

Thematic Group

Smart & Competitive Rural Areas

2nd Meeting
Brussels, 24 February
2016

FINAL REPORT

V2 – April 2016

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Introduction

Presentation

Introduction

by Paul Soto
(ENRD CP)

The opening presentation outlined the topic of smart supply chains and market opportunities, focusing on outputs expected from the Thematic Group and the audience those outputs are expected to reach

Key messages from the presentation:

- The key audience for activities are the Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks, Rural Stakeholders, Local Actions Groups and the Rural Development Programmes themselves .
- This second workshop will look to drawing on the experience of participants, and drawing on Contact Point inputs – RDP analysis, good practices and thematic expertise
- The focus continues to be on creating outputs using Contact Point dissemination channels – Rural Review, a Thematic Group Seminar, Report, Workshops, NRNs and participant outputs

Further reference: TG Presentation prepared for the Rural Networks Steering Group on 4th March 2016

Presentation

Introduction and Added Value

David Lamb
(ENRD CP)

This presentation focused on the theme for the morning, which was on opportunities for entrepreneurship and added value, highlighting Good Practices in Scotland, Wales and followed by a presentation on activity in Flanders. There was also presentation of specific Good Practices in Public Food from Slovenia and France, using smart systems and producer support. This was in turn supplemented by a presentation on Public Food from Scotland.

Key messages from the presentation:

- There are different methods of working with companies to foster entrepreneurship and added value.
- These include the development of one-to-one relationships, one-to-many models and intensive working, including links with advisory services
- New models for developing public food into schools and hospitals can include online platforms and supporting producer cooperation.

Interactive Session 1: Market Opportunities

Presentation

Academy on Tour

Patrick Pasgang
(Innoavtiesteunpunt)

The session was opened with a presentation from Patrick Pasgang on the 'Flanders District of Creativity' project delivered by the Innovation Service, which focused on developing the skills of entrepreneurs from SMEs.

The project took 24 companies to the UK to look at potential markets, and on the bus to the UK allowed them access to 8 experts to create business plans, which were completed by the time they returned.

Further reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djVBTQH5dP4>

Key messages from the presentation:

- The 'hothouse' approach of multiple resources linked to business planning can be effective
- As with other models, this must be market focused, and there is the opportunity for peer learning as well as guidance from experts
- It is important to enable businesses to have the space and resource for innovation

Presentation

Public Food

Robin Gourlay
(Scottish
Government)

The second presentation to set the scene focused on public food opportunities, and how this was framed within a country (Scotland). The approach to disaggregate supply in Scotland was outlined, together with the linkages to the National Food & Drink policy, which originally concentrated on food and drink producers, but then switched focus to health and to consumers.

Group discussion

What are the key opportunities that can be developed to access new markets, enable entrepreneurship and develop added value?

Two discussion tables were set up around the same set of questions (see left column). Groups were then asked to share and comment on each other's findings. The following is a summary that takes into account recurring issues emerged during the group discussions.

The discussions focused on identifying **key needs** and **opportunities** for developing added value, entrepreneurship and new market access.

Key opportunities

The feedback session from the discussion tables on the key opportunities highlighted a number of areas worth developing

1. **Using the internet** as a means of market communication, especially in public food opportunities
2. **Develop market brokers**: developing the skills of those who can enable entrepreneurship and access to new markets
3. **Improve business planning**: make sure that support resources are in place to improve the way that rural actors can undertake business planning
4. **Use of selection criteria**: considering how to use the criteria to specifically tackle those that wish to add value and have developed business plans for short supply chains
5. **Share information and knowledge** particularly on the role for farmers in changing consumer behavior
6. **Create learning environments** including producer groups and cooperatives where they can learn from each other. This can include trade missions to visit other markets
7. **Foster product innovation** through support, market knowledge and initiatives which stimulate ideas
8. **Agro-catering** and other direct selling opportunities such as open air markets where these do not exist were seen as specific examples of new markets worth development

Group discussion

What are the key needs that can be explored to access new markets, enable entrepreneurship and develop added value?

Key needs

The feedback on the key needs identified the following areas:

1. **Business advice and skills** were identified as an important resource in supporting added value and entrepreneurship, and providing market advice
2. **Support after initial phases** was equally important – enabling companies to see through their ideas, and to continue to develop business and marketing plans
3. **Public Food**: continuing to improve market access in this areas, by looking at best practice, and how to implement procurement using health, freshness and quality to improve the food; addressing procurement laws through simplification and disaggregation
4. **Improving market understanding**: ensuring that those investing and engaging in added value activity understand the final value of their products or services to the consumer
5. **Advising on funding opportunities** including all structural funds and financial instruments
6. **ICT and broadband**: ensuring both rural producers and the advisors have the appropriate levels of knowledge, and that communication tools are used including social media
7. **Cooperation** through new farmer organisations and structures, encouraging market access in bringing together SMEs through joint activity, and this can be in retailing, marketing or supply.

Interactive Session 2: Smart Supply Chains

Presentation

National Rural Network perspective

Arnaud Marty
(CEGT)

The afternoon session was introduced through two presentations which addressed how thematic aspects in supply chains are applied by rural networks and LAGs.

The first presentation was made by Arnaud Marty, whose organisation are co-pilots of the French NRN, where the main points raised were around the call for projects around main themes as follows:

- Agroecology
- Urban-rural links
- Food governance
- Social economy
- Circular economy

Key messages from the presentation:

- The NRN are clustering rural development actors s by linking competences spread across rural territories
- The call brings added value through innovative projects
- There is an importance in the dissemination of tools and of knowledge
- A promising project creating urban-rural links was highlighted

Presentation

LAG Perspective

Cathrine
Schwenoha

Arnaud Marty
(CEGT)

The follow-up presentation was from a LAG point of view, and again used project examples to highlight their own activity. Through leader, over 40 projects were supported, and key themes emerged such as energy, soft mobility and regional food and drink

Key messages from the presentation:

A number of key needs for the region were identified

- Added value (mobility, qualification, synergies)
- Culture and nature (cultural strategy, renewable energy)
- Common welfare (mobility and education, public participation, work)

Group discussion
What are the key opportunities that can be developed to access new markets, enable entrepreneurship and develop added value?

As in the morning session, two discussion tables were set up around the tools and actions that networks and partners could put in place.. The following is a summary that takes into account the main issues that arose in the discussion

The discussions focused on identifying **key tools** and **actions** for developing added value, entrepreneurship and new market access.

Key tools and actions

The feedback session from the discussion tables on the key tools and actions highlighted some common areas, and some specific examples

1. **Skills and training** were highlighted as a key tool, from basic agricultural skills being delivered in schools and colleges, through to vocational training and support through advisory systems. AKIS was seen as a key resource, and it was even suggested that a broader view could be taken – the notion of an umbrella body (European Academy) for added value and entrepreneurship.
2. **Case Studies:** The availability of good practice is importance, and occasionally in what has not worked, for instance in RDPs or selection criteria. Entrepreneurs in particular were seen as needing best practice and added value examples.
3. **Online tools and data:** plugging into existing tools and developing new ones, and making sure as much available information from vents is posted online, including videos, presentations and examples. Considering the use of ‘big data’ in providing greater market information for rural actors.
4. Developing information on **funding:** looking at accessing information and using networking to make sure as much is shared as possible
5. Using **rural stakeholders** such as national farmers’ associations, Copa Cogeca and others to support activity, including joint events with NRNs.
6. **Encouraging generational renewal** including schemes to enable retirement (such as those employed in Romania) and for young farmers to enter into farming an access land

7. Using **networking** as a tool to disseminate information, joint activities in order to facilitates discussion, including clustering of thematic activity across networks and individual thematic activity at national level.

Final Discussion and Conclusions

Final discussion

Next Steps: Prioritisation of actions and timescales

In the final discussion, reflections were made on the outcomes presented, and in particular the tools that can be used. The feedback both in discussion and on the feedback forms was that the practical examples had been useful at an individual level, and to a lesser extent, the actions of the NRNs and the LAGs in delivering activity.

The main outcomes presented were in continuing to link together the actions of participants, increase use of resources such as good practices, networking, and especially mechanisms which can increase knowledge and understanding.

The tools that can be used will increasingly include those smart tools which can be communicated via networks, LAGs and rural stakeholders, and there was a desire to consider how this is integrated through RDPs and reflected in regional and national programmes, which will be the focus of the next workshop. This was presented in the final session with agreement from participants that this would be a worthwhile topic to pursue in April, providing once more that there are practical examples that can be shared among participants.

The next steps will include the preparation of case studies of programmes for the April meeting of the thematic group, and other practical examples that continue to demonstrate the topics discussed. There are also actions to integrate into the work of EIP on support of AKIS, as some recommendations specifically consider advisory systems, training, innovation brokering and support services.

The other main needs are for improvement in data access, data systems and how rural stakeholders can access market information, and this can be addressed through some aspects of the existing programmes, but also has broader implications for connectivity, and ensuring access to appropriate information to support decision-making on new markets and on where along the whole supply chain there are opportunities to add value.

Annex 1 – Updated Workflow

