

# Regional development with agriculture

*The necessity of comprehensive development in rural areas exists through the countryside's importance as living and working area and the problems associated with this. Rural areas can receive new development impulses when the will to stay is strengthened and the possibility of staying is secured through work and employment possibilities. Presented below from experiences in the Anhalt region are agriculture-linked requirements and solutions for rural area development featuring villages and their functional capacities.*

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Regionalisation, multi-functional agriculture, concepts

## Literature

Literature details are available under LT 02423 via Internet at <http://www.landwirtschaftsverlag.com/landtech/local/fliteratur.htm>

The upheaval within agriculture in eastern Germany, unemployment in villages and insufficient infrastructure lead to loss of function in such communities. The conditions for life in rural areas have definitely changed in the last few years with undesirable developments regarding inhabitants. Solutions for such areas, especially those taking into account agriculture, must be developed and applied on the spot.

### Increasing regionalisation

Survival capacity (business viability and attractiveness) of villages depends greatly to what extent they have retained their role as places to live and do business in and whether they have further developed this role. Increased investments in the expansion of existing village substance and the creation of new work opportunities, mainly outwith agriculture, are urgently necessary. A one-sided concentration in trade or service industries or with public service facilities in ground and material centres leads to a rapid loss in facilities within the village and weakens self-sufficiency. All these factors act together and require a comprehensive approach in order to be able to meet current and future requirements. A key role is played by the region's confidence that [1] all requirements for a sustainable rural area development can be correctly created [2].

The increasing regionalisation of village development, too, requires the increasing of regional wealth creation for maintaining and creating work places.

Here, farming and handwork play a special role in very rural areas. Ever increasing is the demand for handwork services in connection with village renovation and conversions, for building in the food sector over and above farm direct marketing strategies, in the marketing of new products made from rape, hemp, flax and from forestry, is growing. Additional possibilities are also associated with the development of a nature-near tourism.

With the conclusions under Agenda 2000 came also regional support targets which also cover development of rural areas with fi-



Fig. 1: Facades, house door entrance and windows originally conserved

nance in the main from the three structure funds [3]. Farm businesses and processing facilities increasingly recognise the necessity of increased investment in the creation of new workplaces outwith agriculture, linked with the expansion of village substance. Inter-community negotiation areas for assuring the future and strengthening rural regions include an integrated, multi-enterprise agriculture which interacts with handwork and industry with comprehensive traffic connections, public and private service industries and support facilities as well as nature-near tourism. These depend very much on whether the farmers with their experience in regional marketing, in contract nature protection and creation of new income possibilities can be made interested in integration within the regional development process.

A sufficiently capable infrastructure must be developed through strengthened inter-community cooperation. Only with sufficient inhabitants can the required infrastructural facilities be driven and maintained. The magnetism and attractiveness of a region is also increasingly determined through inhabitant-friendly, infrastructural introductions and connections.

### Encouraging multifunctional agriculture

The existence-securing and development-support aspects of a multi-structural agriculture are of fundamental importance for the identity of the rural area and must remain an important component of its economic structure. An ecologically intact unit of village

and farm is not least an important requirement for targeted regional economic support in developing attractive living locations and including facilities for recreation and tourism.

The requirements for agricultural production and with that security of farming investments such as those in environmental and animal protection have to be taken into account from the start in village development planning, for building developments in inner-village areas as well as alterations in use for buildings and locations. Livestock producers should certainly check all possibilities of moving into the outer areas. Should a presentation within the area development plan not be accepted as an outer area, a certification as village area is expedient for the farming business future.

An expansion in livestock production creates, in the case of advanced structural changes, possibilities for retaining employment. Also, alternative income sources can be exploited. Agriculture is increasingly a service industry for society, e.g. as caretaker of the countryside, it increasingly assumes a multi-functional role.

With a continually developing new self-confidence, farming has succeeded above all in diversifying business. A look at the regional markets offers encouragement in the production of quality and special products, for farm-near activities or services - the last an extended support area in agri-investment aid programmes [4].

Beneficial solutions can also be achieved in very different village situations with practical constructive cooperation of farm and community, as demonstrated by many examples of village development. It is very important that the few farmers with commitment be involved in the community politic. In communities where farmers are active in the council there is, as a rule, much commitment to agricultural development.

### Preventing dormitory villages

Villages shouldn't develop into pure dormitory communities. They should be for living and working, a mix of different professions and nationality groups are important endogenous development potentials. A requirement for a harmonious community development is an early-established matching of interests within the community. The solutions for the multiple interests in area utilisation requires increasing actions in ground regulation and structural planning. Focal points here are the merging of ground and building ownership, the unravelling of rights of use, as well as actions for improving agricultural infrastructure. Through land development actions this enables the living, business and

life relationships to be improved in rural areas. Instruments for land development such as agri-structural development planning, the system following the countryside reconsolidation programme statute/agricultural adjustment legislation including ground management and village renovation are in great demand in the agriculturally-linked villages. These instruments are especially effective where they can be bundled or linked with other support programmes. Only a structured planning which agrees with other requirements ensures that the requirements of farming and forestry in the region in question are sufficiently taken account of and involved in the support project.

Farms can also collect very useful experience with the rural way building programme. Their involvement in the application of the rural way concept [5] is indispensable for further rural development. Within the village renewal programme the support of farmers is a central concern and this will also be so in the future - also for the good of the other village inhabitants.

### The route for chances and solutions

Especially in the last years farm support has come through village renewal. While in the restructuring process it is at first most important to secure investment for ensuring existence and stabilisation of the farm, now own-capital is also targeted at renovation actions in farm buildings and houses (*fig. 1*) including their conversion to other uses. Private business initiatives within village renovation programmes will have a very high priority in the future too. Farmers are more actively involved in winning more understanding from the consumers for their production methods with farm days, possible open events and not least with the village image involving improved farm steadings emphasising village character. How well the

farms are accepted by the village dwellers, how well a farm shop survives, depends to a great extent on how well the business and its products are known, its location and image of the enterprise - the farmyard acts as a visiting card.

### Summary

The future of rural regions and their villages depends decisively on long term assurance of working place opportunities, sufficient infrastructure a cared-for countryside landscape and committed village council members. The development of agriculture remains of decisive importance for the identity of the villages. Farms, small business structures with a multiplicity of sites and functions in rural regions can support one another to a great extent and develop through a good climate of cooperation, a well thought-out and targeted networking.

The precise coordination of support must be integrated in a far-seeing rural planning area development. Above all there is a need for the awareness of own reserves in organisation and a growing community sense in the villages.

Attractive communities and landscapes with committed people are important requirements for the establishment of new work places and for using those available in a better way. Increasingly, it is all about the identification of chances and their transformation with commitment within the village.



Fig. 2: Multi-functional use of manor house and farmstead facilities