

## **Ireland's Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission**

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Ireland was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015, outlining Ireland's priorities for using the € 3.92 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (€ 2.19 billion from the EU budget, including € 607 000 transferred from the envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 1.73 billion of national co-funding, plus € 3.17 million of additional national funding top-ups).

A central priority of the Irish RDP is restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. Three quarters of the total funding is allocated to this priority, targeting over 1 million hectares of agricultural area. More specifically, for each of the three focus areas, around 20% of agricultural land will be put under contract, contributing to increased biodiversity, better water management and preventing soil erosion. In addition, almost 10% of the Irish agricultural holdings will be restructured and modernised. Another 3% of holdings will benefit from support specifically targeted at young farmers. Around 111 600 training places will be created for farmers to increase their knowledge and skills. LEADER support is expected to create over 3 000 jobs in rural areas.

Welcoming today's approval, EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan stated: *"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. And we see a good example of this today where the Irish programme is aiming in particular to address environmental concerns. I am particularly interested to see the measures aimed at young farmers, as this is a strong investment in the future of rural Ireland."*

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 multiannual, 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, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. It put also emphasis on networking activities at EU and national level. 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.