



Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for the German Land Hessen

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Hessen was formally adopted by the European Commission on 13 February 2015 and last amended on 22 February 2022, outlining Hessen's priorities for using the € 900,9 million of public money that is available for the 9-year period 2014-2022 (€ 455.7 million from the EU budget, including € 78.4 million transferred from the German envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 222,7 million of national co-funding plus € 222,5 million of additional national funding top-ups).

The RDP for Hessen focuses mainly on two priority areas. Under the first of these – restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry – **13 % of farmland** and **2,35 % of forest land** is placed under funded contracts to **improve soil management** and **cut erosion**. Support for eco-friendly land management also helps maintain **habitats** and improve **water management**. Under the second main priority – social inclusion and local development in rural areas - **91% of the rural population** is expected to be covered by **local development strategies** and nearly **30%** to benefit from **new or improved broadband infrastructure** thanks to fresh investment.

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, 118¹ programmes are being implemented in all 28 Member States. The RD Regulation for the period 2014-2020 addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. 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.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities Hessen 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 budget.

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

Member States with regional programmes, like Germany, may submit for approval a national framework containing common elements for the regional rural development programmes (RDPs).

In Germany rural development is implemented through 13 separate regional RDPs, which broadly correspond to the various *Länder* (but with two joint programmes). However,

¹ The UK left the Union on 31st January 2020; in accordance with the Withdrawal Agreement support under Rural Development continues to apply in the UK during the 2014-2020 programming period.

elements common to regional programmes are presented in a national framework (NF) established at federal level. In addition to this, a National Rural Network Programme provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors in Germany.

Hessen covers an area of 21 115 km², of which 16 % is urban, the rest being categorised as "rural" or "intermediate" areas (where 52,4 % of the total 6.2 million population lives). Of the total area, forest land covers 41 % (one of the biggest shares in Germany). The unemployment rate is 3.9 % (2020).

Hessen is a Land in the centre of Germany which, socio-economically speaking, is divided into two halves. On the one hand, the south is economically strong and densely populated. The population has a high purchasing power and likes to buy high-quality food products. Wine is the most prominent regional product. On the other hand, the north is less prosperous than the south and suffers from the consequences of outmigration and other demographic change. Some villages are deserted and infrastructure is underfunded.

Despite the advantages of proximity to strong demand for high-quality food, Hessen's food and feed sector is relatively weak - dominated by part-time holdings and displaying a lower turnover per worker than the federal average.

Environmental challenges in Hessen relate to soil erosion, nitrate pollution in surface and ground waters and pressure on biodiversity.

2. HOW THE HESSEN RDP ADDRESSES THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, Hessen's RDP funds action under five out of six Rural Development priorities – with a particular emphasis on **restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry** as well as **social inclusion and local development in rural areas**. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

This cross-cutting priority is addressed mainly with nationally funded measures supporting **training** and **farm advisory services**, but also through support for cooperation in the framework of the **European Innovation Partnership** for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

More than **3 % of farms** receive funding for **investments** – focused on innovative potential, young farmers, organic farming, animal welfare and resource efficiency. This funding also covers land consolidation and agricultural access roads. This is complemented by support for the **European Innovation Partnership** for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, as well as for **farm diversification**.

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

Farmers receive support for **investments in processing and marketing**, with a special focus on products emanating from approved **quality schemes**. They are also funded to co-operate with others to develop **short supply chains** and **local markets**.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

13 % of farmland and **2,35 % of forest land** is placed under funded contracts to **improve soil management** and **cut erosion**. Support for eco-friendly land

management also helps maintain **habitats** and improve **water management**. Funding for **environmental investments** and for **co-operative projects** on **climate change** adaptation and mitigation complements these management contracts.

Resource efficiency and climate

The programme does not allocate funding directly to this priority. Nevertheless, resources allocated to other priorities help to achieve it. There are also contributions from **co-operative projects** to boost sustainability through the **European Innovation Partnership** and to **mitigate climate change**.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

The programme funds **Local Development Strategies** drawn up by the expected 24 Local Action Groups (LAGs) under the LEADER approach: these cover areas containing **91% of the rural population**. There is also support for other local development projects, **village renewal** and **infrastructure**. **240 jobs** are expected to be created and nearly **30% of the rural population** to benefit from new or improved **broadband infrastructure** thanks to fresh investment.

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

- € 190 million allocated to Measure 11: Organic farming
- € 188 million allocated to Measure 7: Basic services and village renewal in rural areas
- € 178 million allocated to Measure 4: Investments in physical assets
- € 163 million allocated to Measure 13: Support to areas facing natural constraints

Annex: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Hessen

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Target	Measure	Indicative public support	%
P1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas		0.00	
1A Innovation, cooperation, knowledge		0.00	
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)	1.48 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)	43.00 M16 Cooperation	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		142,139,549.00	15.78%
2A Farm performance		Total: 2A	142,139,549.00
T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)	3.37 M04 Physical Investment	130,089,549.00	14.44%
Total investment € (public + private)	646,900,000.00 M16 Cooperation	12,050,000.00	1.34%
Nr of holdings supported for investment in agricultural holdings (4.1)	572.00		
P3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture		48,742,124.00	5.41%
3A Competitiveness of producers		Total: 3A	48,742,124.00
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)	0.10 M04 Physical Investment	48,142,124.00	5.34%
Total investment € (public + private)	140,000,000.00 M16 Cooperation	600,000.00	0.07%
Nr of operations supported for investment (e.g. in agricultural holdings, in processing and marketing of ag. products) (4.1 and 4.2)	47.00		
Nr of agricultural holdings participating in cooperation/local promotion among supply chain actors (16.4)	17.00		
P4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry		405,716,885.00	45.03%
4A Biodiversity, HNV and landscapes		Total: P4	405,716,885.00
T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	15.74 M08 Forest	6,100,000.00	0.68%
4B Water management		M10 Agri-environment-climate	45,666,667.00
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	6.48 M11 Organic Farming	189,909,657.00	21.08%
4C Soil management		M13 Areas with natural constraints	163,740,561.00
T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	12.96 M16 Cooperation	300,000.00	0.03%
T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2.35		
P4 All Focus Areas			
Area (ha) under agri-environment-climate (10.1)	100,000.00		
Area (ha) - conversion to organic farming (11.1)	33,000.00		
Area (ha) - maintenance of organic farming (11.2)	88,500.00		

P6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas			292,509,289.87	32.47%	
6A Diversification, SMEs and job creation			Total: 6A	7,500,000.00	0.83%
T20: Jobs created in supported projects (focus area 6A)	17.00	M06 Farm and business development	7,500,000.00	0.83%	
Total investment € (public + private)	25,000,000.00				
Nr of beneficiaries (holdings) receiving start up aid/support for investment in non-agric activities in rural areas (6.2 and 6.4)	75.00				
6B Local development			Total: 6B	221,009,289.87	24.53%
T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)	90.53	M07 Basic services	123,783,422.00	13.74%	
T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)	22.45	M16 Cooperation	425,000.00	0.05%	
T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)	265.00	M19 LEADER and CLLD	96,800,867.87	10.74%	
Population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (7.1; 7.2; 7.4; 7.5.;7.6; 7.7)	620,000.00				
Population covered by LAG	2,500,000.00				
Number of LAGs selected	24.00				
6C ICT			Total: 6C	64,000,000.00	7.10%
T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	28.70	M07 Basic services	64,000,000.00	7.10%	
M20 TA			11,830,854.00	1.31%	