



**NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2007-2013 – GREECE**



**CONTRIBUTION – SYNTHESIS OF OPINIONS
FOR THE EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION
ON THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) AFTER 2013**

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NRN	National Rural Network – GREECE
Contact Persons	Maria-Christina Makrandreou Evangelia Tzoumaka
E-MAIL	makrandreou@m nec.gr etzoumaka@mou.gr

Following the extra meeting of the Coordination Committee of the European Rural Development Network held in Brussels on April 14th, 2010 and the guidelines provided to the National Rural Networks, a questionnaire on rural development policy aspects was sent to all 73 members of the National Rural Network in early May 2010. Due to time constraints, a preliminary meeting with the NRN members was not possible to arrange.

The National Rural Network received proposals from nine members: four of them are active in the field of rural development (National Agricultural Research Foundation – {NAGREF}, Agricultural Products Certification & Supervision Organization – {AGROCERT}, Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives – {PASEGES}, Federation of Hellenic Food Industry – {SEVT}), two are administrations involved in the management and implementation of RDP measures (Implementing Authority of RDP “Competitiveness”, Implementing Authority of RDP - Diversification), the Directorate for

Agricultural Policy of the Ministry for Rural Development and Food, and two LEADER Local Action Groups (Pilio and Halkidiki).

The opinions cover a large range of issues: rural development aspects, Pillar I of CAP, technical and sectoral aspects for implementing RDP, topics of National and European interest.

The attached synthesis take into account opinions and proposals regarding especially Rural Development that could contribute to an EU-wide synthesis.

Given the limit of two pages synthesis, two versions were produced: one describing in detail the views of the actors and the other one with the main points.

1. WHAT SHOULD BE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FUTURE RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY?

- ▶ In the light of the future challenges for agriculture and rural areas, what should be the objectives of the rural development policy after 2013?

The main objective of rural development policy should remain the **sustainable development** of rural areas, including the **competitiveness of the agricultural sector** and the **rural economy**, **the environmental protection and the quality of life**.

Emphasis should be given to a) the sustainable management of natural resources and **“green” development strategies**, b) the **adjustment** of the European agriculture to the effects of **climate change**, c) the **job creation** through investment in new technologies for renewable energy , d) the development of high-productivity, environmentally-friendly activities based on certified **production systems using new technologies** and advanced organisational schemes for producers, e) the strengthening of the **multisectoral economy of the countryside**, f) the **social dimension** of the measures g) the **complementarity** of actions and interventions (public and private), and h) the **provision of public goods through agriculture** to compensate for the support provided to the European farmers (protection of the environment, sustainable management of natural resources, safe, high-quality food, etc.).

In addition, raising awareness among **European citizens about the CAP remains an important issue**, so that European taxpayers recognise the need to **preserve and strengthen the CAP**. Further information is also needed about the measures undertaken for **food safety**, and the **“public goods”** provided through agriculture to the European citizens and the countryside..

It is expected that the debate on “Public Goods and the agriculture,” will cover more explicitly the field of rural development and the wider benefits to the countryside.

As far as the target groups are concerned, views diverge: some actors, representing the agricultural sector, argue that the actions should be

addressed **solely to farmers**, whereas other actors believe that rural development concerns **everyone living and working in rural areas**, regardless of their relationship to agriculture.

► What place should rural development occupy, within the future CAP and alongside the other EU policies, to make a meaningful contribution to the future EU?

Rural development should be one of the **main objectives** in the context of the CAP and in relation with other EU policies on economic development and employment, environmental protection and social/territorial cohesion, since **agriculture and rural areas** are interdependent concepts that will be called upon to **face** the new challenges of climate change, renewable energy sources, water management, biodiversity, innovation, etc.

Rural development policy should be in accordance with the 2020 goals set up for European society and the European economy in the framework of the **Europe 2020 Strategy**.

Concerning the role of rural development in the context of the CAP, views diverge as well:

- ❖ On the one hand, the collective bodies of agricultural sector believe that a) rural development should **complement rather than replace the CAP**, and that the two pillars of the CAP should be complementary rather than antagonistic, and b) in the future CAP, any further transfer of resources from direct support to rural development should be blocked.
- ❖ In opposite, the actors involved in broader rural development believe that rural development should occupy a **central place** as regards the production of quality products, the agri-food sector, the preservation of the rural landscape, the protection of biodiversity, climate change and the maintenance of viable communities in the countryside.

Furthermore, **strict criteria** should be set for the EU definition of **rural areas** since the common use of OECD criteria (population density) don't

always facilitate the targeting of the measures. In this exercise, **socio-economic and/or biophysical criteria** could also be taken into account. Any new delimitation of rural areas will facilitate the definition of objectives and the complementarity of various European Union policies.

2. HOW CAN THE POLICY INSTRUMENTS BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE?

- ▶ How can support be better targeted to bring about the most efficient allocation of resources, and thus to maximise the added value of the policy in pursuit of the future EU?

EU policy must continue to be defined through **guidelines**, which each member state will specify and adapt to its own needs, having the ability to choose from a **toolkit of optional measures**.

The **area-based approach** and the **bottom-up approach** could constitute the basis for all the actions proposed in the framework of a rural development policy. Both these approaches can be used in all stages of programming and at all levels of policy governance, so that the **specific needs** of rural territories can be defined and prioritised in accordance to the subsidiarity principle.

The determinant factor should be the **efficiency and effectiveness** of the rural development actions, whereas the complete financial absorbance should be of secondary importance. In addition, the CAP budget must have a **flexible year-end accounting mechanism**, so that unused funds can be transferred and re-allocated to the following year.

The creation of **more simplified common agricultural policy-making instruments**, so that European taxpayers can better understand the relationship between support for agriculture, supply of the markets and payment for the public goods provided by farmers.

- ▶ In the light of experience to date, is the existing toolkit of measures adequate for meeting the policy objectives? What role should be played by Leader in the future?

It is considered to be adequate and sufficient at least **for the objectives** concerning the competitiveness of agriculture, the agri-food sector, and the local rural economy as well as the improvement of the quality of life in the countryside.

However, a **re-evaluation of the existing rural development measures** is needed, so that additional actions will enhance added value and multiplier effects. Priority should be given to actions that contribute to a direct, annual boosting of farmers income (e.g. actions similar to the compensatory allowance and environmental support aid). Measures that failed to achieve the expected results, like early retirement scheme or setting up of young farmers, should be **abandoned or downsized drastically**, and priority should be given to measures that aim to improve food-processing and marketing of products.

Measures to protect the environment and biodiversity, such as organic farming, sustainable use of forests, waters and land, and the development of high natural value of farming and forestry must be **encouraged**.

Additional measures providing technical and economic incentives to farmers, in order to **reduce the impact of farming to climate change** by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, improving carbon dioxide sinking, increasing the use of renewable energy sources and exploiting the capabilities of biomass and biological wastes to produce energy are necessary.

In relation to LEADER

The experience of the LEADER programme implementation has pointed out the willingness of local communities and the EU regions to contribute **to the shaping of EU policies, according to their own needs and priorities**, to ensure the maximum effectiveness and more effective allocation of resources.

However, after three periods of implementation of the LEADER model and philosophy, it would be useful to **re-examine the implementation of the methodology along with the role and function of the Local**

Action Groups. The implementation of Axis 4 highlights more and more the double and often bipolar nature of the Local Action Groups: on the one hand they are **administrative/management entities** active on the local level with a large number of tasks and requirements, and on the other hand they are development agents with high expectations for development initiatives and support (animation, technical assistance for meeting local needs) on behalf of the local actors and the local population. Furthermore, the structure of EU regulations, which interlink the objectives with corresponding Axes and Measures, could be re-examined in the context **of an area-based, targeted and coherent approach**. In this case, any former practices, imbalance in allocation of resources or requirements for change in administrative procedures should be re-examined and, if needed, be remedied by other instruments in the framework either of the CAP or other policies, always in accordance with the subsidiarity principle.

► How can we develop and improve the evaluation methods and the underlying common indicators to best assess policy impact and render results visible without putting too much burden on Member States and beneficiaries?

The new instruments (Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, on-going evaluation) are considered to be useful since they increase the **capacity of administrative bodies** in relation to monitoring and evaluation, and help the Managing Authorities to understand their role in preparing mid-term and ex-post evaluations.

However, **the evaluation milestones** should be re-examined. The experience to date has indicated that the evaluations, particularly the mid-term, have not been conducted at the right moment, so as to produce important findings and better conclusions.

In addition, equal importance should be given to **qualitative characteristics** of the evaluations and the relevant results. In the same context, flexibility should be provided to the Member States, so they can

choose to focus on certain impact indicators, depending on the particularities of their programmes.

Finally, and with the aim of reducing administrative costs, the **use of secondary data** that have emerged either from evaluations on the European level or regular reports of the member states, which cover issues directly or indirectly relating to rural development policy (e.g. environment, employment, etc.), should be capitalized in the context of the evaluations.

3. HOW CAN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE POLICY BE IMPROVED?

► How can the policy be better managed, including better coordination with other policies, for the purpose of ensuring a coherent approach in rural areas?

Single programming procedures for each period will help avoid any overlapping, and also ensure the complementarities of the funds.

Regular exchange and mapping of views, from the strategic planning to the policy evaluation, among all the actors involved, **both within the same policy** and also at **the level of coordination** with other policies, can ensure **better definition of objectives**, avoidance of overlapping and complementarities of the interventions/projects.

It is necessary to set up a **small, flexible structure** on the member state level (task force), which could highlight failures and necessary re-adjustments for the coordination of rural development policy with other policies.

Existing networks supporting the relevant policies could cooperate and **actively promote the necessity for complementarity among policies**, to the benefit of the target areas.

The **Agricultural Organisations** could contribute to the dissemination of **information** to the rural actors in a direct, simple and effective manner.

- ▶ In what ways can both the content and delivery be simplified, so as to facilitate implementation and empower local actors, without compromising the objectives of the policy and sound financial management?

It could be achieved through the **simplification of the regulatory provisions** at all levels of governance.

The separation of competencies and roles at the various levels of management and implementation, the avoidance of overlapping in competencies, the supervision and the more effective control of interventions could make an important contribution to the simplification of procedures.

A necessary requirement is to **reinforce the system of local partnership schemes**, so as to make them more reliable, effective and sustainable.