



Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Lower Saxony and Bremen/Germany

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Lower Saxony and Bremen was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Lower Saxony's and Bremen's priorities for using the € 2.3 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (€ 1.12 billion from the EU budget, including € 181 million transferred from the German envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 506 million of national co-funding plus € 673 million of additional national funding top-ups).

The RDP for Lower Saxony and Bremen focuses mainly on 3 priority areas. Under the first of these – restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry - 6.4% of farmland will be under biodiversity contracts and 2% of farmland will be under funded contracts to improve water management. Secondly, for enhancing food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture, 130 public bodies will receive support for coastal and flood protection. Thirdly, to address social inclusion and local development in rural areas, 42% of the rural population will be covered by local development strategies and 18% is targeted to benefit from improved services or infrastructure.

Support for Rural Development is the 2nd Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, providing Member States with an envelope of EU funding to manage nationally or regionally under multi-annual, co-funded programmes. In total, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States. The new RD Regulation for the period 2014-2020 addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. Moreover, in order to coordinate actions better and maximise synergies with the other European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF), a Partnership Agreement has been agreed with each Member State highlighting its broad strategy for EU-funded structural investment.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities Lower Saxony and Bremen are facing are addressed by the RDP. In the annex, a table indicates the priorities and focus areas each with their specific targets, and their allocated budget.

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

In Germany rural development is implemented through 13 separate regional RDPs, which broadly correspond to the various *Länder* (but with two joint programmes). However, common elements to several regional programmes are presented in a national framework (NF) established at federal level. In addition to this, a National Rural Network Programme provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors in Germany.

Lower Saxony and Bremen cover an area of 48 033 km², of which 93% is rural. Of the total area, agricultural land covers 60% in Lower Saxony and 28% in Bremen. Forest land covers 22% in Lower Saxony and 1.9% in Bremen.

Of a population of 8.5 million, only 22% lives in predominantly rural areas; 61% lives in intermediate areas and 17% in predominantly urban areas. The unemployment rate in Lower Saxony amounts to 5.6% and in Bremen to 7.9% (2012).

Of the agricultural area (2 577 017 ha in 2010), 72.3% is arable land and 27% is permanent grassland. Permanent crops cover the remaining 0.7%.

There are around 41 700 agricultural holdings in total. About 7 500 have a size above 100 ha; the average size is 62 ha, which is significantly above the federal average of 56 ha.

Environmental challenges in Lower Saxony and Bremen mainly relate to the decline of biodiversity and wind and soil erosion caused by climate change.

The coastal regions of Lower Saxony and Bremen face an increasing flood hazard due to climate change. Therefore coastal and flood protection measures as well as the development of rivers, lakes and transitional waters become ever more important.

The region faces more and more the negative effects of an ageing society, the danger of depletion of individual rural areas due to population losses and migration of young people, especially young women - particularly in south-eastern Lower Saxony.

Broadband coverage in rural areas is still significantly lagging behind. ≥ 16 Mbit/s are available in only 10% of Lower Saxony's rural areas. Broadband coverage is concentrated on major towns and their vicinity. Thus, access to high-speed internet in rural areas will be a major challenge.

2. HOW LOWER SAXONY AND BREMEN'S RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, Lower Saxony and Bremen's RDP will fund actions under all six Rural Development priorities – with a particular emphasis on **restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry**, on **social inclusion and local development in rural areas**, on **competitiveness of the agri-sector and sustainable forestry**, and on **food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture**. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

This cross-cutting priority will be given a focus on resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors. It will be addressed mainly through measures supporting training and advisory services for people and businesses in rural areas: an expected 11 000 participants will be trained and 155 cooperation projects will be supported, including in the framework of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Besides the previously mentioned support for training, about 600 farms (1.5%) will receive funding for investments – focused on better animal husbandry / welfare, high-quality production, and improved working conditions.

Food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture

130 public bodies are projected to receive support for coastal and flood protection measures as well as the development of rivers, lakes and transitional waters. In addition about 800 projects for the improvement of animal welfare will receive support.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Lower Saxony and Bremen will improve biodiversity and water and soil management through support for various environmentally friendly management practices – including organic farming, lower use of fertilisers and pesticides and protection of habitats. More than 6% of farmland will be under funded contracts to improve biodiversity, more than 2% under contracts to improve water management and some 0.5% under contracts to reduce soil erosion. Support for environmental investments will complement these annual area-based payments.

Resource efficiency and climate

The emphasis in Lower Saxony and Bremen will be on investments in energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) and ammonia (NH₃) emissions. About 110 projects will receive support for related investments.

Carbon conservation and sequestration will be achieved through the implementation of agri-environment-climate measures on 2% of the agricultural area.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

42% of the rural population will be covered by local development strategies (drawn up by 40 Local Action Groups) under the LEADER approach and 18% of the rural population is targeted to benefit from improved general services and infrastructure. 16% of the rural population will benefit from new or improved broadband infrastructure.

The four **biggest RDP measures** in budgetary terms (total public funding including national top-ups) are:

- € 610 million allocated to Measure 5 (Restoring agricultural potential damaged by natural disasters and catastrophic events and introduction of appropriate prevention measures)
- € 520 million allocated to Measure 7 (Basic services and village renewal in rural areas)
- € 357 million allocated to Measure 4 (Investments in physical assets)
- € 283 million allocated to Measure 10 (Agri-environment-climate)

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Lower Saxony and Bremen (Germany)

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Lower Saxony - Bremen			
Target	Measure	€ Total public	%
Priority 1: Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas (1)			
1A Fostering innovation, cooperation, knowledge base	01 knowledge		
6.43 % of RDP expenditure	02 advisory		
	16 cooperation		
1B Strengthening links (with research, etc.)	16 cooperation		
155 cooperation projects			
1C Training	01 knowledge		
11 000 participants trained			
Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management		306 928 777	13.35
2A Economic performance, restructuring & modernisation	01 knowledge	9 372 500	0.41
1.44 % of holdings with RDP support	02 advisory	9 637 137	0.42
	04 investments	270 419 140	11.76
	16 cooperation	17 500 000	0.76
Priority 3: Food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management		638 165 973	27.75
3A Improving competitiveness of primary producers (3)	14 animal welfare	27 500 000	1.20
1.92 % supported holdings (animal welfare measures)			
3B: Farm risk prevention and management (3)	05 restoring agric.	610.665.973	26.56
130 beneficiaries, public bodies (coastal and flood protection)	potential		
Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry (2)		637 456 448	27.72
4A Biodiversity	01 knowledge	74 860 717	3.26
6.39 % of agricultural land under contracts	04 investments	10 995 000	0.48
4B Water management	07 basic services	96 494 759	4.20
2.03 % of agricultural land under contracts	10 AEC	248 147 536	10.79
4C Soil erosion and management	11 organic farming	96 741 769	4.21
0.46 % of agricultural land under contracts	13 ANC	98 966 667	4.30
	16 cooperation	11 250 000	0.49
Priority 5: Resource efficiency and shift to low carbon and climate resilience economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors		112 141 185	4.88
5B Energy efficiency	04 investments	52 541 185	2.28
157 m total investment for energy efficiency			
5D Reducing GHG and NH3	10 AEC	35 600 000	1.55
1.94 % of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions			
5E Carbon conservation and sequestration (3)	04 investments	24 000 000	1.04
3 750 tons/year CO ₂ equivalent reduction of greenhouse gas			

emissions through utilization of moors			
Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas		576 524 456	25.07
6B Fostering local development	07 basic services	340 096 490	14.97
42 % rural population under local development strategies	16 cooperation	23 425 000	1.02
18.2 % rural population with improved services/infrastructure			
2 jobs created (via LEADER)	19 LEADER and CLLD	129 125 158	5.62
6C Access to and quality of ICT	07 basic services	83 877 808	3.65
15.81% rural population benefitting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT)			
Technical assistance		28 242 745	1.23
TOTAL PUBLIC ALLOCATIONS		2 299 459 584	100

(1) No financial allocation shown for Priority 1 as the expenditure is distributed across other focus areas

(2) Expenditure under priority 4 is programmed for the priority as a whole, not for individual focus areas

(3) Programme specific indicator