

European Rural Sustainability Gathering 2014

18-21 sept. 2014- Beaufortain – France

REPORT



European Rural Sustainability Gathering - 18-21 Sept 2014 – France

This year Forum Synergies' **European Rural Sustainability Gathering** will take place in **Beaufortain territory** (Savoie district in Rhones-Alpes - France), from **18 to 21 September 2014**.

This three-day gathering will be an excellent opportunity to meet people with a spirit of action for sustainable rural development from across Europe. We will visit **good examples of local sustainable development** in a region with a strong civil society activity.

You will discover **the mountains area of Beaufortain**, sometimes presented as “*four municipalities, 4744 inhabitants, 4 hydraulic dams, 4 ski stations and 4000 cows*”. It is an example of a voluntary process of rural development where local authorities, local community and economic actors have been involved altogether for a development of the territory over the past 50 years.

This event will be co-organised with **Savoie Vivante**, an association active in this County since 1986 and with a strong experience in support of community life, and local social policy, in environmental educational and sustainable development, as well as on territorial dialogue and mediation.

We also wish to provide opportunities to **discuss Forum Synergies program and activities** such as: the future of youth in rural areas, local food chains and hygiene rules, territorial civic dialogue, as well as herbs and public health.

PROGRAMME

Thursday 18th: Arrival to the Alpine region

17h00-20h00 Arrivals

20h00 Dinner

21h00 Opening

Welcome: *Annick Cressens (Mayor of Beaufort municipality and president of Communauté de Communes)*

Presentation of the workshop: *Hannes Lorenzen and Marina Guedon (Forum Synergies)*

Short Presentation of the region: *Leopold Viallet and Aurélie Lemeur (Savoie Vivante)*

21h20 **Presentation of participants** (*moderation Savoie vivante*)

22h00 Visit organisation for the following day / good night

Friday 19th: Discovering the Beaufortain region

7h30 **Breakfast**

8h30 **Starting Field trips** (including a pic-nic on the spot)

Field trip 1: Guide: Valérie Geslin (AAB)

8h45: Visit of Ferme du Praz : two cow milk producers are associated to produce milk for Beaufort cooperative. *With Pierre Gachet (farmer and cooperative board member)*

10h30: Visit of Beaufort cheese cooperative where milk is processed into Beaufort cheese DOP. *With Pierre Laurent (Director)*

13h00: Presentation of Association d'Animation du Beaufortain (AAB) (training, support to local associations, social and cultural services). *By Valérie Geslin (Director)*

Field trip 2: Guide: Aurélie Lemeur (Savoie Vivante)

8h45 – visit of Ferme du Bersend: sheep shepherd and cheese maker producing cheese on farm and selling to local shops. *With Loïc Perriault and Jeff Mann (farmers)*

10h30 – Visit of s Marcot slaughterhouse and cutting plant (used by local shepherd to sell their meat directly to customers). *With François Ducruet (director), and Stéphane Frison, (slaughterhouse co-president and GIDA president).*

12h00 – Presentation of Foundation FACIM (promoting local natural, cultural, agricultural and industrial heritage) *By Martine Viallet, (heritage guide in FACIM).*

Field trip 3: Guide: Jeanine Sochas (Savoie Vivante)

8h45 - Presentation of SEM Arêches-Beaufort (ski station owned by local municipalities) and presentation of chart of sustainable tourism signed in 2007 by Beaufort municipality), *With Nicolas Blanc (local elected representative and SEM president), Géraldine Gallice (responsible for the chart of sustainable tourism in 2 ski stations: Arêches and Les Saisies) and Benoît Gachet (in pluriactivity: farmer in summer and ski instructor in winter)*

10h45 – Visit of Ferme des Sapins: angora goat shepherd producing and selling wool, bread and apple juice on her farm and in farmers shops. *With Marie-Hélène Perrault (farmer)*

13h00- Presentation of Association d'Animation du Beaufortain (AAB) (training, support to local associations, social and cultural services). *By...*

15h15 **Coffee Break**

15h30 **Working groups**

Main issues / questions / ideas raised during the visits

16h30 Plenary – feedback on visits (moderation Philippe Barret)

Short feedback on the visits by each group (5 min/ group)

Debate and exchange with a panel of local stakeholders (elected authorities, association, people visited...) (45min)

- *Emmanuel Huguet, mayor of Villard municipality mayor and vice-president of Communauté de Communes*

- *Leopold Viallet, president of Savoie Vivante*

- *Pascal Meunier, ex-elected representative and ex-worker of Communauté de communes (where he was responsible for a programme for local development (OCMMR) and ski station development strategy (Contrat de station))*

17h30 **Market of initiatives** (moderation Philippe Barret)

Presentation and exchange of initiatives and participants in a "market place"

Evening: International Buffet

Saturday 20th: Thematic workshops

9h00 Plenary session to focus on the topics of the workshops (*moderation Hannes Lorenzen*)

10h00 Workshops 1 & 2

In parallel: Herbs / Food

1/ Herbs and health (*moderation: Simone Matouch & Philippe Barret*)

- Herb projects and challenges in Savoie and Europe
 - From 1st European Herb Gathering to a Herb Foundation
- With Christophe Valaz, herb producer in Basse Tarentaise (member of Syndicat des producteurs de plantes (herb producers association). / PNR Bauges tbc*

2/ Local Food chains (*moderation: Oliver Emmes and Hannes Lorenzen*)

- Importance of Local Food chains for local development (local markets, AMAP, producers shops), good example of flexibility in hygiene rules (for mountain cheese makers), local food in school canteens and restaurants.

With Jean Paul Tranchant / local producer.tbc

13h00 Lunch

14h30 Workshops 3 & 4

In parallel: Civic Dialogue / Youth

3/ Rural Youth: from Savoie to Europe (*moderation: Liljana Tanevska and Simone Matouch*)

- Activities run by and for young people in Beaufortain and in Savoy
- Discussion on Young people's needs and ideas for involvement on European networking activities - FS youth scholarships.

With Rémi Serain, responsible for youth policy in Savoie (Savoie Vivante Association).

4/ Civic dialog at different scales (*moderation: Philippe Barret and Marina Guedon*)

- Presentation of Savoie Vivante activities in promoting territorial dialogue in Savoy (training sessions, awareness days for local authorities, departmental council for territorial dialogue...)
- Civic dialogue in Europe

· Working on issues and needs to prepare the Civic Dialogue Gathering in December 2014.
With Aurélie Lemeur, director of Savoie Vivante Association.

18h00 Sharing Results of the sessions

Evening: cultural event

Sunday 21th: conclusions and good-bye

9h00 Forum Synergies General Assembly

10h00 Conclusions and next steps

11h00 Departure (pic-nic will be given to participants)

Report of the Field trip feed back and debate

FIELD TRIPS FEED BACK:



Field trip 1:

- Ferme du Praz : cow milk producers selling milk to Beaufort cooperative (where it is processed into Beaufort cheese DOP)
- Beaufort cheese cooperative and shop
- Association d'Animation du Beaufortain (AAB) (training, support to local associations, social and cultural services)

What would you like to keep as good practice?

- Vision of independence from banks/markets
- Reliance on personal networks as well as collective action
- Combination of pragmatism and strong personal values: e.g. Farmer we met makes same salary as his hired workers.
- Focus on quality/values and not just maximizing profits
- Sense that they have to do it themselves
- High level of solidarity; fought off McDonald's
- Cooperative model
- Persistence/faith in their approach (Emmental model seemed more profitable in 1970s, but Beaufort stuck to their approach and ultimately have been successful.
- Highly participatory/consultative/democratic process

What questions/doubts emerged?

- It is hard to relate to situation: here only 11 people unemployed, relatively high incomes, no conflicting visions for development, extremely high civic engagement, strong solidarity, no multinational corporations or major state projects invading them. There is also government funding for civil society.
- What do they do to manage price/quantity going forward: increase production and lower price? Reduce production to maintain high price?
- When does growth (in cheese production) stop?
- Can they balance agriculture and tourism?
- Land and housing access: how can younger farmers get farms?
- Long-term planning (what about big external issues: climate change? TTIP?)

What suggestions do you have?

- Explore new means of integrating agriculture and tourism?
- Are there other means of capturing more income from tourism?
- Forest: logging, wood processing (there are models in Tyrol of small-scale, mountain-adapted, sustainable forestry. Combines with agriculture as an additional income source)
- Non-timber forest products industry?
- Use of online marketing?
- Other places are experimenting with mechanisms to get land for younger farmers.



Field trip 2:

- Ferme du Bersend: sheep shepherd and cheese maker producing cheese on farm and selling to local shops
- Slaughterhouse and cutting plant (used by local shepherd to sell their meat directly to customers)
- Fondation FACIM (promoting local natural, cultural, agricultural and industrial heritage)

After we visits the group made a list of things that impressed and inspired us most. We summarized this list into 4 final points that captured all our the remarks of the group

1) Strength of the Community

For example:

- Young peasant farmers - being able to sell locally
- Financing of the buildings largely done with local funds
- Being able to work collectively
- Open, not closed for influences from outside

2) Courage to create your own job/ design your own life

- Young farmers choose to live the rural life as peasants.
- designing the slaughterhouse together!

3) Sense of Territory/proud on regional traditions

For example:

- Preserving of old/local races of sheep
- Producing local and traditional products, like the cheese!
- Proud on the region

4) Sense of (ecological) sustainability

For example

- Not going for the maximum, rather for an optimum
- Cow herds in the mountains: understanding the importance of protecting the quality grasslands by not to do overgrazing: max number of cows per area.
- Using the "waste", The whey leftovers from the cheesemaking was used for feeding the porks: Closing the cycles. Also in the slaughterhouse almost all that comes in (the whole animal) is used for something: almost nothing is thrown away.



Field trip 3:

- Ferme des Sapins: angora goat shepherd producing and selling wool, bread and apple juice on her farm and in farmers shops + meeting with a young farmer who returned to her father farm after studying.
- ski station : [SEM Arêches-Beaufort](#) (chart of sustainable tourism, source of season jobs for shepherds in winter, owned by local municipalities)
- Association d'Animation du Beaufortain (AAB) (training, support to local associations, social and cultural services)

The good practice we can learn is **self-initiative and strong cooperation** - working in committees and cooperatives of inhabitants, small-scale producers, farmers, municipalities, entrepreneurs and others that work or live in the area.

Despite of it during the trip a question about the possibilities of participation for local inhabitants appeared as the specialists could not give examples of **public participation outside the official forms** – committees and formal public meetings.

One of many successful local initiatives in the region: **farmers shop run by producers** who control production as well as sales.

Flexibility and possibilities to adapt to harsh circumstances of local activists not just to survive but to create a stories of success doing it on their own, creating a cooperation or with informative, financial or consultative support from municipality or external sources.

Courage, creativity and long-term effect on sustainable development - *Association d'Animation du Beaufortain (AAB)* is an great example of around 30 year experience of innovative solutions for local development, **connecting public and private sector**, informing and supporting local people and municipalities.

Participants of the trip were inspired by **targeted work of union of 4 municipalities** that was made to solve problems and rise development in environmental, economic, social and other fields, signing contracts for territorial cooperation, working on development plans, researches and planning documents activities as well as organizing common activities and realising projects.

Seasonality can be a great value if it's used smart! People can find their way to work different job each season and take it is an advantage while local tourism services and municipality could expand the vision of activities in the summer and other seasons out of skiing (8 month a year there are 80 000 cold beds that are rented just in the winter period and still it is higher demand than the supply).

Youth and young families live Beaufort and come back to live here – as the specialists say it is because of life quality, beautiful landscape and clean environment. Municipality provides support for building the houses for new families which is highly important, but **activities on creating environment for high qualified jobs (especially for women) outside the cities, remote working centres would be suggestible** (as the population is increasing, but birth rate decreasing).



Maintaining and developing ski stations (owned by local municipalities) and other tourism attractions is great example of finding **balance between human activities and nature**. Social and economic processes are taken into account in spatial planning which is something we all can learn from – sustainable making of artificial snow, measuring ecological footprint of one drive in cable drive and other activities.

Key of sustainability is to find the balance. We met a farmer who is shepherd in summer and ski instructor in winter: he didn't need more money or cattle as he had enough work and money to maintain his family. The same was expressed by the head of municipality while talking about tourism. Here we met people who know the limits and **work for more quality not quantity**.

Debate and exchange with a panel of local stakeholders



- Emmanuel Huguet, mayor of Villard municipality mayor and vice-president of Communauté de Communes
- Leopold Viallet, president of Savoie Vivante
- Pascal Meunier, ex-elected representative and ex-worker of Communauté de communes
- Martine Viallet, Fondation FACIM
- Loic Perriault, Farmer (Ferme du Bersend)

· ANSWERS TO SOME COMMENTS OF THE FEED BACK FROM FIELD TRIPS

History of the territory and its link with the sense of community:

When the territory developed, inhabitants were mainly farmers, whose agriculture was based on auto-sufficiency and mutual aid. This has been an important element for the building of sense of community and solidarity.

It is also important to highlight the crisis the territory lived in the 60-70's when dams were built: farmers lost their pastures and had to find an alternative solution: it is when the milk cooperative was created. Thanks to financial compensation, municipalities could invest in ski stations (ski lift) and mountain tracks that favored mecanisation (and to bring milk back to the cooperative).

Access to Land

It is true that land prices are high but we are in a touristic territory. When tourists buy rural houses here, big farm buildings usually include some surrounding land (it is not possible to separate one farm in different plots). That explains why Access to land is difficult in property. However renting is possible as the owners don't have problem in renting lands to farmers.

Tourism: sustainability and diversification

The tourism sector has a complex organisation in Beaufortain. Four ski stations are owned by 4 municipalities and they maintained this competence. The federation of municipalities doesn't have any specific authority in tourism so it is difficult to develop a global touristic strategy in Beaufortain region. Ski stations have a vision on their own development but not on the whole territory. Some collective actions have been launched however, thanks to national contract (trekking routes, mountain bike), but they did not reach the ski stations. Even if they try to diversify, it is still difficult to implement a 4 season's tourism (they are quite dependent on the schools holidays).

Link between agriculture and other sectors / stakeholders (tourism, municipalities).

Farmers are good working together and municipalities do not intervene. The federation of municipalities only took action in the improvement of roads in mountains and in the slaughterhouse. However this local slaughterhouse was created and partly paid (50%) through Beaufortain cooperative by farmers.

When FACIM started its heritage project with farmers, it provided an impetus and now, FACIM is no more leading as farmers are now opening their farms, organise snacks etc.. This direct contact with tourists gives a human dimension to tourism and is a real added-value.

Agriculture situation and perspectives.

For farmers, the situation is not always as idyllic as seen: some farmers are becoming bigger, to the detriment of small farmers and land property is concentrated in fewer hands.

There are positive aspects anyway:

- the cooperative does not discriminate small farms to collect milk
- the fact that milk production per cow is limited and GMO's are prohibited in Beaufort cheese specifications helps limiting a development based only on economic grow. As the human size of farms will be a challenge in the future, some local farmers (like in Bersend) suggest to go deeper, introducing organic production for more added value.

· ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

What is the diversity of agriculture production?

Beaufort producers are a majority (140 members of the cheese cooperative – cow cattle and out of it, there are only 4 goat cattle and 1 sheep cattle making cheese or wool). This has limited the development of other productions (goat, sheep, vegetables...). Installing new farmers out of Beaufort production will be a real challenge in the future. There is space for all production but access to land is limited.

Where is the limit of tourism development, how to maintain the balance with agriculture?

In Arêches, complementarity between agriculture and tourism exists for some shepherds that work in the ski station when animal are not in pasture. However, higher incomes given by tourism may demotivate people from following in the agricultural sector. New housing competing with access to land for farmers will also be an issue.

What about international tourism? Are French speaking tourists the sole target?

The touristic infrastructure does not really fit some costumers' expectations (small flats etc). So they would need to invest in higher standards offer to reach foreign tourists.

What is the role of local association (Association d'Animation du Beaufortain) in the creation of community spirit?

AAB was created by visionary people and `layed a strong role in a sofet and sustainable development of the territory. It supported inhabitants and their projects, basing development on local heritage and respect of natural resources. AAB has a federative role in the local territory and brought together local actors around professional or cultural projects, in a participative way.

IN SUMMARY :

1. It's all about :

CONNECTING:

- own initiatives
- Training
- Educating
- Discovering
- Supporting
- Sensatizing
- Dialogue
- Sharing

COOPERATION

“the human size”

2. We accept our limits

- Our own feed for our animals
- Our water resources for energy
- Our own local animal races
- Limits to quantities of production
- Limits to what nature can carry

=> sufficiency economy

3. We want our Markets back

- Local food chains
 - Local services and training
 - Local processing
- => our added value

4. Yes We Do

- We take our own initiatives
 - We get ourselves organised
 - We reconnect though
- COOPERATION**

5. We take our time

- Slow change
- Slow feed
- Slow food
- Slow tourism

Longivity

Sustainability

Resilience

