

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

The Bulgarian Rural Development Programme (RDP) was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Bulgaria's priorities for using € 2.9 billion of public money that is available for the period 2014-2020 (€ 2.4 billion from the EU budget, including € 28 million transferred from the Bulgarian envelope for CAP direct payments and € 0.5 billion of national funding).

Under the first objective of improved competitiveness and balanced development of the country's agri-food and forestry sectors, approximately 3 500 agriculture holdings and about 120 companies active in the forestry sector are expected to receive investment support. More than 4 000 small farmers will receive support to develop their farms and 1 630 young farmers will receive start up aid to launch their businesses. Under the second objective of protection and sustainable management of ecosystems, efficient use of natural resources and mitigation and adaptation to climate change, support for conversion and maintenance of organic farming will cover about 46 000 ha (out of which 23 000 ha will cover conversion to organic farming). Agri-environment-climate measures will be implemented on 113 000 ha and 60 000 ha in designated Natura 2000 areas will benefit from compensatory support. Under the third objective of socio-economic development of rural areas, more than 4 200 jobs will be created through diversification and development of small enterprises, and another 600 jobs via the implementation of local development strategies. One third of the rural population will benefit from improved infrastructure.

Welcoming today's approval, EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan stated: "I am delighted to see the approval of the Bulgarian RDP today. *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. For example, the Bulgarian programme has a specific thematic programme to address small farms. It will also boost competitiveness of fruit, vegetable and livestock sectors and address environmental concerns by supporting organic production.*"

Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva also welcomed the adoption of the Bulgarian programme: "*This investment gives the possibility for farmers to develop their business, to achieve better results from it and to create more jobs in agriculture. It pays special attention to funding for small and young farmers. It also supports organic farming, where demand is on the rise in Bulgaria and on the European market. Our key goal is to support farmers, but also to make sure there are more quality and affordable locally-made products available for Bulgarian consumers. I expect that this money will reach beneficiaries quickly, so that the wider public can feel the effect from the EU budget.*"

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.