



Factsheet on the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022 of La Rioja

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) of La Rioja was officially adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015 and last amended on 2 March 2023. It presents La Rioja's priorities as regards the use of the EUR 248,1 million of public funds available for the period 2014-2022 (close to EUR 96,3 million from the EU budget, EUR 90,3 million from national co-financing and over EUR 61million from additional national funding top-ups).

The main objective of the RDP is to enhance the viability of farming and forestry and the region will therefore give investment support to modernise and restructure around 14 % of the farms in La Rioja. In addition, 4.6 % of farms will receive start up aid for young farmers to launch their businesses. Nearly 18 000 places will be offered in training courses and thirty cooperation projects will be supported. The RDP will also promote conservation and the protection of the environment, including more efficient use of resources and contribution to climate change reduction. 46.6 % of irrigated areas will receive support to improve water efficiency, while 30 % of agricultural land will be covered by a management contract to prevent soil erosion and desertification and more than 27 % to protect biodiversity. Under LEADER, local action groups will develop local initiatives that will affect 86% of the rural population and create 140 new jobs. 77.7 % of the population in rural areas will benefit from improved basic services and infrastructures.

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, there are 118 programmes in the 28 Member States¹. The Rural Development Regulation for the period 2014-2022 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 provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities La Rioja 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. TITLE AND KEY CHALLENGES

¹ The United Kingdom 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

In Spain, rural development is implemented through 18 different RDPs – one at national level and seventeen at regional level. However, common elements to the programmes are presented in a national framework. In addition, the National Rural Network Programme provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors in Spain.

La Rioja covers an area of 5 045 km², of which agricultural land covers 41.7 % and forest land 28.7 %. The primary sector is important in La Rioja as it contributes almost 5 % to gross added value and 7 % to regional employment. The predominant crops in terms of Final Agricultural Production are vegetables, especially mushrooms (34.4 %), fruits (31.1 %) and vines (17.8 %).

La Rioja is the least populated Autonomous Community of the Spanish Peninsula (318.647 inhabitants in 2014) and the second smallest in terms of geographical area. It suffers from an ageing population above the national and EU average, as well as from depopulation of less dense settlements. More than three quarters of the municipalities count less than 500 inhabitants. Unemployment rate is 20 %, but almost half of the young people between 15-24 years are unemployed (2013 figures).

Riojan farming suffers from certain shortcomings, including the limited size of farms (50 % of farms are less than 5 ha; the average physical size of farms is 22.5 ha), which makes it difficult for farmers to sell their products. However, agricultural activity is essential to avoid land abandonment. Consequently, one of the key challenges for this programming period will be to improve the competitiveness of farms whilst supporting environmentally sustainable agricultural systems and landscapes.

2. WILL THE RDP FROM L TO RIOJA ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?

To address these challenges, the RDP of La Rioja will finance actions under the six rural development priorities identified, with a particular focus on “Promoting the competitiveness of agriculture and the agro-industrial sector”.

“Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry”. The focus of main priorities is explained briefly below.

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

During the programming period, La Rioja will support the development of innovative solutions through twenty operational groups of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) and offer 18 000 places in training courses targeting the agricultural sector.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Farm investments supported under this priority will aim at modernising and restructuring around 14.7 % of all farms in the region, while 4.6 % of farms will receive support for young farmers to launch their businesses.

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

The region will support 75 projects investing in agricultural holdings as well as processing and marketing of agricultural products. Around 10.4 % of agri-food industries will receive support.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Most funds under this priority will be used for agro-environmental operations, as well as

support for environment/climate-friendly forest investments. 27.5 % of the agricultural land will be under contract for biodiversity, 3.4 % for water management and 30.4 % for soil management.

Resource efficiency and climate

This priority will mainly address investments related to water efficiency so that 46.6 % of the region's irrigated area will switch to more efficient irrigation systems. 0.5 % of agricultural and forest land shall be subject to management contracts contributing to carbon conservation or sequestration.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

Under this priority, the region will support actions to improve basic services and village renewal operations as well as LEADER Local Action Groups and their Local Development Strategies. These strategies will address small investments related to the diversification of non-agricultural activities in rural areas and the reinforcement of basic services and small-scale collective infrastructure. Particular attention will be paid to improving the living conditions of the rural population and the creation of 140 new jobs and new business opportunities. The Local Development Strategies will cover 86.2 % of the population in La Rioja, and 77.7 % of the population in rural areas will benefit from improved basic services and infrastructures.

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

- EUR 97,5 million allocated to Measure 4 – Investment in physical assets
- EUR 42.4 million allocated to Measure 8 – Investment in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests.
- EUR 24.9 million allocated to Measure 10 – Agri-environment-climate
- EUR 19.8 million allocated to Measure 6 – Farm and business development (business start-up aid for young farmers)

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in La Rioja

Objective	Measure	EUR Total public	%
Priority 1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas¹			
1A: Fostering innovation, cooperation, knowledge base 8.25 % of RDP expenditure	01 knowledge		
	02 Advisory		
	16 cooperation		
1 B: Strengthen links (with research, etc.) 30 cooperation projects	16 cooperation		
1C: Training 18 000 participants trained	01 knowledge		
Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management		93 800 158	37,82
2A: Economic performance, restructuring & modernisation 14.66 % of holdings with RDP support	01 knowledge	2 240 000	0,90
	02 Advisory	7 7000 000	3,10
	04 investments	58 710 158	23,67
	16 cooperation	3 500 000	1.41
2B: Generational renewal 4.63 % of holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers	01 knowledge	1 900 000	0,77
	06 farm and business development	19 750 000	7,96
Priority 3: Food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management		23 500 000	9,48
3A: Improving competitiveness of primary producers 10.42 % of agri-food industries will receive support.	01 knowledge	400 000	0,16
	04 investments	23 100 000	9,31

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

Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry²		80 882 104	32,61
4a biodiversity	01 knowledge	1 450 000	0,58
2.25 % of forests/other wooded land under contracts	04 investments	1 000 000	0,40
27.54 % of agricultural areas under contracts	07 Basic services	1 225 000	0,49
	08 Forests	37 947 104	15,30
4b water management	10 Agri-environment-climate	24 900 000	10,04
3.43 % agricultural land under contracts			
2.25 % forest land under contracts	11 Organic farming	4 650 000	1,87
4c erosion and soil management	13 areas with limitations	6 710 000	2,71
30.36 % agricultural land under contracts		3 000 000	1,21
2.25 % forest land under contracts	16 cooperation		
Priority 5: Resource efficiency and shift to low carbon and climate resilience economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors		20 060 000	8,09
5a water efficiency	01 knowledge	150 000	0,06
46.67 % of woodland will switch to more efficient irrigation systems			
	04 investments	14 700 000	5,93
	16 cooperation	710 000	0,29
5e carbon conservation and sequestration	08 forests	4 500 000	1,81
0.55 % of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon conservation or sequestration			
Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas		29 705 000	11,98
6b promoting local development	07 basic services	9 175 000	3,70
86.17 % of rural population covered by local development strategies			
77.71 % of rural population with better services/infrastructure			
140 jobs created (via LEADER)	19 LEADER	20 530 000	8,28
Technical assistance		61 978	0,02
Total public expenditure in EUR		248 009 240	100,00

² expenditure under priority 4 is programmed for the priority as a whole, and not for each of the focus areas.