



Factsheet on the Rural Development Programme of the Basque Country 2014-2020

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) of the Basque Country was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, last amended in September 2025, presenting the priorities of the Basque Country as regards the use of the EUR 309 million of public funds available for the period 2014-2022 (EUR 119.8 million from the EU budget (EURI 7.5 million), EUR 59.7M of public funding; and 129M top-up). There was one amendment that extended the programming period by 2 years, until 31 December 2022, including two annual EAFRD allocations, as well as the recovery funds financed by the EU (EURI).

The RDP of the Basque Country focuses mainly on three priority areas. In order to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, 19 % of agricultural holdings will receive support to restructure and modernise their farms and 3 % of farms will receive support to enable young farmers to start their businesses. Around 1.000 farmers will receive funding to participate in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chain distribution, and the region will support training for around 20.000 participants. Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry are also considered important, with 16 % of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and landscape. Almost 53 % of the rural population will be covered by the LEADER local development strategy, which is expected to create around 530 jobs.

Support for rural development, which is the second pillar of the common agricultural policy, provides Member States with an EU financial envelope managed at national or regional level under co-financed multiannual programmes. In total, there are 118 programmes in the 28¹ Member States. The Rural Development Regulation for the period 2014-2020 addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and the programmes clearly set out the objectives to be achieved. In addition, in order to better coordinate actions and maximise synergies with the other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), a Partnership Agreement has been concluded with each Member State, reflecting its overall EU-funded structural investment strategy.

This document outlines how the RDP addresses the challenges and opportunities facing the Basque Country. A table indicating the priorities and focus areas, their corresponding specific objectives and allocated budgets is provided in the annex.

¹ The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020; in accordance with the Withdrawal Agreement, support under Rural Development continues to apply in the United Kingdom during the 2014-2020 programming period.

1. STATE OF PLAY AND KEY CHALLENGES

The Basque Country covers an area of 7 234 km², of which 70 % are rural. The region is home to 2.2 million people, or 8 % of the Spanish population. The total area is covered 30 % by arable land and 55 % by forest area. The Basque Country consists of three historical territories or provinces. There are significant differences between the most urbanised coastal provinces (Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia) and Álava, which is very rural. Given the geography of the region, its rural areas are closely linked to urban areas.

A key socio-economic strength is the fact that, although agriculture and forestry account for only 0.5 % of total regional GDP, the two sectors play a key role in preserving the environment and landscapes, cultural heritage as the strategic agri-food sector.

The unemployment rate was 9.73 % in 2012. The ageing of the population, together with the abandonment of young people to urban areas, is seen as a major problem in the region. In addition, other shortcomings include the fact that the agricultural sector is dominated by farms without employees, the low qualification levels in rural areas, as well as the fact that the Basque Country is a high-mountain region that makes it difficult to mechanise agricultural and forestry processes.

2. HOW THE RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, the Basque Country RDP will finance measures under the six rural development priorities, with a particular focus on improving the viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture and promoting innovative farming technologies and sustainable forest management, as well as restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. The objective of each priority is briefly explained below.

Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

This cross-cutting priority will be addressed mainly through training support measures: almost 20 000 participants will be trained. 140 cooperation projects will also be supported in the context of the European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Competitiveness of agriculture and sustainability of forestry

In addition to the training support mentioned above, around 19 % of farms will receive funding for investments in restructuring and modernisation. Almost 3 % of farms will receive support for young farmers to start their businesses.

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

Under this priority, more than 4 % (around 1000) of farms will receive funding to participate in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chains.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Approximately 27 % of the allocated funds will be used for area payments to farmers applying management methods that are beneficial for the environment or climate, such as organic farming. Around 16 % of agricultural land will be under management contracts to improve biodiversity.

Resource efficiency and climate

Support allocated under this priority shall primarily facilitate the supply and use of renewable energy sources. Support shall be provided for agricultural and forestry land to contribute to promoting carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

The programme will finance local development strategies designed and implemented by Local Action Groups (LAGs) following the LEADER approach. Almost 53 % of the rural population will be affected by these local initiatives, which will also create around 530 jobs. In addition, the entire population of the Basque Country will benefit from new or improved ICT infrastructure or services.

The five most important RDP measures in budgetary terms (total public funding without additional funding) are:

EUR 64 million allocated to Measure 4: Investments in physical assets

EUR 35 million allocated to Measure 13: Payments to areas facing natural constraints

EUR 23 million allocated to Measure 19: LEADER

EUR 16 million allocated to Measure 10: Agri-environment-climate

EUR 13 million allocated to Measure 8: Forests

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the rural development programme of the Basque Country

Objective	Measure	Total public contribution in EUR	%
Priority 1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas²			
1A: Fostering innovation, cooperation and the knowledge base 6.59 % of RDP expenditure	01 knowledge		
	16 cooperation		
1B: Strengthening relations (with research, etc.) 140 cooperation projects	16 cooperation		
1C: Training 19.053 participants trained	01 knowledge		
Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management		47,313,383.00	18.46
2A: Economic performance, restructuring & modernisation 18.48 % of farms supported by the RDP Nr of agricultural holdings: 3.058	01 knowledge	453.122,00	0.18 %
	04 investments	32.736.163,00	12.77 %
	16 cooperation	220.402,00	0.09 %
2B: Generational renewal 2.81 % of farms with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers Nr of beneficiaries: 465	01 knowledge	1.302.213,00	0.51 %
	06 farm and business development	12.601.483,00	4.92 %
Priority 3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management		55,853,688.00	21.80
3A: Improving the competitiveness of primary producers 4.39 % of agricultural holdings are supported to participate in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations	01 knowledge	106.798,00	0.04 %
	03 quality schemes	3.676.698,00	1.43 %
	04 investments	47.204.350,00	18.42 %
	09 pipeline clusters	2.503.428,00	0.98 %
	16 cooperation	2.337.003,00	0.91 %
3B: Agricultural risk prevention and management	01 knowledge	25,411.00	0.01

² No financial allocation is indicated for priority 1, as expenditure is distributed among other focus areas.

Priority 4: Restoring, conserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry³		85,718,529.00	33.45
4a biodiversity	01 knowledge	280,601.00	0.11
5.04 % of forest or other wooded land under contracts	04 investments	3,596,375.00	1.40
15.75 % of agricultural land under contracts;	08 forests	2,010,058.00	0.78
4b water management	10 agri-environment-climate	25,161,350.00	9.62
0.51 % of agricultural land under contracts;	11 agricultural agriculture	6,627,001.00	2.59
0.76 % of forest land under contracts	13 AREAS WITH CONSTRAINTS	47,091,899.00	18.38
4c soil erosion and management	16 cooperation	951,245.00	0.37
0.51 % of agricultural land under contracts;			
0.76 % of forest land under contracts			
Priority 5: Resource efficiency and the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors		18,970,637.00	7.40
5a water efficiency	01 knowledge	60,836.00	0.02
7.34 % of forest areas to be converted to more efficient irrigation systems	10 AGRI-ENVIRONMENT-CLIMATE	1,490,471.00	0.58
	16 cooperation	0	0.00
5b energy efficiency	01 knowledge	6,316.00	0.00
	16 cooperation	190,252.00	0.07
5c renewable energy	01 knowledge	45,555.00	0.02
EUR 56 321 373 of investment in renewable energy production	08 forests	14,262,795.00	5.57
	16 cooperation	787,797.00	0.31

³ Priority 4 expenditure is programmed for the whole priority, not for individual areas.

5d reducing greenhouse gases and NH3	01 knowledge	742.00	0.00
	10 AGRI-ENVIRONMENT-CLIMATE	5.000	0.00
	16 cooperation	0	0.00
5e carbon conservation and sequestration 0.14 % of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon conservation or sequestration	01 knowledge	5,931.00	0.00
	08 forests	915,000.00	0.00
	10 AGRI-ENVIRONMENT-CLIMATE	1.073.103	0.42
	16 cooperation	126,839.00	0.05
Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas		47,719,183.00	18.62
6a diversification, small business creation and employment 2014 beneficiaries of training actions related to business creation and employment in rural areas	01 knowledge	123,609.00	0.05
	16 cooperation	36,227.00	0.01
6b boosting local development 52.59 % of rural population under local development strategies 530 jobs created (through LEADER)	01 knowledge	34,608.00	0.01
	16 cooperation	237,867.00	0.09
	19 leader	46,875,466.00	18.29
6c access to and quality of ICT (information and communication technology) 100 % of rural population benefiting from ICT 520 beneficiaries of training actions related to information and communication technologies in rural areas	01 knowledge	411,406.00	0.16
Technical assistance		679,245.28	0.27
Total public expenditure EUR		256,254,665.28	100