

Lithuanian Rural Network: good practice examples



EUROPOS ŽEMĖS ŪKIO FONDAS KAIMO PLĖTRAI:
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Lithuanian Rural Network: good practice examples

The publication presents the exhaustive information relevant to the good practice examples of the Lithuanian Rural Network, the multifarious activity of this structure, involving rural communities, local action groups, non-governmental organizations, science institutions, business sector representing organizations, municipal and State institutions and agencies related to the implementation of the 2007–2013 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme and/or in other way contributing to the agricultural, forestry, food sector and rural development.

Photos by Nijolė Petrošiūtė, Česlovas Skaržinskas, Jolita Žurauskienė and executors of the Lithuanian Rural Network projects.

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Dear reader,

For you it will be interesting and useful to familiarize with the Lithuanian Rural Network (hereinafter the Network), to understand the role of the Network and its significance in achieving the goals, foreseen in the 2007–2013 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme, tackling other present-day and future agricultural, forestry, food sector and rural development issues. On the other hand, upon deciding to take part in the Network activity, you will learn how this should be done, what activities are eligible for financing from the Network support. The best examples of project implementation by the Network members, which are also included in this publication, no doubt, will be of benefit to you.

The Network was established in accordance with Article 68 of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005. It is targeted to cover all developmental trends laid out in the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 and to seek for the effective implementation of the Programme and objectives set out therein. Various institutions and structures, with an aim of improving and accelerating the rural development in rural areas, participate in agricultural and rural development activities. The Lithuanian Rural Network was set up with a view to consolidate their role in the rural development process, to promote information, know-how and transferable good practice exchange and to develop local initiatives and partnership. Membership in the Network is based on the principles of partnership, cooperation, volunteering, and equal treatment. The Network has been in operation for four years, encompassing over 800 members and its number still increasing.

I would like to emphasize that mission of the Lithuanian Rural Network is to set up the national and transnational forum, aimed at ensuring the opportunities for broad dissemination of information and good practice on rural development and its exchange. Information and good practice exchange and active cooperation are assured on a local, regional, national and transnational level. We succeeded in achieving that good practice diffusion covered not only the rural development, but also the regional development and environmental policy.

The Network provides a good option for its members to be granted funding and to participate in the Network actions. The Network members receive funds for good practice exchange in agricultural and rural develop-



ment, organization of informative events, implementation of cooperation projects, participation in the inter-territorial and transnational rural development events in Lithuania and overseas, collaboration in tackling other significant issues on the implementation of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013, forestry, food sector and rural development. Even up to 100 per cent of all eligible expenditure of the project shall be financed from the support funds. Support shall be granted only for public projects, i.e. non-profit ones, and where profit is raised it should be invested in the development of project operations, with rural inhabitants as direct beneficiaries.

A presumption was made in the formation of the Lithuanian Rural Network model that a stimulus for rural changes are the rural development participants themselves, since no one knows better of the problems and needs of the rural population. Therefore, the coordination of the Lithuanian Rural Network activities is aimed to be guided by the “bottom-up” approach. With due regard to the problems in the country and the regions, the Network members identify their activity priorities. Those priorities are used for guidance in the development and implementation of the projects. The improvement in the quality of life in the countryside, promotion of innovations and research, management of landscape and environment, rural youth initiatives, encouragement of support for rural development, farmers and rural tourism are referred to by the majority of the Network members as priority trends. The Network members take part in the decision-making process on

the project suitability for implementation and thus ensure that the best projects are implemented. It is delightful that this work is done with due responsibility and diligence.

I would like to note that with the fifth year gaining momentum in the implementation of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 and upon initiation by the European Commission of the discussions on the future of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2013, the Lithuanian Rural Network is a significant support in modeling the future of the Lithuanian countryside. The Network is active in discussions and gives the generalized opinion on the need to reform the present CAP and how to satisfy the expectations of rural development participants and instruments needed in the formation of the future CAP. The Network members are unanimous in deciding that CAP should not change radically, whereas policy and action continuity should be ensured with a view to balancing and tackling more fairly the political, economic, social, public, and environmental issues throughout the European Union.

I believe this publication will acquaint you not only with the Lithuanian Rural Network and its setting up sour-

ces, but also will provide answers to the core questions, pertaining to the Network activity implementation.

I would like once again to express a hope that the Lithuania Rural Network will further help the rural communities and other institutions, operating in the field of Lithuanian rural development, to successfully integrate and cooperate, and that the disseminated good practice will enable the rural development participants to learn from each other at a national and transnational level, with an aim of improving the life quality in rural areas to the best extent and stimulating competitiveness and entrepreneurship.

Your active participation in the rural policy decision-making process and a dialogue with the governance institutions will contribute in maturing the best ideas and creating the efficient economic and social agricultural and rural policy and will stimulate the growth of Lithuanian economy. You have always been, are and will be our best advisers and partners, since all of us are toiling for the sake of our Lithuania.

Respectfully,
Minister of Agriculture
Kazys Starkevičius



Lithuanian Rural Network



The Lithuanian Rural Network was established in December 2008 and is an organizational structure, uniting institutions and organizations participating in the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 (hereinafter the Programme).

The Lithuanian Rural Network is an open structure. Rural communities, local action groups, non-governmental organizations, science institutions, business sector representing organizations, municipal and State institutions and agencies, related to the Programme implementation and/or otherwise contributing to the agricultural, forestry, food sector and rural development take part in the Network activities.

Objectives, tasks and functions of the Network

The objective of the Network, in line with the agricultural and rural non-governmental organizations, State institutions and agencies, involved in the implementation of the Programme and other rural development, agricultural, and food sector goals, is to help ensure the proper implementation of the Programme and to aim for the sustainable agricultural, food sector and rural development.

The Network tasks:

- To tackle most important issues pertaining to the Programme implementation as well as other rural development, agricultural and food sector issues and to submit proposals relating to their solution.
- To encourage and support the dissemination of information, know-how, and good practice among agricultural and rural non-governmental organizations, State institutions and agencies related to the implementation of the Programme and other rural development, agricultural and food sector objectives.
- To encourage and support the cooperation of agricultural and rural non-governmental organizations, State institutions and agencies related to the implementation of the Programme and other rural development, agricultural and food sector objectives.

The Network in implementing the delegated tasks performs the following functions covering:

- Identification, collection, storage, analysis and systematization of agricultural, food sector and rural development good practice, organization of information dissemination on rural development measures and good practice.
- Initiation and organization of experience and know-

how exchange in the field of agriculture, food sector and rural development at an inter-regional and transnational level, and provision of technical support thereof.

- Initiation and organization of development and improvement of training programmes for local action groups, provision of technical and methodical assistance in implementing the *LEADER* method.
- Initiation and organization of the Network members' cooperation at an inter-regional and transnational level.
- Submission of proposals on the agricultural, food sector and rural development issues to competent institutions and agencies.
- Participation in identifying the need to change the Programme, submission of proposals to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter the Ministry) on amending the Programme.
- Participation in tackling the important issues in the field of agriculture, food sector and rural development.
- Contributing in any other way to the proper implementation of the Programme and other rural development goals.

The organizational structure of the Network

The organizational structure of the Network consists of: the Network members, Network committees, Network Council, Network working groups, and Network secretariat.

In 2011, some 300 new rural development members joined the Network, the majority of which are rural communities. At the beginning of 2012, the Network encompassed 867 institutions and organizations participating in rural development, agricultural and forestry processes.

The Network secretariat organizes the general meeting of the members at the end of each year. The general meeting at the end of 2011 was attended by 400 Network members.

On 12 December 2011, in Kaunas, the general meeting of the Lithuanian Rural Network was held, where the Network activity results for 2011 were presented, new chairmen of the committees and their deputies were elected. Kazys Starkevičius, the Minister of Agriculture, awarded the authors and executors of the best projects of the Network.

The best Network projects awarded

„I would like to thank you for the first visible results. Due to your efforts, village changes and becomes beautified”, K. Starkevičius, Minister of Agriculture, shook hands with the most prominent activists in the countryside at the general meeting of the Network.

At the general meeting, awards to the best projects, supported by the Network, were granted. A project-fair “From the Past to the Future” organized by the Dienmedis community from Paluknys was announced a winner. Majority of the farmers from the Paluknys land are engaged in milk processing and cheese production. Since of old, this area has been famed for basket weaving from pine splinters, which are commonly sold at the Kaziukas fair.

According to the project authors, a fair “The Past to the Future” was organized to present and publicize local farmers and folk masters and their works. Craftsmen, farmers and folk masters from Trakai and Vilnius regions and other places of Lithuania took part in the fair. Craftsmen familiarized the fair participants to their craft. A photo exhibition “Paluknys at the Turn of the Century”, reflecting the century-old history of Paluknys: farming traditions, rural lifestyle, etc., was held. The first championship of “Driving any Vehicles in Paluknys” was organized. In 2012, it is planned to pre-

sent the second project-supported activity – the book “Paluknys at the Turn of the Century”, published in the Lithuanian and Polish languages and giving a description of the Paluknys farming traditions and development, and honourable residents of this area.

The second place went to the Dusetos ward (seniūnija) and parish community cohesion project “Gathering of the Fellow-Countrymen”. The project received the support of 92 votes. The two-day conference “Gathering of the Fellow-Countrymen” was attended by the representatives of the Dusetos land rural communities, local authorities, Dusetos land honourable people, public activists, and rural youth. During the conference, discussions were focused on how to impact the future of their village and land, how to persuade young people to stay in the village and what ways are to be used for stimulating youth to set up in their native village.

The project “The Youth Practical Conference of the Kaunas Region Community Organizations” was awarded the third place. It received 68 votes. According to the representatives of this community centre, simple and easily implementable advices on healthy diet were given to the youth of the community organizations of the Kaunas region at the two-day practical conference. A competition “Healthy Food – Organic Products” was organized at the conference.



Minister of Agriculture Kazys Starkevičius thanked the Network members for the good results achieved

Other projects of the Network members, given a fair number of votes on the website, created by the Network, were also awarded. Those projects received special nominations: Kavoliškis Rural Community. The project “Nine Trades and Tenth is Business” for cherishing of the cultural heritage; the Nemunas Local Action Group. The project “Organization of Creative Workshops for the Development of the Rural Youth Projects” for stimulation of rural youth initiatives; the Lithuanian Association of Organic Farming. The project “Twenty-year Scientific and Practical Experience in Organic Farming” for disseminating the organic farming experience; Rusnės Šeima (Rusnė’s Family) Community. The project “Regional Cooperation Using the Residential Area Resources for Rural Development” for regional cooperation; Aleksandras Stulginskis University. The project “Search and Application of Innovative Solutions for Management of Changes in Rural Areas” for social innovations.

The Network Council

The Council, formed of the representatives of the Network members, deals with rural development issues

and other issues relating to agriculture, food sector and forestry. It is also in charge of the Network activity coordination, activity animation, and formation of annual action plans. The Network Council members represent the Network interests on the principle of rotation. They are delegated to the Network Council by the Network committees (each Network committee shall delegate 3 members). The Network Council is elected twice a year.

The Network committees

- Committee on rural policy issues (55 members)
- Committee for rural business promotion (121 members)
- Rural youth committee (73 members)
- Landscape and rural area planning committee (55 members)
- Committee for innovations and rural research (34 members)
- LEADER and community promotion committee (529 members).

Priorities of the Network committees in 2012

Committee on rural policy issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Challenges of the Common Agricultural Policy. 2. The present and future Lithuanian agricultural policy in the context of foreign countries. 3. Popularization of Lithuanian products and consumer education. 4. Improving the quality of life in rural areas. 5. Activation of organizations representing interests of rural residents.
Committee for rural business promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of rural entrepreneurship and competitiveness and competence improvement. 2. Promotion of rural cooperation, partnership and co-operatives. 3. Application of innovations to increase rural business efficiency.
Rural youth committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promoting entrepreneurship for rural youth. 2. Organizing rural youth leisure time and employment. 3. Facilitating dialogue between generations in rural areas. 4. Promoting rural youth volunteering. 5. Promoting rural youth initiatives. 6. Fostering public spirit of rural youth.
Landscape and rural area planning committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of partnership. 2. Application of good and historical experience for village preservation and revival. 3. Enhancement of a traditional farm by preserving biodiversity. 4. Preserving forestry potential and sustainable development. 5. Landscape formation and management seeking a positive impact on climate change.
Committee for innovations and rural research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biotechnological innovations in rural areas. 2. Healthy environment and lifestyle in rural areas. 3. Development and implementation of social innovations in solving rural problems. 4. Application of information technologies in rural areas. 5. Application of technological innovation in rural areas.
LEADER and community promotion committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of sense of community and volunteering. 2. Partnership strengthening among rural development stakeholders. 3. Promotion of community services development in rural areas. 4. Promotion of youth initiatives in rural use.

Since the beginning of 2012, the Network committees have been delegated with the main task of reporting to their represented committees for the projects implemented by the Network members.

Secretariat

To ensure the Network management, its efficient functioning and activity coordination as well as mutual operation and cooperation of the links in this structure, the Network secretariat has been established. The Network secretariat is also responsible for organization of the

meetings of the Network organizational structures. In 2012, the Network secretariat initiated discussions of the members of the Network committees on the European Parliament and Council Regulation relating to the support for rural development, granted by the project of the European Agricultural Fund for rural development.

The Network budget breakdown

Measure	Public expenditure (EUR)	Private expenditure (EUR)	Total (EUR)
Technical support	90,662,240	–	90,662,240
– of which for the Lithuanian Rural Network:			
a) Establishment and administration expenditure	9,297,920		9,297,920
b) Action plan expenditure	2,324,480	–	2,324,480
	6,973,440	–	6,973,440

The Network administration

The Network secretariat performs the Network establishment and administration activities. Since 2009, the Network secretariat to ensure the smooth operation of organizational structures has been involved in the formation of the Network committees and their activity coordination, organization of the meetings of the Network Council and the Network working groups.

Some 45 meetings of the Network committees have been organized since 2009, focusing on the issues of annual activity priorities and provision of recommendations for project implementation. At least twice a year the Network Council is elected. The Network secretariat is also in

charge of the performance of functions for admission of new members into the Network. The working group meetings in the Membership Network are organized at least once a month.

The Network establishment and administration expenditure is also used in preparing training programmes for local action groups (LAG) and organizing educational events related to training programmes.

Those functions are performed and educational events are organized by the *LEADER* Programme and Farmers' Training Methodology Centre under the Ministry of Agriculture, headed by Lina GUMBREVIČIENĖ, who told about the Centre-organized events and LAG training.



Primarily, I would like to stress that most of the trainings organized by our centre are funded under Action Programme Axis 3 of the activity area “National Rural Network” of the 2007–2013 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme measure “Technical Assistance”. In 2010–2011, the following trainings were

conducted, their themes covering: “Management of Accounting for Non-profit Organizations and Finance of the Projects”, “Organization of Public Procurements”, “Accounting Policy in Non-Profit Organizations”, “Strengthening of Local Action Groups Management in Implementing the Action Development Strategies”, “Opportunities for the Creation of Local Development Identity in Implementing the Local Development Strategies under the “*LEADER* Method Implementation” Axis”, etc. In 2012, trainings were organized on the following topics: “Performance of Electronic Public Procurements” and “Management of Projects Relating to Construction Work Organization”. More specifically, in 2010–2011 under this Axis 32 trainings were organized, and in 2012 ten trainings have already been held, focusing on competence improvement of specialists, directly related to LAG activities Trainings

were attended by about 590 participants. Most popular trainings were on public procurement and strengthening of LAG local development strategy.

The key audience of the centre-organized trainings consists of the LAG administration staff, members of the LAG managing bodies, and NGO representatives. Competence improvement trainings, organized under the programmes, devised by our centre, are attended by the employees of the above-mentioned institutions, whereas LAGs diffuse information and organize trainings within their territories, and our centre just conducts quality surveillance. Moreover, annual transnational conferences for Lithuanian and foreign LAGs and rural communities, with the main focus on establishing international coopera-

tion contacts, are organized from the Network support funds. The third conference is planned to be organized this year, in September. Also, following the requirement of the Programme Axis “LEADER Method Implementation”, emphasizing that 1/3 of the members of the LAG managing bodies must raise their qualification in the field of the Programme Axis “LEADER Method Implementation”; we organize trainings of this type as well. Within the past years, over 160 employees improved their qualification here. We can boast that this year, with the help of technologies, we started organizing video conferences, this allowing the provision of the most urgent information relating to the Programme Axis “LEADER Method Implementation”.

Implementation of Action Plan for 2012

No.	Funds	Total (Lt)	Network Committee I, project proposals (PP) submitted	Network Committee II, project proposals (PP) submitted	Network Committee III, project proposals (PP) submitted	Network Committee IV, project proposals (PP) submitted	Network Committee V, project proposals (PP) submitted	Network Committee VI, project proposals (PP) submitted
1.	Funds, allocated for Action Programme Axes I-IV	7,500,000	29 PP for 1,070,000	69 PP for 2,279,540	35 PP for 1,000,895	25 PP for 727,000	20 PP for 571,000	268 PP for 6,908,360
			After the Network Committee meetings, held in March 2012, it was recommended to implement 335 project proposals for LTL 6,121,787.					
2.	Funds, allocated for Action Programme Axis V	555,000	11 applications for support were submitted for LTL 508,864. Applicants: Chamber of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Rural Tourism Association, Lithuanian Farmers' Union, etc.					
3.	Funds, allocated for Action Programme Axis VI	1,510,000	23 applications for support were submitted for LTL 1,769,794.32. Applicants: Lithuanian University of Agriculture, PI Tatula Programme, Lithuanian Farmers' Union, etc.					
4.	Funds, allocated for Action Programme Axis VII “Network Management”	535,000	68 applications were submitted for LTL 344,450 Lt.					
5.	Total	10,100,000						

The activities of the Network members eligible for support through seven axes of the Action Programme:

- Identification of agricultural, food sector and rural development experience and changes, collection, systematization, analysis, generalization and submission of proposals.
- Dissemination of experience in the field of agriculture, food sector and rural development and other related information.
- Development of training programmes for the local action groups, technical and methodical assistance in implementing *Leader* method.
- Technical support for regional and transnational cooperation of the rural development participants.
- Representation of the interests of the rural development participants in the EU organizations.
- Implementation of the projects initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania and related to agriculture, food sector and rural development.
- Network management.

Examples of the projects, implemented by the Network members

The projects, implemented under Axis 1 of the Network Action Programme

A well-cast net is important

Nijolė MITKEVIČIENĖ

Egidijus Giedraitis, Chairman of the Nemunas Local Action Group (LAG) from Jurbarkas, says wittily that each fisherman knows that a catch depends on the manner how a net is cast. Thus, having made use of all the opportunities, offered by the EU support to the Lithuanian Rural Network, they made efforts for their activity to bring the biggest benefit, to attract as many people as possible, especially youth. “We, and, probably, not only we, notice that our youth is quite passive, only its small part participating in the NGO activities. The reason is the lack of information, absence of motivation, unattractiveness of the organizations, etc. Therefore, those barriers had to be removed”.

First of all, according to Chairman Egidijus, in 2010 they filed an application “Organization of Creative Workshops for the Development of the Rural Youth Projects”. The project support amount was LTL 24,890. It has been targeted at creating conditions for young people to create their future in the Jurbarkas District. Young people were taught to prepare projects, to submit applications for their implementation, etc. Within the project implementation period, young people independently prepared 8 project applications. The projects were presented in public.

The next application by the Nemunas LAG was “Rural Youth for Entrepreneurship and Cooperation”. The project support amounted to LTL 16,000, its main goal being to attract as many young people as possible into rural development processes, to create conditions for solving their local problems, and not to be the passive observers.

The third application was “Study of the Needs of the Jurbarkas Region Youth”, and its value was LTL 19,944.



Team work is of major importance



The project participants presenting their ideas



The final project conference

The goat farm is popularized due to the support

Brigita ŽURAUSKAITĖ

The Lithuanian Goat Breeders Association, headed by the farmer Andžela Dalia Ėmužytė, has already prepared more than one project under the action area “National Rural Network” of the 2007–2013 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme measure “Technical Assistance”. Goat milk cheeses, produced at the farm of the farmer A.D. Ėmužytė, have become well-known in Lithuania. She produces 36 sorts of goat cheeses, natural and of unique taste. The farmer adds caraway seeds, garlic, paprika and pepper, nettle, rosemary and other herbs. The skilful mistress does not forget to flavour cheese with chocolate, cocconut, raisins or orange peel. For goat cheese production, A.D. Ėmužytė uses raw materials from her organic farm, buying just some part of spicy herbs.

The head of the Lithuanian Goat Breeders Association cherishes a thought to popularize goat breeding and its products and to present them to the broader circle of consumers. She succeeded to implement this idea thanks to projects. People, interested in this activity, gathered for several times at A.D. Ėmužytė’s farm in the village of Griciūnai, Širvintos District. In 2010, the Association invited almost 300 visitors to the gourmet fiesta, organized by the Lithuanian dairy goat breeders. In 2011, the project was also being implemented. Under the activity area “National Rural Network” of the 2007–2013 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme, LTL 30,000 was allocated to the project. The head of the Lithuanian Goat Breeders Association boasted of almost one thousand of visitors at the international event “The Fair of Goat Products”. Alongside the Lithuanians, the fair was atten-



A.D. Ėmužytė uses raw materials from her organic farm for cheese manufacture, buying just a part of spicy herbs

ded by the Latvians and Ukrainians. At “The Fair of Goat Products” one could taste a variety of cheeses and meat dishes. Special attention was devoted to the clothes from lamb fur and leather, accompanied by a fashion show of these garments.

Something new is always demonstrated at the events, taking place for three years. People at the fair have an interesting time. A.D. Ėmužytė said that guests (goat breeders) also prepared dishes to their own recipes. Prizes are awarded for their active performance. In 2011, they went ballooning. In the autumn of 2012, the project “The Fair of Goat Products” will be held once again. The head of the Lithuanian Goat Breeders Association mentioned of the future cheese manufacturing lessons. Owing to the Network support, after presentation of those products at the fairs, the consumption of goat dairy cheeses and meet got increased.



The international event “The Fair of Goat Products” attracted almost one thousand of the followers

Methodical material, prepared seeking to avoid errors

Brigita ŽURAUSKAITĖ

The Širvintos District Local Action Group (LAG) is a member of the Lithuanian Rural Network. It has developed a project “Partnership Strengthening of Local Action Groups by Sharing Methodical Support” under the 2011 Lithuanian Rural Network Action Plan. The support of LTL 20,000 was allocated for the project implementation. According to LAG Chairman Vita Janavičienė, to implement successfully the European Union funded projects, one should be familiarized with the Law on Public Procurement of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts, regulating public procurement. Quite a number of LAGs, which received support for their activity, in implementing their own development strategies, often have questions relating to the public procurement procedures carried out by the project executors. With an aim of avoiding errors occurring in the procurement procedures, a decision was taken to prepare methods, outlining the main public procurement aspects and most frequent violations. V. Janavičienė says that the project has been aimed to publish the booklet containing the public procurement assessment methods and to share them with other Lithuanian local action groups. The public procurement assessment methods have been developed by a public procurement expert group. The booklet, as a supplementary theoretical aid, was published with the circulation of 60 copies. Its thematic presentation took place in the rural tourism farmstead “Kernavės bajorytė”, Širvintos District.

According to the Širvintos LAG Chairman, a new publication was given special attention, and over 100 participants from the LAGs of the whole of Lithuania wanted to participate in the event. It was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Paying Agency (NPA), LEADER Programme and Farmers’ Training Methodology Centre, Lithuanian Rural Network Committee VI, and the Agricultural Science and Technology Park of Aleksandras Stulginskis University. The participants were acquainted with a new methodical publication. Ruslanas Jurėnas, Director of the Public Procurement Expert Group, devoted a great deal of attention to the mistakes occurring in the course of conducting public procurements.



V. Janavičienė, Chairman of the Širvintos District LAG, says that a new publication was given a great deal of attention



The event was attended by the representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Paying Agency (NPA), LEADER Programme and Farmers’ Training Methodology Centre, Lithuanian Rural Network Committee VI, and the Agricultural Science and Technology Park of Aleksandras Stulginskis University

Giedrius Ruseckas, Head of the Public Procurement Division of the NPA Department of General Affairs, provided advices on the contracting authority’s public procurement assessment, discussed with local action groups the problems faced in carrying out e-procurements through the Central Public Procurement Information System. The Chairman of the Širvintos District LAG is of the opinion that this newly prepared methodology will help to work in a constructive way and to avoid mistakes in carrying out and assessing public procurements.

Partnership links expanded

Brigita ŽURAUŠKAITĖ

In 2011, the Trakai Region Association of Culture and Crafts (TRCCA) carried out a project according to Axis 4 of the Network Action Programme “Cultural and Culinary Rural Tourism Development by Taking Over the French Experience, Skills Development and Dissemination of Practices”. LTL 20,000 was allocated for its implementation. TRCCA, together with the partner Aristculture, organized a thematic-informative meeting with the mushroom, snail and lavender growers, other farmers, rural tourism representatives, whose activity and production was related to culinary and cultural rural tourism development. Meetings were held with the representatives of the French cheese dairy “Fromagerie Gaugry”, Jean-Paul Bresse snail farm “Escargots fermiers bresse”, wine producers of the farm “Sarlcaves du Chateau”, truffle farm “La Truffe du Ventoux”, nougat and whistle manufacturers, the museum “LesAppeaux Raymond” owner and the Local Action Group GALLEADER Ventoux representatives.

The project participants visited the cheese dairy and watched the cheese-making process. They also attended a small shop, where special attention is devoted to the presented products. The preserved old French cheese-making traditions guarantee reliability and high quality to the products. The cheese dairy cooperates with the neighbouring entrepreneurs and farmers; therefore, other articles and products are offered for sale in the shop. The members of the Trakai Region Association of Culture and Crafts visited snail farms and pastures, familiarized with their processing and food production. In France, snails are frozen or canned with various spices and wine. Snail pastes, creams, meat and snails in their shells are also manufactured. The owner of the said farm in his own restaurant offers different snail dishes, and also sells them by wholesale and retail trade. A visit to a wine producer’s farm was organized, where wine tasting and rural tourism are developed. A farm, growing truffles, those extraordinary mushrooms, was also given attention. The owner of this farm told about the participation in the LEADER Programme and the implementation of the projects relating to the installation of the stands on truffle products. Everybody showed special interest in the Silvain family nougat manufacture, where not only this French sweet stuff is produced, but



The Trakai Region Association of Culture and Crafts members visited snail farms and pastures

also rural tourism is developed. The nougat manufacture owners create not only new recipes, but also cherish old recipes of their products. They have also preserved their grandma’s recipes. The owners produce chocolate, sweets and honey-soaked fruit. A visit to the lavender and lavender farm “Sarlcaves du Chateau”, where the project activity is carried out by the head of the family and the son, also was useful for gaining experience. The mistress is concerned with the shop, information diffusion and contacts with tourists. The Angelvin family supplies for wholesaling the essences of their own make and soaps produced from them, biscuits, and canned meat with lavenders. The project participants also paid a visit to the “Chartreuse Diffusion” liqueur factory and had a meeting met with the LAG representatives on constant cooperation.

According to the Dominyka Dubauskaitė-Kairevičienė, head of the TRCCA, experience was shared at the meetings on the use of the French and Lithuanian crafts, their technologies, cultural and culinary heritage in developing rural tourism, and close cooperation contacts were established with foreign partners. The exhibition of traditional crafts and culinary products was presented. At the international event –the informative-thematic meetings – the guests were acquainted with the Trakai region cultural and culinary tourism and its development. The Lithuanian side gained experience in this field from the French rural development participants. The Trakai Region Association of Culture and Crafts placed the project material on a CD and Internet.

Opportunity to go out of the yard

Liudas VAKARIS

According to Guoda Burokienė, Chairman of the Lithuanian Rural Communities Union (LRCU), they carry out the project under Axis 5 of the Network Action Programme, representing since 2010 the interests of the rural development participants of our country in the ELARD (European Leader Association for Rural Development) organization. The importance of the project with a value of LTL 15,000 is enormous. It is of great benefit to Lithuania, since it implements effectively one of the principles of the *Leader* methods, namely a bottom-up approach, which is aimed that rural organizations and population would participate in adopting and implementing solutions relating to their living environment, and stimulates the sense of community and partnership. The LRCU represents the Lithuanian rural communities, local action groups, etc., presenting to the EU organizations their opinion on the existing situation.

G. Burokienė is delighted that the LRCU participation in the operation of the ELARD and other international organizations (PREPARE, ERA), expressing actively their position in the European Commission thematic and European Network working groups, the Advisory Group for RD, as well as submitting proposals on the rural development policy formation, is significant for Lithuania. It also takes part in the joint projects with the EU Member States (Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia,

Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Greece, Portugal, Spain, France, Ireland, and Scotland) and other activities. The participation in the ELARD and other international organizations helps protect the interests of the Lithuanian rural development organizations in the EU. The Lithuanian Rural Communities Union members also receive exhaustive and firsthand information on the ongoing events in the EU countries in the field of rural development and participate in impacting the rural development policy in the EU and Lithuania (by participating in the meetings, conferences, and working groups of the represented organizations). It provides useful information, related to the rural development policy, to rural communities and local action groups. “When the information, received from the EU, concerns the volunteering activities of the rural communities and the partnership of the *Leader* groups, the LRCU, simultaneously with the dissemination of the information received, stimulates the sense of community and partnership as well as volunteering among rural communities and local action groups in Lithuania”, spoke the LRCU Chairman G. Burokienė about the project implementation.

In brief, the implementation of such project is the opportunity to go out from one’s own yard. This is the opportunity to get acquainted with the life of other rural communities in Lithuania and EU countries and their activities. This is the opportunity to share good practice and ideas and upon coming back home to adapt all that in the life of one’s own communities.

According to G. Burokienė, she most often goes to Brussels, even though the ELARD meetings and other events are also organized in other EU countries. G. Burokienė says it is not important that Lithuania is tiny, its voice, nevertheless is always heard and its remarks and proposals are listened to.

When asked to recall several most memorable ideas, brought to our villages from overseas, Guoda says that are very numerous. She was very fond of the mowers’ festivity in Slovenia, which after the visit was also organized by the Vilkaviškis activists. Now such festivity also brought fame to Žaiginys from the Raseiniai District. The Pagėgiai residents are also worth of praise for their plans to revive the sometime renowned geese market.



The implementation of the Network project gives the opportunity to go beyond one’s own yard and the village. A visit to Slovenia

Sustainability of activity, ensured in the Tatula Programme

Liudas VAKARIS

For encouraging of organic farms and educating the consumers of their products, within three years PI Tatula Programme was granted the support of LTL 220,000 under the activity area “National Rural Network” of the 2007–2013 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme measure “Technical Assistance”. The Tatula staff implemented 5 projects.

The Tatula Programme, uniting the organic farms for more than two decades, was among the first to join the Lithuanian Rural Network activity. This ensured the sustainability of organic food product popularization in the country. In 2009, the Tatula Programme applied for the EU support in organizing the fairs of organic products, gaining fame in Lithuania. For this purpose, almost LTL 50,000 was allocated under Axis 6 of the aforementioned measure. The similar amount was granted according to Axis 2 for organization of field days in the organic farms and health days.

“The fairs help to effectively educate the society. People need to learn how to not confuse rural and organic products. The field days are of special importance for the farmers, since if one wants to be competitive he must get practically acquainted with novelties. Health days also brought forth a huge response. During those days

the principles of healthy diet were explained and organic food was offered for tasting. The EU funds for such work are the main source of financing”, says Almonas Gutkauskas, Director of the Tatula Programme. For these sustainable projects in 2011 the support of LTL 50,000 and almost LTL 46,000, correspondingly, was allocated. The European and national budget support, granted to the Tatula Programme, helps it participate at the AgroBalt international agricultural and food product processing exhibition.



One of the glimpses at the fair



In 2012, the Tatula Programme submitted applications for activity sustainability support under activity area “National Rural Network” of the Programme measure “Technical Assistance”



The Tatula Programme, which has become a model of organic farming in Lithuania, invites to its fairs in Vilnius and other cities for 17 years already



**For more extensive information on the 2007–2013
Lithuanian Rural Development Programme please refer to:**

Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania:
www.zum.lt

Lithuanian Rural Network: **www.kaimotinklas.lt**

National Paying Agency under
the Ministry of Agriculture:
www.nma.lt