



Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Ireland

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Ireland was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26th May 2015, and last modified on 4th February 2019. This document outlines Ireland's priorities for using € 4.15 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (€ 2.19 billion from the EU budget, including € 607 000 transferred from the envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 1.73 billion of national co-funding plus € 224 million of additional national funding top-ups).

A central priority of the Irish RDP is restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. Three quarters of the funds is allocated to this priority, targeting over 1 million hectares of agricultural area. More specifically, for each of the three focus areas, around 20% of agricultural land will be put under contract, contributing to increased biodiversity, better water management and preventing soil erosion. In addition, almost 10% of the Irish agricultural holdings will be restructured and modernised. Another 3% of holdings will benefit from support specifically targeted at young farmers. Around 111 600 training places will be created for farmers to increase their knowledge and skills. LEADER support is expected to create over 3 000 jobs in rural areas.

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 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. It also puts emphasis on networking activities at EU and national level. 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 Ireland is 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

Ireland covers an area of 69 798 km², of which 99.6 % is rural. Of the total area, agricultural land covers 71.6 % and forest land 11.5 %. Of the UAA, 80 % is permanent grassland. Ireland has the highest birth rate and the lowest old-age dependency ratio in the EU. The unemployment rate is 7.3% (2016).

The majority of agricultural grassland habitats are not achieving favourable conservation status. This is a key area to tackle with the RDP support.

As Ireland's total GHG emissions per capita are among the highest in the EU, and of the total GHG emissions agriculture accounts for the biggest share with 32%, taking decisive actions against climate change is an important challenge for the country.

Less than 7% of the Irish farmers are under the age of 35 – a special effort is needed in terms of generational renewal.

2. HOW THE IRISH RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, Ireland's RDP funds action under all of the six Rural Development priorities – with a particular emphasis on restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry as well as resource efficiency and climate.

The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

Under this priority the RDP aims to support knowledge transfer and information actions, advisory services, and co-operation. Around 111 600 training places are available for farmers to increase their knowledge and skills. In total 1 222 co-operation projects are envisaged, mainly encouraging farm partnerships and establishing EIP Operational Groups.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Almost 10% of the Irish agricultural holdings will be restructured and modernised. Another 3% of holdings will benefit from support specifically targeted at young farmers. Although start-up support for young farmers is not included, prioritising investments by young farmers, providing them with a higher support rate, and facilitating their access to farmland, for example via co-operation with other farmers, is central to the RDP strategy.

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

The focus of this priority lies on animal welfare, with 24% of holdings supported to improve their livestock's living conditions. In addition, 26 600 farmers will participate in Knowledge Transfer Groups. These are interactive groups where farmers share best practice and improve their knowledge on a range of issues tailored to their individual farms.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

This main priority of the RDP is being addressed directly or indirectly by all the programmed RDP measures. Particularly important in this context are well-targeted and prioritised agri-environment-climate schemes, ANC with special focus on the Irish islands, and support to around 50 000 ha of organic farming. All three focus areas, namely biodiversity, water management and soil erosion, are almost equally important, since Ireland is aiming to cover some 20% of the Irish agricultural land under each of them.

Resource efficiency and climate

This priority is targeted by improving the energy efficiency of the Irish farming sector, with a total of € 50 million investment forecast, as well as encouraging and supporting climate-friendly agricultural practices on over 10% of the agricultural land. Furthermore, there is a targeted intervention in order to reduce livestock emissions and emissions intensity of production.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

LEADER support is expected to create over 3 000 jobs in rural areas. Two thirds of the rural population will be covered by local development strategies.

The four **biggest RDP measures** in budgetary terms (total public funding) are:

- € 1.53 billion allocated to Agri-environment-climate
- € 1.49 billion allocated to Payments to areas facing natural constraints
- € 425 million allocated to Investments in physical assets
- € 250 million allocated to Support for LEADER local development

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Ireland

Target	Measure	€ Total public	%
Priority1: Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas¹			
1A: Fostering innovation, cooperation, knowledge base 3.6% of RDP expenditure	01 knowledge		
	02 advisory		
	16 cooperation		
1B: Strengthening links (with research etc.) 1 210 cooperation projects	16 cooperation		
1C: Training 111 600 participants trained	01 knowledge		
Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management		299 800 000	7.23
2A: Economic performance, restructuring & modernisation 9.11% of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge	25 000 000	0.60
	02 advisory	500 000	0.01
	04 investments	155 300 000	3.75
	16 cooperation	1 750 000	0.04
2B: Generational renewal 2.86% of holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers	04 investments	114 000 000	2.75
	16 cooperation	3 250 000	0.08
Priority 3: Food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management		158 300 000	3.82
3A: Improving competitiveness of primary producers 24% of holdings supported under the animal welfare	02 advisory	300 000	0.01
	14 animal welfare	100 000 000	2.41

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

measure	16 cooperation	1 000 000	0.02
3B: Farm risk prevention and management 26 600 participants in Knowledge Transfer Groups	01 knowledge	25 000 000	0.60
	02 advisory	6 000 000	0.14
	04 investments	25 000 000	0.60
	16 cooperation	1 000 000	0.02
Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems in agriculture and forestry²		2 963 755 630	71.49
4A: Biodiversity 20.77% of agricultural land under contracts	01 knowledge	36 700 000	0.89
	02 advisory	1 000 000	0.02
	04 investments	100 700 000	2.43
4B: Water management 20.91% of agricultural land under contracts	07 basic services	6 000 000	0.14
	10 AEC	1 156 605 630	27.90
	11 organic farming	56 000 000	1.35
	12 Natura	73 250 000	1.77
4C: Soil erosion and management 18.08% of agricultural land under contracts	13 ANC	1 491 000 000	35.96
	16 cooperation	42 500 000	1.03
Priority 5: Resource efficiency and shift to low carbon and climate resilience economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors		456 500 000	11.01
5A: Water efficiency 1 locally-led environmental and climate project operational group	16 cooperation	2 500 000	0.06
5B: Energy efficiency €50 million total investment for energy efficiency	04 investments	20 000 000	0.48
	16 cooperation	2 500 000	0.06
5C: Renewable energy 1 locally-led environmental and climate project operational group	16 cooperation	2 500 000	0.06
5D: Reducing GHG and NH3 0.20% of LU (Live-stock Unit) concerned by investments in live-stock management in view of reducing GHG (Green House Gas) and/or ammonia emissions 10.79% of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions	01 knowledge	39 100 000	0.94
	02 advisory	500 000	0.01
	04 investments	10 000 000	0.24
	10 AEC	299 600 000	7.23
	16 cooperation	2 500 000	0.06
5E: Carbon conservation and sequestration 0.32% of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration or conservation	10 AEC	74 800 000	1.80
	16 cooperation	2 500 000	0.06
Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas		250 000 000	6.03
6B: Fostering local development 65.74% rural population under local development	19 LEADER and CLLD	250 000 000	6.03

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

strategies 3 100 jobs created (via LEADER)			
Measure 113 (transitional expenditure)		9 207 547	0.22
Technical Assistance		8 266 415	0.20
Total public expenditure €		4 145 829 592	100