

Short Rotation Woody Crops (SRC) plantations for local supply chains and heat use

Project No: IEE/13/574



Report on training event for farmers

“Participation of farmers on energy market and achievement of greening in agriculture”

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Vinkovci, Vukovar- Srijem County

WP 3 – Task 3.5

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SRCplus website: www.srcplus.eu



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1 Introduction

The aim of the second SRCplus training seminar for farmers was to introduce to potential stakeholders, primarily farmers, the concept of short rotation coppice (SRC) and to encourage stakeholders to consider their involvement in biomass production from SRC and engagement in local supply chains. This time focus of the seminar was on Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of EU and position of short rotation coppice within the policy in Croatia. CAP considers SRCs as ecologically significant elements eligible for greening CAP payments in agriculture under certain conditions. SRC are also considered as acceptable hectares for direct payments. However, the general impression is that even though some policies are in place, apprehension of the SRC concept and practical implementation are lacking. Having this in mind, the tasks of this seminar were the following:

- Provide general information on SRC species and cultivation characteristics
- Understand the position of SRC in the framework of greening CAP payments
- Estimate possibilities for farmers to engage in SRC development in the region
- Understand economic parameters in SRC cultivation
- Explore the potential of SRC as a tool for rural development
- Explore possibilities for synergies between SRC production for biomass and animal husbandry
- Identify where farmers can ask for support for project development

The seminar was organised at the premises of Hotel Slavonija in restaurant Orion, located in the centre of Vinkovci. The seminar was supported by Department for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Vukovar- Srijem County and Advisory service. The presentations were prepared and presented by EIHP and several invited speakers, who contributed to the overall quality of the event. Seminar was attended by total number of 50 participants.



Figure 1: Seminar participants and venue

Attendance of relevant authorities and institutions in the field of agriculture such as Advisory Service (for agriculture and forestry), county's Department for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, and Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development was of extreme importance, since these are the stakeholders that have ability and means to transpose their knowledge to farmers. Furthermore, the seminar was attended by 10 students from Agriculture and Forestry High school from Vinkovci, together with their teachers.

2 Stakeholders

The list of potential beneficiaries did not only include farmers, but as well other stakeholders in the supply chains and stakeholders relevant to the topic of the seminar. The associations of farmers, municipalities and other organisations were invited to the seminar, as well as local development agencies, local authorities and local enterprises. Several associations were asked to circulate the invitations among their regional contacts. After the first round of invitations, the second was sent several days before the training (see Annex for the invitation).

This time the seminar was organised in December, hoping that more farmers will attend the seminar, since this is the time of the year when the level of activities at farms is much lower. However, reaching farmers was very difficult since many of the farmers do not have e-mails, and the ones that do have, often do not check e-mails regularly. From the contact list of more than 100 farmers within the County, less than 15 submitted their e-mails as a contact option. Contacting farmers individually by phone would take far much time and resources then foreseen. Therefore Local Action Group and Municipalities were contacted in order to forward the call to their contact list, hoping that more farmers can be reached.

Application for the training was enabled by Google forms, e-mail and telephone. In total, 6 applications were received via Google forms and 20 via e-mail. Finally 47 participants and 3 EIHP staff attended the seminar, what adds to total number of 50 participants.

The structure of the participants is shown below:

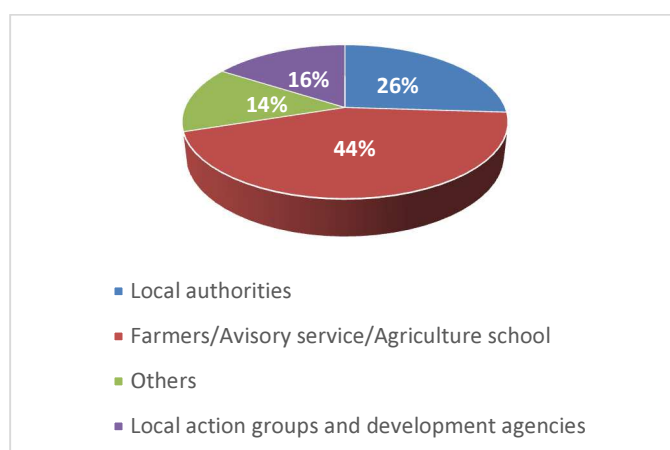


Figure 2: The structure of the participants

3 Training concept

In total, the seminar was divided into 3 thematic blocks:

1. General information on SRC and greening payments in agriculture

Ms. Fištrek (EIHP) presented SRCplus project, the project objectives, activities and results so far, followed by the general presentation on SRC with focus on species, agricultural practices, mechanisation for SRC production, more precisely mechanisation for planting and harvesting SRC. The presentation was adjusted not to be too heavy on data, but to rather explain how basic things are performed, and which equipment is needed.

Invited speaker Ms. Pohajda (Advisory Service) presented the concept of greening in agriculture with a special focus on SRC as an element of CAP greening payments. This topic was followed by presentation of experiences and farmers attitudes towards greening, after the first year of implementation in EU, with special focus on SRC. Ms. Ključarić (Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development) introduced ARKOD system for classification and registration of agricultural land and explained the status of SRC within this system. She also demonstrated how to fulfil application for parcel in the system, especially when it comes to ecologically significant areas, eligible for greening CAP payments.



Figure 3: Presentation in block 1

2. Experiences on SRC cultivation and economic parameters

Mr. Fragner (company Rebina Agrar) presented the company's experience with willow (*Salix viminalis*) SRC plantations. This enabled the participants not only to hear about examples from Sweden and other distant countries but also to hear experiences from climatic areas similar to the ones within the County, such as the conditions in Romania and Serbia. Most importantly, clear and detailed presentation of costs for establishment of *Salix viminalis* plantation was given, based on company's own experience. The last part of the presentation addressed organisation of SRC production in terms of cooperatives, followed by real example of cooperative from Romania.

Ms. Kulišić (EIHP) performed an economic analysis of SRC production on an example of Vukovar- Srijem County. She compared economic viability of several options for farmer regarding the available land (growing grains, selling the land, leasing the land) in comparison to SRC production on the same land. A special focus was on how to maximise revenues from biomass production through combination with other uses such as poultry breeding.

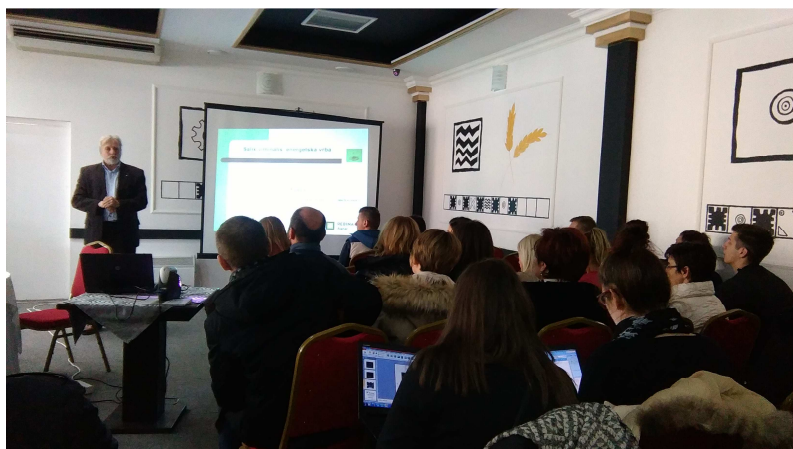


Figure 4: Presentation in block 2

3. How can a farmer start some new and innovative projects such as SRC

The last part of the seminar was reserved for local action groups (LAG) and development agencies as carriers of rural development and contact points for project ideas. LAG Srijem and LAG Šumanovci presented their activities and how they are supporting farmers. It was evident that their role in the community is a crucial one. Especially interesting was the project led by Local Regional Development Agency Vjeverica- Drenovci that has made a huge step in application of renewable energy within their Municipality. The back bone of their project is construction of biomass cogeneration plant for production of electricity and heat from woodchips. The electricity will be sold while excess heat will be used for various processes within Agriculture Incubator for Agriculture and Entrepreneurship Drenovci. The main feedstock for the biomass plant will be SRC woodchip that would be grown in inundation areas within the Municipality. This is a good example of local energy project, and would definitely result in other benefits for local community such as additional employment. The first licences were acquired recently, however, there is still a long way in front of the project team for complete project realisation. An important milestone in this project is security of feedstock production and supply. As mentioned, the intention is to secure feedstock from SRC grown within the inundation belt in Municipality. However, state owned land within the inundation belt is under the management of public company Croatian Water, and currently it is not clear if the company will allow SRC establishment within the inundation belt.

At the end, Ms. Radić from Croatian Agriculture Chamber presented project UP_rruning, a Horizon 2020 project which started in April 2016 with a goal to foster wider usage of pruning residues, among other purposes, for energy production. Since the County will be one of the project target areas, we found this is a good opportunity to connect two projects.

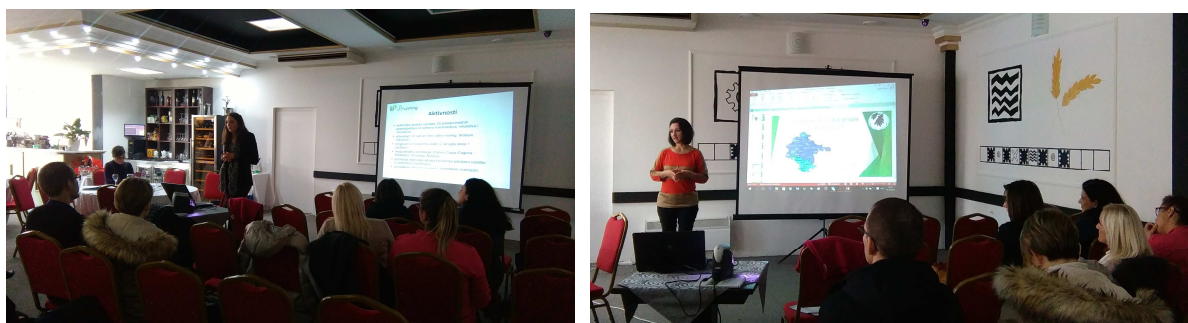


Figure 5: Presentation in block 3

During the seminar, a coffee break and lunch were organised for the participants. These two breaks were a great opportunity for networking and any informal exchange of information and views.



Figure 6: Coffee break

For the preparation of the seminars, mostly materials developed within SRCplus were used, but as well materials from other projects.

During the event, all participants filled a questionnaire that aims to establish socio-economic influences attached to SRC plantation growing. The questionnaire results will be used for both, the SRCplus project, as well as IEA Bioenergy Task 43 for research on SRC plantations and selection of land slots according to the preferred criteria by stakeholders.

Annex

- Invitation to the workshop
- Participant list
- Media coverage evidence
- Presentations