



Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme of England (United Kingdom)

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for England was formally adopted by the European Commission on 13th February, 2015 and last modified on 7th March 2019. It outlines England's priorities for using the €4 056 million of public money that is available from 2014-2020 (€3 471 million from the EU budget, including €1 694 million transferred from the UK envelope for CAP direct payments, plus €495 million of national co-funding, plus €90 million of national funding top-ups).

The main objective is better management of natural resources and the wider adoption of farming practices which are climate friendly. The **aim is to protect 2.5 million hectares of farmland** through environmental land management targeted to **specific biodiversity and water** objectives. **14,000 hectares of woodland will be planted.** The productivity of farming and forestry will be boosted which will result in economic growth and more jobs. Support will target **tourism, broadband infrastructure and renewable energy.** The programme will promote genuine local economic partnerships and the Leader approach. More than **120,000 training places** will be created to foster innovation, co-operation, more sustainable farming practices and stronger rural businesses.

[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 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.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities faced by England are addressed by the RDP. In the annex, a table indicates the priorities and focus areas with their respective targets and budget.

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

England covers an area of 132 935 km² of which 85% is rural (defined as settlements of less than 10 000 people, open countryside and some sparsely populated/remote areas).

The total population is 53 million – of which 18% live in rural areas. Of the land area, 69% is farmland while forests cover 10 %.

The country faces many challenges regarding the environment and climate change.

Throughout rural England, there are many important semi-natural habitats for wildlife. However, due to changes in land use and new farming practices, these habitats are being

fragmented. As a result, they are becoming less resilient to climate change and less viable in the long term.

More than 40% of priority habitats and over 30% of priority species are in decline. Just over a third of grassland types (as defined in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive) are in serious decline.

In addition, diffuse water pollution from agriculture continues to affect the natural environment and the objectives of Protected Areas and Good Ecological Status are not achieved for many water bodies.

Threats to tree health have increased with the globalisation of trade with a marked increase in the volume and diversity of plants and plant products entering the country. This has increased the likelihood of plant pests and pathogens also being introduced, spreading through gardens and woodlands and potentially causing serious damage to either native flora or commercial crops.

There has been a failure to conserve and invest in natural capital assets. This is due to a lack of expertise in recognising and managing environmental risks. Opportunities within the farming and forestry sectors have been overlooked. In the long term, this brings greater costs and lower performance.

Relative to global competitors, productivity is low and falling. There is a problem of **low incomes in the livestock, pig and poultry sectors where** more than 20% of farms are losing money. In some sectors, farming is not commercially viable without subsidies. The Farm Business Survey has indicated that farmers are not aware of the importance of business skills.

The primary research sector is strong. However, there is limited applied research undertaken by the private sector. Research results are not always adopted by farmers. There has been a decline in research infrastructure and many research institutes have been closed. This has led to the fragmentation of research efforts and an absence of 'hubs' where private applied research can draw on the results of public research. There is a lack of a clear enabling framework laying out the path from public and private research to farmers and land managers.

The average age of farmers is relatively high (median age of 59). There is a lack of young people entering the industry. Older farmers tend not to retire. The age profile of owners and managers of woodland is different from that of the general population, with the majority aged over 45.

Woodland owners comprise a diverse group with widely differing attitudes to owning and managing their woods. 77% have holdings of less than 10 ha. These account for only 12% of the total woodland area.

As for the socio-economic context, the productivity of the rural workforce is relatively low. Compared to the country as a whole, a lower proportion of rural areas fall into the top performing 25% of districts whilst a higher proportion fall into the lowest performing 25%. The lack of a skilled workforce is a barrier to growth for rural firms. Limited access to superfast broadband remains a challenge for both businesses and households.

2. HOW THE ENGLISH RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, the RDP will fund actions under all six Rural Development Priorities – with a particular emphasis on **Priority 4 (agriculture and forestry ecosystems)**. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge Transfer and Innovation

This cross-cutting priority will be addressed through training, advisory and co-operation measures (with a **target of 135 co-operation operations**), particularly agri-environment-climate actions. Support to set up EIP operational groups will be offered. The groups will focus on improving agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Increasing the productivity and efficiency of farming and forestry will focus on improving business performance. This will include helping farmers, forestry businesses and land managers to apply innovative practices, use new technologies, exchange knowledge and obtain advice and training. This priority will cover **3.2 % of farms**. A specific new scheme, with a modest budget, will encourage young people to take up farming as a career. It will also support diversification away from farming and the creation of small businesses in rural areas.

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

Support will be given to improving animal health through a number of welfare projects in the livestock and dairy sectors. The projects will be geographically targeted: the animal health projects will deliver national objectives but will focus on areas particularly affected by endemic animal diseases.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

The RDP will target biodiversity, water quality and flood management benefits together. The **aim is to protect 2.5 million hectares of agricultural land** through environmental land management targeted to **specific biodiversity and water** objectives. Funding will also be provided to plant **14,000 hectares of woodland**. New delivery arrangements will replace a number of existing schemes, building on and enhancing the Environmental Stewardship (ES), the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) and the Catchment Sensitive Farming schemes in the 2007-2013 programme.

Resource efficiency and climate

The programme will support investment aimed at improving resource efficiency, developing wood fuel supply chains and better managing water reservoirs in the event of floods and droughts.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

The RDP will support investment strategies developed at local level as well as targeted support in the agri-food and tourism sectors, alongside support for new and existing rural businesses across a wider range of sectors. The programme will also support limited strategic infrastructure investment in those areas that still do not have superfast broadband; and in rural renewables where this offers both economic growth potential and community benefit in addressing fuel poverty. Finally, as a funder of last resort, the programme will provide some limited support for non-agricultural skills and advice benefiting rural SMEs still facing barriers to accessing mainstream and commercial provision.

LEADER Local Development Strategies implemented by **80 Local Action Groups** will have a focus on supporting rural jobs and growth. In terms of the overall balance of expenditure for LEADER, projects will directly support rural growth by, for example, creating and developing SMEs and improving the local rural economy.

The five **biggest RDP measures** in budgetary terms (public allocation) are:

- €2 682 million allocated for Measure 10: Agri-Environment Climate
- €354 million allocated for Measure 4: Productive and non-productive investments
- €221 million allocated for Measure 8: Forestry
- €174 million allocated for Measure 19: Leader
- €163 million allocated for Measure 7: Basic services and village renewal

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme of England

England: RDP strategy summary table with indicative public support			
Focus Area and targets	Measure	€ Total public	%
P1: Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas (1)			
1A: fostering innovation, coop, knowledge base 4.43 % RDP expenditure	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 16 cooperation		
1B: strengthening links (with research, etc.) 135 coop operations	16 cooperation		
1C: training 123 255 participants	01 knowledge		
P2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests		121 250 000	2.99
2A: Farm performance 3.32 % of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 04 investments 16 cooperation	30 000 000 7 500 000 58 750 000 11 875 000	0.74 0.18 1.45 0.29
2B: Business development for young farmers 0.12 % of holding with supported development	02 advisory services 06 farm and business development	625 000 12 500 000	0.02 0.31
P3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture		40 000 000	0.99
3A: Improving competitiveness 0.05 % of holdings receiving support	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 16 cooperation	3 750 000 1 250 000 11 875 000	0.09 0.03 0.29
3B: Risk management 2 800 participants in training	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 05 restoring agricultural potential 16 cooperation	1 250 000 1 875 000 12 500 000 7 500 000	0.03 0.29 0.31 0.18
P4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry (2)		3 256 537 932	80.30
4A: Biodiversity 27.38 % UAA under contract 11.15 % of wooded areas under contract	02 advisory services 04 investments 07 basic services	35 250 000 245 404 277 27 875 000	0.87 6.05 0.69
4B: Water management 23.22 % UAA under contract 7.69 % of wooded areas under contract	08 forest investments 10 agri-env-clim 11 organic farming	213 462 784 2 682 052 268 15 000 000	5.26 66.13 0.37
4C: Soil erosion and management 25.09 % UAA under contract 3.85 % of wooded areas under contract	15 forest environ-climate 16 cooperation	26 993 603 10 500 000	0.67 0.26
P5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors		27 500 000	0.68
5A: Water efficiency 0.99 % of land switching to more efficient irrigation	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 04 investments	625 000 312 500 7 500 000	0.02 0.01 0.18
5B: Energy efficiency €9 375 000 in investment efficiency	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 04 investments	625 000 312 500 3 750 000	0.02 0.01 0.09
5C: Renewable energy €21 875 000 in investment for renewables	01 knowledge 02 advisory services 04 investments 08 forest investments	625 000 312 500 3 750 000 5 000 000	0.02 0.01 0.09 0.12

5D: Reducing GHG and NH3 0.26 % of LU concerned	01 knowledge	625 000	0.02
	02 advisory services	312 500	0.01
	04 investments	3 750 000	0.09
P6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas		471 610 856	11.63
6A: Diversification , SME and job creation 6 750 jobs created	04 investments	30 625 000	0.76
	06 farm and business development	65 000 000	1.60
	08 forest investments	2 500 000	0.06
	16 cooperation	7 500 000	0.18
	19 Leader	173 535 856	4.28
6B: Local development 1.26 % rural pop. improved services	01 knowledge	30 000 000	0.74
	02 advisory services	14 375 000	0.35
	07 basic services	41 825 000	1.03
	16 cooperation	12 500 000	0.31
6C: ICT 1.60 % rural pop improved services (ICT) 26 475 additional households with 30Mb/s access	07 basic services	93 750 000	2.31
	Technical assistance	138 800 000	3.42
TOTAL PUBLIC ALLOCATION		4 055 698 788	100.00

(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