

KEY FINDINGS

Some key findings of the TWG included:

- Rural development, as part of the Common Agricultural Policy, offers a range of effective measures to encourage the application of environmentally sound farming systems, management practices, as well as investments favourable for the provision of public goods.
- A number of these measures, in particular agri-environment measures, create positive spill-over effects on rural activities, stimulating employment, tourism and the production of value added products.
- Developing skills and knowledge of land managers, such as training in environmental management techniques or advice on sustainable use of resources, proved to be particularly effective in engendering behavioural change.
- Care is needed in designing the measures which have to be selected and implemented according to local needs. In view of ensuring an effective, efficient and transparent implementation of those measures, it is of essence to have a working monitoring and evaluation system in place.
- The most prominent policy measure, contributing to the provision of environmental public goods in the field of agriculture, is agri-environment measures, encouraging environmental services and the use of environmentally sound farming practices. The success of the measure lies in its flexibility and in its potential to be designed according to local needs.



For further information:
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PUBLIC GOODS

Thematic Working Group (TWG) 3 on
**Public Goods and
Public Intervention**



European Commission
Agriculture and
Rural Development



ENRD THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Rural development is a broad and complex topic with many different themes and areas of interest. In order to ensure that rural development issues are understood and promoted across Europe, “working groups” of experts have been established within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). They engage in detailed analysis of relevant themes – with the overall aim of increasing knowledge and ensuring greater effectiveness in the delivery of current and future EU rural development policy.

THEMATIC WORKING GROUP 3 – OVERVIEW

The Thematic Working Group 3 (TWG3) on ‘Public Goods and Public Intervention’ was set up in early 2009, to address the issue of ‘public goods’ and to examine how EU rural development policy contributes to it. The TWG3, comprising national experts, NGO representatives, and chaired by the Commission (Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural development – DG AGRI) was supported by analytical work provided by scientific experts. The work concluded in December 2009, culminating in a seminar in Brussels, ‘Public Goods and Public Intervention in Agriculture’. A summary of the group’s objectives and findings is outlined in this leaflet. For further information, please consult the ENRD website.



WHAT ARE PUBLIC GOODS IN AGRICULTURE?

The term ‘public goods’ refers to essential benefits that are accessible to everyone and that can be enjoyed jointly. As these characteristics render it difficult to make people pay for those goods, individuals have no incentive to engage in supplying public goods. Thus, by definition, public goods cannot be delivered through markets. The relevance of agriculture for the provision of public goods refers in particular to its effects on farmland biodiversity, landscapes, and natural resources such as water and soils. Furthermore, agriculture has an influence on economic or social public goods such as the development of vibrant and prosperous rural communities.

A SYSTEMATIC UNDERSUPPLY OF PUBLIC GOODS

In the past, many public goods were provided as side effects of profitable agricultural production. However, as agriculture underwent major technological and technical changes, involving the intensification of land-use and the abandonment of marginal farmlands, the provision of public goods cannot be taken for granted anymore. Policy action is needed to counteract these developments and to avoid e.g. the continuous decline of many species and habitats, water scarcity, forest fires, soil erosion, as well as the exodus of people from rural to urban centres. In this respect, agricultural and rural development policies have an important potential to contribute to the provision of public goods which is more and more recognised by the public at large.

