

This series of informative fiches aim to present, in summary, examples of practices and approaches that EU Member States and Regions have put in place in order to implement their Rural Development Programmes in the current period. These examples want to contribute to the understanding of what has worked well and less well in the delivery of the 2007-2013 RDPs and as far as possible, draw lessons in the view of future improvement of the programmes.

Joint implementation of measures 111 and 114 through the “Catalogo Verde” in Emilia-Romagna



Needs addressed

The agricultural sector in the Emilia-Romagna region is amongst the most developed in Italy. Maintaining a high level of competitiveness requires constant updating about new products and process innovations. To this aim the region of Emilia-Romagna was seeking ways to make it easier for farmers to access support from measures 111 and 114. This would allow to better address their needs and to ensure a smooth spending of the financial resources allocated to these measures.

Keywords: Vocational training, consultancy services, information technology, targeting

EU Member State: Italy

Specific Location: The approach was applied region-wide

Implementing entity/ies: Emilia-Romagna region

RDP Measure(s): M111- Vocational training,
M114 – Consultancy services

Implementation Period: 2007-2013 EAFRD programming period



Key elements of the approach

The “Green Catalogue” is an online tool used by the Managing Authority of Emilia-Romagna to jointly implement measures 111 and 114. It serves as a platform where offer and demand for vocational training and consultancy services for farmers are brought together. Farmers can search online and book services of their interest with less bureaucracy while ensuring a faster and better targeted spending of the measures’ funds.



Objective

Improve the targeting of vocational training and consultancy services to farmers, in order to address their problems and maintain the competitiveness of the farming sector.



Main steps and features of the initiative or approach

- ◆ In order to access support from measures 111 and 114, farmers of the Emilia-Romagna region have at their disposition a full “Green catalogue” available online. Through this online platform potential users have an overview of the whole regional offer in vocational and regional training for the agricultural sector.
- ◆ The Managing Authority firstly evaluates the quality of offers for vocational training and consultancy services that are considered appropriate for the sector and deserve support, selecting only the ones that fulfill a set of minimum requirements. Suppliers are accredited training and advisory bodies of proven competence and the subjects included in the catalogue are only those coherent with the EU and regional policies.
- ◆ The offers are published in the form of contracts between private parties (farmers and suppliers). The contracts can be taken up between a given service provider and a farmer at provincial level. If a given course/service is not available in a province, the farmers can opt for accessing it in the nearest one.
- ◆ The cost of the contracts is defined a priori. The same applies for the reimbursement due to the purchase of the contract. The region manages the online system for displaying and booking the training and/or assistance services, showing also the contributions owed to farmers and to the service providers, therefore facilitating the flow of money.
- ◆ The “Green Catalogue” provides simplified application procedures with less administrative costs for the beneficiaries via a standard, single application form for measures 111 and 114 available online.



Main results and benefits

Thanks to the new approach in place:

- ◆ The targeting of vocational training and technical assistance services is much more accurate and reliable. The “Green catalogue” includes more than 300 accredited training bodies and 84 providers of technical assistance. The online platform allows the Managing Authority to easily monitor which activities are mostly requested, and the ones that are not;
- ◆ The number of beneficiaries of the measures 111 and 114 significantly increased compared to the past. 10 400 farms and 24 000 persons (employees, managers, etc.) have used it, overcoming the specific target that was set in the RDP (20 062 participants). More than €25 million have been paid by the Managing Authority as public funding to the involved beneficiaries;
- ◆ The joint implementation of the two measures addressed a substantial and diversified part of the farm sector at regional scale. The type of users is pretty diversified in terms of education (40% with primary-secondary grade); in terms of age (24% is younger than 40 years); and in terms of farm economic size, although medium-to-large farms with a yearly turnover exceeding €40 000 tend to be more represented than other types of farms.
- ◆ From the Managing Authority’s side, this approach allowed to achieve a faster utilisation of the financial resources available, reduction of administrative costs, and a far better monitoring of the areas, sectors and type of beneficiaries involved in the process. The monitoring results are currently being used in the design of the



next RDP for the programming period 2014-2020.



Lessons learnt

- The joint implementation of measures 111 and 114 had a positive overall impact by increasing the amount of requests for the provision of services by farmers and their associations.
- The topics that were frequently requested by farmers were: computing, new processes, quality, work security and animal welfare. This reflects both growing areas and areas where new mandatory requirements were recently introduced.
- Companies providing consultancy services received a higher number of contacts for information and signed more contracts compared to the past. The competition also lowered the average cost for providing such services and training. The cost was reduced up to 40% compared to the past.
- Merging the offer of measures 111 and 114 to potential users greatly diminished the request for training courses. This outcome may be due to the fact that in the past farmers had already attended a substantial amount of training, or it may indicate that they currently prefer shorter and highly focused consultancy services. As a result, many structures usually providing training activities are experiencing severe problems, and some have already been closed.
- Initially, the whole process proved cumbersome to implement, and required a series of interventions and adjustments to avoid red tape and speed-up the operation of the online booking system. This involved, for example, cutting a series of administrative steps usually needed before actually starting accessing the training/assistance service by the farmers, and simplifying other aspects of the administrative procedure (e.g. making each expense undertaken by the beneficiaries after the presentation of the online request eligible).
- The EU regulation proved too strict on some issues (e.g. setting constraints concerning the range of training and consultancy services that could be offered, and the time frame for providing them). In addition, eligible amounts for measure 114 proved in some cases too small for the larger-than-average size of many Emilia farms.



Additional sources of information

Web link: <http://agricoltura.regione.emilia-romagna.it/azienda-agricola/temi/formazione-1/catalogo-verde>

“Catalogo Verde”, implementation results :

<http://agricoltura.regione.emilia-romagna.it/azienda-agricola/temi/formazione-1/documenti-formazione/report-catalogo-verde-2008-2013/view>