



Farming guidelines to deal with contaminated land in the Slovenian Upper Mežiška Valley



To the naked eye, the Mežiška Valley in Slovenia, which is home to 589 farmers, is a picture-postcard of rolling green hills. However, due to a long tradition of mining and metallurgical activities in the area, 181 farmers – with a total of 1650ha – are struggling with an accumulation of heavy metals in their soil and plants. An interactive innovation project showed the farming community how to deal with this issue.

Farmers and researchers join forces

In 2012, farmers from the degraded area, the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, the Institute for Environmental Research and the Institute of Public Health joined forces to tackle the contamination problem. They wanted to assess the actual situation, find innovative solutions and give technical instructions to the farmers. Together with experts and stakeholders such as the Biotechnical Faculty, farmer representatives, and the public farm advisory service for the Carinthia region, they started their work, which included the drafting of the guidelines for the sampling and analytics of the soil, identifying the contaminated sites, measures to reduce the intake of heavy metals and guidelines for farming in this area.

Practice is the best experience

The farming guidelines included the characteristics of farming in the area such as the natural resources, the structure of the farms and the exact location of the contaminated sites. Farmers deal with the situation by following guidelines listing clear measures to reduce the intake of heavy metals in plants and entering the food chain, measures to prevent pollutants entering the human body as well as the definition of contamination of cattle feed and the state of contamination of food of animal origin.

Farmers were given theoretical information through lectures and interactive workshops and the practical testing of the guidelines and the monitoring and review of results helped to get the most out of the guidelines in the fields. And finally, the project group used articles in local newspapers and radio interviews to raise awareness about the project.

Stepping stones for successful innovation projects

Some useful tips drawn from the project's experience could help others set up an interactive innovation project and deliver good results. Janko Rode, speaker from Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia at the EIP-AGRI Workshop, was happy to share some of his thoughts: "Working in an interactive project with actors such as researchers and farmers requires an experienced coordinator and

responsible partners. Agricultural consultants proved to be good coordinators in our case: farmers know and trust them and that made the practical use of the guidelines easier and more successful. The consultants make sure farmers are well involved through individual consultation, farmers groups, and through concrete good practices and experiments. Moreover, ideally the project idea comes from the practice.”

“In addition it is important and necessary to set clear objectives, share tasks and set deadlines and pay attention to equality of group members and the corresponding financial support. Regular – personal - communication between partners to determine how to run the project, solve the problems and determine critical points is crucial to succeed. All these tips, should help you to start a successful interactive innovation project”, concludes Janko Rode.

Janko Rode from the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia gave a presentation on behalf of project coordinator Dusica Majer on 25 March 2014 during the EIP-AGRI workshop 'Establishing Operational Groups under Rural Development Programmes' in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Different actors from Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary and Slovenia attended the workshop.

**You can download his presentation via [this link](#)
More information on the project is to be found via dusica.majer@kgzs.si**

Share your innovative project!

We are looking for innovative actions that can deliver relevant practical solutions and that are "ready for use" in the field or that can easily be put in practice. These innovative actions can include the development of new products, services, processes, or new organisational models. They can be technical, technological or social. This also includes traditional or already known products, services or processes which can be tested in new situations or contexts.

If you have been involved in or know of such a project, please fill in this [e-form](#) and share your information with the EIP-AGRI network.