

France – innovation example 2

COLLECTIVE APPROACHES BY BREEDERS

Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels Languedoc-Roussillon (CEN L-R)

www.cenlr.org/content/hnv-link/

- **Location:** Throughout France and in the Causses and Cevennes.
- **HNV system:** All types of system. In the examples that are presented, mostly in pastoral systems.
- **Scale of operation:** Large scale
- **Timespan:** Depending on the individual projects, from several years (for studies) to several decades (SIQO, direct distribution)
- **Keys to success:** Mainly the involvement of breeders and their basic willingness to take action plus, in second place, mobilisation of funding and communication about the projects



Figure 1

Problems addressed by this example

Collective approaches by breeders correspond to needs that have been identified by the breeders themselves: the need for improved enhancement of their products; the desire to improve their practices; the wish to create social links and to create added value on their farms; the need for recognition of their practices. There are a variety of difficulties but the assessment is often the same: working collectively enables the delivery of projects that a breeder cannot carry out alone.

Story in a nutshell

The breeders' collective approaches combine several categories of example which have become fairly current in France over a number of years:

- Product quality: Official labels identifying quality and origin (*Signes Officiels de Qualité et de l'Origine* - SIQO) and brands;
- Product enhancement: direct distribution, farm shops, Agrilocal;
- Organisation of the sector: local slaughterhouses, dispensation for oak and chestnut woods in CAP areas;
- Improved agricultural practices: the Robustagno Operational Group, an Economic and Environmental Interest Group (*Groupement d'Intérêt Economique et Environnemental* - GIEE).

What does collective approaches by breeders achieve for HNV farming?



Figure 2 Breeders in the Raiolaine collective – Source www.raiolaine.org

- Collective approaches by breeders have existed in the region for a very long time, almost 100 years for the Roquefort AOP (*Appellation d'Origine Protégée* label indicating origin) but some are very recent (for example, the GIEEs)
- 2 IGP (*Indication Géographique Protégée* label indicating protected geographic origin) – 2 AOP – 1 Label Rouge (Red Label quality mark) – 2 brands
- **Collective direct distribution:** *Boutiques Paysannes* (Farm shops), *Bienvenue à la Ferme* (Welcome to the Farm), Agrilocal
- **Collective approaches for sector organisation:** slaughterhouses have been taken over by breeders in the towns of Die and Guillestre (Outside the LA)
- **Approaches linked to practices:** the Robustagno operational group (GO), GIEE (22 in the 4 regional Departments)

Achievements

The SIQO quality labels have been remarkably success throughout France for the commercial recognition they convey. Consumers perceive them as a guarantee of quality. Direct distribution is increasingly popular with consumers who prefer a direct link with producers.

The slaughterhouses that have been taken over by breeders outside the LA are still in operation and one has even increased its tonnages.

The GIEEs and the GO enable breeders to reconsider their practices and there is a significant pool of breeders who are motivated to work within these groups.

Economics of HNV farming

The principal and secondary objectives of most of the collective approaches of the breeders are to improve the added value of farm products and so improve profitability on the farm (but we have no exact figures for this).

Maintaining or improving HNV values

The approaches are linked to extensive systems using local resources and so support for this type of farming permits the continuation of forms of HNV agriculture in the region. However, certain initiatives, such as the SALSA project, have a clear agro-ecological objective.

How does collective approaches by breeders respond to the HNV LINK innovation themes?

Example 1: Agrilocal

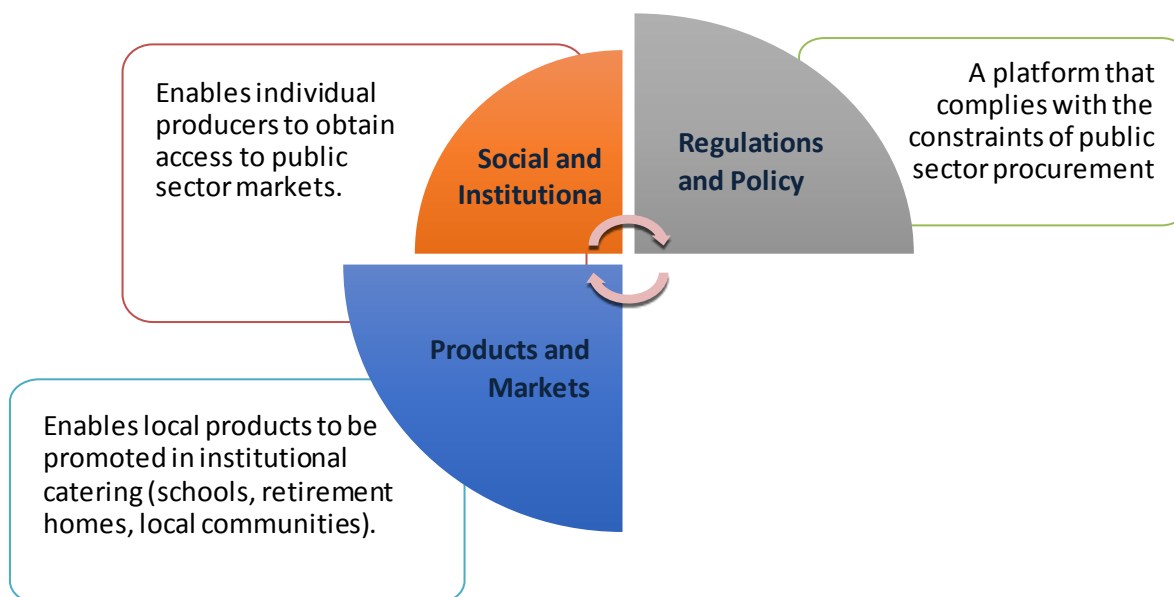


Figure 3 The framework HNV-Link used for evaluating innovations for high nature value farming.

Agrilocal is a platform that brings together suppliers of local products (farmers, food professionals, local shops, etc) and institutional catering purchasers (schools, retirement homes, etc) in a simple, direct and instant relationship that ensures respect for the public procurement code (*Code des Marchés Publics*). The concept was developed in 2011 by the Puy de Dome and Drome departments and was then extended to the Lozere and Herault departments in particular.

This approach permits promotion of agricultural produce via direct distribution, providing added value to the products and additional income for farmers, as well as developing the principles of “eating well” and “eating local food” within institutional catering.

The approach is particularly innovative regarding produce and markets and the regulatory framework but also, to a lesser extent, with respect to social and institutional aspects. On the other hand, for the time being it does not involve changes in farming practices (other than with respect to the requirements for organically farmed produce).

Example 2: **Slaughterhouses managed by breeders** (outside the LA)

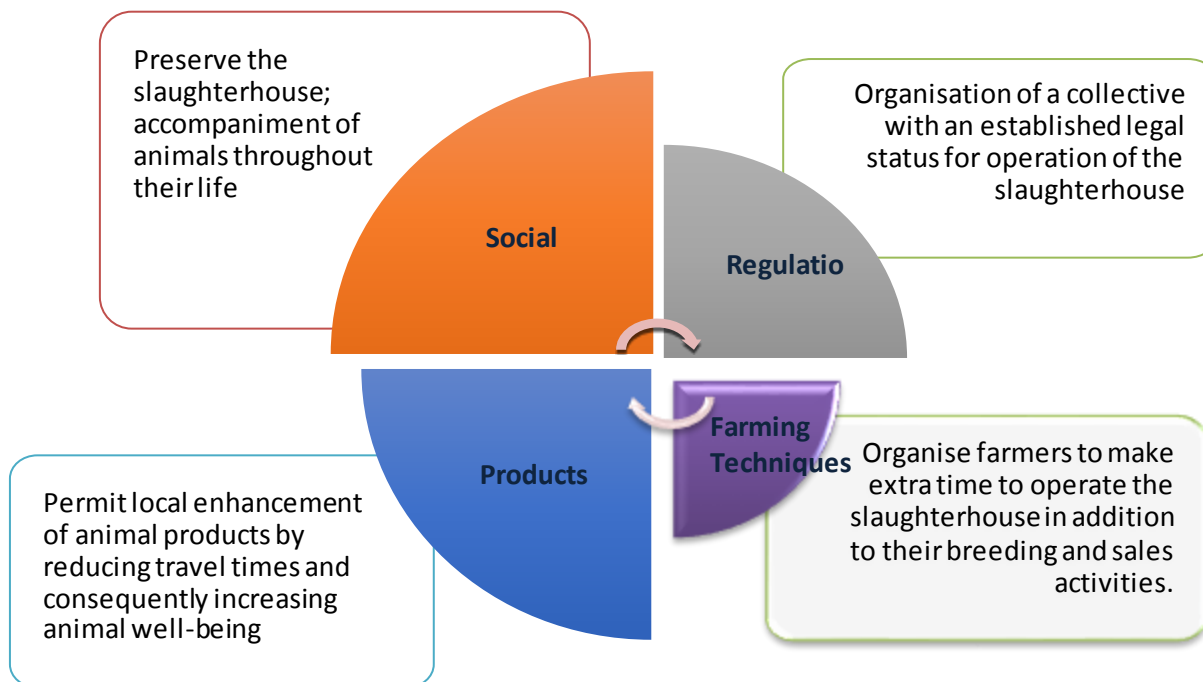


Figure 4 The framework HNV-Link used for evaluating innovations for high nature value farming.

The breeders form a collective in order to take over a slaughterhouse that has been closed or that is threatened with closure and they organise themselves to be able to operate it and participate in the work of slaughtering. Several small local slaughterhouses have been saved in this way by breeders in France. A collective was created and a project mounted to take over the slaughterhouse which closed down in 2017 in Vigan, in the research region.

Such local slaughterhouses are small but they are essential for breeders in isolated mountain areas, particularly for direct distribution sales that not only bring improved value to products but also create social links with consumers.

This is a social and institutional innovation since the breeders’ collective permits preservation of the slaughterhouse and the associated economic activities (direct sales from the farm, selling at markets, festival barbecues, tasting sessions, etc.). The creation of a collective and its operation requires a great deal of commitment and goodwill on the part of the breeders. It is also an innovation for their products to be sold through direct distribution. It additionally needs a legal structure that satisfies certain requirements to make the takeover operation possible. For breeders to be available to operate the slaughterhouse means they must organise themselves individually on their farms in order to generate spare time for the work.

The process that made it happen and critical factors for success

- The motivation and mobilisation of the breeders who make up the collective;
- Support of the collective from suitable, competent structures and people;
- Public policy and funding support.

The innovations described here are based on the breeders' willingness to form a collective in response to a difficult situation. Their approach is supported by technicians, project managers, organisers, funding bodies, etc. It is frequently necessary to form a legally established structure with a Chairperson to make decisions with the support of a supervisory board.

In France the agricultural world is highly structured and it is unusual for a farmer not to belong to at least one collective or other structure.

For the Pelardon AOP, a core group of breeders formed the *Association de Défense du Pélardon*, an association for the protection of Pelardon goat's cheese through the attribution of an AOP label guaranteeing the origin of the cheese. Following the award of the AOP label in 2001, the Association became the *Syndicat des Producteurs de Pélardon*, (Union of Pelardon Producers) and acts as the body that controls the cheese-making specifications. Through the *Syndicat des Producteurs de Pélardon* the collective is able to employ a technician to investigate funding, partnerships, ensure communication about the product and provide technical support to the breeders. Training the collective enables the acquisition of resources and permits action to be taken that would normally be completely beyond the scope of a single farmer. Collectives are a strength.

Funding can be European, national, regional, local and/or private depending on the situation. The principal risks for collectives are misunderstandings within the collective that could lead to its dissolution or to the exclusion of specific people from the collective as well as the lack of funding of the organisation since, if it is not organised, a collective is no longer effective.

Lessons learnt from this innovation example, and its potential replication

Collective approaches by breeders:

- Can be replicated
- Are adaptable
- Are increasingly agro-ecological
- *But they must continue to evolve.*



Figure 5 Breeders in the collective Aubrac farm meat. Source www.boeuffermieraubrac.fr

Organisation as a collective is a strength and can easily be replicated elsewhere on condition that there is a legal framework that permits this to happen, in other words to be able to form an association, a union, a civil law partnership, a cooperative, etc.

Almost all the initiatives may be replicated by adapting the rules and their conditions of implementation and the AOP procedure is fairly easy to reproduce (even though preparing the application is tedious and it takes a long time to be processed), as is setting up a smallholders' shop (Boutique Paysanne) or the validation of a GIEE. Whilst the problems for breeders are evident, (that they should be motivated and committed and be supported by competent people), they can achieve nearly all these projects. Nevertheless, some projects may fail because of funding, regulatory or societal obstacles. A collective must therefore work with regional bodies and communities as well as with Civil Society to mount projects.

Breeders must constantly regroup and create collectives based on new themes in order to maintain the dynamics of the region. Collectives are increasingly created with clearly stated agro-ecological objectives (for example the GIEEs).

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