

# Operation of Rural Network Unit in Estonia

Ave Bremse  
Estonian Rural Network Unit

Nordic-Baltic meeting  
12.05.2009

# Establishment of the Rural Network Unit by the Rural Economy Research Centre

**May 2007** - Start of activities at Rural Economy Research Centre (*is an authority under the administration of the Ministry of Agriculture*), performing the duties laid down in the Statutes established by the Minister of Agriculture

**April 2008** – Rural and Fisheries Networks Department:

- Rural Network Bureau
- Fisheries Network Bureau

# Structure of Rural Network

- **Estonian Network Unit** - no formal membership
- - at the moment 4 full time employees + 3 part time
- **Network Cooperation Chamber** – involves associations and organizations representing programme beneficiaries and organizations and authorities engaged in rural development. The members are selected according to the objectives of the axes of the Rural Development Plan
- Working groups:
- **Leader Working Group** - All 26 Estonian LAGs (represented by either LAG chairman, LAG manager, or another LAG representative)
- other working groups – planned in near future
- **Budget** – for period 2007-2013 max. 4.480.000 €

# Rural Network action plan and functions

- **Rural Network action plan:**
  - collection, aggregation and dissemination of best practice and innovative approaches, incl. on the implementation of Leader method;
  - organisation of events for rural development
  - support to cooperation initiatives
  - support activities as Leader information centre
  - administration of an operating website environment of network functions
  - Spread information through website and other means of media.
- **Keywords of Estonian Rural Network are:**
  - step by step development
  - flexibility, to accept new ideas
  - consideration of bottom-up initiative and cooperation
  - development in time
  - Increase positive approach to rural life

# Role of the Rural Network Cooperation Chamber

- Role of the Rural Network Cooperation Chamber:
  - to advise the Rural Network Unit in the preparation and implementation of the action plan;
  - to assist in Rural Network coordination;
  - to advise the Rural Network Unit in the selection of thematic areas and in the coordination of work;
  - to make proposals to the Rural Network Unit for the establishment of thematic working groups, if necessary.

The first session of the Chamber of Co-operation took place on 5 December 2008.

The second Chamber meeting will be in 16th June 2009.

Topics: – working groups  
- involvement strategy



# The Chamber for Cooperation (1)

## Members:

### Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry:

- Estonian Private Forest Union
- Estonian Farmers Federation
- Union of Estonian Young Farmers
- Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce

### Improving the environment and the countryside:

- Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs
- Estonian Council of Organic Farming Organisations
- Centre for Ecological Engineering

## The Chamber for Cooperation (2)

### Improving quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy:

- Estonian Village Movement Kodukant
- Association of Municipalities of Estonia
- Estonian Rural Tourism
- Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations
- Estonian Association of SMEs
- EUROPEA Estonia
- Green Riverland Partnership (Leader group)
- Valga Country Partnership Board (Leader group)
- Estonian Institute of Humanitarian, University of Tallinn
- Pärnu College, University of Tartu

## The Chamber for Cooperation (3)

### Implementing agencies involved in rural development and the implementation of the organizations:

- Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Estonian University of Human Sciences
- EAS Enterprise Estonia
- Rural Development Foundation
- State Nature Conservation Centre
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Estonian Agricultural Research Centre
- Agricultural Registers and Information Board (ARIB)
- Private Forest Center
- Estonian Ministry of the Interior, Regional Development Department
- Rural Economy Research Centre

## Leader working group

- Leader working group acting as a sub-committee of Chamber of Cooperation.

The first meeting – 17. December 2008.

### 4 thematic workshops:

1. Criteria's of selection of Leader best practice.
2. Need of trainings and seminars.
3. Cooperation – transnational and international.
4. Promotional activities.

The second meeting will be in 17th June 2009.

# Annual plans

- Quantitative targets are set only for larger Network activities.
- An annual work plan will be discussed each year with the Ministry of Agriculture and is set out in the ERDP Technical Assistance plan.
- The work programme will be renewed according of needs, with ideas coming from Chamber of Cooperation and Ministry of Agriculture, LAGs and other stakeholders.
- E-mail surveys of network participants will help evaluate the benefit of network activities.
- 2009 – occurred financial difficulties, some exchange of plans. New working annual plan will be for 2009-2010.

# Rural Network activities in 2008

## 2 priorities:

- Support provided by the Rural Network to Leader action groups in transition to the new programming period:
  - to ensure operational exchange of information and seminars
  - to contribute to the maintenance of the activity and cooperation potential of action groups in the transition period
    - e.g.: teleproject SUMMER MORNING in cooperation with the Estonian Public Broadcasting
  - to collect and store the experience of the previous programming period

Axes 1 priority – cooperation and common market



# Rural Network activities in 2009

- Keywords – **International relations:**
- Planned – 2 study tours to Sweden (axes 1 and 4)
- Summer seminar for Estonian LAG-s in Latvia – 29.-30.July 2009
- ENRN is partner for international conferences and seminars in Estonia:
- - **"International Place Marketing Conference"** organised by LAG Tartu Development Association - Alatskivi, Tartu county 20.-21. May 2009.
- LEADER conference **„Involving and developing the Community through the Projects“** Narva-Jõesuu, 28.-29.May 2009 organised by LAG Virumaa Koostöökogu and LAG Kirderanniku Koostöökogu
- **RURAL PARLIAMENT OF ESTONIAN VILLAGES:** *“Active villages help to guarantee the sustainability of rural areas”* organised by Estonian Village Movement KODUKANT - 5.-9.August 2009, Tartu County.

# Network and Leader Activities 2007-2008

Main target for 2007-2008 activities –

- Assist LAG-s as smoothly as possible from old period to the new period

Seminars:

1. “How to build up Leader strategy” – seminars in regions
2. “What is Leader” – seminars for potential Leader-areas
3. “Rules for bookkeeping in Leader” infoday with Paying Agency
4. “Contracts and Law” – seminar with lawyer
5. “How to build up regional Leader-measure” – infoseminars in regions

2009 – involve more LAG-s in organising seminars in Estonia.

Topics for seminars:

- Preparation of NEW LAG-s (3 seminars 2008-2009)
- Improvement the work of LAG’s selection committees
- Implementing strategies
- Publicity

## Support activities

- To visit LAG-s infoday's, seminar's, meeting's, training's, etc - to perform presentations or explain about Leader principles, EU Leader best practice, current Leader situation in Estonia, new period, etc.
- Consultations by telephone
- Represent Leader info in local fair's – Farmers Days, Farmers Fair 2008, 2009
- 2009 – will be continued

## Co-operation with Ministry of Agriculture and Paying Agency

1. Co-operation between NNU personell with managing authorities to work out new legislation for Leader.
2. Infodays and meetings between managing authorities and LAG representatives to prepare and improve Leader legislation.
3. Infoseminar with Leader strategies evaluation experts and LAG representatives 31.10.2008

2009 – will be continued

# Spread of information about rural life

Internet Website [www.maainfo.ee](http://www.maainfo.ee) - information about:

- Leader events around Estonia.
- Rural events around Estonia
- Ministry of Agriculture and Paying Agency
- Seminars
- International events
- Information about EU countries NDP and Leader
- Important regulations or links

Weekly e-newsletter in every Tuesday (important events and information)

Photos from NNU events

- 2009 – NEW improved website
- Information in English
- Databases (LAGs, best practice, partnership search, experts database) – opening step by step!

## International co-operation

- To support international cooperation:
- Partnership search assistance
- Study tour to Denmark – 6.-8.11.2008
- To organise LAG-s participation in conferences and seminars with Estonian Leader information (Portugal, Finland, Latvia, Germany, Italy)
- 2009 – will be continued – criteria for selecting partners will be discussed at Chamber meeting in June.
- - July 2009 – 3 youth workers to summer youthworkers seminar in Germany.

# Researches

## “Implementation of LEADER activities in Estonia”

(October 2008 to January 2009.)

The part of the survey was systematised examples of best practice of Leader activities and the analysis of all 24 action groups.

## “Practical examples of joint marketing of agricultural products (on local level)”. (November 2008 - February 2009)

To find examples of joint marketing of agricultural products produced and processed within joint activity of agricultural producers and other representatives of the sector of enterprise.



# Leader in Estonia

MAAMAJANDUSE  
INFOKESKUS

## Summary of Leader+ period



- In August 2006, 24 non-profit associations, meeting the requirements for a LAG, applied for the support for a local action group
- All the submitted applications were granted: 21+3
- 94% of Estonian rural area was covered by LAGs
- By 30.6.2008, all the 24 LAGs submitted to the ARIB new or complemented strategies of their area

# Estonian Rural Development Plan 2007–2013

## Axes of the Estonian Rural Development Plan 2007– 2013:

**Axis I** – improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector – 40% (5,7 million EEK)

**Axis II** – improving the environment and the countryside – 39% (5,6 million EEK)

**Axis III** – quality of life in rural area and diversification of the rural economy – 21% (3 million EEK)

**Axis IV** – LEADER

**Leader - budget – in Estonia, 10% of the RDP**

**Budget – 1,4 million EEK**

## Axis IV – LEADER (2007-2013)

- On 15 August 2008, the receipt of applications ended. Applications were submitted by **26 associations**, meeting the requirements for a local action group (LAG)
- It was possible to apply for the following:
  - Support for the **development of the strategy** was applied for by- **2**
  - Support for the **implementation of the strategy** was applied for by- **24**
- **98% of Estonian rural area** has been covered by LAGs. 8 local government units have not joined, they can only accede to the already existing LAG's.

# The budget of LAGs for 2008-2010

**1. For the development of the strategy:** up to 2 billion EEK can be applied for– period 1 year

**2. For the implementation of the strategy:**

- the first part will be divided in equal shares between LAGs (20%)
- the second part will be divided, taking into account the socio-economic indicators of the activity area: population, area, receipt of personal income tax and the location of the local government unit in an island (70%)
- the third part will be determined, depending on the quality of the LAG's strategy (10%)

## Refund rate and amount

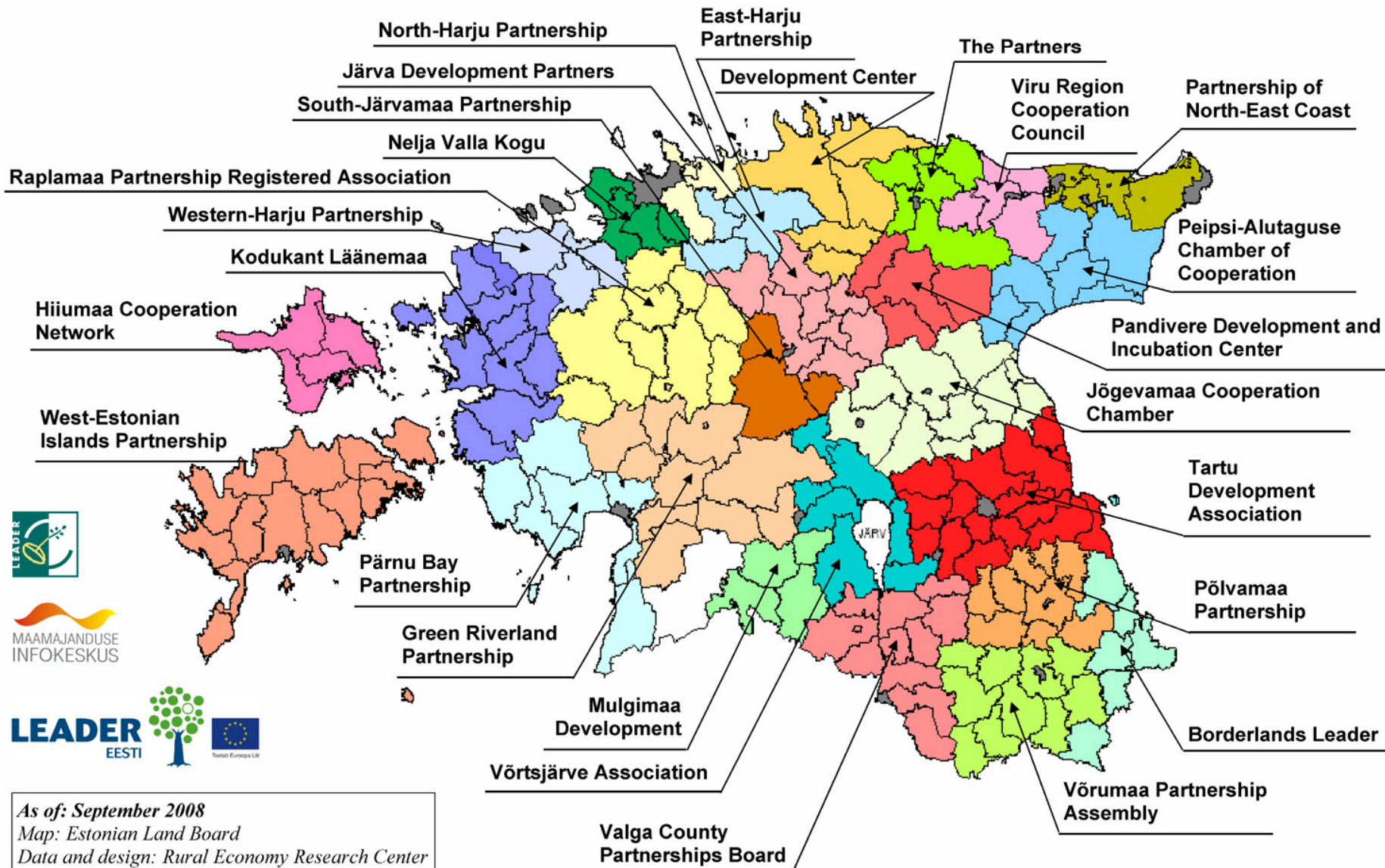
- For the general expenses of a LAG 20% of the budget – refund rate up to 100%
- Support for the development of the strategy – up to 100%
- Support for the implementation of the strategy – refund rate for the projects implemented by citizens' associations and local government units is up to 90%, business sector up to 60%
- Refund rate for infrastructure investments is up to 60%
- Maximum support amount for one object is up to 3 129 320 EEK (200 000 EUR).

# Implementation of Leader projects by LAGs

- The strategy of a Leader LAG includes the main trends of the development strategy of the area and is created within 2007-2013. The strategy can be amended in 2010
- By Leader-axis, the measures of axes 1, 2 and 3 may be implemented
- Each year LAGs submit an implementation plan - by 1 November of the preceding year - presenting LAG's measures and the budget to be opened next year
- International co-operation projects are part of the LAG strategy and budget

# Leader map - 2008

## LEADER ACTION GROUPS IN ESTONIA



As of: *September 2008*  
Map: *Estonian Land Board*  
Data and design: *Rural Economy Research Center*

# Estonian 24 LAG-s implementing strategies - 2009

- open calls for local projects – earliest - 13. January 2009 – latest June 2009.
- Measures and sub-measures – 126
- Total number of applications – (May 2009) – 889
- Sum of applications – 173,3 EEK – 11,1 €
- Approved projects by LAG-s – 170
- Approved projects by PA (ARIB) – 8
- Axes 1 – 1 project, Axes 3 – all others



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**THANKS!** 😊

Krista 😊

Ave 😊

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