



Factsheet on 2014-2022 Rural Development Programme for Region Veneto

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Region Veneto was formally adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015, outlining Veneto priorities for using the €1,566 million of public money that is available for the period 2014-2022 (€ 702 million from the EU budget, of which €51 million from the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument, € 859 million of national co-financing plus € 5 million of additional regional resources).

Veneto's RDP focuses on restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems. More than 84 000 hectares will be protected through environmental land management contracts targeted to specific biodiversity, water objectives and preventing soil erosion. In addition, almost 12 000 hectares of farmland will receive support to either convert to or maintain organic farming. In order to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the farm sector, nearly 109 000 training places will be created to promote innovation, co-operation and more sustainable farming practices. More than 5 000 agricultural holdings (including young farmers) will benefit from support to improve their economic performance, and restructure and modernise their farms. Finally, local development and economic diversification projects will deliver around 140 new jobs and 11% of the rural population will get access to improved ICT and broadband infrastructure. In addition, the region is supporting beneficiaries hit by the consequences of COVID 19 sanitary emergency with a dedicated measure as well as through the funds stemming from the 100% co-financed recovery instrument NextGenerationEU.

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, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States¹. The new RD Regulation for the period 2014-2022 addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. Moreover, in order to coordinate actions better and maximise synergies with the other European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF), a Partnership Agreement has been agreed with each Member State highlighting its broad strategy for EU-funded structural investment.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities Region Veneto 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 after the

¹ The UK left the Union on 31st January 2020; in accordance with the Withdrawal Agreement support under Rural Development continues to apply in the UK during the 2014-2022 programming period.

modification approved by Commission Implementing Decision (2024)3092 of 30 April 2024.

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

In Italy, rural development is implemented through 22 separate RDPs – one at national level and 21 regional RDPs. In addition, the National Rural Network Programme provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors in Italy.

Veneto is categorised as a "more developed" region. The region covers an area of 18 399 km², of which 95% is rural. Of the total area, utilised agricultural land (UAA) covers 44% and forest land 22%. The total population is near 5 million – of which 17% live in rural areas. The number of livestock units is around 1.36 million (second in Italy after Lombardy).

As one of the better performing Italian regions, Veneto has an employment rate of 65%, while unemployment is at 6.6% (2012) and the youth unemployment rate accounts for 23.7%.

Veneto is characterised by an outstanding naturalistic heritage: the NATURA 2000 network covers 22.7% of the total surface area and half of the total forest area. The High Nature Value farmland areas represent 32% of the UAA.

Besides farming, the agri-food and the aquaculture sectors also play an important role for agriculture in Veneto.

In general, the agricultural sector in Veneto faces structural changes with many small-size farms disappearing as they are absorbed by medium-size farms, which subsequently become bigger.

In particular, Veneto's rural areas are challenged by a persistent loss of business activity, migration of labour force, and demographic changes. Ageing of the agricultural population and the low proportion of young farmers in the agricultural workforce are also issues of concern for rural development in Veneto.

Veneto also faces environmental challenges, such as an increased and serious pressure of intensive agriculture and breeding on natural resources. Moreover, the *Farmland Bird Index* has decreased by 25% between 2000 and 2012, meaning that there are 25% less birds today compared to year 2000. Soil erosion is lower than the Italian average, but it is an issue for mountain and some hill areas. Finally, organic farming is still underdeveloped and covers only 2.1% of the total farmland (5% Italian average), despite the good potential in this sector.

2. VENETO'S RDP STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

In addressing these challenges, the RDP for Veneto will fund action under six Rural Development priorities – with a particular emphasis on restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry as well as competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry. The focus of each priority is explained briefly below.

Knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

Knowledge transfer system (workshops, coaching, demonstration activities, information actions and company visits) will be enhanced through specific training addressed to the farmers with regard notably climate change, sustainable agriculture and food quality. Particular attention will be paid to the training of new entrepreneurs, especially young farmers. An important element is innovation which is facilitated via co-operation, and information and knowledge transfer between the agri-food sector, researchers and other

stakeholders. About 84 different co-operation projects (inter alia developing pilot projects, and creating clusters and networks) will be financed, there will be support for 26 Operational Groups under the European Innovation Partnership and the region will deliver nearly 109 000 places in training courses.

Competitiveness of agri sector and sustainable forestry

Support will be targeted at process and product innovation in farms, in agro-industrial and forestry holdings. The objective is to improve output and product quality, combined with a reduction of production costs. Similarly important are the improvement in the productive powers of labour, equipment modernisation (including ICT systems) and diversification of production. Another important strategy choice is to promote the creation and development of non-agricultural activities in order to create new income opportunities.

Moreover, the progressive ageing of the workforce makes necessary to accelerate the entry of young skilled people into the agricultural sector to ensure the future of farming, innovation, and improving productivity and competitiveness.

More than 2 500 investment projects will be supported for investments in restructuring or modernisation, over 2 600 young farmers will be granted business start-up aid for implementing their business plans. More than 11 500 participants in training on these topics are foreseen.

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

Support is granted for new participation in quality schemes by groups of farmers, and for information and promotion activities. The objective is to improve logistic and commercial channels, and to raise consumer awareness about quality products on the market. Farmers are also encouraged to participate in cooperation projects with a view to develop short supply chains.

The region estimates that around 640 farmers will receive support to participate in quality schemes and short supply chain, of which around 85% will be for participation in quality schemes and the remaining 15 % short supply chain.

Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

The measures proposed are targeted the safeguarding of water quality through the promotion of agricultural production techniques that reduce pressure on the environment, combating erosion in hills and mountain areas and enhancing soil organic matter. The programme also proposes actions for the sustainable management of ecosystems and habitats, for preventing agricultural land abandonment and preserving plant and animal agricultural biodiversity. In order to achieve these objectives, the Region also aims at strengthening collective approaches at local level.

Nearly 10 % of the agricultural land will be under management contracts supporting biodiversity, water and soil management. Almost 3 250 hectares will receive support to convert to organic farming and another 8 500 ha to maintain.

Resource efficiency and climate

The actions proposed for climate change mitigation and adaptation refer to promoting (1) the rational use of water resources (inter alia, through modernisation of equipment and conversion of irrigation systems, technologies and distribution systems); (2) the development of bioenergy (which will partially replaces the use of fossil fuels in the agroforestry sector); and (3) the use of agricultural and agro-industrial by-products.

Another important strategy choice is to reduce greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agro-industrial activities, and increase carbon sequestration through forestry actions. Additionally, the co-operation measure supports enhanced sustainability through the European Innovation Partnership and through co-operation for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Investments in agricultural holdings with environmental purposes will receive nearly € 32 million of EU support. More specifically, over 1 000 projects will receive support targeting more efficient irrigations systems. In other words, about 8 000 ha of irrigated land will be switching to more efficient irrigation systems. € 15 million will be invested in renewable energy production. Finally, 66 500 hectares of agricultural land will be under management contracts targeting reduction of greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions.

Social inclusion and local development in rural areas

Under this priority, the region focusses on fostering local development in rural areas and broadband internet deployment (including the development of ICT-services). 8 Local Action Groups (LAGs) will implement their Local Development Strategies, covering more than 1.1 million people in rural areas.

Investments in basic services will be supported within the scope of the Local Development Strategies and will thereby cover nearly 30 % of the rural population. Moreover, additional 40 additional jobs will be created in supported projects. Around 160 farms will benefit from support for investments in non-agricultural activities in rural areas and 8% of the rural population will benefit from new or improved broadband infrastructure thanks to investments under this priority.

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

- € 551 million allocated to measure 4 (Investments in physical assets)
- € 295 million allocated to measure 10 (Agri-environment-climate)
- € 158 million allocated to measure 6 (Farm and business development)
- € 168 million allocated to measure 13 (Payments to area facing natural or other specific constraints)

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

Target	Measure	Indicative public support	%
P1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas		0,00	
1A Innovation, cooperation, knowledge		0,00	
T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	1,78	M01 Knowledge	0,00
		M16 Cooperation	0,00
1B Research & innovation		0,00	
T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	65,00	M16 Cooperation	0,00
1C Lifelong learning and vocational training		0,00	
T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	1.948,00	M01 Knowledge	0,00
P2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests		123.673.847,07	26,05%
2A Farm performance		Total: 2A	97.782.453,36
T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)	6,94	M01 Knowledge	642.582,22
Total investment € (public + private)	202.389.275,25	M04 Physical Investment	77.239.540,67
Nr of holdings supported for investment in agricultural holdings (4.1)	1.142,00	M06 Farm and business development	11.888.034,79
		M08 Forest	6.995.073,31
		M16 Cooperation	1.017.222,37
2B New farmers		Total: 2B	25.891.393,71
T5: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (focus area 2B)	3,91	M01 Knowledge	540.000,00
Total investment € (public + private)	25.351.393,71	M06 Farm and business development	25.351.393,71
Nr of beneficiaries (holdings) receiving start up aid young farmers (6.1)	634,00		
P3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture		31.202.739,11	6,57%
3A Competitiveness of producers		Total: 3A	31.202.739,11

01: Percentuale di aziende che recepiscono un contributo nell'ambito dell'Operazione 4.2.1 rispetto al totale di aziende agroalimentari di trasformazione	80,00	M04 Physical Investment	31.000.000,00	6,53%
Total investment € (public + private)	81.578.947,36	M16 Cooperation	202.739,11	0,04%
Nr of operations supported for investment (e.g. in agricultural holdings, in processing and marketing of ag. products) (4.1 and 4.2)	106,00			
P4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry			255.461.011,78	53,80%
4A Biodiversity, HNV and landscapes		Total: P4	255.461.011,78	53,80%
T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A)	0,04	M01 Knowledge	280.284,11	0,06%
T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	37,82	M04 Physical Investment	8.939.280,64	1,88%
4B Water management		M07 Basic services	218.000,00	0,05%
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	3,03	M08 Forest	2.732.835,48	0,58%
4C Soil management		M10 Agri-environment-climate	74.103.645,63	15,61%
T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	40,84	M11 Organic Farming	24.747.526,42	5,21%
P4 All Focus Areas		M13 Areas with natural constraints	141.976.787,66	29,90%
Total investment € (public + private)	9.935.688,23	M16 Cooperation	2.462.651,84	0,52%
Area (ha) under agri-environment-climate (10.1)	54.250,00			
Area (ha) - conversion to organic farming (11.1)	760,00			
Area (ha) - maintenance of organic farming (11.2)	2.500,00			
P5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors			20.695.691,15	4,36%
5A Water efficiency		Total: 5A	18.870.154,63	3,97%
T14: percentage of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation system (focus area 5A)	4,29	M04 Physical Investment	18.870.154,63	3,97%
Total investment € (public + private)	23.587.693,28			
5B Energy efficiency		Total: 5B	209.004,23	0,04%
02: Successful projects Intervention 16.1.1	50,00	M16 Cooperation	209.004,23	0,04%
5C Renewable energy		Total: 5C	1.261.699,77	0,27%

T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€) (focus area 5C)	1.790.101,08	M16 Cooperation	1.261.699,77	0,27%
		Total: 5E	354.832,52	0,07%
		M16 Cooperation	354.832,52	0,07%
P6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas			38.000.433,37	8,00%
		Total: 6A	3.922.222,93	0,83%
		M01 Knowledge	164.247,15	0,03%
		M07 Basic services	3.757.975,78	0,79%
6B Local development		Total: 6B	21.507.210,44	4,53%
T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)	35,57	M19 LEADER and CLLD	21.507.210,44	4,53%
T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)	20,00			
Population covered by LAG	148.000,00			
Number of LAGs selected	2,00			
6C ICT		Total: 6C	12.571.000,00	2,65%
T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	78,12	M07 Basic services	12.571.000,00	2,65%
M20 TA			5.780.961,72	1,22%
Total public expenditure			474.814.684,20	100,00%

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