

The Future of the Rural Development Policy post-2013

Debate on the National Rural Network in Portugal

In response to the challenge launched by the European Network for Rural Development (EN RD), the Portuguese Rural Network held a wide debate on the future of the Rural Development Policy.

This debate was organized around the questions posed:

- What should be the objectives of the future rural development policy?
- How can the policy instruments be made more effective?
- How can the management of the policy be improved?

The NRN coordination promoted several initiatives to inform and stimulate the participation of members of the National Rural Network in this debate, which occurred according to the following schedule:

Date	Event
27 April	Presentation at the meeting of the EAFRD National Coordination, raising awareness of national and regional entities involved in the management of RDPs
29 April	Presentation and awareness raising of the Technical Organisation Unit of the Rural Network for the debate
29 April	Meeting of the Coordination Council of the NRN to launch the debate among national members and people responsible for coordinating the Rural Regional Assemblies (RA)
30 April	Information published on the National Rural Network site (http://www.rederural.pt/)
	Electronic mail to the 194 members of the NRN to raise awareness for the debate within their organizations and in the RAs and to call for written contributions
17 May	Making of video with presentation of the debate by the Director General of the Office of Planning and Policy (GPP), to be used in the meetings of the NRN Rural Assemblies. The video is available at the NRN site.
19 -20 May	7 meetings of the NRN Rural Assemblies (Norte, Centro, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Alentejo, Algarve, Madeira, Azores) 91 regional or local members of the NRN were involved
21-25 May	Receipt of written contributions and drafting of summary for the final session. 7 contributions were received from RA (91 participating members), plus contributions from 13 NRN members (Agriculture, NGOs, Local Development, etc.) and one individual contribution.
26 May	Final discussion open to 250 people, organized into three panels according to the issues involved, with presentation of the summary of contributions sent by NRN members and comments from experts and stakeholders. The programme is available at the NRN site
31 May	Publication of information from the final discussion at the NRN site
02 June	Submission to the EN RD of the executive summary, reviewing all contributions received, indications regarding the organisation of the debate as well as the received contributions
04 June	Publication on the NRN site of the contributions issuing from the public debate

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Executive Summary of Portuguese Rural Network members' contributions

Question

What should be the objectives of the Future Rural Development Policy?

Given the future challenges for agriculture and rural areas, what should be the objectives of the rural development policy after 2013?

What role should RD play in the future CAP and in conjunction with other Community policies in order to make a significant contribution to future EU priorities?

Answers

1) Reasserting existing RD objectives and introducing new concerns by...

- providing conditions to existing economic activities in rural areas and encouraging diversification
- promoting the sustainability of the countryside
- creating conditions for people to settle in the countryside
- creating mechanisms that allow each region to be an active part in shaping its future and in implementing the solution to get there
- combating climate change
- supporting renewable energy and
- creating a system of risk management

2) Producing for the market in a sustainable way by...

- promoting the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry
- producing healthy and affordable food
- implementing local food production
- producing in an environmentally and socially sustainable way
- accelerating the transition to an efficient agriculture in terms of resource use, less dependent on fossil fuels and more resilient to climate change and other external pressures
- encouraging quality products (PDO, PGI, etc.)
- encouraging small farmers to maintain production
- encouraging market-oriented production
- supporting sectors with emerging potential (forestry, wine, fruit, vegetables)

3) Ensuring the sustainability of the countryside and enhancing the value of public goods produced there by...

- enhancing the multifunctionality of agriculture
- enhancing the value of public goods
- contributing to the preservation of habitats, landscape and biodiversity
- contributing to a balanced management of water and to the quality of water
- combating soil erosion
- managing and reclaiming land
- ensuring risk management mechanisms

- raising awareness among the general population for the multifunctionality of the countryside and agriculture in particular

4) Bringing life back to the countryside by...

- revitalizing the local economic fabric
- settling people, particularly young people
- improving quality of life in rural areas, by providing public and private services to populations
- bringing urban and rural areas closer
- providing and creating strategic skills for the countryside
- supporting sectors with emerging potential (rural tourism, ecotourism, health tourism, rural heritage)
- reactivating endangered activities and productions
- encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting SME and creating jobs
- enhancing the value of countryside related professions
- preserving the cultural identity of the territories

5) Integrating cohesion and governance objectives by...

- contributing to social and territorial cohesion
- meeting the diverse needs of the territories
- building capacity for governance and implementation of micro policies
- involving local stakeholders in the development process
- using bottom-up approaches

6) Meeting RD objectives will involve...

- a two-pillar structure for the CAP
- strengthening the 2nd pillar
- rural development financed by the 2nd pillar

Question

How to make Rural Development Policy instruments more effective after 2013?

How to best target support in order to obtain a more efficient distribution of resources, while maximizing the added value of the policy in implementing future EU priorities?

Answers

1) Maintaining the strategic framework and the comprehensive nature of the RDP, while strengthening the RD bottom-up approach and governance by...

- maintaining the European and national strategic approach;
- setting up the strategy based on strategic dialogue (using the bottom-up approach);
- increasing the autonomy and institutionalization of regional and local levels within the programming (planning and execution);
- establishing policy guidelines at the global level and implementing policy measures adjusted to the multiplicity and diversity of territories, by enhancing the value of the principle of subsidiarity and local capacities (UE/MS, National/regional/local);
- increasing levels of participation and accountability of RD actors in designing and managing policies (strengthening the principle of partnership);
- enhancing and restoring the LEADER approach;

- maintaining the comprehensive nature of the RDP with a focus on the production, environmental, social, cultural and training areas

2) The importance of financing - principles and envelope

- CAP funding mainly from the EU budget
- Allocation by MS based on objective criteria and principles of solidarity, ensuring fair treatment between old and new MS and reflecting the European importance of public goods associated with agriculture in each Member State
- Matching the funding envelope with the challenges facing the territories
- Prioritization of European public funding for European public benefits
- Strengthening the budgetary allocation of the RDPs
- Creating a specific national fund for RD
- Increasing the RD financial allocation by transferring from the social support budget, in order to consolidate the RD role in supporting employment, child care and elderly care in rural territories.
- Increasing the provision of support to the beneficiaries based on a clear public interest and in the production of public goods and services

Does experience to date show that the set of RD measures is suitable to achieve the policy objectives?

What role should LEADER play in the future?

3) It is necessary to adjust policy instruments (and co-financing rates) to the specificities of each territory, type of agriculture, agent and investment by...

- Making programmes flexible according to the specificities of each territory
- Setting up policies for areas with specific features (e.g. peri-urban areas, areas with handicaps, low-density areas, etc.)
- Adapting the instruments to the specificities of agriculture in each country or region
- Adapting the policy instruments to RD agents
- Adapting the policy instruments to the size and type of businesses and investments (small, medium/large, family/business, local markets, regional/global markets)
- Simplifying RDPs taking into account the ability of the Public administration to implement them and the specificity of the beneficiaries

4) It is necessary to promote the coordination between policies and policy instruments by...

- Improving the compatibility between the various policy instruments
- Ensuring the maintenance of market regulation (prices, quotas, entitlements, regionalised stocks at Community level)
- Linking investment support with market management instruments, namely production quotas
- Enhancing the integration and coordination between public policies (employment, social support,...)
- Integrating and coordinating measures and programmes
- Integrating and coordinating financial instruments

5) Encouraging partnership, cooperation, new forms of management by...

- Encouraging partnership and cooperation between economic agents in order to increase competitive capacity and ensure the resources required for technological modernisation and innovation
- Supporting forms of production associated with increasing scale and streamlining resources

- Strengthening the role of local public-private partnerships (e.g. Local Action Groups) in coordinating and implementing RD policies
- Promoting and encouraging new forms of management, by fostering the participation of local actors

6) It is necessary to include new support instruments or ways of managing to resolve persistent problems or new challenges by...

- Establishing mechanisms for land mobility
- Including activities currently not supported (e.g. salt production)
- Encouraging local food production
- Promoting social and technical support to the territories
- Increasing information and communication among rural actors, which is crucial to capitalizing on opportunities and improving available means
- Enabling support through LEADER for small and medium integrated projects, without having to resort to multiple sources of funding
- Enabling the development of innovative, higher-risk solutions

How can we develop and improve evaluation methods and indicators for:

- Better assessing the impact of policies
- Giving visibility to the results

without unduly burdening the MS and beneficiaries?

7) Accountability, simplification, local monitoring, good practices

- Accountability - All recipients of public money must be able to report on their compliance with the terms of the payment arrangements
- Simplification - Adopting simple monitoring tools that provide visibility of the investments made to the beneficiaries and the population in general
- Follow up the completed projects, by demonstrating and disseminating innovative experiences

Question

How can we improve the management of Rural Development Policy after 2013?

How can we best manage the policy, including better coordination with other policies, in order to ensure a consistent approach in rural areas?

Answers

1) Strengthening participatory approaches and networking by...

- enhancing partnership working
- promoting an effective interconnection between the Ministry of Agriculture and representative local actors
- creating and consolidating intervention models based on local representative partnerships
- using bottom-up type participatory methodologies, taking into account local specificities
- promoting networking among all stakeholders related to "the countryside" (by creating a European Observatory on Rural Policy for Sustainable Development with recipients in each country, based on a cross-border digital platform?)

2) Training and building capacity of people and agents in RD by...

- promoting the retraining of stakeholders
- training local development agents to promote cooperation and build capacity for discussing rural problems
- supporting and encouraging the establishment and proliferation of Rural and Popular Universities
- promoting the role of schools and education as a factor in rural development in order to get a new perspective, a new approach

3) Through coordination and complementarity...

- change the management policies and programmes in order to enable their complementarity
- pursue a more integrated approach that enables complementarity between policies and programmes (considering the possibility of resuming the multi-fund model)
- coordination and complementarity between the different EU funds at various levels and scales, ranging from the Community level to national, regional and local levels
- Coordination between public and private interventions

How could both content and implementation be simplified in order to facilitate execution and to build capacity of local actors, without compromising policy objectives and sound financial management?

4) Simplification, less red tape, decentralization, flexible rules and procedures

- The adoption of best solutions for each rural area lies on the flexibility of programmes and measures
- Simplifying support instruments, by preventing their proliferation and inefficient interconnection and focusing on the end result rather than on the formal grant application
- Using simple tools and instruments that are efficiently and transparently adjustable to a multitude of situations
- Simplifying and clarifying rules and procedures so that beneficiaries may get all possible benefits from the RD policy
- Promoting less red tape in the processes as a way to expedite the implementation of the outlined objectives
- Strengthening the role of planning and regulation for the public administration, while leaving operating functions to RD agents

5) Ensuring continuing and timely operations and evaluating new mechanisms by...

- minimizing transition stages between funding periods
- providing for regular and timely financial flows supporting the policies
- meeting deadlines, since this can lead to the success or failure of policy implementation and enforcement
- In the case of local development strategies, new payment mechanisms should be studied