

# Kompot – Community Food Association

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Targets, realization, focus, outcomes, organizational aspects, project funding. What we do within the project, how we work.

## **General project aim:**

The general project aim is to improve public awareness and interest in the issues like: local food production, food sovereignty, environmental, landscape and soil protection, renaissance and establishment of inter-generational and other social bindings and support of other sustainable values in the places where people really live.

## **Specific targets:**

The specific target of the project is to plan, build and operate a community-based market garden in village Středokluky (Central Bohemia) that would be a source of food for community and simultaneously a space for educational, informational and leisure time activities related to gardening, organic farming, soil cultivation and also sustainable development issues in general with a focus on kids and adults alike.

The garden has been established on the principles of Community supported agriculture (CSA) scheme where all participants share the rewards and risks of agriculture and share the responsibilities of food production and farm operation. CSA brings higher involvement of people in the food production and distribution and establishes common interest – i.e. food as a primary human need. Project also contributes to higher economic autarky of the region by using and re-circulating local capital and by more environmentally sound approach.

## **Project establishment, current situation and outcomes**

The idea to set-up a model farm based on CSA idea and to build a small environmental centre for information on the consequences and importance of food in the terms environment and rural development has appeared in 2011. Next year, civic association KomPot (Community Food) has been established by 12 people, and a 6 000 sq. metres field has been rented in Středokluky village for 20 years. The plot has been fenced in 2012 and first vegs have been grown there on the small part of the plot already. Area has been upgraded by planting 100 bushes and trees to protect it from surrounding industrial fields. During 2012 new members have been actively recruited and involved in the association's mission including roughly 10 events on the garden for kids and adults.

In 2012 the association also managed to organize a community planning of a model nature garden, to which a part of the 6000 sq. m. plot would be turned in the future. The plot would be not only a production place, but also a place for gathering, relaxation, community building and in the future also a positive model of natural gardening for general public. These were the motives to devote roughly 1000 sq. metres to this model natural garden. Local people and association members have been involved in the planning of future plan of this garden, that would be introduced to the public this February.

In 2013 a production of vegetables for 25-30 members is about to start, this enterprise will create a part-time job for a gardener, probably young graduate of gardening school who usually have

difficulties to find a reasonable and well-paid job in this field. This year, we will also plant windbreak bushes and other plants and also other facilities (as compost toilet, open-air kitchen, water supply, etc.) will be built this year. All constructions and work are done on a voluntary basis of association members and other supporters with their kids of course.

On the beginning of 2013 our project has been awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> price of a CEE Bankwatch competition called "Have you better ideas", that was meant to bring new ideas to the new EU programming period. The jury has awarded our project based on the fact that it is a complex solution for numerous issues of our era – i.e. deterioration of rural areas and landscape, connection between rural and urban areas, social enterprise, etc.

The project enables the resurrection of small-scale farming on the plot, that – after the fall of the communism – remained included in the 80 ha field, that is highly endangered by wind and water erosion. The wind break made of local varieties of trees and bushes will be established on the plot. The project is based on understanding and investigating nature's spontaneous processes and on application of modern knowledge and wisdom of generations of our ancestors excluding modern destructive technologies of industrial agribusiness.

### **Budget situation:**

Minimum investment to establish (facilities and tools for farming) market garden is 200 000 CZK (ca 8 000 €). This initial investment will be gathered by the membership fees as each member is obliged to invest minimum of 4000 CZK (160€) to the project. This membership funding of the project is beneficial, however with certain limitations mainly in very slow building of the membership. Very often the idea of social enterprise is not well understood and the low incomes pose an obstacle for many people to enter the project. So far the project has had up to 60 interested supporters but only 24 people have really entered it, which is enough to initiate but not enough to sustainably operate the garden on a long term.

We are convinced that everyone has a right to quality local food. Thus the members are not forced to input only financial investments, but there is also an option to invest for example tools, resources, etc. We are proud on the fact, that numbers of investments have been executed with minimal financial input because of the willingness of the members to do it themselves. KomPot association is planning to establish a self-help fund that would enable to pay the membership fee (investment) for the low-income people who cannot afford to pay such an amount or to assist some of the members in an emergency situation.

The subproject of model natural garden has been planned by means of community planning in cooperation with professional permaculture designer. The planning was guaranteed by PRO-BIO LIGA organization and funded from grant donated by Via Foundation. Its target was to involve local public into the planning process and future realization of the natural garden and to incur an interest of local people of this issue. In the moment the planning is already finished and we seek other funding for realization of the garden. The budget for establishment of the garden in full scale is estimated on 100-150 000 CZK (4-6 000 €).

As the project is a social enterprise, it will generate only minimal profit. The price of production would cover all operational and employment costs.

So in total our project would need funding of roughly 350 000 CZK i.e. 14 000 €-

### **Organizational scheme**

Significant aspect of the association's work is community and Do It Yourself approach and consensus decision making i.e. any decision cannot go against the will of any of the members. Basic coordination of the association's operation is done by 6 member's coordination group that works voluntarily and executes the will of general assembly. Members of the coordination group have certain rights (given by organization's statutes and GA) and are voted on 2 years period, after which they may be re-elected however at least one third of the coordination group must be renewed. Specific tasks are executed by ad hoc working groups.

### **Involving local public, cooperation**

The project is built around the mutual cooperation of many agents including local people, municipalities, NGOs etc. The public is usually invited to all events that take place on the garden within the project by means of traditional and new media. All works executed on the garden are done by means of voluntary work open to public (trees planting, pick-your-own, etc.). Each event is accompanied by a specific programme for kids, i.e. we always work hard to enable kids to become part of all works done in the garden. The project is promoted on local festivals in the surrounding villages and in capital city of Prague. In the future we would like to focus more on seniors and their involvement in the project and on school kids from schools around. The garden is supposed to be ready to accommodate for example school excursions in the future too.

It is very important that the project activities are actively supported by mayor of village Středokluky, who helps us with promotion, provides us room for our meetings, etc. Because of this cooperation, KomPot association could get more involved in improvements of the poor state of agricultural land in the surroundings of the village soon.

Where we use subcontractors we usually seek local small scale enterprises (i.e. local plant shop, local farmer lends us agricultural machinery, etc.). The garden is about to bring forth a part-time job for a gardener that could be occupied by a graduate of a local gardening secondary school with which we also tightly cooperate and that sends its students to execute their practical training on our garden to see different approach opposing typical commercial gardening. Some of the association's members are also employees of Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague and other important organizations of the area.

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