

Summary of seminar on collaboration, the 9th of April 2014, Sweden

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Content

1. Background
2. Reflections from organizers
3. Summary of participants evaluation
4. The thematic questions for the workshop

The summary in swedish has been sent to all participants as well as people at Swedish Board of Agriculture that are responsible for the regional action plans and the members of the rural network.

1. Background

The seminar was organized by Swedish Board of Agriculture, Swedish Agency of Environmental Protection, Baltic Compact and the Swedish Rural Network.

The topic was “Collaboration - agri/environmental measures and profitability hand in hand” - main focus on measures in Swedish **Rural Development Programme (RDP)** and how these can be used for stimulating more collaboration.

This was a full day seminar and workshop. Around 60 participants from various organizations agencies, universities, municipalities, LEADER, County Boards, farmers associations and NGO’s participated.

The first session of the day contained presentations and discussions on the newly published reports “*Miljöåtgärder i samverkan*” (Collaborative agri-environmental measures-strategies for inspiration) and “*Framgångsfaktorer i samverkansprojekt*” (Success factors in collaborative projects). These reports were ordered by Swedish Board of Agriculture and Swedish Rural network respectively. Since they were published around the same time and partly had similar conclusions we decided to present them in the same seminar and also to do something more than just a presentation of them.

After the presentations of the reports there were three dialogues between an interviewer and three of the projects presented in above reports.



The afternoon session contained the latest information about the Swedish RDP, with the focus on measures for cooperation.

In the afternoon there were also workshops and the participants had the possibilities to choose two out of ten different themes to discuss. The themes were predefined by organizers but had their origin in recommendations from the two reports and from the ongoing work with the regional action plans for RDP. There was a possibility for each group to document their discussions and hand it over to the organizers. We did not get documentation from all groups and therefore it is difficult to make any clear conclusions on how to proceed around each theme.

Here is a short introduction to the Swedish organization of RDP. The Swedish Board of Agriculture has the responsibility for the implementation of the programme, it is also the paying agency. **The County Administrative Boards (CAB)** make regional action plans for the implementation of the programme and they also decide (by using criteria set either on national or regional level) which projects that should get support. **Community Lead Local Development (CLLD, former LEADER)** has their own local action plans and it is the Swedish Board of Agriculture that will handle the applications.

At the time of the seminar the content of the RDP was just released to public and the work with the action plans and criteria had just started.

2. Reflections from organizers on the seminar

- Clearly there was a need for a workshop/seminar on this topic. We had expected around 30 participants when we started to organize this seminar. In the end 60 people turned up!
- There is a wish to develop the “environmental parts” of the strategies, and to raise environmental awareness in more projects than the most typical ones (for example in CLLD)
- We as organizers knew that none of the people at Swedish Board of Agriculture responsible for the regional action plans could participate. We had gone through the material and the topics for discussion before the seminar and at the date for the seminar there was not too much of stated information, but instead many details (on how the criteria for each measure in RDP should be set) were still open. Therefore it was difficult to be clearer than we were.



- This seminar was a bit of taking a chance. We normally don't spread the results of reports in this kind of way—a broad invitation and combining two reports with similar but not identical topic. With a broad heterogenic participation the prerequisites and the expectations can vary a lot. It can be difficult to keep the participants together and they will interpret the information in several ways. It was a positive atmosphere and the few critical questions raised were a positive input in the discussions. In all we are satisfied with doing this seminar even if the evaluation show low grades on some of the sessions.
- There were three dialogues between an interviewer and a project member from a successful project. Perhaps the dialogues should have had more structure, but overall we are satisfied with both the dialogues and the presentations of the reports.
- The workshop in the afternoon. Somehow we rushed thru the starting up of the workshops. The groups were in some cases to big and the template for the documentation of the workshops was a bit difficult to understand. It would have been good if we had in advance picked a secretary in each group. The documentation from each workshop is therefore a little bit difficult to interpret and was perhaps not as detailed as we had hoped.

3. Summary of participants evaluation of the seminar

Total amount of participants were 60, out of these approximately 50 percent answered the online evaluation after the seminar. Even if the rate of answers is low we still want to make summary of the comments from the participants that answered the evaluation.

The scale is from 1 to 5. 1 is not satisfied and 5 is very satisfied. The answers were quite equally distributed between the different grades and the average for each question was 3 or just below.

What should we be satisfied with?

There is a general interest and 2/3 of participants answer yes to the question if they think we should organize a new seminar on the same topic. We also asked the participants what focus or theme it should be on a new seminar and the suggestions for new seminar were; internal collaboration, collaboration with municipalities and regional actors involved, collaboration between CABs, collaboration urban-rural areas, learn more about innovative solutions and pilot projects and more focus on agri-environmental actions and profitability



and agri-environmental actions and rural development. Finance and maintenance of projects- both look deeper into “successful” and “not successful” examples.

Some comments were also that the topic itself is not so important but instead that the most important is the meeting between active people and go back home with more positive examples and contacts.

The organizers reflections on these comments. If we will organize a new seminar it would be better to focus on one target group and not to be so broad. Something that is always pointed out in evaluation is the need and wish for more time to discuss. The physical meeting should focus on the actual meeting; networking, discussing and sharing experience. As preparation for a seminar there could for example be suggestions on articles or reports to read.

What could have been better?

- There should have been someone from Swedish Board of Agriculture that knew more about the time plan and work with the regional action plans. The competence on this issue was too low.
- Several pointed out that there should have been a clearer and deeper focus on the topic -collaboration - agri/environmental measures and profitability hand in hand. The focus was now instead on defining what collaboration is.
- Also more practical examples of how to work with environmental issues in CLLD was asked for.
- The dialogues were interesting but they could have focused more on a defined message.
- The purpose and goal with the seminar should have been clearer and the workshops should have been structured in a better way.
- There were some confusion around the documentation of the workshops and there should have been a secretary and a “moderator” in each group. In general the workshops got low grades but there is also the opposite reflection, that the workshops were much better than “normally”.

Participants expectations

About 2/3 of the participants that did the evaluation commented the question about expectations before the seminar. Some had much higher expectations than what they received from the seminar, referring mostly to lack of information and knowledge around the



regional action plans, but also because they thought the focus on agri-environmental measures and profitability wasn't discussed as deep as expected.

There were also participants with expectations just to meet new people and discuss good examples and there were also people with no expectations at all.

One of the questions was if you as a participant met new people during the seminar that you would contact in your work in the future. 2/3 answered yes or maybe. This can be interpreted as it was not the "usual" combination of people that met in the seminar. One goal with the seminar was to mix a group of people that normally don't meet.

Also 2/3 said that they will or might have use of some of the content in their daily work.

4. The thematic questions for the workshop

Organizers reflections- participation and popularity of theme

- We conclude that the workshops with most participants were the themes; Internal collaboration, Areas (in RDP) of priority for collaboration and Maintenance of regional action plans.
- The workshops with less or no participants were; Guidance and collection of best practice and Evaluation and monitoring

Documentation of each theme

Each group wanting to discuss a certain theme got a prepared template to follow. The questions in the template were

- Solution to the theme/answers to the questions?
- Stakeholders needed for implementation of solution?
- Actions needed for implementation?
- Who should take the initiative?
- What obstacles can we see already today when implementing this?
- What solutions to be found to above obstacles?

The themes and the comments to each theme

Below is a presentation of the themes for the workshops and some conclusions from the participants.



1. Internal collaboration

Do agencies need more internal competence around collaboration and do they need to collaborate more (between divisions etc.)? How is this to be done? Do agencies need coordinators for (external) collaborative efforts?

- Yes, CABs and national agencies do need to collaborate more (internal between different divisions) but what is mostly needed is the mandate to do it! It is a crucial first step to get mandate and to be allowed to collaborate more between divisions and units.
- There might also be a need for a coordinator.
- The need of competence varies from county to county. There are already people at CABs with role as coordinators, but sometimes their colleagues don't have mandate to work with them on collaborative efforts.
- The mandate needs to come from above, perhaps even as far from the top as the government.
- In existing examples of successful collaboration on CAB level there has been need to work against existing organizational structure.

2. Guidance and collection of best practice

Is there a need for some kind of guidance on how to handle different situations in collaborative efforts and collection of methods and best practices? Who should create these and how should they be designed?

- There was no documentation from this group, in fact, I don't think there was any group discussing this.

3. Evaluation and monitoring

Is there a need for more evaluation and monitoring of collaborative efforts? Which methods are most suitable for evaluation and monitoring? How to spread the results in the best way?

- No relevant documentation from this group.

4. Peer community learning

Do we need to work more actively with peer community learning to promote exchange and transfer of knowledge and inspiration? How can existing networks and groups change to give better support or do we need to create new?



- It is important with “real” physical meetings. Today you are often referred to webpages etc, but a dialogue is often needed for best transference and exchange of knowledge.
- It is also important to share solutions, especially around the budget of projects. How are they financed? Be open with the “difficult” parts of a project.
- Sometimes audits from CABs or other agencies can be positive and create new input to a project. So audits and control has an important role here.
- Important to feel collaboration and not competition.

5. *Internal or external competence*

Is it good to hire external process/project managers? How to define when it is needed?

- With external competence there is a risk that the knowledge disappears from the region after the project is finished.
- It is most useful to use external competence only when there is not enough knowledge on local level or when there is need for additional resources.

6. *Delimitation of projects*

Is there a need for win-win situations for all stakeholders in a project? How to define the amount of stakeholders to be involved?

- What is within the concept of win-win? It is more than money, for example it can be pride and happiness for your region.
- It is not necessary that all parts win equally, but all should feel that they have won some things. Even if it is not economical profit.
- It is not possible to define in forehand who should participant in the project, this is unique for each project.
- It is important that agencies on local level participate in environmental related projects, today often they are the initiators of projects but it would be good with more bottom-up projects.

7. *Areas (in RDP) of priority for collaboration*

Is there articles (areas) in the rural development programme that are of extra importance for collaboration? Should these be defined on national or regional level?



- Extra important in areas where the solution is not on individual level, for example projects concerning climate, environment, energy, water. For example look at watershed level instead of farm level. Another area is food production- solutions for promoting and distribution of local product to local markets.
- Prioritize project where primary producers are participating
- On which level should the "high value" areas or areas of priority be defined? If there is dedication and involvement on local level the areas of priority should be defined on local level.

8. Collaboration as a criterion in regional action plans

Should we use collaboration as a criterion for some measures in the RDP? If yes, for which? Should they be defined on national level or on regional level? What exactly should then be valued?

- It is suitable to use collaboration as a criterion for example for articles on broadband, cooperation and non-productive investments
- It is important that the criteria is not too detailed
- For example could number of actors on local level, multifunctionality (the project aims to more than one environmental objective) and availability and usefulness for local population be valued, but it should not be so detailed that it defines the amount of actors involved.

9. Maintenance of regional action plans (RDP)

How to keep the regional strategies and action plans alive? How to collaborate within the partnership?

- Regular meetings within the partnership, continuous communication
- Don't forget to use earlier experiences and knowledge of the partners, let all partners be creative
- Participate in seminars and other events to be up to date with good examples and as a reminder of possibilities within the programme
- Make sure that the participants know the aim of each meeting so that they get the right expectations
- Better with smaller "focused" groups than meeting with all partners.



- Monitor and evaluate continuous and make changes and actions when it is needed
- Coordinate with other regional and local strategies
- A problem can be to coordinate with the local action plans (CLLD) since the borders of a CLLD area doesn't have to be within one county.
- Maintain networks for beneficiaries

10. How to link regional- and local action plans (RDP)

What kind of collaboration is needed to synchronize the regional action plans with the local action plans? What kind of collaboration is needed between Swedish Board of Agriculture-County Boards- partnership and CLLD?

- Better with meetings with few participants, CABs could visit CLLD administration or opposite on daytime.
- Let the CABs have a representative in the LAG (Local Action Groups)
- Both LAG and CABs should take responsibility for the meetings and contact to take place.

