

## **ANNEX “A”**

### **National Environmental Framework**

A document prepared pursuant to:

Article 103 f(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1234/2007

Articles 57, 58, and 60 of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1580/2007

## Index

1. Foreword.....	3
2. Goals - The “Environmental Framework” .....	5
3. Requirements for the environmental actions selected under an operational programme .....	7
3.1 General requirements.....	7
3.2. Duration of environmental actions .....	9
4. Interventions .....	10
4.1 On Farm actions:.....	11

## 1. Foreword

This document is prepared in accordance with the requirements of Article 103f(1) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 and is being attached to the strategy and transmitted to the Commission.

The “Environmental Framework” project as drawn up in application of Article 103f of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007, is an integral part of the National Strategy for the sustainable operational programmes in the fruit and vegetable market.

Specifically this “*Environmental Framework*” project provides:

1. for the obligation that the operational programmes allocate at least 10% of the Fund specifically for environmental actions or, as an alternative, include at least two environmental actions;
2. for the option that if 80% of the producer organisation (PO) members implement one or more identical environmental commitment under the Rural Development programme, each one of these commitments shall be considered as a valid environmental action;
3. for the increase (to 60%), at the request of the producer organisation, in the maximum rate of co-financing of the actual expenditure incurred by the Community financed assistance for organic production within the PO’s operational programmes;
4. for the compliance of the levels of support for environmental actions with those applicable for similar measures in the Rural Development Programme,

in line with provisions of Article 60 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1580/2007;

5. for the adherence of the environmental actions to the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, including those of complementarity, coherence and conformity as set out in Article 5 of that Regulation, and to the Community strategic guidelines and the National Strategic Plans;
6. for the criteria to define and establish the support granted to environmental actions, in terms of financial compensation for “lost income” and additional costs resulting from the implementation of the action;
7. for a confirmation that the environmental actions must comply with the requirements for agro-environmental payments set out in the first paragraph of Article 39, paragraph 3 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.

## **2. Goals - The “Environmental Framework”**

The “Environmental Framework” provides for integrated initiatives:

- "On-farm" initiatives, i.e. initiatives implemented by operators, who are members of a Producer Organisation, at the stage of primary agricultural production;

The “Environmental Framework” is intended to be adopted and made operational by the producer organisations within their operational programme.

### **2.1 The strategic orientations**

The Maltese Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) describes the Maltese countryside as being characterised by small-sized and fragmented agricultural land and a rich diversity of semi-natural habitats that are often under severe threat from human activities. As a result of centuries of farming activity, including extensive terracing and moulding of the land, farmers have contributed immensely to the shaping of the rural landscape. Many habitats are rich in biodiversity but at the same time very fragile and can only be safeguarded if sustainable farm management practices are encouraged and adopted. All agricultural land in Malta is affected by significant natural handicaps, notably a low soil productivity, poor climate conditions and low and erratic rainfall patterns, that are not favourable to rainfed production and that together impose severe disadvantages on productivity. The pressures on natural resources, including water and soil have increased, especially in intensively managed farmed areas. The RDP highlights that the major opportunities to safeguard the Maltese countryside lie in the promotion of farming practices that either reduce the negative environmental impact of certain agricultural activities, including those

resulting from the use of external inputs that have a direct effect on the wildlife, or that contribute to conserving or enhancing the semi-natural habitats, the flora and fauna that they support, and the quality of natural resources, especially water and soil, in a manner that is also economically feasible to the farmer.

In this context, and also taking account of the specific characteristics of the fruit and vegetable production, the following priority environmental objectives for the environmental actions implemented under the operational programmes have been identified:

- a) *Soil preservation and maintenance of air quality;*
- b) *Preservation of water resources;*
- c) *Rational use of plant protection products;*
- d) *Efficiency in energy use;*
- e) *Rational waste management.*

The environmental themes are highly transversal and impose the differentiation of certain operational areas. These areas are distinguished through specialised specific interventions at holding level:

The interventions which refer to agricultural holdings (on-farm), require the use of an active logbook (still in its infancy stage) and are based on established guidelines according to eligible measures (see chapter 4.1).

### **3. Requirements for the environmental actions selected under an operational programme**

#### **3.1 General requirements**

- The environmental actions selected under an operational programme must:
  - respect the requirements for agri-environmental payments set out in the first subparagraph of Article 39(3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, and in particular go beyond:
    - a) the relevant mandatory standards established pursuant to Articles 4 and 5 of and Annexes III and IV to Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003
    - b) minimum requirements for fertiliser and plant protection product use established by national legislation;
    - c) other relevant mandatory requirements established by national legislation.
  - be conform to the National Environmental Framework;
  - be compatible and complementary with the other environmental actions implemented under the operational programme and, where appropriate, with the agri-environmental commitments, supported under the Rural Development Programme, implemented by the members of the producer organisation.
- Where an operational programme entails the possibility of combining different environmental actions and/or where the environmental actions selected under

the operational programme may be combined with agri-environmental measures supported under the Rural Development Programme, the level of support must take account of the specific income foregone and additional costs resulting from the combination.

- The support for the environmental actions selected under an operational programme, which is intended to cover additional costs and income foregone resulting from the actions, could be modified in case of amendments of the relevant reference level (i.e., the set of standards beyond which an environmental commitment must go).



### ***3.2. Duration of environmental actions***

In the case where the National Environmental Framework provides for an environmental action (other than investments) that is similar to an agri-environmental measure included under the Rural Development Programme (e.g. actions on aspects of emission prevention, landscape and habitat protection or soil protection, where the duration is an essential condition for its effectiveness, i.e. for attaining the expected environmental benefits), the same duration should apply as the similar agri-environmental measure concerned. All other environmental actions that do not overlap with those in the Rural Development Programme shall have a minimum duration of 4 years. In the case of investment actions, the acquired assets have to be utilised for at least 4 consecutive years.

In the case where the duration of the operational programme is shorter (i.e. 3 or 4 years) than the duration referred to above, the producer organisation should be obliged to continue the environmental action concerned in its subsequent operational programme, if this is necessary for attaining the duration applying for similar agri-environmental measures under the Rural Development Programme, except for duly justified reasons, and in particular based on the results of the mid-term evaluation of the operational programme provided for in Article 127(3) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1580/2007.

In the future, where relevant, this requirement will also apply to other environmental actions newly included in the National Environmental Framework.

## 4. Interventions

The environmental management in the production of fruit and vegetables proceeds in a stepwise progression throughout the phases of cultivation, delivery of the product to the processing/sale/storage installation, the product processing/storage/transformation and the product sale.

The environmental actions defined under the “National Environmental Framework”, which forms an integral part of the national strategy, are not mandatory. Producer organisations (PO) or associations of producer organisations (APO) can choose the actions that are the best suited to their specific conditions and implement them on a voluntary basis, within the vision of improvement of performance along the whole fruit and vegetable supply chain.

The non exhaustive list of eligible environmental actions and the specific conditions applicable to them are presented in Prospectus 1, which refers to the eligible interventions that can be implemented at farm level (on-farm).

This leaves freedom for the PO/APO to identify the most appropriate specific interventions, in conformity with the framework, to be implemented. Essential elements that PO/APO shall take into consideration, when proposing a specific action (that complies with the conditions indicated in Prospectus 1), the following:

- the action must lead to concrete environmental benefits;
- the action must go beyond cross-compliance requirements and the minimum and obligatory requirements established by the national and European Legislation;
- implementing the action must entail additional costs and/or income foregone, which can justify eligibility for support;

- compliance with the specific commitments entailed by the action proposed must be controllable.

#### ***4.1 On Farm actions:***

A non exhaustive list of actions that can be carried out at farm level is presented in Prospectus 1, which indicates:

- a) the justification of the action based on its expected environmental impact in relation to environmental needs and priorities as identified in section 2.1;
- b) the commitments entailed by the action;
- c) the criteria for calculation of the support.

**Prospectus 1. Non exhaustive list of environmental actions at farm level**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Calculation of Aid</b>
<b>Action 1 Integrated pest management</b>	The utilisation of non chemical alternative plant protection materials will contribute to reduce the risk associated with the use of chemical plant protection products on the natural resources (water, soils). It will also contribute to safeguarding the Maltese countryside that is rich in diversity of semi-natural habitats and biodiversity.	Use of non chemical alternative plant protection materials, products and/or methods according to a common protocol defined by the PO.	Additional costs incurred and income foregone. Standard rate per ha based on actual average additional costs of the POs. Maximum value for Annual crops=€400.
<p>Action 1 is eligible for support only if the following conditions are fulfilled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the action is supported by technical assistance (*), internal and/or external to the PO;</li> <li>b) a common protocol of the PO has been defined concerning the specific materials, products and/or methods to be applied</li> <li>c) a plan for controlling the application of the common protocol by the PO's members is defined and implemented.</li> </ul> <p>(*) by a qualified person or body (see action 5).</p>			

<b>Action 2 Integrated pest management in mushroom production</b>	Commercial mushroom production is an intensive cultivation. The use of plant protection materials, products and/or methods alternative to chemicals will contribute to reducing the chemical load on the environment.	Use of non chemical alternative plant protection materials, products and/or methods according to a common protocol defined by the PO.	Additional costs incurred and income foregone. Standard rate based on actual costs analysis. Parameter for calculation: surface (m <sup>2</sup> ). Maximum value (Euro) 2
<p>Action 2 is eligible for support only if the following conditions are fulfilled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the action is supported by technical assistance (*), internal and/or external to the PO;</li> <li>b) a common protocol of the PO has been defined concerning the specific materials, products and/or methods to be applied</li> <li>c) a plan for controlling the application of the common protocol by the PO's members is defined and implemented.</li> </ul> <p>(*) by a qualified person or body (see action 5).</p>			

<p><b>Action 3 Calibration of spraying machines</b></p>	<p>Traditionally Maltese farmers rely on pesticides to control pest attacks on their produce. However, the constant use of agrochemicals in agriculture continues to rise creating significant problems in terms of soil and water quality. The control and the correct functioning of spraying machines through calibration is a preventive measure in curtailing the consumption of chemicals. This contributes to protect the environment and biodiversity.</p>	<p>Submission of the spraying machine to control and calibration by a recognised body within the first year of the implementation of the action and then after 3 years. Only commitments going beyond the statutory requirements are eligible for support. The normal maintenance of the machinery is not eligible for support.</p>	<p>Cost for service of control and calibration.  Real cost (invoice)</p>
<p>Action 3 is eligible for support only in combination with Action 1</p>			
<p><b>Action 4 Soil Management</b></p>	<p>In Malta the spatial pattern of soil types in agricultural areas is very intricate and different soil types often occur within a single field or within a distance of few metres. The movement of excavated soil material from sites of construction in accordance to the Fertile Soil Act (Cap. 236) and the creation of 'made ground' or replenishment of eroded or shallow soils, and the associated impacts of progressive urbanisation, have contributed to increase the heterogeneity of the soils.. All Maltese utilisable agricultural land is affected</p>		

	<p>by one or more of the natural handicaps, including unfavourable soil chemical status and, low soil organic matter and unfavourable water regime as a result of an impermeable surface crust. Baseline measurements conducted in 2002-03 (MAL SIS, 2004) show that 46% of the land has a surface soil horizon characterised by a low content of organic matter.(less than 2%).</p>		
<p>Soil and plant tissue analyses for preparation and implementation of fertilisation plans.</p>	<p>Soil analysis and plant tissue analyses are imperative to the drafting of a proper fertilization plan aimed at avoiding over-fertilisation.</p>	<p>To undertake:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a pre-approved soil analysis and / or plant tissue analysis for the definition of a fertilisation plan;</li> <li>2) implementation of the recommended fertilisation plan.</li> </ol> <p>Soil analysis, tissue analysis and definition of the fertilization plan have to be performed by a recognised body.</p>	<p>Cost of soil analysis and / or plant tissue analysis, Real Cost (Invoice) (preparation and implementation of fertilization plan are requirements not eligible for support)</p>
<p>Action 4 is eligible for support only in combination with action 1</p>			
<p></p>			

<p><b>Action 5 Technical assistance and advice in support of environmental actions</b></p>	<p>A particular characteristic of the Maltese agricultural labour force is an aging farming population whereby for every farmer under the age of 35 there are 10 farmers of 55 years or above. This trend is expected to continue in the future as no large influx of young farmers is expected. As regards the educational background in agriculture, the majority of farmers – 11,135 farmers out of the total 14,113 or 78.9% – have only practical experience gathered in the field during their work. Only 535 or 3.8% of the total workforce declared to have undergone ‘basic’ training or ‘full agricultural’ training. In this context technical assistance and advice can be crucial for the effective implementation of certain environmental actions and the effectiveness of those actions.</p>	<p>Use of technical assistance and/or advice on support of an environmental action.</p> <p>A description of the action must be provided, in order to specify that, for eligibility for support, the following requirement must be met:</p> <p>a. The action will complement (i.e. accompany and be associated with) other environmental actions included in the National Environmental Framework, which must therefore be included in the operational programme, and are specifically targeted to reinforce the effects of these actions. The actions concerned must be specified.</p> <p>b. The technical assistance, advice activities must be entrusted to additional (internal or external) qualified personnel.</p> <p>c. The operational programme must indicate the specific tasks that the additional qualified</p>	<p>Real cost (Invoice)</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------



		<p>personnel is required to perform. Moreover, similar actions will be excluded from eligibility for support under other parts of the Nations Strategy, and in particular actions aimed at promoting access to advisory services.</p>	
--	--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

