



Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme of England (United Kingdom)

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for England was formally adopted by the European Commission on 13 February 2015 and last modified on 24 August 2023. It outlines England's priorities for using the €4 056 million of public money that is available from 2014-2020 (€3 471 million from the EU budget, including €1 694 million transferred from the UK envelope for CAP direct payments, plus €495 million of national co-funding, plus €90 million of national funding top-ups).

The main objective is better management of natural resources and the wider adoption of farming practices, which are climate friendly. The aim is to protect 2.5 million hectares of farmland through environmental land management targeted to specific biodiversity and water objectives. 14,000 hectares of woodland will be planted. The productivity of farming and forestry will be boosted which will result in economic growth and more jobs. Support will target tourism, broadband infrastructure and renewable energy. The programme will promote genuine local economic partnerships and the Leader approach.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities faced by England are addressed by the RDP. In the annex, a table indicates the priorities and focus areas with their respective targets and budget.

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

England covers an area of 132 935 km² of which 85% is rural (defined as settlements of less than 10 000 people, open countryside and some sparsely populated/remote areas).

The total population is 53 million – of which 18% live in rural areas. Of the land area, 69% is farmland while forests cover 10 %.

The country faces many challenges regarding the environment and climate change.

Throughout rural England, there are many important semi-natural habitats for wildlife. However, due to changes in land use and new farming practices, these habitats are being fragmented. As a result, they are becoming less resilient to climate change and less viable in the long term.

More than 40% of priority habitats and over 30% of priority species are in decline. Just over a third of grassland types (as defined in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive) are in serious decline.

In addition, diffuse water pollution from agriculture continues to affect the natural environment and the objectives of Protected Areas and Good Ecological Status are not achieved for many water bodies.

Threats to tree health have increased with the globalisation of trade with a marked increase in the volume and diversity of plants and plant products entering the country.

This has increased the likelihood of plant pests and pathogens also being introduced, spreading through gardens and woodlands and potentially causing serious damage to either native flora or commercial crops.

There has been a failure to conserve and invest in natural capital assets. This is due to a lack of expertise in recognising and managing environmental risks. Opportunities within the farming and forestry sectors have been overlooked. In the long term, this brings greater costs and lower performance.

Relative to global competitors, productivity is low and falling. There is a problem of low incomes in the livestock, pig and poultry sectors where more than 20% of farms are losing money. In some sectors, farming is not commercially viable without subsidies. The Farm Business Survey has indicated that farmers are not aware of the importance of business skills.

The primary research sector is strong. However, there is limited applied research undertaken by the private sector. Research results are not always adopted by farmers. There has been a decline in research infrastructure and many research institutes have been closed. This has led to the fragmentation of research efforts and an absence of 'hubs' where private applied research can draw on the results of public research. There is a lack of a clear enabling framework laying out the path from public and private research to farmers and land managers.

The average age of farmers is relatively high (median age of 59). There is a lack of young people entering the industry. Older farmers tend not to retire. The age profile of owners and managers of woodland is different from that of the general population, with the majority aged over 45.

Woodland owners comprise a diverse group with widely differing attitudes to owning and managing their woods. 77% have holdings of less than 10 ha. These account for only 12% of the total woodland area.

As for the socio-economic context, the productivity of the rural workforce is relatively low. Compared to the country as a whole, a lower proportion of rural areas fall into the top performing 25% of districts whilst a higher proportion fall into the lowest performing 25%. The lack of a skilled workforce is a barrier to growth for rural firms. Limited access to superfast broadband remains a challenge for both businesses and households.

2. HOW THE ENGLISH RDP WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, the RDP will fund actions under all six Rural Development Priorities – with a particular emphasis on Priority 4 (agriculture and forestry ecosystems). The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge Transfer and Innovation

This cross-cutting priority will be addressed through training, advisory and co-operation measures (with a target of 113 co-operation operations), particularly agri-environment-climate actions. Support to set up EIP operational groups will be offered. The groups will focus on improving agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Increasing the productivity and efficiency of farming and forestry will focus on improving business performance. This will include helping farmers, forestry businesses and land managers to apply innovative practices, use new technologies, exchange knowledge and obtain advice and training. This priority will cover 8.2 % of farms. A specific new scheme, with a modest budget, will encourage young people to take up farming as a career. It will also support diversification away from farming and the creation of small businesses in rural areas.

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

Support will be given to improving animal health through a number of welfare projects in the livestock and dairy sectors. The projects will be geographically targeted: the animal health projects will deliver national objectives but will focus on areas particularly affected by endemic animal diseases.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

The RDP will target biodiversity, water quality and flood management benefits together. The aim is to protect 2.5 million hectares of agricultural land through environmental land management targeted to specific biodiversity and water objectives. Funding will also be provided to plant 14,000 hectares of woodland. New delivery arrangements will replace a number of existing schemes, building on and enhancing the Environmental Stewardship (ES), the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) and the Catchment Sensitive Farming schemes in the 2007-2013 programme.

Resource efficiency and climate

The programme will support investment aimed at improving resource efficiency, developing wood fuel supply chains and better managing water reservoirs in the event of floods and droughts.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

The RDP will support investment strategies developed at local level as well as targeted support in the agri-food and tourism sectors, alongside support for new and existing rural businesses across a wider range of sectors. The programme will also support limited strategic infrastructure investment in those areas that still do not have superfast

broadband and in rural renewables where this offers both economic growth potential and community benefit in addressing fuel poverty. Finally, as a funder of last resort, the programme will provide some limited support for non-agricultural skills and advice benefiting rural SMEs still facing barriers to accessing mainstream and commercial provision.

LEADER Local Development Strategies implemented by 80 Local Action Groups will have a focus on supporting rural jobs and growth. In terms of the overall balance of expenditure for LEADER, projects will directly support rural growth by, for example, creating and developing SMEs and improving the local rural economy.

The five biggest RDP measures in budgetary terms (public allocation) are:

- €2 761 million allocated for Measure 10: Agri-Environment Climate
- €506 million allocated for Measure 4: Productive and non-productive investments
- €174 million allocated for Measure 19: Leader
- €138 million allocated for Measure 20: Technical Assistance
- €92 million allocated for Measure 7: Basic services and village renewal

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the RDP of England

Target	Measure	Indicative public support	%
P1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas		0.00	
1A Innovation, cooperation, knowledge			
T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	0.99	M01 Knowledge	0.00
		M02 Advisory services	0.00
		M16 Cooperation	0.00
1B Research & innovation		0.00	
T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	113.00	M16 Cooperation	0.00
1C Lifelong learning and vocational training		0.00	
T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	7,500.00	M01 Knowledge	0.00
P2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests		107,395,853.00	2.65%
2A Farm performance		Total: 2A	107,395,853.00
T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)	8.20	M02 Advisory services	623,507.00
		M04 Physical Investment	105,236,011.00
		M16 Cooperation	1,536,335.00
P3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture		14,840,865.00	0.37%
3A Competitiveness of producers		Total: 3A	96,793.00
T6: percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (focus area 3A)	0.00	M16 Cooperation	96,793.00
3B Risk management		Total: 3B	14,744,072.00
PSTI3bFRF: Estimated area of restored agricultural production (ha)	6,170.00	M01 Knowledge	2,029,259.00
		M02 Advisory services	3,335,925.00
		M05 Restoring agricultural potential	9,279,055.00
		M16 Cooperation	99,833.00

P4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry			3,424,338,283.00	84.34%
4A Biodiversity, HNV and landscapes		Total: P4	3,424,338,283.00	84.34%
T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A)	11.15	M01 Knowledge	264,101.00	0.01%
T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	27.38	M02 Advisory services	24,157,706.00	0.60%
4B Water management		M04 Physical Investment	332,067,503.00	8.18%
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	23.22	M07 Basic services	32,941,742.00	0.81%
T11: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	7.69	M08 Forest	105,323,825.00	2.59%
4C Soil management		M10 Agri-environment-climate	2,838,288,507.00	69.91%
T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	25.09	M11 Organic Farming	34,615,647.00	0.85%
T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	3.85	M15 Forest-environment	49,482,463.00	1.22%
		M16 Cooperation	7,196,789.00	0.18%
P5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors			19,404,733.00	0.48%
5A Water efficiency		Total: 5A	10,622,176.00	0.26%
T14: percentage of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation system (focus area 5A)	99.44	M01 Knowledge	0.00	0.00%
		M02 Advisory services	0.00	0.00%
		M04 Physical Investment	10,622,176.00	0.26%
5B Energy efficiency		Total: 5B	542,276.00	0.01%
T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€) (focus area 5B)	1,355,691.00	M01 Knowledge	0.00	0.00%
		M02 Advisory services	0.00	0.00%
		M04 Physical Investment	542,276.00	0.01%
5C Renewable energy		Total: 5C	8,126,658.00	0.20%
T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€) (focus area 5C)	20,050,465.00	M01 Knowledge	0.00	0.00%
		M02 Advisory services	0.00	0.00%
		M04 Physical Investment	1,499,719.00	0.04%
		M08 Forest	6,626,939.00	0.16%
5D Reducing GHG and NH3		Total: 5D	113,623.00	0.00%
T17: percentage of LU concerned by investments in live-stock management in view of reducing GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)	0.01	M01 Knowledge	0.00	0.00%

T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)	0.06	M02 Advisory services	0.00	0.00%
		M04 Physical Investment	113,623.00	0.00%
P6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas			355,764,885.00	8.76%
6A Diversification, SMEs and job creation		Total: 6A	296,454,994.00	7.30%
T20: Jobs created in supported projects (focus area 6A)	8,100.00	M04 Physical Investment	62,930,868.00	1.55%
PSTI6ALEADER: Percentage of rural population covered by Local Development Strategies (Focus Area 6A)	85.00	M06 Farm and business development	59,378,201.00	1.46%
		M08 Forest	0.00	0.00%
		M16 Cooperation	610,070.00	0.02%
		M19 LEADER and CLLD	173,535,855.00	4.27%
6B Local development		Total: 6B	31,842,477.00	0.78%
T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)	3.51	M01 Knowledge	0.00	0.00%
		M02 Advisory services	0.00	0.00%
		M07 Basic services	31,653,263.00	0.78%
		M16 Cooperation	189,214.00	0.00%
		M19 LEADER and CLLD	0.00	0.00%
6C ICT		Total: 6C	27,467,414.00	0.68%
T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	1.60	M07 Basic services	27,467,414.00	0.68%
M20 TA			138,233,115.00	3.40%
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Total public expenditure			4,059,977,734.00	100.00%