

Diversifying Cockle Picking

FLAG: Costa da Morte
Anllons, Galicia, Spain

Project overview

This project is an example of an integrated chain of activities to raise awareness of the cockle picking tradition in the area and to improve the image of the product. The activities also add value to a fisheries product (cockles) and start to diversify the cockle pickers' activities through tourism, training and product promotion.



Context and key challenges

Cockle picking has a long tradition in Anllons but much of the community these days has lost touch with this heritage – whereas in the past the local population could collect cockles directly from the beach, stricter resource management no longer allows this. Moreover, as with many fishers and primary producers, the shellfish gatherers of Anllons receive only a small share of the value of their product (cockles) as well as suffering from the lack of control over the price their cockles would fetch on the market.



The shellfish gatherers in Anllons are all organised into a non-profit association which is responsible for managing the resource sustainably. However, until recently it could only sell its cockles via the auction (over 100km away) as it did not have a purifier to treat the cockles and therefore sell them locally. As such, the specific qualities of their cockles were no longer known locally as once they leave the area to go to auction they are sold to big markets around Spain, with most going to wholesales in Barcelona.

When the association purchased a purifier (with support from Axis 3 of the EFF), a door was opened to play a more active role in selling their cockles to local outlets. This opportunity brought with it a completely new set of challenges for the shellfish gatherers whose activities until then had been limited to collecting cockles.

Project objectives

With support from Axis 4, the cockle pickers of Anllons aimed to:

- › Raise awareness in the community of the tradition of cockle picking in their area and what it involves.
- › Get their product known among the local population and outlets (restaurants, hotels, shops etc).
- › Increase their share in the value added of the product by direct selling and by developing new ways to package and present their product
- › Equip their premises to carry out tasting sessions and presentations on their cockles.

Project description

The project took place from mid-August until the end of October 2010 (2.5 months). One of the first actions undertaken was the purchase of a small refrigerated van to transport their cockles in the correct conditions to their centre where they had installed the purifier. As soon as the basic conditions were in place to start purifying their cockles, the shellfish gatherers could start with their activities to promote and sell their produce.

In order to promote their cockles among local restaurants and hotels, the association organised training sessions for local chefs by the well known chef and professor at Coruña's catering school, D. Miguel García Silvarredonda. The training demonstrated the different qualities of the cockles as well as various ways of preparing and presenting them.

To help with developing packaging/presentation material for the cockles, the shellfish gatherers took a course in basket making. They learnt to make baskets and net bags, using recycled material from the fishing sector such as old nets and rope.



The association then developed a series of promotional materials about cockles (flyers, posters, a short dvd explaining how they work, and a recipe book, including some of the recipes developed in the training sessions for chefs).

Finally, the shellfish gatherers of Anllons equipped their centre with the basic facilities required to be able to welcome visitors (kitchen, a dvd player, furniture...). They then organised a series of open days for the broader public where they screened their dvd and offered information on and tastings of cockles.

Main actors involved

The project was proposed by the shellfish gatherers of Anllons which is an association of 30 women and 1 man. The whole association took part in the project (putting aside part of their cockle catch to be purified by the association instead of the auction hall which continued to buy the majority of their cockles; helping to organize and animate the open days and training; and taking the basket making course). However, a smaller group of representatives spearheaded the project. This group worked closely with the Costa da Morte FLAG which provided technical advice in developing the project, helping to define the various activities and ensure they responded to the main objectives they aimed to meet.

Project outcomes

It is still early to discern strong impacts but the local population is already becoming more aware of the work of the cockle pickers in their community and of the product. The association is now selling directly to 4 restaurants in the area and to a number of individuals which is starting to increase the revenue of the association.

The premises of the association are now equipped to receive visitors on a regular basis with a view to promoting their produce. 15 days of cooking courses and tasting sessions have taken place (attended by school groups, house wives and retirement associations as well as local hotels, shops and fishmongers) and a recipe book has been produced to give ideas of different ways of preparing cockles.

The beneficiaries are the shellfish gatherers themselves who are not only enjoying the satisfaction of playing a more active role in marketing their cockles but who are also starting to see a small increase in the revenue of their association thanks to additional sales directly to local outlets.

Overcoming obstacles: key lessons

The challenges that had to be overcome were largely linked to the lack of awareness of the product both by restaurants and fishmongers as well as the general public. This was confounded by the difficulties linked to differentiating their product with the existing labeling. The lack of product awareness implied a further challenge of introducing cockles as a regular ingredient of dishes offered in local restaurants.

Moreover, the prior lack of experience of the shellfish workers in the field of marketing was an important challenge when trying to reach new markets.

While the lack of experience of the shellfish workers in the field of marketing made it more difficult to overcome these challenges and to reach new markets, a number of important factors helped to ensure the project's success, including:

- › the motivation and active participation of the shellfish workers;
- › the high quality of the cockles;
- › the strong interest in the product from local restaurants;
- › good coverage of the project in the local press; and
- › the purchase of the purifier, which, although not funded under Axis 4, made all subsequent activities possible.



Future prospects

This project which has helped to promote the qualities and potential uses of cockles is the first step in a more ambitious plan. The association now plans to generate more value from their product by selling them directly from their centre as well as setting up a small restaurant where people can eat cockles.

They also have plans to develop tourist packages with a local tourist company to take groups on guided tours of the bay where they collect cockles in order to explain how they work. It is worth noting that these activities are taking place in parallel with a project presented by the town hall to landscape the neighbouring piece of land, setting up a picnic area which will overlook the bay where the shellfish gatherers can be seen at work.

And finally, the shellfish association has initiated basket making activities with a local association for handicapped people. They are trialing basket making courses for handicapped people with a view to this association setting up a non-profit company in which their members would make baskets for the local cockles.

With the main investments made and having secured a number of regular customers already, the shellfish gatherers can now afford to continue promoting their product through tasting sessions and similar activities in order to increase their direct sales. Moreover, it has given them the confidence to undertake more ambitious plans as well as demonstrating the value of investing further along the food chain and in parallel activities.

Transferability

This type of project could be transferred to all kinds of small producer organizations – especially those with a high quality product and good distribution potential in the territory. The association has already been invited to other FLAG areas and fisheries associations to present their project.



Costs and funding

Project activity	Total cost (€)	Total public contribution (EFF Axis 4 + national co-financing) (€)
Different types of equipment (for the centre, transport for produce etc.)	20 457.76	18 411.99
Information and promotional material	6 218.64	5 596.77
Basket making course	2 084.00	1 875.60
Dissemination	3 100.00	2 790.00
VAT:	5 449.75	0.00
Total	37 310.15	28 674.36

As an awareness raising project which also helps to professionalise a non-profit association, this project received a total public contribution of 90% (EUR 28 674.36). Of this, 61% was provided by Axis 4 of the EFF, 19.5% from national co-financing and 19.5% from regional co-financing (excluding VAT which the association also paid but can reclaim). The total private contribution of 10% was provided by the Association of Shellfish Gatherers of Anllons.

Project information

Title: Anllons Cockle Pickers: Diversifying their activities

Duration: August – October 2010.

Case study date: March 2011

Project promoter

Agrupación de Mariscadoras Río Anllóns (Anllons Association of Shellfish Gatherers)

Julia Haz Barrientos

rioanllons2003@yahoo.es

Tel: +34 670 397 893

FLAG details:

Costa da Morte, Galicia, Spain.

gac3@accioncosteira.es

Tel: +34 626 104 619

<http://www.accioncosteira.es/?q=gl/node/128>

[FLAG factsheet](#)



Editor: European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Director-General.

Disclaimer: Whilst the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries is responsible for the overall production of this document, it is not responsible for the content nor does it guarantee the accuracy of the data.