

Combining forces for a more efficient food industry

Smaller firms in the food industry are often disadvantaged by their remoteness from major production, processing and distribution chains. This is why the EU is supporting a project that offers new opportunities for linking stakeholders in the sector across the Adriatic region.

A LOGISTICS NETWORK

The AGRONET project is building a food industry network that covers logistics, distribution and service infrastructure in the Adriatic region – where such connections are not as developed now as they could be. The project aims to fill the gap with an Adriatic transnational economic cooperation system, permitting exchanges of good practice on food safety and quality standards, and access to support services for certification, funding, or training. This will allow enterprises to operate more easily across the currently diverse technical, managerial, financial and certification challenges along the two Adriatic coasts. And by assisting economic cooperation, the project is encouraging trade, and should increase competitiveness.

It has brought together farmers, food processors, commodity exchanges and agricultural markets, creating closer links with wholesalers, packagers, transportation and logistics companies, and the retail sector. The world of policy is also involved, from ministries, municipalities, chambers of commerce, and universities. Overall, this initiative is making it possible for firms to focus on introducing innovative processes in the marketing of high-quality agricultural and food products.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

AGRONET is a platform for creating opportunities for businesses that want to develop on an international scale. The information the network has collated identifies local distribution structures and infrastructures, lists

measures covering the distribution of food products, and highlights financial services and credit options for developing networks among firms. It has identified a common management software programme for distribution platforms that can connect the members of the partnership and promote commercial exchanges. It has devised a harmonised operating system that checks conformity with EU standards of food quality and safety along the entire production line. Shared rules for certifying companies and products have been set by a transnational network of certification bodies that have conducted a series of pilot certifications.

Key elements include a web portal for companies seeking to promote their business across frontiers. This offers AGRONET members a database of companies, legislation, financial incentives and business opportunities, and provides facilities for exchanging products, services, and knowledge.

“The main problems in the agro-food sector are customs issues, identifying products from a confusing mix of different labels and languages, and accessing credit guarantees. AGRONET helps meet these challenges, and its portal makes it easier to find new cross-border business opportunities”, says Andrea Sabot, the Director of the market in Udine.





European
Commission

Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Western Balkans

IPA – AN INVESTMENT IN EUROPE. AN INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

PROJECT DETAILS –

AGRONET – Setting up a permanent network of logistics, distribution and services infrastructure in the food industry chain of the Adriatic Area

The project is part of the IPA Adriatic programme, a cross border cooperation programme between Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia.

Partners:

Finest S.p.A. – Financial company for the promotion of economic cooperation with east European countries (lead partner), Italy
Veneto Agricoltura – Regional agency for agriculture, forestry and agri-food sectors, Italy
Informest – Service and Documentation Centre for International Cooperation – Development Projects Department, Italy
Chamber of Commerce (CCIAA) of Bari, Italy
Region of Apulia – Industrial Research and Innovation Service, Italy
Confederation of Cooperatives – Provincial Union Ravenna, Italy
Consortium for Industrial Development – Biferno Valley, Italy
Regional development agency of Split – Dalmatia County, Croatia
RDA of Northern Primorska Regional Development Agency Ltd. Nova Gorica, Slovenia
Ministry of Energy and Industry of the Republic of Albania
Foundation for Sustainable Development – OdRaz, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Total cost in €:

2.5 million

EU Contribution in €:

2.13 million (85%)

Start date:

March 2011

End date:

June 2014

Results:

Harmonised management of distribution infrastructure;
increased cooperation among SMEs;
shared systems that meet EU standards of food quality and safety;
347 companies engaged in the platform;
80 technicians trained in high-quality food products marketing.

Techniques:

Training; equipment; consultancy

Project website:

www.agronetadriatic.eu

