ISSN 2443-7379

European Network for Rural Development

RURAL CONNECTIONS

THE EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

EN

SPRING 2015

NEWS AND UPDATES

NEW ENRD CONTACT POINT

FIRST EVER RURAL NETWORKS' ASSEMBLY

INFOGRAPHICS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING 2014-2020

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

HOPES FOR TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

RAISING THE VOICE OF RURAL PEOPLE

FOCUS ON...

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Funded by the European Commission

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu

European Network for
Rural Development

European Network for Rural Development

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) is the hub that connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). The ENRD contributes to the effective implementation of Member States'Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and co-operation across rural Europe.

Each Member State has established a National Rural Network (NRN) that brings together the organisations and administrations involved in rural development. At EU level, the ENRD supports the networking of these NRNs, national administrations and European organisations.

Find out more on the *ENRD website* (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu)

Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers to your questions about the European Union.

Freephone number (*):

00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls
(though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Managing editor: Markus Holzer, Head of Unit, EC Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development.
Editor: Ed Thorpe, Communications Manager, ENRD Contact Point
Manuscript text finalised during April 2015. Original version is the English text.

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (http://europa.eu).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

ISBN 978-92-79-47798-0 - ISSN 2443-731X - doi:10.2762/922435 (print)
ISBN 978-92-79-47796-6 - ISSN 2443-7379 - doi:10.2762/2645 (web)

© European Union, 2015
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The contents of this publication do not necessarily express the opinions of the institutions of the European Union.

The text in the publication is for information purposes only and is not legally binding.

Printed in Italy

You can also order one paper copy free-of-charge via the EU Bookshop website: http://bookshop.europa.eu or by sending a request to info@enrd.eu

Acknowledgements

Authors: Ed Thorpe; Tim Hudson; Veneta Paneva; Alex Papakonstantinou; Ina van Hoye; Professor Alan Matthews; Juha-Matti Markkola; Radim Sršeň; Patrice Collignon; Bogdan Alecu; Aldo Longo; Isabelle Raynaud; Tommy Nilsson; Michael Dower; Vanessa Halhead; Emma Cooper; Andrew Copus; Vyara Stefanova; and Dr Efi Charalambous-Snow.
Layout: Benoit Goossens, Tipik
Cover photo © Lightspring, Shutterstock

CONTENTS

3 EDITORIAL

NEWS & UPDATES

ENRD NEWS

4 New ENRD Contact Point 2014-2020
4 ENRD publications
5 ENRD online
6 First ever Rural Networks' Assembly
7 First European meeting of the NRNs 2014-2020
7 ENRD starts thematic work 2014-2020

UPDATE FROM EIP-AGRI

8 Operational Groups
9 A Service Point for the EIP-AGRI Network

EU NEWS

10 New Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
10 Update on approval of new RDPs
11 New climate and energy commitments
11 EU guides
12 Infographics: EU rural development funding 2014-2020

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

14 Hopes for transnational co-operation projects 2014-2020
Juha-Matti Markkola, Finnish NSU

16 LEADER/CLLD: Think globally, act locally
Radim Sršeň, ELARD

17 A new Parliamentary Intergroup on rural affairs
Patrice Collignon, R.E.D.

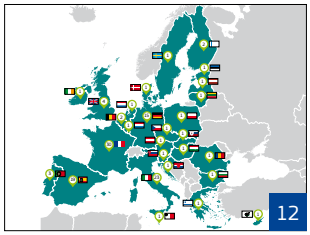
18 Family farms in Romania - regeneration and rediscovery
Bogdan Alecu, Romanian Ministry for Agriculture

4

6

8

10


12

18

20 The first European Rural Networks' Assembly

Interview with Aldo Longo, DG AGRI

22 The EU needs a Rural Day!

Tommy Nilsson, Swedish NRN

23 European Rural Parliament – raising the voice of rural people

Michael Dower, PREPARE
Vanessa Halhead, ERCA

24 The first ever Scottish Rural Parliament

Emma Cooper, Scottish Rural Parliament

A FOCUS ON… STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

REPORT
26 Participative Management of Community Forest in Soria (Spain)

INTERVIEW
30 Vyara Stefanova

European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)

REPORT
32 Involving women in the Rural Development Programme of Northern Ireland

INTERVIEW
36 Dr Efi Charalambous-Snow

Cypriot farm advisory services

39 BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

EDITORIAL

Sharing the voices of rural development stakeholders

Welcome to the first edition of Rural Connections, the new magazine of the ENRD. Rural Connections aims to be the networking magazine for rural development in Europe, making connections between ideas and between people.

Rural Connections starts with a "**News and Updates**" section covering some of the most relevant stories coming out of the European Rural Networks and the EU. This section does not seek to compete with the ENRD Contact Point Twitter feed (@ENRD_CP) or the ENRD Newsletter for up-to-date breaking news. Rather, it provides an overview of the key stories that you might have missed from the world of rural development in Europe in recent months.

The voices of rural development stakeholders are at the heart of each edition of Rural Connections in the section "**Rural issues, Rural perspectives**". The articles are written by named authors on issues that are important to them and are not limited to shared positions of the wider ENRD network. The articles can raise awareness of new initiatives, highlight hopes for the future, discuss problems or uncertainties, or even present challenging ideas. It is hoped that the range of perspectives published in future editions will only increase.

This first edition features stakeholder voices speaking about topics ranging from community-led local development to a new cross-party rural group in the European Parliament and from transnational co-operation projects to the first ever Scottish Rural Parliament.

Each edition also includes a section of interviews (people-focused) and reports (place-focused) with "**A Focus On...**" a particular topic. Whilst the EU Rural Review remains the ENRD's principal thematic publication, this thematic section presents snapshots from the ground to give a flavour of a wider topic. This edition focuses on stakeholder involvement, with reports from Northern Ireland on engaging women in the RDP and from Spain on developing forest management collectives.

I hope you enjoy this first edition of the ENRD's new networking magazine. I would be delighted to hear your comments and reactions to anything in this edition as well as suggestions for articles and topics to be covered in future editions. I want Rural Connections to be the networking magazine for you, the rural development stakeholders.

Ed Thorpe
Communications Manager, ENRD-CP
editor@enrd.eu

NEWS & UPDATES

ENRD NEWS

New ENRD Contact Point 2014-2020

The new ENRD Contact Point is in place to serve the needs of the European Network for Rural Development during the 2014-2020 programming period. The team started their activities in the second half of 2014, establishing a new office in Brussels.

The Contact Point is the office that supports the running and activities of the ENRD. The Contact Point coordinates the thematic work of the ENRD, organises ENRD workshops and seminars and communicates the work of the network.

The Contact Point is led by Team Leader Paul Soto and Deputy Team Leader Mike Gregory.

The new Contact Point has four teams of staff working on:

- Management, coordination and administration
- Knowledge development
- Knowledge sharing and IT
- Exchange and co-operation

The new team has committed to focusing on ever-more targeted support to rural development stakeholders. It will work to identify needs more clearly, prioritising and coordinating all the networking activities and tools to deliver real progress on RDP delivery. "We will work with you to make sure what we do is useful," promises Paul Soto.

© ENRD CP Tim Hudson

Back row from left
Tim Hudson, Veneta Paneva, Ed Thorpe (all Knowledge Sharing), Mike Gregory (Management and coordination), Ines Jordana (Exchange and co-operation), Alex Papakonstantinou, Fabio Cossu (both Knowledge Development).

Front row from left
Pilar Arcas (Administration), Urszula Budzich-Tabor (Knowledge Development), John Grieve, Paul Soto (both Management and coordination), Edina Ocsko (Exchange and Co-operation), Elena Maccioni (Knowledge development), Fiorella Giorgiani (Administration).

Not in the photo
Florence Gérard (Management and coordination); David Lamb (Knowledge Development); Yves Boisselier, Belgacem Guemida (both IT).

Read the new ENRD presentation booklet

Unsure what the European Network for Rural Development is and how it supports rural development in Europe? Read the updated ENRD presentation material. This short booklet provides a brief overview of:

- Rural development in the EU
- What the ENRD does
- EU rural networking structures
- ENRD online and printed communications

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Download it directly from the homepage of the ENRD: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu
Contact: info@enrd.eu

The new Evaluation Helpdesk is being set up in early 2015. Read about its plans and meet the new team in the next edition of Rural Connections.

NEWS & UPDATES

Engage with the ENRD online

ENRD website

Visit the ENRD website http://enrd.ec.europa.eu for all you need to know about the ENRD and rural development in Europe. Find latest news and updates on rural development policy and programmes and access specific tools including:

- **Rural Development Gateway** 2014-2020 – understand what is new in the 2014-2020 rural development programming period.
- **RDP Projects Database** – find interesting examples of good rural development projects funded by the EAFRD.
- **LEADER Gateway** – a one-stop-shop of tools and information on the LEADER local development method.
- **Communicating Rural Development Gateway** – get inspired with this database of good communication practices.

ENRD Social media

Follow ENRD updates and share your news, photos and videos via our social media channels. Find the right social media channel for you:

Visit the ENRD Facebook page for examples of rural development practices from across the EU – as well as latest news and trends.

Watch videos on rural development projects and thematic issues on the **EURural YouTube channel**.

Follow @ENRD_CP on Twitter for updates on EU rural development policy, news and events.

Join the ENRD LinkedIn group for debates, exchange and discussion around rural development policy and implementation issues.

Subscribe to the new and updated ENRD newsletter

The ENRD newsletter provides all the latest rural development news from Europe straight to your inbox once a month. From policy updates to ENRD meetings and from project outcomes to online videos, this new and updated tool aims to provide something for everybody interested in rural development policy in Europe. Each edition also highlights upcoming rural development events from across Europe.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Email: subscribe@enrd.eu

Inspiration for EAFRD projects 2014-2020

Be inspired by the latest EAFRD Projects Brochure produced by the Contact Point in spring 2015. The brochure presents more than 50 projects – implemented using EAFRD funding support from the 2007-2013 programming cycle – which provide real-life examples and ideas for working towards the new EU rural development priorities 2014-2020.

The brochure aims to improve understanding of the new rural development priorities, highlight achievements made by EAFRD projects and show the types of projects that could attract future funding support through the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Download the brochure from the publications and media section of the ENRD website.
Contact: info@enrd.eu

NEWS & UPDATES

First ever Rural Networks' Assembly

The first ever European Rural Networks' Assembly took place in Brussels on 26 January 2015. It brought together nearly 200 delegates representing rural development stakeholder groups to discuss and debate the strategic direction of the two EU rural networks: ENRD and EIP-AGRI.

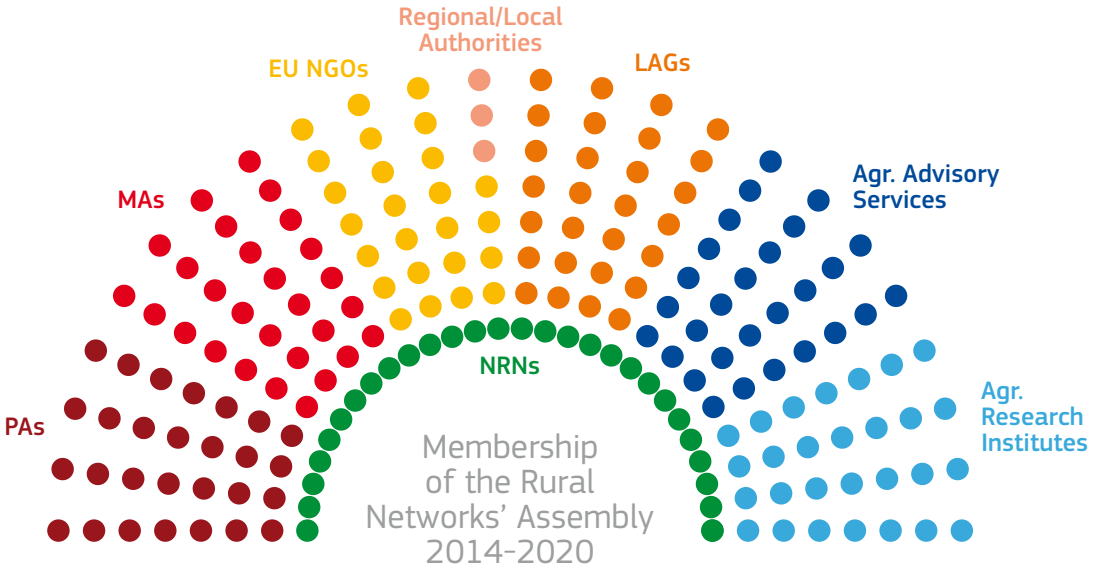
The Rural Networks' Assembly is a new governance structure created by the European Commission in 2014 to provide stronger stakeholder oversight and coordination of the work of the EU rural networks.

The members of the Assembly identified a number of themes and challenges on which the ENRD should prioritise future work, including: improving Rural Development Programmes' (RDP) management and performance; simplification of RDP funding mechanisms and procedures; demographic challenges; collaboration in diversifying rural activity; and monitoring and evaluation.

European Commissioner Phil Hogan addressed the Assembly, highlighting the important role of rural networks in supporting improved implementation of RDPs to help meet Europe's key agriculture and rural development challenges.

For more on this ground-breaking rural development event, read the interview with Aldo Longo, Director in DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission and Chair of the Rural Networks' Assembly on **pages 21-22**.

Read about the first meeting of the Rural Networks' Steering Group in the next edition of Rural Connections.



'Governmental' representatives
- 28 Paying Agencies
- 28 Managing Autorities

'Innovation' representatives
- 28 Agricultural Advisory Services
- 28 Agricultural Research Institutes

'Civil + Local' representatives
- 25 EU Non-Governmental Organisations
- 3 Regional/Local Authorities Organisations
- 28 LEADER Local Action Groups

NRN representatives
- 28 National Rural Networks

NEWS & UPDATES

First European meeting of the National Rural Networks 2014-2020

National Rural Networks, the ENRD Contact Point and DG AGRI launched their joint work towards achievement of common rural development objectives at the first networking meeting of the 2014-2020 period in Brussels, 5-6 November 2014.

The meeting focused on explaining the new structures of the 2014-2020 period and developing a shared vision of how the rural networks and ENRD Contact Point can best work together to achieve their common objectives in the new period.

Representatives came mainly from the National Support Units in each Member State. They heard presentations from the Contact Point and DG AGRI before exploring how networking across Europe can support the achievement of three main rural development goals: improving the quality of RDPs; increasing the involvement of rural stakeholders; and communicating effectively about RDPs.

ENRD CP Team Leader, Paul Soto, concluded that "Our objective for the new period is to move networking up a gear, really making sure that every activity contributes to the shared network objectives of improving RDP implementation, increasing the involvement of rural stakeholders; and communicating about RDPs."

© ENRD CP Tim Hudson

ENRD starts thematic work 2014-2020

The first ENRD thematic groups for 2014-2020 have started work in 2015. These first groups are working on overarching themes that will provide some of the groundwork for more detailed thematic rural development work in the future.

There are ENRD thematic groups running January to July 2015 on the topics of:

- Stakeholder involvement
- RDP implmentation

Both thematic groups are holding up to three meetings and organising a Seminar. The groups aim to exchange views and experiences from the range of rural development stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of where rural networking can have a real impact on improving the implementation of rural development policy.

Both thematic groups will produce final reports.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:
edina.ocsko@enrd.eu - Stakeholder Involvement
fabio.cossu@enrd.eu - RDP Implementation

NEWS & UPDATES

UPDATE FROM EIP-AGRI

EIP-AGRI: Boosting innovation in agriculture and forestry

The European Innovation Partnership on "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" (EIP-AGRI) was launched by the European Commission in 2012 to develop competitive and sustainable farming and forestry throughout the EU.

"Innovation is the key to sustainable agriculture and forestry within the EU. We need practice-oriented answers to existing problems or opportunities to improve farming profitability and the farming sector's environmental performance," explains Rob Peters from the European Commission.

The EIP-AGRI will catalyse the flow of information and improve the exchange of knowledge and experience across projects, sectors and borders. It will link innovation actors including farmers, advisors, agri-businesses, researchers and civil society, forming a network: the EIP-AGRI Network.

One of the most important EIP-AGRI approaches is to encourage the formation of Operational Groups which involve different types of actors – such as farmers, advisors, researchers, amongst others – and target practical innovation, by working together on a concrete project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EIP-AGRI brochure on the EIP-AGRI network:
http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-network

Operational Groups: EU countries ready to support innovative projects for farmers and foresters

© EIP-AGRI

An **Operational Group** is a group of people who come together to work on concrete solutions to a practical problem or innovative opportunity and whose project is funded by the EU Rural Development policy through the Rural Development Programmes. It consists of several partners with a common interest in a specific, practical innovation project. The people involved in the Operational Group should bring in different types of practical, and where necessary, scientific expertise. They may include farmers, scientists, agri-businesses and many others. Every country or region has the possibility to define specific national demands or restrictions on how to put together an Operational Group.

With representatives from all EU countries attending the EIP-AGRI Seminar 'Launching Operational Groups and EIP Networking in Rural Development Programmes', in November 2014, it is clear: the managing authorities are taking the possibility of supporting innovative projects through Operational Groups in farming and forestry very seriously.

European Commission Director of 'General Aspects of Rural Development and Research' Aldo Longo concluded the seminar by saying: "It is important to create the right support environment for Operational Groups".

With the approval of the Rural Development Programmes by the European Commission in view, managing authorities are now preparing the calls for the Operational Groups to enable farmers to turn their innovative ideas into real projects.

The first projects are expected to be selected by May/June 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EIP-AGRI brochure on the Operational Groups:
http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-brochure-operational-groups-turning-your-idea-innovation

EIP-AGRI brochure on Innovation Support Services:
http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/innovation-support-services

NEWS & UPDATES

A Service Point for the EIP-AGRI Network

The European Commission established the EIP-AGRI Service Point in April 2013 to connect people in the EIP-AGRI Network. The Service Point provides a helpdesk, answering questions related to the EIP-AGRI. The Service Point also organises the EIP-AGRI events, such as workshops and seminars, feeds the EIP-AGRI network and website with publications and coordinates the online Meeting Point.

In addition, the EIP-AGRI Service Point informs, engages and encourages the EIP-AGRI members through the newsletter, the Agrinnovation magazine, social media, and press, to help agricultural and forestry innovations spread rapidly across Europe.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EIP-AGRI brochure on the EIP-AGRI Service Point: http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-service-point-how-can-we-help-you

Would you like to join the EIP-AGRI Network?

You can register to the EIP-AGRI website. As a member of the EIP-AGRI Network you can take advantage of its resources such as, for example:

- Have a look at innovative projects and ideas within your country
- Find inspiring information, people, and other resources at the online Meeting Point
- Read publications, news and events from the EIP-AGRI Network to find out more and stay tuned

As the EIP-AGRI website is still under construction, more possibilities in the Meeting Point will be available soon. Your suggestions for further improvement of the website will also be welcome.

© ENRD CP Tim Hudson

www.eip-agri.eu : the one-stop-shop for innovation

SHARE WITH US information about you, your projects and projects ideas, research needs, etc.

SEARCH AND FIND funding opportunities, partners, interesting projects... on EIP-AGRI Meeting Point

FOCUS ON practical innovative solutions to problems and opportunities provided in the EIP-AGRI Focus Group chapter

DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE by different EIP-AGRI related publications in our library

STAY UP TO DATE on innovation related agricultural topics and read about the latest EIP-AGRI news and events

NEWS & UPDATES

EU NEWS

New European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development prioritises simplification

As part of the new European Commission formed under President Jean-Claude Juncker for the period 2014-2020, the Irish politician Phil Hogan has taken up the role of European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Commissioner Hogan's priorities for 2014-2020 have been identified as:

- Ensuring that EU agricultural and rural development policies promote growth, investment and new jobs.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of EU spending on agriculture and rural development.
- Identifying how European agriculture can be more energy efficient and can lower its carbon dioxide emissions.
- Examining ways to simplify direct payments for farmers.

SIMPLIFICATION

In a speech to the European Parliament 3 December 2014, Commissioner Hogan stressed the importance of supporting young farmers and the "top priority" of reducing bureaucratic 'red tape' in implementing the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2014-2020.

He emphasised that "Simpler rules will make for greater competitiveness and will enhance the job-creating potential of agriculture, of rural areas and of agricultural trade." The Commission will be "working to improve access to finance for farmers, particularly young farmers, as they start their career in agriculture."

© European Union

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Find out more about Commissioner Hogan at: http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/hogan_en

Update on approval of new RDPs

The European Commission is working its way through the approval of all 118 national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the EU for 2014-2020. The very first 'wave' of approvals took place on 12 December 2014 when the three national RDPs for Austria, Denmark and Poland were approved.

Speaking on the occasion of their approval, Commissioner Hogan highlighted the priority given in the RDP for Poland to "create more than 22 000 jobs", in the RDP for Denmark to "fostering innovation, with the objective of creating almost 1 000 green jobs", and in the RDP for Austria to "environment and climate concerns".

More than half the RDPs are expected to be approved by May 2015 and the rest before the end of 2015.

For more information on the number of RDPs and EAFRD budget for each country, see the infographic on pages 12-13.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For the latest state of play of approvals as well as factsheets, summaries and press releases on all the approved RDPs, visit the updates page of the Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/index_en.htm

NEWS & UPDATES

New climate and energy commitments

The EU has published a series of documents in recent months setting out key new commitments in the fields of energy and climate:

- the binding target of reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels
- Increasing the share of renewable energy to at least 27%
- Reform of the EU Emissions Trading System

"The agricultural sector will be affected by these climate targets through three different mechanisms:

- **By the requirement that it must contribute to the overall 40% emissions target;**
- **By the potential demand for land for the production of bioenergy to help meet the 'at least 27%' renewable energy target; and**
- **By the impact of additional abatement costs through a more effective Emissions Trading System (ETS) on its use of fossil fuel energy."**[1]

Professor Alan Matthews,
Professor Emeritus of European Agricultural Policy,
Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

The European Council's 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework (adopted in October 2014) specifically calls on the European Commission to "examine the best means of encouraging the sustainable intensification of food production, while optimising the sector's contribution to greenhouse gas mitigation and sequestration, including through afforestation".

(1) Quote used with permission from capreform.eu blog: http://capreform.eu/the-energy-union-package-and-agriculture/

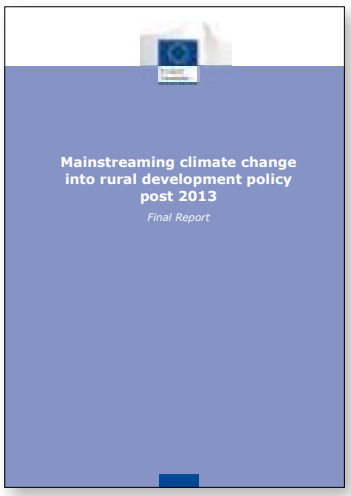
EU guides

The European Commission has published a number of guides and guidelines on subjects directly related to rural development policy.

DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs has published a comprehensive new Guide on EU funding for the Tourism Sector providing very practical information on funding available under various EU programmes, including the EAFRD.

DG Agriculture and Rural Development has published a Guide on support opportunities for organic producers in Europe highlighting all the funding available to farmers to develop organic agriculture in the EU.

ISBN 978-92-79-39198-9



DG Climate Action has published guidelines on Mainstreaming climate change into rural development policy, providing suggestions for designing and integrating new and innovative climate actions into the 2014-2020 RDPs.

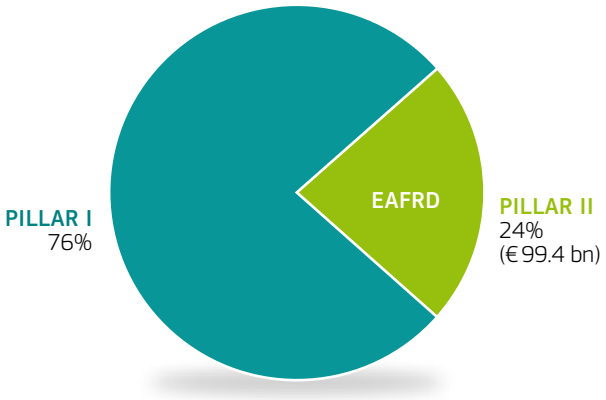
ISBN 978-92-79-40846-5

NEWS & UPDATES

Infographics: EU rural development funding 2014-2020

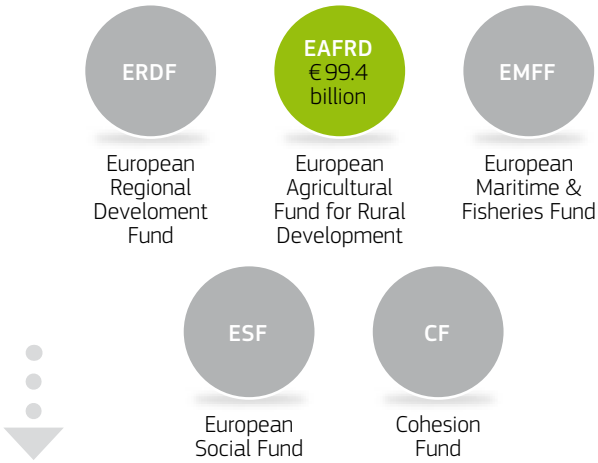
COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) 2014-2020

€408.3 BILLION



EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL & INVESTMENT FUNDS (ESIF)

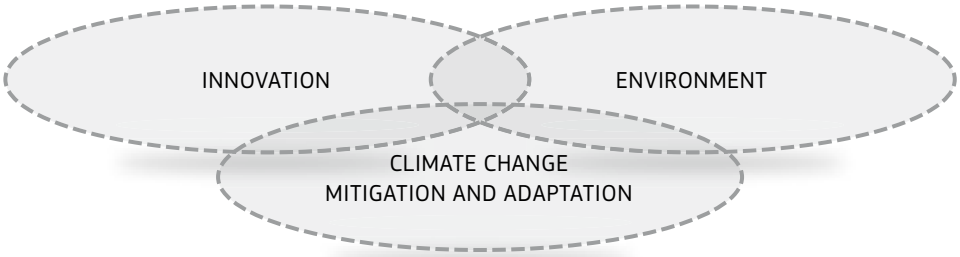
€453.1 BILLION



6 EAFRD PRIORITIES

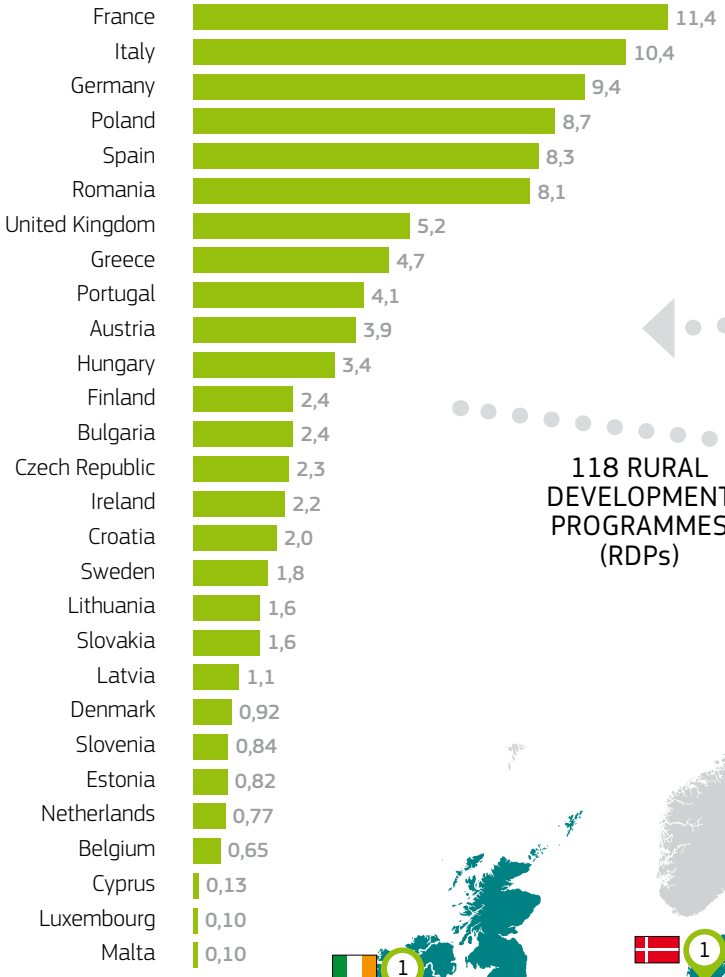
1. Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas.
2. Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests.
3. Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture.
4. Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry.
5. Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors.
6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

3 CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVES



NEWS & UPDATES

EAFRD BUDGET PER MEMBER STATE (billion EUR)*



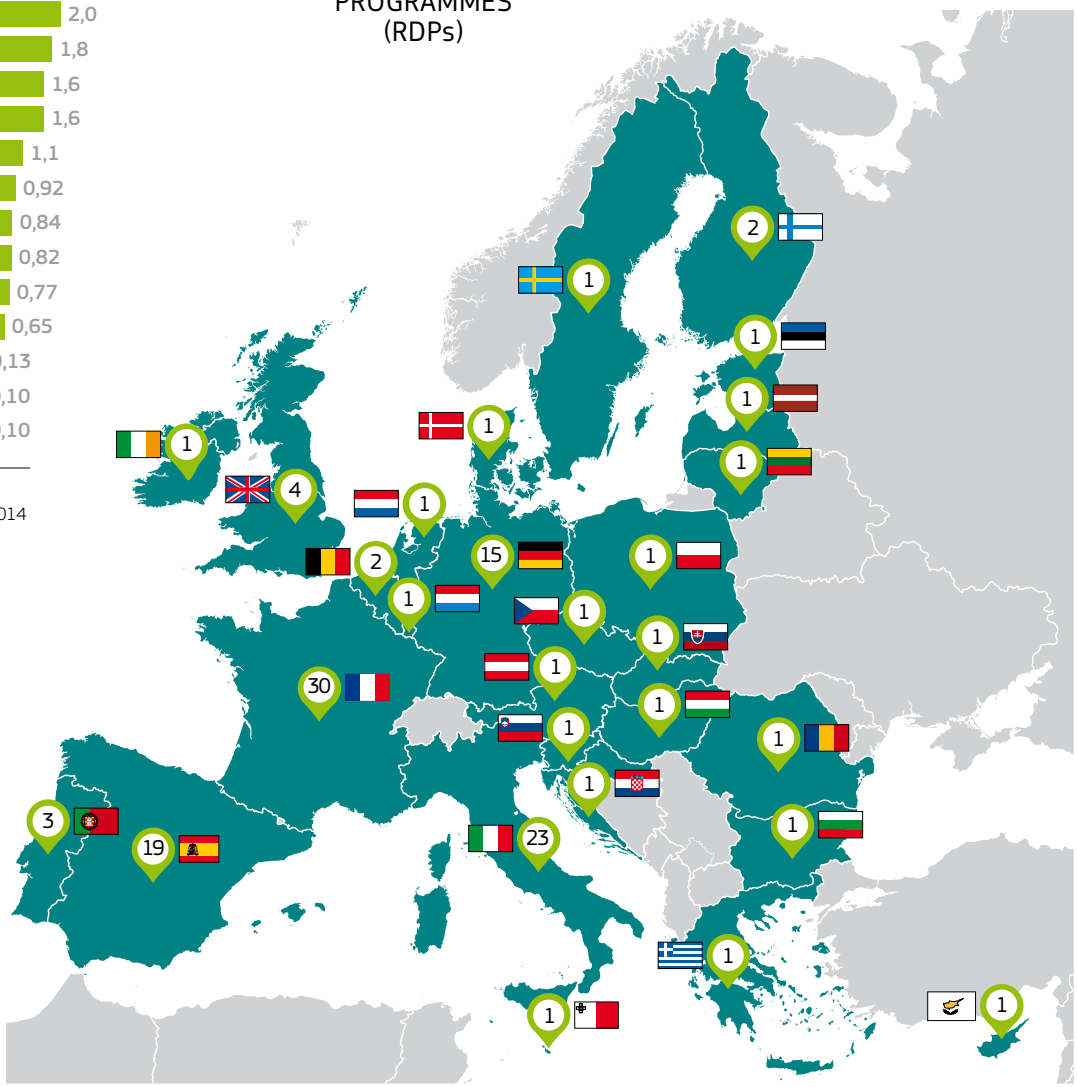
* Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1378/2014

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD)

€99.4 BILLION

118 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES (RDPs)

NUMBER OF RDPs PER MEMBER STATE

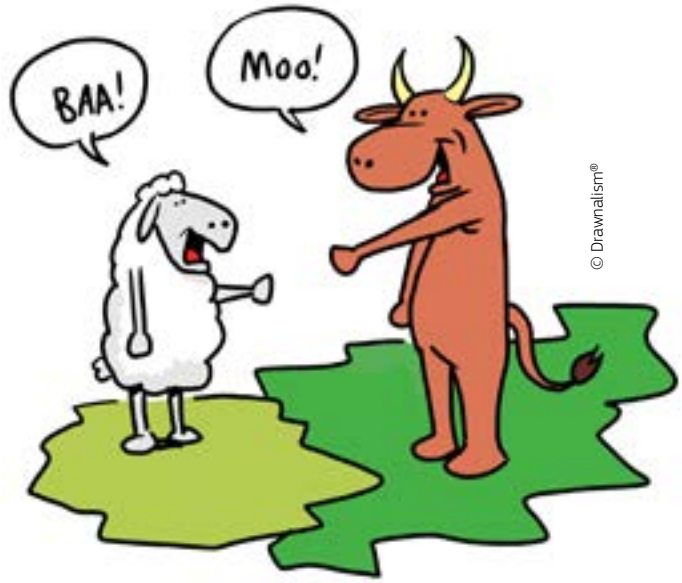


RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

Hopes for transnational co-operation projects 2014-2020

Juha-Matti Markkola, Finnish NSU

The new EAFRD Regulation for 2014-2020 makes it possible to build transnational co-operation (TNC) projects outside of LEADER. This creates even more potential to use the co-operation measure to effectively promote exchange and mutual learning through EAFRD-funded rural development projects.



© Drawnalism®

Building trust and understanding between partners is essential to develop a good transnational project. It can take time. But it is worth it.

Juha-Matti Markkola is a rural networks expert who has worked in the Rural Network Support Unit of Finland since 2007.

In the previous programming period (2007-2013), co-operation projects between Local Action Groups (LAGs) in different Member States were eligible for finance under the EAFRD Regulation. In Finland, LAGs were involved in 94 such projects during the period. Around 70 % of Finnish LAGs were involved in at least one TNC project.

Interesting TNC project examples involving Finnish partners include: CULTrips, a project to help rural areas in five Member States identify each other's untapped tourist potential; and Mustaparta Archipelago and Tornio Valley, which developed cross-border tourism with a LAG in Sweden.

Nevertheless, despite many positive results, the overall uptake of TNC projects in the previous programming period was somewhat disappointing. Considering all the effort and attention given to TNC projects – and the opportunities for exchange provided by the enlarged network of 2 400 LAGs - only around 500 such projects were implemented.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES 2014-2020

The possibility created by the 2014-2020 EAFRD Regulation to support TNC projects also outside of LEADER has been translated into the RDP for the Finnish mainland, which was adopted in late 2014. We strongly hope that this will deliver even more TNC projects, for example, focusing on business development or environmental projects.

> The possibility to support TNC projects also outside of LEADER has been translated into the RDP for the Finnish mainland [2014-2020]. We strongly hope that this will deliver even more TNC projects.

We are already discussing this issue with our colleagues in Sweden, but are keen to hear how other countries are planning to use the new possibilities under the co-operation measure in their RDPs.

HOW TO DEVELOP A GOOD TNC PROJECT

Experience has shown us that developing TNC projects can seem intimidating at first. Cultural and language differences sometimes make the first steps little bit difficult. However, it is the differences that provide some of the most valuable and fun parts of transnational co-operation. It is important to remember this when embarking on the journey!

Successful projects need practical know-how, good

© Axel Mitzka

Transnational co-operation and exchange in the project helped deliver the innovation of the first ever 'beepass' to support bee populations in Europe.

The *Bees and Diversity* project was a transnational co-operation (TNC) project involving the Finnish partner MTT Agrigood Research Finland Sotkamo Research Station in Kainuu, with funding from the LAG Living Kainuu Leader and Oulujärvi Leader. The Kainuu region beekeepers' association also collaborated actively.

Partners in seven EU countries worked on local projects to protect Europe's bees and their crucial role in preserving biodiversity and supporting the bio-economy through plant pollination.

Activities and exchange focused on: land management in favour of pollinating insects; beekeeping activity in the rural economy; and information and education.

Contributions from partners in Kainuu included the results of pollination service trials. Meanwhile, they had a clear benefit from working with partners with longer experience of addressing bee population decline.

For more information:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_project_10220_en.html

connections and burning passion! Developing a TNC project is also about the process. It is not only the outcome that is valuable. It is important to take the first steps and learn from each other and from overcoming challenges and obstacles along the way.

Building trust between the partners and mutual understanding of the work and expectations is one of the cornerstones of a successful TNC project. It is very important to give adequate time and effort for this during the planning phase. RDPs need to foresee resources for preparatory support to help lay the foundations of excellent TNC projects. Rural network support units can also help with guidance and advice.

Building trust between the partners and mutual understanding of the work and expectations is one of the cornerstones of a successful TNC project. It is very important to give adequate time and effort for this during the planning phase.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

A challenge that is often mentioned by stakeholders are the processes and bureaucracy they see as accompanying TNC projects. One of the main practical problems surrounds differences in process for making funding decisions under different RDPs. Administrative rules, implementation guidelines and documentation requirements differ from one RDP to another.

Just as important are issues of timing. In some countries, applications for TNC projects can be made at any time, whereas in others there are periodic calls. These differences and different approval processes can cause sometimes long delays for agreeing a transnational project involving partners in several countries. For the project beneficiaries, it can feel like double bureaucracy.

The process of developing TNC projects would be helped a lot by ongoing application processes in all countries. Still, the differences in guidelines between the RDPs will not disappear. This means that good dialogue is not only important between the project partners, but also between Managing Authorities. They are often shy to make contact with their colleagues in other countries. That should be changed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Commission guidance on LEADER inter-territorial and transnational co-operation 2014-2020: http://docs.enrd.eu/newsletter/20141119_LEADER_Cooperation-Guide-2014-20.pdf

ENRD 'NRN guidebook' - Chapter on inter-territorial and TNC co-operation: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assets/pdf/guidebook/3.6.pdf

ENRD study (May 2014) on TNC and inter-territorial co-operation projects 2007-2013: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assets/pdf/leader-gateway/Measure_421_State_of_play_FINAL_May_2014.pdf

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

LEADER/CLLD: Think globally, act locally

Radim Sršeň, ELARD

I fully believe in the LEADER methodology as a tool for promoting European rural development goals through local actions. Widening the scope of the initiative to cover more European Structural and Investment Funds through the concept of 'Community-Led Local Development' (CLLD) provides great new opportunities, but also challenges, for 2014-2020.

Radim Sršeň is President of ELARD – the European LEADER Association for Rural Development.

Over the past 23 years, the LEADER method has proven itself to be a very successful and effective instrument of rural development policies in Europe. It has also been successfully used in cities and as an international development tool.

LEADER provides a means for delivering on EU strategies, whilst fully respecting the principles of subsidiarity, good governance and democracy that require people to have a say and control over local decisions that affects their lives and their communities. It can contribute to strengthening the legitimacy of the European Union.

THE POTENTIAL OF THE CLLD APPROACH

Based on this experience and in compliance with the new trends of EU structural and cohesion policies, the European Commission introduced ´Community-led Local Development´ (CLLD) as a new innovative tool for the programming period 2014–2020.

The CLLD approach gives a significant opportunity to implement more effective local development.

CLLD widens the option to implement the LEADER methodology across four European Structural and Investment funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the European Social Fund (ESF); the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD); and the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF.

The CLLD approach gives a significant opportunity and more power to local stakeholders within LAGs to implement more effective local development based on harnessing different funding streams in a clear and strategic way (known as the multi-fund approach). This should benefit from the synergies between different policies at local territorial level.

ONGOING CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING CLLD

However, so far, the implementation of CLLD through ERDF, ESF and EMFF funds is voluntary and, unfortunately, not all Member States will use this opportunity in the new programming period 2014-2020. Around half of EU countries will be pioneers in multifund CLLD implementation and, therefore, closely watched to see if they succeed.

The success of initial CLLD implementation across the different funds will be an important precondition for its wider use across Europe. Its failure would mean a serious step back for EU rural policies.

Important challenges for implementing CLLD include the creation of effective implementation, delivery, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms across the different funding streams to ensure coherent local strategies and synergies in the use of EU funds.

The success of initial CLLD implementation across the different funds will be an important precondition for its wider use across Europe.

Our journey from LEADER to CLLD can be summarised in an analogy: We used to be a small rocky boat, a sort of miracle able to sail very far on the huge ocean. Now we have a brand new cruise-liner waiting in the port for its first journey. I am reminded of the wise African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, come together".

Working together creates challenges, but hopefully we will navigate between the icebergs waiting for us. I am more than sure that our 'crew' in the LEADER community will succeed, with your co-operation and trusting to the LEADER spirit!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

www.elard.eu
http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/themes/clld

A new Parliamentary Intergroup on rural affairs

Patrice Collignon, R.E.D.

The European Parliament has created a new Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas. Expectations amongst civil society organisations are high for this cross-party body aiming to put rural issues and rural communities at the heart of European debate.

Patrice Collignon is Director of the international Rurality-Environment-Development Association (R.E.D.) and Coordinator of the European Countryside Movement.

Early 2015 has seen the creation of a new forum for dialogue on European rural policy, following the European Parliament's decision to create a "Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas" Parliamentary Intergroup. The new Intergroup will be chaired by Mercedes Bresso MEP, former president of the Committee of the Regions.

This decision reflects the content of a Memorandum of the European Countryside Movement adopted prior to the recent European elections and which triggered a collective initiative coordinated by Rurality-Environment-Development, Euromontana and FREE.

Expectations are high for this new Intergroup among rural civil society organisations. Their hope is that the Intergroup's ambitions will reflect the scale of the challenges and potential of Europe's rural areas.

At present, rural policies within the European Union are broken down by sector, reflecting the division of powers between departments. The formation of a Parliamentary Intergroup will help to break down these barriers, creating an open forum for discussion and ideas, and providing a genuinely cross-disciplinary perspective on the needs of rural areas, as well as potential avenues for action and development.

Such an integrated, cross-disciplinary strategic approach will help to highlight the true potential of rural areas.

The Parliamentary Intergroup will provide a genuinely cross-disciplinary perspective on the needs of rural areas.

© R.E.D. Association

The first meeting of the new Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas took place in Strasbourg on 12 March 2015.

A move away from sector-specific management towards a more integrated model will reveal and highlight the multi-faceted contributions that rural areas can make to the European project.

Europe's rural environments range from remote or mountainous regions to areas impacted by urban expansion. These spaces are not given enough attention and, in some cases, are poorly understood by European decision-makers. There is a widening gulf between rural and urban areas, especially when it comes to services, which is detrimental to social and territorial cohesion.

All European Union citizens, whether they live in the countryside or in cities, have the right to a decent quality of life and equal access to health, culture, transport, connectivity, clean energy and security services.

One of the Intergroup's aims should be to call on the Commission to produce a White Paper on rural realities in the European Union. This would ensure that European policy better reflects the needs and requirements of rural areas. Such a document is explicitly called for in the Memorandum of the European Countryside Movement and would provide a solid foundation for rural policy development during the new programming period.

This Parliamentary Intergroup can – and we hope will – provide a space to promote shared recognition of rural territories as centres of development and innovation. It will also need to establish partnerships with other Intergroups to restore rural areas and their inhabitants to their rightful place as key partners at the heart of Europe.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

www.ruraleurope.org/content/view/216/4/lang,english/

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

Family farms in Romania - regeneration and rediscovery

Bogdan Alecu, Romanian Ministry for Agriculture

In Eastern Europe, family farms are in the process of regeneration and rediscovering their identity after the fall of Communism. The Romanian RDP aims to support family farms in fulfilling their potential for the development of agriculture and the rural environment.

Bogdan Alecu[1] is Manager of the Directorate for Evaluation, Selection and Implementation of the Romanian Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

THE PLACE OF FAMILY FARMS IN ROMANIA

A misconception has been perpetuated for a long time... that small farmers are not productive farmers, but more like supported by agriculture. In fact, family farms are opportunities for the development of agriculture and the rural environment, by contributing, among other things, to diversifying production and creating jobs.

Family farms use environmentally friendly, traditional and extensive methods, and from a social point of view, they are associated with family values [and maintaining] traditions and crafts.

In Europe, it has been proven that the added value of products obtained within family farms was twice as much as that obtained by large-scale farms. This means that sustainable and competitive farming is not only made at a large scale, but also through a smart growth of the production, through keeping traditions and environmentally friendly practices.

It has also been noticed that family farms have coped well with the economic crisis, as they are not organised like large-scale farms in a corporate system that depends on the banking system. The development of the rural area cannot be made without taking into account its central elements, the family farm.

Family farms are opportunities for the development of agriculture and the rural environment, by diversifying production and creating jobs.

FAMILY FARMS IN THE 2014-2020 ROMANIAN RDP

The Romanian RDP 2014-2020 supports family farms with a view to increasing production and market entry, through a series of investment measures, as well as indirect supporting measures.

The eligible family farm is defined as: an agricultural holding belonging to the family enterprise or to the legal person whose associates are exclusively members of the same family. By members of the same family we understand the husband/wife and relatives up to the third degree, inclusively.

To valorise and increase the competitiveness of the family farm, it is necessary to focus on four priorities:

- emphasising the family farm as a model of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- consolidating family farms within the supply chain
- finding a connection to the consumers' needs
- developing the human capacity... used at the farm.

The economic size of the eligible family farm is between 8 000 and 250 000 [euros of standard output] . The RDP is also aimed at holdings under the minimum economic size, which can be beneficiaries of the EAFRD by accessing measures in associative and/or co-operative forms, which brings additional value to the marketed output.

It is important that family farms and small farmers should understand that a necessary aspect for the increase of production and profit, as well as to marketing and imposing on the market is good co-operation locally, sharing facilities and resources for marketing the output, developing new products, practices, processes and technologies.

© Romanian National Rural Development Network

The true value of family farms in countries like Romania is being appreciated once again.

ACCESSING EUROPEAN FUNDS

The activities carried out at a family farm are eligible for all the measures included in the 2014-2020 RDP, including the diversification of non-agricultural activities....

Furthermore, from 2013 onwards, the MARD has decided to help small farmers (through the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 43/2013) regarding a facilitation of their access to funding and ensuring co-funding in the case of accessing investment projects.

We would like small farmers to become accustomed to using the measures dedicated to them in the 2014-2020 RDP to develop their holdings, and to encourage the submission of a large number of projects that would result in the absorption of the allocated money.

We recommend farmers and everyone else who is interested in accessing the rural development measures of the 2014- 2020 RDP to inform themselves correctly, by contacting the MARD and the Funding Agency for Rural Investments (FARI), both institutions being at the applicants' disposal.

For any activity that is carried out in the rural areas, be it agricultural or non-agricultural, it is necessary to make an analysis of the real possibilities specific to the holding, especially with a view to supporting decent living standards for the family, without the use of other revenue-generating activities.

The Romanian RDP 2014-2020 supports family farms through a series of investment measures, as well as indirect supporting measures.

In short, in order to identify the viability of a holding it is recommended to draft a business plan, irrespective of the fact whether the holding accesses European funds or not. The most frequent problem when accessing the RDP measures was ensuring co-funding.

(1) This article is based on an interview provided by Mr Bogdan Alecu to the Romanian National Rural Development Network, which can be read in full in Rural Romania, Issue 4, October 2014.

(2) Standard output (SO) is the economic size of a holding expressed in monetary terms. It corresponds to the the sum of the values obtained for each product (crop or livestock).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:
www.mapam.ro

The Romanian National Rural Development Network:
www.rndr.ro

The International Year of Family Farming:
www.fao.org/family-farming-2014

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

The first European Rural Networks' Assembly

Interview with Aldo Longo, DG AGRI

Mr Longo shares his views on the first meeting of the European Rural Networks' Assembly, held in Brussels on 26 January 2015.

Aldo Longo[1] is Director of 'General Aspects of Rural Development and Research' in DG Agriculture and Rural Development and Chair of the Rural Networks' Assembly.

Mr Longo, this Assembly was attended by 200 rural practitioners. What was the purpose of the Assembly?

The Assembly was the first formal meeting of all key practitioners in the sector, drawing together those involved in rural development policy, innovation and administrative and practical agricultural research. The idea behind the forum was to foster collaboration between those practitioners who play a key role in rural development policy and the CAP in general.

Given that the Assembly aimed to be more representative, did this come through in the discussions?

Yes. A strength of the Assembly was the large diversity of stakeholders who attended and the collegial nature of the discussions, especially during the workshop sessions.

The Assembly was the first formal meeting bringing together all the major stakeholder groups for rural development policy.

Participants identified some particularly relevant and important themes. With regards to innovation, we highlighted the importance of the start-up phase of the Operational Groups within the framework of the rural development programmes. We also addressed other subjects such as the circular economy, precision agriculture, knowledge transfer and demographic change within the farming population.

I would also like to underline the significant political dimension brought to the Assembly by the contributions of Commissioner Hogan and Kersti Kaljulaid, Member of the European Court of Auditors. They highlighted the important links between the Rural Networks and the European Union's priorities, such as growth, employment and effective use of European funds.

What were the main messages of these keynote speakers?

In his speech, Commissioner Hogan highlighted the crucial role of Rural Networks. He stressed the important role that the Assembly plays: in creating links between rural development stakeholders from across the EU; in acting as an 'incubator of ideas' for knowledge development and innovation for all; and in enhancing policy effectiveness. He also emphasised the importance of the simplification process, on which he expected the Assembly to make a significant contribution.

Ms Kaljulaid, from the European Court of Auditors, talked about the crucial need to measure the impact of rural development policy actions. Audit results provide important information about the consistency and compliance of certain operations. The networks can provide real added value towards the achievement of policy objectives by supporting the development and

© 2014 European Union

The Rural Networks Assembly brought together nearly 200 representatives of rural development stakeholder groups including national rural networks, managing authorities, European organisations and agricultural research and advisory bodies.

spread of a performance-oriented culture. Achieving territorial development objectives requires effective coordination and the identification of synergies between various European policies that have an impact at territorial level, on agricultural activity and rural economies.

Finally, the representative of the European Investment Bank (EIB) talked about the use of financial instruments, stressing the benefits of closer co-operation between DG AGRI and the EIB.

Apart from the formalities of launching the Assembly, what were the main expected results of this first Assembly?

The primary aim of this first meeting was to foster a strong participatory spirit. It was important to establish an open dialogue to encourage participants to share their ideas and experiences. The Assembly provides a platform aiming to recognise and value each participant's contribution, to achieve better results by working together than as individuals. This approach is reflected in the 'family' photo we took at the event, which embodies our vision of each participant playing an active, rather than passive, role in proceedings.

The primary aim of this first meeting was to foster a strong participatory spirit. It was important to establish an open dialogue to encourage participants to share their ideas and experiences.

This first meeting was attended by representatives of the European Court of Auditors and the European Investment Bank. Do you plan to invite other institutions to future meetings?

The contributions of other institutions such as the ECA and the EIB were particularly appreciated by Assembly participants. For that reason, we intend to invite other institutions, organisations and external contributors to our meetings in the future. This will help to expand the scope of our discussions and to highlight the broader interest in our rural development policy across all European institutions.

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us. We wish you every success in your role as Chair of the Rural Networks' Assembly.

(1) Interview by Isabelle Raynaud, DG AGRI, Unit H.3 - European Network and Monitoring of Rural Development Policy.

The EU needs a Rural Day!

Tommy Nilsson, Swedish NRN

There are many commemorative days to note in our calendars nowadays; from Mother's day to World Cancer Day and Earth Day. I suggest we also need The Rural Day, when organisations, authorities and businesses can together manifest the importance of rural areas for the whole of society.

Tommy Nilsson is the Communication Officer of the Swedish Rural Network.

The Swedish Rural Network has arranged a Rural Gala every year since 2009, to promote and share good practices from activities funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Other networks have arranged similar events. This has been a positive experience for all involved, but has been somewhat less successful at reaching out to the wider public.

THE VALUE OF A RURAL DAY

Organising a Rural Day could help us to achieve our aims around reaching a broader public with positive messages about rural development in Europe. All national rural networks could work together with the ENRD to launch The Rural Day across the EU.

The EU institutions would hopefully join in, as would other networks, organisations and associations interested in rural development, including the European Rural Parliament and LEADER associations.

The more we work together to promote rural areas on this day, the greater the effect will be in the media and in people's minds.

The Day would enable us to reach out together with messages about the meaning and importance of strong, vibrant rural areas. The more we work together to promote rural areas on this day, the greater the effect will be in the media and in people's minds.

The Day could encourage greater co-operation between organisations that work on rural matters. This would not only provide benefits of synergy in communicating around the Day itself, but also stronger contacts and working relationships for the longer term.

PLANNING A RURAL DAY

Each annual Rural Day could have a topic with a clear connection to the goals of European Rural Development Policy and the EAFRD. For example, the main topic of the first Rural Day could be: The Sustainable Rural Areas of Europe. This topic could then be divided into sub topics, such as the use of energy resources in rural areas and sustainable food supply.

National rural networks and managing authorities could agree common topics and messages for the Day. Local organisations could also develop their own actions or messages under the same overall umbrella, adapted to their situation and communications priorities.

By launching the Rural Day open and widely, we will not be able to have total control of all the actions and messages sent out. However, the strength would come from focusing communications efforts on the same Day in every region, in every country in the EU, drawing public and media attention to rural development in Europe.

Attracting wider attention to rural development issues remains an important challenge.

© Drawnalism®

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

tommy.nilsson@jordbruksverket.se

European Rural Parliament – raising the voice of rural people

Michael Dower, PREPARE
Vanessa Halhead, ERCA

National Rural Parliaments, like that in Scotland *(see overleaf)*, are part of a far broader movement which seeks to raise the voice and stimulate the self-help activity of rural communities throughout Europe. A central element is the European Rural Parliament.

Michael Dower (PREPARE) and **Vanessa Halhead** (ERCA) are Joint-Secretaries of the European Rural Parliament

The first European Rural Parliament, in Brussels in November 2013, was initiated by the European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA), PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe and the Nordic group of national rural movements. 150 people from 30 countries took part.

Participants urged that the initiative continue, in order to strengthen the voice of rural people. So, ERCA and PREPARE, plus the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), are now preparing the second European Rural Parliament, to be held in November 2015.

This has a double aim: firstly, to strengthen the voice of rural communities, and ensure that their interests are fully reflected in national and European policies; and secondly, to promote self-help, solidarity and co-operation among rural communities throughout Europe.

FROM NATIONAL UP TO EUROPEAN LEVEL

The 'voice' must come from the rural people, at grassroots level. So, the heart of the initiative is a series of national campaigns, to gather the concerns and hopes of rural people. Members of our three networks, and allies elsewhere, are acting as "ERP national champions" in 40 countries, within and beyond the EU.

Each national champion is organising an 'upward cascade of ideas', starting at local level, gathered in regions, synthesised at national level and combined at European level to form a draft European Rural Manifesto and a supporting report. In some countries, the campaign includes a National Rural Parliament.

Meanwhile, a task force is gathering data on the state of rural Europe, and on the rural policies of governments, to feed into the Manifesto. The ERP website is enabling wider consultation.

The 'voice' must come from the rural people, at grassroots level. So, the heart of the initiative is a series of national campaigns, to gather the concerns and hopes of rural people.

The ERP 2015 Gathering will be held in November 2015 in the town of Schärding in Upper Austria. It includes field trips in the surrounding region; and two days of discussion, climaxing in adoption of the European Rural Manifesto. Over 300 people will attend, from 40 countries, plus leading rural organisations and invited representatives of European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe etc.

After the event, we will publish the Manifesto and supporting evidence, to influence governments and European institutions in policies for rural communities, and to encourage action by the rural communities themselves.

© Schärding Tourism board

The 2015 European Rural Parliament will be held in the beautiful Austrian town of Schärding.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

European Rural Parliament website: www.europeanruralparliament.com

The homepage of the 2015 host town Schärding: www.schaerding.at

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

The first ever Scottish Rural Parliament

Emma Cooper, Scottish Rural Parliament

The first ever Scottish Rural Parliament was held in Oban, 6-8 November 2014. Around 400 people attended, more than 300 of whom were from rural communities.

Emma Cooper is the Scottish Rural Parliament coordinator

THE ORIGINS OF THE SCOTTISH RURAL PARLIAMENT

We were aware of Rural Parliaments in around ten countries across Europe. Their success over the past 20 years inspired us to initiate a Rural Parliament in Scotland. Sweden was the original model, so we visited them to learn from their experience. We gained some new ideas, but also confirmed that we have our own specific situation here in Scotland.

A Rural Parliament is not just an event, but also a process. We put in a lot of work to engage Scottish rural stakeholders in preparing the event of the Parliament. We created an advisory forum, which is a group of (mainly) national organisations with a stake in rural affairs, to help prepare and implement the Parliament.

BUILDING FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL

We also organised about 25 local events in different rural locations across Scotland, including on islands off the mainland. The locations and contexts were very diverse, but many of the key themes came up again and again.

Using these inputs, and existing work to identify what matters to rural communities, we created a short-list of priority themes for the 2014 Rural Parliament. We asked rural stakeholders to vote on these both online and at a major rural event.

This process confirmed the priority themes of the Scottish Rural Parliament 2014 as:

- Rural business and employment
- Access to broadband
- Transport infrastructure

- Issues of land use and planning
- Protecting natural assets and adapting to environmental change
- Local decision-making and local democracy
- Health and social care.

NEW METHODS OF WORKING

We tried out Twitter debates on these themes. On average, the debates had around 50 participants and some interesting inputs, but some worked better than others. I would quite like to see this practice taken forward, but we will have to see and, of course, it is not a tool for everybody.

We appointed working groups to develop background papers to help prepare the Parliament discussions. These covered the policy context, key issues, new practices and approaches to address these issues, and what the latest research is saying.

A Rural Parliament is not just an event, but also a process. We put in a lot of work to engage Scottish rural stakeholders in preparing the Parliament.

All the preparatory work meant that the Rural Parliament itself was able to focus on identifying solutions and the actions needed to overcome the challenges which we had identified.

OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

The outcomes of our first parliament were all about democracy, planning and how to influence decision-

© Scottish Rural Parliament

Participants at the Rural Parliament discussed the priority topics identified during preparatory consultations.

making. Our Parliament was very focused on the need to develop greater transport links in rural areas, the need for rural broadband connections and rural business and employment.

We now have to create an Action Plan to take these issues forward. It will look at the governance and role that the Parliament will take, including actions such as lobbying and strategy, and how it might be delivered regionally. A big positive is that the Scottish Government have committed to helping engage with major organisations to take this Action Plan forward.

The model for Rural Parliaments is every two years, so the next one will be in 2016. In the meantime, we will keep engaging through meetings across Scotland and on social media. It is important that this continues to be a participative democracy initiative, enabling people to represent themselves and their issues.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk

Andrew Copus[1] is a Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences (SEGS) researcher at the James Hutton Institute and was a delegate at the 2014 Scottish Rural Parliament

CAN A RURAL PARLIAMENT SUCCEED WITHOUT STRONGER LOCAL DEMOCRACY?

Andrew Copus, James Hutton Institute

Scotland (like the rest of the UK) has one of the weakest local democratic frameworks in Europe.

In Sweden there are 290 municipalities for a population of 9.5 million, and locally elected municipality officials represent, on average, a couple of hundred people. In Scotland, just 32 Local Authorities represent 5.2 million; the councillor/resident ratio is more than 1:4 000.

Given these deep contrasts it is an open question whether a Scottish Rural Parliament will be able to influence rural policy and local development practice to the same extent as the Swedish model.

Having said that, as a forum and 'mouthpiece' for rural interests, the Scottish Rural Parliament can only be a good thing in terms of providing a counterweight to urban interests.

It is also encouraging that the Scottish Rural Parliament has the support of the Scottish Government Minister responsible for rural policy. Only time will tell, but the [Parliament] has certainly provided another reason to use the phrase "interesting times!"

(1) This perspective is taken, with permission, from a blog article of 14 November 2014 that can be read at: www.hutton.ac.uk/blogs/segs

REPORT

Participative Management of Community Forest in Soria (Spain)

Through the project 'Montes de Socios' (Forests of the People), the Province of Soria (Castilla y Leon) has been at the forefront of efforts in Spain to re-engage the owners of largely abandoned forests to create a model of sustainable management for the 21st century. The process has involved the creation of new laws, hours of research on land ownership rights and the creation of autonomous local management groups providing a new impetus to rural development through effective stakeholder engagement.

© Montes de Socios

A COMPLICATED HISTORY

To understand the Montes de Socios project, its challenges and its achievements, it is essential to understand the history that led to the general abandonment of hilly forest land in many areas of Spain.

In Soria, a "Monte" is not so much a "mountain" as an area of land associated with hills, forests, bushes and lowland grazing - it is generally land unsuitable for agriculture.

In the 19th century, large parcels of hilly forest land were auctioned off by the State to raise funds, following rounds of confiscations, which saw the expropriation of land from monasteries, municipalities, military orders, hospitals and hospices. Around 100 000 hectares were put up for sale during the two years 1866-7 alone.[1]

The confiscation and selling off of this land not only impacted on the institutions affected, but on the many poor villagers who used the municipal commons for their subsistence. In many cases, they joined forces to try to buy the land so they could continue to use it. The land was not sold off cheaply or below the market rate, so the effort undertaken by villagers was considerable, involving sacrifices, loans and years of hard work to repay debts.

"Buying the land was not easy. It was a lot of money at the time. Most people really struggled. Some sold their animals cheaply to get the money they needed, others effectively gave up their rights to harvest timber for 40 years. They just kept the right to use the pasture and to gather the wood they needed to build houses and for firewood in the home."

Cándido Moreno, President, Monte Pinar Management Collective, Herrera de Soria.

For more than 80% of the forest sold in Soria, the shared sacrifice created a shared spirit that saw joint ownership and joint management of the forest through co-operative-style arrangements. The co-purchasers had indivisible rights to the land, ensuring its management through co-operation and making use of the forest resources to support the local community.

THE LOSS OF A CULTURE

However, the handing down of the land from generation to generation and important social changes that led to significant migration to towns and cities by people in search of new opportunities made successful management of these uncultivated hilly forests increasingly difficult. Who wanted to work the land? Who owned it? Whose responsibility was it?

Even where efforts were attempted to organise the effective exploitation of forest resources, the legal framework did not make it easy. Trying to establish legal ownership or management rights was too costly and complex to be practical for most rural families or communities. The forests were largely abandoned, damaging the ecosystems that had developed and increasing the risk of forest fires. In Soria, 25% of the total forest area was abandoned – around 150 000 ha.

© Montes de Socios

Landowners came together in often large numbers to form the new collectives.

© Montes de Socios

The landscape of the project areas is characterised by hills, trees and relatively poor quality soils.

The tendency was for local authorities to take over ownership and responsibility for land that had been largely abandoned. However, as the Mayor of Ledrado (Soria), Revilla Jiménez, points out: "These lands were bought by our ancestors. They belong to the people, there's no doubt about that. Why should the local authorities lay claim to them?"

"It was not right or fair that these lands, which were bought with so much effort and sacrifice, and which belonged to the villagers fell into public ownership like that, without any questions. We decided to try to identify the rightful owners and call on them to protect this territory give a new impulse to rural development in the area."

Pedro Medrano, Technical Director, Soria Forestry Association v

A NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT MANAGEMENT

Management of the land had in many cases become impossible. The first and essential step for resolving the situation and re-enabling development of these rural areas was the creation of a new legal framework.

The Forestry Association of Soria promoted legislative change, which led to an amendment of the national law on these forest landscapes in 2003.[2] This change provided for the legal establishment of Forest Management Collectives to make effective joint management of hilly forest areas under shared ownership practical once more.

The first step for the formal constitution of a Forest Management Collective (Junta Gestora) is to obtain accreditation that the forest area belongs to at least ten different people with indivisible rights to the territory. In the absence of current title deeds, ownership can be demonstrated through a documented link from the original owners to current claimants.

(1) Following civil confiscations under the Madoz Law (Ley Madoz) of 1855.

(2) Disposición Adicional 10, Ley de Montes 43/2003, Spain.

© Montes de Socios

Signing up to the new management collectives typically takes place in quite formal ceremonies.

The process is overseen and controlled by the respective Forestry authority for each Autonomous Community in Spain, which also undertakes to publicise the creation of a Forest Management Board.

TRACING OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND

Identifying the current owners of the land was not a simple task. There were records from official sales that took place in the 1860s, but the passing on of land might have been recorded with local authorities, local associations or only via the handing down of documents within families.

All and any archives and sources were used to trace ownership from the original purchasers to people alive today. Hundreds of hours of research were undertaken, scouring through the records to find the rightful heirs to the land. Many were still living in Soria, but others were living in different parts of Spain and even further afield.

> *"We knew that my father was from a village in Soria... But my father lost all contact with the village when my grandparents died."*
>
> *Elías Pascual,an elderly landowners, living in Argentina*

Elías Pascual lives in Argentina and had no idea that he was the rightful heir to shared ownership of forest land in Soria. He is emotional about re-establishing the connection with the land through the Management Collective: "Above all, it's the satisfaction of keeping the family memory alive, and of my grandfather who was one of those who bought the forest land with so much effort."

The result of the research was extensive 'genealogical trees' that identified as many of the current owners as possible. It was the groundwork that enabled the creation of Forest Management Collectives across the forest territory of Soria.

© Montes de Socios

Management of the land had, in many areas, been abandoned over the years.

© Montes de Socios

The story of Herrera de Soria

Herrera de Soria is a municipality of Soria covering 1 364 ha. It was sold by the State in 1905 and bought by 44 villagers who formed a collective to ensure they could maintain their way of life. Effective management of the land was seriously affected by the exponential growth in families with rights to the land descended from the original owners and processes of migration away from the municipality. Research by the project found more than 400 owners with indivisible rights to the mountain land today. In 2007, 11 direct descendants of the original 44 purchasers were the first to sign the agreement to create the Management Collective to provide for the effective management of the forest land.

ESTABLISHING JOINT MANAGEMENT OF THE LAND

Once the criteria for establishing a Management Body have been established and accredited by the relevant forest authority, the legal procedure concludes with the convening of the co-owners in a meeting to formally approve and sign the creation of the Management Collective. Under the Montes de Socios project 26 such Forest Management Collectives were established.

Modern technologies have been used to enable the participation of landowners who are not physically present in the territory or cannot attend meetings of the Management Body. Everyone is encouraged to have their say in the way the forest is managed and the rural community supported

THE BENEFITS OF JOINT MANAGEMENT

The benefits of stakeholder involvement in creating the Management Collectives have been economic, environmental and social. They have provided a new impetus for effective and sustainable management that extracts value from the forest in harmony with local biodiversity.

The process has played an invaluable role in reconnecting people with their rural roots and creating a new dialogue between all the people with a shared connection to mountain villages, regardless of their age and where they live now.

Involving stakeholders has been the essential pre-condition for ensuring effective and sustainable management of the forest resources and providing a new dynamic for rural development in Soria.

The reality is that being identified as a landowner today is not a path to riches; each person typically has a very small share in the value generated by the mountain. The value of the process comes from enabling important reinvestment in the rural community. Many Management Collectives are already planning the use of the money produced from the forest to repair houses, improve roads, create new services and offer support to new families to come to the rural villages.

© Montes de Socios

The collectives have helped recreate a sense of community in many locations.

> *"That's how it always was. The money made pays for the electric lighting, it pays to bring running water to the houses, it pays for the building of schools and roads. It is money of the village, invested in the village."*
>
> *Cándido Moreno, President, Monte Pinar Management Collective, Herrera de Soria.*

© Montes de Socios

The participative management of community forest has now spread to other locations in Spain.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Pedro Medrano:
pedro.medrano@asfoso.com

http://montesdesocios.info/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxcZmd2MyA8

INTERVIEW

Vyara Stefanova

European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)

Vyara Stefanova works with the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) in South East Europe. She has been at the forefront of helping farmers participate in rural development actions that both support the competitiveness of small-scale agriculture and conserve important wildlife habitats.

© ENRD CP Veneta Paneva

When did you start your work with rural development stakeholders?

Initially, I was involved with helping to establish Bulgaria's first national agricultural advisory service. This work for the Ministry of Agriculture led to me becoming part of a team that was tasked to prepare the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD programme) in Bulgaria. My task was to set up a national agri-environment programme and test it as a pilot measure under SAPARD.

Nothing like this had been developed before in Bulgaria and it showed the challenges that were ahead when trying to get agricultural stakeholders involved in nature conservation. Very few farmers were initially aware that they could benefit from nature conservation support.

I became Head of Unit in the Ministry responsible for implementing these types of environmental measures, which included early versions of the sort of High Nature Value (HNV) farm support schemes that we promote through the Forum [EFNCP] today.

Now I work in the branch office of the EFNCP in Bulgaria. Our office acts as a focus for an HNV Farming network in South East Europe. Our aim is to improve understanding of, and support for, HNV benefits so that they can be properly recognised by farmers, consumers, local authorities and policy makers.

Why are HNV farm support schemes important?

High Nature Value (HNV) farming typically uses semi-natural pastures and meadows and is widespread on less productive land in many European countries. Here in South East Europe, HNV farms often operate in the most marginal areas under difficult social and economic realities.

This type of farming might be on marginal land, but it is the most important for conserving biodiversity across Europe. This agricultural landscape is home to a huge range of wildlife species. It is also essential for other environmental services, such as managing water-catchments and preventing wild fires.

How does your work with the European Form for Nature Conservation and Pastoralism support such schemes?

Engaging farmers in nature conservation initiatives is a priority task for rural development policy. Organisations like ours

are working proactively to increase the involvement of different stakeholders in nature-based rural development initiatives on the ground.

The Forum uses an integrated rural development model that aims to increase the involvement of small farms from HNV areas in business development activities as well as nature conservation. We are also trying to show farmers how they can promote their products' natural characteristics, which many consumers like.

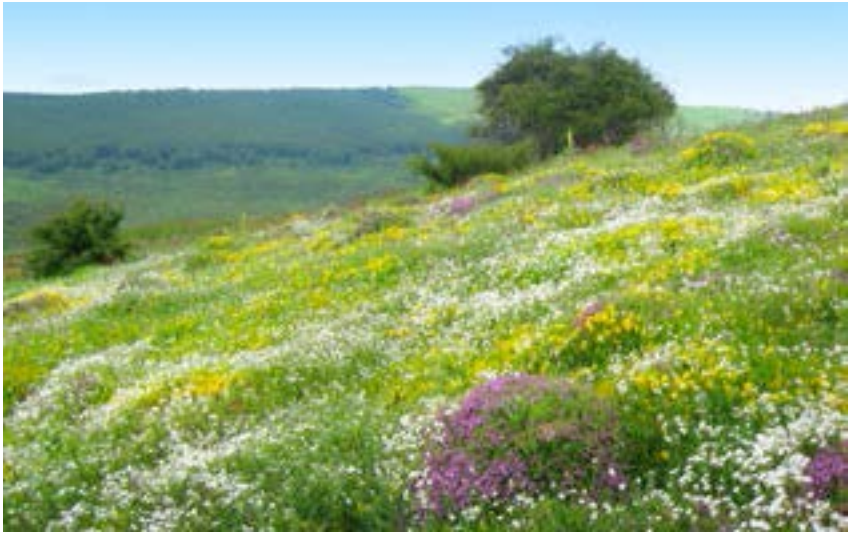
This approach helps farmers to understand the hidden values of their HNV farming systems and it is also useful for overcoming some of the opposition that can exist to Natura 2000 site designations in Bulgaria.

What is your approach to engaging farmers?

Farmers are usually in very good positions to protect biodiversity. However, in many cases they do not have sufficient information and knowledge about the opportunities for using national and EU funding to support these aims.

As well as providing information and advice to farmers, working for EFNCP requires me to spend a lot of time finding out about farmers' perspectives. It is essential to really understand what types of rural development support works well for small-scale farms on HNV land and why.

We are trying to develop integrated conservation approaches that correspond to farmers needs and that will help them to continue their traditional farming methods



© Evdokia Georgieva

High Nature Value (HNV) agricultural landscapes in countries such as Bulgaria are home to a huge range of wildlife species.

What are some of the main challenges farmers talk about?

In some cases, the policy instruments are not reflecting the national conditions or are not tailored to the small-scale farmer's needs. For example small-scale food producers in southeast Europe often have difficulty to comply with hygiene rules and regulations introduced as a part of the EU hygiene package. The EU rules are applied regardless of the size of the business or of the scale of the hygiene hazard, with little or no flexibility applied to small-scale farming contexts.

These farmers also face difficulties to apply for investment support to improve the on-farm facilities. Furthermore, the design and implementation of agri-environment schemes that can support HNV farming systems is not a priority for the national authorities in southeast Europe.

What are your priorities for the future?

One example of what we are doing in Bulgaria is trying to influence both municipal authorities and the farmers to consider nature issues when they are deciding how to use communal grazing land, which is very widespread here.

We are also trying to encourage the municipal authorities to carry out monitoring. This is needed to give a long-term viewpoint about the best way to use the land for both livestock and biodiversity.

By highlighting good practice, EFNCP intends to inspire more Balkan farmers to participate in HNV rural development activity, and encourage authorities to respond to their needs. We also want to establish working parnerships with research and advisory bodies that will help farmers to better understand the socio-economic values and challenges of HNV farming, and to reveal the economic benefits of this type of farming to society.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) is the only European organisation focusing on the maintenance of low-intensity livestock farming. Its primary aim is a viable economic future for High Nature Value farming across Europe.

The network provides a direct link between local projects involving low-intensity farming, and policy-making processes at national and EU levels.

For further information, visit: www.efncp.org

REPORT

Involving women in the Rural Development Programme of Northern Ireland

An important element of increasing stakeholder involvement in rural development is reaching out to groups who might face risks of being marginalised. Northern Ireland (UK) has demonstrated good approaches for ensuring that women are supported to take full part in the Northern Irish Rural Development Programme (RDP).

© Northern Ireland Rural Network

GENDER ON THE AGENDA

Rural development policy acknowledges the role of rural women and highlights the opportunities that RDP support can provide for women in rural areas. Member States are therefore able to pay special attention to women's rural development needs, and (as part of the RDPs' equal opportunities commitments) take measures to increase the participation of women in RDP activities.

> *"Whether they are actively farming, supporting the family farm, running a rural enterprise or involved in local community enterprises, women play an active role in sustaining our rural communities."*
>
> *Northern Ireland Rural Network*[1]

(1) Women in Rural Development Case Study Booklet.

Nevertheless, a study commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development found that: "While gender mainstreaming is integral to the Rural Development Regulation, there is evidence to suggest it has not been rigorously implemented to date.[2]

Good practice here has been forged by the RDP of Northern Ireland. Regional government authorities have adopted a 'gender mainstreaming' approach within its stakeholder participation policies.

© Northern Ireland Rural Network

The Rural Network's 'Inspirational Rural Women' guide received support from Northern Irish Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Michelle O'Neill.

A GENDER THEMATIC WORKING GROUP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Central to this achievement was the emergence of gender issues as a thematic priority of the Northern Ireland Rural Network during the 2007-2013 programming period. The network created a Thematic Working Group on 'Women in Rural Development'. The Group explored the role of women in rural life and rural businesses.

> *"Promoting equal opportunities is a key programme focus. It aims to address the inequalities faced by women, amongst these isolation, unemployment and poverty, by introducing funding opportunities to attract women and encouraging women's groups to become involved."*
>
> *Teresa Canavan,*
> *Rural Network for Northern Ireland*

Teresa Canavan from the Rural Network for Northern Ireland explains that: "In an attempt to get to the grassroots involvement of women in the life of rural areas, the Rural Network for Northern Ireland established a Women in Rural Development Thematic Working Group comprising representatives of Local Action Groups, Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster, Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network and Countryside Agri Rural Partnership."

The main aims of the group were to examine the current levels of female participation in the Northern Irish RDP, identify good practice projects implemented by women under the current RDP and identify the best approaches and good practices in rural women's issues.

"The group focused on a range of issues facing rural women and held events and activities to encourage women to become economically active," continues Ms Canavan. "Those who participated were from a range of backgrounds, ages and interests; many associated with farming and part of farm families, others involved in community groups and many more who had begun or developed innovative business ideas."

Events covered themes such as Rural Entrepreneurship; Women in Agriculture (Family Farms); and Women on Local Action Groups.

The very existence of the Thematic Working Group was a success in that it brought together those with a specific interest in rural women to discuss challenges and opportunities in the future.

High-level political support for the Working Group was also useful. This came from Michelle O'Neill, Northern Ireland's Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, who took an interest in the group's work and attended its 'Inspirational Women in Rural Development' event. She was very encouraged by, "what real women with vision, determination and a 'can-do' attitude have achieved both locally and further afield, with a little support from the Rural Development Programme."

> *"I had the pleasure of attending one of the Thematic Working Group conferences last year and I heard from many of the women... who through the RDP are now running their own businesses. To me these women are inspirational."*
>
> *Michelle O'Neill MLA,*
> *Northern Irish Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development*

RURAL WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS

Many women have been encouraged by the opportunities arising from the Rural Development funding streams and have

(2) "Women working on the farm: how to promote their contribution to the development of agriculture and rural areas in Europe", Dr Sally Shortall, Queen's University, Belfast.

become involved in the implementation of a variety of projects. Direct investment has been given to ventures including diversification from traditional farm activity, the creation of new businesses, tourism development schemes and projects which address basic services gaps in local rural communities.

Significantly many of these innovative projects have created jobs and it is this local economic impact which is hugely important in the retention of a good quality of life for rural dwellers.

"Our first event 'Inspirational Women in Rural Development' was a showcase of women who had received funding under all aspects of the Rural Development Programme," highlights Ms Canavan. "Feedback was excellent and demand was such that two further highly successful 'Early Steps into Business' seminars were held attracting more than 160 women."

A collection of case studies about businesswomen from rural communities[3] was produced by the Working Group to motivate more involvement in the RDP by its female stakeholders. The publication proved to be both popular and productive.

Janette O'Hagan received RDP support towards the development of software and business planning for 'heatboss' her revolutionary heating controls business.

www.okotech.co.uk

© Northern Ireland Rural Network

"In many instances these enterprises were up and running before the Rural Development funding came on stream and it was seen as an opportunity to expand, but for many others the investment helped them on their first crucial step to purchasing equipment or investing in technology which helped mobilise ideas."

Teresa Canavan,
Rural Network for Northern Ireland

It showed that women were not discouraged by obstacles to get involved in the life of their rural areas, and reinforced the point that whilst women recognise that barriers exist, they are determined to get past them and create their own future.

A variety of different female entrepreneurs from rural areas were covered in the case studies. They included marketing and corporate business services, engineering and tourism provision, hat and handbag hire, beauty industries, childcare centres, textile design and dressmaking.

"They demonstrate that women cannot be pigeon holed into 'women's jobs' but rather they have the skills, aptitude and appetite to take on the world of business in all its facets. To me these women are inspirational."

Michelle O'Neill
MLA, Northern Irish Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

WOMEN IN LOCAL ACTION GROUPS

The Thematic Working Group found that 64 members of the Northern Ireland Local Action Groups (LAGs) were women, which equated to 34% of total LAG membership. This was considered favourable since it meant that women had a significant input and voice within the LAGs' decision-making systems.

One of the female LAG members (and Working Group contributor) who has been at the forefront of rural development in Northern Ireland is Councillor Frances Burton. She is active in numerous gender equality roles that encourage women to participate in civic life. Her work promotes up-skilling, building confidence and education for women so that they can take up opportunities within their local community.

Gillian Reid is an agricultural business mentor on the Farm Family Options Mentoring Programme supported by the RDP in Northern Ireland.

Around 75% of farm businesses mentored on the programme (2007-2013) had one or more active female participant.

For further information visit www.countrysiderural.co.uk

© Northern Ireland Rural Network

(3) Inspirational Rural Women – A Sharing Practice Guide.

"Women remain under-represented in senior employment, in policy development, and other areas. Our Council is very forward thinking in that it has developed a plan to support and promote the development of women in these areas."

Councillor Frances Burton

© Northern Ireland Rural Network

Jacqueline McGonigle received RDP money to support the computer programming behind her new start-up business 'WhatsOnNI'. It provides a searchable database of events in Northern Ireland.

"The RDP funding I received came at a crucial point in our development," she highlights.

Visit: www.whatsonni.com

GENDER MAINSTREAMING THE 2014-2020 RDP

The Thematic Working Group commissioned research by Queens University Belfast on 'Gender Mainstreaming the Rural Development Programme' to explore the opportunities for enhancing women's involvement in the 2014-2020 RDP. It confirmed that Northern Ireland's efforts to involve female RDP stakeholders were exemplary in Europe, but recommended continued work by the RDP authorities to improve female participation during the 2014-2020 rural development period.

The Northern Ireland managing authority launched a 'Rural Development Programme Stakeholder Consultation Group' which took account of the gender mainstreaming issue. Two women's organisations became members of the group and participated fully throughout the RDP planning processes.

Their contributions included providing valuable inputs during an Equal Opportunities Impact Assessment (known as an EQIA). EQIA outcomes indicated that more could be done to "try and increase female participation, not only in farming, but in all matters that affect the communities and people in rural areas and industries".

'Equality proofing' of decision-making roles at senior levels of influence was considered to be useful, as was attention to practical issues that can enhance the participation of women, like childcare and timing of meetings.

Supplementary mitigation measures were suggested that involved encouraging more women to take part in LAGs. Capacity building and mentoring support were proposed to achieve this. Animation work was also seen as effective for developing potential projects involving women in rural development.

AN EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

An Equality Action Plan was drawn up for programme implementation that intends to improve women's representation on RDP (and associated) bodies. It will take a partnership approach to reviewing all aspects of public appointment processes and groups that the RDP managing authority hosts. Results aim to remove any potential barriers to participation by women.

The Action Plan calls for "prompt and innovative outreach measures to raise interest levels amongst potential female candidates", with intended outputs increasing the gender balance to take representation to 50%. Actions addressing the "Low take up for RDP funding" for women involve using "Pro-active activities to target women and women's groups to encourage RDP funding applications."

'Equality Screening' will be required on selection criteria for individual RDP funding schemes as they are being designed. A further innovative aspect of the pioneering work promoting gender mainstreaming by Northern Ireland's RDP stakeholders covers actions to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of RDP equality impacts.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information:

Teresa Canavan, Rural Network for Northern Ireland: tcanavan@rdc.org.uk

info@ruralnetworkni.org.uk

www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk

Inspirational Rural Women – A Sharing Practice Guide:
www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/download/files/Women%20In%20Rural%20FINAL.pdf

Women and Rural Development – Gender Mainstreaming Factsheet:
www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/download/files/Gender%20factsheet(1).pdf

Research by Professor Sally Shortall, Queen's University Belfast:
http://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/sally-shortall%28800e50ec-31ed-4328-bc8d-128ca964cb4c%29/publications.html

INTERVIEW

Dr Efi Charalambous-Snow

Cypriot farm advisory services

Dr Efi Charalambous-Snow is an Agricultural Officer in the Extension Section of the Department of Agriculture – the body responsible for agricultural advisory services in Cyprus – and a representative on the Rural Networks' Steering Group. She is a strong advocate for the positive contributions that farm advisers can play in helping to develop rural Europe.

© Dr Efi Charalambous-Snow

Why did you want to be involved with farm advisory services?

I have always appreciated the benefits of farm advisory services. My belief in their value goes back to the time I spent with my grandparents on their fruit farm in the Troodos mountains of Cyprus. I remember how much my grandparents welcomed the advice and time that they received from visits by farm advisors.

You could see on their faces the difference that it made to them. This was not just because they had gained useful new knowledge about how to improve their products or deal with a problem. It was also because they felt that someone cared for them enough to come and visit them and to help them with their livelihood. As small-scale farmers this was a big confidence boost.

How do you see the role of farm advisory services today?

I believe it is very important to show farmers - especially small-scale farmers like we have a lot of here in Cyprus - that they do not need to feel abandoned and that their worth is actually well recognised by authorities at regional, national and EU levels.

We need farmers to produce our food and look after our countryside and farmers can do this work better with the help of guidance about new methods, and also about the support that is available for them. This is why I think that we need to ensure that Europe's agri-food sector has the backing of the best possible farm advisors and that is why I specialised in agricultural extension services.

How are agricultural advisory services organised in Cyprus

Farm advisory services in Cyprus are operated by the Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment. We have six regional advisory offices

We all work together and we often find that similar development issues arise in different parts of the island. These are identified by the annual needs-assessments that the regional offices carry prior to preparing their own locally-targeted work programmes.

Our job in the Department involves coordinating these programmes and we

often get involved in organising collective farm advice activities that are considered useful for several of the regional offices. Such activities might be running training schemes, arranging knowledge-transfer visits or other events.

We also coordinate other centralised advisory work including publishing a quarterly magazine and we liaise closely with the National Rural Network (NRN) during our duties.

What success factors help the farm advisory service function in Cyprus?

The regional offices and their staff have very good relations with their local farmers. They represent a link between farmers and the national agricultural authorities. The farmers tell us what their needs and interests are and we then communicate that back to the different Ministry departments, such as the Agricultural Research Institute, for action.

Because the advisors are all civil servants, the farmers know that they act in an objective way and this maintains a lot of trust in our services from farmers. We find they prefer speaking with us and we take advantage of this trust to help run a real bottom-up style service.

As part of the 2007-2013 RDP period we tested using private sector advisory services but we found that these were not widely used by Cypriot farmers. Smaller farmers here are often part-time farmers and so they need to know that the costs of an advisory service will produce enough financial benefits to make it worthwhile. This seemed to be a challenge for many small-scale farmers and only a limited number of, mostly larger, agri-businesses used the private sector advisors.

Can you tell us about a practical example of the advisory services making a positive difference for farmers in Cyprus?

An example of this is the way we linked up researchers and farmers who were experiencing problems with fusarium in melons and watermelons. With the assistance of propagation specialists, our plant pathologists were able to carry out applied research. They worked with the farmers to identify an innovative solution.

This involved grafting watermelon plants to rootstocks that were resistant to soil-borne diseases (such as pumpkin rootstock). This solution overcame the problem and helped our farmers to regain their competitiveness. Being a network of local advisory offices was then useful for transferring the new knowhow around the country.

How does the farm advisory service co-operate with the Support Unit for the National Rural Network?

Cyprus is a small Member State so it is quite easy for the National Support Unit (NSU) and us to co-operate because we know each other well. We are both based in the Department and we have clear dividing lines between our tasks, which is good to ensure that we do not duplicate our actions.

The NSU focuses just on providing information and advice about Rural Development Programme (RDP) matters, whereas we get involved with a wider range of agricultural topics, including the rest of the Common Agricultural Policy. My NSU colleagues spend more of their time working with farm organisations or other rural development groups and we tend to do a lot of direct one-to-one advisory work with farmers.

How can networking support your objectives?

As I said before, there was not a lot of take-up of private agricultural advisors in Cyprus. For this reason we did not include a farm advisory measure in our 2014-2020 RDP. This means that we and the NRN can do more together to improve our farmers' operations by making them more competitive and more environmentally-friendly. I think co-operation is a very useful tool for such work and our advisors promote the benefits of networking between different supply-chain stakeholders.

Good communication is essential here because we may need to convince some farmers that their neighbours are not their competitors. I know that this is not just a

Farm advisors in Cyprus use tools such as videos to get their message out to farmers across the country.

© Department of Agriculture, Cyprus

challenge for Cyprus and it is something that all of Europe's farm advisory services recognise. Everyone can benefit from working closer with each other and we need to see that our competitors are actually those countries from outside of the EU, more than actually our direct neighbours.

Communication skills in the advisory services are vital for promoting new ideas that can boost profitability. For example, we encourage farmers to think about the opportunities they could exploit from growing crops that can be harvested earlier here than in other countries. Potatoes are a prime example of this.

What is your final message to the ENRD network on the role of farm advisory services in supporting stakeholder involvement?

I really believe that new ideas hold lots of possibilities and that is why I support the ENRD concept. For me the ENRD is a very useful mechanism for gaining new knowledge from other areas that we can apply in Cyprus, as well as vice versa of course.

We have already seen how we can gain from transferring other countries' good practices. Hence I am very keen that the ENRD finds ways to make sure that the good practices it identifies is well used - the learning should not just sit on a shelf gathering dust. Europe's farm advisory services can play key roles in enabling good practices to be converted into really tangible developments throughout the countryside in Member States.

Real-life exchanges and face-to-face networking are great ways of making this happen. I know that a lot of publications are produced but we do not all always have time to read them and one of my most memorable lessons from my agricultural extension training was that "seeing is believing".

We can try to persuade farmers to change their practices in many ways; but showing them how to do it rather than telling them how to do it is a much more effective approach. That is why I like field visits, posters and videos as advisory tools because these allow farmers to really see for themselves the truth and they do not have to rely solely on someone else's theory.

I am looking forward to promoting more of this "seeing is believing" principle in my different national and EU roles with the farm advisory service. As such I would encourage all ENRD stakeholders to make good use of the advisory services that exist to help Europe's farmers continue to provide us with food and care properly for our countryside.

© Department of Agriculture, Cyprus

Production of wine, olives, citrus fruits etc. have long been important economic activities for farmers in Cyprus. Many vineyards are located on the slopes of the island's Troodos Mountains.

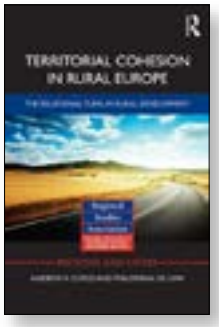
Books & publications

Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe

The Relational Turn in Rural Development

Andrew K. Copus, Philomena de Lima

This book is the 76th in the Regions and Cities series, published by Routledge and prepared by the Regional Studies Association. It is intended for individuals involved in local/rural/regional development in the EU and related policies.



It reflects on how European rural areas have changed in recent years and notes important development variations across regions. The book argues that rural Europe has become very polarised and has failed to address recent challenges in spite of territorial approaches.

The authors set out the principles of the so-called 'Rural Cohesion Policy' while calling for more decentralised approaches to support the various, regionally specific development potentials of rural areas.

Read the book review in Studies in Agricultural Economics 2014/116/3, Andrew F. Fieldsend

ISBN 978-0-415-85950-9

Transfer and learning of the LEADER model in Central Europe

Transfert et apprentissage du modèle LEADER en Europe centrale

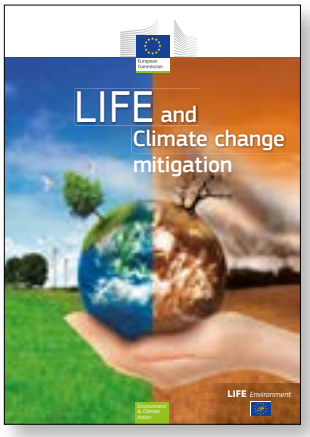
Marie-Claude Morel, Pascal Chevalier and William Lacquement

Published by CERCEC (Centre d'études des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen), this book examines the mechanisms and practicalities of Central European countries' implementation of the LEADER local development model since their accession to the EU.

The publication provides a better understanding of how social actors have adopted LEADER principles and mobilised their resources to develop effective development strategies. It further offers insights into the effects of the adoption of the model on Member States' political systems.

The book is only available in French.

ISBN 978-2-343-04082-0



LIFE and Climate change mitigation

European Commission

This publication gives an overview of EU climate policy and a variety of best practice examples from over 200 LIFE projects in areas ranging from agriculture and forestry to energy and transport.

As farms are responsible for approximately 10% of the total GHG emissions in the EU, improving their environmental performance is a high priority for EU Climate Action. A specific section dedicated to agriculture details LIFE projects that have provided valuable climate action methods and mitigation techniques successfully incorporated into farm practice

ISBN 978-92-79-43945-2

Transitioning towards agroecology. Using the CAP to build new food systems

Arc2020, Friends of the Earth Europe, IFOAM EU

This new brochure compiles good practices in applying agroecological approaches to farming in various EU Member States. Transitioning to agroecology means moving away from conventional agricultural methods to ones integrating environmental and societal concerns more coherently.

The good practice examples were selected also on the basis of their use of a 'community of practice' approach – a network of equal participants (farmers, advisory services, local policy makers, food activists, researchers, local development companies etc) working together to achieve a common objective.

The publication makes the case for facilitating the use of RDP funds to support the transition towards agroecology.

Studies in Agricultural Economics

Research Institute of Agricultural Economics

The 'Studies in Agricultural Economics' is an open-access journal intended for policy makers, agriculture and rural development practitioners, and researchers with a particular interest in Central and South Eastern Europe.

The journal offers a compilation of research papers, policy analyses and book reviews on agricultural economics and rural development. In particular, it explores subjects related to agricultural production and competitiveness, environmental resource management, agri-food supply chain management rural economy and sociology, and development of information and knowledge-based society in rural areas.

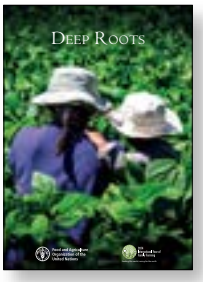
The latest volume (vol. 116, number 3, 2014) focuses on the 10th anniversary of EU accession by ten Central and Eastern European countries. It considers the 'Europeanisation' of their rural development policies, the new phenomenon of rural peripheralisation, and risk management at farm level.

Family Farming

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

On the occasion of the *International Year of Family Farming*, 2014, FAO produced several open-access publications as part of the global effort to raise the profile of family farming in agricultural, environmental, and social policies.

Towards stronger family farms reflects on an extensive policy dialogue with numerous civil society organisations to identify the specific needs of family farmers region by region.



Deep Roots examines family farming policy developments and actions at international, national, regional and local levels by providing the perspectives of over 100 authors coming from governmental and civil society backgrounds.

E-ISBN 978-92-5-108535-6

Focusing on the importance of mountain family farming for sustainable development, ***Mountain Farming is Family Farming*** collects case studies from all over the world to give an overview of the global changes affecting the sector and the strategies developed by mountain communities to tackle them.

E-ISBN 978-92-5-107975-1 (print)

ENRD PUBLICATIONS

Keep up to date with all the latest news, views and developments in European rural development by reading the various ENRD publications.

These are available on the *Publications and Media* section of http://enrd.ec.europa.eu or you can subscribe by emailing subscribe@enrd.eu. For further information write to info@enrd.eu.

EU RURAL REVIEW

The EU Rural Review is the ENRD's principal thematic publication. It presents the latest knowledge and understanding of a particular topic relevant to rural development in Europe. Themes range from rural entrepreneurship and food quality to climate change and social inclusion. It is published twice a year in six EU languages (EN; FR; DE; ES; IT; PL).

No.18 – Organic Farming

No.17 – Family Farming

No.16 – Knowledge transfer and Innovation in Rural Development Policy

EAFRD PROJECTS BROCHURE

The ENRD publishes brochures presenting good and interesting examples of EAFRD-funded projects. Each edition highlights successful project examples around a particular rural development theme. The brochures aim to showcase the achievements of the EAFRD and inspire further projects. They are published in six EU languages (EN; FR; DE; ES; IT; PL).

Rural Development Priorities 2014-2020

EAFRD Project Examples 2007-2013

Social Inclusion

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
  via EU Bookshop (http://bookshop.europa.eu);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
  from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
  from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
  by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (http://bookshop.europa.eu).

KF-AN-15-001-EN-N

ENRD online

ENRD Website

Visit the ENRD website http://enrd.ec.europa.eu for all you need to know about the ENRD and rural development in Europe. Find latest news and updates on rural development policy and programmes and access specific tools including:

- **Rural Development Gateway** 2014-2020 – understand what is new in the 2014-2020 rural development programming period.
- **RDP Projects Database** – find interesting examples of good rural development projects funded by the EAFRD.
- **LEADER Gateway** – a one-stop-shop of tools and information on the LEADER local development method.
- **Communicating Rural Development Gateway** – get inspired with this database of good communication practices.

ENRD Social media

Find the right social media channel for you:

Visit the **ENRD Facebook page** for examples of rural development practices from across the EU – as well as latest news and trends.

Watch videos on rural development projects and thematic issues on the **EURural YouTube** channel.

Follow @ENRD_CP on Twitter for updates on EU rural development policy, news and events.

Join the **ENRD LinkedIn group** for debates, exchange and discussion around rural development policy and implementation issues.

ENRD Contact Point
Rue de la Loi, 38 (bte 4)
B-1040 Bruxelles
info@enrd.eu
Tel. +32 2 801 38 00

Publications Office

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu

European Network for Rural Development