



1. General information on the project

➤ Short name

Xeis

➤ Title of the project

Projects dealing with the theme Farmer & Guest (“Bauer&Gast”) – development of the leading product Xeis Red Deer

➤ Themes

- Regional value added
- Governance capacity
- Protected areas
- Mobility
- New forms of decision-making
- Policies and instruments

➤ Region

Styria, National Park Region Gesäuse = Leader+ Region Gesäuse-Eisenwurzen

➤ Are there one or several centres in the region?

No, because the project participants are scattered in the whole region.

➤ Country

Austria

➤ Alpine Perimeter

The project is located within the Alpine perimeter.

➤ Duration of the project

11/2003 – 12/2006

➤ Short description

Projects dealing with the theme Farmer & Guest (“Bauer&Gast”) – development of the leading product Xeis Red Deer – contain the development of a mission statement for the region Gesäuse-Eisenwurzen focusing culinary.

The leading product of this initiative is Xeis Red Deer products, a cross-sectoral project concentrating on the processing and marketing of a natural and extraordinary endogenous resource: unprotected game. Activities of the project include:

- The development of a regional mission statement.
- The research concerning the processing of game by food technologists and product development.
- The market development for Xeis Red Deer Products and other regional products using the umbrella brand name Xeis.
- Building up a distribution network of direct marketers in Styria as a whole (farmers shops, further development of the national Park Partner Businesses).
- The marketing and promotion for Xeis Red Deer Products, especially within the tourism sector, e.g. participation in tourism fairs (opportunity for prospective guests to taste the region), etc.
- Passing the Xeis Red Deer Products’ image (healthy, natural) on the region’s image in order to position as culinary tourism destination.



➤ **Project executive**

Project executive in the beginning:

LAG Gesäuse-Eisenwurzten

Markt 35

A-8933 St. Gallen

Telephone 03632/7714

Email: naturpark@eisenwurzten.com

Current project executive:

Xeis-Edelwild GmbH

Markt 35

A-8933 St. Gallen

Telephone 03632/7714

Main responsibilities:

- Regional development and implementation of the European Community Initiative Leader+
- Preparation and implementation of the initiative „Farmer & Guest“ consisting of numerous small subprojects (e.g. National Park Partner Businesses) and “Xeis Red Deer” as leading project.
- Operative management of the initiative „Farmer & Guest“: coordination, etc.

➤ **Contact person:**

MAS Reinhard Mitterbäck

CEO Xeis Red Deer Ltd.

Markt 35

A-8933 St. Gallen

Telephone: 03632/7714

Email: r.mitterbaeck@eisenwurzten.com

➤ **Participants and external cooperations**

Participants:

- Forest owners: Österreichische Bundesforste (Austrian Federal Forests inc.), Styrian Landesforste (Styrian Federal Forests), Monastery Admont, some individual, private people (interested in the project because they have shoots),
- Butchery Pfeiler,
- Natur Park Styrian Eisenwurzten, National Park Gesäuse,
- Tourism Office Gesäuse, Tourism Office Eisenwurzten,
- 56 National Park Partner Businesses,
- 10 regional municipalities,
- Agricultural direct marketing initiative “Gutes vom Bauernhof Steiermark“ (Styrian Chamber of Agriculture, platform for originally Styrian products which stem directly from the farmer).

The forest owners had to be integrated into the project due to the leading product „processed game products“: being suppliers of the raw material and being important stakeholders.

The project’s core team consists of 4 persons:

- 2 internal persons: R. Mitterbäck (CEO Xeis Red Deer Products) and R. Pfeiler (butchery company)
- 2 external persons: a consultant (BSU Business Consultancy Agency) and Grete Reichsthaler (CEO “Gutes vom Bauernhof”)

External cooperations:

- Industry and agriculture cooperate in the processing and distribution of game.
- Gastronomy, agriculture and tourism: offering Xeis Red Deer Products to the gastronomy, to typical regional points of interests (sights), positioning as culinary tourism destination (taste the region).
- Forest enterprises, industry and tourism cooperate in the sale of game.



An important external partners is the Business Consultancy Agency BSU, Graz, which accompanied the implementation of the project.

➤ **Key person**

Reinhard Mitterbäck:

Has fulfilled all project tasks in the beginning until other people started too to get involved with the project. At present he is CEO of the Xeis Red Deer Products Ltd. on a honorary basis because there is no money to employ a CEO for remuneration.

All 3 partners of the leader+ project are driving forces for the project: huntsmen, R. Pfeiler (butcher) and Grete Reichsthaler (initiative “Gutes vom Bauernhof”).

A key function fulfilled the EU Community Initiative Leader+ by creating the prerequisites for the project. Otherwise the cooperation would not exist.

➤ **Identification**

The population identifies with the region due to the innovative game products and their contribution to the regional economy. This identification provides for rising commitment of the population: the numbers of inquiries concerning the Leader+ Programme and further opportunities for projects increase.

➤ **Objectives**

- Overall objective is the development of a regional leading product creating identification within the region for the gastronomy and the tourism sector.
- Generating regional value added for game by processing and developing marketable products.
- Establishing a quality marketing under the label XEIS for Styria as a whole: future economic autonomy and integrating other regional leading products.
- Strengthening the regional commerce by building up farmers shops at tourism attractions and selected groceries.
- Strengthening the industry (processing) in the region by safeguarding the last existing butchery within the 13 municipalities (Pfeiler).
- Establishing synergies with the tourism sector: positioning the region as culinary tourism destination in order to transfer the project's benefits on tourism providers too.

➤ **Activities**

- Developing a regional mission statement.
- Research by food technologists, product development.
- Market development: creating a corporate identity for the label XEIS as brand for processed game products and further products (to be defined, e.g. fish, wood, herbs, etc.).
- Building up a distribution network of direct marketers in Styria: farmers shops, further development of the national Park Partner Businesses.
- Marketing and promotion for Xeis Red Deer, especially within the tourism sector, e.g. participation in tourism fairs (opportunity for prospective guests to taste the region), etc.

➤ **Process**

1. Phase (2 months) – idea generation: detailed market analysis, establishment of farmers shops, 15 regional road shows informing agriculture and gastronomy about the project, selecting and defining the leading product, searching partners, 60-70 meetings of the project's core team, developing a functioning project management, application for leader+ funds.
2. Phase – implementation: test market and following evaluation.
3. Phase – putting the project on professional basis: foundation of the Xeis Red Deer Ltd. to establish different distribution channels for the product (extension of the network of direct marketers by integration the National Park Partner Businesses) and guarantee that the project



can pay for itself in future. The products have to be available within the region in sufficient quantity.

Currently negotiations with big regional retailing companies are in force: eventual integration in their assortment of organic products. Thereby it is important to maintain the exclusive and high qualitative image of the product (no bulk product)!

The Business Consultancy Agency BSU, Graz, has accompanied the project implementation in all phases.

➤ **Results**

- A leading product was developed for the region from an endogenous resource.
- Product innovation: professional and marketable products made from game.
- The interest and awareness for game products raised: image of being healthy and natural products is passed on to the image of the tourism destination.
- The project caused the positioning as culinary tourism destination.
- Enlargement of the product line
- Creating identification within the population because the project generates value added for different economic sectors (tourism, agriculture, retailing, gastronomy, forest enterprises, processing, etc.)
- A regional project executive was established (Xeiss Red Deer Marketing Ltd.) aiming at the professional marketing of the products.

Success factors:

- Using a natural resource and changing it into an extraordinary and innovative high quality product
- Using exclusively unprotected game.
- Dynamic and committed project core team
- Positive image of the leading product which was passed on to the region's image: healthy, natural, culinary.
- The participants are committed to the project.
- Synergies to other economic sectors (especially tourism).

➤ **Is there made use of endogenous resources? Which ones?**

The project is based on an important regional resource: unprotected game. This resource is processed into innovative products which are marketed under the brand XEISS which is connected with the region itself at the same time.

➤ **What is the specific relevance of the results for the Alps?**

The project's specific relevance for the Alps is the usage of an Alpine product which was neglected before in the process of developing marketable products. The project demonstrates the inventive talent of Alpine regions and their ability to produce and market their products in a professional way. Farmers too show entrepreneurial spirit.

➤ **Evaluation**

Internal evaluation:

- Local Action Group Gesäuse-Eisenwurzen.
- Evaluation of the leading product after the 2nd project phase (test market): feedback of customers, sales, etc. The test market delivered important results which led to changes of the assortment and products, the improvement of the logistics and the foundation of the Xeiss Red Deer Marketing Ltd. to ensure the future economic autonomy.
- The consolidated analysis of economic data (of the different participating companies) is starting now.

External evaluation:

- Closing Leader+ evaluation in 2006: evaluation of the farmers shops and the project as a whole (Initiatives concerning the theme "Farmer & Guest") conducted by the Land Use Planning Office Rettensteiner (p.p. of the province of Styria).



➤ **Difficulties**

Low acceptance within the region and less developed cooperation culture: the willingness for cooperation was low because of the various different interest and objectives in the region. There was a lack of understanding why the project is implemented. The National Park represented a very dominant stakeholder within the region (budget of € 2 millions) and there existed only few persons being willing to commit themselves to the project.

Especially the project's driving force, R. Mitterbäck, worked hard to overcome these obstacles: permanent information and convincing in the frame of one-to-one talks and common meetings. Raising the interest of important regional stakeholders and demonstrating the potentials of a project focusing game (by presenting the success of other regions implementing activities within the scope of game).

Difficulties in the product development: it is very difficult to process game into marketable products because of the fluctuations concerning quality and weight, e.g. finding forms enabling the production to standardise the products' seize and weight (important for packaging and pricing).

➤ **Budget and financial backer**

Total budget: € 511.000,--
thereof about 30% Leader+ funds

The remaining funds are raised by:

- Capital market (banks): The Local Action Group Gesäuse-Eisenwurzen took out the loans which are refinanced by the sales of the Xeis Red Deer products (the price of the products considers the refinancing)
- Equity capital of participants: farmers (creation of direct marketing shops, e.g. National Park Partner Businesses), butchery Pfeiler.
- The Leader+ Association (LAG Gesäuse-Eisenwurzen) assumes liability in the amount of € 70.000.

News (September 2005): reorganisation of the cooperation and, therefore, transfer of the leading project Xeis Red Deer Products into economic autonomy by the foundation of the Xeis Red Deer Products Marketing Ltd. for the marketing and distribution of the Xeis Red Deer products.

It is very difficult for rural and peripheral Alpine regions to find sponsors and international investors: therefore the EU Community Initiative Leader+ exists.

➤ **Source of information**

www.eisenwurzen.com

Regional leading product Xeis Red Deer Products: www.xeis.st



2. Comments on the best practice example

➤ Impacts on nature and environment

The strengthening of the agricultural sector contributes to the conservation of the cultural landscape in the region: it ensures that farmers are able to conduct their activities within the scope of nature protection and landscape conservation.

➤ Economic value added

There are no (quantitative) figures available yet because the economic analysis is starting but now (and the Leader+ evaluation takes place not until in 2006):

- Safeguarding the existence of the last regional butchery (i.e. safeguarding 15 working places).
- Creation of 5-7 (direct) working places within the scope of point of sales at regional tourism destinations and attractions (the creation of 20 working places is intended according to the mission statement of the region).
- The project creates various indirect working places by establishing synergies with the tourism sector, gastronomy and industry.
- The project creates economic value added for the whole region due to the strong networking: i.e. the projects strengthens the regional basis.
- The sales of game (forest owners) has increased considerably. The processing within the region constitutes the great difference to the prior situation: it generates economic value added for the whole region.

➤ Multiplier effects to other economic sectors?

Multiplier effects are codified in the project design itself (cross-sectoral and integrated implementation): agriculture – industry and commerce – gastronomy – tourism.

The tourism sector benefits strongest due to the new image of the region (healthy, natural) and the positioning as culinary tourism destination.

➤ New markets?

The project succeeded in entering new markets (the Province of Styria as a whole) with new products. Thereby it is important that the Xeis Red Deer products preserve their image of exclusiveness and do not become a bulk product.

Other regions pick up the theme game too and try to establish a processing and marketing for the resulting products.

socio-cultural value added

The project could raise the population's awareness: identification with a high quality product and the resulting regional image. The leading product is not artificial but may be recognised within the region and, therefore, creates identification.

A regional cooperation culture develops due to increasing acceptance and prosperities: the inquiries on leader+ funds and the increase of new project ideas prove this process.

This is extraordinary considering that it was impossible to find a regional project executive in the beginning of the project. The new regional project executive (Xeis Red Deer Products Marketing Ltd.) comprises all relevant regional stakeholders integrating public institutions and private organisations/persons as shareholders. This ensures the authenticity and sustainability of the project Xeis Red Deer Products.

➤ Innovative elements

- Processing within the region.
- Using exclusively regional unprotected game (guaranteeing the high quality: natural growing up, feeding regulations, etc.)
- Integrating all relevant stakeholders in the region into one project: shareholders of the project executive Xeis Red Deer Products Marketing Ltd. This include the municipalities too and, therefore, is an innovative form of cooperation: public private partnership.
- Product innovations: marketable products made from game!
- Game is available during the whole year.



➤ **Good governance**

The interest in participation in the project Xeis Red Deer Products was evaluated in the beginning (start of the leader+ programme): road shows and workshops demonstrated which people are interested in a participation.

In the current project phase Xeis Red Deer Products concentrates on its participants in the decisions-making process.

A committee involving all shareholders of the Xeis Red Deer Products Marketing Ltd. (regional municipalities, Styrian Federal Forests, Monastery Admont, Austrian Federal Forests, tourism offices, Nature Park Eisenwurzen, National Park Gesäuse, hunter men, direct marketing initiative “Direkt vom Bauernhof” and the butchery Pfeiler) decides on the project and its activities. This ensures the democracy of decisions and the information exchange between the project participants.

➤ **PR impact and publicity**

- Road shows for the population in order to increase the acceptance and raise awareness
- Media cooperation with “Kleine Zeitung” (presentation of products)
- Participation in tourism fairs in cooperation with the tourism offices. Tasting of the region!
- Participation in the “Junkerpräsentation” in the Austrian provincial capitals
- Styrian test market (23 farmers shops) to gain publicity.
- Classical PR activities in the course of marketing the Xeis Red Deer Products: press releases, Internet, ads, etc.

Impacts include the appreciation of the visitors of the tourism fairs (tasting a potential holiday destination is something new and contributes to the positive image in the prospective guests’ heads). Within the region itself, results appear in the menus of the gastronomy enterprises: they offer at least one game food during the whole year.

➤ **Multiplier effects and networking**

The networking within the region is ensured by the project design itself: agriculture – industry and commerce – gastronomy – tourism.

Other regions start picking up the theme game as they recognise its potential (due to the success of the project Xeis Red Deer Products), e.g. Hochschwab (Hochschwab Game). These regions still lack intensive product development and, therefore do not represent competitors at present.

The know how of the project is presented in the frame of Leader Networking Conferences by R. Mitterbäck: Know how is passed on by exchanging information and know how and supporting developing projects.

Naturally, detailed information on strategies and product development are not exchanged because other regions represent nonetheless future competitors. Moreover, the economic value added ought to be preserved for the own region.

➤ **Transferability**

The idea of exploiting a regional resource and develop it into products by regional processing is transferable.

Important prerequisites for the implementation of this idea is the existence of a extraordinary natural and endogenous resource within the region, e.g. instigating a project based on pork is difficult due to the saturation of the market for ham and other pork products.

The endogenous resources must be used to create a regional USP!

➤ **Further remarks and uploads**

➤ **Further contact person**

Robert Pfeiler
Butchery
Kirchenlandl 43

“Future Alps“

Good Practice Examples: Question 1 - Regional Value Added



8931 Großreifling

Telephone: 03633/3111

0664 7 531 61 34

Email: robert.pfeiler@magnet.at