



RURAL NETWORK



2010

FINNISH RURAL NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Finnish Rural Network Annual Report 2009

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Cover photo: European action groups met in snowy Levi for an international seminar in March 2009.

1. Key facts 2009

- **LEARNING NETWORK.** A total of 3,278 people took part in Finnish Rural Network events during the year. All in all, 61 different network events were held throughout Finland, and 4 study trips were also organised.
- **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS.** Information about current issues related to the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland was actively communicated on the maaseutu.fi website. After updating of its structure and look, the new Maaseutu.fi website was launched on 14 December.
- **PUBLICATIONS SERIES.** A brochure of acid sulphate soils and also of control drainage were produced to provide background and supplementary information for agri-environment payments.
- **ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAMPAIGN.** The rural entrepreneurship communications campaign was launched in March. The entrepreneurship campaign was publicised on the radio and in newspapers and at fairs.
- **FAIR VISIBILITY.** The Rural Network took part in several fairs across Finland. The main event was Farmari agricultural fair.
- **RURAL EXPERTISE.** The rural expert register was published in March 2009. The expert register currently includes the names of 223 experts.
- **INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS.** In co-operation with Lapland Leader action groups, the Finnish Rural Network Unit invited European Leader action groups to Levi in Finnish Lapland in March 2009. The project seminar brought together nearly 200 action group professionals from 19 different countries. The Network was active in creating new contacts with rural actors in European countries.

Vision of the Finnish Rural Network

In 2013 the Finnish Rural Network will be a strong and flexible network of rural developers that brings benefit to the countryside.

Mission statement of the Finnish Rural Network

The Finnish Rural Network Unit will energise the links between rural actors and achieve a more effective transfer of competence in order to develop the countryside.

Vision of the Finnish Rural Network Unit

In 2013, the Finnish Rural Network Unit will have stimulated an atmosphere of working together among rural actors so that maximum benefit can be obtained from the rural development programmes.

Service principles

Openness

Reliability

Participation

Competent forecasting

Positive thinking

Equality and service orientation

Working together

2. Review of 2009

The aim of Finnish Rural Network activities is to provide information on the opportunities and results of rural development programmes, to increase co-operation with authorities and stakeholders and to enhance expertise through an exchange of experience.

In the year under review Rural Network communications and events highlighted good practices relating to the implementation of the programmes. Top experts from each respective area were involved in planning and implementing the events. Topics included the programme themes, profitability and competitiveness of agriculture, the environment, village activities and entrepreneurship. Particularly important actions included the initiation of the Leader method and Leader module work. The Ruralia Institute, which operates under the University of Helsinki, was selected to run the Leader method development process. The goal is to further reinforce the local aspect in Leader work. Leader module training introduces new people to the principles of action group work, and the process is run by the Lönnrot Institute, which is a part of University of Oulu. Rural Network events have been open to all programme actors, and in 2009, 3,278 people took part in 61 different Rural Network events. During the year, project planning and village activity events and regional road shows on contractualisation were held around Finland.

The theme for 2009 was entrepreneurship and the theme year was launched at an opening ceremony held in Helsinki in March. The aim of the theme year was to highlight rural areas as a good environment for entrepreneurship and to describe the many opportunities that the programme provides for advancing entrepreneurship. A large number of expert entrepreneurship organisations were involved in this co-operation. In spite of the economic recession, new rural enterprises were registered at a satisfactory rate, which is visible in the number of applications for business support received by the Centres for Employment and Economic Development (T&E Centres, provincial authorities) and action groups.

International contacts continue are becoming an increasingly important part of the daily life of rural developers and rural actors. International co-operation brings added value to the rural area through learning, new ideas, networks and good practices. The goal during the current programming period was to focus on networking rural development on a European level. National rural networks have been established in every Member State and they offer an excellent co-operation body for making European connections. Contact Point serves as the co-ordinator of European rural network co-operation. Although the actual international project work was one of the last programme measures to be implemented in the autumn, Finland was still a forerunner in Europe in this matter. The greatest challenge will be to achieve the target of 300 international projects that was set for the programming period.

In the spring, the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture appointed a working group on reducing the administrative burden of rural business and project financing. The working group completed its proposal in December and it provides answers to many questions of concern to actors. The challenge in 2010 will be to put the working group's proposals into practice. Rural Network activities are aimed at promoting the implementation of these proposals. Successful achievement of the rural

development programme goals will require seamless cooperation throughout the entire chain of actors involved in programme work: from rural dweller to legislator. People are at the heart of this process – they are the power behind activities and results.

During the year, the Rural Network steering group and the working groups that it has appointed have performed diverse, active rural development work for the rural development of both Mainland Finland and the Åland Islands. An outstanding group of experts have been involved in the groups. At the beginning of 2010, half of the steering groups members change, and the aim is to make even better use of this new expertise when realising the vision of the Finnish Rural Network: a network working for the good of the countryside.

Päivi Kujala

Director of the Rural Network Unit

3. Administration and organisation

The activities of the Finnish Rural Network are coordinated by the Rural Network Unit. Administratively, the Rural Network Unit is a unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Department of Agriculture and is located in Seinäjoki.

3.1. Rural Network steering group

The Rural Network steering group met four times in 2009.

Composition of the steering group

(The member's deputy is listed in brackets.)

Chairman Esko Juvonen, Agricultural Counsellor, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Members:

Tiina Malm, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

(*Virva Terho*, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)

Sirpa Karjalainen, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

(*Salla Rossi*, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)

Leena Tenhola, Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs

(*Olli-Pekka Peltomäki*, Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs)

Juha Ruippo, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners MTK

(*Ismo Partanen*, Federation of Finnish Enterprises)

Rikard Korkman, Central Union of Swedish-speaking Agricultural Producers in Finland (SLC)

Henrik Ingo, ProAgria Svenska lantbrukssällskapens förbund

(*Jouko Kostamo*, Forestry Development Centre Tapio)

Ursula Immonen, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

(*Irina Herzon*, Birdlife Finland)

Tuula Säynätmäki, Employment and Economic Development Centre for Southeastern Finland

(*Juha Niemelä*, Employment and Economic Development Centre for Central Finland)

Asko Peltola, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia

(*Anne Pesola*, Regional Council of Central Ostrobothnia)

Pertti Sevola, West Finland Regional Environmental Centre

(*Irmeli Ahtela*, Häme Regional Environment Centre)

Paavo Mattila, Suupohja Development Association, LAG Suupohja

(*Sinikka Koivumäki*, Development Association of Seinäjoki Region, LAG Liiveri)

Hilkka Vihinen, MTT Agrifood Research Finland

(*Päivi Eskelinen*, Game and Fisheries Research, Jyväskylä Game and Fisheries Research)

Chris Lindholm, Provincial Government of Åland
(Leif Franzell, Provincial Government of Åland)
Risto Matti Niemi, Village Action Association of Finland
(Niklas Ulfvens, Swedish Study Centre SSC)
Katariina Pylsy, Maaseudun kehittäjät ry (Rural Developers Association)
Liisa Niilola, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation
(Eeva Nurmi, ProAgria, Häme)
Eero Uusitalo, Rural Policy Committee
(Ritva Pihlaja, Rural Policy Committee)
Päivi Kujala, Finnish Rural Network Unit
Secretary, *Hanna Lilja*, Rural Network Unit

3.2. Finnish Rural Network working groups

The four working groups of the Rural Network met as follows:

Inter-regional and transnational cooperation

The Kvarken Council, Christina Knookala
Kainuu Businesswoman LEADER, Liisa Häme (The Village Action Association of Finland, Risto Matti Niemi)
Joensuu region LEADER, Antero Lehikoinen (Joutsenten reitti ry, Petri Rinne)
T&E Centre of Kainuu, Juha Määttä
New Rural Policy Society, Ella Mustakangas
Rural Network Unit, Hans Bergström / Juha-Matti Markkola

The working group had two meetings.

Innovation

HAMK University of Applied Sciences, Tero Uusitalo,
IPS-kylät, (Villages of Eastern and Northern Finland), North Wind Oy, Veli-Matti Karppinen
University of Helsinki's Ruralia Institute, Sami Kurki (, Toivo Muilu)
Artist / farmer, Osmo Rauhala
ProAgria Association of Rural Advisory Centres/ Regional ProAgrarias, Pentti Meriläinen (Österbottens Svenska Lantbrukssällskap, Henrik Ingo)
Rural Network steering group, Hilikka Vihinen (MTT)
Rural Network Unit, Teemu Hauhia

The working group had three meetings.

Leader Working Group

LAG YHYRES, Matti Jaskari (Ostrobothnia)
LAG Etpähä, Jukka-Pekka Jauhiainen (Päijät-Häme)
LAG PoKo, Juha Kolhinen (Pirkanmaa)
LAG Ylä-Savon Veturi, Taina Väre (North Savo)

LAG Peräpohjolan Kehitys, Rauno Kuha (Lapland)
Rural Network steering group, Katariina Pylsy
LAG Aktion Ostrobothnia, Carina Storhannus (Ostrobothnia)
LAG Viisari, Kirsti Pirinen (until 11 May 2009)
LAG Rieska-Leader, Tuula Aitto-oja (North Ostrobothnia, from 11 May 2009)
LAG Nouseva Rannikkoseutu, Satu Sarin (North Ostrobothnia, from 11 May 2009)
Rural Network Unit, Juha-Matti Markkola
The working group had three meetings.

Co-operation in Finnish Swedish speaking areas and Nordic countries

SLC, Rikard Korkman
LAG I samma båt, Sami Heinonen
Österbottens förbund, Nikals Ulfvens
Government of Åland, Leif Franzell
Svenska studieccentralen/4H, Hed-Mari Björkell
Finska hushållningsällskapet, Jörgen Grandell
TE-center, Kaarlo Lepistö
Rural Network Unit, Hans Bergström
Study trip to Jönköping, Sweden on 5–6 February 2009, visit to Kreativ Landsbygd seminar, Swedish Board of Agriculture and the Swedish Rural Network Unit.
The working group had two meetings.

3.3. Personnel

Director of the Finnish Rural Network Unit, agronomist, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Päivi Kujala

Nätverksombudsman (Network Coordinator, services in Swedish), BA

Hans Bergström

Information Officer, Ph.D.

Kirsi Hakoniemi

Network Trainer, M.Sc. (Econ.)

Teemu Hauhia

Network Coordinator, M.Sc., (Business and Economic Sciences) (Network Secretary until 1 May))

Hanna Lilja

Network Coordinator, M. Sc., (Agriculture & forestry),

Juha-Matti Markkola

Network Secretary, M.Sc. (Econ.) (from 18 May)

Sanna Puumala

Public Administration trainee, 18 May–15 August 2009

Niklas Holmberg, University of Turku

4. Reviews by task area

4.1. Networking

Rural Network activities promote networking through events, including training sessions, study trips and working group meetings. One of the issues considered as a whole when planning events is bringing together a network that functions well in relation to the theme with the best possible expertise and disseminating information. For example, stakeholder bodies involved in the theme area were invited to training events so that information would be disseminated to the broadest possible group of actors.

Implementation of Rural Network study trips observed the same principles as those applied to the planning of other events. The participant network gathered for a trip on a specific theme was expanded to the international level through cooperation between national Rural Networks. The international Leader seminar held in Kittilä in March also promoted international networking.

Working group activities make use of the network organisations' know-how and expertise when planning the implementation of rural development programmes.

Challenges to achieving networking targets

Based on feedback, the targets for networking were well met in 2009. Training events and study trips brought a large number of stakeholder bodies together around different themes. The study trips and Leader seminar also laid the foundation for international networks and cooperation. A large number of representatives from different organisations took part in the work of working groups, and the groups produced good ideas and proposals for planning and implementing the rural development programme. The study trips provided participants with the opportunity to interact with one another in the context of joint seminars and general discussion. The autumn project days and trips and visits allowed the participants to network and exchange information.



Regional rural actors met at the Kymenlaakso Rural Forum held in Kotka on 1 April 2009.

4.2. Communications

During 2009, the Rural Network Unit provided information in many different ways on the measures, support schemes and related news of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland and the Rural Development Programme for the Province of Åland. The channels used in communications included the Internet (www.maaseutu.fi / www.landsbygd.fi / www.rural.fi) and electronic bulletins as well as printed publications. Communications were carried out in cooperation with stakeholders and various Rural Network actors. By nature, communication was active, open and easily understandable.

The theme of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland in 2009 was entrepreneurship. Rural entrepreneurship was broadly presented in many different communications channels throughout Finland. The theme of the communications and marketing campaign, which continued until early November, was "Making ideas reality. Every opportunity for enterprise."

In addition to the communications campaign, communications in 2009 increased national awareness through newspaper announcements about training events and participation in various events and fairs. The target groups for communications were Finnish citizens in general, the rural population, members of the Rural Network, beneficiaries, the bodies implementing the programme and the rural network units of other European Union countries.

The highlighting and targeting of communications continued in 2009 on the basis of feedback and requests. Careful planning went into the development of electronic communications, and a major website overhaul was completed during the year.

Challenges to achieving communications goals

In 2009, the challenges facing communications work were associated with the available resources. The website publication system worked technically better than in the previous year. The transition to the new version of the publication system opened up new opportunities for content production, but it also took a long time to make some functions available. Website content production and updating work was smoother this year than in the previous year, which shows in the more up-to-date content.

The Maaseutu.fi development project improved website usability and also made it easier to update. On the other hand, the new website elements require that more time be spent on content production coordination, for example, between regional communications contact persons.

The shortage of human resources in relation to the many communications needs of rural developers and the diversity of Rural Network Unit communications was reflected in oiling up of communications work and occasional problems in the timeliness of communications. By distributing assignments a certain amount of improvement was achieved in the human resources situation.

Communications in 2009

Communications campaign to promote rural entrepreneurship

In March 2009, the Rural Network Unit launched a communications campaign to promote rural entrepreneurship together with its partners (The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners MTK, ProAgria, Federation of Finnish Enterprises, Finbio, Rural Business Working Group,

Finnish Enterprise Agencies, Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry). The kick-off event was held on 11 March 2009 at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki.

The communications campaign encouraged entrepreneurship in the countryside, and it was aimed at current and potential rural entrepreneurs and the general public. The campaign showed that entrepreneurship promotes the well-being of rural areas and that it benefits all Finns. The campaign provided information on the financing opportunities for rural entrepreneurship offered by the Rural



Development Programme for Mainland Finland in axis 3 (improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity). The campaign also drew attention to the fact that financing for rural enterprise is sourced from European Union funds.

The campaign to promote rural entrepreneurship was seen and heard in the spring, and again during a second campaign peak in the autumn, in national newspapers, on radio channels, at fairs and in the campaign section of the maaseutu.fi website, which presented the diverse opportunities for rural entrepreneurship. The Rural Network also promoted rural entrepreneurship at the Farmari agricultural fair held on 30 July–2 August 2009.

The communications campaign to promote rural entrepreneurship lasted until the beginning of November. The communications campaign was led by the steering group, which consisted of Rural Network actors. The campaign implementation received excellent feedback: the target was achieved and the campaign measures and supplementary material were considered successful. As a result of the entrepreneurship campaign, Rural Network communications reached many new media channels and audiences, including local radio stations and newspapers and many websites all over Finland.

Internet

Development work on the maaseutu.fi, landsbygd.fi and rural.fi websites

The websites were created and links were provided to current information in Finnish, Swedish and English. An electronic questionnaire on the functionality of the maaseutu.fi website was sent to partners and stakeholders in the early part of the year. More than 200 responses to the extensive survey were received. The group which coordinates communications on the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland processed the results of the survey in the spring and considered improvement measures to improve the website.

During the year project and steering groups were set up for a major overhaul of the maaseutu.fi website, which was carried out during the year. External expert assistance was utilised for developing the project concept. Three workshops were run by a network expert, the first of them involving a detailed review of the website development needs and a discussion of different methods of implementation. The concept designer drew up a simple, concrete model as the basis for comprehensive development work.

The goal for renewing the website was to make it easy for each user to find the desired information and for the website to serve different users as a pathway providing access to the diverse range of rural issues. The new style clarified the website structure, sharpened its content, redesigned the appearance and thus improved website usability. The new website was launched in December 2009.

Another topic considered in the development project was how more news material could be produced for the website with the existing human resources. The development project reviewed the practices for producing and updating content so that the website would work as a tool capable of reacting quickly, maximising its limited resources.

Rural Network web TV

Planning work for the planned web TV did not progress in 2009. It was found that there is no longer a need for web TV on the maaseutu.fi website, as the new website publication system allows for the addition of videos. Videos are primarily utilised as training material. Illustrative video material produced by other Rural Network actors can also be added to the website.

Development of a Rural Network register of persons with special expertise and competencies

A register of persons with special expertise and competencies was published on the maaseutu.fi website in spring 2009. The base information was compiled from the register data of the New Rural Society, and the content was expanded through partners and stakeholder networks.

Brochures

Layout templates were produced in A4 and B5 format for Rural Network publications in spring 2009. The templates will be used for background and supplementary guides, including brochures and other publications. The templates were brought into use immediately and found to be very functional: the templates standardise background and supplementary guides, give them a uniform appearance and make practical layout work easier.



The international Levi Leader seminar arranged by the Rural Network Unit and Lapland action groups on 17–19 March 2009 included a number of different workshops.

In spring 2009, the Rural Network Unit's brochures were updated in all languages: Finnish, Swedish and English. The Finnish-language version of the Rural Network's annual report was also published in the spring and the Swedish version in the autumn. An additional print run of the general brochure for the rural development programme – Food for Growth – was also ordered in all language versions (Swedish, English, German and French).

A trilingual Leader pocket brochure was produced for the international seminar held in Levi in March. The pocket brochure was very popular among Finnish and foreign Leader groups, so an additional print run was ordered in late spring. A brochure of acid sulphate soils was produced in cooperation with ProAgria in Finnish and Swedish. A brochure of control drainage was produced in cooperation with Finnish Field Drainage Association and the Organisation of Swedish-speaking Producers in Ostrobothnia in both languages as well..

The programme brochures are available on the maaseutu.fi website at <http://maaseutu.fi/fi/index/viestinta/esitteet.html>. Rural Network brochures can be ordered by sending an e-mail to lahettamo@mmmtike.fi.

In 2009, the Rural Network Unit began planning for the production of a brochure on rural Finland. The brochure is intended to present the Finnish countryside as a diverse and modern operating environment and place to live. The brochure is primarily being produced in English to meet the needs of international readers. The biggest task in this process was found to be producing the text content and selecting suitable photos for the text. Further clarification of the target and implementation of the brochure will continue in 2010.

Publications

The manual for project actors, was translated into Swedish and is available on the www.landsbygd.fi website.

Newspaper work

In 2009, the Rural Network Unit produced three supplements together with the Maaseutu Plus newspaper: Maaseutu Plus 2/2009, 3/2009 and 5/2009. A separate print run of the 3/2009 supplement was ordered for distribution at the Farmari agricultural fair. An international magazine was published in autumn 2009 in cooperation with Maaseutu Plus.

A supplement was produced in cooperation with the Maaseudun Tulevaisuus newspaper in October and a corresponding Swedish-language supplement was produced with the Landsbygdens Folk newspaper in December.

In March, the Rural Network was involved with the Regional Council of Lapland and the Lapland T&E Centre in producing a supplement presenting the opportunities of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland from a regional perspective. The supplement was published in March 2009 along with the Lapin Maakuntasanomat newspaper.

Newspaper announcements on training and other events were extensively published in regional and local newspapers and in trade journals. In 2009, articles in newspapers published in different parts of Finland described Rural Network activities, including the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland theme for the year – entrepreneurship.

Preparation for the environmental theme of 2010 began at the end of the year in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Rural Development Unit, which is responsible for the theme content. In October, the Rural Network contributed some environmental material for the PR and communications agency Viestintätoimisto Deski's "green season". Their online service is an idea website for journalists, which supplies ideas for articles, news topics and background material. Participation in the green season was visible in the Rural Network Unit's media monitoring.

Media monitoring

In spring 2009, the Rural Network Unit learned more about online media monitoring and, after trial use, decided to enhance its media monitoring by purchasing licences for the Meltwater news monitoring service. Meltwater's online news monitoring services gives users access to news after logging in to the service through their e-mail. News monitoring users can freely select their search areas or keywords. In 2009, the online media monitoring keywords included Countryside and entrepreneurship, Rural development, and Agricultural competitiveness. In addition to online media monitoring, the compilation of a newspaper cutting file was continued in 2009.

Bulletins

In 2009, the Rural Network Unit sent out summarised news bulletins in both the country's official languages. Distribution of bulletins in Finnish and Swedish increased significantly during the year, and press releases were also sent out in both languages according to communications needs. E-mail was actively used to communicate about daily news and current events.

Electronic newsletters

In 2009, the Rural Network Unit produced article material for the rural developers' newsletter Liiteri and for the agricultural policy newsletter Verso.

Information signs

The Rural Development Unit was responsible for purchasing information signs indicating Rural Development Programme funding. Multiprint Oy was selected to supply the signs. The information signs (four sign types) were delivered as ordered to the action groups (sign types 1 and 2) and the T&E Centres (sign types 3 and 4) in April 2009. Additional sign orders were also placed in 2009. The signs were updated in early 2010 due to the changes affecting the T&E Centres (now Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment).

Fairs

In 2009, fair work focused on the entrepreneurship campaign. The Rural Network took part in the Sarka fair in Seinäjoki in February 2009, with the South Ostrobothnia T&E Centre as its partner. The Rural Network also took part in the Oma Yritys entrepreneurship fair held in Helsinki in March 2009.

The Rural Network also promoted rural entrepreneurship at the Farmari agricultural fair held in Kokkola in July–August 2009. In conjunction with fair preparations were made for a national journalists' study trip aimed at highlighting rural entrepreneurship. However, the trip was later cancelled due to a lack of interest.

The Rural Network took part in three fairs in autumn 2009: the goal for participation in the Kuntamarkkinat fair, a forum for public administrative bodies, held in September in Helsinki was to increase cooperation with local and regional authorities. In October, the Rural Network participated in the KoneAgria fair in Jyväskylä with the Central Finland T&E Centre. In November, the Rural Network and Southwest Finland T&E Centre participated in the From Countryside to the Marketplace fair for rural entrepreneurs in Turku.



The Farmari agricultural fair held on 30 July–2 August 2009 was an excellent place to promote rural entrepreneurship.

Other communications events

In January 2009, the group coordinating communications for the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland arranged a meeting of the communications contact persons in Helsinki. The aim of the meeting was to learn about old and new communications elements and share experiences among the participants. Current issues related to programme communications were discussed during the day, with a special focus on the entrepreneurship campaign and the maaseutu.fi website development project.

A second meeting of the communications contact persons was held in December 2009 in Tampere. During the day participants exchanged opinions about programme communications during the year, including discussion of the completed entrepreneurship campaign and the renewed maaseutu.fi website, for which it is hoped that the regional communications contact persons will produce content in the future. The Rural Network Unit presented the Best Practices competition for the coming year. Each participant outlined their communications for the next year at the meeting, in addition to exchanging ideas about social media and how it can be utilised in communications.

The Finnish Rural Network's communications were presented at a meeting of network units organised by Contact Point in Budapest in September 2009.

Programme communications and information material

The communications and information material needed at fairs and other events in 2009 was purchased in cooperation with the group coordinating the development programme communications. The Rural Network Unit placed its first order for USB memory sticks with the programme look for the Levi international seminar in March. A second order was placed in response to the positive feedback received for the trial batch. The purchase of Rural Network pens was transferred from the group coordinating communications to the Rural Network Unit. The pens have been in great demand during the programme period, and additional orders were placed in preparation for future needs.

The Rural Network promotional sweets were further developed after the trial batch: the visual look was changed and the sweet itself was also changed. The new sweets were available in November. Fishing rods with spring and autumn versions of the campaign look and sports bags were produced to meet the entrepreneurship campaign needs for distribution at fairs.

During the year, photo purchasing agreements were signed with two photographers to support programme communications.

4.3. Education and training

The objective of Rural Network training is to highlight the opportunities of the development programme, to network actors and to provide background information to supplement training relating to implementation. The comprehensive training themes in 2009 were primarily influenced by needs that were expressed by Rural Network actors when compiling the training plan in autumn 2008. Planning was also based on the training and service needs survey carried out in summer 2008.

The focus of training in 2009 was training to provide background information relating to micro-enterprise activities and project support. For example, theme-specific project days held in the autumn were intended to communicate good practices regarding project activities. The topics of other training themes were rather evenly distributed among all development programme issues.

In May–June 2009, the Rural Network Unit carried out a training and services needs analysis in which the target group comprised all the T&E Centres and action groups. The objective of the survey for 2010 was to place the focus of training on the issues and needs that were considered most important in the survey.

The Rural Network arranged altogether 61 training events in 2009 (see Appendix 1. RURAL NETWORK TRAINING 1 JANUARY–31 DECEMBER 2009). A total of 3,278 people took part in Rural Network training, and the average number of participants in the events was 54. The training events were held in cooperation with various stakeholders.

The topics of the training events were divided by axis in as presented in Appendix 1. The feedback received on the training has been collected by topic in Appendix 1. The need for training was still considered to be great at this stage of the programme period.

The following section describes Rural Network training.

Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry

To enhance the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry training was organised around four themes in 2009: these were related to the Act on Public Contracts, rural construction planning and improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry. In addition, the forestry project days offered training and disseminated good practices.

Training on the Act on Public Contracts was arranged in cooperation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. The training addressed the principles of the Act and related background issues. The Act on Public Contracts applies to all machine and equipment investments of more than EUR 15,000 that receive financing from the development programme and have a subsidisation level of over 50%. The Act also applies to many rural construction investments and project work.

All actors with a possible interest in extending their planning activities to agricultural and rural construction were invited to the rural construction planning days. This event represented the first web TV recording of a Rural Network training session, which is available on the [Maaseutu.fi](http://www.maaseutu.fi) website at <http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/kalenteri/koulutusmateriaalit/koulutus23.html>. The afternoon session of the seminar also included a broad panel discussion on rural construction planning, and this can also be viewed as a web TV recording.

The agricultural competitiveness seminar series continued with events held in Kuopio and Loimaa. The seminar topics included improving the competitiveness of milk and beef production, vegetable production, domestic animal production and agricultural innovations.

Improving the state of the environment and countryside

The topics of training themes related to improving the state of the environment and the countryside were animal welfare payments and biodiversity. In addition, the seminars at the autumn environmental project days and the study trip day offered training and disseminated good practices. The study trip involved learning about wetlands, game fields and traditional biotope sites. The project days generated excellent feedback, and more such events will be arranged as themed days in the future.



One of the topics at the Environmental Project Days was building wetlands. Photo: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry / Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs, Martina Motzbäuchel.

Training in issues related to animal welfare payments was provided for advanced students of veterinary science in cooperation with the Agency for Rural Affairs and the Association for Animal Disease Protection.

The Rural Network was involved in arranging the annual seminar on agricultural biodiversity. The event organisers were the Finnish Environment Institute, ProAgria, the Rural Women's Advisory Association and the Ministry of the Environment. Once again, the seminar brought together a large group of people working in the planning and implementation of biodiversity, traditional biotopes and wetlands.

Diversification of rural business and quality of life in rural areas

Events relating to the quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of rural business were arranged on the topics of micro-entrepreneurship and village planning.

A seminar day for small entrepreneurs was arranged in the Åland Islands, where small entrepreneurs from Mainland Finland, the Åland Islands and Sweden told their success stories and described their challenges and problems. Entrepreneurs were also given time to network during the day.

Comprehensive village planning seminars were arranged for village actors. The objective of the seminar days was to reinforce the role of village planning and find new ideas for developing villages. Representatives of local authorities, village actors, action groups, Forest Centres, environmental authorities, Road Regions and other people interested in village planning were invited to the seminars. During the seminars there was lively discussion on matters relating to village zoning and safety issues.

The Participating Village training session was an event aimed at village actors and village project leaders. The topics of the two-day seminar included finding the strengths of each village, a do-it-yourself village plan and matters relating to village economy.

A seminar day entitled "Employment Path" was arranged in cooperation with the Lapland Village Association / Lapland Village Association Support. The main objective of the seminar was to find a Lappish operating model for responsible village association employment. A number of different models were presented during the seminar and decisions were made about further measures.

The Responsible Local Community regional road show that had been initiated in autumn 2008 continued during 2009. Five events were held during the spring. Events for village actors, action groups and local development associations were arranged in cooperation with the Village Action Association of Finland and the Union of Rural Education and Culture. Topics addressed during the day included understanding the future of local development and improving practical skills and organisational prerequisites. A total of 18 events were held during 2008–2009.

Leader

A total of three training events for Leader action group board work were held in spring 2009, one of which was in Swedish. There seems to be a continuous need for such training, as the composition of the boards changes every year. The objective of the training was to introduce the board members to the principles of Leader method, the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland and the responsibilities and obligations of board members. The events also served as an important annual forum where action group representatives and officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Agency for Rural Affairs can meet.

Developing the quality of action group work was one of the themes for 2009. In cooperation with the Agency for Rural Affairs and the Rural Network Unit, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry organised negotiation days regarding the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland's action group work. The objective of this event was to develop programme work and increase interaction among the various actors. An action group work development seminar was also held in conjunction with the meeting. The development seminar addressed the Leader method and the status of action groups and their future prospects.

The Leader method development process began in the autumn. After competitive bidding, a consortium comprising the Ruralia (University of Helsinki) and Lönnrot (University of Oulu) Institutes and Otava Folk High School were selected to run the process. The Leader method development process brings together action group personnel, action group board members, administrative officials associated with action group work and researchers with experience of action group work. The objective of the work is to increase the amount of systematic development dialogue and interaction between action groups, to identify and find solutions to the challenges of action group work, and to support planning of the next programme period for Leader activities (2014–).

Autumn 2009 also saw the start of module training sessions for action group work. The aim of the training is to ensure consistent and high quality induction of new action group personnel and to update the information and skills of those already involved in rural development work. After competitive bidding, the Lönnrot Institute was selected to implement the training. Two of the five training modules with different themes were held in autumn 2009 and three will be held in spring 2010.

Many action groups have expressed interest in developing quality and management systems. The Quality Day for action group work provided basic information on quality systems, presented the Kärki–Leader and Central Karelia Jetina quality and management systems as examples, and encouraged action groups in their quality work. Development work relating to quality and management systems for action groups will be included in the action plan for 2010.

Leader also expanded to the Åland Islands in 2009 when Leader Åland launched its activities in the early summer. There have been several contacts with the Åland Islands. The executive director and board members of Leader Åland took part in their first board training session on 6 June in Tampere. During the autumn it was agreed that Leader training events would also be arranged in the Åland Islands.

All programme areas

Training themes relating to all programme areas were held for municipal rural authorities, the payment authorities responsible for the development programme. The annual programme negotiation days were also held.

All Finnish municipal rural authorities were invited to the Winter Days in Ikaalinen, and nearly 300 participants accepted the invitation. The Winter Days were arranged in cooperation with the Agency for Rural Affairs: the first development programme seminar day was arranged in the form of Rural Network training while on the second seminar day the Agency for Rural Affairs provided training relating to programme implementation.

Spring Days were held in Oulu for the payment authorities responsible for the development programme. The objective of the training days was to increase the payment personnel's competence regarding work assignments and their well-being at work. Training planning was implemented in cooperation with the Agency for Rural Affairs.

In cooperation with the Rural Network Unit, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Rural Development Unit arranged a series of negotiation days for local and regional rural developers involved in the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland. The series included negotiation days relating to action group work, business development and entrepreneurship and community development and project activity. The events brought together programme work experts and actors to acquire new information and discuss the programme's strategic guidelines, the current state of implementation, challenges and future prospects. Feedback on the negotiation days was good and the plan is to arrange them on an annual basis.

4.4. Compiling and disseminating good practices

Compiling and disseminating good practices was promoted through network events and communications, including the maaseutu.fi website. In spring 2009, the University of Oulu carried out a preliminary study of the implementation of the Sähköinen Silta (electronic bridge) communications system as an outsourced service. Based on the preliminary study, the Rural Network steering group made a decision in its autumn meeting concerning further measures on implementing the electronic bridge. The objective is to use the electronic bridge to build multi-channel electronic services to meet the needs of rural researchers, developers, funders and trainers with regard to communication of good practices.



There was active contact with rural actors in other European countries. This photo shows Ave Bremse from the Estonian Rural Network Unit.

Themed project days were also found to be a good means of sharing experiences and good practices in project work. In the future, they will be continued as national events that address different themes.

Preparation of the Best Practices 2010 competition began at the end of the year. In January 2010, the Rural Network will announce the Best Practices 2010 competition for rural actors. The goal of the competition is to communicate good practices and disseminate beneficial operating models that have been created within the framework of the Finnish rural development programmes. In this way, tried and proven ideas and operating methods will be transferred to other parts of the country. Preparations for the competition started with a working group comprising representatives from the T&E Centres' action groups, ProAgraria, Ruralia, the Agency for Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Rural Network Unit.

4.5. Inter-regional and transnational cooperation

Cooperation between the regions in Finland was promoted by arranging national and regional events and training. These brought together experts from different fields across regional borders.

The European Network for Rural Development (EN RD) began to play a more active role in 2009. The majority of national rural networks have started up their activities, and the exchange of information between the rural network units of different countries has begun.

The EN RD Contact Point began operating in autumn 2008. During the spring, Contact Point arranged meetings of rural networks, published the Rural News newsletter and forwarded project partner searches. The European Network's website was launched at: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>

At the end of March the Commission held an opening seminar for the European Network for Rural Development in Brussels, which attracted rural actors from all over Europe. An eight-person delegation from Finland took part in the seminar.

The rural networks of Scotland, Estonia and Finland met at a joint seminar on a study trip for environmental actors in Scotland.



Cooperation with neighbouring regions continued actively. The cooperation between rural network units initiated by Finland in 2008 with Sweden, Denmark and Estonia has expanded to include the entire Baltic Sea region. Cooperation with neighbouring regions involves the exchange of everyday information between the network units. A joint meeting will be arranged twice a year: in May the Swedish Rural Network Unit hosted a meeting of the Baltic Sea Region rural network units and the same units met again in Denmark in November.

Cooperation with the Swedish Rural Network Unit on a closer footing than before. The Rural Network's Swedish-language working group Svenska arbetsgruppen visited Jönköping in February. During the visit the working group participated in the Kreativ landsbygd seminar and familiarised themselves with work of the Swedish Board of Agriculture and rural network/network unit activities.

Svenska arbetsgruppen's chairman Rikard Korkman and Swedish-language network coordinator Hans Bergström took part in the Swedish Rural Gala and the related network event and in a meeting of Leader executive directors held on 30 September–1 October.

A sense of community was reinforced at the Levi Leader seminar in many ways, one of which was winter sports. Photo: Ave Bremse.



Tammerforsträffen was an informal network event held in Tampere for Swedish speaking and bilingual stakeholders. The Rural Network Unit and Svenska Studiec centralen cooperated to arrange Tammerforsträffen, which involved two meetings, one in March and another in November.

The increase in international cooperation was particularly visible in project partner searches. Requests for cooperation with action groups were received continuously from all parts of Europe, and Finnish groups actively searched for partners in other countries as well.

Two Rural Network study trips were arranged in the spring: Italy was the destination for a study trip dealing with axis 1 issues, while the heads of Agricultural Administration travelled to Denmark. In the autumn, study trip groups visited Scotland and the destinations in Central Europe were Slovakia, Austria and Hungary. The study trips were carried out in cooperation with the national rural networks in the destination countries. Members of the Estonian Rural Network also took part in the study trip to Scotland.

An interesting new opening in the utilisation of rural networks was a lecture on Italian rural development held for students at HAMK University of Applied Sciences. The lecture was given from Rome by a representative of the Italian Rural Network via the web conference service.

With regard to international activities, the largest single event was the international Leader seminar arranged by the Rural Network Unit and the Lapland action groups in Levi in March 2009. The event attracted approximately 200 participants from 19 countries, including Russia and Norway. During the week, the participants learned about Finnish Leader work, looked for project partners and considered the current status and future of Leader activities. The seminar received excellent feedback.

During the autumn, a series of four international project training sessions were held in cooperation with the Agency for Rural Affairs. The objective was to discuss the instructions and regulations relating to international projects and to highlight good examples of international projects.

Thematic work began in the European Network for Rural Development. The aim is to select rural development themes and use them to determine opportunities for cooperation and results of development activities on the European level. The forestry and "social farming" thematic networks were launched at the December meeting of rural network units.

The Rural Development Unit planned the programmes and accompanied diplomats as they toured South Ostrobothnia on 11–12 June 2009 and 7–8 September 2009. The trips were hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's International Affairs Group.

Finland's administrative representative on the EN RD Coordination Committee appointed by the European Commission is Virva Terho from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry while the rural network representative is Päivi Kujala from the Rural Network Unit. Sanna Sihvola from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Juha-Matti Markkola from the Rural Network Unit are members of the Leader subcommittee. The Commission has also established four thematic working groups to promote rural development programme work. Professor Hilikka Vihinen from MTT Agrifood Research Finland is a member of the "Targeting territorial specificities and needs in Rural Development Programmes" working group and Professor Jyrki Niemi a member of the "Agriculture and the wider rural economy" working group. There is no Finnish representative in the "Public goods and public" working group. The fourth group is called "Delivery mechanisms of rural development policy" and will start its work at the beginning of 2010.

Rural Network study trips

Study trip to Denmark for rural administration leaders, 15–18 April 2009

Study trip to Italy for the people responsible for structural aid and stakeholder groups, 19–24 April 2009

Study trip to Edinburgh, Scotland for environmental actors, 28 September–2 October 2009

Leader study trip to Slovakia, Austria and Hungary, 14–18 September 2009



A study trip to Italy for the people responsible for structural aid including learning about the production of Parma ham.

Participation in meetings and events of European Rural Network

European Commission seminar for rural networks, “Capacity building for national rural networks”
The challenges of national rural networks to efficiently support the implementation of EU rural development policy, Brussels 30–31 March

- Moderator Round table: Networking to achieve a better integration of rural development policy, Liisa Häme, Kainuu Businesswoman Leader
- Assisting rapporteur Efficient Tools and Interlinks Between Networks working group, Juha-Matti Markkola, Rural Network Unit
- 10 Finnish participants

Cooperation seminar: “Common ideas and good contacts – motivation for successful partnership”, Kaunas, Lithuania, 3 April

- presentation by Antero Lehikoinen, Joensuu Region Leader (expert sent by the Rural Network Unit)

Prague, Czech Republic 13 February, Networking for rural development: towards a greater stakeholder involvement,

- presentation on networking of axis 2 actors: New Stakeholder Involvement, Päivi Kujala, Rural Network Unit

- presentation: Stakeholder example: TEHO project in Finland (Widespread use of effective agricultural water protection means), Airi Kulmala, Southwest Finland Environment Centre
- Working group moderator Päivi Kujala, Rural Network Unit

Brussels, Belgium 29 April

- Cooperation between the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development and European Network for Rural Development
- Compiling and disseminating good practices
- Examples of organising rural network activities

Seville, Spain 8–10 June Rural development seminar FICODER (Foro Internacional de Cooperacion en Desarrollo Rural)

- panelist in the round table discussion “Challenges in Transnation co-operation in Europe”, Juha-Matti Markkola, Rural Network Unit
- Finnish Rural Network stand at the seminar’s exhibition area
- A meeting of European Rural Network Units was held in conjunction with the FICODER seminar.



The Rural Network Unit took part in the FICODER (Foro Internacional de Cooperacion en Desarrollo Rural) rural development seminar in Seville, Spain on 8–10 June 2009.

Budapest, Hungary 16–17 September 2009

- Presentation of Finnish Rural Network’s communications strategy and measures, Päivi Kujala, Rural Network Unit

Brussels, Belgium 9–10 December 2009

- Juha-Matti Markkola, Teemu Hauhia, Päivi Kujala
- theme work on Social farming, Forestry policy and Good practices
- Also present from Finland was expert Pirjo Räsänen from the tourism theme group

Meetings of the Baltic Sea Region cooperation network

Åhus, Sweden 13–15 May

- Juha-Matti Markkola, Teemu Hauhia, Kirsi Hakoniemi
- Representatives from Poland were present at the meeting for the first time

Billund, Denmark 3–5 November 2009

- Juha-Matti Markkola, Teemu Hauhia, Hans Bergström
- Special theme: Baltic Sea strategy
- Marjatta Kempainen-Mäkelä from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was present as an expert
- A representatives from Germany was present at the meeting for the first time

Tartu action group seminar, International Place Marketing Conference, Alatskivi, Estonia 20–21 May

- Kirsi Hakoniemi

5. Financial review

The Rural Network Unit operates with technical assistance from the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland.

Realised budget 1 January–30 December 2009.

	Vuosi 2009	
	Budget 2009	Paid
Salary costs	365 000	350 862
– establishment costs	120 000	107 883
– action plan costs	245 000	242 979
Travel costs	170 000	99 249
Procurement	200 000	44 321
– establishment costs, procurement lawyer	27 000	420
– action plan costs	173 000	43 901
Information, including website, brochures and brochure material	485 000	711 499
Network events	440 000	235 180
Good practices and networks	90 000	15 898
Promotion of international and inter-regional and transnational cooperation	160 000	93 212
Other costs, including rents, IT, meetings, office supplies, personnel training, etc.	245 000	142 797
Total	2 155 000	1 693 018

Appendix 1.

Rural network training 1 January–31 december 2009

TRAINING EVENTS AND FEEDBACK

Feedback was collected by means of Webropol surveys and feedback forms that were collected at the events.

Axis 1 Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry

Application of the Act on Public Contracts	
Content and learning objective:	Act on Public Contracts and related background issues, application of the Act on Public Contracts
Target group	Municipal authorities, T&E Centres, action groups, advisors, private consultants, investment aid recipients applying the Act on Public Contracts
Number of participants	104
Type of training	Regional seminars
Location and date	25 May 2009 Kannonkoski (21 participants) 24 June 2009 Salo (10 participants) 16 September 2009 Pori (23) 10 November 2009 Kemi (24) 26 November 2009 Vaasa, Swedish-language event (26)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies:	Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

Construction planning day	
Content and learning objective:	New trends in agricultural construction planning, normative cost accounting and other matters for consideration
Target group	Construction planning stakeholders, agricultural construction engineers, construction supervisors at the T&E Centres, private consultants, students of architecture, etc.
Number of participants	92
Type of training	Lecture
Location and date	3 February 2009 Vantaa (48 participants) 23 November 2009 Kuopio (44)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies:	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs, T&E Centres

Agricultural competitiveness seminars	
Content and learning objective:	Measures to improve agricultural competitiveness, continuation of the national agricultural competitiveness seminar held in December 2008
Target group	Farmers, researchers, advisors
Number of participants	178
Type of training	Workshop-type regional events
Location and date	9 March 2009 Kuopio (100 participants) 2 November 2009 Loimaa (78 participants)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies: MTK, working group on agricultural income and profitability, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	

Axis 2 Improving the state of the environment and countryside

Training in animal welfare payments	
Content and learning objective:	To promote the health and welfare of animals and other issues related to animal welfare
Target group	Students of veterinary medicine and veterinarians
Number of participants	16
Type of training	Seminar
Location and date	11 March 2009 Helsinki (16 participants)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies: Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs, Association for Animal Disease Prevention ETT	

Environmental Project Days	
Content and learning objective:	The opportunities provided by the rural development programme in environmental protection and measures in agri-environment payments, non-production investments, new special measures related to agri-environment payments
Target group	Advisors, consultants, authorities at T&E Centres and environment centres, action groups
Number of participants	101
Type of training	1 seminar day, 1 study trip day
Location and date	8–9 October 2009 Lahti (101 participants)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies: Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs, ProAgria, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation	

Axis 3 Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Entrepreneurship seminars by theme	
Content and learning objective:	Promoting knowledge of project activities: review of development work being done in Finland by topic. The objective is to transfer good practices for operating and promoting inter-regional cooperation and networking among actors.
Target group	Project implementers, authorities, developer and expert organisations
Number of participants	70
Type of training	2 national seminar days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project day for forestry examples of ongoing projects • Project day for service entrepreneurship examples of ongoing projects
Location and date	10 November 2009 Turku, service entrepreneurship in the countryside (25 participants) 2 December 2009 Helsinki, Project day for forestry (45 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies:	T&E Centre

Seminarium for small-sized entrepreneurs	
Content and learning objective:	To by means of the RDP give inspiration to new and to develop working small-sized entrepreneurs in the countryside and in the archipelago. Focusing on young entrepreneurs. Presentations by 15-20 enterprises, their factors of success and financing possibilities through RDP. Mixed branches and participated entrepreneurs from Finland, Sweden and Åland
Target group	small businesses and young entrepreneurs
Number of participants	160
Type of training	seminarium
Paikka ja ajankohta	11.3 Mariehamn (160 participants)
Person responsible:	Hans Bergström
Organising bodies:	Ålands landskapsregering

Regional development days for action groups and village actors ROAD SHOW Future workshop – Responsible local community	
Content and learning objective:	Understanding the future of local development and improving practical skills and organisational prerequisites – how the National Village Action and Leader Group Programme 2007–2013 can be implemented at the regional level and how the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland supports its implementation.
Target group	Representatives of provincial village coalitions and Leader groups, village representatives, executive directors and employees, other local development organisations and associations, elected municipal representatives and civil servants
Number of participants	201
Type of training	Seminar, 1 day
Location and date	8 January Mikkeli (62 participants) 14 January Kajaani (31 participants) 28 January Joensuu (64 participants) 16 February Vasa (23 participants, held in Swedish) 27 May Kolari (21 participants)
Person responsible:	Hans Bergström
To help local actors develop cooperation and understand joint development targets and methods Organising bodies: Village Action Association of Finland, Union of Rural Education and Culture, regional village associations: Järvi-Suomen kylät ry, Kainuun Nuotta ry, Pohjois-Karjalan kylät ry, Aktion Österbotten rf, Lapin kylätoiminnan tuki ry.	

Comprehensive village planning	
Content and learning objective:	To shed light on the importance and requirements of village planning that should be taken into consideration in rural living and its development.
Target group	Local authorities, action groups, forestry centres, forest management associations, road region personnel
Number of participants	290
Type of training	Regional seminar days, 3 in Finnish, 1 in Swedish
Location and date	23 April 2009 Pori (80 participants) 8 May 2009 Rovaniemi (56 osallistujaa) 3 June Pieksämäki / Peiposjärvi (74 participants) 7 September Suomusjärvi (80 participants)
Person responsible:	Hans Bergström
Organising bodies: LAG Karhuseutu and LAG Veej'jakaja, Järvisuomen kylät, Lapin kylätoiminta, National Land Survey of Finland, Ministry of the Environment	

Participating Village – training for village actors	
Content and learning objective:	Developing the content of village planning, learning methods, finding the strengths of a village, village economy management, village and organisational activities
Target group	Village actors, village representatives, project actors, T&E Centres and action group personnel
Number of participants	32
Type of training	2-day seminar
Location and date	19–20 November Laukaa (32 participants)
Person responsible:	Hans Bergström
Organising bodies:	University of Vaasa Levón Institute

Axis 4 Leader

Training day for new action group board members	
Content and learning objective:	Developing the quality of board work, programme knowledge, knowledge of regulations and guidelines, action group work, knowledge of operative work
Target group	Action groups, new board members
Number of participants	102
Type of training	Regional events, 2 in Finnish, 1 in Swedish
Location and date	7 March Tampere (16 participants) 9 May Oulu (73 participants) 6 June Tampere (in Swedish) (13 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola, Hans Bergström
Organising bodies:	Action groups

Development seminar for action group work	
Content and learning objective:	To develop the Leader method and assess what action group work will be like in the future and how the Leader-based rural development work can be utilised. A brainstorming session for developing Rural Network work.
Target group	Action group personnel and development association board members
Number of participants	68
Type of training	National event, 2-day seminar The seminar is a continuation of the development seminar held in Vantaa on 30 January 2008. The development seminar was linked to the Agency for Rural Affairs training day held on 1 April and the action group work negotiation day held on 2 April for action groups.
Location (city, country)	3 April Espoo (68 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies:	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs, Ruralia Institute

Quality Day for action group work	
Content and learning objective:	New openings in action group work, the challenges of bureaucracy and good practices
Target group	Action group work professionals from administration to project actors
Number of participants	25
Type of training	National event
Location and date	5 June. Punkaharju
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies: LAG Kärki-Leader and LAG Jetina	

Info seminars for action group work	
Content and learning objective:	Development of cooperation in action group work and the municipal sector
Target group	Action groups, elected municipal representatives and authorities
Number of participants	70
Type of training	A seminar held in conjunction with the Municipal Days
Location and date	9 September Helsinki, The countryside as a municipal resource (70 participants) 9–10 September Helsinki, booth at the stand display
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities	

International LEADER seminar	
Content and learning objective:	Development of Finnish and European Leader action group networks, finding project partners, brainstorming and planning international projects, presentation of Finnish Leader work
Target group	Finnish and other European action groups, European rural network units
Number of participants	183
Type of training	3-day seminar + related events
Location and date	17–19 March 2009 Levi, Kittilä (183 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies: Leader Action groups in Lapland, Regional Council of Lapland, Municipality of Kittilä, Levin matkailu	

Internationalising countryside training theme	
Learning objective	Planning and implementation of international projects, practical examples of successful international projects, tools for finding partners
Target group	Local actors, action groups and village personnel, representatives, entrepreneurs
Number of participants	133
Type of training	Training for T&E Centre personnel and 3 regional events
Location and date	27 August Seinäjoki, international project implementation training day for T&E Centres and action groups (47 participants) 29 September Rovaniemi, regional international training (27 participants) 6 October Pieksämäki, regional international training (27 participants) 17 November Helsinki, regional international training (32 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies: Agency for Rural Affairs, action groups	

All axes, programme areas

Winter Days for municipal rural authorities	
Content and learning objective:	Utilising the opportunities of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland, background information and good practices for agricultural and rural development, current financing and project issues, administrative reform
Target group	Municipal rural authorities
Number of participants	288
Type of training	Lecture, group work, 2 days/event
Location and date	28–29 January 2009 Ikaalinen (288 participants)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Agency for Rural Affairs	

Training events for Regional Management Committee rural divisions / regional rural networks	
Content and learning objective:	To develop forms of cooperation between rural divisions and promote regional networking, exchange of good practices, project work in the new programme period
Target group	Rural divisions of Regional Management Committees
Number of participants	65
Type of training	2 regional events, 1–2 days/event, continuously by calendar year
Location and date	23 September Siilinjärvi, joint meeting of Eastern Finland (South Savo, North Karelia, Kainuu) rural divisions (40 participants) 3 November 2009 Oulu, meeting of North Savo and North Ostrobothnia rural divisions (25 participants)
Person responsible:	Päivi Kujala, Sanna Puumala
Organising bodies: T&E Centres of South Savo, North Karelia, Kainuu and North Ostrobothnia, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	

National open seminar with the theme of rural innovations	
Content and learning objective:	Promoting cooperation and networking, presentation of new rural innovations and innovation methods, review of current Rural Network issues
Target group	Rural Network actors
Number of participants	111
Type of training	National seminar held in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the New Rural Policy Society
Location and date	12 November Tampere, researcher meeting, communality among rural experts (68 participants) 13 November Tampere, open seminar (43 participants)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies: New Rural Policy Society	

Project planning and project implementation	
Content and learning objective:	To increase the competence of project implementers, good practices and principles related to project planning and implementation
Target group	Project implementers
Number of participants	516
Location and date	21 January 2009 Seinäjoki (65 participants) 22 January Kokkola (36 participants) 27 January Vaasa (35 participants) 3 February Kuopio (44 participants) 4 February Turku (74 participants) 24 February Rovaniemi (40 participants) 24 March Rantasalmi (34 participants) 7 May Oulu (40 participants) 13 May Tampere (38 participants) 15 May Jyväskylä (36 participants) 12 June Helsinki (18 participants) 27 August Hämeenlinna (24 participants) 9 September Pori (32 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies: Implemented in cooperation with Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, T&E Centres and action groups	

Seminar for development programme payment authorities	
Content and learning objective:	Rapporteur course, coping and well-being at work, auditing and bookkeeping, communications, Act on Public Contracts
Target group	Development programme payment authorities, payers of financial support and persons making grant decisions
Number of participants	84
Type of training	National event
Location and date	25–26 May 2009 Oulu (84 participants)
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Organising bodies: Agency for Rural Affairs	

Meetings of responsible persons at T&E Centres	
Content and learning objective:	Current issues
Target group	T&E Centre personnel responsible for action groups, business support and the programme
Number of participants	63
Type of training	National meetings
Location and date	28 August 2009 Meeting of persons responsible for action groups, Seinäjoki (14 participants) 29 October 2009 Autumn meeting of persons responsible for business support, Helsinki (24 participants) 5 November 2009 Meeting of persons responsible for the programme, Seinäjoki (25 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola, Päivi Kujala
Organising bodies: Agency for Rural Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	

Programme negotiation days	
Content and learning objective:	Direct dialogue between the Ministry and local and regional actors, promotion of feedback and exchange of experiences, review of the current status of programme work
Target group	Local and regional rural developers
Number of participants	283
Type of training	National meetings
Location and date	2 April Helsinki, Negotiation days for action group work (153 participants) 22 April Helsinki, Trade development and business activities (60 participants) 27 May Helsinki, Development of communality and project activities (70 participants)
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Organising bodies: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, T&E Centres	

3 Study trips

Based on the needs of stakeholders, the Rural Network Unit also organised themed study trips in Finland and Europe in order to exchange good practices and find peer groups.

Axis 1

Study trip	
Content and learning objective:	Agricultural investments
Target group	T&E Centre, Agency for Rural Affairs, ProAgria, Farmers, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK)
Number of participants	30
Type of training	Study trip
Time /duration	April
Location and date	Rome, Bologna, Florence 19–24 April 2009
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Cooperation with the Italian Rural Network Unit	

Axis 2

Study trip	
Content and learning objective:	Good practices regarding environmental measures in development programmes
Target group	T&E Centre, Agency for Rural Affairs, ProAgria, action groups, executive directors of MTK unions, Ålands landskapsregering, Finnish Environmental Institute
Number of participants	30
Type of training	Study trip
Time /duration	September–October
Location and date	Edinburgh 28 September–2 October 2009
Person responsible:	Teemu Hauhia
Cooperation with the Scottish and Estonian Rural Networks	

Axis 3

Study trip	
Content and learning objective:	Agricultural support administration, bioenergy, rural micro-enterprise activities
Target group	Managers of rural departments at T&E Centres, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Agency for Rural Affairs
Number of participants	19
Type of training	Study trip
Time /duration	15–18 April 2009
Location (city, country)	Copenhagen / Lolland / Denmark
Person responsible:	Päivi Kujala
Cooperation with the Danish payment authority and the Danish Rural Network Unit	

Axis 4

Study trip	
Content and learning objective:	Good practices in Leader activities, learning about Leader work and actors in other countries, promoting international project activities
Target group	Persons responsible for actions groups at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Agency for Rural Affairs and T&E Centres
Number of participants	30
Type of training	Study trip
Time /duration	September
Location and date	Slovakia, Austria and Hungary 14–18 September 2009
Person responsible:	Juha-Matti Markkola
Cooperation with the Slovakian, Austrian and Hungarian Rural Network Units	

Rural Network financing was also used for the following events:

Kyminlaakso Rural Forum, 1 April, Kotka

- Regional event for rural actors
- 3rd rural forum to be arranged
- The theme in 2009 was food
- More than 150 participants

Meeting of researchers of rural services and well-being, 23–24 April Jyväskylä

- The objective of the seminar was to survey the research being conducted in the field of rural services and well-being in Finland. A second important aim was to promote interaction between researchers and research groups.
- Bodies responsible for the seminar: Rural Policy Committee's Theme Group on Well-being and the National Institute for Health and Welfare
- Presentation: Research, knowledge and practice – the Rural Network Unit's perspective on encountering research and development, Juha-Matti Markkola

Living and lived-in villages – seminar and workshop, 4–5 May, Kajaani

- Seminar and workshop on village living, moving to the countryside and zoning
- The main organisers were the Kainuu Businesswoman Leader and Oulujärvi Leader

T&E Centre regional project training sessions (project implementation):

- South Ostrobothnia, Seinäjoki, 22 January
- Lapland, Rovaniemi 25 February
- Southeastern Finland, Kouvola 9 February
- South Savo, Savonlinna 6 May and Mikkeli 7 May
- North Ostrobothnia, Oulu, 8 May

Energy day for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's administrative sector, Helsinki, 5 June 2009

- National climate and energy policy and its objectives in the agriculture and forestry sector
- Energy policy in the agricultural sector and current energy issues
- Rural development programme support and international investment support for farms

Study trip by Central Finland rural actors to the Farmari fair in Kokkola, 30 July 2009

- Networking with partners and a visit to the Farmari fair and its diverse range of expertise

Study trip by Central Finland municipal rural authorities to North Savo, 26–27 August 2009

- Learning about local activities

Natural resources as a strength in sparsely populated rural areas, Helsinki, 8 September 2009

- The importance of sparsely populated rural areas for Finnish competitiveness
- The countryside as a raw material storehouse and resource for creative activities
- Harnessing local resources to serve income formation in the area
- The role of the Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland in supporting the vitality of sparsely populated rural areas

LOKAALI seminar Vaasa 1–3 October 2009

- Negotiation days for village activities and Anniversary seminar for local developers

Negotiation days for agricultural environmental protection, Turku 11 November 2009

- The objective was to ensure common application practices in the area of environmental protection and water legislation, and to review changes in the legislation

Training day for municipal rural authorities and the T&E Centre's rural and energy sector, Mikkeli, 27 November 2009

- Current issues regarding rural development, implementation of support policy and cooperation

Contractualisation road show organised by the Rural Policy Committee's Contractualisation theme group

- The tour began in autumn 2009 and will continue in spring 2010. Eight events were held in the autumn: in Lieto, Pori, Kouvola, Kitee, Ilmajoki, Saarijärvi, Jokiainen and Rovaniemi.
- The objective of the tour was to present new methods for supplementing rural services and find new, flexible local solutions to safeguard continuity of services.

Agricultural Lumo Day, Helsinki, 29 January 2009

- Planning of special agri-environment support and non-production investments, planning special support agreements, especially buffer zones, wetlands, traditional biotopes, biodiversity
- Organising bodies: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation, Finnish Environment Institute.



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

The Finnish Rural Network brings together the various actors involved in the rural development programmes, including Leader action groups, associations, advisory organisations and other stakeholders.



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