



Factsheet on 2014-2022 Rural Development Programme for Cantabria

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) of Cantabria was formally adopted by the European Commission on 20 July 2015, last amended on 8 August 2024, and presents Cantabria's priorities for the use of the more than EUR 298 million of public funds available for the nine-year period 2014-2022 (EUR 136 million from the EU budget, of which EUR 8,5 EURI, and EUR 162 million of national co-funding).

The RDP for Cantabria focuses mainly on four priority areas. In order to improve the competitiveness of the farm sector, nearly 10 % of farmers will get support to restructure and modernize their farms and support for young farmers to launch their businesses will be provided for an estimated number of 560 beneficiaries. Restoring, preserving and enhancing of ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry is also considered important with 15 % of farmland to come under management contract to improve biodiversity. In addition, support will be provided to convert around 2 000 hectares to organic farming. More than 20 % of the rural population will be covered by a LEADER local development strategy and these strategies are expected to create around 83 new jobs. Almost 120 000 inhabitants of Cantabria will benefit from these local initiatives.

Support for Rural Development is the 2nd Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, providing Member States with an envelope of EU funding to manage nationally or regionally under multi-annual, co-funded programmes. In total, there are 114 programmes in the 27 Member States plus 4 programmes in the United Kingdom¹.

The Rural Development Regulation for the period 2014-2020 addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities and the programmes clearly set out the objectives to be achieved. In addition, in order to better coordinate actions and maximize synergies with the other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), a Partnership Agreement has been concluded with each Member State, reflecting its overall EU-funded structural investment strategy.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities Cantabria is facing are addressed by the RDP. In the annex, a table indicates the priorities and focus areas, each with their specific targets and their allocated budgets.

¹ The United Kingdom left the Union on 31 January 2020; in accordance with the Withdrawal Agreement, support under Rural Development continues to be implemented in the UK during the 2014-2020 programming period.

1. TITLE AND KEY CHALLENGES

In Spain, rural development is implemented through eighteen different RDPs (one at national level and seventeen at regional level). However, common elements to the programmes are presented in a national framework. In addition, the National Rural Network provides funding for networking of rural development actors in Spain.

Cantabria covers an area of 5 321 km², of which more than 90 % is rural. Of the total area, farmland covers 51 % and forestry 40.5 %. The region is home to 588 568 million people or 1.2 % of the Spanish population. Cantabria has a total of 102 municipalities: the seven largest municipalities cover 25 % of the area, but only cover 1 % of the population. This gives an idea of the marked rural character of the region and explains the uneven distribution of the population, with a density of just 110 inhabitants per square km.

Cantabria consists of three main and clearly differentiated geomorphological areas: the northern coastal area, the inland mountains, and the milder southern valleys. Relief strongly conditions land use in Cantabria and makes mechanization of agriculture and forestry processes difficult. Nearly 40 % of the land is above 700 meters of altitude and around 33 % presents steep slopes of 30 %, though significant differences may be observed between the more urbanized coastal municipalities and the rural and mountainous inland.

A key socio-economic strength is the fact that although agriculture and forestry represent only 2 % of the total regional GDP, the two sectors play a key role in conserving the environment and landscapes, cultural heritage as well as the strategic agri-food sector). The agricultural holdings in Cantabria are relatively small, with an average area of only 24,5 hectares, although approximately 79 % of the farms do not reach 20 hectares. Livestock farming is undoubtedly the most important agricultural activity in the region. With a total of 34 816 farms devoted to livestock production (4.14 % of the total number of Spanish livestock holdings), approximately 32 500 farms are geared towards meat production, while just over 2 000 farms are oriented towards milk production. The production of maize for animal feed is also noteworthy in the region, as almost 10 900 hectares are used for this crop.

The unemployment rate in the region was 17.7 % in 2012. The ageing of the population which, coupled with young people leaving for urban areas, may lead to land abandonment is considered a large problem in the region, the average age of active farmers in Cantabria is 49 years.

2. WILL THE RDP OF CANTABRIA ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?

In addressing these challenges, Cantabria's RDP will fund action under four Rural Development priorities – with a particular emphasis on enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests as well as restoring, preserving and enhancing of ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Farm viability, competitiveness of agri sector, promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable forest management.

This priority will be addressed mainly through measures to support some investments in physical assets as 9.82 % of farms will receive funding for investments focused on restructuring and modernization. More than 4 % of farms will receive support to enable young farmers to start their businesses.

Food chain organization, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture

Public support allocated under this priority will provide funding for farmers to participate in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chains. It is estimated that 15 % of agri-food industries in the region will benefit from investments in the processing and marketing of agricultural products. This will enhance the competitiveness of local producers and keep people in the rural areas.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Approximately 45 % of the funds allocated will be allocated to this priority through, for example, area payments to farmers implementing practices beneficial for the environment or the climate, such as organic farming. It is estimated that 27 350 hectares of agricultural land will be subject to management contracts to improve biodiversity. In addition, around 2 000 hectares are expected to be converted to organic farming by 2023.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

The programme will fund Local Development Strategies (LDS) drawn up and implemented by Local Action Groups (LAGs) under the LEADER approach. Nearly 120 000 inhabitants in rural areas will benefit from these local initiatives which will also create around 83 new jobs. In addition, 20 000 inhabitants in rural areas will benefit directly from new or improved rural services or infrastructure.

The five biggest RDP measures in budgetary terms (total public funding) are:

- EUR 84 million allocated to Measure 4: Investment in physical assets
- EUR 68 million allocated to Measure 13: Payments for areas facing natural constraints
- EUR 35 million allocated to Measure 19: LEADER
- EUR 32 million allocated to Measure 10: Agri-environment-climate
- EUR 29 million allocated to Measure 8: Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests

Annex 1: Indicative public support for the Rural Development Programme in Cantabria

| Objective | Measured | EUR Total public | % |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Priority 1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas¹ | | | |
| 1A: Fostering innovation, cooperation and the basis for 16 cooperation knowledge 0.27 % of RDP expenditure 1B: Research and innovation 16 cooperation 8 cooperation projects | | | |
| Priority 2: Farm viability, competitiveness and sustainable forest management | | 79 829 925 | 26,78 |
| 2 A: Economic performance, restructuring & modernisation 9.82 % of holdings with RDP support | 04 investments | 41 810 262 | 14,02 |
| | 14 animal welfare | 18 749 338 | 6,29 |
| | 16 cooperation | 759 115 | 0,25 |
| 2 B: Generational renewal 4.41 % of holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers | 06 farm and business development | 18 511 209 | 6,21 |
| Priority 3: Food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management | | 42 196 382 | 14,15 |
| 3 A: Improving competitiveness of primary producers 15 % of agri-food industries in the region will benefit from investments in the processing and marketing of agricultural products. | 04 investments | 42 196 382 | 14,15 |

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|---|---|--------------------|--------------|
| Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry² | | 134 290 387 | 45,05 |
| 4a biodiversity 13.35 % of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity or landscape. 4.34 % of forests or other wooded land will benefit from investments that support biodiversity. | 08 forests | 29 001 453 | 9,73 |
| | 10 agri-environment-climate | 32 014 667 | 10,74 |
| | 11 organic farming | 4 943 240 | 1,66 |
| | 13 areas facing natural constraints | 68 331 028 | 22,92 |
| Priority 6: Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas | | 36 060 094 | 12,10 |
| 6b promoting local development 20.73 % of rural population covered by local development strategies 3.45 % of rural population with better services/infrastructure 83 jobs created (via LEADER) | 07 basic services | 924 724 | 0,31 |
| | 19 leader and community-led local development | 35 135 370 | 11,79 |
| Technical assistance | | 775 472 | 0,26 |
| Discontinued measures | | 4 966 858 | 1,67 |
| Total public expenditure in EUR | | 298 119 118 | 100 |