

## SPAIN

# Technical assistance

### Location

National

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Measure

M20 – Technical assistance

### Budget

On going

### Project duration

2020 – 2020

### Project promoter

Spanish Rural Network

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### Website

[www.redruralnacional.es/-/cuatro-nucleos-rurales-que-facilitan-acceso-a-la-vivienda-para-repoblarse](http://www.redruralnacional.es/-/cuatro-nucleos-rurales-que-facilitan-acceso-a-la-vivienda-para-repoblarse)

An insight into how the COVID-19 crisis has generated urgent action to adapt the CAP to this new context.

## Summary

The emergence of the COVID-19 crisis was the catalyst for urgent action to adapt the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in the new and critical situation. Specifically, there has been a relaxation of certain criteria and the identification of new forms of support in rural development policy through Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).



With the emergence of the COVID-19 disease and the ensuing lockdown situation, many regular coordination activities such as workshops and other types of exchanges came to a halt. Technical teams at all levels have had to adapt to a new 'home-office' situation. In light of this the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) has strengthened and intensified its coordination efforts, along with its transfer and dissemination of information, and taken advantage of new technologies to carrying out the important work of supplying information.

## Results

The special support and emphasis placed on the explanation and dissemination of all the available information favoured a reorientation and modification of the Spanish RDP's processes to adapt to the new and unforeseen context. The adaptation to this new way of working, specifically in the case of the National Rural Network (NRN), not only proved successful, but also reinforced participation and interest in their activities.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Faced by the unprecedented containment measures, it has been possible to generate closer working relationships thanks to telematic tools, new technologies and the additional efforts made by the coordination and NRN units of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In fact, all these elements combined have improved the flow of information rather than stopping it.

## Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for urgent action to adapt the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in the new and critical situation. Specifically there has been a relaxation of certain criteria and the identification of new forms of RDP support. This unique situation led to a large volume of information about policy changes and plans being constantly updated. Analysis and adaptation had to be done as quickly as possible, taking into account the urgency of the situation. The disruption in face-to-face activities, as well as coordination actions, made it necessary to identify alternative solutions. Technical teams faced challenges in adapting to the unprecedented circumstances and working in a new 'home-office' situation.

## Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

- Increase understanding about all the information generated whilst adapting the existing Measures to be able to apply them according to the urgency required in response to the COVID-19 situation.
- Strengthen knowledge exchanges between territories and Autonomous Communities: being able to quickly collect concerns, questions and proposals to be submitted to the European Commission.
- Disseminate the initiatives and practices promoted in this period of crisis in rural areas, looking for a demonstrable effect.
- Adapt network actions in rural areas to this new scenario by promoting online activities and specific actions aimed at dealing with the situation.

## Activities

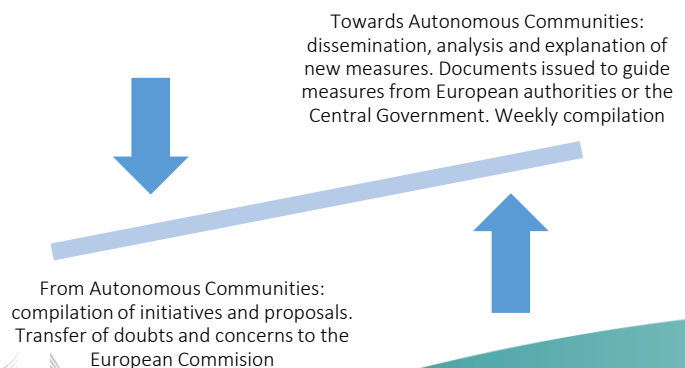
Beyond the specific measures set out by the Spanish Central Government to face the crisis caused by COVID-19 in the agri-food sector in general, and in some subsectors in particular, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) reinforced its coordination, information and explanatory work. For instance, MAPA published a practical guide of measures implemented by the national government to provide support in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This document contains: relevant measures for the agri-food and fisheries sector, specific measures for the fisheries sector and other interesting links. To complement this document, a detailed legislative compendium of national legal initiatives on agriculture and fisheries related to COVID-19 was created.

- The MAPA also made significant efforts to summarise and convey all the initiatives launched by the

Government and the EU:

- Horizontal measures, such as supplementary allowances for self-employed workers and autonomous workers due to the cessation of their activities.
- Guarantee lines from the Official Credit Institute (ICO) for guaranteed loans to the self-employed and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).
- Moratorium on payments to the Social Security system for workers who hired agricultural workers.
- Simplification of personal income tax for farmers and stockbreeders.
- Royal Decree on direct aid for sheep and goat breeders of EUR 10 million, which complements the EUR 159 million of European measures for private storage.
- Agricultural labour measures: Royal Decree Law 13/2020 by which urgent measures were adopted for farm workers.
- CAP measures: advances, extension of the deadlines for the presentation of the single application, simplification of controls, flexibility in the fulfilment of eligibility requirements, of the n+3 rule.
- Regular publication of press releases and briefing notes on the Ministry's website.
- MAPA also launched several campaigns on social media, such as #AlimentaisNuestraVida (YouFeedOurLives), to recognise the work of farmers, livestock breeders, fishermen and others employed in agri-food sector, who ensured the continuous supply of food during the COVID-19 crisis; or, #AlimentosDEspaña, to promote the consumption of 'Food from Spain', highlighting the quality of national agricultural and fisheries products.

**Coordination with the RDPs Managing Authorities** - since the beginning of the crisis, the coordination unit of the Managing Authorities in the MAPA has strengthened its coordination activity, generating a continuous flow of information in both directions:



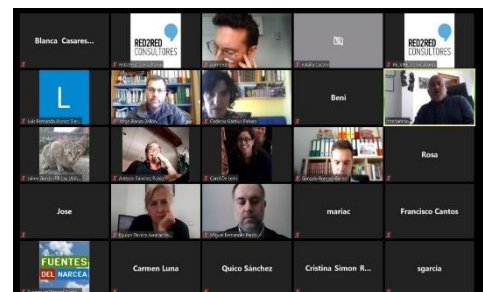
- **Towards Autonomous Communities** - the coordination Unit of the Ministry generated weekly analysis and reviews of all the news, measures and proposals taken at the higher levels. The MAPA also established a system of regular exchange of information and observations with all the Managing Authorities of the regional RDPs, sending weekly updates on new regulations from the EU, translations and explanatory notes on EU initiatives. Information was also circulated about the progress of developing regulations and information on the correspondence between the Spanish Minister and the EU Commissioner for Agriculture regarding petitions, his position on new regulations, etc.
- **From Autonomous Communities** - in the framework of continuous monitoring on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the agri-food sector, the MAPA asked Autonomous Communities for information on the measures they had been adopting in their field to support their respective regional agri-food sectors. Furthermore, the MAPA also established an information exchange system with RDPs Managing Authorities, compiling and transferring to higher authorities all their concerns, questions and proposals.

The **Spanish National Rural Network** worked to disseminate information, analysis and provided training to adapt to the new situation caused by COVID-19. The Spanish NRN quickly adapted its Action Plan to reflect the time of crisis and revised its programme in two ways: a) the inclusion of specific activities of special usefulness in the current situation and, b) a change in the planned activities, adjusting these to the current circumstances through digital platforms.

- Firstly, a seminar was organised on *digital technologies for teleworking* on 4 May 2020, in collaboration with LAGs and regional and local authorities. 500 attendees participated in the seminar ([link](#)). They provided tips on how to improve ways of working from home and information on the best digital tools for teleworking ([more information](#)).
- Secondly, several activities were developed: from 18 May, a four-week course to strengthen capacities for entrepreneurship in rural environments was held. It included information on the basic steps to follow, the development of a business plan or build capacities and other cross-cutting issues. In the future, more training courses will be organised on different activities specifically targeted at business training for women in rural areas to improve the development of

their marketing strategies, business and financial management knowledge, communication and team management strategies.

The Spanish NRNs did not cancel their regular face-to-face meetings with practitioners but tried to adapt discussions to an online format. During the state of emergency, different online exchanges were held, such as an 'Exchange on LEADER experiences related to Food of the Biosphere', to create a network for the promotion of short food circuits associated to the brand '[Spanish Biosphere Reserves](#)'; and, a 'Virtual exchange between task forces and innovative projects on animal and vegetable health issues'.



The activities of the Spanish NRNs also provided a forum to analyse the way different agents adapted in rural areas to the new situation generated after the COVID-19 crisis. On 23 June, an exchange between LAGs and Management Authorities took place with the aim of exchanging information between different LEADER managers so that LAGs can adjust their actions in the best way possible to minimise the effects of COVID-19 in their territories. It was a space for dialogue to work on proposals that can be implemented by LAGs in their territories ([more information](#)).

Significantly, the NRN website and its social media accounts established themselves as important centres for the dissemination of information and initiatives taking place in rural areas. At the beginning of the crisis, the Spanish NRNs played a crucial role in spreading information about the actions of different agents and thereby encouraged their possible replication and transfer. In addition, the Spanish NRN promoted different events such as (image 1) 'Slow down the curve' #rural and #innovation. Join the team of 'Social Innovation in Rural Context Laboratories, ODS Rural Labs. Objective: to provide #digital tools to #ruralareas'.

In addition, the Spanish NRN is closely observing and very actively participating in the paradigm shift in the urban-rural relationship currently taking place because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Adaptation to 'home-office' working seems to have opened a door through which to unite the rural and urban worlds. The NRNs have also collected several offers from towns that provide affordable housing to attract new inhabitants ([more information](#)).

Cuatro núcleos rurales que facilitan acceso a la vivienda para repoblarse



## Main results

The special support and emphasis placed on the explanation and dissemination of all the available information favoured a reorientation and modification of the Spanish RDP processes to adapt to the new context. The adaptation to this new way of working, specifically in the case of the National Rural Network (NRN), not only proved successful, but also reinforced participation and interest in their activities.

## Key lessons

Faced by the unprecedented containment measures, it has been possible to generate closer working relationships thanks to telematic tools, new technologies and the additional efforts made by the coordination and NRN units of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In fact, all these elements combined have improved the flow of information rather than stopping it.

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### Additional sources of information

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