

Brussels, 25 July 2007

Northern Ireland's Rural Development Plan

Country profile:

- **Agriculture:** 21% of Northern Ireland population is rural,
- less favoured areas constitute 70% of agricultural land.
- Agricultural employment 3.6%, GVA (Gross Value Added) 1.9%
- Large number of small farms, agri-food processing less well developed, poor supply chain communication and integration
- **Environment:** water quality decreasing, large proportion of farms in less favoured areas
- **Rural Areas:** need for diversification, creation of micro-enterprises, childcare/eldercare facilities

Chosen strategy corresponding to the profile:

- Focus on vocational training, farm modernisation and supply chain improvements; support for less favoured areas and agri-environment and forest environment measures; diversification of rural economy, cultural heritage and promotion of tourism, to be supported by the local communities through a bottom up approach.
- Good experience from 2000-2006 programming period, particularly through the use of Leader
- Broadly positive opinions of ex-ante and strategic environmental assessment.

Overall budget and share of EU funding

A financial aid of € 323 million of which € 171 million (53%) is EU financed has been allocated to the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme for the period 2007- 2013

Axis	Total public (in € million)	EAFRD contribution. Rate (in %)	EAFRD * (in € million)	Share %
Axis I	35	50	17	10
Axis II	188	55	103	60
Axis III (delivered by the Leader approach)	0	0	0	0
LEADER	100	50	50	29
Total	323		171	100

* EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Overall aim of RD programme in Northern Ireland

To promote sustainable rural development in a manner complementary to the other policies of the Community.

Axis 1 budget allocation and main priorities:

Total budget: €35,475,870 - EAFRD contribution: €17,737,935

Axis 1: The baseline indicators and SWOT analysis (assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) suggest that the following key challenges need to be met in order to achieve the objectives of Axis 1:

- A more competitive agricultural industry achieved through:
 - Increased business and technical competence
 - Improved market focus
 - A dynamic approach to innovation and uptake of new technologies
 - Improved physical capital
- A more competitive food processing industry achieved through:
 - Increased added value processing
 - Better product development
 - More effective marketing

Axis 2 budget allocation and main priorities:

Total budget: €187,501,153 - EAFRD contribution: €103,125,634

Axis 2: The baseline indicators and SWOT analysis suggests that the following key challenges need to be met in order to achieve the objectives of Axis 2:

- Delivering environmentally sustainable land management through:
 - Appropriate management of Natura 2000 areas
 - Increasing biodiversity by farmland habitat preservation and creation including investing in High Nature Value farming systems
 - Appropriate management of the environment to ensure an improvement in water quality and a reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases
- Conserving and enhancing the character of the farmed landscape through appropriate land management practices, particularly in more marginal areas
- Promoting alternative land use options through:
 - Increased conversion of farmland to woodland
 - Increased exploitation of renewable energy opportunities

Axes 3 budget allocation and main priorities:

Total budget: €99,920,982 - EAFRD contribution: €49,960,491 (all delivered through the Leader approach).

Axis 3: The baseline indicators and SWOT analysis suggests that the following key challenges need to be met in order to achieve the objectives of axis 3:

- Greater economic opportunities in rural areas through:
 - Supporting the creation and development of micro-businesses
 - Development of innovative products and services
 - Encouraging farm households to diversify into non-agricultural activities to increase their incomes
 - Encouraging the development of activity tourism

- Sustainable development of the natural and built environment
- Encouraging greater usage of ICT (Information Communications Technology) and broadband
- Improving the quality of life and creating strong and vibrant rural communities and community infrastructure through:
 - Engaging with rural communities to identify and address problems and opportunities
 - Building community capacity and leadership
 - Social and economic regeneration of rural villages and their surrounding areas
- Improving access to basic services by rural dwellers

Leader budget allocation:

Total budget: €99,920,982 – EAFRD contribution: €49,960,491 (as axis 3 since axis 3 is delivered through the Leader approach)

See also: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm