

Krajowa Sieć Obszarów Wiejskich
Polish National Rural Network



PRESENTS...



THE POLISH NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK PRESENTS...

The structure of Polish National Rural Network (KSOW) is two-tier. The headquarters is located in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and in the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture (FAPA). The lower level units are located in 16 Marshal Offices.

The NRN has been implementing the NRN Action Plan which is divided into the general part and regional parts. The Action Plan of NRN General Secretariat includes horizontal projects of supra-regional coverage or pilot projects which can be implemented at lower levels, while the Action Plan of Regional NRN Secretariats has a regional and territorial coverage.

The structure of the NRN in Poland makes it possible to exchange information at central, regional and local levels and to coordinate actions in the regions. The network actions are focused on disseminating knowledge, including good practices on the implementation of Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and on promoting rural values among rural inhabitants and overall society. Their goal is to create the image of rural areas as an attractive place to live and make a living.

This document is a collection of good practices implemented by particular Secretariats in their regions, with collaboration of numerous NRN partners, including Local Action Groups (LAGs). The role of the 336 Polish LAGs in activating rural communities cannot be overestimated and NRN attaches special importance to supporting LAGs in the implementation of local development strategies.

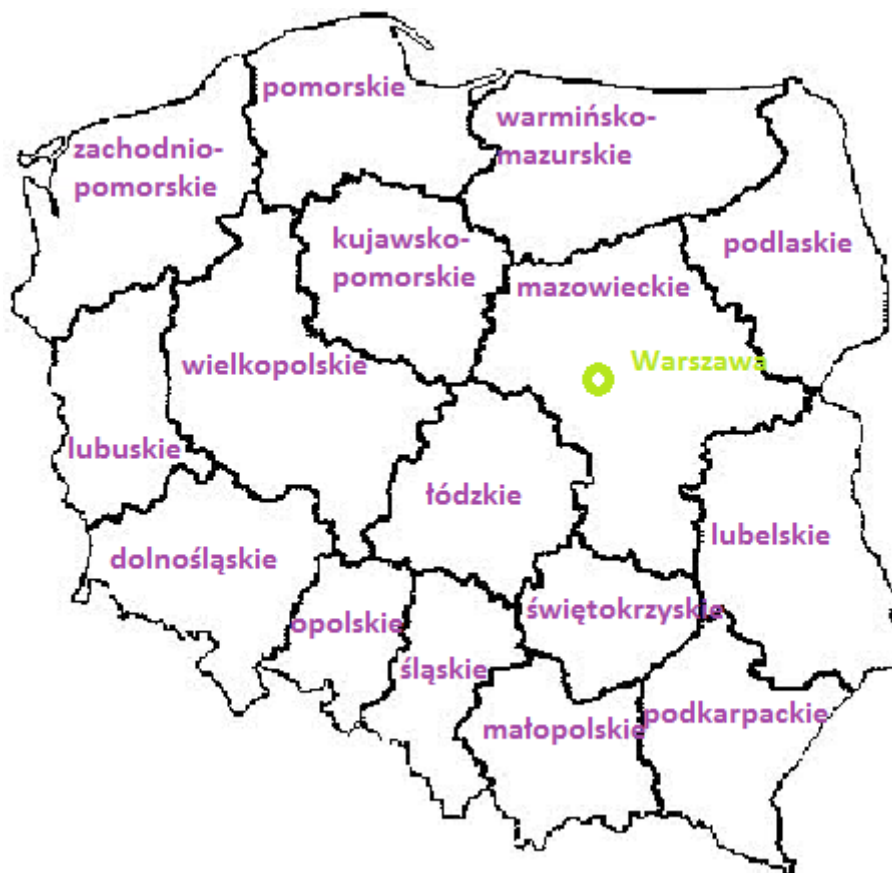
NRN in Poland cares for sharing experience among the regions and for disseminating good practices implemented under the projects which fulfil NRN priority objectives, namely support of entrepreneurship on rural areas, including rural tourism and agrotourism, promotion of quality food, including traditional and local products as well as sustainable development of rural areas in order to preserve and protect rural traditions, cultural heritage and landscape. NRN is especially interested in the future of common agricultural policy post 2013 and in conducting social consultations of the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The undertakings compiled herein demonstrate the involvement of our partners in the National Rural Network actions, transfer of good practices and joint search for appropriate solutions.

You are welcome to learn more about our experiences and actions at www.ksow.pl





REGIONAL SECRETARIATS...



TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL PRODUCT: PROMOTION, BRAND, DISTRIBUTION – EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES



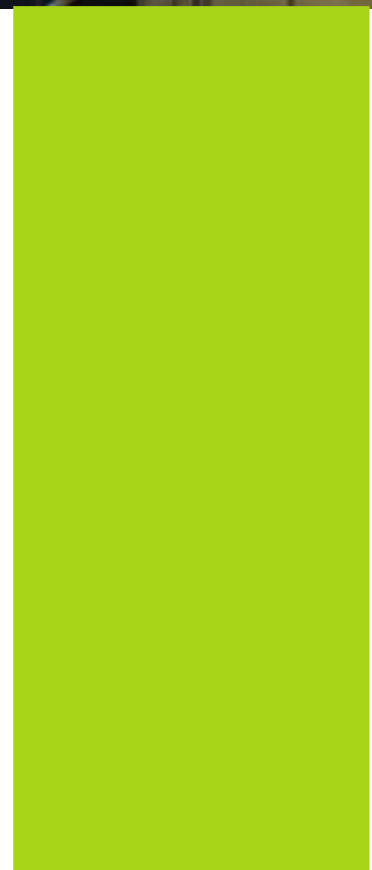
A comprehensive approach to the issue of traditional and local product has been proposed by NRN partners who filed a project under the Action Plan of the National Rural Network General Secretariat. In November 2012, Foundation of Agricultural Biodiversity AgriNatura started to implement the project in collaboration with NRN partners.

The first task on the schedule was to identify good practices in manufacturing, promotion, brand building and distribution of local/regional/traditional products at national level.

A survey to this end was conducted nationwide and covered 150 institutions which were directly related or interested in local development and traditional product, including Marshal Offices, Regional NRN Secretariats, Voivodeship Agricultural Advisory Centres and at least one LAG from each voivodeship, selected regional NRN partners, agricultural chambers, local associations (including Rural Housewives' Circles), producer groups, members of Polish Chamber of Local and Regional Product.

All the collected data was included in a report on the identification of good practices, which comprised a data base of 156 producers of traditional products in Poland, with description of the specific characteristics of 253 products, information about places and methods of their manufacturing, marketing, quality systems applied and networks promoting the product. The products were grouped according to the following categories: dairy products, meat products, fishery products, vegetables and fruit, bakery products and cakes, oils and fats, honeys, beverages, other.

Next, the experts conducted 31 site visits at selected producers' in particular voivodeships in order to verify the information collected in the survey. The analysis made will enable selecting





the most interesting actions to serve as models to be followed; they are going to become a background for a film to promote traditional products. Selected processors represent diversity and different approach to product creation, to the building of business strength and developing offer for

consumers.

The results of the surveys conducted were presented during 3 regional conferences, each of them hosting 100 participants, among whom there were representatives of Voivodeship Inspector of Trade Quality of Food Products, Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Product, academics, representatives of Polish Academy of Taste, media and local producers.

The aim of the conferences was to acquaint the producers with the Polish and EU legislation concerning traditional, local, regional and organic product and to inform them about novel marketing and sales techniques. The conferences also served as vehicles for promoting the best practices identified during the project implementation.

Conference speeches were focused mainly on matters relating to the marketing of traditional and regional products, regulations and requirements to be fulfilled by producers who are interested in marginal, localised and restricted activity (MLO), possibilities of being listed on the List of Traditional Products kept by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and regulations associated with awarding a „Quality Tradition” certificate under the domestic quality food system. Importance of traditional and modern marketing and distribution channels was highlighted, especially sales via the Internet. The *Open Door* method was presented as a new initiative to facilitate building relations between producers and consumers, which method involves visits of clients on farms.

Local producers - winners of numerous prizes - presented the development of their own businesses, their beginnings, the first success, experiences and constraints they had successfully overcome, as well as plans for the future. They also discussed the best methods of marketing and promoting the products which, in many cases, are listed on the List of Traditional

Products or which have been awarded the Pearl – a prize won in the contest “Our Culinary Heritage – Tastes of the Regions”.

A record of actions under the project is kept on an interactive website www.produktytradycyjne-dobrepraktyki.pl. That website presents the best practices and experiences in the scope of creating, promoting brand building, marketing and distributing traditional, local, regional and organic products manufactured with traditional methods in the rural areas. Thanks to new tools, those interested can share experience in a special Good Practices Club bookmark dedicated for that purpose or find examples of products according to their category, products quality certification, region of origin or name of producer on the Map of Good Practices.

Numerous actions were conducted under the project to facilitate dissemination of the collected good practices relating to local processing:

- a training film was produced, which presents good practices from various regions of Poland, together with a short guidebook on how to become a member of Good Practices Club,

- a training brochure was developed and issued, concerning „Traditional and local product: manufacturing, promotion, brand building, distribution – a concise manual of good practices” dedicated in particular to such issues as local processing – definitions and examples, what is a good practice in manufacturing traditional/local products, how to become a model of good practice, how to promote your product and your brand, how to successfully market your product.

- a handy folding map of good practices was issued, with voivodeship boundaries marked on it and 32 examples of good practices concerning manufacturing, promotion, brand building, with description. The map includes information on selected products and places of their manufacturing.

A national conference to sum up the project has been scheduled on 27 September 2013. During the conference, the above mentioned film is going to be presented for the first time along with several other presentations on short food supply chains, field to fork transparency, local processing, brand building and distribution, the use of local resources.

The project highlights the need to discuss the role and place of traditional and local processing in the national and local economy and points to the need to change the Polish legislative system in order to streamline the operations of small producers of local quality food.

Regional Secretariat of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship

NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF TEACHING FARMS



Teaching is a new and a promising way of generating income for farms. The social mission of teaching farms is to disseminate knowledge on rural areas and their social, cultural, historical and natural assets, in particular among children and youth. Teaching farms allow for a dialogue to be conducted between rural and urban areas, they enrich knowledge on e.g. food production, but also increase sensitivity and willingness to experience unusual things. According to the manual for teaching farms' operators *'rural areas become a place of running **knowledge-based economy**, where learning, studying, communicating and experiencing things, as well as feelings and emotions gain on importance'*.

The concept of Nationwide Network of Teaching Farms was developed in 2011 and was preceded by a nationwide survey and a review of good practices implemented in Poland and abroad. Under the 2010-2011 Action Plan of the General NRN Secretariat, the Agricultural Advisory Headquarters in Brwinów developed formal and legal principles of conducting teaching activities on farms. The project, which was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, resulted in the development of a training and educational programme (a set of 5 guidebooks) for farmers, the training of 16 coaching advisors (1 for each Voivodeship), and the development of a website www.zagrodaedukacyjna.pl, to promote teaching farms.



It is an undertaking which:

1. is located on rural areas,
2. is run by an inhabitant of rural areas,
3. accepts children and youth to teach them under the school curriculum and in the form of an off school activity,
4. keeps and presents farm animals or pursues arable farming,
5. offers at least two types of the following education classes:
 - plant production,
 - animal production,
 - agricultural processing,
 - environmental and consumer awareness,
 - rural heritage, traditional rural trades, folk handicraft and folk art.



The Nationwide Network of Teaching Farms is coordinated by Agricultural Advisory Headquarters. Voivodeship Agricultural Advisory Centres have been very much involved in the provision of training, advisory services and in spreading the idea of teaching farms in the regions. The greatest number of teaching farms have been established in Lower Silesia (Dolnośląskie Voivodeship). According to 2013 data, 16% of all the teaching farms, namely 15 of 96 of those operating within the Nationwide Network of Teaching Farms, are located there. This is undoubtedly thanks to good collaboration of NRN Regional Secretariat of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and the Lower Silesian Agricultural Advisory Centre within the framework of partnership in the National Rural Network, which manifests itself in the organization of numerous promotion actions and network supporting activities.

For example, in 2012, six seminars were organized in the Lower Silesia, in order to acquaint farmers with the idea of establishing teaching farms and to present methods of using the potential of their regions for this purpose. Another way

of supporting the network development includes study tours. In 2013, NRN Regional Secretariat of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and Lower Silesian Agricultural Advisory Centre organized a study visit to teaching farms in the French Alsace. The participants had an opportunity to become familiar with interesting teaching schemes implemented on the Alsatian teaching farms; they could also discuss promotion and marketing issues based on the example of the French Federation Bienvenue à la Ferme – „Welcome to a farm”. Among the 26 tour participants there were owners of teaching farms from Lower Silesia, farmers and rural inhabitants from the region, who are contemplating to establish a teaching farm as well as employees of Lower Silesian Agricultural Advisory Centre and the Marshal Office of Lower Silesia who are responsible for teaching farms. The programme of the tour included a meeting with representatives of Alsatian institutions engaged in the development of agriculture, in particular teaching farms, during which discussions focused on the operation of teaching farms in France, the role of the Ministry of Education and agricultural chambers in the development of teaching functions of farms, or requirements to be fulfilled by teaching farms in France. Participants did a sightseeing tour of farms of various profiles: production and sale of wine, cultivation and processing of fruit and vegetables, cattle production and meat processing, milk production and processing, direct sales of farm products on site, horse and goat breeding, production of goat cheese, a horse-riding school, cultivation of plants, bread making, animal breeding, including sheep breeding, production of wool as well as organic production of vegetables and fruit, their processing and sale.

There is a plan to organize a meeting of teaching farms' operators from all around Poland in December 2013. The organization of the event will be possible thanks to the support of NRN General Secretariat and Regional Secretariat of Lower Silesia and thanks to involvement of the owners of teaching farms from the Lower Silesia who will open their farms to participants while sharing their experience in running the business. Approximately 100 people from all over Poland are estimated to participate in the event.

Guest farms of the agro-tourism sector are the most interested in launching teaching activities at their premises, as for them this is an opportunity to extend their offer as well as the tourist season. The Nationwide Network of Teaching Farms is also open to those farms who want to launch teaching activities even though they do not generate additional income from



the provision of accommodation services, but are nevertheless able to prepare an offer for a one-day course of education.

Teaching farms can become an incentive for multidirectional development of rural areas in Poland. The Network of Teaching Farms will contribute i.a. to:

- disseminating knowledge on the production of food, on rural environment and cultural heritage,
- increasing welfare standard of agricultural family by creating an additional income source,
- sharing know-how and good practices among the owners of teaching farms,
- promoting new solutions under the common brand of a “Teaching Farm”
- liaising between interested partners at regional as well as national levels.

A teaching farm is a novel approach to education. It is effective and child-friendly education which combines theory with practice and experience, and which offers education based on experience with all senses. While on a teaching farm, children can touch, smell, taste and feel the real world”.



CULINARY HERITAGE – EXAMPLES OF NETWORKING PROJেকTS IMPLEMENTED IN COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL ACTION GROUPS (LGDs)

NRN Regional Secretariat of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship has implemented a number of projects to promote culinary heritage, which became the basis for networking actions founded upon the partnership with Local Action Groups.

Cultivating local traditions related with culinary heritage and creating a local brand based on a rural tourism product is often the only chance for the development of those rural areas where, because of poor soil quality, there are no favourable conditions for developing agriculture. Regional food produced with traditional methods becomes more and more attractive for tourists. Food produced on a small scale from local and natural ingredients features unique taste and high nutritional quality. Practices of many foreign countries show that such food creates tourist brands and is a key element of effective regional promotion.



Actions were launched in 2009 with the aim to popularize keeping geese on farms and to process them into traditional, regional and local products so that goose meat could again become an element of the every-day Polish diet as it was in the past. An action “The best goose meat at St. Martin’s holiday” was to encourage rural inhabitants to keep geese on their premises and to generate additional income from goose meat processing and direct sales of the processed goose products. Experimental Farm of the Institute of Farm Animal Science in Kołuda Wielka in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship was invited

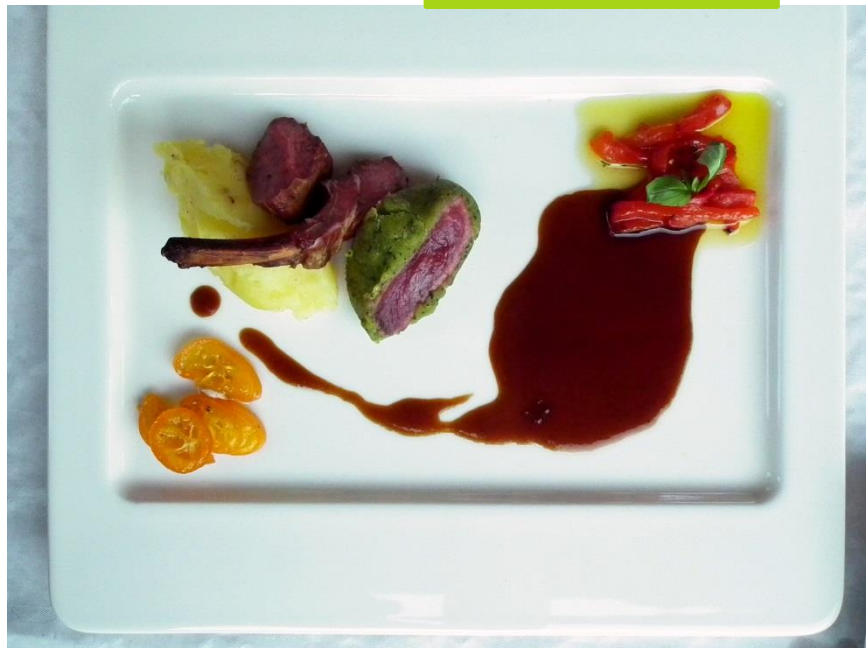
to join the project and to contribute its know-how and experience concerning local goose breeds. Training courses targeted at those interested in keeping small flocks of geese, operators of guest farms and potential goose breeders were aimed at reinstating the tradition of goose keeping for local market purposes. The next stage of the undertaking included a promotion targeted at catering industry operators and cooks in order to include goose meat in the restaurants' menus.

In subsequent years actions were supported to preserve culinary heritage of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship through collecting recipes published in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries' newspapers issued in Pomerania and Kujawy as well recipes published in old cook books, including old family recipes disclosed by members of Rural Housewives' Circles. All those recipes were collected and catalogued by Grażyna Szelągowska – an ethnographer, as a result of which a publication was issued "Cuisine with Tradition – Culinary Heritage of Kujawy and Pomerania". The publication inspired further actions to foster and preserve culinary heritage of the region.

A number of workshops were organized, targeted mainly at guest farms' operators, owners and employees of restaurants and members of Local Action Groups. During the workshops they could practise preparing food according to the recipes collected by ethnographers. Another goal of the workshops was to disseminate knowledge on traditional products of Kujawy and Pomerania.

The leading themes of the workshops included:

- Meat dishes and preparations and flour dishes and preparations of Krajno and Pałuki,
 - Traditional method of baking bread, cakes and noodles,
 - Old Polish Easter cultural and culinary customs, Lent recipes,
 - Goose meat - a delicacy for an autumn evening feast,
 - Duck culinary variations,



- Traditional cuisine: attraction and benefit or a pain in the neck for a guest farm operator.

A dozen culinary workshops made it possible for over 300 participants to learn about regional foods and to practise their preparation, which is a valuable skill for operators of guest farms and restaurants who want to make their businesses more attractive for tourists.

Moreover, actions under National Rural Network enabled learning about experiences and good practices in France – a country where culinary heritage is an important element of creating regional brands. Thanks to a study visit, representatives of Local Action Groups, owners of small processing plants and guest farms could see how local products are made in Alsace and Burgundy. They could also watch how the products are presented and promoted to consumers at the following places:

- Duck production and processing farm in Soultz-Les-Bains;
- Distillery of G. MICLO Laurent Bloch in Lapoutroie – a small plant producing high quality fruit distillates sold on site and ordered via the Internet or sent to French chain retailers,
- Cheese plant in Fruitière de Passavant in the region of Franche-Comte, where the Comte cheese is produced. This is an example of the collaboration of small farms who, despite small herds kept, were able to start a joint venture of building a cheese plant;
- Autonomous „Saugeais Republic” (la république indépendante du Saugeais), an entity which was formed for marketing purposes, namely for selling products manufactured in the local meat processing plant. Untypical construction of a smokehouse using exclusively pine wood, results in the meat having characteristic smell and taste. Unique taste of products is achieved also thanks to raw meat which is obtained from pigs which are fed mainly with whey coming from the Comte cheese production;
- A visit to Domaine du Moulin du Dusenbach Oenotheque (wine repository), located on the „Wine Route” (Route de vin), where participants could learn about marketing wine on site, at local fairs, in retail chains and via the Internet.

The aim of the visit was to encourage the participants to undertake similar initiatives in Poland, especially in the scope of marketing quality food and promoting culinary heritage.

All those actions resulted in the broadening of the circle of those interested in the region’s culinary heritage. Based on experience gained during workshops and study visits, Local Action Groups started to implement networking projects based

on culinary specialties. LAG "The Lower Vistula River Meander" in partnership with LAG "The Gothic Land" established „Taste and Tradition Route" around the city of Toruń. They identified local producers and issued a special publication, a map and created a website www.szlaktradycji.pl where information about the Route is posted. Moreover, LAG "The Lower Vistula River Meander" has been developing a networking project with its partners, which is based on periodical events held on the LAGs area: "A Festival of Tastes" in Gruczno, „A Weekend with the Mennonites" in Chrystków, „Plum Festival" in Strzelce Dolne, „Breeding Horses Show" in Jaruzyn, „The Napoleonic Picnic" in Ostromeck, „The Lower Vistula Fair" in Czarz. There is a plan to create a biking route along the area featuring the culinary attractions, additional show and presentation of local producers.

In 2013 NRN Regional Secretariat of Kujawsko Pomorskie Voivodeship announced a contest „A Weekend Visit to a Countryside" for the purpose of developing a calendar of events which enable local producers to present and sell traditional products. The calendar includes events which promote rural culinary and cultural heritage, regional, local and organic products and the related customs and seasonal rituals.

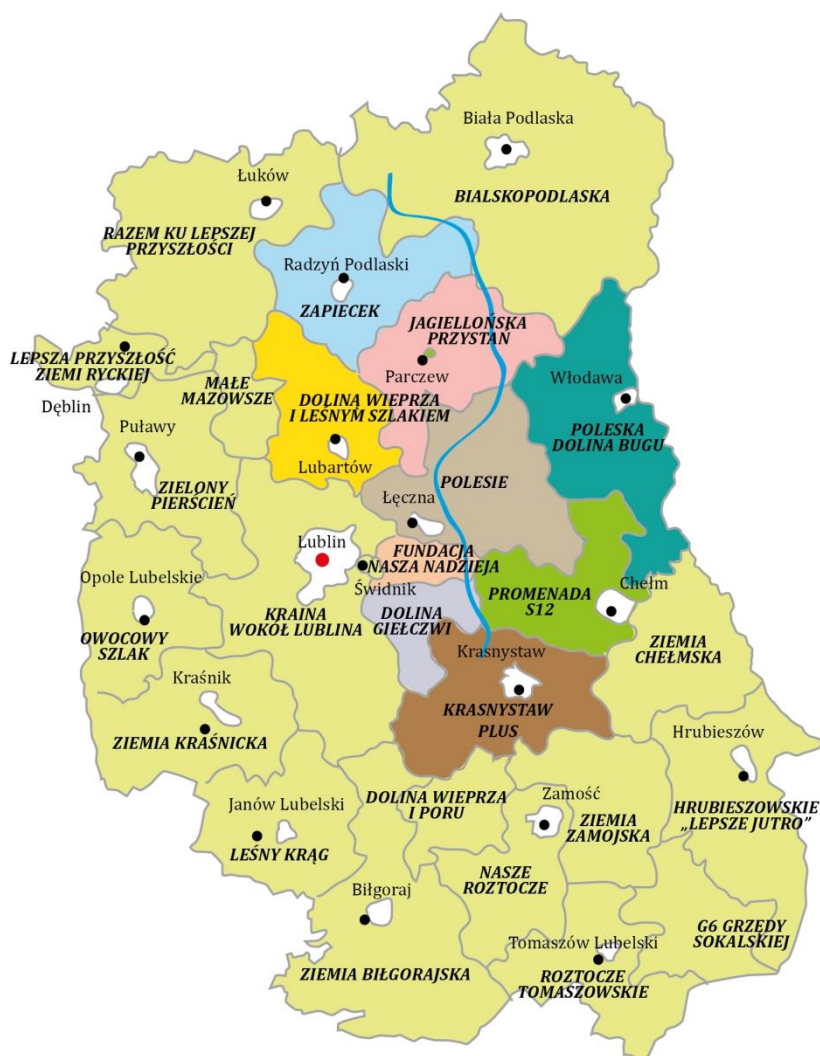
The organization of local events and participation in nationwide actions which promote culinary heritage and rural folklore proves that rural areas can be extremely attractive for tourists, and rural traditions and customs are absolutely unique for a given region and not found anywhere outside its boundaries. Thanks to growing interest in cultural heritage of the Polish countryside, rural inhabitants start to become aware of its very uniqueness, and so the countryside starts to become a valuable asset to be cherished by the entire community.

TRAINING OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADERS TO SUPPORT THE GREENWAYS TRIAL FORMATION



A co-operation project „Tracing the Past. Revitalization and Promotion of Historical and Cultural Heritage of Mid-Eastern Lubelskie Voivodeship” (implemented between 2011-13 by six LAGs of Lubelskie Voivodeship¹) was an inspiration for a Greenways Trail partnership project to be implemented under the Action Plan of NRN Regional Secretariat of Lubelskie Vivodeship. Joint actions under the “Tracing the Past” project enabled making the inventory of 90% of historical and cultural heritage sites and artefacts from 36 gminas, as well as renovating and revitalizing over 100 selected cultural sites, and providing 93 historical buildings with special information plates, issuing a photo-album „Tracing the Past” and tourist maps of the mid-eastern Lubelskie area. Finally, a multimedia guide in the form of an Internet application was created (www.sladami-przeszlosci.pl).

Such efficient and effective collaboration with partners was the basis for starting work on the Greenways Trail project in Lubelskie Voivodeship. Three more Local Action Groups² operating in the vicinity of the Wieprz-Krzna canal, which is a leading motive of the planned trail, were invited to join the project. Since the Local Action Groups have already implemented a joint project under Measure 311 the nine LAGs applied to NRN Regional Secretariat of Lubelskie Vivodeship for a training to be organized in their area of operation for rural development leaders in order to support



Map of Wieprz – Krzna canal area /

¹ LAGs: „The Giełczew River Valley”, „Our Hope”, „Krasnystaw PLUS”, „Polesie”, „Polish Bug River Valley”, „Promenade S12”

² LAGs: „Following the Wieprz River Valley and the Forest Route”, „Jagiellonian Haven”, „Zapiecek”

the process of Greenways Trail formation. At the national level, the trail initiative is coordinated by a Foundation - Partnership for Environment. Initiators of particular green trails create a Forum of Greenways Trails and Eco-Museums under the National Network of Partner Groups.

Innovativeness and exceptionality of the training project is manifested by the fact that it is a unique and specialized training on ecotourism, which will result in the preparation of a feasibility study and a blueprint concept of the green trail. The document will be prepared based on materials collected during meetings and a training session with the participation of representatives of the nine LAGs and their partners.

The undertaking is going to be implemented between August - 15 December 2013 in a few stages. The preparatory stage includes:

- conducting a questionnaire survey on the needs related with development of economic and human potential on a group of at least 90 entities and individuals from the area of operation of the nine LAGs participating in the project,
 - conducting an analysis of cultural and natural heritage, tourist attractions and tourism development of the region in which the 9 LAGs operate,
 - preparing initial guidelines for the planned trail and a workshop plan based on the survey and the analysis conducted.
- The next stage includes an organization, in September 2013, of a conference dedicated to the establishment of the Greenways Trail in the Lubelskie Voivodeship, with the participation of regional media, as well as a two-day workshop for selected group of 30 leaders.

The following stage includes 9 field visits of LAGs representatives to work out an initial concept of the Greenway Trail within the area, including the work on the management and coordination of actions on the Trail, the planning of the main route of the Trail and possible thematic routes and a list of organizations, institutions, businesses and individuals who can join the project.

The visits are going to be summarised during a two-day planning session with the participation of 30 leaders, where the collected conclusions and results of workshops will be presented, along with the results of the 9 meetings held during the expert field visit. The aim of the planning session is to harmonize the plans and the strategy of a joint tourism product (the Greenways Trail) and to work out the objectives of the future Trail together with representatives of each of the nine LAGs.

The project will end with a preparation of a feasibility study for the Greenways Trail and the development of tourism products including the trail concept, which will cover the entire area on which the nine LAGs operate.

The feasibility study will include the following issues concerning the area of operation of the 9 LAGs involved in the project:

1. Development of the area and tourism in Gmina, Powiat and Voivodeship Master Plans;
2. Inventory and diagnosis of the region's tourism potential (natural and cultural heritage, tourist attractions and the existing tourist accommodation base).
3. The mission of tourism development based on the Trail (objective, domains of development, values, standards of behaviours)
4. A map of the main routes of the Trail and the adjacent routes, including their visualisation.
5. Tourist programmes and products offered along the Trail (attractions, offers, events, products and services together with their location along the Trail)
6. The Trail's tourist infrastructure (information signs, landscaping elements, infrastructure necessary for the trail's operation)
7. The plan of establishing the Trail and tourism products (area, goal, actions, planned results, who is responsible for implementation)
8. Promotion and marketing
9. Collaboration with other tourism undertakings within the region

The document will be used at the stage of the Trail formation on the area of the project.

AGRICULTURAL DEBATE



Agricultural Debate is organized by NRN Regional Secretariat of Lubuskie Voivodeship on the initiative of Lubuskie Agricultural Chamber, which is NRN's partner.

The first debate was held on 9 March 2012 at the Voivodeship Marshal's Office in Zielona Góra.

The conference aim was to enrich practical knowledge of the participants concerning the introduction, in the future, of CAP food economy instruments related with environment and food safety requirements, as well to sum up the 20 years of farmers' social insurance scheme implementation in the Lubuskie region, its evolution and history.

Participants of the debate included delegates from Agricultural Chamber as well as representatives of all agricultural unions and organizations associated in the Agricultural Forum, including representatives of institutions handling agricultural matters at the voivodeship level, experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences, agricultural circles and members of Rural Housewives' Circles, representatives of the community of the Lubuskie countryside, local authorities and members of Parliament (230 people in total).



"I am impressed by the degree of solidarity of those working in and for agriculture, not only in Lubuskie, but all around Poland. This is why I want to express my appreciation to Lubuskie Agricultural Chamber" said the Voivodeship Marshal. She also pointed to the potential of the Chamber. *"You are important for the region, and even more important for Poland"* In her opinion, the Lubuskie countryside is changing. *"One can see it clearly. We can see it when signing applications for EU funds. We can admire new sports grounds, collective sewage systems, investments in education"*. She expressed gratitude to all those

working for the benefit of agriculture for their actions and involvement.

Among those invited to lecture was the Rector of the University of Life Science in Wrocław, who talked about the future of Common Agricultural Policy and the food safety of Europe. *“I accepted the invitation to the debate with grate satisfaction. My university has contributed to the fact that agriculture in the Lubuskie Voivodeship has been developing so well. There used to be a branch of my university here, which managed to educate quite a number of eminent graduates. I am in love with Lubuskie”* he said.

The debate was a success and in 2013 the partners decided to organize another Agricultural Debate, which was held on 12 April 2013.

During the meeting, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development informed those present about work which is being conducted within the new support system for farmers RDP 2014-2020. Professor Walenty Poczta from the University of Life Science in Poznań presented the future of CAP in the next period of financing 2014-2020. He informed the participants about the results of research into changes of the Polish countryside following the accession to the EU. He underlined changes in the structure of farms and in agricultural production. The accession also influenced the demand and trade in agri-food products. Agricultural production is a dozen percent higher than before accession to the EU and farmers' incomes have doubled. As far as structural changes which are an indicator of development, the number of small farms dropped by approx. 600 thousand. According to statistical data, Poland is at the end of the ranking of EU Member States in terms of property belonging to one person working in agriculture. Certainly the number of those working in the sector must be reduced, as the hitherto 18% of employment in agriculture will not increase the indicators. Summing up his lecture, the professor said that in the future CAP one should take care especially of those farms which have a potential for development.

Profesor Roman Stryjski from the University of Zielona Góra lectured on social security of farmers in the last 20 years. He started his presentation from discussing all changes which have been introduced to the main statute and implementing provisions concerning social insurance of individual farmers and their families. Next, he discussed the principles of insurance for

farmers in Poland in relation to other countries and he compared the systems of insurance benefits as offered by ZUS (Social Insurance Fund) and KRUS (Farmers' Social Insurance which should be taken account of in a reform of Farmers' Social Insurance Fund. Following him was the director of Regional KRUS Branch in Zielona Góra presented tasks, structure and process of KRUS formation in Lubuskie.

There were 220 people present at the Agricultural Debate, which ended with a concert of the brass Fermata Band from Nowa Sól, which promotes the folklore of the Polish countryside.

Regional Secretariat of Łódzkie Voivodeship

THE TASTES OF ŁÓDŹ REGION'



NRN Regional Secretariat of Łódzkie Voivodeship has regularly been organizing an event 'The Tastes of Łódź Region'. Regional and traditional products create the region's image. The interest in food produced in a traditional way, thanks to which the quality and delicious taste of those foods are guaranteed, has been growing year after year. Thus, it is necessary to spread the word about the ideas of producing such products and about their sales opportunities. This will contribute to activating the voivodeship rural community and to rural income diversification. This year's 'The Tastes of Łódź Region' event hosted Local Action Groups, Rural Housewives' Circles, folk band formations and the voivodeship inhabitants and was an excellent opportunity for exhibitors as well as visitors to learn about the production of traditional products and their registration, about support funds for off farm business and initiatives concerning traditional products' promotion.

The project also aims at promoting regional food and culinary traditions of Łódzkie Voivodeship, by encouraging to eat wholesome foods and to lead a healthy lifestyle while enjoying all the landscape and environmental assets of the region. Participants of workshops had an opportunity to not only taste the Łódź region cuisine, but also to learn how to prepare food based on local ingredients, and they learned about traditions and folk customs of the Łódź region.

The programme of this year's 'The Tastes of Łódź Region' event, which was organized for the fourth time on 16 June 2013 in Łódź, included a range of events targeted at various groups of visitors from rural and urban areas, including:

Traditional and Regional Product Fair – in 26 exhibition tents, Local Action Groups, producers of traditional products and artistic handicraft offered products listed on the List of Traditional Products kept by the Minister of Agriculture and



Rural Aras as well as their own artworks related with folk tradition of the rural areas.

‘Tasty Łódź Region’ Contest – Rural Housewives’ Circles, which cooperate with Local Action Groups, registered for the contest with 25 dishes; three of them have been awarded with electric soup pots and catering water boilers. The purpose of the contest is to make people identify and collect regional food recipes and learn to prepare dishes which could become a culinary flagships of the Łódź region, to promote the foods, to make contest participants exchange culinary experience and build cultural identity of the Łódź region based on the continuity of culinary tradition which is passed from generation to generation.

„Folk-Note” Contest – 32 folk formations from Łódź Voivodeship took part in this year’s contest in two categories: children’s bands and singers’ groups, adult dancers and folk bands. Three best ones in each category were rewarded with a ‘FOLK-NOTE’ statue and money. The contest is aimed at spreading the knowledge of traditional regions among the Łódź voivodeship inhabitants, archiving and protecting folk repertoire as the region’s cultural heritage, as well as building its value and popularity among the public.

Cooking workshop - in a special tent open to public, 4 professionally equipped kitchen stands were prepared for representatives of Rural Housewives Circles. The public could taste dishes prepared during the cooking show.

Children Zone – a separate place for children, where they could participate in games and contests about tradition and culture of the Łódź region and were taught the principles of healthy nutrition based on local products.

Thanks to the engagement of the Łódź LAG network it was possible for many people such as members of Rural Housewives Circles, folk artists and folk band formations from the whole voivodeship to actively participate in the cultivation of the region’s tradition and culture. A variety of the offer attracted great interest of visitors. Such events facilitate the



presentation of rural area values through presenting the region's inhabitants with folk tradition and culture, customs and outfits characteristic for various parts of Łódź Voivodeship, and cooking shows instructing them how to prepare food in traditional way. Four years of experience shows that enabling local firms and small producers to promote quality food produced on a small scale brings results in the form of shaping consumer's tastes and changing their food habits. The event was also an occasion to highlight investment opportunities on rural areas and discuss the sources of financing thereof, including the EU funds.

Regional Secretariat of Małopolskie Voivodeship

MAŁOPOLSKA. LOCAL ACTION GROUPS – PLACES, PEOPLE, EVENTS, ATTRACTIONS



The NRN Regional Secretariat of Małopolskie Voivodeship developed the idea of creating a publication: “Małopolska. Local Action Groups – places, people, events, attractions». The photo book portrays Małopolska by presenting little homelands where Local Action Groups were set up. By operating for the benefit of their area, Local Action Groups lead to a better activation of local people which serves the communities. All projects are based on the use of the characteristic features of the area where they operate, such as: history, heritage of material culture, tradition, customs, and rich nature of Małopolska.

Presentations of 39 LAGs refer to small and big areas, because LAG territories frequently go beyond the borders of poviats and even voivodeships. The binding thing may be the configuration of the land, historical heritage, services for tourists, cultural traditions and customs, a broad range of regional products, etc. All local action groups are shown in the same way, which gives the reader possibility to compare their assets.

Texts presented in the publication are not a full description of each group, nor do they portray the entire spiritual and material riches of the individual regions. All LAGs in Małopolska for the purpose of this presentation chose the most valuable elements of their little homelands – different attractions, events, people of their projects and common actions. The stress is therefore put on the elements which create specificity of the described areas.



NASZA POLSKA MAŁOPOLSKA

LOKALNE GRUPY DZIAŁANIA – MIEJSCA,
LUDZIE, WYDARZENIA, ATRAKCJE.



Local Action Groups create “a chance” for Małopolska. These associations support culture, revive traditions, improve services for tourists and stimulate local communities towards new initiatives. All values and treasures of the Małopolska Region are popularised thanks to the activities of LAGs. The photo book presents these aspects of local associations’ work.

The publication was printed in 4,000 copies (2,000 copies in Polish, 1,000 copies in English, 1,000 copies in German). The Regional Secretariat of Małopolskie Voivodeship and LAGs distribute it among their partners and foreign guests who hopefully could get create new initiatives and ideas.



QUESTING WORKSHOP



NRN Regional Secretariat of Mazowieckie Voivodeship has been deeply engaged in promoting questing in Poland. Thanks to this innovative form of sightseeing one can create sustainable tourism products based on local assets such as nature and culture, in collaboration with local communities. Each locality has some distinctive asset, whether cultural or historical, a legend, a well-known inhabitant, climate, landscape elements. One must only know how to discover it and how to make it attractive for tourists. Hence, a questing workshop project was conducted on the initiative of 'Friendly Mazovia' Local Action Group in cooperation with NRN partners and representatives of Mazovian Regional Tourist Organization.

The aim of the project was to acquaint the participants with questing as a means of discovering cultural and natural heritage or a region, and a means of the region's promotion.

The workshop on discovering local heritage 'QUESTING – TOURISM THROUGH EDUCATION AND TREASURE SEEKING FUN' was organized for 20 representatives of Local Action Groups from Mazovia region between 13-14 September 2012 in Pólka Raciąż locality. Questing is a form of active tourism for those who look for new inspirations, impressions, ideas but first of all – who want to discover places yet undiscovered. This is discovering a place through one's own experience. One should remember that questing is about



guessing clues written in a form of a rhyming instruction, which lead you to discovering cultural, natural and historical heritage in a different and more attractive way. Guided by the clues, one can hike along unmarked routes and by guessing subsequent puzzles one can reach places, learn about legends and attractions which are not usually mentioned in tourist guidebooks. At the end of the hike one should find a treasure – a sealed box to confirm that the quest has been fulfilled. That

form of hiking is complementary to marked tourist routes and trails.

On the first day of the workshop, after making an inventory of local heritage and after a selection of a theme and route of the quest, the workshop group made a field visit in order to inspect the area and identify orientation points of the route. Rainy weather was not a problem. All participants were engaged in discovering characteristic and interesting places to make them milestones of the quest. On the following day, while hiking the route in smaller groups, rhymed clues were prepared, to help find particular milestones, as well as letters needed for finding the solution to the puzzle and for finding the treasure. Instructions drawn up by the participants were collected and read aloud so that everybody could comment on them and suggest their own proposals of modifications. Further during the workshop, the participants prepared other necessary attributes of the quest: drawings, maps as well as the quest logo and a seal to the treasure box.

The output of the workshop was a quest developed by all the participants, including quest clues on how to move along the route, solutions for puzzles, including tips on how to reach milestones, pictures, maps, a treasure box and a seal, information concerning person in charge of the quest, contact data, etc.

In order to disseminate the project results, a brochure was issued in which the quest developed during the workshop was described in detail, together with general information on the questing as a form of sightseeing and examples of quests in Poland.

At the end of the project the participants were asked whether they were interested in the idea of questing; everybody answered that the knowledge and skills gained during the workshop would be useful to them while developing quests at their own locations.



Regional Secretariat of Opolskie Voivodeship

POLISH NETWORK FOR VILLAGE RENEWAL AND DEVELOPMENT



A Regional Programme for Village Renewal was launched in Opolskie Voivodeship in 1997. In October 2012, during the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Village Renewal Programme, a concept of Village Renewal Network was developed. The concept was approved by experts and representatives of gmina authorities in charge of rural development. As a consequence, on 11 March 2013 in the town of Strumień, a memorandum of agreement concerning the establishment of Polish Network for Village Renewal and Development (PSORW) was signed by 36 village administrators and town mayors from 15 voivodeships. Gminas which have particular achievements in rural development were registered as the founding members of the Network. Currently, the Network includes 37 gminas from all over Poland.

Polish Network for Village Renewal and Development is a nationwide platform where rural and rural-urban gminas and other entities can collaborate for the benefit of rural development and rural communities. The Network's partners include also the NRN Regional Secretariat of Opolskie Voivodeship, National Association of Village Administrators and Association of Silesian Gminas and Poviats.

The main goal of the Network is to develop partnership among its members, for them to share experience on participative decision-making and to inspire the development of new solutions to increase the dynamics of social and economic life



periodical meetings of member thematic conferences and study visits during which one can learn about the best practices and ideas of countryside revitalization and development. The Network organizes also partnership visits for those involved in local development actions, as well as initiates and implements joint projects. Thanks to the Network liaisons are made among the Network members, experts and institutions involved in rural development and renovation, scientific and research organizations and educational establishments. Operations of the Network are described on the website www.psorw.odnowawsi.pl which promotes the achievements of the Network and its members. The website is administered by the Association of Silesian Gminas and Poviats.

Network members call for using and promoting the village renewal concept as a well-established idea, method and process of revitalizing countryside resources and reinforcing

rural communities, through *inter alia* the establishment of profiled and thematic villages which have already come up with specific and effective ideas for self-development. The Network promotes initiating actions to encourage scientists, academic and artists to engage in village renewal and to develop a network of liaisons among eminent experts, prominent local government activists, NGO leaders and rural leaders, and to participate in a discourse on creating state and EU policy towards the countryside and rural areas in order to support

village renewal and development in Poland and abroad. What counts is mutual inspiration, exchange of ideas, expertise and broadly understood know-how in order to transfer the best practices, as well as the establishment of liaisons among the Network participants and other entities which are involved in rural revitalization and development in Poland and abroad.

One of the first PSORW initiatives will be to create a Network of the Most Interesting Polish Villages (see: www.dziedzictwowsiopolskiej.pl). That concept was developed as a result of a study visit of the Polish experts on rural areas and cultural heritage to France, which was organized in May 2012. The outcome of the visit was a joint document "The Network of the Most Beautiful Villages. Expert study on the



possibilities of creating a network". The goal of the study tour to France was to share experience and learn about the operations of the Association of the Most Beautiful French Villages and the methodology of selecting criteria for accepting villages to the Network.

Another task of PSORW is to join the collaboration of the gminas – winners of European Village Renewal Prize, which are members of the European Association of Rural Development and Village Renewal (ARGE) based in Vienna. This is a method of awarding villages which have particular cultural, architectural or social potential. The contest is held every two years. In 2013 the members of the Association report candidates and in 2014 winners will be announced. Opolskie Voivodeship has been the member of the Association (since 2000) along with the neighbouring Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (since 2009).

The key task of the Network is to create a platform for collaboration in order to preserve the existing and create new vital values on the Polish rural areas, in particular in terms of identity, revitalization, preservation of cultural heritage and development of countryside and rural landscape, as well as to encourage rural inhabitants to initiate bottom-up actions for the benefit of their villages.



LOCAL ACTION GROUPS' FAIR

Since 2009, NRN Regional Secretariat of Podkarpackie (Sub-Carpathian) Voivodeship has been cooperating with Local Action Groups operating in the region. Effects of the cooperation are presented i.a. during the Fair of Local Action Groups which is held at the end of summer in Rzeszów – the region's capital city.

The goal of the Fair is to present culinary products, tourist offer, historical and cultural heritage of the Sub-Carpathian region. The Fair is a place where one can see very clearly the beauty, the richness and variable assets of the Sub-Carpathian region and admire lots of passionate artists who live and work there. The Fair is a good opportunity to liaise between particular LAGs (31 in the region), to promote the areas of their operation, their local products and principles of operation, as well as LAG's role in local communities. The local government of Sub-Carpathian Voivodeship pays attention to the role of LAGs in cultivating and promoting family traditions. As observed by the Deputy Marshal of the Voivodeship, thanks to the Groups' work the welfare level of rural areas has been growing and so has been the local patriotism.



The formula of the Fair has been evolving year after year, while attracting more and more attention and more and more visitors (last year a few thousand visitors). During the 2012 Fair a contest for the most beautiful exhibition stand was held. Evaluation jury took account of the stand arrangement, variety of items presented and artistic setting. During this year's 5th edition of the Fair the formula of the contest was broadened to

cover “music and songs” and an educational panel for children and youth on healthy nutrition, environment and knowledge of Local Action Groups.

The visitors to the Fair can taste culinary delicacies prepared by ladies-members of Rural Housewives’ Circles.

A lot of stands offer organic food and regional products produced in accordance with local tradition. One can admire folk handicraft and learn

about tourist and historical attractions. The presentation is accompanied by artistic performances. NRN Regional Secretariat admits that the organization of the Fair has attracted attention of the community to quality food prepared with traditional methods and opened sales markets for its producers. The Fair contributes to increased interest in traditional food and regional art works, folklore, rural tourism and to increasing number of traditional and regional food producers.



LOCAL PRODUCTS IN DOMESTIC TRADE THEMATIC GROUP FOR FOOD QUALITY (TRADITIONAL CHEESES) IN PODLASKIE



Natural conditions and specific dairy character of Podlaskie Voivodeship foster traditional processing of milk. All farmstead cheese factories operating in the region are registered as conducting marginal localised and restricted activity (MLO). Restricting the market to Podlaskie Voivodeship and the adjacent poviats hinders further development of those businesses.

In order to help marginal producers of the Podlaskie, NRN Regional Secretariat together with its partners decided to develop model solutions based on legislative framework applied for food safety in the cheese plants which were granted licenses for trading their products on the EU market.

Numerous myths concerning food production have still been haunting a lot of producers. They find it difficult to navigate in the sea of legislation

concerning this issue. The legislation includes EU guidelines as well as domestic statutes. The situation is even more complicated by the fact that private initiatives of small-scale food production were not supported in any way for many years. As a result, we have a disoriented producer on the one hand, and inconsistent interpretation of law by surveillance authorities on the other hand. At the same time, current policy has been encouraging to promoting the so called local products. According to a new approach to food safety, which

The screenshot shows the website 'Wrota Podlasia' with a navigation bar including 'TURYSTYKA', 'SESEJE SEJMIKU', 'KRONIKA WOJEWÓDZTWA', 'KONFERENCJE PRASOWE', 'KULTURA', 'PTP', and 'FUNDUSZE UNIJNE'. The main content area is titled 'ROLNICTWO' and features a video player with the title 'Ścieżka SUROWIEC > PRODUKT'. Below the video, there is a section titled 'Jak zorganizować serownię' with a date of 2013-07-15 14:16:43 and a description: 'Prezentacja rozwiązań modelowych dla zatwierdzonych zakładów rzemieślniczych.' There are also social media sharing options for 'Poleć znajomemu' and 'Wykop'. To the right, there is a search bar and a section titled 'NAJNOWSZE FILMY' listing several videos, including 'Jak zorganizować serownię', 'Dzień Jadła Cygańskiego', and 'Forum Lokalnych Grup Działania, część 4'.

has been followed in Poland after the accession to the EU, the main responsibility for food safety is laid on the producer. Thus, the surveillance authorities must establish certain standards related with practical application of some very general legislation which tends to be quite flexible at the same time.

NRN Regional Secretariat – acting as the animator of events conducted between 2012-2013 and targeted to the producers of regional cheeses - organized a project under which a thematic group for food quality was formed, consisting of representatives of the following bodies: Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Veterinary Inspection of all levels, Association of Regional Cheeses Producers from Podlaskie Voivodeship, University of Life Sciences in Lublin, Polish Embassy in France, the French Ministry of Agriculture and National Federation of Goat Producers from France.

A number of actions were conducted under the project, based on which practical and organizational principles of milk processing were formulated. The following was achieved in particular:

1) Diagnosis

The diagnosis was made based on an inventory of local farmstead cheese factories, thanks to which the most frequent solutions were chosen and put under assessment. A paper was prepared at the University of Life Sciences in Lublin, in which the basis for constructing a theoretical model of a farmstead cheese factory was developed. Next, a team lead by professor Zbigniew Dolatowski disseminated the expertise by conducting a number of HACCP training courses targeted at cheese producers.

2) Comparison of Good Practices

The project relied on experience and solutions from other countries. France is the country which has the greatest experience in cheese production. Thanks to the Polish Embassy in Paris, liaisons were started with the French Ministry of Agriculture and with an association of French Cheese producers. As a result, experts from France were invited to the Podlaskie Voivodeship. The meeting was also attended by veterinary practitioners from all around the voivodeship, as well as the Chief Veterinary Inspectorate and representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. French experience was relied on while developing a manual of good practices, which facilitates production work as well as surveillance actions. A study tour was planned for September

2013 to include veterinary practitioners and producers' organizations, with the aim to compare Polish and French solutions. Dissemination of good practices turned out to be the best way to introduce optimum solutions in the region.

3) Preparation of model farmstead cheese factories

Collected experience and expertise were translated into concrete actions. Model farmstead cheese factories may serve as a genuine basis for developing national sectoral guidelines in the field. During the project, a manual was prepared which, after its approval by the Chief Veterinary Inspectorate, is going to become a source of applicable regulations for inspectors and producers. A film was produced presenting 3 virtual farmstead cheese factories, and all necessary technological solutions were described for each of them. The purpose of the film was to present the principles of operation of a small farmstead cheese factory, which have been agreed by veterinary practitioners.

4) Project result dissemination

A film „How to organize a farmstead cheese factory. Presentation of model solutions for approved small-scale manufacturing plants” is available at www.podlaskie.ksow.pl.

The success of the project results from the fact that producers, surveillance authorities and academics were able to sit round the table together and talk. As a consequence of that collaboration, optimum and flexible solutions were developed, which ensure consumer safety on the one hand, and can easily be applied by an average farm on the other hand.

This action is vital to the development of local products market, as it contributes to the clarification of production conditions and requirements. At the same time, a procedure to be followed by other product groups (processed meat products and processed fruit and vegetables, juices, etc.) has already been defined. Solutions developed in Podlaskie Voivodeship can be applied nationwide.

TOURNAMENT OF RURAL HOUSEWIVE' CIRCLES OF POMERANIA



Support of local organizations which operate on rural areas and cultivate local customs and traditions while promoting cultural and local values and culinary heritage is one of the priorities of the National Rural Network of the Pomorskie Voivodeship (Pomerania). The above mentioned mission is fulfilled by Rural Housewives' Circles which – contrary to stereotypes – play a very important role in the lives of local communities, by animating numerous actions to activate and integrate rural communities. The Tournament of Rural Housewives' Circles of Pomerania is a regional event which has been held every year since 2010. The event demonstrates how much Rural Housewives' Circles are involved in cultivating regional traditions and passing old customs along to other generations and how successful they are in their job.



It is customary that a home town of the winner Rural Housewife Circle hosts the Tournament to be held next year.

The undertaking is supported by NRN Regional Secretariat, Pomerania Agricultural Advisory Centre in Gdańsk, Voivodeship Union of Farmers, Agricultural Circles and Organizations in Gdańsk as well as local government bodies.

The participants of the Tournament include members of Rural Housewives' Circles who are selected as a result of powiat eliminations, or who are registered by powiat authorities and/or powiat office of the Pomeranian Agricultural Advisory Centre in Gdańsk. Tournament participants compete for the title of the

and traditions, folklore and culinary heritage. Particular stages of the Tournament's competition are prepared so that the participants can present their Circle, culinary and artistic talents, but also so that to show cultural diversity of various parts of the voivodeship. Particular Rural Housewives' Circles prepare i.a. regional food which is made according to recipes which are characteristic of a given region, they present regional outfits and dances or customs which are culturally related with a given EU Member State. Organization of the annual Tournament contributes to promoting cultural diversity of Pomerania and the region's traditions as well as helps identify traditional and regional products. While promoting their actions, Rural Housewives' Circles promote a new image of a woman living on rural areas: this is a woman of success, an animator of social life in the countryside, and an active co-manager of a farm, which image is contrary to the stereotype of a passive wife of a farmer.

Value added of the undertaking includes building social relationships and the feeling of pride from belonging to a given local community. The very preparations for the Tournament not only engage ladies who are members of Rural Housewives' Circles, but also activate and integrate the whole rural community which helps prepare particular tournament tasks and supports their "team".

Regional Secretariat of the Śląskie Voivodeship

THE NATIONAL FORUM OF RURAL WOMEN



Issues concerning the involvement of women in rural development are of key interest to the National Rural Network.

This is why the proposal of The Silesian Agricultural Chamber to organize a National Forum of Rural Women, to be held between 2 – 4 July 2012, met with absolute support of the NRN Regional Secretariat of the Śląskie Voivodeship (Silesia) and its will to collaborate.

The goal of the Forum was to attract attention to immense but underestimated participation of rural women in the transformation and development of the Polish rural areas in the recent years.

The Forum served as a platform to discuss key problems of rural women; the participants could share experience on local initiatives taken by women from rural and rural-urban areas of all voivodeships.

The gathering of 150 participants was dominated by representatives of Rural Housewives' Circles from Silesia, members of Poviats Councils, Silesian Agricultural Chamber and representatives of Agricultural Chambers from 7 voivodeships: Western Pomerania, Podlaskie, Lubelskie, Świętokrzyskie, Podkarpackie (Subcarpathian), Małopolskie and Opolskie. The rank of the meeting was increased by the presence of ladies who manage institutions operating for the benefit of agriculture, such as the Director of Silesian Agricultural Advisory Centre in Częstochowa and Director of Agricultural Social Insurance Fund in Częstochowa, President of



National Council of Rural Housewives' Circles, President of the Union of Farmers, Farmers' Circles and Agricultural Organizations from Bielsko Biąta, President of the National Headquarters of the Union of Farmers, Farmers' Circles and Agricultural Organizations, President of Audit Association of Agricultural Cooperatives, representatives of Executive Board and General Assembly of Silesian Agricultural Chamber, and those of the Rural Areas Department of the Marshal Office of Silesia.

The first day of the Forum, which was held in Wisła, included a seminar *Women coming out from the shadow – sharing experience on local initiative of women from rural and rural-urban areas in Poland*. On the second day, the following papers were presented during a plenary session:

Entrepreneurship of rural women - opportunities and constraints,

The role of rural women associated in Rural Housewives' Circles,

EU and national legislation and the issue of rural women equality,

The health of rural women – access to health care and prevention,

Social and economic initiatives undertaken by women in villages and small towns under LAGs and their funding.

The Forum was ended by a workshop on self-presentation. „Woman - show your best”. Apart from participating in seminars, the women had an opportunity to visit two guest farms located in the Beskid Mountains, where regional and traditional food produced on the farm was served.

The Forum contributed to analysing and identifying good practices and innovative projects implemented for the benefit of rural development by women at their home places, also under LAGs. It also enabled sharing knowledge and assessing the policy on rural development from the point of view of women. The organization of the Forum contributed to integrating the community around the problems of rural women. The success of the Forum encouraged the participants to meet again in order to share their experience.

Regional Secretariat of Świętokrzyskie
Voivodeship

INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF RURAL AND AGRICULTURE TOURISM “AGROTRAVEL”



Since 2009 the Regional Secretariat of Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship in cooperation with the Regional Tourist Organisation of Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship and Ministry of Sport and Tourism have been involved in organising the International Fair of Rural and Agriculture Tourism “Agrotravel”.

Agrotravel is the only exhibition venue in Poland entirely devoted to the promotion of recreation in rural areas. Growing interest of the potential and future entrepreneurs and tourists in rural tourism was the motivation for its organization. One can observe that in Poland there is being created a new image of rural areas as the place not only of hard labour but also of rest, rejuvenation, escape from high speed life. So far there have been 4 editions of the fair. From year to year the fair have attracted more exhibitors and visitors (140 exhibitors and nearly 25 thousand visitors). The fair is held once a year in April in the capital of region Kielce.



The fair is a networking initiative that engages regional, national and international NRN partners: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, exhibitors from 16 Polish regions, Regional Secretariats and General Secretariat of National Rural Network in Poland, several dozen LAGs, rural housewives' clubs, owners of agritourist farms, foreign exhibitors and representatives of some National Rural Networks in the EU.

The main fair activities:

- 3-day fair in an exhibition centre,

of local product and cooperation – networking within the framework of local products and tourism addressed to the representatives of LAGs and NRN partners,

- study tours for journalists and conference participants to the most interesting products of rural tourism in Świętokrzyskie voivodeship,

- cooperation fair for LAGs and film presentation of the rural tourism products.

- competitions for exhibitors on most interesting stand, most interesting rural tourism product of Świętokrzyskie voivodeship, most interesting regional souvenir, the youngest owner of the agritourism farm and farm hosting the biggest number of foreign guests.

The “Agrotravel” Fair is an excellent place for exhibitors to make contacts and gain new customers, to introduce new products and services to the market, create and strengthen the brand and also to find out about the customers’ needs. Participation in the fair is a chance for finding an inspiration how to present local tourist offer on Polish and European market. Visitors, on the other hand, could learn about attractions that are available in rural areas and find a place where they can spend their free time.



Considering broad programme of the Fair it was a unique chance to learn about rural culture and heritage, handcrafts, folk art, everyday habits and to taste local and regional cuisine.

During the conference exchange of knowledge which dealt with various areas of tourist activity – from past experiences through actual cooperation, practice and sources of financing to future challenges. Recommendations developed during the conference referred to: the need for cooperation and team work in order to create package tourist product, mutual relations within rural community and among inhabitants of the rural areas and officials, consequent building image of the region, brand promotion based on culinary heritage, unification

and simplification of legal norms at production and sale of high quality food, exchange of information and expert support within the scope of possible financing of an enterprise.

The fair turned out to be an excellent promotion of tourist services offered by agritourist farms and entities from the area of LAG's activity and at the same time became a platform of exchange of information, good practices and knowledge of the people and institutions that run activities for the benefit of development.

Rural tourism has become a public topic thanks to the patronage of TVP, radio and press – promotion of enterprises carried out within the framework of RDP 2007-2013 and under other EU funds.

All necessary information for participants are available on the fair website:
<http://www.agro.travel>

Cooperation and support from the Regional Secretariats' enables LAGs to participate actively in various activities organised during the fair.



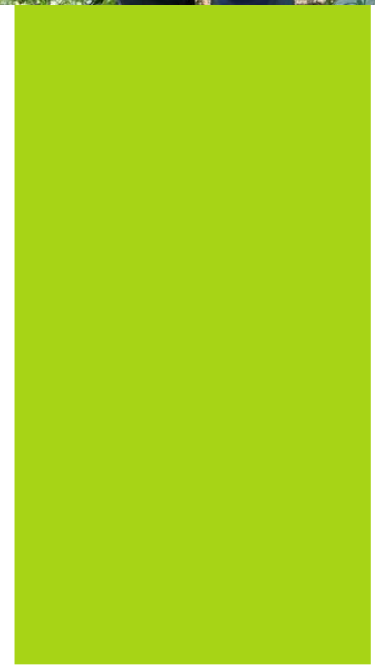


TRAINING FOR BIKE ROUTE MAKERS

A project „Training for bike route markers” was organized under an Action Plan of NRN Regional Secretariat of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship. The aim of the undertaking was to prepare workers skilled in bike routes marking, maintenance and promotion.

Cycle tourism is the second most important tourism product of Warmia and Masuria after sailing. This type of tourism makes it possible to employ environment to work for business, as well as to attract tourists’ attention to cultural and historical heritage by forming thematic bike routes, such as e.g. the Gothic Castle Route or the Prussian Manor Houses Route. Observations of what has been happening on the international tourism market confirm that cycle tourism dominates among active tourists. This is thanks to *inter alia* a strong promotion of biking in Europe and a campaign advertising a bike as an alternative means of transport which is environmentally friendly while improving your health at the same time. Such a promotion of cycle tourism results in the establishment of numerous outlets, service points, rent-a-bike facilities and bicycle repair shops along the bike routes, thanks to which rural areas can flourish.

Currently, Warmia and Masuria boasts 157 well-described bike routes, the total length of which amounts to 5 thousand km. Some of them still need renovation and good maintenance. In order to satisfy this need, NRN Regional Secretariat of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship organized a training course focused on practical skills needed for working on a bike route, including the skill of marking the bike routes with tourist signs. The participants of the training course included the inhabitants of Warmia and Masuria which were selected from among all the 13 Local Action Groups. The training was held in two stages, the first one between 18-20 May 2012 and the second one between 25-27 May 2012. The training was organized on a new bike route which is designed as a loop as it begins and ends in Godkowo



locality in the Godkowo municipality. The route was opened in autumn 2011. The training started with a presentation of tools which are necessary for marking the route, followed by safety training and a show of how to install and paint tourist signs on polls and trees. The participants, accompanied by 3 coaches went on the bike route and covered 3 sections of it. During that time they could practice the theory learned during the lectures. Based on documentation, maps and situation in the area, they marked the bike route with signs placed on polls and trees and they exercised how to put the signs on trees. The training was also an opportunity to learn the theory of route marking, namely how to select a place for putting a sign, how to design a route and how to record the route signs is a special ledger. The project relied on the experience of the Polish Tourist Association whose representative was invited to cooperation. Thanks to the fact that the skills of route marking were taught to the representatives of all the Local Action Groups, which have jointly been promoting the bike routes of Warmia and Masuria, the project can have a major impact on the formation of a uniform and coherent system of bike route marking in the whole region.

The most important factors which condition success of the undertaking include the willingness of LAGs to collaborate for the benefit of developing tourism in Warmia and Masuria as well as the skilful use of the region's natural conditions for the development of a bike route network.



AGROTOURISM- COLLABORATION WITHIN A NETWORK



The development of agrotourism as an alternative form of leisure, permanent need to adjust offers to changing and growing requirements of guest farms' clients, as well as a lack of comprehensive offer of training and promotion targeted at guest farms' operators became arguments for launching, in 2012, of a comprehensive support scheme for the guest farms of Wielkopolska and their promotion.

The main idea behind the actions of NRN Regional Secretariat of Wielkopolskie Voivodeship was COLLABORATION – encouragement of sole guest farm operators to form and develop local networks in order to support one another and to prepare joint offers and promotion campaigns.

The scheme is targeted at owners of over 600 guest farms operating in Wielkopolska, those who plan starting this business, 31 Local Action Groups, representatives of non-agricultural organizations, local governments and Wielkopolska inhabitants.

NRN Regional Secretariat of Wielkopolska Voivodeship has already succeeded with a number of actions:

- A cycle of TV programmes „Agrotourism Wielkopolska style” which shows good examples of guest farms operating in Wielkopolska. Based on LAGs recommendations, 8 farms were selected which were presented in 4 episodes of a documentary series broadcast on the regional WTK TV, You Tube and Facebook.
- The first comprehensive catalogue of 591 guest farms operating in Wielkopolska issued under the title: „Rural Tourism in Wielkopolska. A catalogue of guest farms”.
- „Agrotourism Project – collaboration within a network” including an organization of a conference, 5 workshops in sub-



regions, promotion and information campaign (i.a. a radio spot, press advertisements, a bookmark on the local NRN website www.wielkopolskie.ksow.pl, a Facebook profile www.facebook.com/agroturystykawielkopolska, and 3 contests addressed to guest farms, groups of farms and journalists of Wielkopolska media.

- Agrotourism gala with the participation of over 100 people, combined with „Agrotourism Fair” during which laureates of agrotourism contests were announced. Thanks to the collaboration of NRN Regional Network of Wielkopolskie Voivodeship with Local Action Groups it was possible to reach the owners of guest farms and encourage them to actively participate in the undertakings. Broad interest of the media in agrotourism and rural tourism enabled the idea of collaboration within a network to be disseminated and new networking tourism products to be prepared.

The project contributed to:

- starting discussions on the future of Wielkopolska agrotourism and its effect on economy and the region’s development,
- liaising with guest farms’ owners and identifying their needs (i.a. by means of meetings and questionnaire surveys),
- providing technical support adjusted to the needs of guest farms’ owners, in the form of workshops focused on practical guidelines on how to advertise and promote guest farms, how to service clients and collaborate with other partners and on financial aspects of conducting the business,
- promoting leisure in Wielkopolska countryside and the offer of Wielkopolska guest farms
- integrating over 300 people – active participants of the „Agrotourism – collaboration within a network” project.”
- development of 17 projects prepared by groups of at least 3 guest farms and reported to participate in the contests announced, which projects are implemented by Wielkopolska guest farms; 5 of them include networking actions,
- development and publication of several dozen publications in local, regional and national media (wp.pl, Onet.pl, PAP, Interia.pl, RP.pl, turysta.pl, Głos Wielkopolski daily, Gazeta Wyborcza daily, nationwide agrotourist portals).



Comprehensive support of agrotourism and rural tourism development and promotion in Wielkopolska is one of the key for Wielkopolska local government, that is why those activities will be further developed and supported.

Regional Secretariat of Western Pomerania

THE SCHOOL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANIMATORS



The NRN Regional Secretariat of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship (Western Pomerania) took over an initiative of a Local Action Group “Association of Goleniowo Powiat Gminas” which has been implemented since 2010 under the name “The School of Rural Development Animators”. The undertaking attracted a lot of attention, so a need arose to continue it in subsequent years.

The School of Rural Development Animators is targeted at people whose everyday work is related with the development of rural areas: village administrators, members of village councils, village-clubs’ operators and all those working for the benefit of rural communities and wanting to increase their competence. The project assumed that each of the 15 LAGs operating in the region delegate at least one representative to participate in training.



The training - organized for 24 participants - is conducted using active methods, according to a programme developed specially for that purpose by NRN Partner – The Centre for Local Action Support (CAL). The programme focuses on animating development so that to activate people, institutions, groups, communities to collaborate under partnerships with regional and local government institutions and NGOs. The training programme of the School of Rural Development Animators assumed three three-day training modules and a study visit:

Module 1 – I as an organizer of local community in collaboration with others. Interpersonal communication, team work,

Module 2 – Knowing your local community. From activity to development - development of local community,

Module 3 – Mobilizing people to action. Building local partnerships,

Module 4 A study visit – presentation of animating actions on the area of Western Pomerania and showing how to use the resources available on your area.

The programme assumes an increase of animators' competence and skills such as:

- Development of partnership relations within the community by coalition building,
- Communication among potential social partners by means of liaisons and relations with and among key stakeholders,
- Defining a community profile – getting to know local inhabitants, history, problems, etc.
- Making joint decisions by reaching consensus and defining a common objective,
- Working based on the intra-group dynamics phenomenon,
- Fostering involvement and motivations of others,
- Forming networks – working on boundaries fostering liaisons,
- Managing information and resources.



It is a genuine challenge for animators to watch the local community moving to a higher level of organization, dialogue and social culture by means of developing local liaisons and associations – both formal and informal ones. Mutual contacts and collaboration network is a guarantee of safety, and a stable development for a community which is composed of partners who complement one another.

Positive emotions, attitudes open to change and innovation play a big role, along with the manner of communication, which should be direct, friendly, without “a snooty lecturing tone and jargon”, and oriented at joint solution seeking. Regardless of their goals, workshops should be a great social and educational

experience to be encountered in creative atmosphere. The cycle of education based on the methodology of social animation for leaders of small communities of Western Pomerania is to help build and reinforce positive relations which support the development of local communities.

Thanks to using the methodology, the participants learn what features, knowledge and skills should characterize a leader, how to foster teamwork, what are the features of a local community, what are the models and factors which support and hinder development, why people want to act for their communities, how to establish an NGO and various social organizations, and why to build partnerships.

The School of Rural Development Animators has become such a success that it is going to be organized for the fourth time by the end of 2013.