



## Factsheet on 2014-2022 Rural Development Programme for Slovakia

The Slovak Rural Development Programme (RDP) was formally adopted by the European Commission 13 February, 2015 and last modified on 27 April 2023, outlining Slovakia's priorities for using EUR 3,042 billion of public money that is available for the 9 year period 2014-2022 (EUR 2 276 million from the EU budget and EUR 766 million of national funding). The extended programming period includes 2 years of transitional period 2021-2022.

The programme is mainly focused on the increase of competitiveness of agriculture and forestry sectors (aiming to support investments on 2 150 farms and 800 food enterprises), whilst ensuring the appropriate management of natural resources and encouraging climate friendly farming practices, with around 20% of agricultural land managed to protect biodiversity, soil and/or water resources. The RDP also aims to boost the whole rural economy creating 900 jobs through investments in enterprises, including innovative cooperation projects, infrastructure and human resources via training, advisory services and local services to the population, including integration of marginalized communities.

Support for Rural Development is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, providing Member States with an envelope of EU funding to manage nationally or regionally under multi-annual, co-funded programmes. In total, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States. The RD Regulation 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 faced by Slovakia 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. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

The Slovak Republic spreads over an area of 49 036 km<sup>2</sup> of which around 48% is agricultural land and 40% is covered by forests. Agricultural land is composed of around 71% arable soils and 28% permanent grassland; 65% of agricultural land is classified as affected by natural constraints limiting its production potential. Slovakia has 5,4 million inhabitants, of which 88% live in the predominantly rural and intermediate regions which cover 95% of the Slovak territory.

Slovak agriculture is characterized by a dual farm structure, with a high proportion (80%) of small farms up to EUR 15 000 of standard output, and a small number of large farms (1 180) with standard output higher than EUR 250 000. All together, the agricultural production is characterized by low added value of primary agricultural production mostly oriented to cereals and oilseeds production. Although the Slovak agriculture and food industry are able to produce high quality products, increasing exports of raw primary agricultural production and imports of finalized food products result in only 65% of domestic production being processed in Slovakia. Labour productivity in agriculture and in the food industry is very low, respectively 46% and 39% of the EU average. The continuous

decrease of employees in agriculture ranks Slovakia among the countries with the lowest share of agricultural workers from total employees (half the EU average). The high forest coverage in Slovakia (40%) makes forestry an important sector in the rural economy, although the forest roads network needs substantial investments. The forestry sector is also concentrated on primary production rather than further processing and highly depends on the turnover (80%) from timber harvesting.

The Slovak countryside with its mountainous and sub-mountainous areas and lowlands and different climatic conditions is rich in biodiversity. The highly extensive agriculture leads in some areas to land abandonment and loss of grassland biotopes, 69% of which are not sufficiently managed. 20% of the agricultural area is of high nature value while Natura 2000 areas cover 16% of agricultural land and 46% of forests.

The unemployment rate in rural areas remains above the EU level (8,4%, EU: 6,3%). The marginalized Roma communities are mostly located in rural areas, where the offer of job opportunities is persistently low. Redressing the unfavourable situation will require investments in infrastructure, in diversification of the rural economy and in increasing human capital.

## 2. HOW THE SLOVAK RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

Slovakia is rich in natural and traditional heritage and natural resources which provide opportunities for more diversified agriculture, forestry and the rural economy (e.g. through rural tourism). The RDP support will promote innovative projects delivering new products, technologies, techniques or ways of working. One main objective will be to increase the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by supporting the investments bringing the higher added-value to the primary production and increasing the efficiency of the organisation of supply chain. In this way, the agricultural diversification with particular focus on the plant specialized sectors (e.g. fruits and vegetables) and animal sectors should create more resilient and productive agriculture with new jobs and alternatives for the agricultural diversification.

A second main objective will be the protection and maintenance of high nature value of agricultural and forestry areas, targeting the sustainable use of soils and water, and thus, providing more opportunities for high quality food production and creation of rural tourism activities including diversifying products and services outside from agricultural towards a variety of economic activities in rural areas.

In addition, the RDP will improve the economic and social life conditions of rural citizens through investments in better and new infrastructural network, including the broadband infrastructure. The LEADER approach should also help in better use of local resources and to enhance the ownership of investments and cooperation of local actors in integrating economic activities for creating new jobs and improving the quality of life.

In order to multiply the investments effect, around 1 940 persons will be trained and 32 operational groups will be supported linked to the European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability.

In 2020, as a response to the crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the Slovak RDP introduced exceptional, temporary support to the SMEs in food processing industry to an estimated 160 potential beneficiaries.

The Slovak RDP is centred on 6 Rural Development Priorities (Priority 1 knowledge transfer and innovation is incorporated into remaining 5 priorities), with the main priority being Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry.

### Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Under this priority the RDP includes support to **2 150** farms (8,47% of the total) for investments in the specialized plant (excluding cereals and oilseeds) and animal sectors, while simultaneously targeting resource efficiency (water, soil, energy) and GHG emissions.

The generational renewal will be enhanced by providing start-up aid support to **886** young farmers and development aid for **153** small family farms. These targets will be supported by knowledge transfer activities via vocational training, demonstration actions and research projects providing innovative solutions to increase sustainability and productivity of agriculture. The competitiveness of the forestry sector should be increased by building and/or modernizing **458 km** of forest roads, by investing in modern technologies including processing investments in **475** forestry holdings.

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

Around **800 food companies** will receive support for investments aimed to increase the added value of domestic production, as well as collective investments and integrated projects aimed to promote the horizontal and vertical cooperation of food chain actors.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Under this priority the RDP will **avoid land abandonment** (1,2 million ha targeted) and promote **organic farming practices** (150 000 ha will be supported), maintaining the farming activity in areas with natural and other specific constraints to farming. **Nearly 239 150 ha of agricultural land** will be under **voluntary agri-environmental and climate-related commitments by farmers**, who will also use related training and advisory services to better deliver the environmental and climate-related benefits. The resilience of forests against natural disasters will be increased by preventive and restoration actions against fire, biotic diseases and floods.

Resource efficiency and climate

This priority will focus on **the use of renewable energy resources**, mainly by processing the waste and biomass production from agri-food sector and forestry. Additional impacts on resource efficiency and climate are expected to result from the investment projects supported under other priorities.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

The investments into diversification of the rural economy beyond agriculture should create **700 jobs** through the implementation of local development strategies and an additional **200 jobs** in micro and small enterprises. Specific actions will promote the social integration of marginalized communities.

The **5 biggest RDP** measures in budgetary terms (total public funding) are:

- EUR 1 050 million allocated for Measure 4: Productive investments
- EUR 627 million allocated for Measure 13: Payments for areas with natural constraints and others specific constraints
- EUR 244 million allocated for Measure 8: Forestry
- EUR 223 million allocated for M14: Animal welfare
- EUR 163 million allocated for Measure 11: Organic farming

**Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Slovakia**

Focus Area and Target	Measure	€ Total public	%
<b>Priority 1: Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas<sup>1</sup></b>			
<u>1A: Fostering innovation, cooperation, knowledge base</u> <b>2,79%</b> of RDP expenditure	01 knowledge		
	02 advisory		
	16 cooperation		
<u>1B: Strengthening links (with research, etc.)</u> <b>60</b> cooperations	16 cooperation		
<u>1C: Training</u> <b>1 940</b> participants	01 knowledge		
<b>Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management</b>		<b>656 210 046</b>	<b>21,57</b>
<u>2A: Economic performance, restructuring &amp; modernisation</u> <b>8,47%</b> of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge	1 011 481	0,03
	02 advisory	2 007 500	0,07
	04 investments	478 598 852	15,73
	06 farm development	2 295 000	0,08
	16 cooperation	6 197 896	0,20
<u>2B: Entry of skilled farmers, generation renewal</u> <b>3,62%</b> of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge	680 250	0,02
	02 advisory	480 000	0,02
	06 farm development	44 280 150	1,46

<sup>1</sup> No financial allocation shown for Priority 1 as the expenditure is distributed across other focus areas.

<u>2C+: Forestry performance</u> <b>475</b> forest holdings with RDP support	02 advisory	225 000	0,01
	04 investments	55 000 000	1,81
	08 forest investments	65 433 916	2,15
<b>Priority 3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management</b>		<b>660 093 972</b>	<b>21,70</b>
<u>3A: Improving competitiveness of primary producers</u> <b>0,57%</b> of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge	983 040	0,03
	02 advisory	157 500	0,01
	04 investments	399 928 190	13,15
	14 animal welfare	223 825 642	7,36
	16 cooperation	34 700 000	1,14
<u>3B: Farm risk prevention and management</u> <b>220</b> participants in professional training and advisory services in the field of risk management and prevention	01 knowledge	372 100	0,01
	02 advisory	127 500	0,004
<b>Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>1 245 536 032</b>	<b>40,85</b>
<u>4A: Biodiversity</u> <b>25,10%</b> of agricultural land under contracts <b>2,72%</b> of forestry land under contracts	01 knowledge	1 039 149	0,03
	02 advisory	942 500	0,03
	04 investments	101 840 432	3,35
	08 forest investments	177 717 458	5,84
<u>4B: Water management</u> <b>24,70%</b> of agricultural land under contracts <b>1,18%</b> of forestry land under contracts	10 agri-environment-climate	151 863 244	4,99
	11 organic farming	163 415 853	5,37
	12 Natura 2000 & WFD	8 296 000	0,27
<u>4C: Soil management</u>			

<sup>2</sup> Expenditure under Priority 4 is programmed for the priority as a whole, not for individual focus areas.

<b>20,65%</b> of agricultural land under contracts <b>1,18%</b> of forestry land under contracts	13 areas with natural constraints	627 707 690	20,63
	15 forest-environment	7 713 702	0,25
	16 cooperation	2 000 000	0,07
<b>Priority 5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors</b>		<b>18 915 216</b>	<b>0,62</b>
<u>5C: Renewable energy</u> <b>€ 30 M</b> total investment in renewable energy production	01 knowledge	127 680	0,004
	04 investments	14 673 119	0,48
	06 farm development	370 766	0,01
	16 cooperation	3 000 000	0,10
<u>5E: Carbon conservation / sequestration</u> <b>0,01%</b> of agricultural and forest land under contracts	02 advisory	60 000	0,002
	08 forest investments	683 650	0,02
<b>Priority 6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas</b>		<b>357 424 883</b>	<b>11,75</b>
<u>6A: Diversification, SMEs and job creation</u> <b>200</b> jobs created in supported projects	01 knowledge	116 300	0,004
	06 farm development	66 715 325	2,19
	16 cooperation	1 000 000	0,03
	21 covid-19 crisis	3 662 214	0,12
<u>6B: Local development</u> <b>31,26%</b> of rural population covered by local development strategies <b>10%</b> of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures <b>700</b> jobs created in supported projects	07 basic services	139 500 000	4,59
	19 LEADER and CLLD	146 431 042	4,81
<b>Technical Assistance</b>		<b>106 833 299</b>	<b>3,51</b>
<b>Total public expenditure €</b>		<b>3 042 013 450</b>	<b>100</b>