

ITALY

The first 5 Italian Rural Development Programmes (out of 23) for the 2014-2020 period have been approved by the European Commission today.

Welcoming today's approval, EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan stated: "*I am pleased to see the first Italian plans approved today – for Bolzano, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Veneto, as well as the Rural Network Programme. The others will follow in the coming months. One of the great strengths of our Rural Development concept is that we have core priorities, but Member State or regions have flexibility to design their programmes to suit their situation. And we see good examples of this today where all four regions are looking to support environmentally-friendly farming practices, but have a different emphasis on how to support this objective.*"

National Rural Network Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The National Rural Network programme for Italy was adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015. With a budget of almost € 115 million (€ 59.6 million from the EU budget and € 55 million of national funding), the network will support policies for agricultural development through the exchange of experience and knowledge between rural territories, as well as better implementation and management of Italian Rural Development Programmes. The programme also aims at ensuring better visibility of rural development policy, actions and achievements whilst bringing together all actors involved in rural development throughout the entire territory of Italy.

Bolzano Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for the Autonomous Province of Bolzano was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Bolzano's priorities for using more than € 366 million of public money available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (over € 158 million from the EU budget and € 208 million of national co-funding).

The RDP for Bolzano focuses mainly on restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, resource efficiency and climate change as well as improving the competitiveness of the farm and forestry sectors. Around one quarter of the farmland will come under management contracts supporting biodiversity, 22% will contribute to soil erosion management, and another 14% of the agricultural land will be under contract to reduce greenhouse gases and ammonia emissions. To improve the competitiveness of farmers, 125 farms will receive support to restructure or modernise their farms and almost 6% of farms will receive support for young farmers to launch their businesses. Investments in basic services will be supported within the scope of the LEADER Local Action Groups whose Local Development Strategies will cover 17% of the rural population and create 50 additional jobs. Around 8% of the rural population will also benefit from new or improved broadband infrastructure.

Emilia-Romagna Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Emilia-Romagna was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining the priorities of Emilia-Romagna for using the € 1.19 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (nearly € 513 million from the EU budget and € 676 million of national co-funding).

Emilia Romagna's RDP is putting almost equal emphasis on the four priorities related to competitiveness, food chain organisation, restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, and resource efficiency and climate. The region will support 870 investment projects to restructure or modernise farms and over 1 500 young farmers will be granted business start-up aid. Over 19 000 places will be made available in training courses. In the food chain, more than 1 500 projects will receive support to increase and stabilise the profitability of primary producers as well as modernise production processes and support quality production. Nearly 21% of the agricultural land will be under management contracts supporting biodiversity, 16% for water management and 15% for soil management. Almost 75 000 hectares will receive support related to organic farming and around 6.5% of all farmland and forest will come under management contracts targeting reduction of greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions.

Veneto Region Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Region Veneto was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Veneto priorities for using the € 1.19 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (nearly € 511 million from the EU budget, plus € 673 million of national co-funding, plus € 10 million of additional funding top-ups).

The RDP for Veneto focuses on restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems. More than 82 000 hectares will be protected through environmental land management contracts targeted to specific biodiversity, water objectives and preventing soil erosion. In addition, almost 8 000 hectares of farmland will receive support to either convert to or maintain organic farming. In order to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the farm sector, nearly 74 000 training places will be created to promote innovation, co-operation and more sustainable farming practices. More than 4 000 agricultural holdings (including young farmers) will benefit from support to improve their economic performance, and restructure and modernise their farms. Finally, local development and economic diversification projects will deliver around 140 new jobs and 11% of the rural population will get access to improved ICT and broadband infrastructure.

Tuscany Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Tuscany was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Tuscany priorities for using nearly € 962 million of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (over € 414 million from the EU budget, including nearly € 547 million of national co-funding).

The RDP for Tuscany will focus on environment/climate-friendly farm investments and investments in more resilient forest ecosystems, as well as forest liming. Nearly 17% of the agricultural land will be under management contracts supporting biodiversity, 10% for contracts to improve water management and another 10% for contracts to improve

soil management. Organic farming is also important. A total of 18 000 hectares will receive support to convert to organic farming and another 87 000 ha to maintain organic production. Boosting the competitiveness of farms and forests is also high on the agenda. Over 900 holdings will receive investment support to restructure and modernise, 1 000 young farmers will receive support to launch their business, and the region will implement the European Innovation Partnership to help deliver innovative solutions to the farm sector. In addition there will be 5 500 places in training courses and almost one fifth of the rural population will benefit from new or improved broadband infrastructure.

Background

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 multiannual, co-funded programmes. In total, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States. The new [RD 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. It puts also 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.