuming food in Greece.

"What we wanted to reveal were not only products such as wines and olive oils, but what it means to enjoy these exquisite products; what is the authentic and proper Greek and Mediterranean way of eating, culinary pleasure and physical well-being."

Lefteris Lazarou,
Greek Michelin-Starred restaurateur



Activities

Parnonas started working on the creation of a partnership to develop the project in 2011 under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme. With LEADER support, a network of municipalities was established with partners from all corners of Greece.

Parnonas dedicated staff members to the partnership full-time. These staff members were able to support regular meetings, bringing the entire partnership together once or twice per year. Smaller, regional and local meetings took place more frequently.

Together, the partners devised a network action plan and strategy. Key activities of the project included:

- Research and scientific presentation of the nutritional value of Greek cuisine, the added value of the Greek diet and market penetration of Greek quality products;
- Promotion and marketing of quality Greek products to the export market through the concept of 'Finest Greek Tastes' – including through a marketing plan, videos, a website, events and publicity material;

One of the challenges, but also successes of the project was to coordinate the actions and responses of around 80 partners and to smoothly implement local actions in all 21 regions concerned.

For the period 2014-2020, 'Finest Greek Tastes' will become a non-profit company, giving it a firmer basis to continue its work. The Network will continue to use the material and tools created by the project, aiming to ensure the long-term viability and national scope of the operation after the completion of the Cooperation project.

Additional sources of information

Facebook page - www.facebook.com/FinestGreekTastes

Youtube channel - Finest Greek Tastes

Mediterranean diet: www.mediterradiet.org