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Rural development plan for Flanders (Belgium)

Region profile:

- Size: 13,522 km²; 0% of the total land surface is alpine land (mountain area).
- 6 million inhabitants; 41% live in what are considered as rural areas, the remaining 59% are mostly located in the triangle formed by the cities of Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels.
- Unemployment rate of 8.5% with a high share in the age group 15-24 years
- In 2005, approximately 34,000 agricultural holdings managed 0.6 million hectares of cultivated land or 47% of the total Flemish surface. A further 11% of the surface is covered by forests.
- The cultivated land can roughly be split into three parts: 59% are fodder crops, 32% arable crops and 8% horticulture crops.
- Around 49% of all farms are managed on part-time basis; in recent years the share of full-time agricultural holdings has fallen by 12%.
- Only 0.8% of the UAA is classified as less-favoured area (areas under environmental restrictions)
- The food sector is very diversified; its main components are meat, drinks, dairy products, chocolates and sugar and fruit and vegetables. Organic farming only represents a minor share of the agriculture output (less than 1%).

Chosen strategy corresponding to the profile:

The overall objectives were chosen in accordance with the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) and the National Strategy Plan and are:

- Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector,
- Promoting the sustainability of the countryside and natural resources;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas

Budget and share of EU funding

Total public expenditure: 667.6 million € of which 224.5 million € EAFRD¹ funding. Additional regional funding (state aid) of EUR 40.9 million

Axis	Total Expenditure (in €)	Share of EAFRD (in %)	EAFRD Contribution (in €)
Axis 1	449 041 417	30	134 712 425
Axis 2	112 260 354	50	56 130 177
Axis 3	59 867 857	30	17 960 357
LEADER	37 424 453	30	11 227 336
Technical assistance	8 980 828	50	4 490 414
Total	667 574 909	33.63	224 520 709

Overall aim of RD programme in Flanders

- Stimulating a dynamic and innovative agriculture sector,
- encouraging sustainable production methods with a view to improving the environment,
- improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy,
- local capacity building for more employment and diversification

Axis 1 budget allocation and main priorities:

Total public expenditure: 449.0 million €, EAFRD co-financing rate 30%

Main priorities: modernisation of agriculture holdings (63% of total public expenditure for axis 1), setting up of farms (10.7%), training (8.4%), adding value to agriculture products (6.4%).

Axis 2 budget allocation and main priorities:

Total public expenditure: 112.3 million €, EAFRD co-financing rate 50%, additional regional funding (state aid) 40.9 million €.

Main priorities: agro environment measure (89.9% of total co-financed public expenditure), LFA payments (2.8%), Natura 2000 payments (2.3%), afforestation of agriculture land (2.4%).

Axis 3 budget allocation and main priorities:

Total public expenditure: 59.9 million €, EAFRD co-financing rate 30%

Main priorities: diversification (36.2% of total co-financed public expenditure), conservation and upgrading of rural heritage (26.3%), village renewal and development (17.7%), basic services for the rural economy (9.7%).

Leader budget allocation:

Total public expenditure: 37.4 million €, EAFRD co-financing rate 30%

The Leader axis will be implemented using axis 3 measures, focussed on the quality of life and diversification

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

¹ EAFRD = European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development