

Project under FARM Responsive Mechanism

Project: “Community pastures development through creation of cooperatives”

**Project Partners: Vinnitsa Oblast Youth Ecology League (VOYEL)
&
Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA, Manitoba)
St. Paul’s Grazing Reserve (Alberta)**

Final Summary Report

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Executive Summary

The goal of the project was to improve the livestock situation in the oblast as well as development of environmentally favourable conditions of land use, through mobilization of rural communities and creation of cooperatives for community pastures operation. The project achieved its goals by bringing together and working with the community, rural dwellers, entrepreneurs and the local governments to create the necessary trust, buy in and infrastructure to develop the pastures.

Community pastures have been developed in a cooperative form and will be operating on sustainable basis. VOYEL has established good relations with local extension service Club of Entrepreneurs and they have included grassland/community pastures as new consultation into their activity. Grassland and community pastures action plans were developed and have since been approved at village council sessions, which is essential because it “legalizes” community pastures and allocates funds to support them.

Background and Rationale for the Project

The project evolved after the communities of Nemirov, Litin and Kalinovka of the Vinnitsa oblast identified in their community development plans a need for land to be allocated for cattle grazing. As a result VOYEL initiated a study of livestock production in the Vinnitsa oblast. The study revealed a shortfall of livestock production in the oblast due to lack of access to good quality grazing pastures for livestock. In addition, VOYEL looked at the implications and issues associated with establishing community pastures they included, land quality, land preservation, degradation of grasslands and issues of ownership and responsibility of communities to initiate community pasture development.

The results of the study were disseminated to the three communities and their respective village councils. Based on these results the communities decided to proceed with the development of sustainable community pastures in their communities.

Achieved Project Goal and Objectives

- **Improved methods and mechanisms for the management of community land and pastures.** The whole process of community pastures organization was supported with studies, dissemination of information and discussions with key stakeholders – farmers, village councils and entrepreneurs.
- **Facilitated the improvement of existing cooperatives efficiency, strengthening their position on the market regarding inputs suppliers and customers of their primary production.** After analyses of the existing cooperatives, VOYEL concluded that in order to improve the efficiency of the cooperatives they had to be multifunctional – not only supply or marketing but a combination two types.
- **Reduction and prevention of land degradation and erosion.** A grassland program was established, which is a long term initiative that will result in better quality of land and a more effective approach to land management in general. These plans have been presented to local authorities, who have now put these plans on their agendas.
- **Ensured a stable fodder base for livestock production.** The grassland program, ensures better quality of grass (fodder) for animal herds, which will lead to improved quality of livestock and milk as well.
- **Improved cattle population by using new technologies.** A number of new technologies and approaches to livestock production were introduced and are being adopted by farmers.
- **Facilitated the improvement of the economic situation in communities.** Community members have become more responsible for their livelihoods and have realized that by taking on their own initiatives they can achieve practical results. Community members have

realized that working together on a community pasture initiatives improves dramatically their ability to raise income through improvement of pasture operation.

- **Developed proposals on improvement of legislation and policy based on experience of work with pilot cooperatives.** Proposals were discussed during regional and interregional workshops and later sent to national institutions. VOYEL will follow their further development and how they are received in the national level.
- **Facilitated the improvement of land laws and regulations.** This task was challenging as land issues are one of the most difficult and costly issues at the moment. However, project participants submitted set of proposal on land laws and regulations, all of them in relation to cooperatives and community pastures.
- **Future improvement of quality of land through complex of land preservation measures.** A number of measures regarding land preservation and degradation have been implemented into the structure of community pasture development.

Outcomes and Results

Mobilization of communities. (3 general meetings on community mobilization, creation of 3 initiative groups, 6 meetings of initiative groups and village council representatives)

The project contributed to the mobilization of rural communities and the creation of core initiative groups which worked in conjunction with village and rayon authorities. This gave community members an opportunity to express their views on how to improve their villages through development of community pastures; made them aware and involved in decision-making process, and identified the priorities and needs of the community. As a result of this dialogue, activities were initiated to address the needs and priorities set forth by the communities.

Raised awareness on community pastures and environmental issues (3 general meetings, 3 meetings of initiative groups and village councils, April – May)

Based on previous project experience the project introduced a sustainable environmental approach to development of rural territories through the establishment of community pastures. Training programs were prepared and delivered and all participants of events came to conclusion that cooperative approach to community pastures development was most suitable.

Community pastures plans prepared, and an information campaigns to discuss the plans were held.

Communities developed community pasture plans. Prior to developing and approving the plans a number of information sessions, consultations and trainings were held in order to inform communities about community pasture development and management, legislation, land issues and cooperative development. A training schedule was developed in consultation with the local extension service. Plans were approved at a formal meeting attended by members of communities, local authorities, and businesses.

Five demonstration pastures were established in the pilot communities - Litin, Nemirov and Kalinovka.

The pastures are operational, and are serving as examples for other communities and oblasts.

Approximately 1520 people received training

Using the train the trainer approach, approximately 1520 people received training on the following topics: cooperative development and issues associated with development, Canadian experience with cooperative development; grassland development, maintenance and environmental issues; community pasture management. In addition, participants participated in study tours to the pilot communities.

Canadian Partner Contribution

Two Canadian specialists participated on the project and the two visits had positive impact on VOYEL relations with local authorities and farmers. Ute Holweger of PFRA had interesting and intensive discussions with local authorities at oblast level and they got interested in community pastures issues. In addition, Ms. Holweger delivered training sessions at local universities/colleges; participated in meetings with oblast officials, the Agricultural Institute, local government officials representing Litin, Nemirov and Kalinovka, , local legal advisor; participated in field visits; and met with individual local farmers. As a result the oblast council would like to support the development of a practical guide for local authorities at the village level and are prepared to cover 30% of expenses for preparation and publication. Furthermore, Leonard Demchuk's of the St. Paul Grazing Association held practical sessions with community members on cooperative issues and community empowerment, which led to greater mobilization and buy in of the community stakeholders and in particular farmers.

Conclusion

The project achieved its goal of mobilizing rural communities to achieve a common goal. The project brought together rural dwellers, farmers, entrepreneurs, businesses and the local governments to work together to achieve a common goal. As a result community pasture plans were developed and approved and are contributing to a greater social and economic development strategy for the communities. The needs of community members are being heard and constructive dialogue is occurring. In addition, VOYEL has established good relations with local extension service and they have included grassland/community pastures as new consultation into their activities.

There were many legal issues that were encountered as the communities began to develop their respective community pasture plans, such as cooperative taxation and landownership issues. In addition, during project implementation it was difficult to change attitudes of people to think about the future versus only today. Despite these constraints, community members have expressed that they have realized that working together has a community to achieve a common goal is far more effective than alone. As a result of their efforts the community pasture plans are being allocated funds from local budgets and a number of cooperative members and local meat and milk factories are interested in providing funding for community pasture development in order to improve quality of milk and meat. This commitment by community stakeholders will ensure the sustainability of the community pastures and their development.