



# Activity Plan 2009

Laid down by the steering group of  
the Swedish Rural Network

LANDSBYGDS  
NÄTVERKET



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas

# Overall objective

The Swedish Rural Network is to improve implementation of the Swedish Rural Development Programme and strengthen its efforts for rural development. It will do this by bringing stakeholders together. The network should also be a national and international forum for broad exchange of information, experience and innovation. It will help to broaden dialogue on implementation at and between local, regional, national and international levels. The network thus becomes an arena for learning and interaction.

The overall objective of the Rural Development Programme is to promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in rural areas. This will be achieved through:

- Improving competitiveness in agriculture and forestry
- Improving environment and landscape
- Diversifying sources of income and improving quality of life in rural areas

# Prioritized areas in 2009



**Integration and equality**

**Environmental aspects**

**Rural attractiveness**

**Leader**

**Increased cooperation ( between organisations and programmes)**

# Integration and equality

It is important that the Rural Development Programme is implemented in such a way that it does not discriminate against any group.

## **Gender equality.**

Entrepreneurs who take part of the Rural Development Programme are significantly more often men than women. We need more information on the mechanisms behind this fact in order to explain it and make the programme more equitable. It is also likely that not enough women in rural areas are aware of the possibilities that the programme offers.

Therefore, the network will give priority to activities that lead to:

- Increased knowledge among network members, particularly administrative officers and LAG, on why the programme is unequal and how we can encourage women in rural areas to develop a business.
- More opportunities to disseminate information on the Rural Development Programme to women in rural areas.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope that more women in rural areas will take part in the programme compared to the preceding period.

## **Young people**

Young people are under-represented when it comes to applying for support and running or participating in projects supported by the programme. This is partly because not enough young people in rural areas know what the programme has to offer them.

Another reason is that LAG and others who work with the programme need to understand how they can reach young people and how young people can contribute to the objectives of the programme. Another explanation is that not enough young people are represented in LAG.

Therefore, the network will give priority to activities that lead to:

- Increased understanding and knowledge in LAG about how young people can contribute to rural development.
- Increased understanding and knowledge in LAG about how LAG might involve young people in Leader projects.
- Every LAG has at least one member less than 25 years old.

If we achieve these effects among our members, particularly among LAG, we hope that more Leader projects will have a youth focus during this programme period than during Leader+.

## **Integration**

Few immigrants live and work in rural areas. Immigrants are also heavily under-represented among those applying for support and participating in LAG. Few immigrants are familiar with the labour market in rural areas and too few entrepreneurs in rural areas employ immigrants. Many immigrants associate rural areas with poverty and underdevelopment and have never had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Swedish countryside. Also, few immigrants are aware of the opportunities in the Rural Development Programme.

Therefore, the network will give priority to activities that lead to:

- The establishment of coaches who can make it easier for immigrants to find work in rural areas.
- Increased cooperation with authorities and organisations that have a lot of contact with immigrants so that they can provide information that offers a more nuanced image of the Swedish countryside, and makes immigrants more aware of opportunities in the Rural Development Programme.
- More LAG having members with immigrant backgrounds and more LAG striving to involve immigrants in their Leader projects.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope that more immigrants will find work in rural areas, start businesses and settle there.

# Environmental aspects

Through the Rural Development Programme we will contribute to solving the major environmental challenges. That is why we need a stronger focus on environmental aspects in each area and each measure of the programme. We need to learn more about the underlying problems. We also need to learn more about methods to use when priorities are made.

Therefore, the network will give priority to activities that lead to:

- Increased understanding of the environmental challenges among our members.
- Knowledge of methods that lead to environmental consideration when decisions are made.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope that more projects and other efforts (compared with the previous period) will have a clear environmental focus.

# Rural attractiveness

Several measures aiming at rural attractiveness have had a slow start. We need to step up our efforts if we are to reach our objectives.

## **Infrastructure**

Not enough people contribute to the objectives of a well functioning local infrastructure in order to strengthen agriculture, forestry and rural attractiveness. One likely explanation is that few know that this measure can be used for other purposes than maintaining roads.

Therefore, the network will give priority to activities that lead to:

- More of our members, particularly administrative officers and LAG, being able to provide inspiring examples to relevant local groups.

If we achieve this effect among our members, we hope to achieve the programme objectives of the measure. For instance, some 300 businesses should have received support and

## **Village renewal and development**

More needs to be done to create a structure that contributes to sustainable development in rural areas. For example, people need to know more about how to handle conflicting interests in local development. More villages and towns need to have their own strategies and plans for achieving sustainable development in the area.

Therefore, the network will give priority to actions that lead to:

- More members, in particular administrative officers and LAG, increasing their knowledge about methods and inspiring those working in local development to make an effort for sustainable development.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope to contribute to the programme objectives of the measure. This would mean that 350 villages per year carry out activities up to an investment volume of SEK 70 million. This, in turn, would lead to maintained or increased number of residents in rural areas and to an increased number of enterprises. In 2013 at least 3.4 million people should live in rural areas.

## **Basic services for the rural economy and population**

More needs to be done to improve access to basic services for businesses and residents in rural areas. Among other things, there are gaps in knowledge about how to create integrated service solutions. Also, there are too few common arenas where players at different levels can interact and form coordinated solutions.

Therefore, the network will give priority to actions that lead to:

- More members, in particular administrative officers and LAG, learning about methods for working with integrated service solutions, as well as inspiring more people to work with basic services.
- Members concerned being able to meet in order to interact on a national level and facilitate service coordination on a local level.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope to contribute to the programme objectives of the measure. This would mean 135 activities per year and investments up to SEK 100 million. This, in turn, is to mean that 0.32 per cent of the population in rural areas benefit from improved services and that 0.5 per cent of the population has improved access to broadband.

## **Natural values and culture heritage**

More needs to be done to preserve and upgrade natural values and cultural heritage in rural areas. More property owners and tourism entrepreneurs need to know the objectives and scope of the measure. The inspiring examples need to be collected and made known.

Therefore, the network will give priority to actions that lead to:

- More members knowing about inspiring examples and spreading them on to stakeholders concerned at a local level.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope to contribute to the programme objectives of the measure. Among other things, this would mean that 175 activities per year are carried out resulting in investments up to SEK 45 million. This, in turn, is meant to result in restoration and upgrading of nature values and culture heritage so that they can be used e.g. for new commercial uses. One goal is to create 280 jobs.

## **Safe working environment**

Some 400-650 accidents happen every year in forestry and agriculture. The Rural Development Programme supports the use of extension services to create a safer working environment, but this is not well known among relevant target groups. Also, better telecommunication is needed so that injuries caused by accidents are not made worse.

Therefore, the network will give priority to actions that lead to:

- Increased awareness among our members about the possibilities to use programme measures to reduce the number of accidents.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope to contribute to a safer working environment in rural areas.

# Leader

**The network has a specific mandate to facilitate learning and interaction between LAG.**

Now that Leader is growing from 12 to over 60 LAG many people are beginners and need to learn from each other. Also, LAG are unaccustomed to working with measures within axis 1 (Improving competitiveness in the agricultural and forestry sector) and axis 2 (Improving the environment and the landscape). There is a need for inspiring examples of how Leader can work with these fields. LAG also need to develop their skills in how to continuously follow up their efforts and how to evaluate them. Furthermore, LAG need assistance to establish contacts for inter-regional and international projects.

Therefore, the network will give priority to actions that lead to:

- All LAG learn more about how to work with the Leader method.
- All LAG, but also other members, understand how to work with the Leader method within axis 1 and 2.
- At least half of all LAG begin to work on monitoring and evaluation issues.
- All LAG have channels and methods for cooperation projects.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope to contribute to the programme objectives for Leader. The objectives include 9000 Leader projects, 970 job opportunities, all LAG have participated in cooperation projects, and the number of Leader projects within axis 1 and axis 2 increases.

# Increased collaboration

The network covers almost 100 national members and all LAG. Thus, there is solid knowledge of rural development in the network. If this knowledge is put together and leads to joint efforts the network would probably be more able to achieve the objectives of the programme.

The accumulated knowledge among network members may be used better to analyse the needs and deficiencies in the programme in order to suggest programme changes but also to indicate needs for the future when this programme has ended. We also need greater consensus and understanding of the objectives of the programme. Above all we need better understanding of the conditions for innovators and entrepreneurs who create rural development. The rural network should strengthen its cooperation with networks in other countries. There is also a need to increase interaction between the rural development programme and other programmes, but the boundaries are uncertain and it is not clear what kind of benefits would be obtained from such cooperation. There are too few inspiring examples of cooperation.

Therefore, the network will give priority to actions that lead to:

- All members having the opportunity to contribute their experience of the programme's progress so that we create continuous and shared learning within the programme.
- More stakeholders of the programme having met and increased their knowledge of the objectives of the programme. They have also increased their knowledge of each other's conditions and how to interact.

- The relevant stakeholders understanding the boundaries of the programme and the uses of cooperation within and between various development programmes.

If we achieve these effects among our members, we hope to contribute to increased efficiency and effectiveness.

# Efforts made by the network grouped under areas of activity

The network will accomplish the desired effects among members through these areas of activity:

1. Network cheques (activities initiated by members)
2. Meetings for all members in the network.
3. Monitoring and analysis of external developments.
4. Web and other communication channels.
5. Activities aimed at LAG.
6. Collaboration between researchers
7. International exchange.
8. Monitoring of network effects.
9. Operational costs

# 1. Network cheques

**All members can initiate and carry out network activities.**

**The steering group prioritizes among the initiatives five times a year.**

**There are cheques for organising conferences, cheques for animation activities, cheques for cooperation between researchers and cheques aimed at LAG for international exchange.**

## **2. Meetings for all members in the network**

**Two meetings for all members**

**Five meetings of the steering group**

**One gala promoting the best rural projects and rural entrepreneurs of the year**

**Three network meetings of LAG**

**Two meetings of communicators from our member organisations**

**Apart from this the rural network will co-arrange a rural conference with the Swedish Board of Agriculture and prepare the Rural Parliament in 2010.**

### **3. Monitoring and analysis of external developments**

**This is achieved through:**

**Thematic working groups.**

**Virtual think-tanks.**

**Monthly tuning with programme management and other relevant groups at the Swedish Board of Agriculture.**

**Two meetings per year in which the steering group and the directors of the County Boards meet.**

**Meetings for our animators.**

## **4. Web and other communication channels.**

**Further development and operation of the website.**

**Monthly newsletters.**

**Sub-network for our communicators from member organisations.**

**Media activities.**

**Documentation from our conferences.**

**Inspiration material**

## **5. Activities aimed at LAG**

**Network meetings of LAG.**

**Identification of training needs and training sessions organized in collaboration with the rural team at the Board of Agriculture.**

**Websites for LAG, including a forum for discussion.**

**Mobilizing and monitoring of collaborative projects.**

**Appoint Leader project of the year during the gala for best practices.**

**Mentor programme.**

## **6. Collaboration between researchers**

**Two meetings of the Scientific Council.**

**A Nordic research forum.**

**Exchange of experience between researchers and between researchers and practitioners through network cheques.**

**Researchers participate in network meetings and think tanks.**

**Preparations for a national research forum in 2010.**

## **7. International exchange.**

**Web pages containing information about European network conferences and coordinating committees.**

**Network cheques for LAG's international exchange.**

**Participation in Nordic and European network meetings and coordinating committee meetings.**

**Dialogue with other European networks.**

**Arranging one meeting between the Nordic network cabinets.**

## **8. Monitoring of network effects 2009**

**External consultant monitors the network's activities in relation to its objectives and reports back to the steering group in the last meeting of 2009.**

## **9. Operational costs 2009**

**Contact point for 100 national and 65 LAG.**

**4 full-time posts.**

**Full-time expert researcher interaction issues.**

**Consultants in the Leader Activities.**