



## Nurturing Quality Projects: A Guide for FLAGs



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# Introduction

Community-led local development (CLLD) is about involving local people in thinking through what needs to be improved in their community and encouraging them to launch **projects that will help bring about these changes**. Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) have a budget to support these projects and the responsibility to make sure these resources are used for maximum impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of **building local communities and economies that are resilient to short-term shocks and long-term changes**. Climate change, pressure on natural resources and biodiversity, and increasing disparities in wealth distribution also require strong local communities that can manage their resources efficiently and sustainably.







This will mean “thinking out of the box” to find new, innovative ways of addressing emerging local needs as well as those persistent needs that top-down policy responses have not been able to solve.

This guide aims to help FLAGs identify and support the best projects for their community. Given the specificities of each local area, a good project in one place is not necessarily the best for another. The FLAG's staff has an invaluable role to play in extracting the best ideas from the community and the FLAG members in selecting which of these ideas should be given support to be put into action.

FLAGs should set criteria for selecting local projects at the beginning of the programming period, when developing their local development strategies. Following on from the FARNET guide on “[Forward-looking Strategies for Fisheries Areas](#)”, this publication aims to provide inspiration on the types of projects FLAGs may want to foster, as well as drawing lessons and tips from these examples regarding the conditions for a successful project.

## By “quality local projects”, we are referring to projects that make a real difference to local community members.

Good local projects should:

-  **Respond to a real need at local level** (including of specific groups/individuals)
-  **Build on local resources** (human and/or natural)
-  **Bring about positive change**, for example, to the
  - local economy
  - environment
  - capacity and ability of the community
  - well-being and self-fulfilment of community members
-  **Contribute to long-term improvements** in the area
-  **Offer value for money** (justifying the investment of public money)
-  **Complement other local projects**, building synergies and feeding into a bigger vision for the area

By contributing to the improved use of local resources and skills and encouraging good promotion/communication of local initiatives, **cooperation, and linkages** among local stakeholders – businesses, research, education, public authorities etc. – will be key to ensuring that projects deliver their maximum potential. Cooperation with other areas will allow projects to benefit from greater critical mass and/or knowledge not available in the local area.

Finally, as mentioned above, FLAGs should not forget their important role as **drivers of innovation**. Innovation does not happen without a certain risk of failure. However, it is fundamental if positive change is to happen.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought renewed urgency to rethinking how society and local economies are organised. FLAGs – and the authorities responsible for putting in place the Programmes, **rules and administrative systems** – should carefully consider the role that CLLD can play in proposing and testing new ways of working. To fully realise the potential of CLLD in this capacity, bold decisions will have to be taken to ensure the ambition and flexibility is in place to truly encourage and enable local innovation.

# 1. Healthy Ecosystems

Many FLAGs will want to focus part of their budget on fostering a clean and healthy local environment. Conservation of natural ecosystems is essential to any local community dependent on natural resources such as seas, oceans, rivers and lakes. As well as contributing to productive and sustainable fisheries, healthy ecosystems are also an essential component of the quality of life in fisheries areas.

Through the introduction of the [European Green Deal](#), the EU has also placed environmental sustainability at the heart of its policy for 2020-2030. Importantly, and central to the Green Deal, is that it is an inclusive strategy which includes action at local level. Several priorities within the Green Deal Strategy are relevant to fisheries areas and FLAGs. In fact, they are priorities in which some FLAGs are already highly active, including reducing pollution; moving to a circular economy; mitigating the negative impacts of climate change; supporting environmentally friendly food systems; and the **restoration and preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity**.

This chapter shows how the [Camargue FLAG](#), France, has addressed this challenge as a strategic local development priority.

## In focus: Camargue FLAG, France

Situated in southern France, the Camargue FLAG area is a largely rural area characterised by the Garrigue, a scrubland eco-region of the Mediterranean. It sits on a coastal strip known as the Camargue, shaped by the Rhone River Delta. Fisheries are concentrated in Le Grau du Roi harbour, one of the most significant in the Mediterranean, where 2 900 tonnes of fish are sold each year.

And yet, the area is losing its fishing identity in the face of new economic activities. Tourism is one of these sectors, leading to a ten-fold population increase in the summer and huge pressure on the area's natural resources and marine eco-system.

As such, a key priority to the FLAG is protecting the environment so that these industries can thrive and work together in parallel. It is supporting a series of projects which, together, are helping foster a healthier marine ecosystem:

- Awareness-raising among users of the marine space, including fishers
- Collaboration with marine protected areas and scientists to improve fish spawning
- Collection of marine litter at sea & recycling of plastic waste
- Research into alternatives to plastic-based materials in fisheries
- Cooperation beyond the FLAG area for increased impact



## 1.1 Cleaner seas

### Raising Awareness

The first port of call for the FLAG in its efforts to improve its area's natural ecosystems was to raise awareness within the local community. To generate this awareness, the Camargue FLAG collaborated with three neighbouring FLAGs on a project to establish an **educational resource centre focused on the environment**. The new resource centre has two main functions: to act as a networking hub for collaborative activities among the four FLAGs involved; and to develop and offer specific training tools for raising awareness on the environmental impacts that fisheries have on the area's natural environment.

Through this project, the FLAG has been able to **educate** both fishers and the community on environmental issues. The local interest and awareness generated have helped to **launch other projects** which contribute to a healthier local ecosystem. Not only does the education resource centre complement other projects, but it builds local knowledge and brings about positive and **lasting change**.

### Tackling pollution and marine litter

One of the key elements of the Camargue FLAG's environmental education resource centre is a focus on pollution and waste. In recent decades, plastic production has grown exponentially at alarming levels, with over a third of all discarded plastic ending up in the world's oceans and seas (approximately 8 million tonnes every year).





Like for many FLAGs, combatting the damaging impact that pollution and marine litter can have on the natural environment is an important strand of work for the Camargue FLAG. Building on the local awareness generated around the problem, the Camargue FLAG has several concrete projects focused on reducing litter and ensuring cleaner seas.

#### Marine litter collection and recycling

One such project draws on a circular economy approach to dealing with marine litter. '**ReSeaclons**', a pilot project funded by the FLAG, offers a collaborative approach by bringing together over 50 local fishers in dealing with litter found at sea. The fishers collect marine litter while they are working before bringing it ashore and depositing it into two large shipping containers on the Le Grau-du-Roi quayside. The waste, which typically consists of mixed plastics, is then transported and recycled into new polymer-based products by a plastics company called Trivéo. The project allows the FLAG area to act fast on marine waste in its waters, protecting birds and marine life from becoming entangled in the plastics.

Between April and December 2018, approximately 800kg of marine plastic debris was collected, stored and recycled through this innovative project, which both reduces waste and generates economic activity in the production of new and useable products.



-  Offers a **concrete solution** to a problem
-  **Builds on human resources** and expertise available in the area
-  Brings together different local stakeholders around a common goal, creating **mutually beneficial partnerships**
-  Fosters a **win-win situation**: protecting the area's natural resources and **innovating** to turn waste into a new resource and economic activity

For more information, visit the [FARNET Good Practice](#)

## Scaling up innovation

For projects focused on reducing marine litter, reaching a critical mass is important to have an **impact**. Not only are there no boundaries at sea, meaning that waste entering the sea elsewhere can still end up in your area, but the scale of the problem is such that it needs more than the efforts of a few isolated areas to make a difference.

The development of a chain of actions related to marine litter, from awareness-raising on the issue to its collection and the development of circular economy projects, can be costly for a single FLAG to undertake. Moreover, for any business that aims to turn recycled plastic into new products, the supply of large quantities of marine plastic needs to be assured. The plastic collected in just one FLAG area is rarely enough to build a profitable business.

Collaborating with neighbouring FLAGs and other partners can both increase critical mass and reduce costs for individual FLAGs. **Cooperation** is also a way of accessing other sources of funding, such as Interreg. The upscaling of the ReSeaclons project is therefore under discussion with a view to extending it along the coast of the whole Occitanie Region and potentially to other regions.

## 'Mopping up the flood but the tap's still running'




A phrase now synonymous with the world's plastic pollution problem is '*mopping up the flood but the tap's still running*,' which highlights the need for both cleaning up the mess of plastic waste while also stemming the source of the problem. Where possible, FLAGs should look to support **projects that tackle both the causes and the effects of pollution** faced in their areas. In this sense, they should look to support a combination of complementary projects to maximise synergies and impacts. Through a series of projects, the Camargue FLAG has been able to both start "mopping up the flood" while slowly trying to "turn off the tap".

### Replacing plastics in the fisheries sector

While the ReSeaclons project offers a circular solution to tackling marine waste, the FLAG is also working on **long-term solutions** to the plastic waste produced by the area's local fisheries industry.

Today, the fishers of Grau du Roi use polystyrene boxes for the landing and sale of their catch to fishmongers. Such polystyrene boxes are difficult to dispose of and easily break up into smaller pieces which are difficult to collect and damaging to the environment. As such, the FLAG has funded a **research project which aims to find and test alternatives to polystyrene fish boxes**. Overall, the project aims to put in place a better management system, reducing the industry's dependency on polystyrene. If successful alternatives can be found, the project will have a lasting impact on the local environment, reducing the negative impact of fisheries on the region's natural ecosystems.



-  Forward looking project that aims to tackle the root of a problem
-  Complementary to other projects tackling plastic pollution
-  Harnessing research to develop practical solutions



More information on the role FLAGs can play in marine litter and the circular economy can be found in [FARNET Guide #17: Circular economy in fisheries and aquaculture areas](#)



## 1.2 Protecting biodiversity

The projects above all contribute to the protection of biodiversity by improving the marine environment, and particularly water quality, for fish and other forms of marine life. Indeed, by reducing pollution the local community can ensure biodiversity has a better chance to thrive.



However, as well as helping to protect the basic conditions for biodiversity to flourish, FLAGs can do a lot to protect specific aquatic species. This may be through helping set up or improve the management of marine protected areas. It could also involve ensuring fishing and other marine activities do not damage the seabed or accidentally harm endangered marine species. The Camargue FLAG builds on its work to ensure cleaner seas with projects to actively protect its local biodiversity.

### Preserving spawning grounds

The Camargue FLAG is supporting various scientific projects to study optimal structures that could be used for the spawning of some of the area's prized species. Spawning "modules" were produced and tested in the region's Natura 2000 area in partnership with local fishers.

Through being consulted and involved in the project, the preservation of the fisheries resource and the creation of new spawning grounds was positively received as a management measure by fishers as it supports the long-term sustainability of what is a high value-added fish species.



-  Two-pronged approach to **educate** local fishers about the impact of their activities on marine ecosystems *and* improve the area's biodiversity.
-  Strengthened **cooperation and trust** between fishers and the managers of marine protected areas, giving them common goals and working tools.

### Marine protected areas

FLAGs can play an important role in supporting protected areas such as MPAs and Natura 2000 sites, which are often seen by fishers as detrimental to their catch and livelihood. This might involve launching the idea of setting up an MPA or bringing together the relevant stakeholders to ensure conservation works for everyone.

By including fishers in the development process, FLAGs can demonstrate that protecting spawning areas and biodiversity can have a positive impact on the long-term sustainability of fisheries through the revival of dwindling fish stocks. MPAs can also be of value to an area's ability to diversify its primary sectors into new activities such as nature-based tourism.

## Cooperation around Mediterranean MPAs

Finding a model that makes conservation *economically viable* is fundamental to ensuring its long-term future. The Camargue FLAG has joined a working group with other FLAGs from around the Mediterranean to develop knowledge on how to secure the economic viability of MPAs in their areas. In collaboration with [MedPan](#), the network of Mediterranean MPAs, a first study visit was held in October 2019 in Greece, where participants examined the potential of introducing certain economic activities (such as professional guided tours or diving) to support conservation activities in protected area.



Joint **learning** and **cooperation**



Aims to make **environmental conservation economically self-sufficient**

## 1.3 Managing fisheries resources

A key challenge for the Camargue FLAG is ensuring that employment in fisheries remains competitive with other sectors and attractive to the younger generations. This requires healthy fish and shellfish stocks. Promoting the participation of the fisheries sector in better local resource management is something the FLAG aims to support.

### Improving the sustainability of a local fishery

The wedge clam is a high-value species in the Camargue FLAG area. However, the landings of this species have declined from around 1 500 tonnes at the beginning of the 2000s to just a few hundred tonnes in 2014. The FLAG is therefore in discussions with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) who propose bringing together a series of stakeholders to study the state of this fishery and look at ways of improving its sustainability. If approved for funding, the project foresees bringing together the relevant shell-fishing committees and federation of leisure shell-fishers, the Camargue Regional Park in which they are targeted, the public authorities in charge of monitoring its exploitation and scientific organisations specialising in marine and fisheries research.



Aims to build **long-term collaboration** between all relevant stakeholders



Aims to combine scientific with practical **knowledge to improve future practice**

This Chapter has illustrated how, in the 2014-2020 period, the Camargue FLAG has supported projects that aim to create a healthier marine space where its fisheries can thrive. Steps have also been made towards better management of these fisheries which is expected to be a central part of the FLAG's strategy in the 2021-2027 period.



## Other FLAG projects to protect eco-systems and biodiversity include:

**Reinstating wetlands and pike spawning grounds on the Stockholm archipelago:** a project to restore the natural balance of the local ecosystem where key predators, such as pike, are essential to maintaining healthy waters and biodiversity.

**Cooperating to preserve protected species and fishing businesses:** “Tartatur” is a conservation project involving four Italian FLAGs across the Northern Adriatic Coast.

**Fishing intelligently:** Finnish and Polish fishermen work together on spreading new fishing techniques which benefit both the natural environment and the fisheries sector.



More information on the role FLAGs can play in local resource management, including actions to safeguard and restore biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems can be found in [FARNET Guide #16: Strengthening local resource management](#)

## 2. Sustainable Food Systems

All FLAGs are active in supporting local fishers and/or aquaculture producers. It is important, therefore, that support in this field contributes to **making food systems more sustainable**. This is not currently the case with global foods systems which can bring with them huge environmental impacts, including high levels of carbon emissions and over-exploitation of land and water. Developing more sustainable practices and more regionalised markets are not only essential for better conservation of natural resources but can also bring new opportunities for fishers and aquaculture producers, and others along the supply chain.

The EU's recently launched **Farm to Fork Strategy** aims to make food systems fairer, healthier, and more environmentally friendly.<sup>1</sup> Efforts to achieve such objectives are centred on the increased production and consumption of local food. This can contribute to more sustainable practices and a reduction of carbon emissions, but stronger regional food markets can also make local economies **more resilient in the face of external shocks**. This was clear during the COVID-19 pandemic when global supply chains were disrupted but many local producers managed to sustain their communities.

FLAGs, through their portfolio of local projects, can play a significant role in developing more **resilient and environmentally sustainable food systems**. This chapter shows how the **Navia-Porcía FLAG**, Spain, is seizing the opportunity to do so.

### In Focus: The Navia-Porcía FLAG, Spain

The FLAG is situated on the northern coastline of Spain, facing the Bay of Biscay and takes its name from Navia, the only city in the area, and the Porcía River which borders the territory to the west. The area has a small population of 20 000, and four small harbours served by approximately 40 coastal fishing boats which employ traditional fishing techniques. The main species targeted are goose barnacles, octopus, mackerel and hake.

A key challenge is the low-income levels of local fishers and shellfish gatherers, who, as a result, find it difficult to innovate and invest in their businesses. As such, the FLAG aims to help make fisheries more profitable without disturbing the current ecological balance. It is supporting projects at different stages of the supply chain, starting with sustainable harvesting, and including traceability, product certification and the promotion of local products.

The FLAG's organisation also manages the local LEADER programme and, therefore, takes a global approach to promoting a sustainable local food system – based on both agricultural and fisheries produce. The projects highlighted below include initiatives to:

- Reward sustainable production practices, in particular in the area's octopus fishery
- Maintain and promote the quality of its local food
- Strengthen the area's short supply chains
- Improve consumer awareness of the quality and availability of the area's food products



<sup>1</sup> The Farm to Fork Strategy is a central part of the [European Green Deal](#).

## 2.1 Sustainable production practices

Many FLAGs work on ensuring that their area's fisheries and aquaculture are environmentally sustainable, traceable and that production practices are managed properly.

For this, good data is necessary and a concerted effort to support management processes. Fishers can sometimes be sceptical of research through fear of reduced quotas placing their livelihood at risk.

However, sustainable fisheries management is mutually beneficial if approached correctly, and FLAGs can play an important role in bringing different parties together and ensuring fishers are involved in management processes. They can encourage them to take ownership of their fisheries by identifying and adopting sustainable practices which are beneficial to their activities as well as the environment.

### Rewarding sustainability

Two-thirds of the fleet in the Navia-Porcía FLAG area catch local octopus in traps. Active just six months a year, instead of 11 like most octopus fisheries, Navia-Porcía prides itself on the sustainability of its methods.

One of the primary objectives of the Navia-Porcía FLAG is adding value to local produce through quality labelling and certification, as well as traceability. As such, the FLAG played a central role in promoting the idea of applying for MSC certification<sup>2</sup> for the area's most important fishery – as well as helping it become reality.





Achieving such certification is a lengthy and expensive process, requiring extensive collaboration between stakeholders. The Navia-Porcía FLAG began its involvement in the project through supporting a pre-assessment of the octopus fishery using an independent and external consultancy which concluded that the fishery was both well-managed and likely to meet the MSC criteria for sustainable fishing. As such, it was recommended to proceed to the full assessment. The FLAG was then able to bring together a team of scientists, experts, local stakeholders, and the area's fishers in conducting a full assessment and analysis of the fishery.

The team evaluated the fishery against three core principles of the MSC Fisheries Standard.

1. The health of the octopus stocks.
2. The impact the fishery and its methods have on the marine environment.
3. The management of the fishery.

Western Asturias became the first octopus fishery in the world to receive an MSC certification. This recognition of their efforts in sustainable fishing practices and traceability, along with the marketing campaign that the FLAG supported in parallel, has led to a 29% increase in first sale prices, while also ensuring the longevity and survival of the area's resources.



-  **Long-term** project to **protect and promote a local resource**
-  Levers in **external expertise** and the recognition of a world-renowned brand
-  Delivers concrete **economic results**
-  **Innovative** (world's first MSC certified octopus fishery)

For more information see [FARNET Good Practice](#)

<sup>2</sup> MSC, the [Marine Stewardship Council](#), is globally recognised for its accreditation process to certify the sustainability of seafood production.

Once the MSC certification of its octopus fishery was up and running, managed and financed by the local fishermen themselves<sup>3</sup>, the FLAG turned its attention to strengthening the marketing and promotion of its local fisheries – in particular within the region.

## 2.2 Quality foods

Food recognised for its quality tends to be embedded with information. This may be related to **culture or tradition**, **place of origin**, or the **practices involved in the production process** (e.g. sustainably caught wild fish/seafood, organic aquaculture or organic processed products). The design and materials used for the packaging is also, often, linked to the quality of a food product.

Research shows that consumers are more inclined to choose, and pay more for, products they associate with quality. Several FLAGs have worked on projects related to certification, including eco-certification as we saw in the case of Navia-Porcía s octopus fisheries. Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) are other types of certification.



Other FLAGs have supported projects to ensure the transparent traceability of fisheries and aquaculture products, including where they were caught or raised, and the methods involved. The provision of such information through clear labelling can help the consumer make informed choices as to the origin and quality of products purchased. This, in turn, can help strengthen the market for quality food products.

### “Nature’s paradise”: tapping into a quality brand

The Navia-Porcía FLAG is currently working to link its eco-certified octopus with a regional quality brand. The brand, “**Alimentos del paraíso natural**” (“Food from nature’s paradise”, in English) was initiated by the regional government of Asturias to promote a range of local products that have been certified as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) or organic. While the local octopus does not fit into one of these three categories, the FLAG hopes it can convince the necessary parties that the ongoing monitoring and procedures involved in maintaining its MSC certification fulfil the quality and traceability requirements of products promoted by this regional brand. If successful, the initiative would:



- ✔ Offer **value for money** by piggybacking on an existing brand
- ✔ Bring a **new** category of recognised “quality” foods to the regional brand
- ✔ **Integrate** a fisheries product to an offer which is largely agricultural

<sup>3</sup> through an association, ARPESOS, of all MSC certified boat owners in the area

A stamp of quality does not always have to be obtained from an established certification scheme. Some FLAGs have worked on their **own initiatives** based on the recommendations of local fishers. For example, the **Galeb FLAG**, Croatia, funded the **fishermen recommend** project, a scheme developed by local fishers and restaurants to endorse the quality of locally landed seafood and avoid consumers being misled as to what is local on restaurant menus and what has been imported. The project allows consumers to make informed choices about the quality of their food while being safe in the knowledge that they are also supporting local fishers to obtain a better price for their catch.

Such schemes also build trust and reciprocity between producers and consumers, essential aspects to achieving sustainable local food systems and recognition of product quality. The “fishermen recommend” project also contributes to the Galeb FLAG’s objective of developing a sustainable tourism industry based on exceptional gastronomy and quality local produce.

## Going organic

Organic production is another way small-scale producers can tap into quality food markets. Organic foods are deemed to be of higher quality as they are produced without the use of chemical fertilisers or pesticides. As such, organic aquaculture involves the production of fish farmed in uncontaminated waters and using feed which has also been produced sustainably. By 2030, the EU aims to have significantly increased the production of organic food with the help of the Farm to Fork Strategy. FLAGs are well placed to support the development of organic foods as a means of adding value to local producers and products.

### Organic samphire

The **ADREPES Costeiro FLAG** in Portugal has supported a local business dedicated to the organic production and processing of samphire, a native coastal plant which grows in the area’s salt marshes and has proven quite resistant to climate change. *Salina Greens* is now among the rare organic farms in the EU growing samphire, offering consumers a mark of quality when compared to conventionally farmed samphire.

This quality has helped *Salina Greens*, secure trade relations with different Portuguese supermarkets and organic restaurants. Its use in the cosmetic and pharmaceutical sectors has also led to a contract with the cosmetics company, LUSH, which specialises in natural and organic beauty products. The company has developed partnerships with the foundation that manages the local marshes and a scientific group from the University of Lisbon that specialises in halophytic plants. Such relationships strengthen the local economy as well as opening doors for future opportunities, developing long-term partnerships in and beyond the area.

The project also helps preserve the fragile ecosystem of the salt marshes, largely abandoned over the last decades. Without human intervention, these biodiversity hotspots were at risk of disappearing and growing samphire has offered a sustainable way of ensuring their conservation.



- ✔ Builds on the sustainable use of **local natural resources**
- ✔ Brings **multiple and long-term benefits**: environmental, economic and social
- ✔ Develops lasting **business relationships** within and beyond the FLAG area

For more information see the [FARNET Good Practice](#)

## 2.3 Short food supply chains

Short food supply chains refer to supply chains in which the **producers and consumers are closer together**, both geographically and in terms of the number of economic agents involved in bringing food products to market. Supporting shorter supply chains and shifting consumption toward more local food products bring a series of benefits, such as strengthening local businesses and reducing the carbon footprint of transporting food.

### What do we mean by 'local'?

Consumers' perception of what is meant by 'local' varies significantly. For some consumers, local can mean food from within a 10-mile radius, while for others local can mean from within the same country or even from neighbouring countries depending on their cultural proximity. While definitions vary, proximity is key to food being regarded as local, in other words: harvested/produced, processed and consumed in a defined area of proximity.

There is a growing interest in local food among consumers, politicians, and researchers alike, as it is often claimed to be  **fresher, healthier, and produced and supplied in a more ecological and socially responsible way.**

Having worked on the sustainability of its octopus fisheries, the Navia-Porcía FLAG is now working to develop the local market for octopus and other products. Indeed, until now, only one small fish canning company in the area has obtained MSC Chain of Custody certification, allowing it to use the MSC ecolabel on its local seafood products. As such, the FLAG is encouraging other local processors and restaurants to apply for MSC **Chain of Custody** certification to be able offer MSC certified products. It is also cooperating with all Asturian LEADER groups to put in place a comprehensive approach to shortening supply chains for food products from around the region.

### Regional cooperation to promote local products

A side effect of having guaranteed the sustainability and quality of its local octopus were increased prices. However, the local market has yet to catch up with what foreign markets will pay for such a product and over 90% of the fleet's octopus catch is currently exported to countries such as the US and Japan.

With its LEADER budget, the Navia-Porcía LAG-FLAG has launched a cooperation project with 10 other LEADER LAGs, seven of which are also LAG-FLAGS, to take a common approach to marketing artisanal and organic food products from around the region. This includes fresh and processed products from both local agriculture and fisheries.

The project is still in an early phase, in which the supply of different products is being brought together as a coordinated offer and producers are starting to be trained in making use of short circuits to market their produce. A second phase will focus on improving the effectiveness and profitability of these local supply chains and increasing demand. Local octopus and other species caught locally, including goose barnacles should be part of this offer, as well as canned fish and other products processed locally.

## Developing resilience through strong local food systems

Developing a local market for locally caught seafood has long been a key objective for many FLAGs. However, the disruption to global markets in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the **importance of securing effective local supply chains** for fisheries and other food products.

Several direct sales schemes and other local partnerships helped support fishers and aquaculture producers during the closure of traditional supply chains and outlets while ensuring consumer access to local seafood. This was the case with the direct, fishers to consumer portal **Fisch vom Kutter**, created with the support of the **Baltic Sea Coast FLAG** in 2012. During the COVID-19 crisis, the **portal** saw an 80% increase of visitors to the website with fishers in the area reporting a 10-20% increase in direct to



consumers sales. Many FLAGs have supported similar initiatives, some of which through purpose-built online platforms, while others have used social media to organise dockside pick-ups of local seafood and box schemes aimed at local deliveries.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.4 Consumer awareness

Once a sustainable and quality product has been developed and produced, it is important to communicate its value to potential consumers. Raising awareness amongst consumers is an important part of bringing a product or service to market. It is part of the marketing process and provides buyers with the information available about a new product so that they can make informed choices about their purchases and consumption.

Consumer awareness of local food is achieved through a combination of factors. While certain individual initiatives can be particularly powerful in terms of raising consumer awareness of the qualities and availability of local fish and seafood, several projects working in parallel can reach a broader section of the community with complementary messages, to greater effect.

As well as working to certify its area's fisheries products and integrate them with quality schemes, the Navia-Porcía FLAG has been active in making the area's fisheries more visible to the general public, including within its tourism offer. Over the years, it has supported various projects, including the launch of an online "living fisheries museum" with information on the different species caught in the area; a promotional video documentary on the area's fisheries; and various shorter videos promoting the local fisheries culture and gastronomy. The FLAG also supported its main fishing port to welcome members of the public, raising awareness of how the auction works and the importance of fisheries in the community.

### Opening the Vega fish auction to the public

The general aim of this FLAG-supported project is to raise awareness of the local fisheries sector and to promote its achievements in sustainable production practices by equipping the Vega fish auction for guided tours and educational activities.

Led by the *cofradía* (fishermen's organisation), the project has developed an interactive route around the local auction house allowing visitors to experience and learn about the daily work of local fishers. For €3 per adult (free entrance for children up to 12 years old), visitors are offered a guided tour by an employee of the *cofradía*, experienced in local fisheries activities. A didactic room was also constructed and equipped to illustrate features and practices of local fisheries, using audio-visual material to make the tour more attractive to visitors, especially families with children and local schools. Local hotels even purchase tickets in bulk to offer the tour to their clients for free.

The project has increased local consumer awareness of the area's fishing sector and gained coverage in the national media, becoming an important tourist attraction in the area. As such, it contributes to various objectives of the FLAG, promoting the quality of its fisheries products as well as strengthening the area's tourist offer.



- ✓ Achieves **multiple objectives**
- ✓ Uses **local knowledge** (fisheries expert) to promote traditional activity
- ✓ **Generates pride** within the sector of its contribution to the community
- ✓ **Financially self-sustaining**, thanks to nominal entrance fee

For more information see the [FARNET Good Practice](#)

<sup>4</sup> Several examples of how FLAGs have mobilised fisheries communities during the COVID-19 crisis can be found on the FARNET [COVID-19 – FLAG Response Message Board](#).



## Other FLAG projects to build more sustainable food systems

**Enhancing native oyster stocks in Tralee Bay:** a fisheries cooperative in Ireland embraces the use of new technology to ensure the sustainability of its native oyster stocks.

**Upgrading product and service quality in local seafood restaurants:** following a study of consumer expectations, the FLAG helped 12 “fish taverns” improve the quality of seafood served and information about the products, leading to a “Local Quality Agreement”.

**Cabaz do Peixe:** a virtual platform to sell fish directly from the local artisanal fishing fleet to the general public, delivering fresh and high-quality products to eight local collection points.

**Fish festivals promoting forgotten fish species:** two Lithuanian FLAGs collaborate to promote the area’s freshwater species through demonstrations of traditional fishing techniques, organised education cooking sessions and tasting classes.



More information on raising consumer awareness and marketing fish and other seafood through short circuits, can be found in [FARNET Guide #8: Marketing the local catch](#)

## 3. Developing business opportunities

Many coastal communities struggle with low incomes in primary sectors such as fishing and small-scale aquaculture. A key role of the FLAG is to **identify opportunities** to create additional value from these businesses and develop new businesses. Such opportunities can be found both within the fisheries sector and beyond it. They can be undertaken by representatives of the fishing sector or by other entrepreneurs capable of capitalising on local resources to bring income to the area and create jobs, products and services for its inhabitants. In other words, support to such businesses can help **strengthen and diversify the fisheries sector and the local economy in general**.

FLAGs aiming to support new and existing local businesses can look at a wide range of sectors. This Chapter focuses on just a few:

- Increasing the value of fish by developing new types of products
- Supporting sustainable aquaculture
- Developing sustainable tourism
- Exploring other blue growth sectors

As in other chapters, we will guide the reader through the different possibilities of business development focusing on one FLAG for which this theme is particularly important, the **North Kaszuby FLAG** from Poland.

### In Focus: The North Kaszuby FLAG, Poland

Situated in the northernmost part of the Polish Baltic Sea coast, the North Kaszuby FLAG covers an area of 572 square km and a population of nearly 82 000, with approximately 1900 jobs in fishing and processing (of which 760 are women). The area has a distinct cultural identity linked strongly with the fishing tradition.

In this particularly touristic part of the Polish coast, the challenge is to create additional sources of income and sustainable, non-seasonal jobs. However, weak business skills and low education levels in the area are a challenge. One of two key objectives in the FLAG strategy is to support “competitive businesses, offering diversified and attractive employment to the inhabitants”. The projects in this chapter are just a few that have helped add value to fisheries-related businesses while diversifying the local economy:

- investment for new processed products
- integrating a fish farm to the area’s tourism offer
- helping a fisher diversify into tourism
- launching a medical testing business in an old fish canning factory

*In the previous period, the FLAG supported over 200 projects and created 200 jobs. A stable and highly competent team (4 FTEs + an accountant) and good contact with potential and actual beneficiaries was identified as a key factor of this success.*



## 3.1 Increasing the value of fisheries products

One of the first project types that FLAGs consider when it comes to developing new business opportunities are those that add value to local fisheries. Strengthening linkages between producers and consumers can add value to local fisheries products (see [Chapter 2](#)). However, FLAGs can also help local entrepreneurs develop new products and enter new markets, for example, more lucrative markets for low value fish species and by-products, or niche markets for high quality fish.




New business ventures to add value can be highly sophisticated but they can also be quite simple and equally effective and profitable. The North Kaszubian FLAG offers an example of how a local fisherman managed to develop his business to add value to sprat.

### Processing a low-value species for increased revenue

In the area of North Kaszubian, a family fishing business is also the owner of a processing plant. In the past it used to produce canned fish, but due to lack of qualified staff this activity was discontinued. Subsequently, the sprat, still caught in large quantities, was simply frozen immediately after the landing and sold at a low price, mainly for export markets.

Thanks to FLAG guidance and financial support, the company invested in an automated production line which allows it to quickly gut the fish and sell it fresh for human consumption at a much higher price to Polish processing plants. The investment cost about €100 000 (of which the FLAG granted 50%), and it has allowed the company to increase its income by around 30%.



-  Generates additional **value from an abundant local resource**
-  Develops a **new product** from a previously low-value fish
-  Helps the project promoter access a **new local market**

### Looking beyond the FLAG area for inspiration

Taking the time to look beyond one's local area can pay off. Indeed, innovation at the local level is often inspired from experience in other corners of Europe, or further afield. FLAGs can play a valuable role in broadening the horizons of its community and confronting the sector with new ideas.

In South Finland, for example, the [ESKO FLAG](#) was instrumental in encouraging **experimentation and innovation** to add value to its local catch. It introduced the idea of using a Japanese ageing method to cure locally caught salmon and trout. The project, which blends local produce with international processing techniques, has resulted in a quality product aimed at the luxury market which has attracted Michelin chefs. The processing of the fish adds substantial value to the raw project and is now sold in a top Helsinki restaurant at a premium. Its introduction has created local jobs and increased the business' annual turnover by €50 000.



See FARNET Guides #3: [Adding value to local fishery and aquaculture products](#) and #12: [Boosting business along the fisheries value chain](#) for more ideas on how to strengthen and add value to local fisheries and aquaculture businesses.

## 3.2 Sustainable aquaculture

Sustainable aquaculture can be an important source of food and other valuable products. It can cover a wide range of activities and go well beyond the farming of fish or crustaceans. FLAGs have supported the production of **seaweed or macroalgae**, and even coral farming.




In North Kaszuby, aquaculture has a relatively weak presence in the area. However, the FLAG saw scope to **promote existing fish farming activities** within its broader strategy to link tourism with fisheries heritage under a broad cooperation project called the Northern Fisheries Trail.

### Linking fish farming to tourism

The North Kaszuby FLAG supported a fish farm to plan and develop tourist activities that build on its local heritage. FLAG funding was used to set up a place where visitors can gut and grill the fish they catch themselves at the farm and for physical investments around an old water mill to facilitate fish migration and increase local energy production.

The project has an important educational function, both as an example of sustainable energy production at the local level, and as an attraction for children and young people interested in learning about the only water mill in the FLAG area.



-  **Cooperation and integration** of different sectors of the local economy
-  Builds **synergies** with existing projects linked by the Northern Fisheries Trail
-  **Innovative and inspirational** integration of renewable energy production

### Launching new and sustainable aquaculture





As well as promoting and better integrating existing aquaculture into the local community, FLAGs may also want to support the **development of new aquaculture activities** to boost the local economy and provide (often skilled) jobs. Indeed, a competitive and sustainable aquaculture is a key priority of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027.

## Innovation and aquaculture

An inspiring example of starting innovative aquaculture production and facilitating linkages between different actors comes from the **Mank FLAG** in Denmark. It has supported the first open-water mussel farm in Denmark (where mussel farms are typically located in inlets). A local research centre found that waters around Kerteminde Bay provide particularly good conditions for mussel farming. These high quality, organic mussels are ready for consumption after less than one year, instead of the usual cycle of over two years. The project facilitated cooperation between local actors involved in mussel production, processing, and sales, and it also contributes to improving water quality.

The project started in 2018 as a pilot farm, gradually scaling up to reach maximum production capacity of 400 tonnes per year and the planned employment (5 FTE) by the end of 2020. The original pilot site now serves as a test site for further products, such as oysters and seaweed. The project cost €123 000, of which 53 600 came from the FLAG grant.



-  **Innovative** activity based on **local resource**
-  Facilitates **cooperation** of different actors
-  **Multiple benefits** to the area
-  Development by stages, **from a pilot to a full-scale activity**

For more information see the [FARNET Good Practice](#)

In many areas, FLAGs can make aquaculture an integral part of their strategy to secure successful businesses that sustain their local communities. However, aquaculture can also bring with it heavy environmental impacts and conflict if care is not taken. FLAGs should bear in mind the following issues when supporting new aquaculture activities:

- > environmental impact
- > acceptance by the local community of the production methods
- > potential conflicts of interest related to the use of space
- > consumer behaviour and trust in the product

Depending on the type of aquaculture in an area and specific support needs, FLAGs can play an important role in helping aquaculture producers promote their products, demonstrating that they are locally and sustainably produced, or **facilitating linkages** with other local actors (including gastronomy and tourism) and with the research community.

They can also provide **capacity building** for aquaculture producers to become more sustainable or provide investment funding to **improve product quality** and/or environmental impact. Some FLAGs also play an important role helping producers to influence decision-making at both local and national levels.



See FARNET Guide [Integrating aquaculture in local communities](#) for more ideas on how FLAGs can support sustainable aquaculture while building acceptance, trust and collaboration with other sectors.

## 3.3 Sustainable tourism

Many FLAG areas are, or could be, highly attractive from the tourist's point of view. Tourism can be a source of jobs and additional incomes to the fisheries community. It also creates opportunities for cooperation between different actors.

FLAGs can facilitate **linkages** between the fishing sector and tourism operators, and can support a variety of projects, covering accommodation, gastronomy, attractions such as pesca-tourism trips, nature tourism, or fishing museums. They can also invest in promotion of the area and its fisheries assets and **ensure that different tourism products are combined into coherent "packages"**.

This is what the North Kaszuby FLAG set in motion when it participated in a cooperation project to launch the **Northern Fisheries Trail**<sup>5</sup>. The trail spans 11 Polish FLAG areas, linking and promoting attractions related to the fisheries heritage of each area. Each of the participating FLAGs set up one centre (or 'anchor' of the Trail) which carries out educational and promotional activities, focusing on a specific theme. The North Kaszuby centre, dedicated to small-scale Baltic fishing traditions, acts as a focal point for many of the FLAG's projects. All relevant projects contribute to and are promoted within the Northern Fisheries Trail.






### A fisherman is helped to diversify into tourism

Mr Henryk Indyk from North Kaszuby was a founding member of the FLAG and, together with his two brothers, owns two fishing boats. For a long time he hesitated to apply for FLAG funding, partly because he was keen to continue focusing on his fishing activity. Finally, however, his shrinking income (due to very low quotas for cod and salmon) and the FLAG manager convinced him to start a new type of activity – tourism, which he could still combine with fishing.

Mr Indyk decided to open a small pension with 6 guest rooms, able to receive tourists the whole year round. FLAG funding was used for the construction and furnishing of the establishment, energy-saving LED lighting, as well as a small smokery. The investment also includes an environmentally friendly heat pump and the development of a new product: trips in one of his fishing boats as an additional tourist attraction (guests can smoke the fish they catch in the smokery).

The FLAG supported Mr Indyk from the very beginning, starting from a first meeting in early 2017 and then providing on-going advice to prepare his investment plan and budget, obtain building permits, etc. The FLAG convinced him to use the environmentally friendly heating system and to offer the additional tourist attractions (boat trips, smokery). The project was also included in the **Northern Fisheries Trail** and benefits from joint promotion. It cost €146 000, of which €119 000 were eligible costs. The FLAG granted €50 000.



-  Makes a **real difference** in the fisherman's life
-  Responds to a **specific need** (loss of quota and income)
-  **Builds business capacity** (thanks to FLAG advice)
-  Integrates the use of **renewable energy**
-  Strengthens a **local network and complements other local projects** (thanks to cooperation within the North Kaszuby Fisheries Trail)

FLAGs should remember that, while tourism has very high potential to stimulate economic growth, too much dependency on it may create risks. The consequences of international travel restrictions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, had catastrophic effects on many tourism businesses. Areas with a **mix of different businesses**, but also of tourism businesses

<sup>5</sup> Launched in the 2007-2013 period, the trail continues to grow and attract new elements

catering for *different target audiences* (e.g. local tourism and school visits as well as international visitors) will tend to prove more resilient to unforeseen events.

**Respecting the carrying capacity of an area** is also important for FLAGs to bear in mind when supporting tourism businesses. This will help ensure that the benefits that tourism can bring outweigh the potential negative impacts such as overcrowding and pollution. **Extending the tourism season** as much as possible will not only help ensure year-round activities and revenue but can also help spread the “burden” of tourism, making it easier for a community and its natural resources to absorb.

### Eco-tourism and quality projects

The MEET Network is a network of protected areas working together to conserve natural and cultural resources while promoting a new model of ecotourism to the market and innovative tools to manage their impacts. While focusing on tourism in protected areas, its criteria for eco-tourism include projects that:



- ✓ Involve **local communities** and **local service providers**
- ✓ Benefit **conservation**
- ✓ Reduce the **ecological footprint** and improve the tourist behaviour
- ✓ Catalyze models of **cooperative tourism development** between protected areas and the private sector

More information on ecotourism product development and measuring the ecological footprint of tourism packages can be found at: [www.meetnetwork.org](http://www.meetnetwork.org)



### Other FLAG projects that develop tourism businesses

**Sea trout tourism:** a FLAG-LAG cooperation project addresses local economic and environmental goals by creating a new tourist location based on recreational fishing.

**‘Mar das Illas’:** three Galician FLAGs work together to support local fishers and families in their entrepreneurial efforts focused on marine and pesca-tourism.

**A fisher’s son sets up a company offering tourist packages** dedicated to the discovery of the local marine environment with a focus on cetacean observation, as well as angling, kayaking and snorkelling tours.



See FARNET Guide #9 on **Fisheries and Tourism** for more information on supporting quality tourism projects in fisheries and aquaculture areas.



## 3.4 Other blue growth sectors

For the 2021-2027 funding period, FLAGs are encouraged to exploit a wide range of opportunities offered by the sustainable blue economy. This includes not only fisheries, aquaculture and tourism, but also activities linked to energy, new technologies and the exploitation of marine resources.

However, FLAGs should remember that supporting projects in new fields may require technical knowledge and linkages with sectors that are less familiar to the typical stakeholders involved in fisheries CLLD. It will, therefore, be important to cooperate closely with potential beneficiaries, verify their ability to carry out the projects they propose and ensure that activities bring benefits to the fisheries community.

### Breaking into the knowledge-based economy: an innovative medical laboratory




The North Kaszuby FLAG's strategy has always foreseen support to activities going beyond fisheries and tourism. In the 2007-2013 period, one of the strategic priorities was to develop services for the local community and for visitors, including in a health sector. The FLAG also wanted its operations to support entrepreneurs with a high chance of success, who would inspire others and encourage new businesses to apply for FLAG funding.

GENOXA was developed in 2011 by two businessmen previously involved in a fish canning factory. Their new company specialised in medical tests using the most up-to-date diagnostic technologies, in line with the approach of "personalised medicine", which adapts treatment to the patient's specific needs. The company wanted to open a laboratory in the FLAG area to facilitate access of the local population to quick and reliable diagnostics of gastric and oncological diseases. The project involved adaptation of the fish processing building and purchase of high-quality laboratory equipment, as well as an IT system to help manage the testing process and enable patients to access their results online.

The laboratory turned out to be successful, and in 2018 it started to offer new types of tests based on molecular diagnosis. In 2020, it was selected as one of the few laboratories in the region to carry out COVID-19 tests. In cooperation with local authorities the company set up several drive-through sample collection points for the inhabitants of the FLAG area.

The project has inspired many local entrepreneurs who have become more active in applying for EU funding. It cost around €145 000, of which the FLAG grant €72 000.



-  Opens a **new type of activity** in an area, until then, largely dependent on tourism
-  Offers high quality health **service to the community**
-  Sets an **example for other businesses**

## Adding value to business development – the role of the FLAG

Community-led local development offers the added value of having a **local partnership and a local support team** not only to fund projects but also to select those that can best complement existing businesses and fill potential gaps in the market.

Moreover, the FLAG (or LAG) has a role to play in supporting the development of projects, helping **adapt initial proposals to maximise their potential** to contribute economically, socially and environmentally to the area. The FLAG also has an important role to play in deciding the level of support that each project should be granted<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, by increasing the level of support provided to specific types of projects or beneficiaries, FLAGs can encourage potential **beneficiaries most in need** of financial support to present project ideas as well as incentivising the development of those **projects most needed in the area**.

### Promoting renewable energy uptake through business support

Climate change and the environment has been an important theme for the North Kaszuby FLAG in the 2014-2020 period. Projects that contribute to these objectives are prioritised in the selection process. Mr Zdzisław Karsznia provides services such as the installation of electricity lines to homes and businesses and approached the FLAG for funds to renovate an old building where he was planning to move his company.

The FLAG suggested that, as many of Mr Karsznia's customers are interested in alternative energy supply, he could expand his business to set up a small wind turbine for demonstration purposes. In this way his future customers would be able to get acquainted with the operations of such a turbine and its technical possibilities, while raising their awareness about renewable energy. The site can also be used for school visits.



The **FLAG role in this project was essential**: it inspired the businessman to expand his project into a new type of service, and it also helped him through the whole process of application, implementation and reporting.



### Other FLAG projects that have helped diversify their local economies

**Reef Water Coral Farm**: one of Europe's first commercial coral farms, growing approximately 5 000 corals annually and attracting school trips of children from around the area.

**Cultivating microalgae for omega-3**: a new start-up company to cultivate microalgae on land for oil extraction, to be used as a pharmaceutical-grade nutrient for human consumption.

**Cooperation and exchange to support sustainable local businesses**: exchange between businesses from three countries helps raise skills of local entrepreneurs, develop new products and encourage young people to engage in business activities.

<sup>6</sup> The percentage of the eligible project costs that a FLAG decides to cover is known as "aid intensity". Under the EMFF (Annex III), FLAGs can support up to 50% of project costs. However, for certain projects, e.g. innovative projects, collective projects and projects related to small-scale coastal fisheries, FLAGs can cover up to 100% of the eligible cost. The Common Provisions Regulation stipulates that FLAGs are responsible for "selecting operations and fixing the amount of support". These rules are also envisaged in the draft legislation for the 2021-2027 period.

### “Golden rules” for supporting sustainable and resilient businesses

- **Avoid over-dependence of your local economy on one or two sectors or markets** (for example the export market for fisheries products or a specific form of tourism); the COVID-19 pandemic is a recent reminder that a diversified economy will prove more resilient in case of shocks or crises.
- Keep in mind the **long-term perspective**: is this business going to be sustainable: financially, environmentally, socially, in 5 years from now? And in 10 years?
- Make sure the businesses you support add **new income or jobs**, and do not simply **displace** existing ones (avoid situations when e.g. a new restaurant or hotel does not increase the overall number of meals or overnights in your area, but attracts customers away from existing businesses).
- If the supported businesses plan to create jobs, make sure these jobs are really **beneficial for the local community**; avoid projects which require skills that are not available in the area, and prioritise those that offer jobs to local people who might have difficulty with finding employment opportunities.
- Think of the whole spectrum of **Blue Economy** and choose those sectors which can be realistically adapted to the needs of your area.



See FARNET Guide #5 on [Diversification of Fisheries Areas](#) for further information and ideas for economic diversification, including in the blue economy.

## 4. Generational renewal

Attracting young people to work in fisheries and aquaculture is an objective for many FLAGs. Ensuring generational renewal within the sector is a common challenge around Europe as **fisheries is often perceived as unattractive to young people** due partly to difficult working conditions and relatively low pay. At the same time, many areas traditionally dependent on fisheries and aquaculture face out-migration and depopulation as young people go in search of alternative futures further afield. The draw of urban and cosmopolitan areas attracts many young people away from where they were brought up, offering better long-term career prospects, higher rates of pay and better services for young families. The result is an ageing fisheries workforce and a **downward spiral of decreasing job opportunities and services** in many FLAG areas.

FLAGs can support projects to address these issues. Such projects may promote fisheries and aquaculture as an attractive industry or help facilitate entrance of the young into the sector. Others may help build a better future for young people in fisheries areas, by creating new local jobs (e.g. related to fisheries, aquaculture or other parts of the blue economy) as well as developing the provision of services.

This chapter shows how the **South Finland FLAG**, together with the local LEADER LAGs, has worked to address its ageing fisheries workforce as well as ensuring that the area in general is an attractive place to live and work.

### In Focus: The ESKO FLAG, Finland

The ESKO (South Finland) FLAG area covers the coast of the Gulf of Finland from Hanko to Virolahti. Despite healthy fish stocks, the number of professional fishers has dropped significantly, from 400 in 1995 to just 65 in 2020, with an average age of 60. Further compounding the problem, the remaining fishers in the area are family-based fishing companies which are regarded as being in their last generation of renewal; the children of these families are not expected to continue the family fishing business. Indeed, low profitability of the sector makes it difficult for fisheries to compete with other industrial sectors and the service sector.



Moreover, as young people move to the cities for education and jobs, the coastal communities face population loss and ageing. These issues go beyond the shrinking fishing community and the FLAG collaborates closely with the three LEADER LAGs (Sepra, Silmu and Pomoväst) whose areas' overlap with the FLAG's. While the FLAG focuses more specifically on fisheries, the LEADER LAGs address some of the more general area-based issues such as ensuring the coastal areas remain attractive to the young and facilitating their return after their studies. The examples below show how the FLAG and LAGs have supported projects to:

- Get young people into the sector and secure the next generation of fishers (FLAG)
- Raise the profile of fisheries among young people more generally (LAG-FLAG)
- Improve the profitability of fisheries by addressing one specific challenge: the damage to local catches by seals (FLAG)
- Breathe life back into a small fishing harbour (LAG and FLAG)

## 4.1 Attracting young people to fisheries and aquaculture

It is not only difficult to encourage young people to consider fisheries as an **attractive career option**. It can be equally difficult for a young person to enter the sector, sometimes due to the **right training not being available or attractive** to those most likely to stay in the sector long-term. Another barrier to young people entering fisheries or aquaculture is **the cost**, for example to buy a first vessel, potentially a fishing licence, and the ancillary equipment required (fishing gear, safety equipment, freezers, etc.).

Thus, in many areas there is scope for bottom-up projects supported by FLAGs to demonstrate that fishing and aquaculture can offer attractive opportunities to the young and/or help people take up fishing as a profession.

Several FLAGs have undertaken educational projects in which young people are confronted directly with different types of fishing or aquaculture practices, often as a collaboration between schools and fishers or aquaculture producers. FLAGs have also developed promotional projects to foster a more positive image of fishing among the general public using both traditional and social media to deliver their message.





A common feature of successful projects under this theme is the **involvement of practitioners (fishers, aquaculture farmers, etc.) in the design and delivery of the educational or promotional activities**. This practical experience is instrumental in informing the young about what a job in fisheries or aquaculture involves.

### Master-apprentice scheme

Confronted with the risk of losing all local fisheries activities, the ESKO FLAG agreed with the local Fisher's Association that a 'master-apprentice' scheme could bring more young people to the sector. By reaching out to potential young fishers, working with the relevant education authorities and the fishing sector itself, a tailored scheme was put in place. It consists of a 100% practical training programme in which one or several experienced fishers adopt a young apprentice to work alongside them and share their knowhow and experience.

The training lasts 12 months and includes the use of modern practices and equipment, as well as marketing methods and basic business skills. The 'masters' are paid if they pay a wage to the apprentice, resulting in a cost of just over €8 000 per young fisher trained. By 2019, 23 young fishers had been trained, of which around 80% took up fishing professionally. At less than €10 000 per person entering the sector, the scheme proved highly cost-effective and, as a result, now all Finish FLAGs have set-up a similar scheme.



-  Fishermen associations were **involved from the start**
-  Potential **young fishers were consulted and listened to!** (resulting in an innovative scheme, based entirely on practical training)
-  **Win-win system** whereby fishermen get paid for their time and youngsters receive on the job training, a small income and the chance to takeover an existing business.
-  **Cost effective** and **concrete results** (jobs created, fisheries skills and knowhow maintained locally)

For more information, visit the [FARNET Good Practice](#)




The training programme above largely targeted young people from fishing families. However, in order to ensure a strong enough base of potential fishers or aquaculture producers, **broader awareness-raising in the community** is usually necessary too. The project below complements ESKO FLAG's master-apprentice scheme, casting its net broader in terms of the young people it reaches and linking fisheries education with other maritime themes and sectors – as well as with youth from outside the area.

## Mobilising youth through FLAG-LAG cooperation

The ESKO FLAG has also worked with the [Virumaa FLAG](#), Estonia, and two LEADER LAGs on a cooperation project to bring young people closer to fisheries and the maritime sector and promote entrepreneurship and exchange among the young.

The initiative includes youth camps for children aged 7-16, one-day events and thematic weekend workshops. Nine camps and study-visits were organised in Finland and Estonia, covering subjects such as sailing and navigation, Baltic Sea fisheries, fisheries tourism, fish-based cooking and environmental conservation. Over 75 children from the two countries attended the camps and more than 2 000 participants took part in the events and workshops.



-  Strengthens **local human capacity and knowledge** in a fun way
-  Builds mutually beneficial **cross-border relationships** and **exchange**
-  **Long-term vision** to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and transnational cooperation

For more information, visit the [FARNET Good Practice](#)

FLAGs can also support activities to make small-scale fisheries easier and more profitable. Indeed, once young people have been encouraged to consider career prospects in fisheries or aquaculture, the reality of the job will ultimately determine whether young people enter and remain in the sector.

Around the Baltic Sea, seals and cormorants, both protected species, are responsible for damaging up to 90% of many fishermen's catches. This increases workload significantly while undermining the profitability of the activity. The ESKO FLAG is therefore spearheading a cooperation project around the Baltic to find solutions to the damage caused to fishers' catches by predators such as seals and cormorants.

## Distribution of 'seal scare' devices to fishers

Following a cooperation project with 14 FLAGs to understand and raise awareness of the impact posed by seals and cormorants to small-scale fishers around the Baltic Sea, the damage they caused to local catches was identified as a key issue discouraging young people from entering and *staying* in the sector.

Cooperating with the Finnish Natural Resources Institute ("LUKE") and a regional environmental research institute in its area, the ESKO FLAG launched the discussion in Finland of the importance of research into the use of "seal scarers", devices that emit a sound that deter these predators, whilst not disturbing the fish. They also organised a study trip to Estonia to see their use of Norwegian seal scarers and to demonstrate both to LUKE and the Ministry of Agriculture the urgency of funding this research.

Thanks to the perseverance of the FLAG, the research took place and a number of test seal scarers were funded by different parties, including three by the ESKO FLAG. The seal scarers proved effective and the only technique that fishers have found to protect their catches from seals.



- ✓ Addresses a **real concern** of the local fishing sector
- ✓ Stimulates **tailored R&D** to find a practical solution
- ✓ Builds **partnerships with science, decision-makers and funders**
- ✓ Integrated within a broader collaboration with 14 Baltic FLAGs to tackle the issue at sea basin level, **optimising resources** and **facilitating scaling up**

The projects above are responses to the specific challenges faced by young and potential fishers in South Finland. Together, they tackle both the image and local awareness of fisheries as a career option, as well as concrete barriers to starting up in fisheries, such as training and profitability.



## Other FLAG projects helping the young discover and enter fisheries or aquaculture

**MediterRadio:** using the media to a voice to ideas, news, culture, and activities related to fisheries and the sea.

**Workshops for schools on aquaculture, environment and fishing heritage** organised in collaboration with the local fishing sector.

**Helping two young fishermen continue and expand their father's fishing business** in a traditional fishing district.

**Training packages for young people and long-term unemployed** in business management, fisheries and aquaculture processing and fishing gear repair.

### EMFF support to acquiring a first fishing boat

Under certain conditions<sup>7</sup>, the EMFF 2014-2020 supports the acquisition of a first fishing vessel and the draft proposal for the EMFAF 2021-2027 includes a similar provision. These grants are clearly focused on small-scale coastal fishers active in a segment in which the catching capacity is in a balance with the fishing opportunities available.

## 4.2 Ensuring a future for young people in the area

Many coastal areas experience some form of depopulation or ageing population, with many young people migrating to big cities. As well as decreasing job opportunities, a lack of local services has been identified as a major driver of depopulation, and many people leave rural areas because they are unable to access the basic services they need. This is a vicious circle since services cannot be delivered if there is not enough local population to use them. FLAGs are confronted with a similar situation in many coastal areas, where tourism and secondary residences cannot provide the necessary year-round customer demand.

FLAG support may focus on ensuring generational renewal by boosting the attractiveness of their area: through improved education opportunities, jobs and services. Together, these projects can ensure a better quality of life locally and develop a "smarter" image of these areas, making them more attractive for young people and working families.

The ESKO FLAG and Sepra LEADER LAG face ongoing migration to nearby Helsinki and, in parallel to its efforts to attract young people to fisheries, have also made it a priority to defend community services and other job opportunities in the area.





<sup>7</sup> Applicants must have either five years' experience as a fisher or equivalent vocational training. Grants are limited to 25% of the cost, with a maximum of €75 000.

## Improving services around a small fishing harbour

The Sepra LEADER LAG together with the ESKO FLAG wanted to bring life back to small fishing harbour of Klamila, which was falling into disuse. They started by organising a discussion with all local stakeholders and invited external experts for a critical external view. This has led to the development of an action plan, which included investments in the yacht harbour, a mobile stage, ecological toilets and a community “church boat”. The action plan combined funding from different sources, including Central Baltic Interreg (2007-2013), EAFRD and EMFF, in total around €100 000 over five years.

As a result, the cooperation between different actors of the community and their interest in using the area around the harbour has been strengthened, services have been improved and new business opportunities have been created. The municipality and the organisation responsible for regional development have integrated the harbour better into their development plans. The participative process of work on the action plan has also contributed to the development of the **COMCOT method**: an innovative tool for improving the competitiveness of community-based tourism.



-  Integrates different improvements into a **coherent action plan**
-  Involves many stakeholders, strengthening **local networks and social capital**
-  Sparks new activities and facilitates business development
-  combines **different sources of funding** to strengthen the impact

More information: see [ELARD publication](#) on integrated rural development



## Other FLAG projects improving quality of life and ensuring a future for the young:

**Old boat engine factory transformed into community hub & business incubator**: helping young entrepreneurs on Ærø Island, Denmark, build their own future in this coastal community.

**Mobile village shop**: bringing goods to remote villages in Germany, with a centralised digital platform for ordering goods and linking the FLAG, local producers and customers.

**Telemedicine centre on Culatra island**: in which consultations are carried out remotely by doctors located in the clinic in the nearest town (Portugal).



For more information on fostering smarter coastal communities, including opportunities for the young, see FARNET Guide #18 on [Smart Coastal Areas](#). See also, FARNET Guide #13 on [Social inclusion for vibrant fishing communities](#) for its factsheet on generational renewal.



## 5. Strengthening social capital and local governance

Many of the initiatives mentioned previously in this guide strengthen social capital and/or local governance as an overarching or secondary objective. Indeed, the social capital developed both through the projects themselves but also as a result of the participative process of bottom-up approaches to local development is key to the added value of CLLD.

The way in which FLAGs build strong and mutually beneficial relationships within a community by bringing stakeholders together in concerted local action is, in many ways, the true value of a FLAG's local development strategy. **It is the “glue” and trust of social capital that holds a community together, allows it to be more confident and innovative, and makes it more resilient when crises hit.**

Local governance for its part, is an explicit objective of community-led local development funded under the EMFF, which foresees support for “strengthening the role of fisheries communities in the governance of local fisheries resources and maritime activities”. Many FLAGs have been active in **ensuring that fisheries communities participate in decision-making that affects them**. This can improve both the quality of decisions taken and the acceptance and compliance by the local community.

This chapter will focus on **FLAG West** in Ireland and how the group's projects combine to increase social capital and provide a stronger voice for fisheries in local governance.

### In Focus: FLAG West, Ireland

FLAG West lies on a remote part of the Atlantic coast, comprising the areas of Galway and Clare which both have significant seafood sectors. There are over 368 registered vessels in the region and some 687 employed in the sector. Fishers predominantly target species such as crab, lobster, crayfish, scallops and oysters. Despite this considerable industry, some of the main challenges for the area are associated with its long-term continuity. A declining and ageing population mean it is hard to attract youth to the industry, which is fragmented across the FLAG area, as is the population generally. Added to these challenges are a lack of infrastructure in the area and extensive distances to markets.



The FLAG has worked hard to build cohesion throughout its area, encouraging participation in the local development process generally and in the governance of the area's natural resources. Along with projects to attract people to the area, the FLAG has supported projects to:

- Mobilise community members to work together on pressing challenges such as protecting the marine environment
- Strengthen local networks and build relationships, particularly linked to the area's fisheries businesses
- Integrate small-scale fishers to national and regional decision-making on fisheries

## 5.1 Mobilising the community

Building networks requires, first and foremost, the mobilisation of local people around common objectives. It is for this reason that FLAGs are explicitly endowed with a budget for “animation”. The FLAG team has a role to play in mobilising community members to improve their local area. However, the projects they fund can also mobilise a series of different stakeholders, in particular to work together.

### A community association to tackle local challenges

The Galway Bay fisheries have been in decline in recent years due to several factors such as water pollution, habitat destruction, overfishing and the negative effects of climate change. Added to this, there has been a disconnect between those at decision-making levels and the coastal communities which rely on the seas around Galway Bay for their way of life and livelihood.

Recognising that these dispersed fisheries communities are home to many liked-minded and enthusiastic members who are willing to volunteer and consult widely with others, FLAG West has worked on mobilising the community to tackle these issues. In 2017, these members of the community, including shellfish farmers, inshore fishers, local community groups, along with marine heritage and environmental enthusiasts, came together to set up a FLAG-funded association, [Cuan Beo](#).

Cuan Beo has been able to connect local stakeholders in a concerted effort on several fronts, increasing social capital in the area and developing several initiatives to protect the marine environment. The multifunctionality of the organisation is represented in its funding. Alongside the €73 681 of FLAG funding, the project received funding contributions from the Local Authorities Water Programme, Heritage Ireland and the Galway Local Authority.

Today, Cuan Beo is now embedded in the local community and has been involved in a range of initiatives highlighting the importance of the local marine resources, including delivering talks on protecting the marine ecosystem; seafood cooking demonstrations and tasting events; and an education day with 500 primary school children. It has also organised native oyster workshops and an oyster restoration project bringing together fishers and the State research agencies.



- ✓ Broad **partnership of community members** mobilised
- ✓ Builds on and protects **local resources**
- ✓ Resulted in a **series of complementary projects**
- ✓ Good **value for money** thanks to volunteers
- ✓ **Lasting impact** on the local community

For more information on the project see the [FARNET Good Practice](#)

## Social capital in COVID times

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and on local communities in general. Through this challenging time, FLAGs have been instrumental in mobilising the communities to support the sector and to **support each other**. This has meant having to *mobilise members in online settings* which can be a challenge in many areas. FLAGs have had to adapt quickly to new ways of working and supporting their communities. The social capital built up over years of FLAG activity has made it easier to do this.



### Practical solutions to unforeseen needs

In the Basque Country, Spain, COVID-19 had paralysed the fisheries sector with many activities being forced to stop due to sanitary and safety concerns. The **Basque FLAG** was quick to mobilise its contacts to help put in place the safety measures required to restart the industry. It liaised with the regional government to acquire personal protective equipment (PPE) and secured agreement from the 12 fishers' associations (*cofradías*) in its area to advance the money for them. The FLAG oversaw the collection of the protective items, prepared the packages for each *cofradía* and distributed them. In just a few weeks, the FLAG had distributed three rounds of packages, including 40 000 masks and 5 000 pairs of gloves, for almost 3 000 workers (including fishers, auction staff and marketers).

### New collaboration at a time of need

As the COVID-19 crisis struck and restaurants were closed, a fisheries processor in the **Central Finland FLAG** area started working with a local restaurant to offer a takeaway service to local residents. The collaboration maintained the fisheries supply chain during the crisis, allowing local fishers to sell their catch to the processor, who then provides the restaurant with the fish required for its takeaway service.

### Using the FLAG network and social media

The **Venetian VeGAL FLAG** responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by launching an awareness-raising campaign on **Facebook** promoting the consumption of local seafood through **video testimonials** with local fishers. To support these fishers and other local businesses, the FLAG started promoting **direct sales** by indicating when local producers will be active and where they are making deliveries.

Visit the FARNET **COVID-19 – FLAG Response Message Board** for more examples of how FLAGs have mobilised fisheries communities during the COVID-19.

## 5.2 Building local networks

Once people are mobilised, lasting networks can be built. In social capital theory, relationships matter. Without relationships and networking, many aspects of local development would not be possible. It is this networking between local stakeholders – fishers, small-businesses and members of the community which generate social capital in an area, based on mutually beneficial relationships and trust. These local networks are invaluable to triggering behavioural changes that, in turn, lead to the desired long-term social, economic, and environmental impacts of the programme.

FLAG West covers many small villages and towns in this remote part of western Ireland. To bring the community together in forging stronger networks, connections and relationships, the FLAG has supported a number of smaller projects aimed at shortening the social distance between members of the community and improving access to the industry and locally landed seafood.

### Bringing a dispersed community together

The project, [Galway Bay Seafood and Fishing Maritime Hub](#), received €20 921 in FLAG funding and offers a wide range of services bringing together different elements of the fisheries sector.




Firstly, it promotes a wide range of fisheries products delivered throughout the FLAG area, providing the community with access to locally landed seafood. As well as offering sustainably and ethically sourced seafood products, the hub's 'Dockside Deli' is pioneering the concept of ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook fresh local seafood.

Secondly, the hub offers a tasting service so that people can come and visit the Deli and try the products on offer while learning about the local Galway fishing industry, its traditions and culture. They can also see specialist skills, processes and techniques, such as hot-smoking, in action.

Finally, the hub acts very much as a 'hub' for the local community, offering training services, demonstrations, cookery classes and pop-up shops which support local causes and charities.

Such activities allow the community to network around its fisheries activities. For example, the hub's pop-up shops have supported other FLAG-supported projects such as the [Wild Atlantic Way](#), the [Galway Docklands Experience](#), and the [Galway Dock Tours](#).



-  **Multifaceted project** which contributes to several of FLAG West's strategic objectives
-  **Develops synergies** by networking both projects and the community
-  Builds the **resilience** of the local community by strengthening human capital and local businesses

## 5.3 A stronger voice for the fisheries sector

In many parts of the EU, small-scale coastal fishers often struggle to make their voice heard. One of the five objectives of community-led local development in the EMFF Regulation is “*strengthening the role of fisheries communities in local development and the governance of local fisheries resources and maritime activities,*” and many FLAGs have been active in supporting a stronger voice for local fisheries in decision-making processes that affect them.

Recognising the struggle of small-scale fishers to have their voice heard, FLAG West made supporting their role in local governance a key objective within its local development strategy.

### Ensuring a voice for local fisheries in resource management

Previously, the inshore fleets in Ireland, which represent approximately 1 200 vessels, had little to no voice in decision-making due to the fleet being highly fragmented and scattered across many coastal communities. To secure representation of small-scale fishers in regional and national decision making, FLAG West collaborated with the other FLAGs in Ireland to set up six **Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums** (RIFFs) and one national forum. The national Department of Agriculture Food and Marine (DAFM) and the Irish Seafood Development Agency (BIM) were both instrumental in making this project happen.

The different forums now give small-scale fishers the opportunity to come together on one platform to engage with State Authorities and have their opinions heard on decisions that concern their activities and livelihood. For FLAG West, the project was central to their core strategy and the forums have had lasting impact on the position of small-scale fishers in the area and their position in decision-making and local governance.



- ✓ **Cooperation** between national authorities and all seven Irish FLAGs has resulted in **real change** across the country
- ✓ The project has launched **new ways of working** and of taking decisions within Irish fisheries
- ✓ Gives a voice to a previously **under-represented group** (small-scale fishers) and real influence in decision-making

For more information on this project, visit the [FARNET Good Practice](#).

National FLAG networks can also play a role in supporting networking and cooperation between different fisheries areas and their various stakeholders. This is a key mission of the National Networks in **Estonia** and **Latvia**. Both networks work to promote the status and visibility of fishers and local actors, as well as fostering knowledge exchange and learning. By working closely with the FLAGs, they are able to build trust and create synergies across typically isolated fisheries and aquaculture communities.



### Other FLAG projects that build social capital or strengthen local governance

**Networking support to local businesses:** fishers, retailers, wholesalers and restaurants were brought together to build mutually beneficial and lasting working relationships.

**Supporting business development:** through a series of inter-connected activities a FLAG builds the capacity of local businesses, including fish farmers, restaurants, educational and recreational service providers, and encourages them to cooperate.

**A researcher maps local relationships:** despite revealing a dense network of acquaintances and trust among local fishermen, a study also finds the exchange of professional information limited – and that the FLAG could play a role in improving this.

# Tips and lessons for FLAGs

The development of the local strategy is just the beginning of the FLAG's work to encourage and support meaningful projects in its area. It then has the responsibility for ensuring that projects supported within that strategy are of high quality.

For this, it is important to mobilise the FLAG resources, both human (employees and volunteers) and financial (running and animation costs, as well as other resources, where available) to realise the full potential of each supported project. Together, the different projects that a FLAG funds should respond directly to local needs, bringing about positive, long-term change: economic, social and environmental.

Ensuring the FLAG has the time and capacity to provide the necessary support to project promoters can be challenging. This chapter aims to **help FLAGs target their activities** (community animation, project development support and project selection) more effectively to ensure projects funded truly make a difference to the area and its community.

Looking at the examples presented in this guide, one can see that each of the FLAGs which have been used to illustrate the different themes has developed its own approach to maximising the impact of supported projects. Based on the lessons learnt from these examples, below are some tips that FLAGs can keep in mind:



## Prepare the ground by raising awareness

For projects to succeed in the long term, and especially if the initiatives supported have not been tried in the area before, the FLAG will need to build support for them by raising the awareness of a wider range of actors, not just the project promoters.

For example, the Camargue FLAG ([Chapter 1](#)) started its work on improving the marine ecosystem by raising awareness in the local community. This has helped to pool different sources of local knowledge and to change behaviours – both of the fishing sector (involving them in research projects to better understand the impact of their activity) and of the whole local community (to reduce litter and pollution). Raising consumer awareness is also a fundamental element of initiatives to shorten supply chains and develop new fisheries products.



## Find a good “role model” for inexperienced project promoters

This is particularly important for new FLAGs or when starting a completely new type of activity. In such situations it is useful to find early on an experienced project promoter who can implement a new type of project successfully and set an example for other potential beneficiaries.

In the 2007-2013 period, the North Kaszuby FLAG (see [Chapter 3](#)) was aware that local businesses have relatively little experience in non-tourism-related activities, so it decided to support the idea put forward by two experienced entrepreneurs to start a highly innovative type of business in medical testing. This successful project helped many potential entrepreneurs to overcome their fears and apply for FLAG funding to develop new activities.



## Work with beneficiaries to add innovative elements to their projects

Potential beneficiaries sometimes come to the FLAG with only a vague idea of what they would like to do, or with a project that is merely a copy of something that already exists in the area. However, working with project promoters who have the potential to innovate, the FLAG can help them develop their ideas further and add new elements that strengthen the impact of their projects.

This is what happened, for example, when the North Kaszuby FLAG ([Chapter 3](#)) was working with its applicants. One of them was planning to offer simple accommodation services but, following the FLAG's advice, he made his business more sustainable and attractive by installing innovative heating and offering additional activities such as boat trips and fish smoking. Another, originally planning to move an existing business into a new building, was encouraged to start an innovative activity, offering information and advice about wind turbines.



## Invest in projects that can act as network hubs

Certain projects can play the role of "network hubs" around which further projects can be built. Others can be "drivers of change", setting in motion a whole range of connected activities. Such projects can inspire and encourage further applicants, and help the FLAG ensure coherence and sustainability of the initiatives it is supporting.

For example:

- the Camargue FLAG ([Chapter 1](#)) with three neighbouring FLAGs established an educational resource centre for the environment, which supports training and awareness-raising activities, builds local knowledge and creates synergies with other projects
- the Navia Porcia FLAG ([Chapter 2](#)) used the MSC-certified octopus as a driver of many further initiatives in the area, focusing on product promotion, consumer information and short value chains, as well as developing educational activities in the local fish auction around sustainable fisheries and enhancing the local tourism offer
- the North Kaszuby FLAG ([Chapter 3](#)) set up an education and promotion centre on small-scale fishing tradition and culture as part of the "Northern Fisheries Trail" cooperation project. The centre facilitates the implementation of a number of educational and awareness-raising activities by the FLAG and helps promote other activities in the area. Beneficiaries whose projects cooperate with the Trail are prioritised at the selection stage
- the maritime hub supported by the FLAG West ([Chapter 5](#)) not only offers a variety of services to the fishing sector and the whole community, but also helps promote products and services developed under other projects supported by the FLAG, e.g. through pop-up shops.



## Focus on the young

Many FLAGs struggle with an ageing profession and out-migration of young people from the area. They can find the young generation particularly difficult to involve. However, even relatively small-scale activities that target the young, if designed together with them and by someone who understands the needs and the specific “language” of the young generation, can make a big change in the area.

This is what happened when the South Finland FLAG ([Chapter 4](#)) decided to design a new training programme to support young people into fisheries, taking into account the specific needs and wishes of the potential young fishermen. Really engaging with the young has resulted in progress towards generational renewal in the area’s fisheries.



## Ensure long-term impact by setting up lasting partnerships

One way to strengthen the impact of FLAG-funded projects in the long run is to support the creation of organisations or networks whose lifespan will go beyond the funding period. In this way the FLAG can ensure that key activities of its strategy will be continued; such an organisation can also become an important partner or ally of the FLAG in the future.

FLAG West in Ireland ([Chapter 5](#)) supported the creation of a local organisation mobilising the local fishermen and fish farmers, environmental enthusiasts and other community groups around common challenges, such as water pollution, habitat destruction and overfishing. The organisation, Cuan Beo, is now embedded in the local community and is coming up with many new initiatives. Moreover, it has managed to obtain significant additional funds to secure future activities.