



Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title	<i>Environment Theme Year, 2010</i>		
Theme	<i>Knowledge exchange; Training; Cooperation</i>		
NRN	<i>Finland</i>	Coordinator	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Rural Network Unit of Finland</i>
Partners	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Rural Network Unit of Finland</i>		
Period	<i>1 January 2010-31 December 2010</i>	Resources	<i>250,000 Euro</i>
Geo-location	<i>Mainland Finland and Åland Islands</i>		
Beneficiaries	<i>Operators or the Finnish National Rural Network</i>		

Background

The theme chosen for the Mainland Finland Rural Development Programme in 2010 was environment. The aim of the thematic year was to draw attention to rural environmental matters and to improve the state of the environment through diverse measures available through the Mainland Finland and Åland Islands Rural Development Programmes. The main messages were:

- The rural living environments created by agriculture are vital for many animal and plant species. People in the countryside can look after the welfare of these species through many landscaping and nature management actions.
- These days there are many ways for reducing the impact on waterways of farming, and for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Finnish farmers have better opportunities for producing clean food if the state of the environment is good.

Main activities, including results

A number of events were organised during the year, both for the general public and for farmers and rural residents, informing the participants about efforts made to care for the environment and encouraging them to take advantage of the opportunities available. Tarja Halonen, the then President of the Republic of Finland, acted as the patron.

- A nationwide educational tour organised in the spirit of the year's environmental theme comprised 26 events that focused on solving local and regional environmental challenges. A total of 852 people took part in the events.
- The year's theme was also promoted through exhibitions and events organised by various stakeholder groups.
- Almost 400 people convened in national seminars held in Tampere and Helsinki to hear about the latest scientific findings associated with agro-environmental efforts and to discuss new ways to improve the state of the environment.
- The 2010 Rural Gala included an award ceremony for the best practices competition, where the winner of the Environmental Effort of the Year award was also announced.





- The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry organised an environmental campaign aimed at 10–12-year-old schoolchildren in cooperation with the Finnish 4H Federation. A teacher handbook included both classroom-based and outdoor assignments that are designed to acquaint pupils with environmental conservation efforts in rural areas, biodiversity, and water system management.
- The campaign also featured at an agricultural exhibition aimed at children, which was held in Kauhava in the summer. The exhibition was extremely popular, which a total of approximately 4,000 visitors.
- A report on awareness, use and opinions of non-production and special environmental subsidies among rural secretaries and rural entrepreneurs was commissioned from the Education and Research Centre for Biodiversity of HAMK University of Applied Sciences in late 2010.

Contribution of the NSU

The Rural Network Unit of Finland coordinated the thematic year. Planning and follow-up of the initiative were done together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Rural Development Unit, the Agency for Rural Affairs, local operators, the company in charge of the practical arrangements of the environmental tour (Envitecpolis Oy), and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment.

Contribution of the partners

The team involved in the planning and implementation included representatives from many different organisations: the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Agency for Rural Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the LEADER Local Action Groups, the Finnish Rural Policy Committee working group for nature and landscape services, ProAgria, the Finnish Rural Women's Advisory Organisation, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Central Union of Finnish Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, the Central Union of Swedish-Speaking Agricultural Producers in Finland, various private consultants, WWF Finland, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Birdlife Finland, the Finnish National Board of Education, and Project TEHO.

Success factors

During the thematic year, the general public received information on topics that are usually considered difficult to understand. Concrete actions and completed products were presented in a way that made them easy to discuss in the media.

- We received more media publicity than usual during the year. The thematic year was well received by the media and it was easy to motivate them to pick up the story because they automatically considered it important. A journalists' excursion was organised to involve media that had previously provided little coverage.
- The thematic year was conducted by a large group of stakeholders from the Rural Network.
- A monitoring group consisting of stakeholders was set up for the year. It was successful in coming up with ideas and promoting the theme in the participants' own areas. It provided concrete recommendations and help with communications. The communication materials (roll-ups, brochure, postcards, etc.) produced for the year were in great demand locally.
- The thematic year reached a large number of people from different age groups. Feedback received from the public was positive.
- The thematic year encouraged people to take action for the environment, resulting, for example, in the establishment of several wetland areas.
- As a result of the thematic year, the environmental tour will continue being a part of the Rural Network's operations in 2011 and 2012.





European Commission
Agriculture and
Rural Development



Additional information

<http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/ymparisto.html> (in Finnish)

http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/viestinta/uutiset/ymparisto2010_teenavuosi_kannusti_ymparistotekoihin.html (in Finnish)

