

## NEWS AND UPDATES

- **LEADER COOPERATION EVENTS**
- **RDP & PA SUMMARIES**
- **INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS 2015**

RURAL ISSUES,  
RURAL PERSPECTIVES

- **RURAL-FISHERIES**
- **RURAL BROADBAND**
- **FLY IN THE ARTISTS!**

## FOCUS ON...

- **COMMUNICATING THE RDPs**



## 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).

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**Cover photo:** The 'Tree of Life' at the 2015 Universal Exhibition 'Expo Milano' (see pages 6-7 for related ENRD events).

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## EDITORIAL



As we near the end of 2015, the final Rural Development Programmes are being approved across Europe. More and more Member States and regions are moving from the design to the implementation of their programmes for the achievement of positive rural development results.

**ENRD events** held in September 2015 at the Universal Exhibition in Milan (Expo Milano) – see pages 6-7 – highlighted that there are windows of opportunity for ensuring that some of the good practice from faster moving countries is transferred and, if possible, even improved by those that follow. But there will be opportunities for all stakeholders to exchange and learn from each other throughout the programming period.

The ENRD is there to help that process. You can find out more about the **Work Programme of the ENRD Contact Point** on page 4, setting out the efforts to support simpler programme implementation, strengthened rural networks, more effective LEADER implementation and thematic work on smart and competitive rural areas and the green economy.

A key area of discussion among the National Rural Networks (NRNs) at the beginning of the programming period has been how to communicate the RDPs and the opportunities they provide to stakeholders and the broader public. This edition of Rural Connections presents four examples of the work of NRNs with **“A focus on... Communicating the RDPs”** (pp.26-38). Hopefully these can inspire similar and even better ideas.

In the Rural Issues, Rural Perspectives section (pp.14-25) we continue to bring you a diverse range of voices on issues close to stakeholders' hearts. In this edition we hear about the potential of the **arts and culture** for rural areas, the specific situation of **remote islands**, new European **rural broadband** initiatives, the importance of promoting **entrepreneurship and innovation**, fostering **rural-fisheries** links, the value of **community-based solutions**, and **nature-inclusive farming**.

I encourage you to contact the authors directly or write to me to follow up on these articles... whether to ask a question, join and support the work or even to disagree with what is said. These articles hope to be the start of conversations and not the final word.

**Ed Thorpe**

Communications Manager, ENRD CP  
editor@enrd.eu

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## ENRD NEWS



## ENRD CP Work Programme 2015-2016

The ENRD Contact Point (CP) has started work on its main priorities for the year July 2015 – July 2016, identified through extensive discussions with a broad range of stakeholders. The priorities all contribute to the ENRD's main strategic objectives: to increase stakeholder involvement; to improve RDP implementation; and to better inform on rural development policy.

The CP will provide support and guidance to actors involved in RDP implementation and delivery through capacity building and peer exchange. Specifically, it will work to:

- support **simpler programme implementation**;
- strengthen the functioning of **National Rural Networks** (NRNs) and their Network Support Units (NSUs); and
- enable a more effective rolling out of the **LEADER/CLLD approach**.

The Contact Point's thematic work throughout the year will focus on:

- **'Smart and competitive rural areas'** – examining the factors that can enable access to markets for rural producers using the most up-to-date technologies.
- **'Promoting the transition to a green economy'** – supporting the transition to a sustainable and environmentally friendly rural sector while maintaining or strengthening economic returns.

Each of these two topics will see thematic group meetings, a projects brochure, one issue of the EU Rural Review and a European seminar. Each will also produce a final thematic group report.

All of the CP priorities for 2015-2016 will be supported by RDP screening and analysis, collection of good practices, communication and networking activities.

## ENRD CP team changes

The Contact Point has recently welcomed two new colleagues, Doris Marquardt and Enrique Nieto, to work on the knowledge development team. Doris will focus on simpler and more effective RDP implementation and Enrique will contribute to RDP policy analysis.



We bid farewell to Fabio Cossu (Policy Analyst) after seven years at the ENRD Contact Point. We thank him for his excellent contribution and wish him great success in his new role in the EIP-AGRI Unit (DG AGRI).

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

See the final reports of the ENRD CP's Year One Thematic Groups:  
<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/thematic-group-stakeholder-involvement>  
<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/thematic-group-improving-rdp-implementation>

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For the full Contact Point team list visit: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/general-info/contacts/enrd-contact-point>

## Share your good practice

The ENRD Contact Point is always looking for examples of good practice for achieving positive rural development outcomes, including in both project and programme implementation.

In line with our 2015-2016 work programme we are currently especially interested to hear your good practice examples in the areas of 'Smart and competitive rural areas' and 'The transition to the green economy'.

So, whether it is **providing broadband access** in remote locations, new **rural and agricultural digital services**, advances

in **high-tech farming**, more **efficient use of resources**, development of **renewable energies**, the **bioeconomy** or other similar and related fields.... we want to hear from you!

Please send these and more examples to [david.lamb@enrd.eu](mailto:david.lamb@enrd.eu)

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

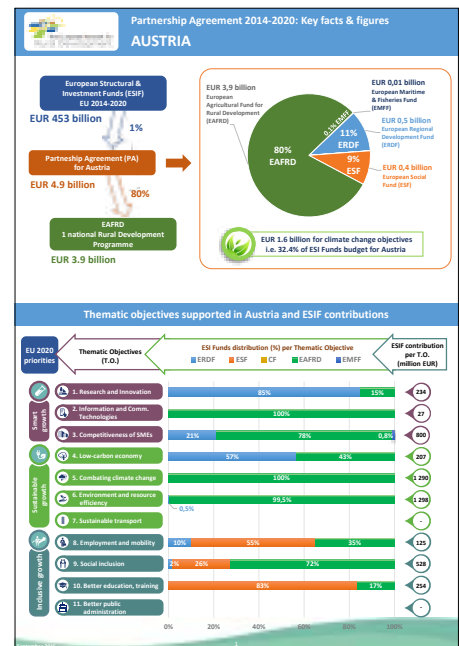
Discover the latest examples of European good practice in rural development: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-action/projects-practice>

NEWS & UPDATES

# Partnership Agreement info sheets

The ENRD Contact Point has published information sheets providing key information from the 28 Partnership Agreements (PAs) signed between the Member States and European Commission in the new programming period.

The info sheets overview the interaction between different EU policies and funds with a special focus on how the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) budget is distributed among thematic objectives in each Member State.

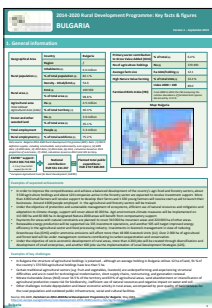


**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

See the info sheets at:  
<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/node/1587/policy-overview-2014-2020>

See the full texts of all 28 Partnership Agreements here:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/contracts\\_grants/agreements/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/agreements/index_en.htm)

# Rural Development Programme summaries



The ENRD Contact Point has started uploading summaries of the approved 2014-2020 national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

The RDP summaries provide a concise overview of selected content of each RDP in a more easily digestible form.

Each summary presents general information on the territory covered and details of the planned expenditure, measures and 2023 targets per rural development priority and focus area.

Keep checking the ENRD website for the latest RDP summaries.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

See the summaries at: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-in-figures/rdp-summaries-2014-2020>

See the full texts of the RDPs, EC factsheets and press releases here: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/index_en.htm)

### 3. Planned expenditure per priority

The following table shows how the planned total public expenditure (comprising the EAFRD support and the national contribution) is allocated between rural development priorities. Priority 1 is considered to be cross-cutting and no separate financial allocation is shown as the expenditure is distributed across other focus areas.

Priority	Total public expenditure per priority (million EUR)	% of total public expenditure*
P2 - Competitiveness	371.9	12.8 %
P3 - Food chain & risk management	272.9	9.4 %
P4 - Ecosystems management	983.1	33.7 %
P5 - Resource efficiency & climate	430.6	14.8 %
P6 - Social inclusion & local development	815.2	27.9 %

\* Figures do not add to 100% because the budget for technical assistance is not included. The budget for technical assistance is available in Section 4.

### P2 - Competitiveness: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable management of forest

Focus Area 2A. Farm's performance, restructuring & modernization	Focus Area 2B. Entry of skilled/younger farmers																														
Total public budget (million EUR): 253.1	Total public budget (million EUR): 100.9																														
Breakdown of FA budget by measure (%)	Breakdown of FA budget by measure (%)																														
<table border="1"> <tr><th>Measure</th><th>m EUR</th></tr> <tr><td>M04</td><td>164.7</td></tr> <tr><td>M06</td><td>60.9</td></tr> <tr><td>M16</td><td>7.8</td></tr> <tr><td>M01</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>M02</td><td>1.4</td></tr> <tr><td>M05</td><td>5.0</td></tr> <tr><td>M16</td><td>3.1</td></tr> </table>	Measure	m EUR	M04	164.7	M06	60.9	M16	7.8	M01	2.0	M02	1.4	M05	5.0	M16	3.1	<table border="1"> <tr><th>Measure</th><th>m EUR</th></tr> <tr><td>M04</td><td>21.0</td></tr> <tr><td>M06</td><td>76.5</td></tr> <tr><td>M01</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>M02</td><td>1.4</td></tr> <tr><td>M05</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>M16</td><td>1.3</td></tr> </table>	Measure	m EUR	M04	21.0	M06	76.5	M01	2.0	M02	1.4	M05	2.0	M16	1.3
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M05	2.0																														
M16	1.3																														
Target indicator: T4 - % of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation: 0.9 %	Target indicator: T5 - % of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers: 0.8 %																														

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

# LEADER/CLLD cooperation events

The ENRD Contact Point and DG Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) recently organised two events at the current Universal Exposition: Expo Milano 2015, in Milan, Italy. The two events were focused on supporting LEADER/CLLD implementation and cooperation.

## Special NRNs' Meeting, 24 September 2015



© European Union

A special National Rural Networks' (NRNs') Meeting held in the EU Pavilion at Expo Milano brought LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), Network Support Units (NSUs) and Managing Authorities (MAs) together to discuss how to support improved LEADER delivery and implementation.

Discussions highlighted the key and privileged role that National Rural Networks (NRNs) can play in supporting horizontal and vertical coordination between stakeholders to jointly achieve improved LEADER delivery. A good example of continuous improvement of LEADER implementation through MA-LAG joint work was presented by the Finnish NSU.

Participants stressed that NRN attention is particularly needed on capacity building of LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), including support to carry out inter-territorial and transnational cooperation projects. Meeting the information needs of LAGs and organising specific trainings were suggested activities.

NRNs also need to ensure learning is shared on technical issues such as how to effectively implement multi-funded LEADER/CLLD. This means exchanging MA and LAG practices and experiences across regions and Member States. In particular, there are opportunities for ensuring that some of the good practice from faster moving countries

is transferred and, if possible, even improved by those that follow.

The event emphasised the importance of LEADER for involving citizens at the local level in addressing important European and national social challenges. Specific practices presented looked at how community-led local development can contribute to social inclusion of refugees and immigrants in Swedish rural areas and Roma integration initiatives in Hungary.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

See the presentations and read the final report on the event web page: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/special-edition-nrn-meeting-20150924>



The EU Pavilion at Expo Milano presents a vision of European agriculture through the story of Alex, a farmer, and Sylvia, a scientist. See the trailer at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLqCsvCF9Co](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLqCsvCF9Co)

© ENRD CP Ed Thorpe



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Conference, 25 September 2015

A conference of more than 150 participants on **'Strengthening Local Development through Cooperation'** stressed the added value of inter-territorial and transnational cooperation projects for supporting the achievement of local development objectives.

"This conference was a first step which signals the European Commission's intention to open up cooperation in this period and make it more effective and easier to apply to the emerging challenges facing rural areas," highlights Paul Soto, ENRD CP Team Leader.

Karolina Jasinska-Mühleck, DG AGRI, European Commission, provided an excellent overview of the new implementation framework for LEADER cooperation. In particular, the new framework aims to address previous weaknesses and harness the untapped potential for cooperation by:

- **Supporting LAGs** better
- Increasing the **flexibility of delivery**
- Providing more transparent rules

Some of the most important specific new features highlighted were:

- **preparatory support** is now obligatory
- less restrictive **eligibility conditions**
- LAGs explicitly allowed to cooperate with **diverse partners in other types of areas**, including in cities and in third countries
- possibility to access resources from multiple Funds (**multi-funding**)

"These changes do not resolve all the administrative problems, but they are an important step in the right direction," concludes Paul Soto. "Ultimately, to be successful, everyone in the LEADER delivery chain will need to work together."

Important recommendations made by participants were for:

- better **information and relationships** throughout the chain and across Funds
- greater **harmonisation of rules** between Managing Authorities
- the use of **open ongoing** calls rather than limited application windows
- project **selection by LAGs** to be the norm

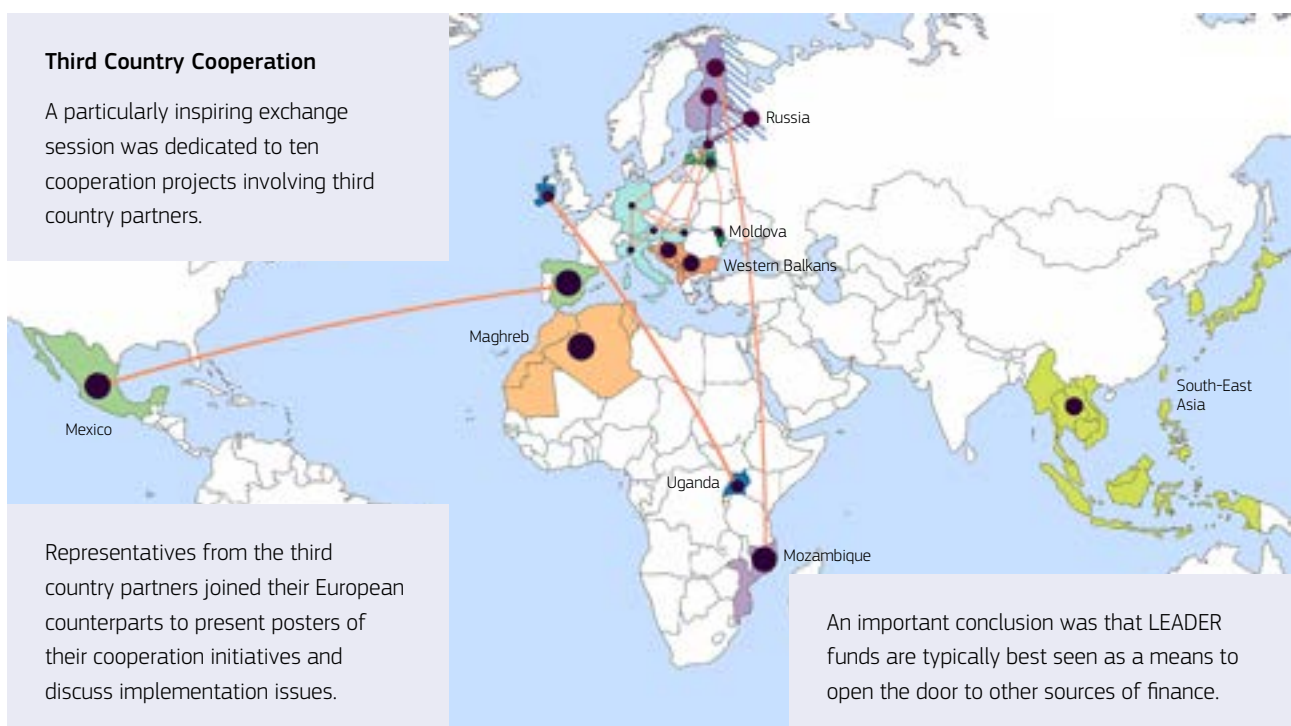
- **quick decisions** on project applications
- supporting **LAG capacity** is key – including specific support for **partner search**
- a reinforced role for **networks**
- there must be **time** and resource to build relationships even when this does not lead to an actual project – some risks need to be taken.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

See examples of cooperation projects, key note presentations and the outcomes of workshops on the event web page:  
<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/leader-clld-conference-cooperation-20150925>

### Third Country Cooperation

A particularly inspiring exchange session was dedicated to ten cooperation projects involving third country partners.



Representatives from the third country partners joined their European counterparts to present posters of their cooperation initiatives and discuss implementation issues.

An important conclusion was that LEADER funds are typically best seen as a means to open the door to other sources of finance.

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## UPDATE FROM THE EVALUATION HELPDESK



### Annual stakeholder survey in the Member States

The Evaluation Helpdesk's geographic experts recently conducted their first Annual Stakeholder Survey via telephone interview. A sample of Managing Authorities and National Rural Networks (NRNs) in all 28 Member States were interviewed.

Five topics were covered in the interviews and related to expectations concerning the support provided by the Evaluation Helpdesk; needs on the ex-post evaluation; needs on data collection; needs in relation to the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System and the evaluation of NRNs.

The **outcomes of the survey** show clearly in which areas the interviewed actors in the Member States expect support from the Evaluation Helpdesk:

- Help to better understand and implement the legal requirements on evaluation in their RDP.

- Support to carry out evaluation activities for the enhanced annual implementation reports (AIR) to be submitted in 2017 (e.g. how to assess complementary results indicators and secondary effects?).
- Specific evaluation guidance for LEADER/CLLD and NRNs.
- Exchange of good practice in relation to the ex-post evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013, the assessment of environmental impacts, counterfactual analysis, governance and management of evaluation.

The analysis of these outcomes continues to contribute to the selection of topics for various **Helpdesk activities**:

- Good Practice Workshops will focus on ex-post assessment of environmental effects (Oct. 2015) and on the definition of High Nature Value farming (2016).
- Specific guidance and support is under preparation (enhanced AIR, evaluation of CLLD and NRN).
- Yearly Capacity Building events have already begun in each Member State in 2015 and provide a forum for evaluation-related discussions for a wider audience.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Rural Evaluation NEWS article: "Building capacities for planning evaluation of Local Development Strategies":

<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/newsletter-en-0409-web.pdf>



Participants of the Evaluation Helpdesk's Annual Geographic Experts Meeting.

## UPDATE FROM EIP-AGRI



### Preparing Operational Groups

Many Managing Authorities are about to launch calls for Operational Groups to enable farmers, foresters and other rural development actors to turn their innovative ideas into real projects. To be well prepared for applying as soon as the call for Operational Groups is open, interested professionals can already start looking for other partners.

Finding partners and working with people from other professions or sectors in an innovative project such as Operational Groups can sometimes be a challenge. Considering the support of Innovation Support Services to make an innovative project a success, might be a good idea.



#### INNOVATION SUPPORT SERVICES, TO GET OPERATIONAL GROUPS UP AND RUNNING

Innovation Support Services could play an important role in leading initiatives that bring people together so that they can find solutions together by presenting their needs and exchanging ideas. They can help connect the right partners, discover innovative ideas, identify funding opportunities, and eventually prepare a project proposal.

Find out more in the EIP-AGRI brochure 'Innovation Support Services':

<http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/innovation-support-services>



#### INNOVATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION, A CONDITION FOR SUCCESS

Participatory approaches such as study trips, strategic games, world café and participatory videos can support Innovation Support Services to help bring people from different backgrounds together to develop new Operational Groups and solutions. Many European agricultural initiatives have already used participatory approaches; the F:ACTS! Project is one of them. The EIP-AGRI brochure 'Participatory approaches for agricultural innovation' provides many such examples.

Find out more in the EIP-AGRI brochure 'Participatory approaches for agricultural innovation':

<http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-brochure-participatory-approaches-agricultural-innovation>

The **F:ACTS! Project in Bulgaria** used the Sketch Match method to involve local people in an important water study. Technical planners worked together with local people to develop future scenarios, while visualising these on sketched maps. Everyone was able to share their ideas and concerns about each suggested solution. The participants discussed the problem, proposed a solution and came up with the 'best' future scenario. The method proved to be effective for the project because the engineers received valuable local information about the natural processes in this village which had never been measured.



#### WHICH EUROPEAN REGIONS WILL SUPPORT OPERATIONAL GROUPS?

The EIP-AGRI website provides an overview of all European countries and regions where Operational Groups can be set up with support from the regional or national Rural Development Programme. For every region a state of play on the opening and closing of the calls is available on [www.eip-agri.eu](http://www.eip-agri.eu).

Find out more in the EIP-AGRI brochure 'Operational Groups – Turning your idea into innovation' (also available in German, Finnish, French, Greek and Italian): <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-brochure-operational-groups-turning-your-idea-innovation>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## EU NEWS

## Package of measures to support European farmers

The European Commission has launched a € 500 million package of measures to support European farmers to face current market instabilities. The package aims to address producers' cash-flow difficulties, stabilise markets, and ensure the functioning of the supply chain.

The largest part of the package is a € 420 million targeted aid scheme allocated

among the Member States to distribute to the sectors most adversely affected by the market situation.

Additionally, governments will be able to advance a greater share of direct payments and certain rural development payments to farmers. Other measures include reinforced Private Storage Aid schemes, increased funding for promotion measures, and actions to

address the needs of vulnerable groups such as refugees.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Support package factsheet:  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release-MEMO-15-5601\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release-MEMO-15-5601_en.htm)

Full speech of Commissioner Katainen and market analysis:  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release-SPEECH-15-5600\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release-SPEECH-15-5600_en.htm)

## 'EU Budget for Results' database

The European Commission has launched an online database "EU Budget for Results" of over 540 projects funded by the EU budget showcasing results-focused and efficient practices. The projects database is searchable by country and funding area and currently contains 78 good practices related to agriculture and rural development. It will expand continuously as new projects from the current programming period are identified.

Visit the database here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/budget/euprojects/>



## Horizon 2020 Programme for 2016-2017

The European Commission has published the Horizon 2020 work programme for 2016-2017 containing funding opportunities for Research & Innovation projects in various areas. The programme includes calls for proposals relevant to

agriculture stakeholders on 'sustainable food security and rural renaissance' (under Societal Challenge 2) and themes such as 'greening the economy' and the 'circular economy' (under Cross-cutting activities).

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

2016-2017 work programme:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-work-programme>

EIP-AGRI brochure overviewing relevant calls: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/node/1354>

NEWS & UPDATES

## Guidance on results-based agri-environment schemes

The European Commission has launched a range of tools providing guidance and practical advice on developing and implementing results-based agri-environment payment schemes (RBAPS) for farmland biodiversity.

The toolkit contains:

- A handbook providing step-by-step guidance on the decision-making process and practicalities of setting up and running an effective RBAPS
- Summaries of the handbook in all official EU languages.
- A web inventory of all RBAPS in operation across the EU.
- A series of good practice videos looking at issues such as effective

scheme design, achieving biodiversity outcomes, and involving farmers.

- A study report reviewing the advantages and challenges of adopting results-based approaches.

Find the toolkit here: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/index_en.htm)

RBAPS provide funding opportunities enabling farmers to protect wildlife habitats on agricultural land. They are focused on paying farmers for biodiversity-positive outcomes and are mostly financed by rural development funding.

## How to communicate CAP to citizens and farmers

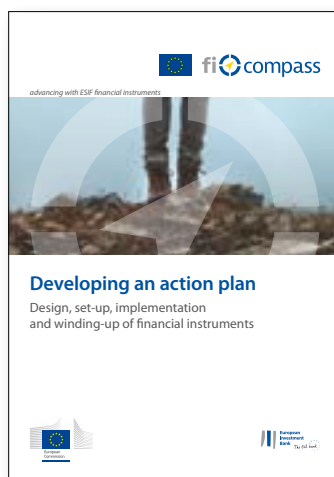
DG Agriculture and Rural Development has published an independent evaluation of its communication on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to various stakeholder groups. The analysis is based on desk research and a tailored collection of data including fieldwork and interviews.

See the report at: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/evaluation/market-and-income-reports/information-policy-2015\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/evaluation/market-and-income-reports/information-policy-2015_en.htm)

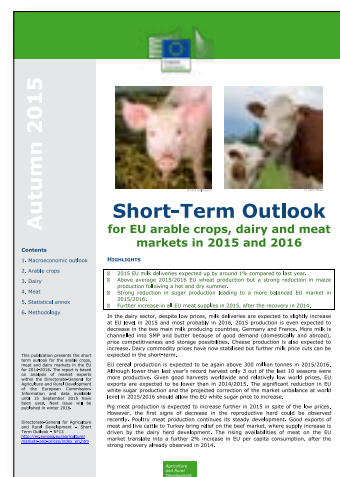
## EU guides and publications



DG Agriculture and Rural Development has released a publication outlining ways in which the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) achieves results by contributing to jobs, growth, competitiveness and sustainability.



The latest guide published by the advisory platform fi-compass provides an action plan for the use of Financial Instruments (FIs). It summarising the main activities around the design, set-up, implementation and winding-up of FIs.



This DG AGRI publication presents an expert analysis for the arable crops, meat and dairy markets in the EU for 2015-2016, taking account of the latest domestic and international market developments and expectations.

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Infographics: International Year of Soils 2015



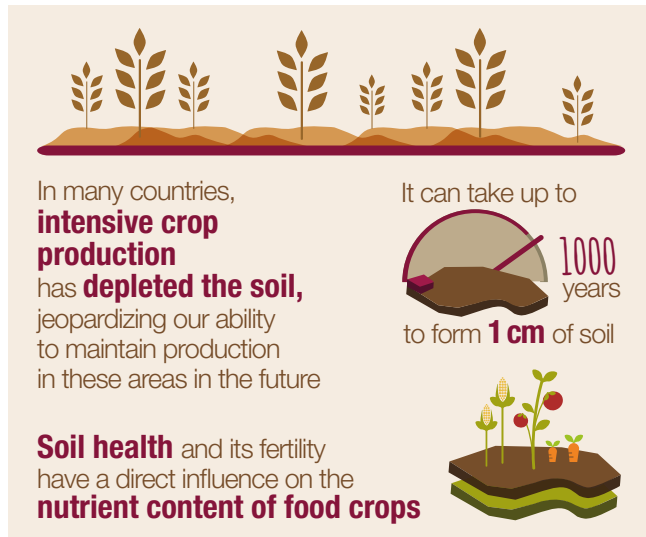
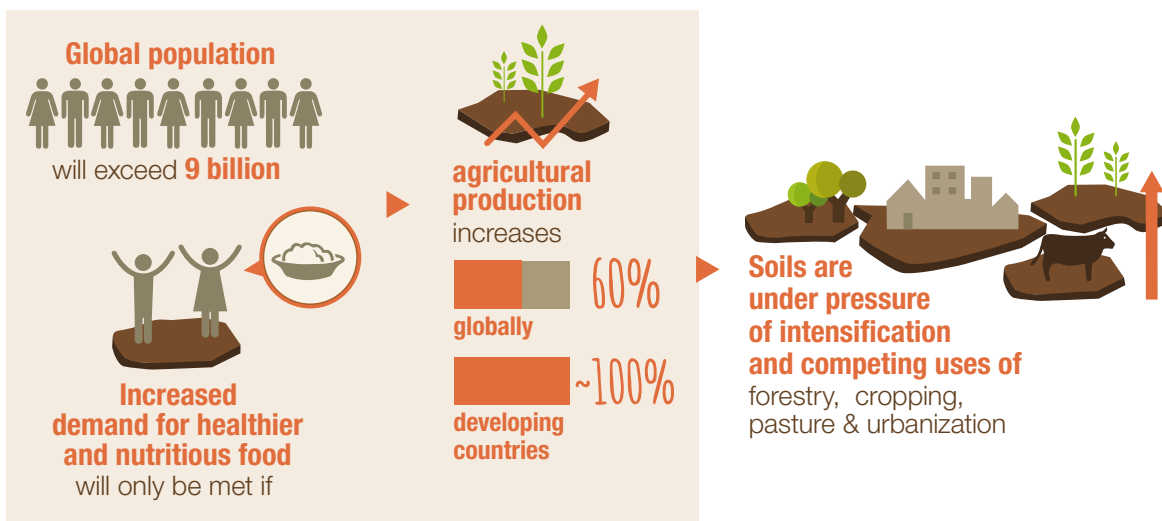
## SOILS, FOOD SECURITY &amp; NUTRITION



In the past 50 years

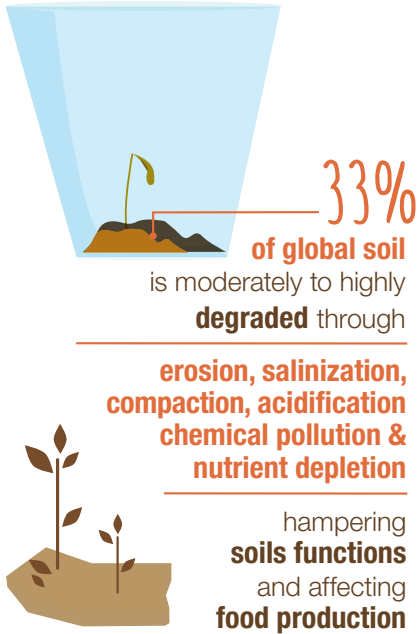


**advances in agriculture technology** has led to increased food production, but sometimes **with negative impacts on soils and the environment**


**2050 THE CHALLENGE**


NEWS & UPDATES

OUR SOILS TODAY



SAVING OUR SOILS

- Inclusive policies and governance
- Investment in sustainable soil management
- Targeted soil research
- Stopping soil degradation & restoring degraded soils
- Effective education & extension programmes
- Soil information systems



SUSTAINABLE SOIL MANAGEMENT

**diverse farming approaches** promote the sustainable management of soils

Agroecology

is a systems approach based on a variety of technologies, practices and innovations, including local and traditional knowledge and modern science

Organic farming

is agricultural production without the use of synthetic chemicals or genetically modified organisms, growth regulators, and livestock feed additives

Conservation agriculture

follows three principles (minimal soil disturbance, permanent soil cover and crop rotations) to improve soil conditions, reduce land degradation and boost yields

Agroforestry

includes both traditional and modern land-use systems where trees are managed together with crops and/or animal production systems in agricultural settings

Zero tillage

is a technique used in conservation agriculture to maintain a permanent or semi-permanent organic soil cover that protects the soil allowing soil microorganisms and fauna to take on the task of "tilling" and soil nutrient balancing

**Sustainable soil management could produce up to more food 58%**



## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Celebrating Diversity

**Wim Hiemstra**

As the European Capital of Culture 2018, Leeuwarden-Fryslân is developing a Celebrating Diversity programme to reverse the trend of decreasing bird, bee and fish populations. We envisage inter-community links to exchange experiences on new governance arrangements for rural areas and to create a legacy.



**Wim Hiemstra** is an agro-ecologist and rural development facilitator who lives in rural Fryslân. He is participation coordinator of the King of the Meadows initiative. [w.hiemstra@etcrnl.nl](mailto:w.hiemstra@etcrnl.nl)

Godwits are called 'King of the Meadows' in the Netherlands. The royal connotation of the bird refers to the understanding that when godwits thrive in farmers' fields, the habitat is favourable for biodiversity. Godwits migrate in early spring from West Africa through Southern Spain, Portugal and France to reproduce in areas such as Fryslân, the Netherlands. They reproduce mainly in farmers' meadows.

The Oevering family (see photo), together with around 700 other dairy farmers in Fryslân, the Netherlands, work in seven agri-environment collectives. In these collectives, farmers and volunteers together look for ways to combine the economy of dairy farming with the ecology of bird conservation.

Yet, despite decades of financial support, the meadow bird population is still going down. A 75% decrease of godwits since 1960 has been documented. Breeding success and survival rates of young chicks decrease when dairy farmers intensify production on their farm with new grass varieties, liquid manure, lowered water tables, and heavy machinery.

## KING OF THE MEADOWS INITIATIVE

As a response, in 2012, farmers, ecologists, artists, educators and villagers came together to create a group with the same name: 'King of the Meadows'. As a citizens' initiative, we combine science, culture and the arts, and innovative projects in farming, biodiversity and commons conservation, rural development and policy-making.

'Nature-inclusive farming' is an example of an innovative project of the King of the Meadows initiative. Nature-

inclusive farming is the search for an effective business model in farming that also creates value for and from nature. Nature-inclusive farming is now advocated by the national government and recently also by the province of Fryslân.

## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY PROGRAMME

In 2013, Leeuwarden-Fryslân won the Dutch contest to become European Capital of Culture in 2018. The Capital of Culture programme is centred around three themes: nature and culture; city-countryside connections; and community and diversity. A broad range of cultural events are being organised for 2018 aiming to explore the meaning of 'open communities' in Europe.

In one of the programmes, called 'Celebrating Diversity', the King of the Meadows initiative is combined with initiatives focusing on reversing bee starvation and repairing the connectivity for migratory fish. The programme will provide visitors with a unique experience of nature and culture, activating all the senses. Most events will take place in spring 2018 with tailored and guided tours in several cities and rural landscapes in Fryslân.

Along the migratory route of the godwit, a travelling festival will take place in Spain, Portugal, Iceland and the Netherlands, collecting stories, music, and performances along the way, which will be collected in a 'Book of Bio-cultural Diversity'.

It is an exchange project of visual artists, musicians, poets and local fanfare bands to visualize what is happening in our European landscapes. The travelling festival will feed into the 'Goodbye King Goodbye' event in Fryslân in June 2018 when the godwits return to Southern Europe and West Africa.

**Nature-inclusive farming is the search for an effective business model that makes money from farming while creating value for and from nature.**





Other initiatives for 2018 include a ‘pollinators dance and music project’ with European youth and Leeuwarden will host ‘a river of flowers’, ‘magical bee hives’, and a theatre research space to encourage new performances that respond to notions of bio-mimicry, ecological balance and biodiversity.

The theatre and performance programme will be presented in the open air in the countryside, in barns and in unused civic buildings such as a ruined 12<sup>th</sup> Century church. Many more events will be developed en route to 2018 and some will travel to other parts of Europe.



Godwits migrate in early spring from West Africa through Southern Spain, Portugal and France to reproduce in places such as Fryslân in the Netherlands.

## DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY

A Frisian citizens’ jury of King of the Meadows in 2013 concluded that: “In the past decades, farmers produced cheap food of a relatively good quality. But the declining biodiversity is the price we pay for ‘cheap’ food. As concerned and engaged citizens, we want to be engaged in new forms of governance, rewarding farmers who conserve biodiversity”.

The participation agenda of the King of the Meadows initiative includes the search for new tools of deliberative democracy. We connected with members of the Spanish Iniciativa Comunales in 2015 and now invite you to join us too!

- Fill the European Book on Biocultural Diversity with stories, music, performances and a Manifesto in which different communities state their commitment to conserve and govern the commons and biodiversity.
- Assist King of the Meadows, Iniciativa Comunales and European rural communities to develop arguments why the new EU agricultural policy (CAP) after 2020 should be linked to green governance, health, wellbeing and quality of life of people.

Let’s value communities’ stewardship of the commons and biodiversity. Let’s reward the positive externalities of nature-inclusive farming in new economic models and anchor them in the new CAP.



Ria Oevering, daughter of a dairy farmer in Fryslân (NL) holds a godwit chick fitted with tags to track it along its migratory route. She says: “We hope she will come back to our meadows to reproduce. We’ll celebrate that day!”

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

King of the Meadows Initiative:

[www.keningfanegreide.nl](http://www.keningfanegreide.nl)

Leeuwarden-Fryslân European Capital of Culture

2018: [www.2018.eu/en](http://www.2018.eu/en)

Iniciativa Comunales: [www.facebook.com/Iniciativa-Comunales-288029678050513/timeline/](https://www.facebook.com/Iniciativa-Comunales-288029678050513/timeline/)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# A Rural Cultural Framework

Ian Hunter

Many of Britain's post-industrial cities successfully engaged the arts, media and culture to aid their regeneration. We could do more to harness the full creative energies in support of Europe's rural areas. Expanding the creative rural economy should be a major priority for future research, policy and investment.



Ian Hunter is an artist and curator and Director of the Littoral Arts Trust, UK.

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The term 'post-agricultural' does not mean the end of agriculture, rather, it signals an opportunity to rethink mainstream agriculture and rural development policy from new critical, aesthetic, ethical, philosophic and cultural perspectives. This was brought into sharp focus in the UK during the 2001 Foot and Mouth (FMD) farm epidemic.

FMD cost the UK some £8 billion (€11 billion). In response, the Government undertook a review of the national priorities for agriculture and rural development<sup>(1)</sup> and called for radical new creative thinking in rebuilding the post-FMD rural economy and in promoting innovation in the agricultural sector.

## A RURAL CULTURE STRATEGY

As a result, the Littoral Arts Trust persuaded Arts Council England to undertake a two-year (2002-04) study for the establishment of a national rural arts and culture sector strategy. This aimed to secure new arts funding support for culture-led farm diversification, rural regeneration and creative rural economy initiatives.

A Rural Cultural Forum (RCF) was set up in 2007, as a cultural advocacy and lobby for farming culture and creative rural communities. The RCF proposed three main arguments in support of a national rural cultural strategy:

1. Creative rural communities and the agricultural sector – with some modest arts investment – have the potential to generate in excess of €1 billion per year for the UK economy.

(1) The Curry Report, 2002

2. Agriculture and rural development policy (in England) have been for too long closed off to mainstream cultural policy and arts funding discourses. Consequently they have not benefited fully from national strategic culture-led investment programmes.<sup>(2)</sup>

3. Agriculture sits at the very heart of culture. Therefore it should be possible to look at framing a new cultural discourse and framework capable of guiding the future priorities for agriculture and rural development: a cultural investment programme forming a 'Third Pillar' of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (a 'CAP Pillar III').

## A UK RURAL BIENNALE

The Littoral Arts Trust is now working with rural communities, farming leaders, artists, and rural NGOs on proposals for a Rural Biennale<sup>(3)</sup> to take place in the uplands and hill farming communities of Cumbria in the summer of 2018. Although UK-based, it is partly intended as a pilot for what could become a future series of Europe-wide rural cultural manifestations. We would welcome input and involvement from other interested ENRD partners.

(2) 'Work of the Arts Council' DCMS Report, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014

(3) NEW FIELDS - connecting up art, agriculture and environmental sustainability policy agendas



Artists, farmers, academics, and Arts Council England representatives discuss proposals for a UK Rural Biennale.

© Esther Anatolitis

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

UK Rural Culture Forum: [www.ruralculture.org.uk](http://www.ruralculture.org.uk)

Littoral Arts Trust: [www.littoral.org.uk](http://www.littoral.org.uk)

New Rural Arts Report:  
[www.littoral.org.uk/Resources/New%20Rural%20Arts%20Report.%20%20\(WP\).pdf](http://www.littoral.org.uk/Resources/New%20Rural%20Arts%20Report.%20%20(WP).pdf)

# Fly in the artists!

Jan Hartholt

Rural development can be well served by the crossover of culture and agriculture – this is the concept of ‘agri-culture’. We are now developing new initiatives to explore what agri-culture can mean for the future of rural areas in Europe.



Jan Hartholt is the Director of the Network Support Unit for the Dutch National Rural Network.  
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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF ARTISTS

If there is one group of people whose core business it is to play with perspectives, to research the origins of phenomena and to challenge our beliefs, it is artists. They look at a problem from different viewpoints as their second nature.

Artists can work with farmers and rural communities to explore issues of agriculture, nature, the history of our daily subsistence and the origins of our landscapes. On a higher level, agri-culture can deal with broad themes such as the relationship between human civilisation and various kinds of sustainability.

In all their disciplines, artists can be inspired by and work with the daily occupations of farmers. These disciplines of agri-culture include film, theatre, music, cuisine, photography, literature, painting and sports.

## A CALL FOR EXAMPLES

We will present and highlight the strength of agri-culture in the spring meeting of the National Rural Networks, in cooperation with the ENRD. This will take place at the Amsterdam Rural Forum on 11-12 May 2016, coinciding with the Dutch presidency of the EU. Please mark the date in your agenda.

We see this event as the first edition of a series of events across Europe, of which the Rural Biennale in the UK in 2018 would be part. For this, we need to start to gather examples and document agri-culture as a specific phenomenon of rural Europe.

One example from the Netherlands has been the creation of a straw castle in Veenhuizen, in the remote rural north of the country. It emerged as co-creation of a theatre group and the farmers in the area who worked together for two years.

The castle was a meeting place for debate on the issues of agriculture and a place to share the stories of local people – it staged many performances on rural topics and provided new ways to communicate rural challenges. Even on days with no performances, hundreds of people visited the straw castle to enjoy the striking image of this natural and yet temporary installation.

We will present the strength of ‘agri-culture’ at the Amsterdam Rural Forum in May 2016.

Since 2014, theatre companies and festivals from ten Member States have been preparing a network which will produce art that finds its starting point in rural topics.

These are just two examples and I would welcome more such examples from readers to bring to the Amsterdam Rural Forum in May 2016. Please do not hesitate to contact me.



A castle made of straw made a dramatic cultural meeting place in Veenhuizen (NL).

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Remote islands: present opportunities

**Dr Zrinka Mendas**

Rural and remote island communities face a number of particular challenges due to their location, size and other characteristics. It is essential to fully explore the potential of RDPs to support the sustainable development of these remote island communities and businesses. Changing attitudes to the potential of these rural areas is key.



**Dr Zrinka Mendas** is an independent researcher and member of the Regional Science Association and Association for Development of Croatian Islands. Her work includes investigation of development and growth in remote and rural regions. [z.mendas@gmail.com](mailto:z.mendas@gmail.com)

Despite their relative isolation, rural and remote islands significantly contribute to regional economies through tourism and various maritime activities. At the same time, these elements can represent a growing threat to sustainable island development, including through sea pollution and overfishing.

Whilst efforts are made to take advantage of new economic activities, many islanders fear the loss of the local way of life and cultural identity. The issue of island development with or without tourism remains a much-neglected area of regional rural planning.

## LACK OF ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A study I conducted of the socio-economic impact of ferry provision in the Zadar island archipelago off Croatia<sup>1</sup> found that the poor frequency, accessibility and affordability of ferry services to smaller islands has had a detrimental impact on island communities' sustainability. It affects the revenue stream from tourism as well as limiting opportunities for the local population.

A lack of basic visitor infrastructure, such as quality accommodation, cafes and food shops also impede the development of local and touristic activities. Environmental concerns are often inadequately addressed due to poor facilities and procedures for waste management and poor attitudes to environmental management.

According to the European Small Islands Federation (ESIN), one of the main challenges is the perception of remoteness by the different levels of government that limits the inward investment flows into these communities. This prompts us to ask what the socio-economic impact could be of investment through the RDPs in the provision of essential infrastructure for remote and rural islands.

## CURRENT STRATEGIES FOR THE ZADAR ISLAND ARCHIPELAGO

The current strategy of spatial integration for the Zadar island archipelago aims to integrate a defined stretch of island and coastal communities with the Croatian mainland coastal centre of Zadar. Such integration involves an emphasis on improved accessibility to the services of the larger mainland centre – particularly for health care and certain social and education services – including the development of short-hop air connections.

However, a study<sup>2</sup> has found that this strategy may not actually be in the interest of the islands' long-term sustainable development. The current spatial planning model of urban-rural governance focuses on metropolitan development, resulting in a lack of infrastructure investment in the

Political actors must align with the needs of island communities to provide the support necessary for sustainable long-term development.

islands. It neglects the specific social and environmental aspects of the islands' development.

The study also uncovered an urgent need to change the island communities' perceptions about finding alternative sustainable ways of managing their local ecosystems.

## RESILIENCE

Despite the many challenges, the spirit of solidarity or 'communal friendship' that is typically present among the islanders is crucial<sup>3</sup>. Island communities often engage in communal entrepreneurial and cultural activities to sustain their local economies. Regardless of distance, communities are able to survive by developing different kinds of job specialisation suited to local needs.

Elsewhere in Europe, the case of Suomenlinna, in Finland, shows the potential for a bottom-up ecosystem approach<sup>4</sup> to island governance. This can contribute to balancing the needs of the island communities with preserving the island's natural ecosystem and European regional seas.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite their remoteness, there are strong signs of resilience in remote island locations<sup>5</sup>. However, communities and political actors need to work together closely to ensure the long-term sustainable development of remote islands, balancing multiple social, economic and environmental needs.

Investment inflows into the island communities are essential. Better connectedness<sup>6</sup> of isolated islands remains one of the key concerns, including access by means of affordable ferry transport and investment into communication and green technologies.

The European Commission's ecosystem approach to creating sustainable societies shows a way forward. This can contribute both to greater government commitment to sustainable island development and to island communities' greater involvement in decision-making processes.

Effective use of EAFRD funding based on full stakeholder involvement can play a major role in ensuring the kind of strategic investment and ecosystem approach that are needed to make a positive difference. There is also great potential to support and develop much needed cross-border and cross-regional cooperation with other European coastal and island regions.



© Islands of Silba

Remote islands such as Silba off Croatia face issues in terms of their connectedness – in terms of ferry transport, resilience and governance.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Mendas, Z. (2015) Tracing socio-economic impact of ferry provision in Zadar island archipelago: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.imic.2015.06.002>  
BONUS, the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme for years 2010–2017. [http://www.bonusportal.org/events/events\\_archive/bssc\\_and\\_bonus\\_forum\\_2015](http://www.bonusportal.org/events/events_archive/bssc_and_bonus_forum_2015)  
European Small Islands Federation: <http://europeansmallislands.com>

- (1) Published in *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* (2015).
- (2) Mendas, Z. (2014). From Dominance to Interdependence: Toward a sustainable development of the coastal region in the municipality of Zadar. In *Proceedings of the RSAIBIS 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference*, August 19–21. 2014, UK: Aberystwyth University.
- (3) Mendas, Z. (2014) Experiencing Derrida through a communal friendship, [http://crow.kozminski.edu.pl/journal/index.php/tamara/article/viewFile/357/pdf\\_135](http://crow.kozminski.edu.pl/journal/index.php/tamara/article/viewFile/357/pdf_135)
- (4) Mendas, Z. (2015) "Toward a sustainable spatial island ecosystem of island archipelago in Zadar, Croatia", In *Proceedings of BONUS 10<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Science Congress "Science and innovation for future of the Baltic and the European regional seas"*, 15–19 June 2015, Riga. Hosted by Latvian Academy of Sciences and Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology.
- (5) Mendas, Z. (2015) "Exploring the resistance in rural and remote island communities", *Journal of Organisational Ethnography* (under review).
- (6) Mendas, Z. (2015) "Rethinking the Distance: Broadband as a catalyst for growth in remote and rural regions". In: *Proceedings of the Fourth Global Conference on Economic Geography 2015*, Oxford University, 19–23 August 2015.

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Rural-Fisheries connections

Monica Veronesi Burch

Expectations in FARNET are currently high for Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) to be increasingly active in fostering local development around Europe. In particular, we hope to see increased cooperation with LEADER LAGs and to support local groups to tap into multiple EU funding sources (multi-funding).



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## FARNET, THE FISHERIES AREAS NETWORK

The LEADER method was transferred to the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) in 2007-2013 and implemented as Axis 4 for the “sustainable development of fisheries areas”. In 2009, the European Commission (DG MARE) set up the FARNET Support Unit to support the different stakeholders involved in the implementation of LEADER under the EFF.

Now, in the 2014-2020 period, coastal and inland fisheries and aquaculture areas are gearing up to implement a second round of Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) using the updated European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

FLAGs in the FARNET network will be focusing on issues such as adding value to local fisheries and aquaculture products; improving Integrated Coastal Zone Management; and helping fisheries and aquaculture communities to become the drivers and beneficiaries of Blue Growth in their area.

The FARNET Support Unit was also recently relaunched for this new period. We have a similar mission to the ENRD Contact Point (CP), but focus exclusively on CLLD rather than the whole fund. We have an explicit mission to support stakeholders at all levels of the delivery chain: FLAGs, Member State administrations, National Networks and DG MARE itself.

## STRENGTHENING RURAL-FISHERIES LINKS

Many fisheries areas are located in rural areas and, to a certain extent, cooperation between LAGs and FLAGs has already started. In a 2012 FARNET survey, we found

that 80% of FLAGs<sup>(1)</sup> claimed a degree of either formal or informal cooperation with one or more nearby LEADER LAGs. However, there is both the scope and rationale to significantly increase this cooperation 2014-2020.

This imperative to cooperate and coordinate local development has become even more explicit at EU level with the requirement that Member States define their strategic priorities for coordinating the different Structural and Investment (ESI) funds and with the integration of the Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Social Fund (ESF) into the “CLLD family.”

LAGs, FLAGs and other CLLD groups will be able to deal with their specific challenges in a more comprehensive and integrated way. However, they will also have to think carefully about the specific contribution that they bring to local development in their area – and how this relates to the potential contribution of the other funds.

As examples, does it make sense for a CLLD group to fund small-scale port and fisheries infrastructure from the EMFF if the ERDF is available? Or for a LEADER LAG to allocate part of its EAFRD budget to local training courses if it has the ESF at its disposal? Ensuring maximum impact of European investments is key.

Similarly, what happens when CLLD is implemented in the same territory by different partnerships for the different ESI funds? How to decide who funds what? How to prepare a joint strategy, if groups decide to merge? And how to ensure, if multiple local strategies do co-exist, that they are complementary?

**The imperative to coordinate local development has become even more explicit.**

(1) In 2012, the FARNET Support Unit surveyed the 242 then-existing FLAGs. 221 replied.

© Serge Gomes da Silva (FARNET Support Unit)



*Fishermen in the Cornish FLAG (UK) are using social media to sell seasonal line and pot-caught seafood direct to customers.*

### MAKING MULTI-FUNDING WORK

The FARNET Support Unit is already working to support Member States, regions and FLAGs grappling with some of these questions. As the only European support unit specialised exclusively in CLLD, we are also helping the different Commission Directorates concerned to kick-start common efforts to strengthen inter-DG cooperation on matters regarding CLLD.

There is a commitment from the different DGs in charge of CLLD to take turns in organising a joint event once a year, the first of which we are helping put into action. Led by DG MARE, this joint event with DG AGRI, DG EMPL and DG REGIO will be a transnational seminar (Edinburgh, December 2015) for Managing Authorities that are implementing CLLD under any of the ESI funds.

The event will be dedicated to understanding and facilitating “multi-funding” – the use of more than one ESI fund to support CLLD in a given area. It will allow Managing Authorities to learn, exchange and meet their counterparts in different countries – as well as in the same country but from a different fund.

The seminar should give participants a good overview of the different types of CLLD strategy that are being envisaged around Europe and different ways of coordinating CLLD. The examples shared and the outputs of the discussions will feed into a guidance brochure that we will develop on multi-funding, to be published in the first half of 2016.

### CLOSER COORDINATION WITH THE ENRD

The FARNET Support Unit also has a strengthened mandate to link up and coordinate with other European networks. Regular meetings with the ENRD CP are allowing both networks to pool CLLD knowledge as well as to consider joint activities and pooling resources when this increases efficiency.

Ideas for FARNET-ENRD cooperation include: joint conferences to bring rural and fisheries stakeholders together to discuss joint projects or common strategic approaches; and common partner search tools to facilitate cooperation projects between LAGs and FLAGs.

Certainly, there is a long road ahead when it comes to coordinating CLLD and strengthening the impact of investments on the ground. However, it is encouraging to see the progress that is starting to be made. If I had just one message, it would be for all CLLD stakeholders to get to know your counterparts from the other funds. Improved communication and cooperation at all levels is key!

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

FARNET: [www.famet.eu](http://www.famet.eu)

2016 FARNET Multi-funding Brochure (forthcoming)

FARNET Magazine n° 7, Fisheries communities at the heart of local development, p9 Coordinating Local Development in Abruzzo (Italy)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Community-based solutions

Concha Salguero

Empowering local communities to share responsibility for their own land management is not only an exercise of democracy, but offers a means to improve the efficiency of rural development policy – in both the attainment of EU objectives and use of public funds.



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## BARRIERS TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

I believe there are two key barriers to success in rural development in the EU. The first is a lack of integration – and often contradiction – between rural development, agricultural and environmental policies. This impacts, for example, on the maintenance of wooded pastures and associated extensive livestock farming, which are crucial for many of Europe's rural economies as well as biodiversity and other objectives.

The second is the absence of opportunities for real participation of local communities in the policies and measures that are applied to their territories. This makes policies appear 'imposed' from the outside, with little consideration of local knowledge and a lack of ownership by local communities for 'their' programmes.

The LEADER approach aims to nurture and encourage a *bottom-up* approach to rural development. However, it remains no more than a 'small island' in rural development policy, frequently overwhelmed by the implementation of the rest of the CAP.

## COORDINATED LOCAL APPROACHES

Empowering local communities to share responsibility for their own land management offers the potential to achieve diverse benefits for rural areas. Such an approach, based on the engagement of local communities from the outset in policy design and implementation can provide a very cost-effective alternative for the implementation of EU rural development policy, the Natura 2000 network and the EU's Biodiversity Strategy.

Alignment must be established between the goals of the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives, the Rural Development measures and Pillar 1 of the CAP. Overcoming contradictions and directing these three policies towards common goals would support much more efficient achievement of results.

Additionally, the official recognition of "community conserved areas"<sup>(1)</sup> would boost the currently weak application of Natura 2000 requirements. This would help put local communities at the heart of the design and implementation of the plans and measures that affect them, enabling the achievement of real success.

(1) This designation is already accepted by the "Programme of Work on Protected Areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity".



Transhumance is the seasonal movement of people and livestock between fixed summer and winter pastures.

© Concha Salguero

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Natura 2000 Network: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm)

EU Biodiversity Strategy: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>

Convention on Biological Diversity: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



# Disseminating innovation

**Maria Custódia Correia, Ana Entrudo and Teresa Barata**

Innovation and knowledge transfer are essential for taking advantage of opportunities in the modern agricultural sector. Disseminating entrepreneurship and innovation in agriculture and rural development is a priority of the Portuguese National Rural Network, 2014-2020.



**Maria Custódia Correia, Ana Entrudo and Teresa Barata** are animators in the Network Support Unit (NSU) of the Portuguese National Rural Network (NRN), integrated in the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DGADR) with the support of seven regional focal points.  
[rederuralnacional@dgadrpt](mailto:rederuralnacional@dgadrpt)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION

The diversity of the Portuguese agricultural sector and the climate conditions of our country enable us to produce quality products with reduced seasonality and extended marketing periods compared to other countries.

If we can increase and organise production, concentrate supply, promote the quality and typical features of our products, and expand into national and international markets there are significant opportunities for growth.

To achieve this, it is essential to develop innovation capacity and knowledge transfer in the sector, to improve the level of qualifications of farmers and producers, to increase levels of entrepreneurship, and to ensure an efficient farm advisory system. Such support to innovation and knowledge transfer are European priorities.

## THE NRN ROLE

Dissemination of relevant or innovative experiences and projects, an analysis of the factors for their success, and exchange around these issues are crucial aspects of promoting a true sharing of knowledge and increasing entrepreneurship and innovation capacity.

The National Rural Network (NRN) has a privileged position in Portugal in this respect. Bringing together about 500 members representing different sectors of rural activity, it offers the chance for first-hand exchange with specific target audiences in the sector.

In the 2007-2013 period, the Portuguese NRN already disseminated relevant projects and experiences through several tools including: website; films; social media; national database; European database; publications; newsletter; and events.

These initiatives were well received by their target audiences. The most important were probably the sessions involving face-to-face discussions with promoters. This personal contact is always important to encourage the creation of new businesses and networks.

## INCREASED PRIORITY

Projects we will disseminate should either have potentially transferable results for other projects, sectors of activity or regions or have economic and/or social impact in the sector and/or in the region.

*The NRN has a privileged position for the dissemination of innovative projects.*

Innovative projects with potentially transferable results include: projects that have created new products or significantly improved existing products; projects that have introduced new techniques or technological solutions to enhance economic viability or improve the efficient management of natural resources; and projects that have introduced new ways of organisation or that have contributed to improve working and living conditions of rural workers and entrepreneurs.



*The markets for traditional Portuguese products, such as olive oil and wine, can still be strengthened through ongoing innovation.*

© Portuguese NRN

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Portuguese NRN: [www.rederural.pt](http://www.rederural.pt)  
European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability: [www.eip-agri.eu](http://www.eip-agri.eu)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Rural broadband: an EU priority

**Guido Acchioni**

Many rural areas in Europe are still deprived of high speed (30+ Mbps) internet connections, which holds back the potentials of farmers, rural businesses and entrepreneurs to grow their activities. Next generation broadband access for rural areas is an increasingly clear priority for EU rural development policy.



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Having a fast broadband connection is essential for rural areas. What is at stake is the capacity to diversify economically, create new jobs and attract new industries, allow people to live and work anywhere, help farmers and rural businesses to remain competitive and provide access to regional, national, and worldwide markets.

Furthermore, as an increasing number of services are provided online, broadband can help rural communities to access a wide range of social, educational, cultural, and recreational resources, interact with public administrations, enjoy the progress of telemedicine or enhance security and safety.

## CLEAR BROADBAND TARGETS FOR EUROPE

Since 2010, the Commission has made broadband a policy priority for the EU in the context of the 'Digital Agenda for Europe'. This has clear objectives by 2020: broadband coverage for all Europeans with connectivity speeds of at least 30 Mbps, and 50% of households with 100 Mbps subscriptions.

As part of the national strategies to achieve these targets, governments and network operators are increasingly focusing on the improvement of rural broadband availability. However, ensuring access to high speed broadband services remains one of their main challenges.

Unfortunately, low population density and sometimes a challenging topography do not always encourage

investment by network operators in rural Europe. At the beginning of 2015, more than 68% of EU households had access to high-speed broadband services, but only around 25% of rural households were connected with these technologies.

A 2014 study for the European Commission<sup>(1)</sup> found significant differences between Member States in terms of next-generation access (NGA) coverage in rural areas (see chart). This is often linked to the way authorities see the copper lines of the "legacy" telecom network: in rural areas where DSL lines are generally available, much of the effort has gone to the upgrade of existing networks. In contrast, in some countries - notably in the Baltic region - a substantial effort has been made to roll out new fibre-optic networks even in rural areas in an effort to really sustain the long-term competitiveness of these areas.

For some areas, the roll out of a wired high speed connection may not be the best option. Other technologies offer important alternatives, notably fixed wireless access solutions (e.g. LTE, Wimax) and satellite broadband. The European Commission has supported the SABER and BRESAT Networks to bring together regional

(1) <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/study-broadband-coverage-europe-2014>

## Fibre to the Village

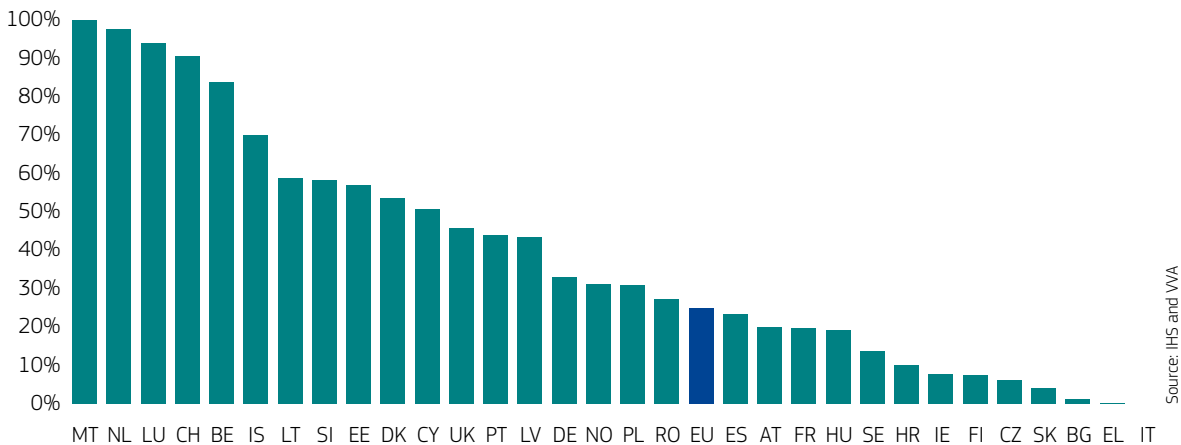
This EAFRD-supported project in Sweden empowered local communities to develop their own internal broadband networks or 'village nets', which they can then attract service providers to hook into.

A study phase identified villages where the market was unlikely to provide broadband access within a 5-year window and the needs of the village communities. Information material was produced and about 450 villagers and local administrators attended 17 seminars and 150 related workshops. These explained how local communities can develop and fund their own internal broadband network.

As a result, about 40 follow-up projects were initiated involving villages and network companies to expand the broadband network into targeted rural areas. Public administrators also engaged in the promotion of good practice in these village community projects.

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-action/rdp\\_view/fibre-village-bringing-broadband-remote-areas](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-action/rdp_view/fibre-village-bringing-broadband-remote-areas)

**Next Generation Access (FTTP, VDSL and Docsis 3.0 cable) coverage in rural areas, 2014**



Source: IHS and VVA

authorities, representatives from the satellite industry and other stakeholders to develop guidelines for regions – such as the setting up of *Satellite Voucher Schemes* to reach out to the most isolated populations.<sup>(2)</sup>

**SMART FUNDING SUPPORT**

The roll-out of high speed broadband networks is a field where smart and targeted public investment from the EU can have a significant impact on the ground.

The EU has already made almost €6 billion available through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ERDF and EAFRD) to support broadband roll-out and complement national, regional and local funds. See info box for an EAFRD-supported project supporting local communities to provide rural broadband in Sweden.

Furthermore, President Juncker’s Investment Plan (EFSI) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) offer additional opportunities to explore innovative financing solutions (e.g. blending public and private funds for projects or groups of aggregated smaller projects) that can attract the investment community (e.g. insurance companies, pension funds) to the digital sector.

Broadband in rural areas is an exciting field of

(2) [www.broadbandforall.eu](http://www.broadbandforall.eu)

experimentation where new projects are making an innovative use of technologies and deploying new business and investment models. We are already observing many independent and open access networks emerging across Europe, complementing the deployment carried out by traditional operators from the urban centres.

**SHARING GOOD PRACTICE**

The Commission is actively supporting the dissemination of broadband projects through a database of best practices<sup>(3)</sup> and the annual EU Broadband Awards<sup>(4)</sup> – many of which are located in rural areas.

It has also created an online platform<sup>(5)</sup> for the exchange of detailed country information on high-speed broadband access, national broadband strategies and funding instruments.

One of the challenges ahead is the reinforcement of local administrations’ capacity to plan broadband projects at local and regional level. The European Commission will therefore work with the ENRD and find pragmatic ways to network and reinforce the existing bodies responsible for implementing broadband measures in ESIF – not least by keeping them fully informed on the many regulatory and funding opportunities that can be provided to rural areas in Europe.

(3) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/broadband-best-practices>

(4) <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/competition-best-high-speed-broadband-project>

(5) [www.broadband-europe.eu](http://www.broadband-europe.eu)

© Thinkstock



High speed internet access can be key in helping farmers to modernise and grow their businesses.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Digital Agenda for Europe:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en>

Connecting Europe Facility: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/connecting-europe-facility>

## A FOCUS ON... COMMUNICATING THE RDPs

## REPORT

## The RDP launch campaign in Finland

A dedicated communications strategy accompanied the launch of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) in Finland. It emerged from effective cooperation between key delivery stakeholders and the use of external communications expertise. It successfully addressed both potential beneficiaries and the wider public, stimulating recipients to find out more about the possibilities offered by the RDP.



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NETWORKING AMONG  
COMMUNICATORS

During the previous programming period, the Communications Officers of three key RDP bodies in Finland came together to form an informal communications 'Group of Four'.<sup>(1)</sup> "The Managing Authority takes the lead, but we plan everything together as a team," explains Sinikka Torssonen, Communications Officer in the NSU. "Three of us work full-time on RDP communications, so it makes sense to do it together."

Riika Isola, Communications Officer of the Finnish Agency for Rural Affairs is

(1) Four representatives of the Managing Authority (1), Paying Agency (1) and Network Support Unit (2)

enthusiastic: "We meet up every two weeks and speak to each other most days via email. Our regular exchanges help us identify where we have common objectives and also to understand each other when our priorities are slightly different." The 'group of four' started to plan already in 2013 the launch of the next RDP in 2015.

A central part of the strategy for communicating rural development in Finland has been to work through a broader 'network of communicators' across the country. It brings together communications professionals - including representatives of regional authorities - as well as people working in the field with an interest in communications. The group has discussion sessions around five times a year - around

twice in person and the other times via video link-up.

“It is important to engage the people who can communicate the Rural Development Programme at regional and local levels.”

Sinikka Torssonen  
NSU, Communications Officer

## THE 2015 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Finnish RDP was one of the first to be approved – in December 2014 – and the Communication Plan 2015, including the need for an RDP launch campaign, was already in place. The ‘group of four’ defined the Plan in consultation with the network of communicators.

One of the main strategic aims of the plan was to further strengthen the network of communicators. To this end, regional communications projects were foreseen and are being funded by the RDP. “To ensure the relevant activities could be launched as soon as the RDP was formally approved, the calls for the regional communications projects were also prepared in advance,” highlights Ms Isola.

The Plan sought to prioritise bottom-up voices and perspectives, increasing the involvement of stakeholders and highlighting personal and project stories on

The central visual element of the ‘update your countryside’ slogan is a circular white arrow in a pink circle. “The circular arrow represents the idea of ‘updating’, as one might usually associate with a web page. The background is pink, which is unusual, because rural aspects are almost always presented in green,” highlights Sinikka Torssonen. “We like that because it supports the main message that people need to change the way they think about rural areas.”

Another frequently used element is a pair of glasses, with campaign images in each lens. This also asks people to think about the way they see the rural

the ground. To achieve this, developing and strengthening electronic communication is an important focus.

“We still produce brochures and other publications, but we found that we had lots of printed copies left from the previous period. So now we prefer to print only on demand.”

Sinikka Torssonen  
NSU, Communications Officer

The plan also included a shared LEADER logo for LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)



© Recommended Finland Oy 2015

in Finland. Like many of the initiatives for the new programming period, this had also been prepared well in advance.

## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTISE

The group of four put out a call to advertising agencies to come up with and implement the RDP launch campaign. “We knew what we wanted to achieve, but wanted to tap into external expertise on exactly how to go about it.” The budget foreseen was €400 000 for a campaign covering the launch period until the end of 2015.

“We wanted to allocate a budget that reflected how important we saw the launch campaign for our strategic objectives around the RDP.”

Sinikka Torssonen  
NSU, Communications Officer

## One LEADER logo for Finland

In the 2007–2013 period, each Finnish LAG had its own logo and visual identity. “Some groups were better at communicating their work than others, but the general public had little understanding of the broader LEADER concept,” highlights Juha-Matti Markkola, Network Expert in the Finnish NSU. “Generally, each LAG was seen as its own initiative.”

The idea and concept of a joint LEADER logo for the Finnish LAGs was developed towards the end of the previous programming period. “It was a voluntary process, but very fruitful. The LAGs shared our desire to develop a stronger LEADER identity in Finland and bought into the shared message of ‘LEADER on a human scale.’”

The early preparations meant that when the new period started, all the visual elements were ready and waiting to be used as soon as the new LAGs were selected. “Because the image is the same across the country, hopefully the LEADER message is stronger,” concludes Juha-Matti Markkola.



Nevertheless, the initial submissions were quite disappointing. “We wanted something really creative and different – to move away from traditional attitudes towards rural areas. But the initial concepts were still quite conservative, based on ideas such as promoting rural areas as a place to live. This was not our main message.”

The idea was rather to change people’s perceptions of the countryside from traditional stereotypes to include aspects such as high technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, bioeconomy and active local communities. Having gone back to the advertising agencies, a more ambitious campaign was agreed, based

on the central campaign message: ‘Update your countryside’.

Sinikka Torssonen explains: “This main campaign slogan actually has two main messages. It asks people to update and rethink the idea they have of rural areas. It also wants to say that there are tools and money available via the RDP to carry out activities to modernise and take advantage of new opportunities.”

The campaign was designed to attract attention, create interest and to make people think ‘this could be interesting for me’. After that, it would be up to the main communication activities of the ‘group of four’ to provide more practical information.

## THE RDP LAUNCH CAMPAIGN

Following agreement of the concept, the campaign was developed more fully so that it could start in June 2015 to run until the end of 2015. A series of visual elements were designed to support the central message. These elements were then used on a number of campaign materials including posters, videos and a dedicated campaign website.

The posters and other campaign materials invite people to visit the dedicated campaign website. This encourages people to find out more, without directing them immediately to official or technical information. The website provides data on visitor numbers so that the group of four can track the success of the campaign and individual activities.

“We noticed that when our TV advertising campaign started there was a spike in visitors to the campaign website.”

Sinikka Torssonen  
NSU, Communications Officer

The campaign website contains over 400 suggestions for how you can update your countryside, including real projects and new ideas. These contribute to the dual aim of raising awareness of modern rural areas and highlighting some of the opportunities under the RDP.

“The website starts to make the link with the RDP,” enthuses Sinikka Torssonen. “There is also the possibility for users to enter their postcode to find out if they live in an area that is eligible for RDP support. People are often surprised. We have lots of small towns in Finland and the people that live there often think they live in the city. But actually 95 % of Finland is rural.”

Only if the user clicks to find out more are they then directed to the more official information on the website of the RDP and NRN.<sup>(2)</sup>

(2) [www.maaseutu.fi](http://www.maaseutu.fi)



Posters such as this one show how traditional views of the countryside can be updated.

Sheep are a traditional aspect associated with the countryside, as represented by the left-hand side of the poster. On the right-hand side, the sheep is still there, but the image has been updated to something more modern and challenging.

“We thought about putting concrete images to represent the modern countryside, but the advertising agency advised us to keep it abstract. It is quite strange, but we like that. It invites people to question what is going on and to start a conversation about what the modern countryside is.” Sinikka Torssonen.

Television adverts were developed and targeted at different programmes on half a dozen channels in Finland; they were also posted on YouTube and via Facebook. "People sometimes say that TV is getting old-fashioned now, but certain programmes really have a lot of important viewers that we want to reach. At the same time, we were impressed with the reach of our videos on Facebook with much lower costs than TV advertising," highlights Sinikka Torssonen.

### USE OF EVENTS

Events provide additional opportunities to reach out to important stakeholders for the RDP. The 2015 Communications Plan already specified the need to be present at important rural events such as LEADER Week and Open Villages in June, the Finland Agricultural Exhibition in July and the Finnish Municipalities Forum in August.

One idea that proved to be more successful than the group of four even hoped for, was a photo booth where people could get a free photo of themselves superimposed on a quirky rural background, including skateboarding pigs, sheep on rockets and cows wearing sunglasses. Members of the public could download their photo for free from the campaign website and if they then uploaded it onto Instagram, they were entered into a competition to win a bicycle.

"We ran the booth at a music festival in a small town and also at the big agricultural exhibition. It was amazing," recalls Sinikka Torssonen. "People were queuing to get their photo taken! Not only was it fun and different, but it engaged people with the message and encouraged them to also visit the campaign website."

A second photo competition asked people to send in their real-life pictures of the modern countryside. The response has been good with over 700 images uploaded onto Instagram using the hashtag of the campaign. "We did not



© Finnish Network Support Unit

*An Update your Countryside Tent at the Finland agricultural exhibition in Joensuu provided another opportunity to attract people's attention to the campaign messages.*

expect to get so many photos," explains Ms Torssonen. "However, we are still hoping to receive more photos that really represent a new and modern way of seeing rural areas."

### THE CAMPAIGN IN 2016

Following the RDP launch activities in 2015, the group of four are now discussing which elements of the campaign to maintain and which to modify in the annual Communication Plan for 2016. The group of four consulted with the broader network of communicators, who highlighted a desire to have clear themes which are easier to communicate to stakeholders.

"The annual campaigns will be smaller than the launch campaign, certainly in budgetary terms," highlights Sinikka Torssonen. "But they will also be more targeted depending on the specific focus." One idea currently being discussed for 2016 is to focus on rural entrepreneurship – both in terms of existing success stories and the potential RDP support available for entrepreneurial ideas.

“ We will probably continue to use the pink ‘update your countryside’ visual element for the whole programming period. It is starting to get recognised now so we want to build on that. ”

*Sinikka Torssonen  
NSU, Communications Officer*

Accessing people via social media is another priority to develop, including exploring greater use of video blogging and Facebook advertising. "We had a forum on our website, but it did not really work. So we are getting rid of it and will probably try on existing social media platforms. You have to go to where people already are," concludes Sinikka Torssonen.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Campaign website:  
[www.paivitamaaseutusi.fi](http://www.paivitamaaseutusi.fi)

RDP website: [www.rural.fi](http://www.rural.fi)

## A FOCUS ON... COMMUNICATING THE RDPs

## INTERVIEW

Developing the new website of the Scottish Rural Network  
2014-2020

# Christopher Bathgate

Scottish Rural Network Support Unit

Christopher Bathgate is Communications Officer in the Network Support Unit of the Scottish Rural Network (NRN). Since January 2015, he has been working alongside Website and Social Media Officer Norette Ferns to procure and develop a new network website. The new site was launched in July 2015 with an update expected before the end of the year.



© Scottish Rural Network Support Unit



## How did you develop the new Scottish NRN website?

Taking advice from specialist colleagues within the Ministry, the Network Support Unit decided on a procurement process that allowed us to source **local web design agencies**<sup>(1)</sup> that could work quickly and within budget.

We worked with our website manager and the selected agency to create a new site map that would simplify the range of options available for our website users. For this option, we used **Treejack software**, which trialled how users navigate our website, and ran a user survey to test if our theories were correct.

A first phase of website development built the basic user interface and news and

(1) Blonde Digital Ltd.

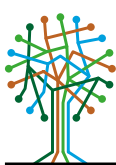
events sections. For the newsletter we chose **'Campaign Manager'** software, which our developers could configure to our needs and integrate with the website. There are many similar products available, or it is even possible to design your own applications.

We also ran a series of **user-acceptance meetings** to take our stakeholders' views on the development of the site and ask for any additional functionality they thought useful. We balanced these expectations with a fixed budget.



## What are the new website's main (new) features?

The website provides a one-stop shop for rural news and information, and can also help people connect with others. The website has three key functions: **inform**;



scottish  
rural  
network

Connecting Rural Scotland  
Lìonra Dùthchail na h-Alba  
A' Ceangal Sgìrean  
Dùthchail na h-Alba





## Inform

The Scottish Rural Network website is your one-stop-shop for news, events and information about rural development.



## Connect

We can help you connect with other people, communities, organisations and businesses across rural Scotland and beyond.



## Inspire

We love sharing inspiring stories about some of the amazing things that are happening across rural Scotland.

**connect; inspire.** We hope it will raise our profile and bring rural actors together over the current programming period.

The main new features include **cooperation offers, a partner search facility and an Expression of Interest form for LEADER funding.** We also hope to have a **range of blogs on rural issues,** including from members of the NSU and other rural organisations.

**Search functions have been strengthened.** The project and case study sections will have a range of filters that can be applied, for example by region, category or keyword search. Users can also **search for other individuals and organisations who have registered on the site** if they have opted for their details to be shown.

We hope this will be particularly useful in connecting rural actors who are seeking to share knowledge and practical experience of setting up projects.



### How do you plan to monitor the success of your communications efforts via the website?

We hope to use **web analytics** as part of a cyclical process of monitoring and improvement. We have a range of **increasingly sophisticated tools** – such as Google Analytics – that we can use to give us data. Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics can generate an automatic snapshot of your accounts, including the most popular posts or tweets and so on.

The newsletter data we can pull from the **'Campaign Monitor'** tool is excellent – how many people open it, which stories they click on and more. We are currently sending our email newsletter on different days and times to get a better understanding of when is best.

However, we are **still learning** about how to improve our monitoring so that we can produce meaningful quantitative feedback and reports to improve our website and social media communications for users.



### How will you look to improve the way you use web analytics?

We realise that monitoring **numbers alone may not give us the data we need** to decide if we have been successful. Any measurement we make needs to be linked to a specific goal to have real strategic value for us.

For example, you might think a lot of page views is a good thing. But what if people have to visit ten pages of your website to find what they are looking for. Is that success? Not according to our stakeholders. Equally, the length of time spent on a page can be misleading – your reader might have gone to the shops!

With that in mind, we will filter out those metrics that represent the least value. Rather, we plan to identify and monitor a range of **metrics linked to our NRN aims** and the main themes of the Scottish RDP. We can then set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against the range of data that we gather.

Our Digital Engagement colleagues have suggested **benchmarking** ourselves against similar organisations to start thinking about reasonable targets. To this end we have contacted Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage to see how we can share our communications data analysis.

We also plan to have **online surveys** for users to give their feedback. These could be aimed at all RDP stakeholders, or tailored more specifically to individual rural groups or topics. This can give us important qualitative data that can tell us things that the raw figures cannot and help ensure we draw the right conclusions to keep improving our communications efforts.

Finally, it will be **important to keep revisiting the process,** not only monitoring ourselves against our KPIs, but ensuring that we are monitoring the right things.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.ruralnetwork.scot](http://www.ruralnetwork.scot)

## A FOCUS ON... COMMUNICATING THE RDPs

## REPORT

# The French rural network updates its communication plan

The French rural network evaluated its 2007-2013 work and has updated its 2014-2020 communications as a result. It now aims at greater and wider participation with increased use of digital communications and a more European outlook. The main challenge is to join up its actions with those of the 27 French regional networks.



## LEARNING FROM 2007-2013

In 2014, the French National Rural Network (NRN) undertook an evaluation of its 2007-2013 communication activities. The network turned to external communications consultants to lead the process.

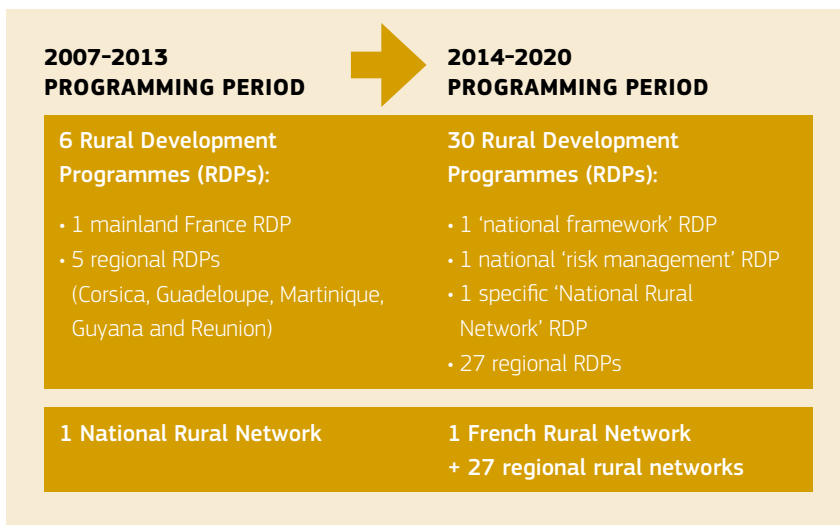
“We identified an agency<sup>(1)</sup> to lead on the development of a new Communications Strategy. But we also wanted to tap into specific expertise on digital communications,” explains Joëlle Silberstein, coordinator of the French rural network. The solution was an agreement with a digital communications agency<sup>(2)</sup> to work jointly on one overall evaluation process.

(1) Francom : [www.francom.fr](http://www.francom.fr)

(2) RC2C Communication & Stratégies Numériques: [www.rc2c.fr](http://www.rc2c.fr)

The evaluation sought to: take stock of past work and achievements; find out more about user needs and expectations; and define the main strategic directions for 2014-2020. It involved consultation with the range of national stakeholders and a benchmarking exercise to enable a comparative analysis with the German, Spanish and Italian rural networks on the basis of a joint questionnaire.

The consultation found that, in general, the network should be better connected with the various relevant territorial levels (European, cities, conurbations...) and with the emerging and cross-cutting issues affecting rural areas (resource efficiency, short supply chains, the bioeconomy...).



The digital media evaluation found a large diversity of stakeholder engagement. A particularly important finding on the use of the tools provided by the network in the 2007-2013 period was that members of the network often see themselves as 'consumers' of information, rather than 'participants' in the network.

“We don't need grand theories.

There is always time to look up information on the computer later.”

Stakeholder feedback,  
French NRN communications evaluation



The magazine of the French rural network.

Other notable findings were that users mainly want concrete information rather than theories and philosophy. Nor was instant access to information on the go a major concern for stakeholders on the ground: "Our projects are long-term", pointed out one stakeholder respondent.

The evaluation revealed a shared willingness amongst rural networks in Europe to intensify their communications and to adopt innovative tools and methods in order to go beyond traditional rural stereotypes, which provide caricatures and often a derogatory image of rural life. Innovation, entrepreneurship, new technologies and the many initiatives undertaken at territorial level were identified as aspects to be highlighted.

“This whole process has enabled us to match up our needs with those of our members and our main users – the rural networks and the network stakeholders.”

Joëlle Silberstein,  
French rural network coordinator

### A NEW COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The new communication strategy of the French rural network 2014-2020 principally aims to **make the network more attractive**, not only to its existing members, but to potential new members. Achieving this objective means disseminating clear

and accessible information, but also successfully **engaging the members**.

The strategy therefore aims to mobilise the network members, enabling them to meet, exchange and share information. The network wants to be a **'bridge'**, firstly between Europe and the French regions, but also between local stakeholders themselves, and between rural and urban territories.

This means enabling peer-to-peer exchange and not just the vertical flow of information between the national and local levels in either the top-down or bottom-up direction.

“The network should break down the barriers between the different stakeholders, by facilitating better and easier exchanges between the members.”

Joëlle Silberstein

Putting this approach into practice means changing the logic of the communications work, from the 'logic of dissemination' ("Here

### Stakeholder priorities

The evaluators conducted a SWOT analysis, which identified four main expectations of the stakeholders of the National Rural Network:

1. Better assert the network as a **tool** which rural stakeholders can refer to and in which they are motivated to participate.
2. A greater focus on **communicating with stakeholders on the ground** in harmony with regional bodies in order to guarantee a real exchange of experiences and good practice.
3. **Modernise** the image and operation of the network – notably by strengthening the use of **ICT**.
4. Reinforce the **European dimension** of the network.

is our work programme, see if interests you.”) to a ‘user logic’ (“tell us what you need and we will tell you what resources the network can make available to you.”) The new strategy gives priority to **ICT tools** to stimulate transversal exchanges.

The strategy also highlights the need to **increase awareness of the network amongst the broader public** and in particular amongst those living in rural areas who are interested in engaging in the development of their territory. Hence, the need for broader and more inclusive communications, particularly towards young and disadvantaged people in rural areas.

To increase its impact, the French network will emphasise strengthening the role of network multipliers, notably the 27 regional rural networks and the LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs). At the same time, it wants to improve access to specialist media, which can further communicate its work.

“*In the French context of decentralisation, communication is a precious tool.*”

Joëlle Silberstein

Giving priority to the users is a way of giving the national network a renewed vocation: to be a neutral ‘support hub’ for the 27 regional RDPs in France.

### ‘HUMANISING’ THE NETWORK IMAGE

A first step to make the network more attractive was changing the name of the ‘National Rural Network’ to the ‘French Rural Network’. This gives a more appealing and inclusive image to people on the ground and in other countries.

The new strategy also applies to **‘humanising’ the visual identity and presentation of the network**. Instead of using ‘neutral’ images of the territory and countryside to accompany its messages, the network will prioritise images of people. It aims to reflect the fact that the network is primarily a community of men and women working together for the development of their rural areas.

### The Auvergne Regional Network

The Auvergne Rural Network – like others at regional level – shares some objectives and areas of work with the national network, but translated into specific actions within the region.

The regional network aims to increase the visibility and mobilisation of the EAFRD and to promote the rural development actions carried out in the region.

To optimise the links with the national network, the Auvergne rural network will continue to capitalise on and communicate the knowledge and outputs coming from the national level (newsletter, website etc.).

“The new strategy of the French Rural Network will allow us to share the communications tools put in place, working alongside the other regional networks,” opines Marianne Brun, coordinator of the Auvergne Rural Network.

“It will also allow us to contribute and be a source of ideas and proposals for the actions developed at national level, so that they can respond even better to the needs of our territories.”

[www.reseaurural-auvergne.fr](http://www.reseaurural-auvergne.fr)



A priority approach in France will be to present the stories of project beneficiaries, whether individual or collective. This will help make the impact of the RDPs – and European funding – in France more tangible to the target audience. It is a means of moving away from outdated stereotypes of rural life towards a dynamic and contemporary image based on real lives.

### A NEW COMMUNICATION PLAN

This work led to the development of a new Communication Plan for the French Rural Network based on 18 specific products and activities (see box).

“*The network’s Action Plan around communications is now better adapted to the new decentralised context in France.*”

Joëlle Silberstein



The development stages of the digital communication strategy.



The range of stakeholder target groups of the French rural network.

A suite of communications tools was established, based on a **new visual identity** and **editorial guidelines** to frame all the actions of the network. Specific editorial guidelines were drawn up for electronic and social media, with an approach clearly focused on the user.

Several communications outputs will be produced, which will serve to support the activities of the regional networks: a **website**, including a **resource library**, **promotional material**, **annual review**, electronic **newsletter** and regular postings via **social media**. The implementation of all these activities will be coordinated by the national Network Support Unit, with recourse to specialist service providers.

The work of the French Rural Network will be disseminated by the **regional networks**, but also by the communication departments of **Europ'Act**<sup>(3)</sup> and communications networks in Europe, notably the **ENRD** and the EU information service **Europe Direct**. Relationships will also be developed with journalists and other professionals who can support increased media coverage for the impact of the EAFRD in France.

(3) Europ'Act is the French national cross-fund technical assistance programme.

### ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The French Rural Network Communication Plan already contains details on the monitoring and evaluation methodology to be followed throughout the period 2014-2020. It stresses the importance of **ongoing monitoring** to inform continual development and improvement of the communications activities, rather than relying solely on an ex-post evaluation.

Specific qualitative and quantitative **indicators** are already elaborated in the plan to measure the outreach and impact

of each individual activity. Indicators include:

- Website visitor numbers;
- Document downloads;
- Attendance figures for events;
- Newsletter open and click rates.

Finally, in addition to the regular and ongoing monitoring, two key moments are foreseen to carry out a more detailed evaluation: a mid-term evaluation in 2017 and a final **evaluation** in 2020.

### COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES AND PRIORITIES

Priority level: ★★★ High ★★ Medium ★ Low

#### Communications framework

1. Visual identity ★★★
2. Editorial guidelines ★★★
3. Promotional material ★★★
4. Introductory booklet ★★
5. Presentation kit of rural network ★★★
6. Annual review ★★

#### Digital communications

7. Website – resource library ★★★
8. E-mailing tool ★★
9. Social networks ★★
10. Electronic newsletter ★★★

#### Partnerships

11. Relations with specialised media ★★★
12. Rural communicators 'club' ★★★

#### Events

13. Annual national seminars ★★★
14. Rural Biennale ★★★

#### Peer learning

15. Rural innovation competition ★★
16. Young rural talent competition ★★
17. Twinning of regional rural networks ★★
18. Mentoring competition ★

## A FOCUS ON... COMMUNICATING THE RDPs

## INTERVIEW

Informing the Austrian people about the benefits of the RDP

# Wolfgang Wisek

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management

Wolfgang Wisek is the Press Spokesman and Head of the Directorate of Communication and Service at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management in Austria. He led the team that developed the Liveable Austria campaign in 2014 to communicate the new RDP to the Austrian population. In January 2015, the campaign won CAP Communication Awards in two categories.



© Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture



## Why was it important to communicate the launch of the RDP in Austria?

Rural development is the key element of Austria's agricultural policy. It stands for a modern and sustainable agricultural system. Embedded in the Common Agricultural Policy it follows a comprehensive European strategy. In April 2014 our Ministry submitted the Rural Development Programme (RDP) for the period until 2020 to the European Commission.

We wanted to tell people about the new programme in an information campaign: Our objective was on the one hand to strengthen the awareness of the general public about the great diversity of the programme, the services rendered by agriculture and the benefits of the Common Agricultural Policy. On the other

hand, to stimulate innovation, we wanted to inform potential applicants about the new opportunities the programme offers.

When I started planning the campaign with my team last year we soon realised that we would need a special concept to achieve our communication objectives: creating awareness and providing information, presenting complex issues clearly, and addressing people of all age groups and social status.

We needed a communication campaign which was equally broad and sustainable. Based on these considerations, the project "*Liveable.Austria*<sup>(1)</sup> - the new Rural Development 2020 Programme" was designed.



## What were the principles of your approach?

It was important to us to avoid a top-down approach. We wanted to communicate directly from the heart of society and to allow interaction and exchange between people on the ground. We thus made farmers the messengers of our communication campaign.

For each Federal Province and for each line of production, we chose one person with whom people from the region could strongly identify. In the course of this process we met many dedicated and highly motivated people.

(1) "Lebenswert.Österreich"



Our objective was to share their personal testimonials of rural development so as to give the programme a face and make the Common Agricultural Policy tangible for the wider public. In this way we would communicate an authentic picture of modern agriculture without applying romantic clichés.

The testimonials were presented with a large three-dimensional "L". The "L" stands for the "liveable Austria" for which these people are working. The content of the "L" symbolises the service the person provides as well as the action from the RDP which ensures the framework for it. In this way the RDP and its positive impacts on the individual regions were communicated in a practice-oriented and easily understandable manner.

**How did you disseminate these personal testimonials?**

We call the people providing the testimonials the "L carriers". Being well known in their home regions, they were RDP ambassadors for the campaign with an extraordinary multiplier effect. Whether as subjects in online and print publications or as people that others could actually contact or meet in the flesh at information events.

The "L carriers" reached people of all age groups, educational levels and social backgrounds. This effect was enhanced by a fine-tuned multimedia strategy. The testimonials were the thread running through all channels of communication – new and traditional media were combined efficiently.

An information tour across the Federal Provinces activated additional multipliers and stakeholders from the agricultural sector. The interactive character of the initiative enabled people attending the events to pose questions concerning the new programme. The Federal Minister, regional stakeholders and other experts were able to inform about the benefits of rural development for the relevant region.

In parallel, a broad-based media campaign made our programme a topic in agricultural and non-agricultural media. Digital communication tools were used not only as additional instruments, but were key components of the entire campaign. Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and a blog were used in real-time.

**Were you able to measure the success of the campaign?**

A comprehensive evaluation rendered very encouraging and promising results. The media campaign enabled us to reach a wide audience; the tour across the Federal Provinces was well-attended and a survey indicated that the campaign was very well received.

The testimonials got positive feedback. The media presented our 'L carriers' and their activities; reports and interviews followed. Well-known companies took notice of them and one of these RDP ambassadors even became the face of a prominent manufacturer of folk garments.

Encouraged by this positive response we decided to submit the campaign for the CAP Communication Award. Together with Thomas Strubreiter, one of our 'ambassadors', we travelled to Brussels





*Commissioner Phil Hogan presents Wolfgang Wisek and Thomas Strubreiter with the CAP Communications Award.*

© Babylania/Thierry Roge

in January 2015. We were really pleased to receive the Communication Award, and having watched the interesting project presentations of our colleagues it meant even more to us.

We achieved first place in two categories: "Communication to Stakeholders"; and "Communication to the Public". On this occasion I would like to say thank you once again and to express my sincere gratitude to all those who participated in the project and to all members of my team. This Award was a joint success of Austrian agriculture.

It also gave us great pleasure that representatives of other Member States approached us after the award ceremony. As our campaigns can easily be adapted to other countries and regions, they were interested in details concerning implementation. This led to lively discussions and learning from each other – Europe at its best!



### What are the next steps for communicating the RDP in Austria?

The awards confirmed that our efforts were worthwhile and that we are on the right track with our concept. With that in mind, we developed the 2015 campaign and are pursuing it very successfully. Whilst we focused on the extraordinary scope and diversity of the programme in 2014, this year's major topic is the potential of rural development to enhance value-adding in rural areas.

Again, communication centres around L carriers, paying special attention to farmers who are successfully using innovative farming practices and thereby also promoting the economic activity of their regions.

On the one hand we inform farmers about promising management concepts and the RDP measures we can offer them to

promote their concepts. On the other, we illustrate the positive impact which the programme has for large parts of the population at regional level. We plan to continue the campaign again next year with another substantive topic.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CAP Communication Awards 2014:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/newsroom/190\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/newsroom/190_en.htm)



# Books & publications

## *Organic Cooperative Approaches to Rural Development*

A manual for stakeholders

**IFOAM EU**



This publication aims to guide organic farming stakeholders in their use of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). In particular, it is intended as a reference work for organic farming associations, advisors and educators to better understand the opportunities provided under the reformed CAP for increased cooperation among farmers and development of innovative approaches to organic farming.

The manual includes an overview of the options presented by the new policy and examples of cooperative approaches pioneered by organic farmers and other stakeholders in Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

It concludes with a set of recommendations for successful organic cooperation and a list of organisations and networks working on rural development and cooperation at the national and European levels.

## *Eating from the Farm: the social, environmental and economic benefits of local food systems*

**Friends of the Earth Europe**

This publication highlights grassroots movements that organise and promote local food supply chains, supplying sustainably farmed, small-scale food, also known as 'agroecological' farming. It explores in detail innovative and creative ways to sustainably produce and consume food through five case studies in the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy and Spain.



The publication makes the case for agroecological local food systems by examining the processes, challenges and benefits of local production. It concludes with a set of policy demands in support of local food systems to the European Commission and national governments.

## *Soil Atlas 2015*

**Heinrich Böll Foundation, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies**

Launched in the context of the International Year of Soils, 2015, this publication provides a broad overview of soil-related issues, ranging from global land use patterns to small-scale management. It is focused on challenges such as

unsustainable management of soil and unequal access to land, and the effects of climate change, land use change and waste. Particularly, it explores issues such as urbanisation and ownership inequality, as well as fertiliser use, organic farming methods and soil restoration. It argues that restoring the 33% of soils

that are degraded and improving management techniques will take time and long-term commitment from all stakeholders, and solutions will vary by context and locality.



## Global Food Security 2030

Assessing trends with a view to guiding future EU policies

Joint Research Centre, European Commission



This new scientific report presents a vision for securing food supply in response to a changing and growing global demand by 2030. It considers the key drivers of this change: demography; urbanisation and economic growth; global food demand and dietary changes; pressure on natural resources; and climate change. It argues that the EU has a role to play in guaranteeing food security on a sustainable basis by working to achieve:

- a significant transformation of agricultural and food production systems;
- an enabling environment in rural areas;
- a balanced food system between local, regional and global levels; and
- a demand-driven food system.

The report makes the case for a move from a 'food-security approach' to a 'food-systems approach' and concludes with a set of policy recommendations.

ISBN 978-92-79-48364-6 (PDF)  
ISBN 978-92-79-48365-3 (print)  
Catalogue number LB-NA-27252-EN-C

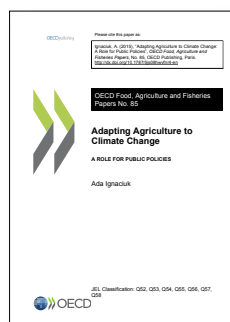
## Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change: a Role for Public Policies

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

This new OECD publication examines ways in which governments can support farmers' adaptation actions to meet changing climate conditions providing both private and public benefits.

The report provides a review of national adaptation strategies for the agricultural sector in OECD countries and highlights different approaches undertaken by governments. It goes on to identify the main criteria under which governments may take action to increase the resilience of the agricultural sector and its adaptive capacity to climate change. It concludes with a discussion on strategies to monitor and evaluate adaptation policies.

ISSN 1815-6797 (online)



## 2014-2015 Global Food Policy Report

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

The fourth edition of the annual Global Food Policy Report provides a comprehensive overview of major food policy developments

and events. It highlights the key trends in global food policy in 2014 at the global, regional, and national levels and looks into the opportunities and challenges in achieving food and nutrition security in 2015.



The report presents expert analysis along with data for several food policy indicators, including agricultural research spending, capacity for food policy research and country-level data on hunger. It further contains the results of a global opinion poll on the current state of food policy.

ISBN: 978-0-89629-575-9

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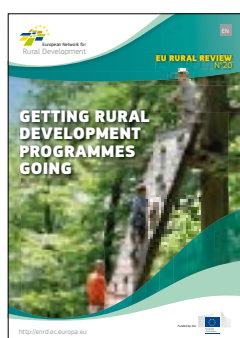
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## EU RURAL REVIEW

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.20 – Getting Rural Development Programmes Going



KF-AJ-15-020-EN-C

### No.19 – Improving stakeholder involvement



KF-AJ-15-019-EN-C

### No.18 – Organic Farming



KF-AJ-14-018-EN-C

## 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



KF-02-15-287-EN-C

### EAFRD Project Examples 2007-2013



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### Social Inclusion



K3-AK-13-001-EN-C

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- **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.

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



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