

Country summary for the United Kingdom

The management of rural development is a devolved area of policy in the UK. In Scotland it is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive; In Wales it is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government; In Northern Ireland it is the responsibility of the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARDNI); and in England it is the responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The UK Rural Development National Strategy Plan sets out the strategy for the UK as a whole and draws together common elements in the way it will be implemented within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for the period 2007 - 2013. The document provides separate strategies for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to be implemented through four individual Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). These RDPs aim to reflect the diversity of economic, social and environmental conditions in the different parts of the UK.



Map of the United Kingdom
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General socio-economic situation in rural areas in the UK

The total agricultural area in the UK is around 18.7 million hectares (Ha) or 77% of the total land area (June 2008¹). Crops and uncropped arable land account for 4.9 million Ha (28% of the total agricultural area), grass pastures account for 7.1 million Ha (41%²) of farm land whereas rough grazing makes up 4.4 million Ha (25%), and woodland with all other land on agricultural holdings accounts for 1 million Ha (6%). The UK has a higher than average coverage of agricultural land compared to the EU average.

UK agriculture's contribution to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), was £6.817 billion (\approx €7.500 billion²) in 2007, ranging from £5.508 billion (\approx €6.050 billion) in England to £168 million (\approx €185 million) in Wales². This represents 0.46% of UK Gross Value Added (GVA), ranging from 1.23% of regional GVA in Northern Ireland to 0.32% in Wales². Agriculture

¹ Defra- Agriculture in the UK-2008

² Based on £1 = €1.1

accounted for 1.7% of employment in 2008, ranging from 5.77% in Northern Ireland to 1.36% in England². A trend of decreasing contribution to GDP and total employment is common to most developed economies but is more pronounced in the UK than in most other EU countries. Recent years have seen a rise in food imports and a fall in exports of food, feed and drink. Farmers are also receiving a declining share of the total retail spending on food, arising from an increase in value-added beyond the farm gate. Total income from farming was £18,185 per full time person equivalent in 2008 (≈ €20,000), up from a recent low of £12,368 (≈ €13,600) in 2005². The UK has a high rate of farm business diversification with, for example, 51% of farms in England³ recorded as having diversified activity compared with the EU-27 average of 12%⁴.

Since 2000 the majority of UK farmers are over 55 years of age, with only 3% under 35 years old and 33% over 65 years old in 2007². In 2005, only 11% of farm managers possessed basic training and 12% full training, with just over three quarters of managers having no formal agricultural training. Between 1990 and 2005, there has been almost no change to the overall proportions of managers with 'basic training', 'full training' and 'practical experience only'².

The physical and climatic conditions are much more difficult in some regions than in others in the UK, with a consequent effect on labour productivity. Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) constitute 84.5% of agricultural land in Scotland, 78.8% in Wales, 70.2% in Northern Ireland and 16.2% in England². However, the labour productivity of agriculture in the UK is, on average, more than twice that of the average for the EU-27. Unbalanced migration flows are a feature of UK rural areas, resulting in a net out-migration of young adults and the net in-migration of older individuals.

Around 11.7% or 2.8 million Ha of the UK as a whole is covered by woodland (2009), compared to the EU average of 31%, and ranges from 6.5% in Northern Ireland to 17.2% in Scotland⁵. Of this total, 1.3 million Ha (47%) is in Scotland, 1.1 million Ha (40%) is in England, 0.3 million Ha (10%) is in Wales and 0.1 million Ha (3%) is in Northern Ireland. From 2003 to 2007, GVA in primary wood processing increased by 13% to £1.67 billion. GVA in forestry has seen a net increase of 22% over the same period to £384 million⁶. The forestry, logging & related services provide around 13,000 jobs (2007), whilst there was estimated to be a total of almost 7,000 full time equivalent staff employed by primary wood processors in the UK in 2008⁶. The economic importance of forestry differs between the UK regions, due to the variation in woodland coverage. In Scotland, forestry makes only a slightly smaller contribution to the economy than agriculture. Labour productivity in UK forestry is considerable lower than the EU average, but the forestry sector makes an important contribution to tourism.

The overall total extent of land and sea protected in the UK has increased from 2.3 million to 3.5 million Ha between 1996 and 2008 – an increase of 48% – based on the extent of land, freshwater and coastal sea area protected under 3 designations: Sites or Areas of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas⁶. Within these three designations, the combined percentage of features or area in favourable condition or in unfavourable but recovering condition was generally between 60% and 85% in 2008,

³ Defra - Farm Diversification in England: Results from the Farm Business Survey, 2008/09

⁴ EU Farm Structure Survey (FSS) 2005

⁵ Forestry Commission - Forestry Statistics 2009

⁶ Defra - UK Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket 2009

although it drops below 50% for Special Areas of Conservation in Wales and Northern Ireland⁷. Of the 32 measures which describe the 18 UK biodiversity indicators which are used to compile an 'all measures' summary statistic, 13 (41%) show an improvement since 2000, compared with 9 measures (29%) showing improvement over the longer term⁷. Within the UK, the status of only 64% of the 287 assessed species and even less (45%) of the 35 assessed habitats were increasing or stable (2008)⁷. Between 1970 and 2007 there was a decrease in the populations of breeding farmland, woodland and water birds of 48%, 21% and 6% respectively.

Agriculture is a major source of diffuse and point source pollution to rivers and groundwater. For example, losses from agricultural land are estimated to account for 61% of nitrate which enters surface waters in England and Wales, and up to 40% of the phosphate load in rivers, although this varies between catchments.⁷ England has significantly higher nitrate and phosphate levels in rivers than Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Agriculture accounts for 86% of ammonia emissions, 38% of methane emissions and 73% of nitrous oxide emissions in the UK but only 1% of carbon dioxide emissions (2007)⁸. To date only a very small amount of renewable energy has been produced from agricultural crops, by-products and wastes in the UK. Around 300,000 tonnes of softwood products were sold to bio-energy (including pellet manufacturers) in 2008⁶, ranging from around 3,300 tonnes in Wales to 154,000 tonnes in Scotland.

Rural development challenges

Rural development challenges in the UK relate mainly to increasing the ability of farm and other rural businesses to respond to the opportunities represented by the growth in consumer demand for high quality foodstuffs, through improving skills and exploiting the use of existing skills and resources, innovation and cooperation. Public intervention aims to focus on those areas where market deficiencies can be addressed, particularly in relation to the skills required for a modern farming business, such as improving industry uptake of technology, and entrepreneurial skills to achieve a more productive sector and environmental sustainability. A key development challenge for UK environmental land management is to improve the quality of inland and coastal waters, including groundwater, in line with the objectives of the EU's Water Framework and Nitrates Directives.

There is a long tradition in the UK of using agri-environment and forestry schemes to increase the environmental value of the countryside and mitigate negative environmental impacts. The Rural Development National Strategy Plan for the UK aims to build on these achievements to:

- promote, encourage and reinforce competitive and sustainable agricultural and forestry management;
- work within the demographic trends in rural areas to promote a thriving, socially inclusive and diversified rural economic with high quality employment opportunities;
- contribute further to EU strategic objectives for the environment, in particular through increasing biodiversity, reducing water, soil and air pollution and meeting the challenges of climate change.

New rural development challenges were identified in the UK in 2009. These correspond with

⁷ Environment Agency –Diffuse water pollution in England and Wales report (May 2007)

⁸ Office of National Statistics - Environmental Accounts: Emissions; Atmospheric, 2007

priorities agreed following the CAP Health Check and include: improving water management, tackling climate change; conserving biodiversity; restructuring the dairy sector; and harnessing renewable energy.

United Kingdom national strategic objectives

The Rural Development National Strategy Plan for the UK is the reference framework for four regional Rural Development Programmes (RDP). Rural development policy is an area of devolved responsibility within the UK, which results in four regional RDPs being implemented (one each for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The main emphasis of the UK's RDP strategies is on axis 2, and focuses on agri-environment schemes, the maintenance of farming in Less Favoured Areas, and the environmental management of forestry (including, where appropriate, the establishment of new woodland). However, the UK recognises the importance of encouraging, through the RDPs, sustainable and competitive agricultural and forestry sectors, which make a key contribution towards successful maintenance and enhancement of the countryside and environment. Funding under axis 1 therefore focuses on improving agricultural and forestry uptake of technology and innovation, and seeking to increase the entrepreneurial skills required to achieve a more productive sector and environmental sustainability.

The UK national strategy aims to contribute to the EU's Lisbon Agenda for jobs and economic growth by: (1) fostering a more market driven and competitive business environment in rural areas, with special emphasis on helping farmers to focus on activities that maximise returns from their assets and skills; and (2) increasing earnings opportunities in rural areas through the encouragement of innovation and support for skills acquisition and knowledge transfer. The strategy also contributes to the Lisbon Agenda's 'fairness' priority through supporting rural communities' access to services, and employment and training opportunities. It recognises that there is a particular need to ensure effective participation in the labour market for women and young people from rural areas.

Core objectives for the UK RDPs are as follows:-

- **England**
 - To build profitable, innovative and competitive farming, food and forestry sectors, that meet the needs of consumers and make a net positive contribution to the environment.
 - To improve the environment and countryside.
 - To enhance opportunity in rural areas, in a way that harnesses and builds upon environmental quality.
- **Wales**
 - To stimulate a dynamic and innovative agricultural sector.
 - To encourage sustainable production methods with a view to improving the environment.
 - To improve the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy.
 - To build capacity and innovation in rural areas.
- **Northern Ireland**
 - To focus on vocational training, farm modernisation and supply chain improvements.

- To support less favoured areas and agri-environment and forest environment measures.
- To support diversification of rural economy, cultural heritage and promotion of tourism, to be supported by the local communities through a bottom-up approach.
- **Scotland**
 - To support business viability, add value to the rural economy and facilitate increased market orientation.
 - To support a coherent and integrated approach to meet environmental objectives.
 - To encourage private enterprise and entrepreneurship, improve services and infrastructure at local levels and support Scotland's cultural opportunities.
 - To support capacity building and innovation.

RDP amendments

Taking into account the additional financing provided by the CAP Health Check, the European Economic Recovery Package (EERP) and Modulation, greater strategic priority in each of the four UK regions is given to the new challenges noted above, although these differ between the four regions:

- England - biodiversity (which receives an indicative financial allocation of 46% of the amounts resulting from the Health Check and the EERP), water management (28%), climate change mitigation and adaptation (24%), restructuring the dairy industry (1%) and broadband infrastructure (1%);
- Northern Ireland - biodiversity (84%), climate change mitigation and adaptation (13%), and broadband infrastructure (3%);
- Wales - biodiversity (61%), climate change mitigation and adaptation (22%), water management (13%), and broadband infrastructure (4%);
- Scotland - climate change mitigation and adaptation (47%), biodiversity (36%), water management (12%) and renewable energy (5%).

However, in the UK, no additional funding is available following the 2009 amendments to implement the new challenges as a result of the Health Check because of the requirement to adjust Voluntary Modulation in response to the increase in Compulsory Modulation. The small amounts of additional funding from the EERP and the increase of the EAFRD ceiling and the Health Check funding in the UK regions are largely intended to reinforce existing actions to support the new challenges. No new measures or operations are introduced, with the exception of a new operation under measure 321 (Basic services for the economy and rural population) in the amended England, Wales and Northern Ireland RDPs.

In England, the EERP funding of €6.6 million has been allocated equally to providing additional support to the dairy sector (through €1.108 million to each of measures 121- Modernisation of agricultural holdings, 123- Adding value to agricultural and forestry products and 124- Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and in the forestry sector) and €3.324 million to supporting rural broadband infrastructure (through measure 321). The additional allocation of €1.6 million and €1.4 million from the EERP in Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively, is being used to address the availability and speed of broadband connectivity in rural parts of these regions. Scotland has allocated approximately €2.9m from EERP to measure 214 (agri-environment payments).

The UK received €100,000 of additional funding from the increase of the EAFRD ceiling, which was divided between the regions. England added its allocation (€66,000) to that for measure 214. Wales and Northern Ireland each received an additional €9,000 and Scotland received an additional €16,000, which are not allocated to any specific measures or operations within their RDPs but have been applied to axis 2.

Finally, €160,000 in each of the five years (2009-2013) is transferred from the budget for the UK wine support programme to the English RDP's measure 111 for vocational training and information actions aimed at the UK wine production sector.

Expected outcomes of the policy

In the UK, quantified targets and objectives, and the indicators to be used, have been defined at the RDP (i.e. regional) level, rather than within the UK Rural Development National Strategy Plan. As such, each regional RDP has individual targets related to socio-economic outcomes, environmental outcomes and outcomes and targets in relation to the new challenges. As the targets are specific to each RDP, they do not lend themselves to comprehensive consolidation at the UK level.

Output targets are, in the main, directly linked to individual measures. Examples include:-

- Related to increasing competitiveness:
 - in England, 1,900 farm and food enterprises to be supported in the development of new products and/or technologies;
 - an equivalent target of 140 enterprises in Wales.
- Related to agri-environment:
 - in England, 2 million ha of land under successful land management to exhibit an improvement in biodiversity and 1.2 million ha to exhibit an improvement soil quality;
 - in Scotland, 672,000 ha of land supported by agri-environmental actions linked to the new challenges and 202,500 ha of forest area assisted;
 - in Northern Ireland, 90% of the area of land under successful land management to exhibit an improvement in biodiversity and, similarly, 90% of the area to exhibit an improvement in water quality.
- Related to diversification and improvement of the quality of life in rural areas:
 - In England, 200,000 persons benefiting from improved services and 25,000 new jobs

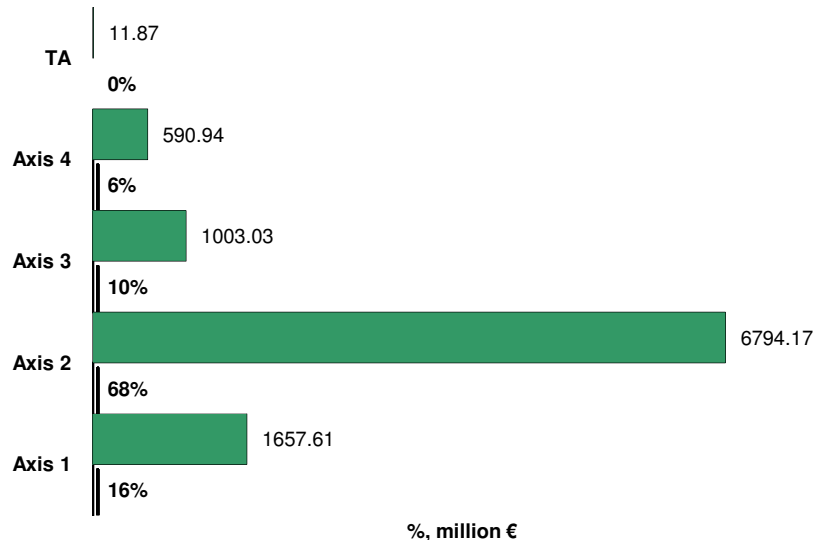
As an example of impact indicators; the English RDP includes indicators related to the new challenges such as:-

- Contributing to combating climate change
 - 274,250 tonnes of oil equivalent per year of additional renewable energy through RDP support.
 - Two agri-environmental indicators have been identified- the annual sequestration of carbon in woodland established since 1990, based upon the estimated net increase in carbon sequestration as a result of woodland being created; and the proportion of new woodland contributing to habitat networks and adaptation to climate change).
 - An additional UK impact indicator has been identified during the design of the initial RDP for environmental objectives regarding climate change actions (Net increase in carbon sequestration as a result of the area of woodland

- created under the programme).
- Reversing biodiversity decline
 - Decline in farmland bird populations reversed by 2020.
 - An additional impact indicator for environmental objectives relating to reversing biodiversity decline is the Proportion of new woodland contributing to habitat networks and adaptation to climate change.
- Improvement in water quality
 - Two indicators have been identified related to agri-environment (Changes in gross nutrient balance; and Contribution of new woodland to improving water quality).

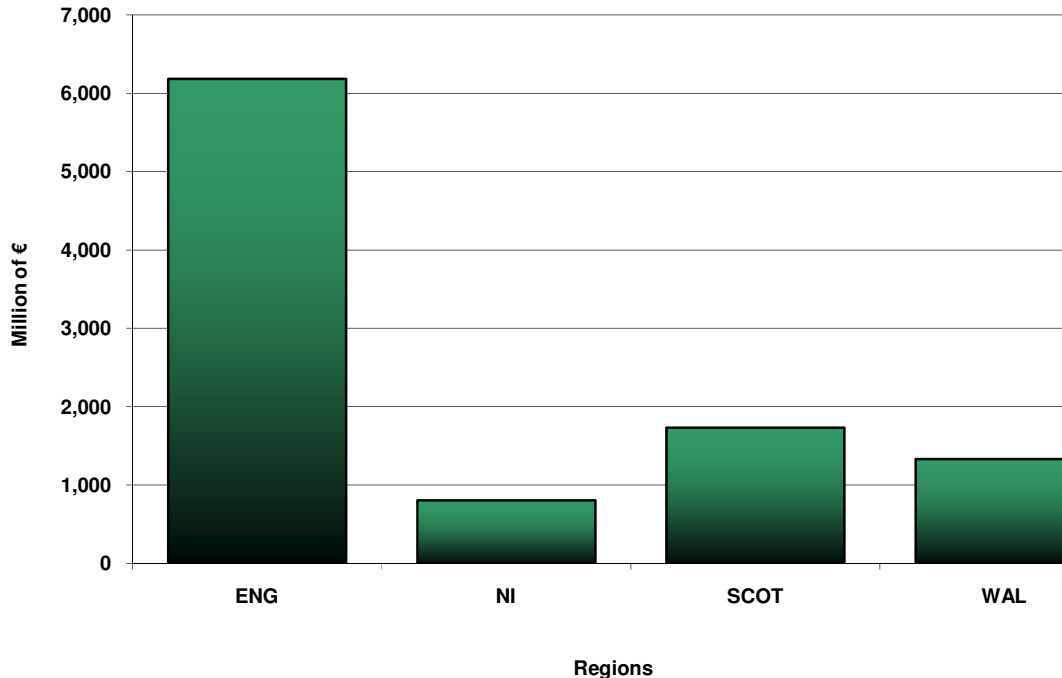
The RDP budget allocations are divided into four main areas of expenditure, known as axes (namely: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; Improving the environment and the countryside; Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy; and Leader). Axis 1 (€1.657 billion) represents 16% of the overall UK RDP budget. Axis 2 (€6.794 billion) represents 68% of the overall UK RDP budget. Axis 3 (€1.003 billion) represents 10% of the overall UK RDP budget and Technical Assistance (€11.87 million) represents 0.1% of the overall RDP budget.

Total country budget breakdown by axis: Total expenditure (including national/regional + EAFRD + private funding), of €10,057,612,567



The RDP budget allocations are broadly divided into four main areas of expenditure, known as axes (namely: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; Improving the environment and the countryside; Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy; and Leader). Axis 1 (€1.657billion) represents 16% of the overall UK RDP budget. Axis 2 (€6.794 billion) represents 68% of the overall UK RDP budget. Axis 3 (€1.003 billion) represents 10% of the overall UK RDP budget. Axis 4 (€590.9 million) represents 6% of the overall UK RDP budget and Technical Assistance (€11.87 million) represents 0.1% of the overall RDP budget.

Regional break down of the country budget



The UK regions receive differential proportions of the funding, with England receiving 61% (€6.183 billion), Scotland 17% (€1.733 billion), Wales 13 % (€1.332 billion) and Northern Ireland 8% (€807.53 million).

Axis Information

Axis 1 objectives - Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector

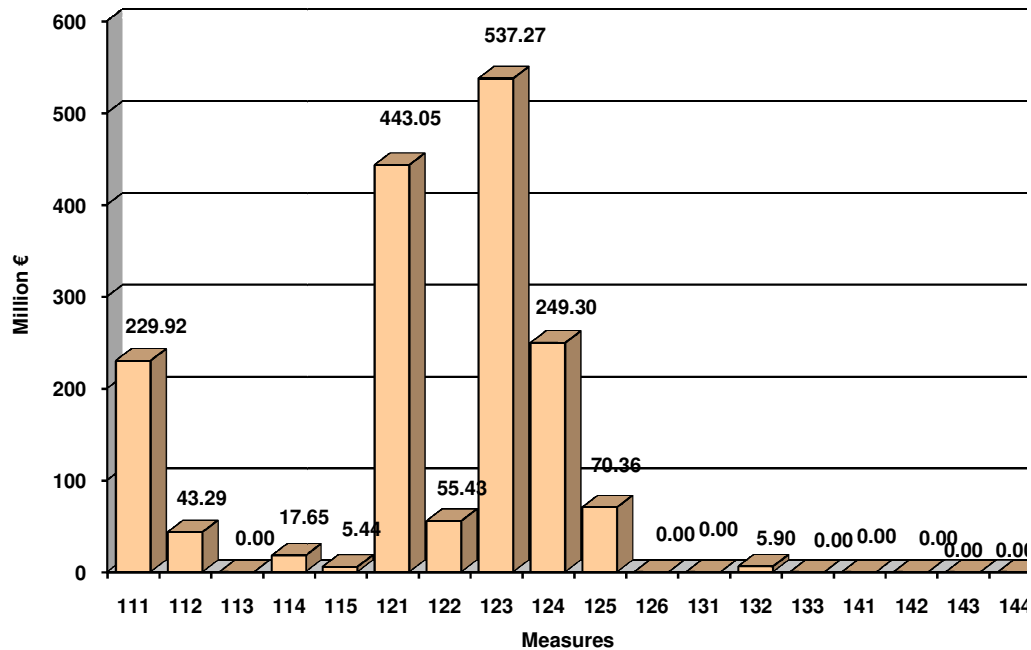
In the UK, Objectives are set at the RDP (i.e. regional) level, rather than within the UK Rural Development National Strategy Plan. Nevertheless, the latter sets the overall axis 1 strategic potential for UK RDPs as:

1. recognising that sustainable and competitive agriculture and forestry sectors are a prerequisite for improving the environmental quality of the countryside;
2. improving resource protection skills and management to address climate change mitigation and adaptation, and contribute to better soil, air and water quality; and
3. improving the ability of farmers to meet increasing demand for quality food products.

The general approach under axis 1 is similar for all the UK regions, with an emphasis on creating a competitive and sustainable agri-food industry through knowledge transfer and innovation, and exploiting opportunities for new enterprises and employment in the forestry sector, particularly in relation to renewable energy. The priority is to increase skills and facilitate knowledge transfer in ways that make farming and forestry more competitive and sustainable. There is also provision for capital investment which can be shown to provide

widespread benefits beyond the individual business, through for example encouraging innovative production methods or techniques which benefit the sector as a whole.

Axis 1 indicative budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including regional/national public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €1,657,609,463



Funding under axis 1 is relatively modest in the UK compared. It focuses on improving agricultural and forestry uptake of technology and innovation, and seeking to increase the entrepreneurial skills required to achieve a more productive sector and environmental sustainability. Measures 123- Adding value to agricultural and forestry products (32% of the UK axis 1 funding), 121- Modernisation of agricultural holdings (27%), 124- Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and in the forestry sector (15%) and 111- Vocational training and information actions (14%) receive the bulk of the UK's axis 1 funding.

The budget allocation on most measures is distributed across the regions with the exceptions of measures 112 (Setting up of young farmers) and 132 (Participation of farmers in food quality schemes) in which all of the UK budget allocation is in Scotland) and 115 (Setting up of management, relief and advisory services) in which all of the UK budget allocation is in England). The proportion of the axis 1 budget allocated to the measures differs between the regions- England allocates most of its axis 1 budget to measures 121 (30%), 123 (27%) and 124 (18%); Northern Ireland allocates most of its axis 1 budget to measures 123 (62%) and 121 (23%); Scotland to measures 121 (31%) and 122- Improvement of the economic value of forests (28%); and Wales to measures 123 (49%), 124 (20%) and 111 (19%).

Axis 2 objectives - Improving the environment and the countryside

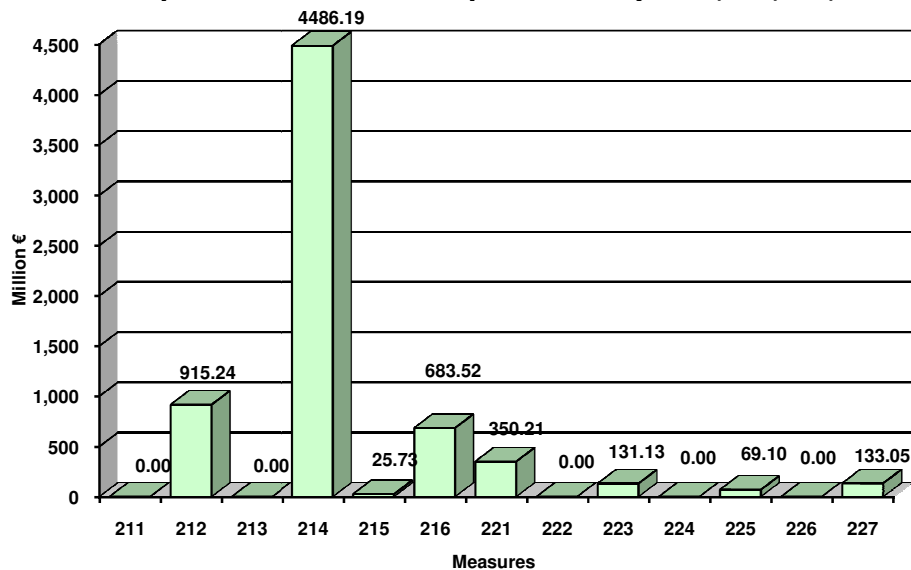
In the UK, Objectives are set at the RDP (i.e. regional) level, rather than within the UK Rural Development National Strategy Plan. Nevertheless, the latter sets the overall axis 2 strategic potential for UK RDPs as:

1. strengthening the positive and reducing the negative environmental impacts of agriculture through agri-environment support;
2. improving coverage and/or penetration of agri-environment and forestry schemes to increase habitat networks, combat diffuse pollution e.g. of water and air, and address climate change;
3. promoting sustainable management of agricultural land in the uplands.
4. maintaining, and where appropriate, enhancing rural landscape features and traditional crafts; and
5. encouraging energy crops and wood fuel as part of an increasing use of renewable energy.

Throughout the UK there has been a strong tradition of support for agri-environment and forestry measures which conserve and enhance biodiversity and landscape quality. Increasingly these have been developed to create multiple benefits, including protection of water, soil and air resources, and adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. This trend towards multiple objectives is expected to continue and reflect the UK's intentions to meet key rural development challenges, such as those associated with climate change or the EU Water Framework Directive.

The distribution of agri-environment and Less Favoured Area measures varies considerably across UK RDPs. England, Wales and Northern Ireland have a greater emphasis on agri-environment support rather than compensation for farming in Less Favoured Areas.

Axis 2 indicative budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including regional/national public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €6,794,169,482



The main emphasis of the UK RDPs' strategies is on axis 2, and particular priorities have been placed on agri-environment schemes, the maintenance of farming in Less Favoured Areas, and the environmental management of forestry (including, where appropriate, the establishment of new woodland). Measures 214- Agri-environment payments (66% of the UK's axis 2 budget), 212- Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas (13%) and 216- Non-productive investments (10%) receive the bulk of UK axis 2 funding.

England allocates the majority (81%) of its axis 2 budget to measure 214. In Northern Ireland, the axis 2 budget is predominantly split between measures 214 (52%) and 212 (44%), whilst in Wales, the axis 2 budget is predominantly split between measures 214 (57%) and 216 (22%). Scotland allocates its axis 2 budget more evenly across the measures, with the largest allocation to measures 212 (37%) and 214 (22%).

Axis 3 objectives - The quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

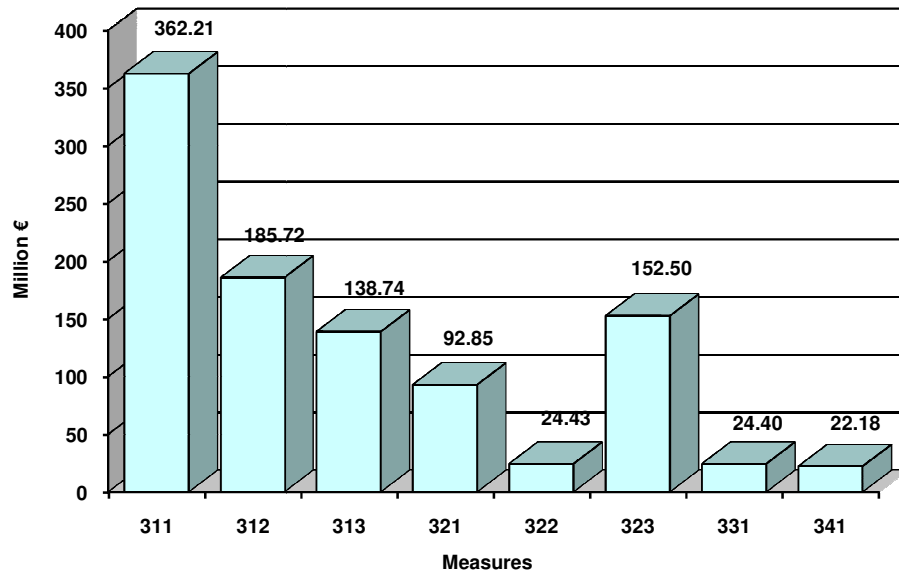
In the UK, Objectives are set at the RDP (i.e. regional) level, rather than within the UK Rural Development National Strategy Plan. However, the latter sets the overall axis 3 strategic potential for UK RDPs as:

1. where appropriate, using agricultural/forestry skills and physical assets for diversification activities;
2. encouraging access to and enjoyment of the countryside, with spin-offs for tourism, health and social inclusion;
3. maintaining 'traditional' land management, craft and construction skills for enhancement of the rural landscape; and
4. improving skills potential for a diversified rural economy with high quality employment opportunities.

The UK RDPs highlight a need for action under axis 3 to broaden the economic base in UK rural areas and improve access to services. Funding in support of each of these objectives will help create and sustain viable communities and combat social exclusion.

The common principle underlying all axis 3 expenditure in the UK is that it should complement or add value to existing domestic funding sources. For that reason the emphasis in the strategies for each RDP is on contributing directly to creation of employment opportunities in rural areas and contributing to the EU's Lisbon Agenda aims.

Axis 3 indicative budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including regional/national public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €1,003,031,154



Funding under axis 3 aims to broaden the economic base in UK rural areas and improve access to services. Measures 311- Diversification into non-agricultural activities (36% of the UK's axis 3 budget), 312- Support for business creation and development (19%), 323- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage (15%) and 313- Encouragement of tourism activities (14%) receive the bulk of the axis 3 funding. Variations occur in the allocation of axis 3 funding across the four UK RDPs – England (69.4%), Scotland (20.3%), Wales (10.1%) and Northern Ireland (0.2%).

Northern Ireland allocates all of its axis 3 budget to Measure 321 (Basic services for the economy and rural population); the majority of England's axis 3 budget is allocated to measures 311 (44%), 323 (19%) and 312 (18%). Scotland's budget is reasonably evenly distributed (18 - 28%) between measures 311, 312, 313 and 321; whilst Wales has spread the budget across all measures with only measure 311 receiving less than 5% of its axis 3 budget.

Axis 4 objectives - Leader

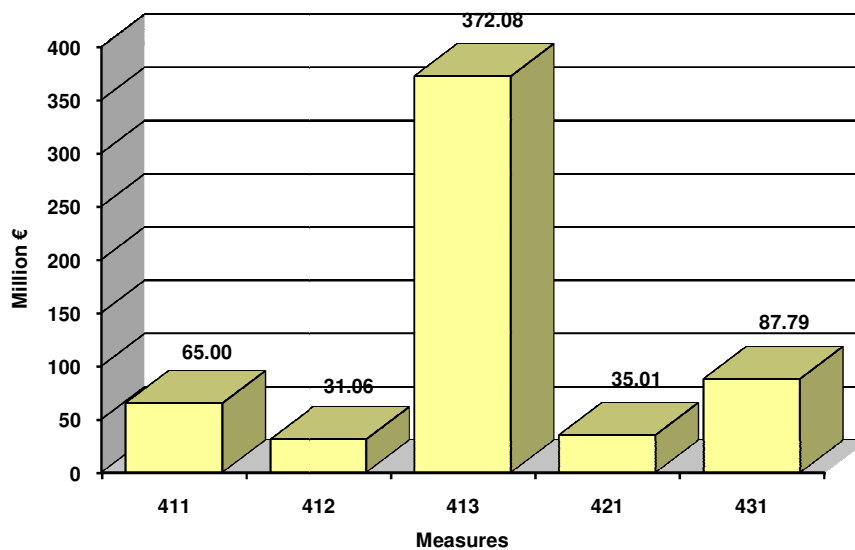
In the UK, Objectives are set at the programme (i.e. regional) level, rather than within the UK Rural Development National Strategy Plan. However, in line with the UK Government's approach for devolving decision making to the local level, appropriately constituted Local Action Groups (LAGs) deliver locally tailored solutions in which the building of capacity in locally-led partnerships is a key element. This aims to ensure a bottom-up approach to delivering RDP actions. The number of LAGs designated differs in each region, with 69 in England, 20 in Scotland, 18 in Wales and 7 in Northern Ireland.

Member States have some flexibility in how the Leader approach is used within the guidelines set out by the EU Commission. In England, for example, the Leader approach is targeted on rural areas with particular needs or priorities, as identified by the English regions in their

Regional Implementation Plans. Within these areas, LAGs develop and submit Local Development Strategies which set out their plans for their areas. Selection Panels for LAGs, which include representatives from the Regional Development Agencies (which are responsible for the overall management of the delivery of the Leader approach), Natural England and the Forestry Commission, are responsible for delivering against their Local Development Strategy, selecting and funding projects across the axes which best meet the priorities for their area and support the delivery of their Strategy.

The number of LAGs operational in the UK RDP areas as of March 2010 was 114.

Axis 4 indicative budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including regional/national public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €590,935,467



Most of the UK's axis 4 budget is allocated to measures 413- Quality of life/diversification (63%), 431- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage (15%) and 411- Competitiveness (11%). In Northern Ireland, more than 50% of the axis 4 budget is allocated to measure 413 (84%). In England (67%) and Wales (57%). Scotland allocates the majority of its axis 4 budget to measures 411 (27%), 412- Environment/land management (25%) and 413 (25%).

The National Rural Network

The UK National Rural Network (UK NRN) has been set up in line with the EU Rural Development Regulation, to help exchange good practice and expertise on rural development policy design, programme management and implementation between the stakeholders of the UK RDP and the European Network for Rural Development.

For the UK, the National Rural Network has been established within the four RDPs and not as a separate programme. They are the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Network; Rural Network for Northern Ireland; Scotland National Rural Network; and the Wales Rural Network.

The following principles have informed the development of the UK network:

1. the administrative structure is developed around each of the four UK programmes and linked together at UK level;
2. where possible, it should build on established and tested structures such as, for example, Regional Rural Affairs Forums in England;
3. it should be as close to local beneficiaries as possible, suggesting the need for what the European Commission describes as “regional antennas” as well as a programme level coordination body;
4. the core of the network’s activities should be built around development and maintenance of a website able to provide detailed information on managing aspects of the UK RDPs, e.g. legislative constraints, funding availability and accounting, facilitation and targeting, beneficiary support, communication and promotion;
5. training courses, seminars and national networking meeting should be used to supplement the website by providing opportunities for knowledge transfer and skills building among RDP practitioners.

The UK NRN Steering Group ensures that the UK NRN acts as an effective hub between the four constituent UK RDPs for supporting the exchange of ideas and experience and ensure that EU regulatory requirements are fulfilled. It is chaired by a UK Managing Authority, with members consisting of up to two representatives each from the UK RDP Managing Authorities, the UK NRN operator, and the Rural Network Unit from each RDP region.

Monitoring and evaluation strategy

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are set up at the regional level in the UK to monitor and evaluate the regional RDPs. In each of the four UK regions, the Monitoring Committee, which is responsible for the M&E system, comprises representatives of the relevant Managing Authority (England - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Wales- the Welsh Assembly Government; Scotland- the Scottish Executive; and in Northern Ireland – the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development) and other key stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Each of the M&E systems ensures continual assessment of the RDP performance and outcomes against specific targets and indicators, and uses the European Commission’s Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF).

Monitoring of each regional programme is based on the common indicators set by the CMEF and additional indicators where necessary, to allow full evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures as they are implemented within the context of the relevant RDP. Examples of the additional UK RDP indicators include:

- the level of consumption of wood fuel (England);
- number of farms participating in data collection training (Northern Ireland); and
- enhanced public access to the countryside (Scotland).

Communication and publicity

The UK National Strategy covers communication in the context of the UK NRN and states that it will be primarily web-based. The strategy does not explicitly cover publicity. UK NRN ‘Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Communications Plan 2009–2013’ has been developed and implemented by UK NRN Steering Group which is composed of representatives of the four regional Managing Authorities and the four regional Rural Networks. The individual rural networks of England (RDPE Network), Northern Ireland (Rural Network NI),

Scotland (Scotland NRN) and Wales (Wales Rural Network) act as focal points for RDP communication in each region. Therefore, the UK NRN plan is linked to the communication plans for the networks in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to maximise communication opportunities and ensure consistency in key messages. The overall objective of the Communication Strategy for each of the RDPs, which is shared by the Managing Authority and delivery partners, is to provide information on and to publicise national strategy plans, RDPs and the EU contribution to the identified target audience. The target audience includes the general public, beneficiaries, local and regional authorities, professional organisations, economic and social partners NGOs, particularly bodies promoting equality between men and women, environmental organisations and the general public.

Dissemination of information is implemented through various means and includes details of funding activities on the Managing Authorities websites, guidance literature, mail shots, billboards, ministerial announcements, publicity at national and local agricultural shows and events, information disseminated by the four regional Rural Networks and through mass media.

Annex I – Measures

Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector	<i>Promoting knowledge and improving human potential</i>	111	Vocational training and information actions
		112	Setting up of young farmers
		113	Early retirement
		114	Use of advisory services
		115	Setting up of management, relief and advisory services
	<i>Restructuring and developing physical potential and promoting innovation</i>	121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings
		122	Improvement of the economic value of forests
		123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products
		124	Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and in the forestry sector
		125	Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry
		126	Restoring agricultural production potential
	<i>Quality of agricultural production and products</i>	131	Meeting standards based on EU legislation
		132	Participation of farmers in food quality schemes
		133	Information and promotion activities
	<i>Transitional measures</i>	141	Semi-subsistence farming
		142	Producer groups
143		Providing farm advisory and extension services	
144		Holdings undergoing restructuring due to a reform of a common market organisation	
Axis 2 - Improving the environment and the countryside	<i>Sustainable use of agricultural land</i>	211	Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas
		212	Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas
		213	Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC
		214	Agri-environment payments
		215	Animal welfare payments
		216	Non-productive investments
	<i>Sustainable use of forestry land</i>	221	First afforestation of agricultural land
		222	First establishment of agroforestry systems on agricultural land
		223	First afforestation of non-agricultural land
		224	Natura 2000 payments
		225	Forest-environment payments
		226	Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions
		227	Non-productive investments
		Axis 3 - Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy	<i>Diversify the rural economy</i>
312	Support for business creation and development		
313	Encouragement of tourism activities		
<i>Improve the quality of life in rural areas</i>	321		Basic services for the economy and rural population
	322		Village renewal and development
	323		Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
	331		Training and information
	341		Skills-acquisition and animation measure with a view to preparing and implementing a local development strategy
Axis 4 - Leader	<i>Implementing local development strategies</i>	411	Competitiveness
		412	Environment/land management
		413	Quality of life/diversification
	421	Implementing cooperation projects	
	431	Running the local action group, skills acquisition, animation	