

1. How well are you informed about Rural Development Plan (RDP 2014-2020), Community Led Local Development (CLLD) and the possibilities to implement LEADER measure during period 2014-2020?

Answers:

Very well informed on various seminars, workshops, trainings from LAG`s, other institutions and Ministry of agriculture

We are very well informed about the program of rural development for participating in various workshops and lectures by the Ministry of Agriculture , Extension Service and Education organized by various consultants . Now we need any additional instructions on how to create a local development strategy of the LAG..

We are well informed about the Rural Development Plan (RDP 2014-2020), CLLD and the LEADER measure during 2014,.2020. We have studied the previously mentioned using all available sources (newsletters, workshops, brochures etc.). Off course since not all RDP 2014.-2020. measure rule books have been written, we don't have all the information about the rules of implementation of all the measures.

We are very well informed about RDP because we participated in seminars and workshops organized by Ministry of agriculture, regional development agency and other LAGs. We have also organized some informative workshops about RDP for our members and local community.

We have only basic information about implementation of LEADER measure during period 2014-2020. There were some workshops about this topic, but only for short term plans fo LEADER implementation.

Mostly during meetings with other people who had already an experience with LAGs in Croatia, also from different European web-pages about LAG, and LEADER program.

I believe I am fairly well informed about RDP 2014-2020 and the possibilities to implement LEADER. I have participated at several workshops organized by the Ministry and LEADER network related to this. However, I still lack sufficient information about CLLD and the difference between the existing principles and the CLLD methodology (principle).

As a Local Action Group we have been reasonably well informed through various workshops organized by Local Action Groups in Croatia and Ministry of Agriculture.

The level of information is satisfactory. We are familiar with all RDP 2014-2020 measures. Concerning the implementation of LEADER measures, we are still doing fieldwork, collecting information with purpose of better knowledge of potential users. Our sources of information are The ministry of agriculture, workshops and trainings.

We are very well informed about Rural Development Plan 2014 - 2020. We have used newsletters, seminars, workshops and trainings. When it comes to the implementation of LEADER measure, sub-measure 19.1. is not a problem, but we are afraid that there will be not enough money for LAGs of Republic of Croatia, which we do not consider as fair. Out of the whole sum of Croatian RDP, only 3% has been reserved for LEADER.

Our LAG is informed about these measures via mass media, APPRRR, MPS, seminars and workshops but not in a way that would be enough for such development role as a legal entity.

Our LAG is well informed about the Rural Development Program, especially concerning the measures related to the Local Development Strategy. We also use the services of the outside consultant who is updating us on actual events and changes concerning the Rural Development Program. We are also participating at the workshops organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, LEADER network, LAGs and other stakeholders. At the same time we do have less information on CLLD methodology, except for the official documents. But through our international partners (from Slovakia, Check Republic, Slovenia and Hungary) we do manage to get basic information and understanding on how CLLD may be applied.

Good Newsletters, seminars, workshops, trainings Unfortunately after public consultation documents look really different and sometimes it is not good to start researching or doing something to early

We've been participated in several workshops, seminars, etc., regarding to that, I would say that Our knowledge about this (for us,very important) subject is mainly theoretical.

2. What do you find are the most positive things during LEADER implementation in Croatia?

Answers:

We find that the most positive effect the LEADER had during its implementation in Croatia is the bottom-up approach, which was something innovative for the Croatian society. Also one of the biggest benefits of the LEADER measure in Croatia was its contribution to the networking of the local stakeholders.

LEADER gives a direct answer to specific local rural needs. It supports the smaller projects that have a significant and visible positive effect to quality of living in rural areas.

Merging into groups (LAGs) where all three sectors share equal rights although their main role has not been put entirely into action.

Networking between LAG's on Croatian lever

Our has been actively involved in implementation of LEADER through measure 202 within the IPARD program for Croatia. Implementation has two main segments: 1) education and citizen's participation of LAG area; 2) implementation of local development strategy. Through education program, local population got familiar with basic principles of LEADER approach and how to participate in Open Calls within the Rural Development Program. More than 2000 people were involved in communication and various information dissemination actions. At the same time a group of young people were trained into PCM methodology and LEADER approach to be able assist local stakeholders to apply their projects for funding. Through measure 202, LAG has issued 10 Letters of Recommendation for IPARD program, 6 of which were approved for funding.

Creating the initiative on local level, building of long term trust and partnership. Rural areas, unlike urban areas, have much warmer human relations and tradition. Creating local initiative through networking led to more trustworthy relationship between Local managing authorities, LAGs and other development structure from the area.

Cooperation between local stakeholder dissemination of information

The most positive thing in Croatian LEADER is that we connected our members from different sectors and helped them to realize their possibilities in rural development. We organized a lot

of single-day trainings on various topics (volunteering, marketing, quality systems, preparation of projects, ..), multi-day training about preparation of projects eligible for EU funding for the members and volunteers of the LAG, two IT trainings, presentation of "Cooperative Entrepreneurship and EU funds" and the most important education "EU FONDS MANAGER,.". We participated with our members (local entrepreneurs) in some local and regional fairs with a goal of promoting rural area of LAG, and we had several study visits to similar rural areas.

On the beginning the most positive was a will and an enthusiasm of the local people that really believed how new European rules will wake up the villages and islands and help their development. People really started to educate ourselves and also they changed their old and a bit isolated ways of living and working - they tried to develop and modernize their jobs; they also finally recognized a values of their traditions. At the very beginning of making and foundation of LAGs.

The strongest aspect of LEADER implementation is establishment of integrated and multi-sectorial approach. Horizontally, cross-sectorial linking, as well as vertically, linking between local regional and national institutions, is of particular importance in achieving sustainable rural development, combining public, private and civil sector.

Major benefits of the LEADER program in the Republic of Croatia have obtained information about the specific needs of each rural area and a larger number of educated people who transmit information about all the possibilities of rural development on the work of LAGs and LEADER approach as well as simplify the withdrawal of EU funds .

So far, LEADER in Croatia has not been yet explicitly implemented, due to the fact that we have been implementing Measure 202 (IPARD). Nonetheless, the pre-accession period was used for LAG formation and LEADER implementation. When it comes to local success stories and positive aspects, we can mention creation of LAGs in Croatia and creating partnerships between public, civil and business sectors in the area covered by a particular LAG.

Most positive aspect is the process of building awareness of importance of bottom up approach and the fact that local population is becoming more involved and taking responsibility for their own development.

LEADER supported and promoted local manifestations. LAG`s have an open door approach to local people, lots of agriculture holdings are informed on rural policies in EU and opportunities. Local people create the main strategic focus of LAG.

3. What are your main needs related to the LDS (local development strategy) Guide?

Answers:

Most important topics: - creating positive climate for entrepreneurship - analysing most profitable agriculture models of doing business - creating a portfolio of positive case study in the field of agriculture - creating a portfolio of positive case study in the field of family farming manufacturing final branded products - analysing distribution channels and market potentials (on EU level) linked with comparative advantages of a particular area Find most difficult: ensuring local political support and awareness of predominant importance of developing entrepreneurship within communities that are economically undeveloped

Evaluation of projects, Data research

Within the Guide all the topics related to the LDS (local development strategy) should be covered thoroughly. However we find that special attention should be given to tendering

procedures and evaluation as well as the measures allowed in the LDS. The topics we have mentioned previously are the ones that we find most difficult as well.

A deficiency that each Strategy usually has is an unreal needs that are written without checking and understanding a real situation on the place or rural area on which this Strategy refers to. It is usually very unspecific and mostly has some default parameters that has to be satisfied, but they are not rally uncommon with a real situation. Also, in many cases doesn't recognizes the real problems of our agricultural producers or economy.

Evaluation and monitoring of LDS evaluation of the project described in LDS (and scoring), preparation of documents for tender and tendering that will carry out LAG to prepare the project call! How to adjust the expectations of local communities in accordance with the available measures and resources that will be available LAG

We think that all obligated LDS topics must be very well covered and described in the Guide with emphasis on evaluation process of projects.

The most important and difficult topic that should be covered in the Guide is the detailed explanation of all new sections that were not included in the previous strategies and which are still undefined (evaluation, monitoring). Also, the authority of the LAG should be covered.

Guide for the development of the local development strategy of the LAG should contain accurate and detailed instructions on how to develop strategies and descriptions of each unit of the recommended content strategy . The most difficult topics a way of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of strategies to support the implementation of the strategy and the financial resources needed to implement projects .

When it comes to the needs related to the projects involved in LDS: 1) How to invite tenders and prepare/publish call for proposals. 2) Define the process of choosing the projects regarding LDS and the call for proposal. 3) The process of project selection. 4) Specify the criteria on which basis a particular project shall be given additional 20% of grants, avoiding conflict of interests. 5) Conditions that both the board and the commission, the bodies responsible to project selection, have to fulfill to avoid conflict of interests 6) Make suggestions considering the body responsible for project selection - should it be the board, external experts, or some other body. 7) System of monitoring of project implementation? 8) Evaluation of project implementation and field control.

Regarding LDS as such: 1) What the LDS should contain of (in chapters). 2) Define LDS implementation plan and the activity implementation to achieve the LDS goals and outcomes. 3) System of monitoring of LDS implementation - shall it be working groups, or something else. 4) Evaluation of LDS implementation and field control. 5) Surveillance over financial management of LDS implementation. 6) LDS evaluation - once a year, once in six months? Should some external expert do evaluation? - What's your recommendation? Should LAGs respect the same rules and criteria as Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development when it comes to publishing invitations for tenders and calls for proposal?

Concerning the Guidelines to Preparation and Implementation of the LDS we do expect the following: - process of preparation and implementation of the LDS - evaluation process of LDS - integrating the Rural Development Program measures into the LDS - clear instructions on how to evaluate innovation of projects - how to evaluate projects within the LDS - how to create an efficient Action Plan

From the Guide we expect excellent knowledge of LDS drawing methodology. Someone who is able to lead the team working on creation of LDS. Good knowledge of evaluation and monitoring as well.

The most important is to prevent the "copy-paste" principle where all LAGs use the same format and simply copy segment of texts (since it is possible and even factually correct to

apply it). We need to clearly define what kind of project we will be able (allowed) to finance in order to select such project in advance. Do we need to choose measures from the RDP 2014-2020, or our projects can be different? If we will have to choose the measures, will we be able to change the conditions and list of obligatory documentation?

Please help us with defining the best way how to: - evaluate each project, without confrontation - form the evaluation commission (external or internal experts) - establish successful monitoring procedure I think that for us in LAG, the challenging task will be to evaluate the effect, impact and importance of projects regarding to the needs of our area.

what type of projects and the level of description for projects to consider as crucial for strategy, applying procedure for beneficiaries, evaluation process (administrative compliance check, choosing a project to finance, contracts with beneficiaries, monitoring the project implementation).

4. What kind of activities does your LAG foresees for the LDS preparation period (6 months period to implement RDP's sub-measure 19.1).

Answers:

92.3% (12 responses) An analysis of the existing development strategies (ie existing LDS from the IPARD-period, local and regional strategies) to find synergies and focus

92.3% (12 responses) Contract external consultants to provide support for LDS preparation

76.9% (10 responses) Training of the existing LAG staff to raise capabilities to draft a LDS

61.5% (8 responses) Arrangement of the study visits to other Member States to collect best practices about the LDS drafting

15.4% (2 responses) Other

5. What kind of stakeholder involvement activities does your LAG foresees for the LDS preparation period?

Answers:

100% (15 responses) Will arrange questionnaires/surveys about the target groups expectations and needs towards the LDS and perspective funding possibilities

100% (15 responses) Will arrange thematic workshops/seminars to collect target groups input into LDS

93.3% (14 responses) Will publish information (website, local newspapers) about the LDS preparation period and possibilities to be included 12 80% Will publish a LDS draft and offer a possibility to provide feedback/amendments

73.3% (11 responses) Will hold a general participation seminar to introduce LDS draft and to collect feedback from participants

6.7% (1 response) Other

6. How would you describe the role and importance of the (international and national) co-operation for your LAG during the forthcoming period?

57,1% (8 responses) Very important. We have already had a successful national and international co-operation experience and would like to proceed with that during the forthcoming years.

42,9% (6 responses) Very important, although our LAG has not done any significant co-operation with either other Croatian LAG's or foreign LAG's we are about to stress the role of co-operation in our LDS and want to implement it during the forthcoming years

0% We do not see any potential co-operation needs for our LAG's during the forthcoming years

7. How do you plan to organize project calls for local applicants in your LAG?

40% (6 responses) To collect applications by e-mail, arrange evaluation and feedback using e-mail communication

26.7% (4 responses) To set up user-friendly web-based application and evaluation e-environment

20% (3 responses) Other

13.3% (2 responses) To collect paper copies of the applications, to prepare written evaluation sheets and protocols and to provide written feedback to applicants

8. What do you consider the main challenges to design support measures into the LDS?

42.9% (6 responses) To choose and describe the eligible and relevant activities to be financed by the support measures of the LDS

35.7% (5 responses) To set up an effective and transparent evaluation systems of the applications to be submitted according to the support measures

14.3% (2 responses) To choose the most relevant types of operations to finance within the support measures of the LDS

7.1% (1 response) Other

9. What kind of quality criteria do you find most important to take into account if the LAG's strategies are evaluated?

35.7% (5 responses) Cohesion of the strategy (how well background information, SWOT-analysis, objectives, support measures etc are connected with each other)

35.7% (5 responses) Contribution to LEADER measure specific goals and EAFRD priorities;

14.3% (2 responses) Accordance with the LAG's regions background (based on region's analysis and stakeholder involvement)

7.1% (1 response) Transparency of work and decision making procedures

7.1% (1 response) Other

10. Please provide any other necessary information, comments, suggestions you find important for us to consider during the LDS Guide preparation.

Please, do not forget on the very important fact : that REPUBLIC CROATIA HAS MORE THAN THOUSAND ISLAND - from that number 66 islands are inhabited - someone should consider living on those islands during preparation of the next LRS. Thank you

There are big differences within Croatian LAGs, through biodiversity and landscape factors, demographic structure (number and age of population), potential for use of certain RDP 2014-2020 measures. We consider it is necessary to pay attention on evaluation from the previous period, which will not be founded only on percentage of used funds but also on end result. 1. Number of workshops 2. Number of users-in proportion to the number of workable population 3. Number of issued recommendation letters for IPARD 4. Number of registered users with requests for RDP tenders 5. Number of individual consulting 6. Overall evolution since the beginning of the evaluation period

We also find it necessary to evaluate the projects proposals for the coming period, which does not have to mean that LAGs with higher population will propose more projects and cover more RDP goals (and focused regions) - the number of potential users on the observed territory. The importance of evaluation and monitoring during the project implementation.

Guide for LDS preparation we need immediately or as soon as possible, please describe do we in the LDS for 2014-2020 take into the strategy some objectives that can not be financed from the RDP 2014-2020, but from other funds (ESI) We think that we probably can declare it but we can not assign financial value to this goals or objectives through the description of the measures and activities which will be planned for implementation

Please, very clearly define if we need to CHOOSE THE MEASURES from RDP 2014-2020 for our projects, and will we be allowed to modify any requirements defined by the national Calls and official Rules.

We find it important to stress the predominant significance of developing small and medium entrepreneurship and developing models of building the level of knowledge and competencies necessary for creating a productive and successful business environment on a local level.

The Ministry of Agriculture has put some restraints concerning LDS preparation and its later implementation - they have limited us to have maximum 60 pages in our strategy. What is more, they have defined in advance which measures we can incorporate in our strategies, and these are: M 3, M 4, M 6, M 7, M 8, M 9 and M 16. They have also set up the structure of the board (regarding the share of public, civil and business sector) - if we did not comply, we would be discarded as eligible candidates for sub-measure 19.1., and consequently sub-measure 19.2. No matter how many LAGs there is in Croatia, there will not be enough money for all the LAGs.

The most important information for our LAG during the LDS Guide preparation are: process of preparation and implementation of the LDS - evaluation process of LDS - integrating the Rural Development Program measures into the LDS - clear instructions on how to evaluate innovation of projects - how to evaluate projects within the LDS - how to create an efficient Action Plan.