



Factsheet on the national rural network specific programme 2014-2020 for Italy

The national rural network programme for Italy was adopted by the European Commission on 26 May 2015. With a budget of almost € 115 million (€ 59.6 million from the EU budget and € 55 million of national funding), the network will support policies for agricultural development through the exchange of experience and knowledge between rural territories, as well as better implementation and management of Italian rural development programmes. The programme also aims at ensuring better visibility of rural development policy, actions and achievements whilst bringing together all actors involved in rural development throughout the entire territory of Italy.

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 multiannual, co-funded programmes. In total, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States. The new RD Regulation for the 2014-2020 period addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. It put also emphasis on networking activities at EU and national level. 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 the national rural network programme (NRN). In the annex, a table indicates the allocated budget.

1. SITUATION

Italy covers an area of 301 337 km² of which 92 % is rural. The total population is 60.7 million, of which almost 58 % live in rural areas.

In Italy, the 2014-2020 rural development policy will be implemented through 23 programmes. The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will co-finance 21 regional/autonomous provincial programmes, a national programme covering risk management, irrigation and animal biodiversity and a specific programme for the national rural network.

The EAFRD allocation for Italy amount to more than 10.4 billion euro (including the amount that the Italian authorities have opted to transfer from the original envelope foreseen for CAP Direct Payments in Italy). Of this almost € 60 million will be spent on the national rural network.

2. STRATEGY OF THE RDP

The NRN targets the participation of organisations and administrations directly and indirectly involved in rural development, namely:

1. all actors involved in the programming, managing and implementation of the rural development policy at local, regional and national level (managing authorities, paying agencies, LAGs, etc.).
2. stakeholders from the economic and social partnerships , including professional organisations of entrepreneurs and the current or potential beneficiaries
3. civil society (general public, consumers).

The NRN will only implement actions at national level, while actions in the regions are developed at regional level, using the budget of the relevant rural development programme.

The NRN foresees four strategic priorities:

- Improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes
- Increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development
- Inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities
- Foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas (particularly in relation to the target group)

The activities of the NRN aim to achieve the following main objectives:

- Strengthen the administrative capacities of the managing authorities and paying agencies;
- Support and consolidate the competences of the regions by means of exchanges of experience;
- Improve common information sharing systems for evaluation and monitoring of the EAFRD in the Italian rural areas;
- Promote networking between enterprises in the primary sector (agriculture and forestry) or other economic sectors and the public institutions;
- Foster a "culture of entrepreneurship", facilitate access to funding and support young entrepreneurs;
- Increase transparency and visibility of rural development policy;
- Promote European and international collaborations and stimulate connections between regional networks and other networks at European level;
- Enhance the perspectives of rural development (including employment opportunities), and increase the participatory, interactive and bottom-up approach;
- Support the implementation of the Operational Groups of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) and the links with the EU research framework programme Horizon 2020 as well as the national policies on research and innovation;
- Promote innovation in the primary sector and agri-food and businesses in rural areas;
- Consolidate the thematic network related to the EIP operational groups.

At operational level, the "Rete Rurale Nazionale" is established under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy. A technical and administrative secretariat will manage and oversee all the activities. The implementation of the activities will be carried out on the basis of a two-year action plan.

Annex: Budget of the specific programme of the national rural network, Italy

Focus area and targets	Measure	Total Public expenditure (EAFRD) (EUR)
Technical assistance	20.2 – support for the setting up and running of the NRN	59 671 767