

Croatia's Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The Croatian Rural Development Programme (RDP) was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Croatia's priorities for using € 2.3 billion of public money that is available for the period 2014-2020 (€ 2 billion from the EU budget and € 0.3 billion of national funding).

The main objective of the RDP is to restructure and modernise the farm and food sectors. It is expected that nearly 2 000 holdings will receive investment support, more than 5 000 farmers will receive start up aid for the development of small farms and around 1 000 young farmers will get support to launch their businesses. The programme also puts emphasis on the restoration, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity. There will be support for the conversion to, and maintenance of, organic farming on nearly 60 000 ha. Agri-environment-climate measures will be implemented on a further 40 500 ha. More than one tenth of the funds will be earmarked for energy production from renewable resources. Around 42 000 people will be trained to increase the knowledge and skills of those working in farming and forestry.

Croatia will also implement the European Innovation Partnership. The programme aims to create more than 2 000 non-agricultural jobs through a process of diversification and development of small enterprises. Lastly, an estimated 30 % of the rural population will benefit from improved infrastructure.

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. We see a good example of this today with the Croatian RDP, and the way in which it seeks to encourage competitiveness of the agriculture sector by supporting young farmers, technological modernisation of farms and demining of agricultural areas while also stimulating renewable energy production."*

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 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.