



# Added Value of Networking

## Success Story

Success Story title *Agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship award – Best practice*

Theme *Network communications; Knowledge exchange*

NRN *Austria* Coordinator *Netzwerk Land (responsible: Christian Jochum)*

Partners *Chambers of Agriculture, management consultancies, Ministry of Agriculture*

Period *Preperiod: 1999 to 2007; innovation award 2009 and agricultural entrepreneurship award 2011* Resources *How much did it cost? 2009: about 70.000,- € (including financial prizes) 2011: about 50.000,- €*

Geo-location *In Austria*

Beneficiaries *Farmers with innovative, successful projects*

### Background

After several innovation awards between 1999 and 2007 Netzwerk Land took over the job of organising the annual networking award 2009 entitled the “Agricultural Innovation Award”. The award was established to promote small-scale farmers who had developed new sources of income through alternative or additional activities related to farming and agriculture.

### Main activities

The aim of the awards was to motivate farmers to develop new methods, new products or new activities and demonstrate these through successful best practice examples. “Successful” was defined as financially proven, strategic, with a clear concept and combining economic success with quality of life. It was possible to participate as either a single farmer or as a group which included cooperation with non-agricultural partners.

Netzwerk Land invited all potential innovative project developers to present their ideas and the results in a given format. In 2009 116 examples were sent to the jury which demonstrated the richness of ideas and creativity among agricultural and regional entrepreneurs, out of these 6 winners were chosen and one extra award for networking. One further project was selected by the audience through a vote as regional favourite.

### Main results/benefits

Over the years a collection of good and best practice examples has been built for practitioners, people from the advisory service and media. Daily visits to the website have reached 200 to 300 over the last 10 years.

The project has also helped to create a political climate for change, innovation and adaptation to structural constraints in a positive way.





#### Contribution of the NSU

Netzwerk Land has selected the theme for each year - 2009: agricultural innovation, 2011: agricultural entrepreneurship, and defined the assessment criteria together with experts. The Network also managed the call for project presentations, organised the jury assessment, provided documentation on the selected winners through the national public broadcasting company (ORF), organised the winners gala including a whole day programme with lectures, entertainment, presentation of the winners and many networking opportunities for the winners and the 300 people who attended the winners conference and gala. This included professionals working in innovation, cooperation, media, and advisory services and farming practitioners.

#### Contribution of the partners

The success of an award depends on the number of projects presented. The Chambers of Agriculture, the Ministry and different associated organisations disseminated the call and motivated or assisted potential participants to apply.

#### Success factors

By selecting the topics of innovation and cooperation in the field of agricultural the awards helped to create an atmosphere where starting new businesses, testing new markets and daring to run unusual projects can grow. This was further supported by proving the strategic aspect of future developments of the working examples, all of which were internally assessed by members of the business community to ensure only robust projects were presented.

#### Additional information

Netzwerk Land used the existing format of a well known award, which was introduced in 1999, to promote themes with relevance for rural development and the rural economy by providing real examples which capture more information for practitioners than theory and strategic papers can alone.

More information and examples: [www.netzwerk-land.at](http://www.netzwerk-land.at) or [www.agrarprojektpreis.at](http://www.agrarprojektpreis.at) (both websites only in German)

