



## **Factsheet on 2014-2022 Rural Development Programme for Calabria**

**March 2025**

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Calabria was formally adopted by the European Commission on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015, outlining Calabria's priorities for using about € 1.45 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 + 2021 and 2022 (about € 903 million from the EU budget and additional financial resources of national co-funding). The programming period has been extended for 2-years, to 31 December 2022 (payments allowed until 31 December 2025) and included two annual EAFRD allocations as well as the EU financed recovery instrument (EURI).

Calabria's RDP is putting particular emphasis on actions related to restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems as well as improving the competitiveness of the farm and forestry sectors. Over 27% of the agricultural land is expected to come under management contracts supporting biodiversity and the same percentage applies to the agricultural land expected to be under contracts to improve soil management, while almost 23% of the agricultural land will come under management contracts supporting better water management. To improve the competitiveness of farmers, almost 2 600 farms are expected to receive support to restructure or modernise their farms and 1 265 young farmers will be granted business start-up aid. Calabria's RDP will contribute to social inclusion and economic development in rural areas by bringing improved broadband infrastructure to about 15% of the rural population in rural area and by creating 450 new jobs, while almost 70% of the rural population will be concerned by participatory local development strategies.

Calabria's RPD has adopted a multi-regional fund as a financial instrument to support investments which are expected to be financially viable and do not give rise to sufficient funding from market sources.

Furthermore, the RDP will support the beneficiaries most affected by the consequences of the COVID 19 health crisis, with a dedicated measure.

Support for Rural Development is the 2nd 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 UK left the European 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). The new RD Regulation 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 Calabria is 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 budgets.

## **1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES**

In Italy, rural development is implemented through 22 separate RDPs – one at national level and 21 regional RDPs (including "less developed", "transition" and "more developed" regions). In addition, the National Rural Network Programme provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors in Italy.

Calabria is a region of the south of Italy, classified as a less developed region. It covers a total area of 15 222 km<sup>2</sup> (with over 740 km of coastline) of which agricultural land covers 49%. There are about 2 million inhabitants in the region which translates into a population density of roughly 128 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. The region is classified 96% as rural area (rural and intermediate) and over 93% of the total regional Utilised Agricultural Area is currently classified as Less Favoured Areas (mountain area and area with natural constraints in equal share). The regional unemployment rate is almost 20% and youth unemployment reaches almost 54%.

The average size of the almost 138 000 Calabria farms is 4 hectares and 42% of the farms are below 1 hectare (actually, 43% of farms produce just for self-consumption) and 5.5% of the head of the agricultural holdings are below 35 years old. The regional Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) is around 549 250 hectares. Main agricultural crops are tree crops covering almost 46% of the regional UAA, arable crops (mainly cereals for the production of grain and vegetables), permanent grass and pasture. Olive trees represent the most important tree crop: Calabria is the second olive oil producing region in Italy after Puglia, representing 28% of the Italian olive oil and 26.6% of the total Italian productions of olives. The production of citrus fruit is also important in Calabria, with PGI clementine, high quality citron and a particular kind of bergamot orange only grown in the Region. Vineyards cover 4% of the tree crops. There are around 6 800 organic agricultural holdings in Calabria, i.e. 5% of the total regional agricultural holdings and 17.7% of the regional UAA is dedicated to organic production (in particular olive oil).

Calabria is 41% covered by forests and woods, (65% is private) and is the third timber producing region in Italy. Renewable energy sources represent 35% of the energy produced by the region. Data on the use of fertilisers in Calabria show far lower use than the national average (high input concerns only 12.1% of UAA). Calabria has 3 national parks, 1 regional park, 6 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within 179 Sites of Community Importance.

Heavy erosive rain and steep slopes are causes of landslides and floods, a serious threat in the region, which ranks in the highest category for population at risks of landslides. Wood fires constitute also a serious threat: Calabria has one of the highest incidences of fires in wooded land among the Italian regions. Tackling this set of critical issues is the main environmental challenge for Calabria.

## **2. HOW CALABRIA'S RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES**

In addressing the challenges, Calabria's RDP will fund operations under all six Rural Development priorities, with a particular emphasis on Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry as well as improving the competitiveness of the farm and forestry sectors. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

### **Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas**

The region is allocating almost 4% of the financial resources for actions related to this priority, with particular focus on advisory services. Knowledge transfer will address the

training, information and advisory needs of the agricultural, food and forestry sectors as well other land holder and SMEs in rural areas as concerns a number of topics related to the 3 cross-cutting objectives of innovation, environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation, agro-climate environment and animal welfare commitments, organic farming as well as the start-up for young farmers and for non-agricultural activities in rural areas and digital literacy. Over 10 365 places are expected to be made available in training courses.

As concerns innovation, 130 projects will be supported to strengthen the link between agriculture, food and forestry sectors and research and innovation, 9 of which will be under the European Innovation Partnership.

### **Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry**

Given the ageing farmer population and the small size of agricultural holdings in the region, the RDP will support the start-up of more than 1 250 young farmers and investments and modernisation in more than 2 500 farms. The RDP will also support the diversification of farms in order to create new income opportunities, for instance through the development of holiday, social and school farms and small processing plants. . Finally the forest sector will also be supported through investments in forestry technologies and infrastructures for the handling, first processing ("prior-industrial" level) and marketing of forest products.

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

Under this priority, Calabria will promote quality products also through the participation of 400 agricultural holdings in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chain and the support of about 12% of the Calabria agro-food holdings for development, processing and marketing of agricultural products. The RDP will also support prevention actions against floods, which are expected to cover 100 000 hectares.

### **Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry**

Under this priority, Calabria will focus on environmentally friendly operations and practices, with a particular emphasis on soil erosion and biodiversity: over 25 % of agricultural land will be under contracts to combat soil erosion (1.06 % for forest/other wooded area), a serious threat for the Region, and over 27% to support biodiversity (1.06 % for forest/other wooded area). Moreover around 23% of agricultural land will be under contracts to improve water management (1.06 % for forest/other wooded area). Land preservation and safeguard of natural resources (in particular, water and soil) will be pursued through actions geared to coping with environmental problems and challenges in the different rural areas.

Around 22% of the total allocated EAFRD amount to the RDP will be granted to farmers for organic farming commitments, 7% for using environment/climate-friendly land management practices and 7% to support to areas facing natural constraints. Over 115 000 hectares of farmland will receive support to either convert or maintain organic farming.

### **Resource efficiency and climate**

Under this priority, RDP Calabria will pursue water efficiency in agriculture through investments in irrigation targeting 7.8% of the irrigated land and the supply and use of renewable sources of energy through a total public and private investment of almost €5 million.

The RDP will also pursue carbon conservation and sequestration mainly by supporting afforestation, the improvement of the resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems, the increase in organic content of the soil through environment/climate-friendly commitments. In this regard, the Region targets almost 13% of farm and forest

land to be under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration or conservation.

### **Social inclusion and local development in rural areas**

The main actions of RDP Calabria under this priority refer to create basic services in rural areas. This concerns first of all broadband infrastructure with around € 18 million allocated public expenditure in order to allow around half of the rural population to benefit from new or improved broadband services/infrastructures (this amount increases to about € 25 million when including also other ICT services, investments in alternative public transport, active ageing and welfare/social care services). It also includes support to the start-up of non agricultural activities with particular focus on their innovation content, and to support for Local Development Strategies through LEADER Local Action Groups, which should cover 70% of the rural population.

Thanks to the operations programmed under this priority, 450 additional jobs will be created (250 through LEADER).

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

- € 395 million allocated to measure 11 (Organic)
- € 387 million allocated to measure 4 (Investments in physical assets)
- € 139 million allocated to measure 10 (Agro-environment climate)
- € 130 million allocated to measure 13 (ANC)

## Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Calabria

Target	Measure	€ Total public	%
<b>Priority1: Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas<sup>1</sup></b>			
1A: Fostering innovation, cooperation, knowledge base 1.83 % of RDP expenditure	01 knowledge		
	02 advisory		
	16 cooperation		
1B: Strengthening links (with research etc.) 146 cooperation projects	16 cooperation		
1C: Training 10 365 participants trained	01 knowledge		
<b>Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management</b>		<b>391 812 869</b>	<b>27.37%</b>
2A: Economic performance, restructuring & modernisation 1.87 % of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge	1 157 751	0.08%
	02 advisory	368 600	0.03%
	04 investments	194 906 425	13.62%
	06 farm / business development	10 953 255	0.77%
	08 forest	4 528 904	0.32%
	16 cooperation	9 825 000	0.69%
	M21 COVID-19 crisis	6 124 000	0,43%
2B: Generational renewal 0.82 % of holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers	01 knowledge	1 145 384	0.08%
	02 advisory	284 297	0.02%
	04 investments	107 883 454	7.54%
	06 farm / business development	54 635 800	3.82%
<b>Priority 3: Food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management</b>		<b>127 091 775</b>	<b>8.88%</b>
3A: Improving competitiveness of primary producers 0.22 % of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations 10.05% of the total regional food sector holdings receiving support for investment for the development, processing and marketing of agricultural products	01 knowledge	1 020 000	0.07%
	02 advisory	123 142	0.01%
	03 quality schemes	14 909 210	1.04%
	04 investments	48 849 801	3.41%
	09 Producer groups/ organisations	000 000	0.00%
	14 animal welfare	44 899 054	3.14%
	16 cooperation	566 441	0.04%

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

3B: Farm risk prevention and management Agricultural area benefiting from investment for the prevention of floods: 100 000 ha	01 knowledge	11 124 000	0.78%
	05 restoring agric. potential	240 000	0.02%
<b>Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems in agriculture and forestry<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>676 968 179</b>	<b>47.30%</b>
4A Biodiversity 23.03 % of agricultural land under contracts 1.06 % of forest/other wooded area under contracts	01 knowledge	2 600 000	0.18%
	02 advisory	2 990 080	0.21%
	04 investments	2 315 957	0.23%
4B Water management 23.03 % of agricultural land under contracts 1.06 % of forest/other wooded area under contracts	07 basic services	1 025 084	0.07%
	08 forest	27 027 552	1.89%
	10 AEC	113 970 148	7.96%
	11 organic farming	395 515 529	27.63%
4C Soil erosion and management 25.85 % of agricultural land under contracts 1.06 % of forest/other wooded area under contracts	13 ANC	130 487 823	9.12%
	16 cooperation	000 000	0.00%
<b>Priority 5: Resource efficiency and shift to low carbon and climate resilience economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors</b>		<b>92 457 081</b>	<b>6.46%</b>
5A Water efficiency 7.75% of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation systems	01 knowledge	340 000	0.02%
	02 advisory	600 826	0.04%
	04 investments	30 275 710	2.12%
5C Renewable energy Total investment in renewable energy production: € 6 754 291,16	01 knowledge	340 000	0.02%
	02 advisory	150 413	0.01%
	04 investments	1 948 496	0.14%
	06 farm / business development	1 612 107	0.11%
	07 basic services	1 000 000	0.07%
5D Reducing GHG and NH3 26.61 % of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions	01 knowledge	400 000	0.03%
	02 advisory	550 413	0.04%
5E Carbon conservation and sequestration 13.19 % of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration or conservation	01 knowledge	2 000 000	0.14%
	02 advisory	484 297	0.03%
	08 Forests	28 681 816	2.00%
	10 AEC	23 713 000	1.63%
<b>Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas</b>		<b>108 261 120</b>	<b>7.56%</b>
6A Diversification, creation of small enterprises and jobs	01 knowledge	560 000	0.03%

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

157 jobs created in supported projects	02 advisory	133 880	0.01%
	06 farm / business development	2 149 999	0.15%
	07 basic services	7 306 531	0.51%
	16 cooperation	1 922 135	0.13%
6B Fostering local development <u>69.99 %</u> rural population under local development strategies <u>250 jobs</u> created (via LEADER)	19 LEADER and CLLD	77 311 185	5.40%
6C Access to and quality of ICT 14.76 % of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT)	01 knowledge	440 000	0.03%
	07 basic services	18 437 388	1.29%
<b>Technical Assistance</b>		<b>48 530 701</b>	<b>2.42%</b>
<b>Discontinued measures (measure 113)</b>		<b>198 000</b>	<b>0.01%</b>
<b>Total public expenditure €</b>		<b>1 445 319 731</b>	<b>100%</b>