



Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Lower Saxony and Bremen/Germany

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Lower Saxony and Bremen was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015 and last modified on 10 July 2024. It outlines Lower Saxony's and Bremen's priorities for using the € 3.2 billion of public money that is available for the 9-year period 2014-2022 (€ 1.6 billion from the EU budget, including € 273 million transferred from the German envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 638 million of national co-funding plus € 963 million of additional national funding top-ups).

The RDP for Lower Saxony and Bremen focuses mainly on 3 priority areas. Under the first of these – restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry, 8.7 % of farmland is under biodiversity contracts and 2.8 % of farmland under funded contracts to improve water management. Secondly, for enhancing food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture, 130 public bodies receive support for coastal and flood protection. Thirdly, to address social inclusion and local development in rural areas, 42 % of the rural population is to be covered by local development strategies and 18 % is targeted to benefit from improved services or infrastructure.

Support for Rural Development is the 2nd Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), providing Member States with an envelope of EU funding to manage nationally or regionally under multi-annual, co-funded programmes. There are 118¹ different rural development programmes in the 28 Member States for the programming period 2014-2020, with 20 single national programmes and 8 Member States opting to have two or more (regional) programmes. The Regulation on support for rural development for the period 2014-2020 addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. Moreover, in order to coordinate actions better and maximise synergies with the other European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF), a Partnership Agreement has been agreed with each Member State highlighting its broad strategy for EU-funded structural investment.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities Lower Saxony and Bremen are facing are addressed by the RDP. In the annex, a table indicates the priorities and focus areas each with their specific targets, and their allocated budget.

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

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

In Germany rural development is implemented through 13 separate regional RDPs, which broadly correspond to the various *Länder* (but with two joint programmes). However, common elements to several regional programmes are presented in a national framework (NF) established at federal level. In addition to this, a National Rural Network Programme provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors in Germany.

Lower Saxony and Bremen cover an area of 48 130 km², of which 29 % is rural. Of the total area, agricultural land covers 67 % and the share of forest land covers 21 %.

With a population of 8.8 million inhabitants (2023), only 15 % live in predominantly rural areas, 64 % live in intermediate areas and 21 % in predominantly urban areas. The unemployment rate in Lower Saxony amounts to 5.7 % (2023) and in Bremen to 10.6 % (2023).

Of the agricultural area (2 579 754 ha in 2020), 72.3 % is arable land and 26.7 % is permanent grassland. Permanent crops cover the remaining 1 %.

There are 34 170 agricultural holdings in total. The average size is 72.7 ha which is significantly above the federal average of 63.2 ha (2020).

Environmental challenges in Lower Saxony and Bremen mainly relate to the decline of biodiversity and wind and soil erosion caused through the effects of climate change.

The coastal regions of Lower Saxony and Bremen face an increasing flood hazard due to climate change. Therefore, coastal and flood protection measures as well as the development of rivers, lakes and transitional waters become ever more important.

The region faces more and more the negative effects of an ageing society, the danger of depletion of individual rural areas due to population losses and migration of young people, especially young women – particularly in the south-eastern Lower Saxony.

2. How LOWER SAXONY AND BREMEN'S RDP ADDRESSES THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, Lower Saxony and Bremen's RDP funds actions under six out of six Rural Development priorities – with a particular emphasis on **restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry, on social inclusion and local development in rural areas, on competitiveness of the agri-sector and sustainable forestry, and on food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture**. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

This cross-cutting priority is given a focus on resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agricultural, food and forestry sectors. It is addressed mainly through measures supporting training and advisory services for people and businesses in rural areas: 6000 participants are expected to be trained and 155 cooperation projects are to be supported, including in the framework of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Besides the previously mentioned support for training, 640 farms (1.5 %) are to receive funding for investments – focused on better animal husbandry / welfare, high-quality production, and improved working conditions.

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

130 public bodies are projected to receive support for coastal and flood protection measures as well as the development of rivers, lakes and transitional waters. In addition, about 1 000 projects for the improvement of animal welfare receive support.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Lower Saxony and Bremen intends to improve biodiversity and water and soil management through support for various environmentally friendly management practices – including organic farming, lower use of fertilisers and pesticides and protection of habitats. 8.7 % of farmland is under contracts to improve biodiversity, 2.8 % under contracts to improve water management and some 2 % under contracts to reduce soil erosion. Support for environmental investments complements these annual area-based payments.

Resource efficiency and climate

The emphasis in Lower Saxony and Bremen is on investments in energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and ammonia (NH_3) emissions. About 112 projects receive support for investments.

Carbon conservation and sequestration is to be achieved through the implementation of agri-environment-climate related measures on 2 % of the agricultural area.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

42 % of the population is planned to be covered by local development strategies (drawn up by 40 Local Action Groups) under the LEADER approach and 18 % of the rural population is targeted to benefit from improved general services and infrastructure. 16 % of the rural population should benefit from new or improved broadband infrastructure.

The four **biggest RDP measures** in budgetary terms (total public funding including national top-ups) are:

- € 795 million allocated to Measure 7 (Basic services and village renewal in rural areas)
- € 641 million allocated to Measure 5 (Restoring agricultural potential damaged by natural disasters and catastrophic events and introduction of appropriate prevention measures)
- € 513 million allocated to Measure 10 (Agri-environment and climate measures)
- € 490 million allocated to Measure 4 (Investments in physical assets)

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Lower Saxony and Bremen (Germany)

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Target	Measure	Indicative public support	%
P1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas			0,00
1A Innovation, cooperation, knowledge			0,00
T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	5,28	M01 Knowledge	0,00
		M02 Advisory services	0,00
		M16 Cooperation	0,00
1B Research & innovation			0,00
T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	155,00	M16 Cooperation	0,00
1C Lifelong learning and vocational training			0,00
T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	6.000,00	M01 Knowledge	0,00
P2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests			425.846.647,21 13,28%
2A Farm performance			Total: 2A 425.846.647,21 13,28%
T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)	1,53	M01 Knowledge	4.997.500,00 0,16%
Total investment € (public + private)	506.043.031,61	M02 Advisory services	8.621.413,60 0,27%
Nr of holdings supported for investment in agricultural holdings (4.1)	640,00	M04 Physical Investment	384.102.733,61 11,98%
Nr of beneficiaries advised (2.1)	12.542,00	M16 Cooperation	28.125.000,00 0,88%
P3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture			680.653.841,07 21,23%
3A Competitiveness of producers			Total: 3A 39.400.000,00 1,23%
14: Percentage of farms receiving support for animal welfare measures	2,40	M14 Animal welfare	39.400.000,00 1,23%
Nr of beneficiaries	1.000,00		
3B Risk management			Total: 3B 641.253.841,07 20,00%
5.1: Number of public organisations and associations	130,00	M05 Restoring agricultural potential	641.253.841,07 20,00%
P4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry			1.057.866.479,77 33,00%
4A Biodiversity, HNV and landscapes			Total: P4 1.057.866.479,77 33,00%
T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	8,69	M01 Knowledge	95.717.133,25 2,99%
4B Water management			M04 Physical Investment 17.710.762,13 0,55%
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2,81	M07 Basic services	94.271.722,00 2,94%
4C Soil management			M10 Agri-environment-climate 482.909.735,36 15,06%
T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	1,96	M11 Organic Farming	271.577.947,73 8,47%
P4 All Focus Areas			M13 Areas with natural constraints 82.014.179,30 2,56%
Total investment € (public + private)	17.710.762,13	M16 Cooperation	13.665.000,00 0,43%
Area (ha) under agri-environment-climate (10.1)	247.975,00		
Area (ha) - conversion to organic farming (11.1)	21.000,00		
Area (ha) - maintenance of organic farming (11.2)	85.000,00		

P5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors				119.050.990,15	3,71%
5B Energy efficiency			Total: 5B	47.863.571,51	1,49%
T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€) (focus area 5B)	157.269.376,72	M04 Physical Investment	47.863.571,51	1,49%	
Total investment € (public + private)	157.269.376,72				
5D Reducing GHG and NH3			Total: 5D	30.608.820,44	0,95%
T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)	1,94	M10 Agri-environment-climate	30.608.820,44	0,95%	
Area (ha) (e.g. green cover, catch crop, reduced fertilisation, extensification...)	50.000,00				
5E Carbon conservation / sequestration			Total: 5E	40.578.598,20	1,27%
4.4: Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from peatland utilisation	3.750,00	M04 Physical Investment	40.578.598,20	1,27%	
Total investment € (public + private)	40.578.598,20				
P6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas				856.978.436,96	26,73%
6B Local development			Total: 6B	764.658.212,53	23,85%
T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)	42,00	M07 Basic services	608.928.546,06	19,00%	
T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)	18,20	M16 Cooperation	15.354.508,43	0,48%	
T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)	2,00	M19 LEADER and CLLD	140.375.158,04	4,38%	
Population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (7.1; 7.2; 7.4; 7.5.;7.6; 7.7)	1.500.000,00				
Population covered by LAG	3.000.000,00				
Number of LAGs selected	40,00				
6C ICT			Total: 6C	92.320.224,43	2,88%
T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	15,81	M07 Basic services	92.320.224,43	2,88%	
M20 TA				65.161.504,87	2,03%
Total public expenditure				65.161.504,87	2,03%
				3.205.557.900,03	100,00%