



Selected logs at the start of the value chain...

GERMANY

At the cutting edge of timber

By funding three different projects related to the regions timber sector, Leader+ helps to secure the local economy by maintaining employment and reinforcing the identity of local products.

by Sabine Weizenegger, LAG Manager, Altusried-Oberallgäu

Introduction

The local action groups of the Allgäu region are proving that it is not only Scandinavian companies who can market pine and beech woods, since their 'timber value chain' projects are not only enhancing the image of this local raw material, but also providing an income for the region.

In the Allgäu region, the timber industry provides employment for around 6 000 people. According to estimates, up to one third of the Allgäu population is dependent one way or another upon the woodland, forest or timber sectors; either directly as their primary or secondary income, or indirectly as linked to one of the many associated upstream or downstream industries. It is no surprise then that the 'timber value chain' should play a key part in the regional development plan of the local action group (LAG) Altusried-Oberallgäu, with its emphasis on local products and services. One objective is to give a boost to the local timber industry, but it is also intended that the population should learn to appreciate the diversity and value of this local raw material.

Since the LAG started its operations in February 2004, a number of timber-based projects have been implemented. With the support of Leader+, two inter-territorial cooperation projects have been initiated; the 'Allgäu 05' timber construction fair, and the 'in.silva' timber marketing association. Moreover, in the Oberallgäu municipality of Wildpoldsried, Germany's first timber-built multi-storey car park has been built with support from Leader+.

From basic woodwork to master carpentry

The 'Allgäu 05' timber fair was organised by an association based in Kempten (Allgäu), established in mid-2003. This association now has over 100 members, including woodland owners, saw-mill operators, carpenters, architects and planners. The aim was to organise the first regional timber construction fair which would make the 'timber value chain' concept clear to everybody. The target groups of this fair were not only the end users, but all of the value chain's





interested parties. The fair was seen as an opportunity to provide and obtain information, and exchange views and network, since previously a lack of knowledge and awareness of the potential of the region's timber had existed.

The trade fair, which was held in Kempten (Allgäu) under the slogan 'Short cuts — lasting pleasure', attracted several thousand visitors. More than 50 companies were present as exhibitors. The event included specific presentations and was supported by a lively fringe programme, including demonstrations of historical saws and ornate saw workings. Such was the success of the event that both fair organisers and exhibitors repeated it in September 2006.

Leader+ has been supporting the public relations and project management costs, while self-generated funding has been made available from exhibitors' fees. Additional resources have also been made available by a German fund for the sale of timber. Four LAGs are involved in this regional development project: Altusried-Oberallgäu Regional Development, Kneipppland® Unterallgäu, Impuls Westallgäu 10+, and Ostallgäu.

Timber producers join forces

A further cooperation project involving these same four LAGs is the establishment of the 'in.silva' timber marketing cooperative. The impetus for this came from developments in the round timber sector over recent decades, which has seen a number of mergers in the sawmill industry and, at the same time, an increase in the number of forest owners. Currently, the needs of regional sawmills can be met by pooling the supplies of the different forestry cooperatives and forest owners' associations. However, it is a different matter to ensure supplies to large customers, who require a constant, year-round supply of timber of a consistently high quality, and preferably delivered to the factory. This problem is compounded by the need to stockpile significant quantities of timber, especially from small private woodlands, which gave rise to the idea of establishing 'in.silva'.

...are eventually transported for processing.

In harmony with traditional trading relations

Founded in 2004, the 'in.silva' cooperative began commercial operations in the early summer of 2005. This cooperative brings together organisations of small private forest owners, and provides on their behalf, marketing services for fixed lengths of timber to large customers, together with the necessary delivery to factories. Regional sawmills continue to be supplied directly by forestry cooperatives and forest owners associations, so consequently there is no conflict of interest. The sales volume achieved by 'in.silva' is growing steadily, and is now operating internationally following the appointment of the Austrian Federal forestry operator Österreichische Bundesforste AG. Leader+ support has been provided in the form of an initial one-year funding for the business premises and administration of the cooperative, and self-generated funding has been provided from the cooperative's own resources.

Natural parking

Even before the days of Leader+, the municipality of Wildpoldsried had already made a name for itself in the world of timber. In 1995/96, the elementary school was extended using a stacked board construction, while the Wildpoldsried sports hall, also of timber construction, was completed in 2004. Leader+ has now delivered a further project in the form of the 'Wildpoldsried timber garage'.

Since 2002, the local authority has been operating a 'sheltered housing' scheme. Some of the scheme's senior citizens, who drive their own cars as a means of maintaining mobility, experienced difficulties with the wintry conditions, and many requested help for garaging their cars. A solution presented itself when the local authority had a chance to acquire a dilapidated farmhouse, which it was able to transform into a multi-storey car park for the sheltered housing scheme.

So, the summer of 2005 saw the opening of Germany's first timber-built multi-storey car park. The aim was not only to provide suitable parking places for senior citizens, but also to serve as a demonstration project in order to encourage other project owners to adopt timber construction, thereby promoting sales of local timber. A requirement for the project was the supply of information material about the timber-built car park, and the provision of access for visitors. Leader+ support has been provided for investment and public relations work, while self-generated funding has come from the municipality of Wildpoldsried.

Cooperating at a regional level

In the case of the two cooperation projects, 'Allgäu 05' and 'in.silva', both were commissioned and supported under the overall management of the Altusried-Oberallgäu LAG for regional development. Projects were discussed, firstly with the relevant LAG managers and the Leader manager



A sharp eye and a steady hand are important attributes

as intermediary body between LAG managers and the ministry (Bavarian characteristic), and then were referred to the decision-making authorities of all the participating LAGs prior to the filing of applications. In neither project have the LAGs invested their own funds, but have only released development funds from their respective quotas. The geographical proximity of the cooperating LAGs is such that no separate preliminary project costs have been incurred.

A particular feature which is conducive to inter-territorial cooperation in the Allgäu is the fact that it is a region with a strong identity. For many projects, having a single LAG therefore made no sense: extensive areas of the Allgäu fall within the fringes of the Leader+ area, while towns constitute separate administrative areas; the western part of the Lindau district and the southern part of the Oberallgäu are only small dots on the development funding map. It is also important to note that the Leader manager is responsible for all the four LAGs, what has simplified the administration of inter-territorial cooperation.

Member State: Germany
Region: Bavaria
Name of the Leading LAG:
 Regionalentwicklung Altusried-Oberallgäu
Population: 82 000
Surface area: 684 km²

Holzbaumesse Allgäu 05
Project total cost: EUR 150 565
EU: EUR 13 200

Other public funds: EUR 28 200
Private funds: EUR 109 165
Period of project eligibility:
 April 2005–October 2005

'in.silva'
Project total cost: EUR 105 273
EU: EUR 8 771
Other public funds: EUR 8 771
Private funds: EUR 87 731
Period of project eligibility:
 May 2005–April 2006

Wildpoldsried timber garage
Project total cost: EUR 183 242
EU: EUR 91 621
Other public funds: EUR 91 621
Period of project eligibility:
 October 2004–November 2005

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