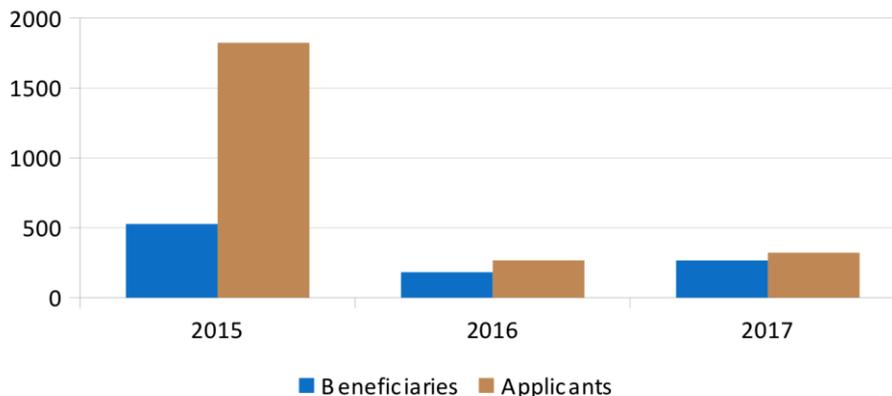




Generational Renewal – Lithuania

Lithuania is the only EU Member State where a majority (56.2%) of the population lives in rural areas. The farmers' population in Lithuania is among the most gender-balanced and close to EU average in terms of education¹, but only 6% of Lithuanian farmers are young (under 35), and over a third are aged over 64². Young farmers interviewed for a 2015 study were more likely to engage in field crops and grazing livestock farming than older farmers.³ Although young farmers participate in national policy measures supporting specific agricultural areas or offering crisis response, the EU-funded Rural Development Programme is the main mechanism for young farmers to receive dedicated financial assistance targeting them specifically.

Illustration 1: Number of applicants and beneficiaries of RDP measure 6.1.



In a 2015 study, young farmers in Lithuania pointed out that access to land and shortage of farm workers were among the pertinent obstacles. Access to credit was less pertinent compared to the EU average.⁴

Purchasing land and equipment

According to the National Paying Agency, the total public funding available for young farmers starting up (measure 6.1) under RDP 2014-2020 is 64.7 million euros. Since 2015, when the first round was funded, 2,409 applicants have requested 117.5 million euros.

1 Eurostat, *Farmers in the EU – statistics*. 2017.

2 European Commission, *Young farmers and the CAP*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

3 Ecorys et al., 'Young farmers' needs in Lithuania', 2015. Client: European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

4 Ecorys et al., 'Young farmers' needs in Lithuania', 2015. Client: European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.



Among them, 970 have been awarded funding, and 55% of the total funds for 2014-2020 have been disbursed (see the illustration).⁵

Young farmers can use this measure to buy land, crops, livestock and agricultural equipment. Many use it for equipment. According to the young farmers' lobby, the Union of Lithuanian Young Farmers and Youth⁶, most farmers accessing the funds and lauded as good practice examples already come from farming families.

Access to credit

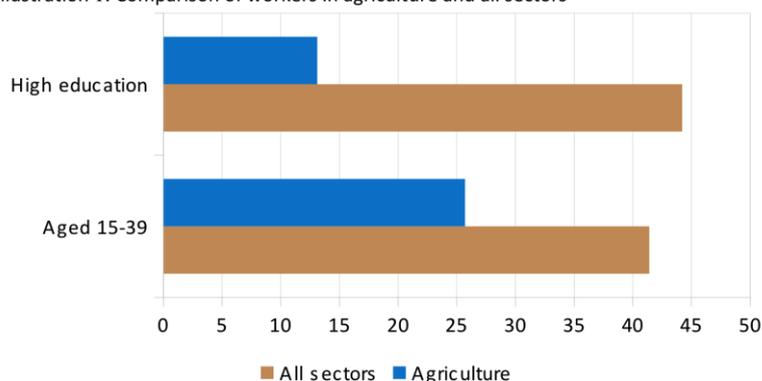
Whether or not a young farmer receives public sector assistance, fluctuation in their income pressures them borrow to even out financial flows. To help farmers, the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Fund offers guarantees for young farmers' loans to set up or expand their farm when they lack collateral. The Fund is supported by the RFP measure targeting youth. Young farmers who do not receive EU financial assistance can apply for an interest compensation from the Ministry of Agriculture. In the private sector, the main national banks offer credits for young farmers. Many of these schemes are designed with the expectation that a young farmer benefits from state or EU funding.

Access to knowledge

Access to knowledge was more pronounced as a bottleneck compared to the EU average in the 2015 study. Asked about their knowledge needs, four in five said it was likely that they would seek technological knowledge for the farm. They were more likely than their peers elsewhere in the EU to seek knowledge in resource and nature/ environment management. Like their counterparts elsewhere, young farmers obtained knowledge online, but even a higher share (nine in ten), far above the EU average, participated in workshops, seminars and conferences to obtain knowledge. Around a half found online learning opportunities. Lack of time and language barriers were the main obstacles.⁷

Acquisition of knowledge under RDP

Illustration 1: Comparison of workers in agriculture and all sectors



Young farmers receiving RDP funding without a vocational or university diploma in agricultural sciences must attend courses in management, environment conservation, and either crop or animal farming and must be completed within three years, which is not enough for a bachelor's degree.

5 National Paying Agency, 'Statistics', updated 28-01-2019, available at: <https://www.nma.lt/index.php/parama/lietuvos-kaimo-pletros-20142020-m-programa/statistika/9156#res>

6 Interview with Vytautas Buivydas, Chairman of the Union of Lithuanian Young Farmers and Youth, 07/02/2019

7 Ecorys et al., 'Young farmers' needs in Lithuania', 2015. Client: European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The distribution of education providers across the regions, the deadlines and differences in the availability of courses does not meet the needs of many young farmers in distant areas and, according to the young farmers' lobby, education is commonly treated as a formality rather than an opportunity.