

Wales Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 approved by European Commission

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Wales was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26th May 2015, outlining the priorities of Wales for using the nearly € 1.13 billion of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-2020 (€ 655.8 million from the EU budget, including € 292.4 million transferred from the envelope for CAP direct payments, and € 470.2 million of national co-funding).

The RDP for Wales focuses mainly on restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry and enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests. With 56% of the support allocated to better management of natural resources and encouraging climate-friendly farming practices, the aim is to protect 700 000 hectares of farmland through environmental land management targeted to specific biodiversity, water management and soil erosion objectives. The productivity of farming and forestry will be boosted, which will result in economic growth and more jobs. Support will also target tourism and renewable energy as well as improving ICT and broadband infrastructure for about half a million people. In addition, the programme will promote genuine local economic partnerships and the LEADER approach, covering almost half of the rural population. Moreover, 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 Welsh RDP has been adopted and I look forward to hearing more about it when I visit the Royal Welsh Show in July. *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 Wales has been able to put forward a range of measures, that reflect the specificities of its rural areas in comparison to those of the rest of the UK. For the wider rural economy, I note the potential boost that improved broadband connectivity can provide to rural businesses.* "

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.