

European Commission approves the Åland Islands' Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Åland Islands, Finland, was formally adopted by the European Commission on 13 February 2015. It outlines Åland's priorities for using more than € 59 million of public money that is available from 2014-2020 (€ 20.7 million from the EU budget and € 34.7 million of national funding, plus more than € 3.7 million of additional national top-ups). The Åland RDP focusses on improving the competitiveness and structure of the agricultural sector, aiming to support investments on almost 14% of farms, the setting-up of 22 young farmers as well as training 150 people. The RDP also focusses on ensuring the appropriate management of natural resources and climate friendly farming practices. About 72% of agricultural land is expected to come under agri-environment-climate measures. Åland Islands will also focus on service innovations. Around 7 000 people, a quarter of the islands' population, will benefit from improved services.

Quote from EU Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan: "*One of the great strengths of our Rural Development concept is that we have core priorities, but it is up to each Member State or region to design programmes which suit their situation. This flexibility has allowed the Åland Islands to draw up schemes which address for example the competitiveness and environmental challenges which are perhaps unique to these islands.*"

Support under [Rural Development](#) (RD) is the 2nd Pillar of the [Common Agricultural Policy](#). It provides Member States with an envelope of EU funding to manage, at either national or regional level, multi-annual, co-funded programmes. In total, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States. The new [RD Regulation](#) for the 2014-2020 period addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities. Programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. To better coordinate actions 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.

For [more details, including of the mainland Finland RDP](#)