

## **Creating Growth through Regional Thinking among Food Related SMEs**

The European Development Fund project called REFRAME is taking steps towards creating better conditions for food related SMEs in rural areas by promoting a regional approach. This entails developing new skills for food related SMEs, fostering regional cooperation, supporting transnational learning and thereby stimulating innovation. Furthermore, the aim is to heighten the awareness about regional food supply and demand as well as nudging local governments and large-scale consumers to procure food regionally.

Through a living lab consisting of 5 regional pilots REFRAME has been doing just that. Since the project started great progress has been made on several accounts. For instance in relation to enabling SMEs to share knowledge and influencing large-scale consumers to adopt a more regional thinking.

### **Getting Inspiration through Exchange of Experience**

Regional networks have been established among food related SMEs, where new smart specialization strategies are shared as well as best practices. Through these network the regional food SMEs are able to learn from each other and get inspiration to develop new strategies and practices.

Through the gathered and shared knowledge REFRAME has helped food related SMEs to find and develop smart specialisation options and thereby fulfil a role in a regional supply proposition. So far, these efforts have resulted in the development of 14 smart specialisations and support measures for food related SMEs.

Especially inspiring is a Swedish example, where 300 registered SMEs can be seen as a form of “Regional Supply Proposition”. Through a joint platform the 300 regional SMEs are marketed via a website, at mini fairs, inspirational activities, in sales binders etc.

### **Large-Scale Consumers are Open to Regional Thinking**

When it comes to large-scale consumers REFRAME has succeeded in influencing several major players to commit to adopting a more regional food frame. An example of this is the fact that REFRAME has stimulated a large supermarket chain in Sweden to include more products from regional SMEs in their product assortment. Furthermore, in the Netherlands a municipality has adjusted its procurement strategy in such a way that it enables more food related SMEs to participate. Similar examples of progress are also taking place in Germany and Flanders, which also are participating in the project.

In rural area logistics can be a challenge. Due to this REFRAME works towards cooperation and other arrangements between regional suppliers and large-scale distributors. As a result of this work, REFRAME has succeeded in stimulating large-scale distributors to include more regional suppliers in both Flanders and Sweden.

### **Facts about REFRAME:**

- REFRAME is project co-funded by the North Sea Region Programme 2014 - 2020.
- The project has a total budget of 5.190.008 €

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