Collective farmers marketing initiatives: the Alimenterra network

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• About AlimenTerra
  – European Network for Sustainable Food Systems
  – Founded 2003
  – Members from England, Spain, France, Netherlands and Italy

• AlimenTerra encourages
  – cooperation between producers and consumers
  – Alternative trading networks
  – Public catering with sustainable products
  – European standards for sustainable food products
  – Food policies based on sustainability principles
• Activities of AlimenTerra:
  – Food for Health, Learning and Livelihoods – F4H
  – Urban Food Strategies (London, Sevilla, …)
  – ECCE Bio, European trading network for organic products
  – Food& Tourism Network
• Food&Tourism Network
  – 7 participants from 4 countries: small scale producer groups, cooperatives and NGO’s
  – Bottom up, facilitated by AlimenTerra
  – Project with Leader+ funding
  – Preparation started autumn 2004
  – Project period June 2006 - December 2007
Goals

- Activities to support rural development
- Exchange of knowledge and experiences
- Facilitate trade (trading pilots)
  - New distribution channels for local products
  - Increase sales in local shops / outlets
- Development of ‘food tourism’
- EU Trading organisation (cooperative)
Interim conclusions:

- Differences between participating organisations
  - size, stage of development, activities and objectives
- Complementary product ranges
  - Products need intensive promotional support
  - Synergy between local food & tourism
- Not every partner is well organised at local level
- European trading organisation (cooperative) one step too far for now
- Strong network and involvement of participants is conditional
  - communication needs to be improved
- Partners wish to proceed Food & Tourism Network after 2007
Lessons learned (1):
- Difficult to sell products with added value and premium price
  - Food products with no international reputation are not easy to trade with (suited for the local market only)
  - Synergy with Food tourism has to be strengthened
  - ‘Products selling their region and regions selling their products’
  - Linking regions to strengthen ‘territorial marketing’
- Organisation at local level is crucial
  - Marketing strategies
  - Building on existing marketing channels
  - Cooperative entrepreneurship – shared values, common objectives, collective action
- Collective action is not obvious, depending on cultural background and history
Lessons learned (2):

- Different roles / functions have to be fulfilled to be successful:
  - Production of distinct quality products and services
  - Marketing and sales
  - Development (new arrangements, tourism packages, knowledge and education)

- Different organisational models (configurations) can be successful, but some minimal scale is required for continuity

Small scale farmer groups need support from NGO’s to innovate

Territorial marketing is an issue that concerns all parties involved (producers, tourism providers, local governments, SME’s etc)
Future development of the network
- Current project (2006 – 2007) is phase 1
- Phase 2: Strengthen the network (2008-2009)
  - Knowledge exchange, more trading activities, tourism development
  - New project partners in cooperation with AlimenTerra
  - Support local structures (NGO’s and producer groups)
  - Developing quality standards
- Phase 3: Implementation of quality formula for Food & Tourism
  - Organisation development
  - Brand development
More information:

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www.alimenterra.org

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