

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

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Scotland (UK) was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26th May 2015, outlining Scotland's priorities for using the € 1.68 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (€ 844 million from the EU budget, including € 335 million transferred from the envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 489 million of national co-funding, plus € 12 million of additional national funding top-ups).

A central priority of the Scottish RDP is restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. Approximately 80% of the total funding is allocated to this priority, targeting more than 6 million hectares of agricultural and forestry area through environmental land management targeted to specific biodiversity, water management and soil erosion objectives. More specifically, for each of the three focus areas, around 20% of agricultural land and almost 40% of the forest area will be put under contract, contributing to increased biodiversity, better water management and preventing soil erosion. In addition, restructuring and modernisation grants covering roughly 16% of Scottish agricultural holdings will be available with a view to boosting the productivity of farming and forestry and thereby creating economic growth and more jobs. Support for LEADER is expected to create over 550 jobs in rural areas. Moreover, almost 13 000 training places will be created to foster innovation, knowledge transfer, co-operation, more sustainable farming practices and stronger rural businesses.

Welcoming today's approval, EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan stated: "I'm pleased to see the Scottish RDP has been adopted. *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, where Scotland has put a particular emphasis on addressing environmental concerns. I look forward to hearing more about it when I visit the Highland Show next month.*"

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.