

# Question Team 1 - Questions to analyse good practice projects

Project : Valplantes/Bio Alp Tea

Yellow = receivable information, coming soon !

## Basic Information

1) Project name, duration and budget

Coopérative Valplantes/Bio Alp Tea, 1987 - ..., 500000 operating costs per year.

2) Short description of the project.

The Valplantes Co-operative with its 100 members has been producing ecologically grown herbs and medicinal plants in the Valais Alps for the last twenty years. (the project has started 1987). The organisation works with powerful drying plant and supplies leading Swiss companies in the food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. In cooperation with a number of partners, Valplantes has put a herbal ice tea on the market called Bio Alp Tea. Involved economic sectors and branches: plant production (agriculture) in Valais, aliment-, cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries in Switzerland, Swiss supermarket chains, research institutes in Switzerland

3) What is the geographical project perimeter (functionally)?

Canton Valais, whole Switzerland

4) Description and address of project executives.

Coopérative Valplantes, production de plantes aromatiques et médicinales biologiques du Valais, Mr Maurice Tornay, Coopérative Valplantes. Route du Grand-St-Bernhard, 1933, Sembrancher, Suisse Info@valplantes.ch, +41277851600, +41277851679

5) Contact person(s).

Mr. Fabien Fournier, Coopérative Valplantes. Route du Grand-St-Bernhard, 1933, Sembrancher, Suisse Info@valplantes.ch, +41277851600, +41277851679

6) Name and function of interviewed person(s).

M. Fabian Fournier

7) Date and place of interview.

28.09.2005, email

## Where it started from ...

8) What was the “**project trigger**”? (e.g. an existing problem, an upcoming event, etc.)

...

9) Which were the **objectives/goals** in of the project (as defined in the beginning of the project)?

The main objectives that led to the foundation of Valplantes are still valid today, namely: promoting the continuation of mountain farming based on respect for the environment, promoting diversity in terms of agricultural produce, income generation for full and part-time farmers, the fight against the rural exodus, upgrading the landscape and environment. With such problems as small acreages, steep slopes, limits to mechanised working and low yields, the Swiss mountain areas do not lend themselves to profitable farming based on the traditional cultivation of cereals or mixed farming with livestock and cereals. It therefore makes sense to promote new agricultural activities (organic farming) that make ecological use of the soil, contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and provide a reasonable income.

10) Which were the **success-criteria** for the project (as chosen in the beginning of the project)?

After twenty years' work it can be said that, in qualitative terms, the main goals have been achieved: Organic farming has been established and new sources of income generated in the agricultural sector. It is produced an annual total of 100 tons of dried plants and it is doing everything possible to further increase the yield.

11) Which were the main **obstacles, challenges**?

There were many difficulties during the last 20 years: at the beginning, it was missing experience and control of amount. There were problems of organisation, trade, financial, human and technical problems. Inundation after strong precipitation. Thanks to many collaboration with different private and public authorities and thanks to the engagement of the "Valplantes producers" the problems could be beared and solved.

12) Was a **monitoring** concept set up in the beginning of the project?

**Who and how?**

13) **Who...**

- was initiating the project-idea?
- was developing the project? was/is implementing the project?
- was/is running the project?
- was/is evaluating the project?
- is transferring the project experiences to other projects/activities

Describe referring key-persons, stakeholders, economical sectors, branches, etc. as well as their roles and identification.

14) What was/is the **organisational design/legal body** of the project:

- in the development phases?
- in the implementation phases?
- in the running phases?
- for the transfer of the gained project experiences

A hundred producers of herbs and medicinal plants build the co-operative Valplantes, management, technical committee, employees of the co-operative, scientific and technical

panel. Co-operation structure with a general assembly for decision-making with equal vote possibilities between small and big producers (1 producer = 1 vote).

15) What kind of were/are **co-operations/networks** were established (local, regional, national, international, urban-rural, etc.).

Co-operation with external partners in agricultural research: Agroscope RAC Changins (ferns) and Médiplant. Other external partners: Office de vulgarisation agricole (dissemination of agricultural know-how), Valais College of Agronomy, Valais Dairy Union, Plantamont (umbrella for Swiss producers).

16) What **methods and activities** were/are used for:

- organizational development?
- project development?
- project implementation?
- project evaluation?
- for the transfer of the gained experiences
- further ...

Measures already completed: establishment of a co-operative and the necessary legal structures in 1985, introduction of the cultivation of ecologically grown herbs and medicinal plants in Valais, creation of the administrative structures needed to co-ordinate production and provide producers with technical and administrative support, construction of two drying plants and continuous improvements to the plants, modifications and enhancements to the methods of cultivation, creation of a joint stock company (Provalplantes SA), identifying new markets for unprocessed plants and finished products, development of finished products with added value (Bio Alp Tea, herbal teas), development of new plants in collaboration with customers and research institutes, marketing ecologically grown herbs and medicinal plants and the finished products.

17) How was/is **information/knowledge** managed?

18) How was/is **decision-making** handled?

19) What kind of **capacity building activities** were/are carried out?

20) How was/is **ownership of the knowledge** gained in the project handled?

21) Did/does the project work with **external facilitators**?

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## Resources

22) What kind of **resources** are used to generate project related value added?

local medical herbs and plants

23) How much **money** was/is available, and where did it come from (foreign, national, local, public, private, subsidies, etc.

- in the development phases?
- in the implementation phases?
- in the running phases?
- For project evaluation?
- For other purposes?

500000 operating costs per year. Finance: members of the production co-operative.  
Investments: credits LIM from agriculture credit office in Switzerland.

## Results/Impact

24) What is the “**Alpine Unique Selling Point**” of the project?

Organic farming has been established and new sources of income generated in the agricultural sector. For the mountain valleys in the region of Valais, the co-operation and network generates knowhow also for next generations and maintain jobs for the future. Organic farming and cultivation of medicinal herbs and plants are innovative ways to maintain and to appreciate this kind of endogenous resources in the Alps.

25) Were the **objectives/goals** altered and to what extend are they hit?

In 1996 Valplantes decided to extend its activities to include marketing finished products. The idea of producing a drink on a vegetable basis was implemented in co-operation with partners with experience in that sector, and Bio Alp Tea was successfully launched. Annual sales of the three types of Bio Alp Tea (Classic, Relax and Green) now stand at 1,500,000 litres and continue to grow. Today Bio Alp Tea is to be found on the shelves of most Swiss supermarkets. We are currently working on a number of attractive export projects and additions to our range of vegetable-based products.

26) What is the **impact of the project on nature and environment** (How did or does the project contribute towards preserving or improving nature and the environment? How would you quantify this impact?)?

To maintain the biodiversity in the mountain agriculture, to appreciate the soil, the environment and the landscape of the valleys of Canton Valais. The farmers produce on the base of exact biological methods. Due to investment in the drying plant: 30% saving of electricity. Providing a press to condition the plants: 40% decrease of transport

27) What is the **social-cultural and economical value added**?

Sideline for about hundred of families. New possibilities of purchase for: women, countrywomen, mothers who stay at home to care the children, pensioners for completing their pension, family work (all generations included, knowhow is maintained for generations and genders) authentic, innovative products advance image of the region Valais --> tourism

28) Who are the **winners** of the project?

The farmers, the canton Valais, also the research institutes and the industries, win-win situation

29) Are there any **losers**?

No

30) How many and what kind of **working places** were/will be created?

The value added of the co-operation: between 970000 - 1.3 Mio EUR is every year payed to the farmers. 5 Working places were generated within the co-operation. More than 100 t of dry plant of the alps are disposed to the clients. Interesting revenues for the partners of the project Bio Alp Tea.

31) To what extend does the project contribute to **keep the people in the region**?

See question 27 and 30

32) To what extend does the project **contribute to a sustainable development of the alpine area**?

See question 9, 24, 25

**33) What were the main difficulties to deal with and how were they handled?**

34) Are there **multiplier effects** to other economic branches in the region? What are the impacts? Number of new working places where?

35) Does the project require some **special basic conditions** in a region to implement the same project idea?

The following methods and experiences could be transferable: organisation of production with a cooperative structure, cultural techniques and adapted mecanisations to conditions in the alpine regions. Domestication and cultivation of endogenous especies, project with interdisciplinary collaboration, development of finished products, selling regional products to big distributors in a country

36) Are there any **other economic impacts** for the region?

Image of canton Valais increase

37) Is there an **economic impact in other regions or countries** (e.g. possibility to open new markets?)

In the whole Switzerland, perhaps in the future also in foreign countries

38) What was/is the **PR impact and publicity** of the project (How was or is the success made known to the general public? How would you quantify this impact?)

The activities of the co-operation were published in various reports in different media. The broad public was informed with with various campaigns of promotion of the Bio Alp Tea project. The promotions increased the image of the Valais. The communication advances the high profile of aromatic and medicinal plants.

39) Further results/impacts

## Learnings

40) What are the **“lessens learned”** of the project representatives concerning:

- **role and importance of involved key-persons, stakeholders, economical sectors, branches, etc.? organisational designs, legal bodies, co-operations and networking?**

Networking is very important. Only with a good cooperation it is possible to overcome to difficulties in all project phases.

- effectiveness of methods and activities?
- information- and knowledge management, decision making and capacity building?

Regular meetings of the management committee and transmission of the information about the cooperation situation with information evening, active bulletins are important. Creation of a guides committee for the Bio Alp Tea project. Integration of official instance in the technical commission was a important step.

- knowledge-ownership management?
- role of external facilitators?
- project evaluation?
- Difficulties and failures and how they were handled?
- relevance of endogenous resources?  
Without endogenous resource impossible
- role of Money?
- reaching the objectives/goals?
- generation of impacts and added values?
- dealing the winners and losers?
- impacts on regional development (workplaces, keeping people in the region, etc.)
- generation of multiplier effects?
- transfer of project results to other projects, regions, etc.?
- role of PR?
- Further aspects?

## Further

41) What are **recommendations** for other projects?

42) What is a **good practice project from the project representative's** point of the view?

43) Further points

## Documents

44) List of documents