The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Murcia was formally adopted by the European Commission on 03 July 2015, outlining Murcia’s priorities for using the € 348.1 million of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (€ 219.3 million from the EU budget and € 128.8 million of national co-funding).

In order to improve the competitiveness of the farm sector, Murcia’s RDP aims to give investment support to 500 farmers to restructure and modernise their farms and 550 young farmers will receive support to launch their businesses. Some 130 farmers will receive funding to participate in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chain distribution. The region will support training for more than 8 300 participants and will promote innovation through 27 projects under the European Innovation Partnership. Restoring, preserving and enhancing of ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry is also considered important with 36% of farmland and 33% of forestry coming under management contract to improve biodiversity. This also includes supporting the conversion or maintenance of organic farming on 37 000 hectares. More than 50% of the rural population will be covered by LEADER local development strategies, which are expected to create around 225 new jobs.

Welcoming the decision, EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan said: “One of the great strengths of our Rural Development concept is that we have core priorities, but it is up to each Member State or region to design a programme which suits its situation and challenges. For example, as well as farm modernisation and innovation projects, Murcia is looking to address environmental concerns in the region."

Background

Support for Rural Development is the so-called 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, backed by € 99.6 billion of EU funding over the period 2014-2020 through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), with these measures co-funded by additional national, regional and private finance. The new Rural Development Regulation for the 2014-2020 period 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.