

The Spanish framework for Rural Development

Country profile for Spain

- Size: 504 411 km²
- Population: 44, 5 millions inhabitants (density: 88 inhabitants/km²)
- GDP per capita: 19 480 € (average years 2000-2002; source: national strategy plan for rural development)
- Rural areas cover 91.3 % of the Spanish territory and about 31% of the population live in these areas. The Spanish situation is characterized by important territorial discrepancies, mainly between the interior and the coastal areas in matters such as population density, income and unemployment rate.
- Globally speaking, about 50 % of the total surface area of Spain is utilised as agricultural land (25.2 million ha) and 10.47 million ha are covered by forests (of which 81.6 % are private owned). Concerning the agricultural land, about 50% corresponds to labour lands, 17% is dedicated to permanent crops and the rest is permanent grass. 79% of agriculture land is included in Less Favoured Areas. Around 15% of agricultural land is irrigated and consumes around 75% of total Spanish water consumption.
- Almost 0.95 million people are employed in 1.140.730 agricultural holdings (998 000 work units), with a high share of farms (68.4 %) managed by full time farmers. The average size of the agricultural holdings is 22.1 ha, with big farms mainly in the centre and south of the country, and on the other side relatively small farms in the North part of Spain. While 55% of the holdings use 5% of the agricultural land, the 8.7 % of the holdings occupy the 69.1 % of the agricultural land. The value of the output of Spanish agriculture amounts to about 26 billion € including forestry. Thereby the sector contributes about 3.32 % to the total gross value added produced in Spain (food industry: 16.5%)
- The population working in agriculture has a low degree of training (lower than the EU-27 average) and more than 50% of farmers are aged more than 55.
- Stopping rural depopulation is the biggest challenge for the Spain. A large part of the territory suffers from problems of depopulation due to poor living conditions resulting from topography, climate or scarcity of water, among other causes. The primary sector (agriculture, hunting and forestry) constitutes the main source for maintaining population and employment in the rural areas.
- The diversity of natural resources and landscapes (wet in the North and dryer in the South) can also be seen as an important asset. 24.5% of the territory has been classified as Natura 2000 areas including forest areas, and the preservation of the endangered biodiversity is seen as a very important issue.

Chosen strategy corresponding to the profile

Due to its structure, Spain implements the rural development policy through rural development programmes (RDP) established at regional level by the Autonomous Communities. In this respect, 17 regional programmes, and 2 horizontal programmes related to the national framework and the rural network are to be submitted to the Commission's services.

National framework

Spain has submitted a national framework containing common elements of these regional programmes (Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005, Article 15(3)). This programme includes 6 horizontal compulsory measures (4 in axis I and 2 in axis II):

- Management of water resources/other rural infrastructures
- Increase in the added value of agricultural and forest products
- Start-up of advice services to the farms
- Installation of young farmers
- Mitigation of desertification -Prevention of forest fires
- Natura 2000 in the forest environment.

plus a certain number of common elements and the creation of a Management Committee. Hence, the approval of this document by the Commission is a pre-condition for the approval of the Spanish regional programmes.

The National Framework constitutes an important overarching instrument which contributes to the implementation of the Spanish national strategy plan, of which main objectives, in compliance with the Community strategic guidelines, are:

- to fight against depopulation of rural areas by strengthening the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector.
- to improve the environment and the countryside;
- to maintain and to improve quality of life, diversification of rural economy and building local capacity.

For these measures, when implemented according to the national framework, regional rural development programmes may only contain additional information in respect of the six horizontal measures, provided that information contained jointly under national framework and regional programmes complies with the requirements of Annex II to the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006.

However, the Regional RDPs, with their indicative financial plans, and not the National Framework, will be the basis for co-financing from the EAFRD budget.

Budget for Spain

Total: € 13 814 062 684 (adding national aids € 15 800 192 832) of which EAFRD¹ support amounts to € 7 213 917 799 € (Convergence regions: € 4 943 643 740).

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

¹ EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development