

NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK FOR MALTA NEWSLETTER

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NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK

Ministry for Sustainable Development,
the Environment, and Climate Change

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Dear Readers,

As written in previous editions, the Managing Authority together with a wide spectrum of stakeholders discussed the requirements and necessary elements for a new sustainable rural development programme. In this edition, an overview of the next steps to be taken for the RDP 2014-2020 will be shared with our readers.

A new feature dedicated to projects co-financed with RD funds will have a regular corner in forthcoming newsletters.

Furthermore, the major activities held by the Managing Authority and project beneficiaries, will be highlighted with focus on events organised since the last edition together with the announcement of upcoming events.

Network Support Unit



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€138 million in EU funds for our agricultural and rural communities

A new Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) will soon come into play. As announced last November, our agricultural and rural communities will benefit from €138 million in funds. We understand the importance and benefits of rural development, and also its contribution to the local economy. Therefore special consideration will be given to those directly involved in this sector. Funds will support investments undertaken by farmers to improve their competitiveness, adapt to climate change, improve their skills and knowledge and preserve and protect our landscape and environment. Importance will be given to research and innovation where the programme aims to support innovation partnerships which will see farmers, research institutions and other actors work on pilot initiatives in areas such as drought mitigation, energy and waste management. Measures earmarked to support young farmers will be in place as well as the introduction of an agricultural insurance scheme for farmers.

One of our main missions will also be that of putting Malta and its products on the European Map. Unfortunately we are the only Member State that in the past 7 years did not manage to set up any food quality scheme and this to the detriment of producers, consumers and the thousands of visiting tourists. For this reason the new rural development programme will promote and assist in the setting up of National or EU food quality schemes.

The main priority for me will be to ensure a more fair and sustainable agricultural sector that will guarantee a better income for the farmers, enhance the quality of life, and the environment for the health and welfare of all our citizens.

Hon. Roderick Galdes

Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights

The future for Rural Development

Malta's Programme 2014-2020



The Managing Authority which is responsible for the Maltese National Rural Network organised a public seminar to discuss Malta's Rural Development Program 2014-2020. The guest speakers for this event were Dr Janet Dwyer, and Profs John Powell from the Community and Country Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, UK. They analysed the feedback collected during the previous consultation meetings and gave an overview of the key findings.

Malta's Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) is focused around the proposed **five themes** below:

1. Water, wastes and energy – allocation of €19 million
2. Maltese quality produce – allocation of €27 million
3. Sustainable livestock – allocation of €18 million
4. Landscape and environment – allocation of €37 million
5. Wider rural economy and quality of life – allocation of €24 million.

Additional measures will be set up with the aim of aiding access to funds. These could include financial engineering instruments, risk management schemes and technical assistance with a total allocation of €11 million.

Mr Donald Aquilina from the Managing Authority discussed the new approaches to implement the next Rural Development Programme and gave an insight about the next steps to be taken, leading to the absorption of agricultural and rural development funds allocated to Malta by the European Union. >

€18 million for sustainable livestock



The implementation approach of the new RDP may be summarised as follows:

- Build upon our experiences as well as the EU's experiences – lessons learnt;
- Important aspects – detailed and timely information, accredited systems and structure from an early stage, development of more effective selection criteria, more efficient payment processing systems, integrated projects, resources;
- Positive aspects – better knowledge, flexibility, cooperation, active participation and the setting up of a Rural Network;
- Ideas for 2014-2020 – effective information campaign, rural animators, project promotion/promoters, cooperation with relevant entities, rural hub/one stop shop, single integrated

application, training;

- Cooperation – cooperation from all involved is required in the implementation of certain projects such as restoration of rural areas;
- Suggestions – explore ideas of potential projects with other entities and develop a clear concept for your project, apply for necessary MEPA permits, keep up-to-date with information and developments.

The next step for further development of the RDP after the consultation meeting:

- In the coming months the draft programme will be further developed to include concrete measures, interventions, schemes and all other necessary details;
- On the basis of feedback gathered, and the



€27 million
for Maltese
quality produce



discussions going on at EU-level the draft will be revised. A number of consultation sessions will be carried out as the draft is developed further;

- The submission of the 1st draft RDP and the PA is envisaged for early 2014. Following this it will be possible to know the terms of when the final programme may be re-submitted. The Commission will then have a 6-month period to approve the programme. During this period the Commission will submit requests for clarifications or amendments;
- After the publication of the approved programme, the Ministry will carry out the necessary promotion and launching of measures.

Additional information about the consultation document can be found on the Managing Authority website at www.msdec.gov.mt

The revised policy for ODZ

In November 2013 the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) issued for public consultation a draft policy and design document intended to regulate future development in ODZ areas. The proposed policy document is intended to support the agricultural sector, with the aim to provide a policy framework that assists and simplifies the procedures for the farming community. It seeks to promote and incentivize farm diversification, such as farm gate sales, visitor attractions and agro-tourism. The policy objectives of the document were as follows:

- To support development that is essential and genuine to the needs of sustainable agriculture and rural development in order to complement the competitiveness of the rural economy;
- To encourage farmers to diversify their main agricultural activities, whilst discouraging any proliferation of unnecessary new buildings outside the development zone boundaries; and
- To ensure proper conservation and management of the countryside for both present and future generation

The policy compliments and facilitates the process for the fulfilment of the priorities of the Rural Development Plan 2014-2020. It provides opportunities for the weaknesses highlighted during the consultation process for the development of the draft RDP. Permissions for the upgrading or construction of farming

facilities intended to support sustainable farming and to comply with rules and regulations related to the EU's Common Agriculture Policy and National Agricultural Policy are being proposed. Farming facilities may include storage of farm machinery, agricultural equipment and inputs, produce, grading, cold storage, health and safety and sanitary facilities.

The policy proposes a whole chapter on Farm Diversification with the aim to aid in the diversification of farming enterprises and incomes. It includes the permission of "farm shops" intended for the direct sale of local produce and traditional products. It promotes the change of use or conversion of a legally-established building within an operational farming enterprise to a visitor attraction. The policy also permits the development of farm-based accommodation, where visitors may experience life on an operational farm, with some hands-on experience in the basic day-to-day running of the farm.

The new policy simplifies the planning procedures whereby certain farm developments will not require a development application, like the setting up of tunnels less than 2.3m and new water reservoirs. In addition the new policy highlights the need to support young farmers in establishing their farming enterprise. The document gives more responsibility to

external consultees including the Department of Agriculture as being the most competent authorities in judging the genuineness and the need of the proposed developments.

The policy has brought divergent reactions from the various stakeholders. The Farmers organisations had positive reactions and made joint declarations about their agreement with the draft policy. In their views farmers will be able to shift to more quality-oriented food-chain and more sustainable agricultural practices. On the other hand in a joint statement, the NGOs said that while they support measures to assist the genuine farmer, they highlighted the danger of the simplification of the planning process in becoming an institutional tactic to bypass regulations.

Sharlo Camilleri
Head Paying Agency

The new policy simplifies the planning procedures whereby certain farm developments will not require a development application

RDP 2007-2013 Project Postcard

Measure 121

Modernisation of agricultural holdings

Measure 123

Adding value to agricultural products

Beneficiary: Chris Zahra

Sector: Livestock - Ovines



“... without this aid, it was very difficult for me to modernise and expand my holding. The investments committed have improved my efficiency and also my sustainability. For example the “ice bank” expedites the cooling process of milk, thus reducing my energy costs and process time.”



Aim: To upgrade the holding to EU standards while improving efficiency and sustainability.

Background: Mr Chris Zahra, is a young full time farmer operating a livestock farm in the Virtu’ area. He is engaged solely in the livestock sector rearing a herd of 73 ovines. To improve his operation, Chris has invested in his holding and benefitted from Measures 121 and 123.

Investments: The M121 investment included farm restructuring to improve economic performance and animal welfare. Furthermore, the investment has also contributed towards more efficiency and a more sustainable environment.

Mr Zahra improved further his economic performance when he invested vertically in equipment to produce traditional Maltese cheeselets. The inception of Verdalat was the brainchild of Chris and his family. It is a brand of high quality Maltese cheeselets made out of 100% sheep milk. The implemented investment aided with M123 funds improved his production and quality of the traditional *gbejna*. Today Verdalat purchase from other farmers’ sheep milk to meet the demand for its cheeselets.

Results: Improved economic performance and animal welfare.

Future Plans: With additional investments, Mr Zahra would like to increase further the size of his herd and the production of cheeselets.

M121

Description of project/investment:

- Restructuring for improved production performance and animal welfare.
- Reservoir for water catchment.
- Milking parlour
- Building of manure clamp and cesspit for environmental improvement.

Total Project Budget M121.....	€58,817.00
RDP Support.....	€29,408.00
Aid Intensity	50%

M123

Description of project/investment:

- Refurbishing of existing facilities
- Installation of hygienic cladding
- Stainless steel cabinets for essicating cheeselets.
- Milk Analyser and Milk Cryoscopic Equipment
- Icebank

Total Project Budget M123.....	€42,995.00
RDP Support.....	€21497.00
Aid Intensity	50%



Focus On

The Role of the XLOKK Action Group Foundation

The XLOKK Action Group Foundation that was set up a few years ago by the Local Councils and Private Entities in the southern part of Malta implemented with success several projects in the region.

This Local Action Group (LAG), or as it known locally the GAL XLOKK saw its inception four years ago. The first action the LAG took was the enrolment of a company to identify the needs of the region. A consultation process using a bottom up approach was adopted and together with local stakeholders and residents throughout the region, a series of meetings took place. From the meetings held and collected information, a strategy was planned. The strategy was to address the local needs. In this process, stakeholders and residents alike participated and contributed towards the action plan. Ten measures were identified in the plan and all measures had to be implemented by the end of 2013.

March 2011 was a very active month for the LAG. During this month, the LAG launched its first Measure (Measure 313 - Encouragement of Tourism Activities). There were six eligible applications which proposed amongst other things the set-up of Leisure Parks and Heritage

Trails in the southern part of Malta. In late October, 2011, Measure 125 (Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture) was launched. There were eight Local Councils which benefited from €25,500 each.

In May 2012, the LAG launched three measures that are associated with LEADER 2007-2013. Measures 413.A3 (Promotion and Valorisation of Cultural and Traditional Activities) and 413.A8 (Sport Activities) were open calls. Nineteen beneficiaries benefitted from a total of €300,000. After a tendering process, the third measure, Measure 413.A1A (Communication and Branding of the Region), provided the LAG with a dedicated website for the XLOKK region, promotion for the XLOKK region, TV adverts, Billboard, Banners, etc.

During 2013, the remaining measures were launched. These measures provided assistance to both artisans and farmers. They also provided educational courses for children in the region, and supported embellishment projects for local councils. The LAG is actively participating with the Majjistral LAG in Measure 421 (Transnational Cooperation). The local LAGs are working with LAGs in Italy to promote a Mediterranean Diet

which addresses obesity and eating habits in the regions.

With the continuous cooperation between the LAG, the Board Members, the Paying Agency and the Managing Authority, the LAG XLOKK was able to successfully implement its strategy and action plan that was initiated four years ago. The results show that the XLOKK region has benefitted from over €2 Million in EU funds.

For the next programme (2014-2020), the LAG is convinced that it will continue to build on its experience and knowledge to deliver more benefits to the XLOKK region, benefits that are shared by locals and visitors to the region.

Christian Salerno
XLOKK Manager



Past NRN Activities

Participation in Casal Fornaro Festival 21st September 2013

The Managing Authority and National Rural Network set up a stand and its representatives distributed leaflets on RDP projects, measures and CAP-related information. Moreover, various general queries on opportunities for rural development funding were also answered. The DVD played during the event provided footage of projects that were financially supported with EU funding.



Participation in ENRD 'Youth and Young Farmers Workshop' - Brussels 11th - 12th December 2013

With the assistance and cooperation of the Managing Authority, Malcolm Borg, lecturer at the Institute of Agribusiness -MCAST and two students participated in the ENRD "Youth and Young Farmers Workshop" that was held in Brussels on the 11th - 12th December, 2013. Representatives from the ENRD presented the main findings of an ENRD youth initiative that was held earlier this year. The ENRD youth initiative considers how best to improve the ways in which rural youth and young farmers can benefit from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) support. It was established that the strategies that worked well included: the use of inclusive and open consultation, specific eligibility for young people, best practice competitions that were organized by rural networks, simplified administrative procedures with smaller project grants, training in project development and, most importantly, the inclusion of young people in the formulation of any related strategy. The participants also shared their experiences as young farmers. This meeting was a great opportunity for the participants to network with peers from a number of different European countries and learn from their experiences and best practices.

Evaluation Focus Group 18th October, 2013

The Managing Authority together with the Evaluation Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development organized a focus group on **"Establishing and implementing the Evaluation Plan for the 2014-2020 RDPs"**. The meeting was attended by members of the NRN monitoring committee, Paying Agency, Managing Authority and Evaluators.



The focus of the session was on lessons learnt namely about the set-up and management of monitoring and evaluation in the RDP 2007-2013 and on how these have been taken into account in the proposed content of the Evaluation Plan 2014-2020.



News and Upcoming Events



The *Rural Festivities Unit* participates regularly in Radju Malta 2 weekly programme “Nisġet Artna”. “Nisġet Artna” incorporates discussions about agriculture, animal rights and fisheries. This radio programme is broadcasted every Wednesday at 11.00hrs.

Launch of new Actions by LAGs



**Majjistral
Local Action Group
Action 413.8** Branding
and promotion
of the Majjistral Region



**Xlokk
Local Action Group
Action M411.A1B**
The Setting up
of a Tourist Hub



**Gozo
Local Action Group
GAGF 413.3**
Crafts Sector Support
GAGF 413.5
Improve Signposting
to sites of Interest
GAGF 413.6
Festivals and Events

Appointments



Sharlo Camilleri
Head Paying Agency

Sharlo Camilleri graduated in Agriculture and Geography and has just completed his Master of Science in Environmental Management and Planning. He joined the public service in 1997 as an Agricultural Technician, involved in agriculture research and the provision of advisory services to farmers. He was subsequently promoted to Senior Agricultural Officer and was responsible for the management and administration of the Soil Information System as well as the provision of technical support in the implementation of EU Policies and Directives related to the Environment and Agriculture.

After nine years in research and advisory services, in 2006, he joined the Paying Agency and has been involved in all the operations of the Agency. In the position of manager, he was entrusted with the establishment of the Control Unit of the Paying Agency and was a key person in the restructuring of the Paying Agency in 2008. In 2009, he was promoted to Senior Manager and was responsible for the Control Mechanism of the Agency, including the inspections, registration of agricultural land in the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) and the Cross Compliance regime. In 2011, he was appointed Deputising Director and as responsible for the operations of the Paying Agency as well as the review of the EU Common Agriculture Policy.

In November 2013, Sharlo Camilleri was appointed as Head Paying Agency and is also a member of the MEPA Board since April 2013.



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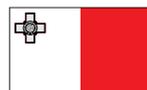
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Newsletter co-financed through Technical Assistance
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
Co-financing Rate: 75% European Union, 25% Government of Malta
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

