

EU funds | 2014
for Malta | 2020

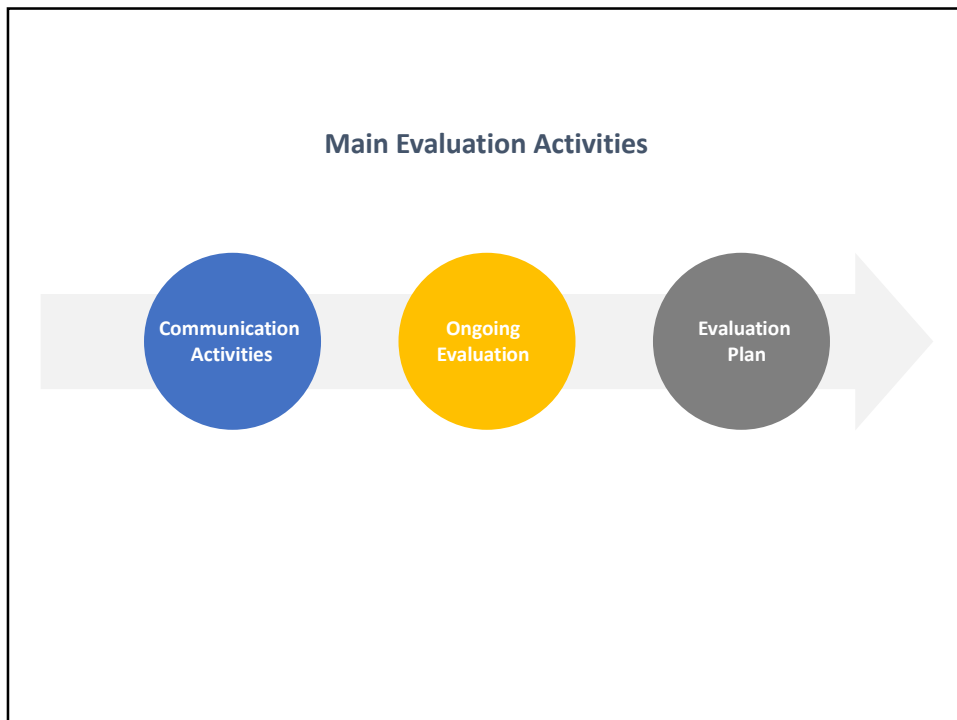
**Rural Development Programme for Malta
2014-2020**

**Presentation:
Ongoing Evaluation of the Rural
Development Programme**

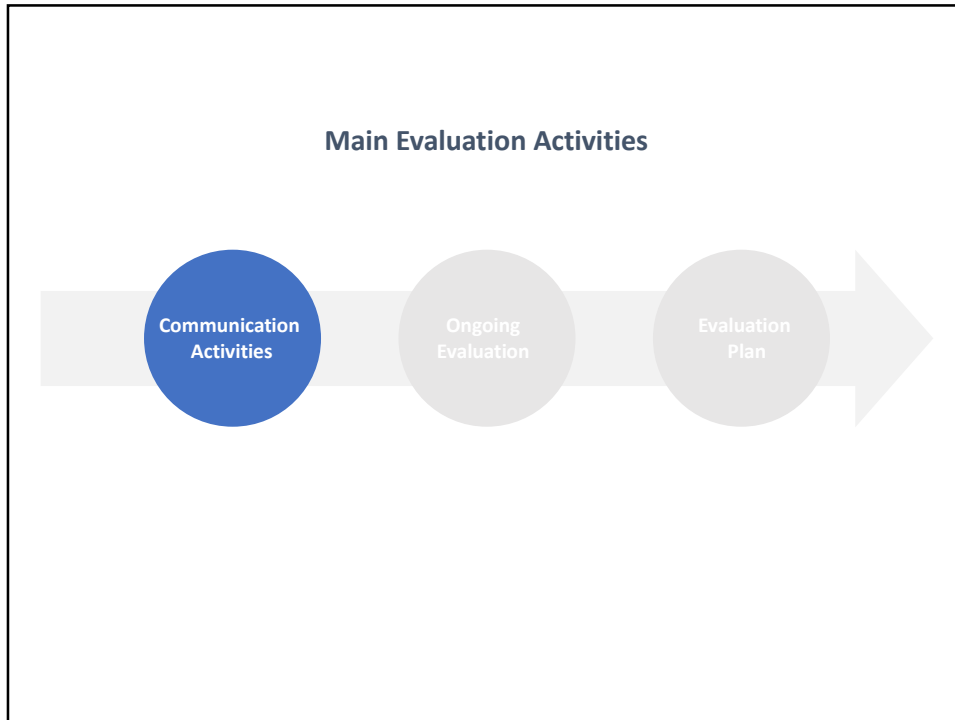
Monitoring Committee: 17 December 2021

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Evaluation: Communication Activities



National Rural Network

Rural Development Network Event

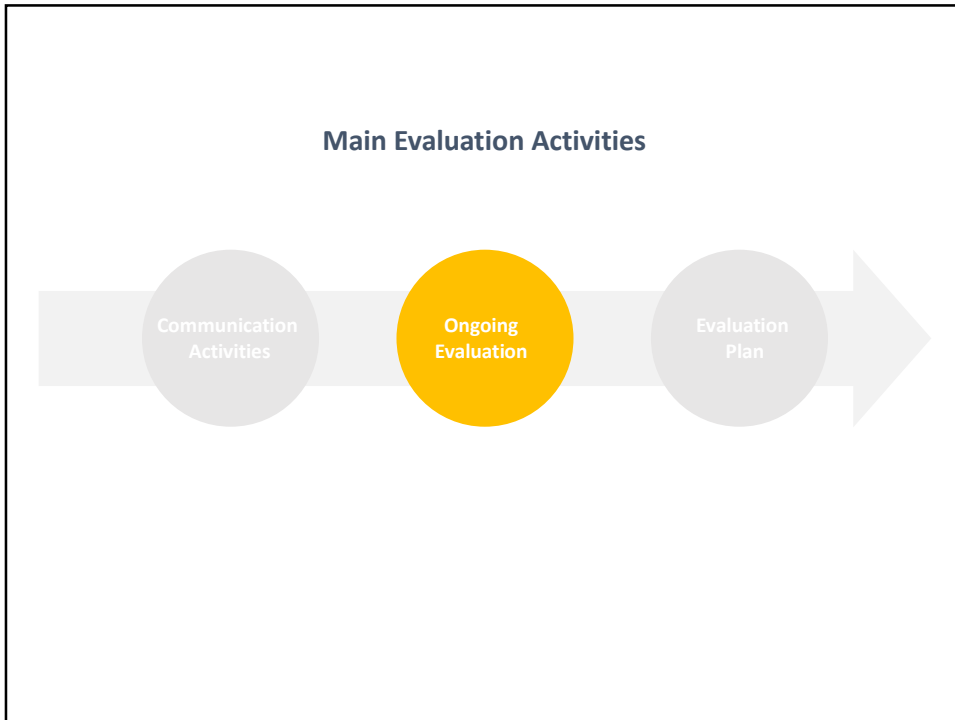
- Participation in the National Rural Network Committee for Malta (17 September 2021)
- Presentation on Young Farmers Evaluation

Bi-Annual News Letters

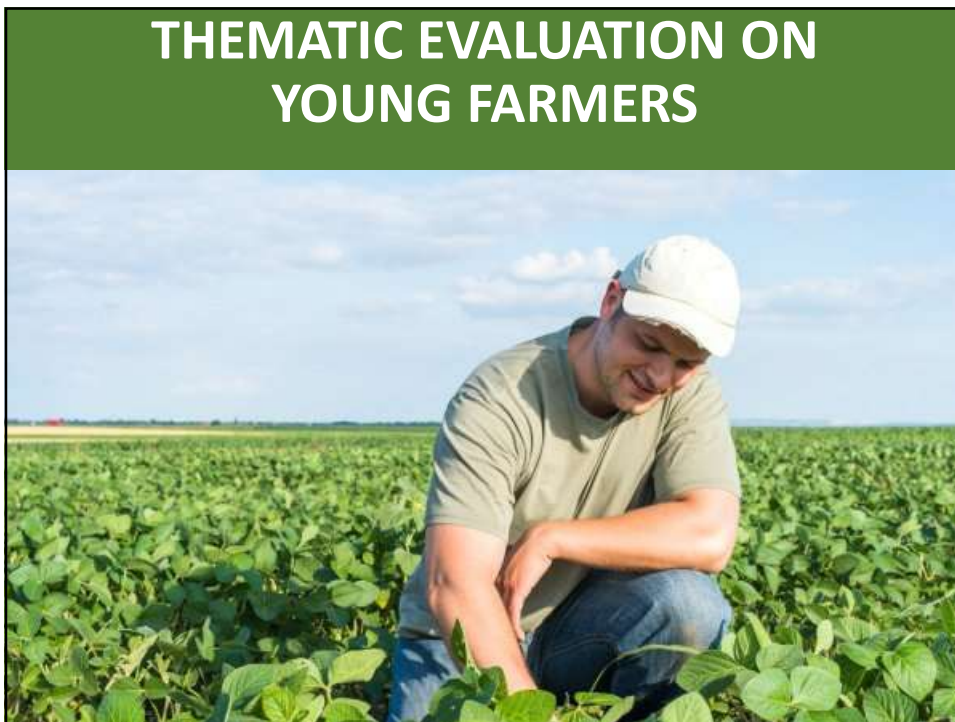
- Contribution towards 1 article (Thematic Evaluation on Young Farmers):
- Edition 21, May 2021



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Evaluation Results (1)

Business Plans

- A total investment of over **€7.1 million is expected to be enabled by Measure 6.1** of which about €4.3 million is RDP funded.
- **Around 92% of the total investment expenditure proposed by young farmers is expected to lead to secondary contributions** towards Focus Areas (FAs) other than Focus Area 2B.
- It is expected that around **75% of the total investment expenditure enabled by Measure 6.1 would have a secondary contribution towards Focus Area 2A** and this is mainly focused on increasing the competitiveness of the farms;
- Indeed, all the young farmers benefitting from Measure 6.1 have proposed projects which are expected to have secondary contributions towards FA 2A; and
- Most of the investment expenditure (52%) which is expected to have a **secondary contribution towards Focus Area 2A** is taking place in the **crop sector**.

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Evaluation Results (2)

Performance Progress Report

- The **average completion rate** of the projects being supported by Measure 6.1 **as at the end of June 2020 stood at around 39%**;
- Around 28% of the beneficiaries have achieved a completion rate of 50% or higher;
- The average completion rate of young farmers in Gozo is estimated to stand at 53% compared to 36% registered by young farmers in Malta;
- From a **total of 17 farms whose completion rate exceeds 50%, 88% are classified as medium, large or very large agricultural holdings** whereas 12% are classified as small or very small farms; and
- It appears that the implementation of Measure 6.1 has been **relatively more successful in the crop sector** since there was a relatively higher take-up of M6.1 in this sector and the beneficiaries in this sector also appear to be recording good progress in their projects.

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Evaluation Results

Focus groups and interviews

Challenges	Areas	Focus Groups		Interviews	Survey
		Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries		
Implementation of Measure 6.1	Measure 6.1	The eligibility criteria on the standard output led to the exclusion of some agricultural sectors such as beekeeping	The design of the measures favoured farmers who came from a farming family rather than new entrants to the sector.		Most of the respondents did not find the application process costly and no difficulties were encountered in developing a business plan. However, the process of applying is complex and lengthy. 84% of respondents expect a positive outcome due Measure 6.1
	Budget (€70k)	Not considered sufficient to implement innovation which typically requires a high level of investment and may be risky.	Budget is too low to implement new projects considering the expenses related to the acquisition of land, particularly for farmers who come from non-agricultural family.		
	selection criteria			It is critical for the evaluation board to be well versed with the technicalities of the sector and the nature of the investments being proposed since the requirements of different sub-sectors may vary.	
	Funds				Young farmers face complexity in applying for EU support and/or public support which restricts their ability to access finance.
	Standard Output		The established threshold led to the exclusion of certain sectors such as beekeeping.	Criteria should be set in a way which does not inadvertently leave out parts of the agricultural sector but rather all the sector should be eligible. The SO threshold is relatively high which made it difficult to reach for certain young farmer.	
	Innovation	Innovation should be defined and promoted.	Innovation should be defined.	Distinguish between innovative projects which are feasible and can have an impact and those that are innovative but not feasible within the local context.	

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Evaluation Results

Focus groups and interviews

Challenges	Areas	Focus Groups		Interviews	Survey
		Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries		
Persistent Challenges	Skills	Skills are crucial especially within the innovation context.		Training should also focus on the development of soft skills for young farmer.	Respondents indicated that access to qualified labour and access to training remain lacking in Malta and lack of replacement on the farm is a challenge for farmers, as they cannot be replaced to engage in another activity.
	Land	Land is scarce and expensive which limits agricultural activity.	Land is scarce and expensive, and a better legal structure is required to avoid fragmentation of land.	High degree of abandoned land which is not being put into effective use and fragmentation of land which limits productivity.	Respondents indicated that high price of land is an issue together with land availability as a result of land fragmentation.
	Permits	Sometimes the requirements put forward by authorities are not consistent. There are a lot of bureaucracy and delays.		Bureaucracy and the fragmentation at the level of the public departments and authorities discourages a significant number of potential applicants. Difficulties in acquiring the necessary permits led to some projects taking longer than expected or to changes in the Business Plans originally submitted.	
	Cooperation		Cooperation should be broader including collaboration between farmers and avoid thresholds constraints that are too high.	Difficulty to achieve cooperation. Many measures related to cooperation had to be removed or altered in the RDP. The definition of cooperation needs to be broader and more reflective of the local context. Higher weight should also be allocated for applicants who seek to engage in cooperation	
	Communication			Changes need to be well-communicated with potential applicants and agricultural organisations.	
	Advice				Lack of advice and extension services is a challenge.
	Finance				Access to loans is a challenge because they often restricted with collateral.
	Supply Chain	Too fragmented. However, there are other supply chains which are yet unexplored.	Support is needed to help farmers sell their product in a profitable manner to safeguard farmers income from volatile prices.	Most of the agricultural products are sold through the same supply chain mitigating efforts of innovative firms. More weight should be applied to projects which include elements of innovation and marketing.	

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Evaluation Results

Focus groups and interviews

Challenges	Areas	Focus Groups		Interviews	Survey
		Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries		
Accessing the market	Competitiveness				The majority of the respondents indicated that their competitiveness is expected to increase. Many are investing in equipment, greenhouses, energy efficient systems, IT systems and/or livestock, for increase in production
	Export	Process is too complicated and expensive, and local production is not enough to cater for foreign demand.	Large investment required to tap into the export market. The local sector is in general constrained by capacity.		
	Compliance	If farmers want to expand their market, they need to become compliant to meet the required standards.			
	Market Size	The market is too small but there are challenges in accessing the export market.			

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Recommendations

National Recommendations	
Synergy between different national policies	Policy which hinders the promotion of young farmers must be adequately addressed. In this respect, one of the pressing needs that has been highlighted throughout this report is the lack of available land.
Coordination between stakeholders	Changes to national land policy are required with effective coordination between all stakeholders.
Land stock taking and better legal infrastructure	Efforts are required to take stock of abandoned land and ensure that land regulations promote the use of land for productive purposes. Furthermore, there is the need for a better legal structure to avoid land fragmentation as this impinges on the use of land for productive purposes.
Reduce delays in issuing permits	Cooperation across authorities is required and procedures need to be simplified.
Identification of needs and effective implementation of training course and advisory services	The National Agricultural Policy refers to the need to integrate educational courses aimed at up skilling farmers and livestock breeders. Also, at a national level, young farmers could benefit from sharing of good practise related to farming and innovative practices.

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Recommendations

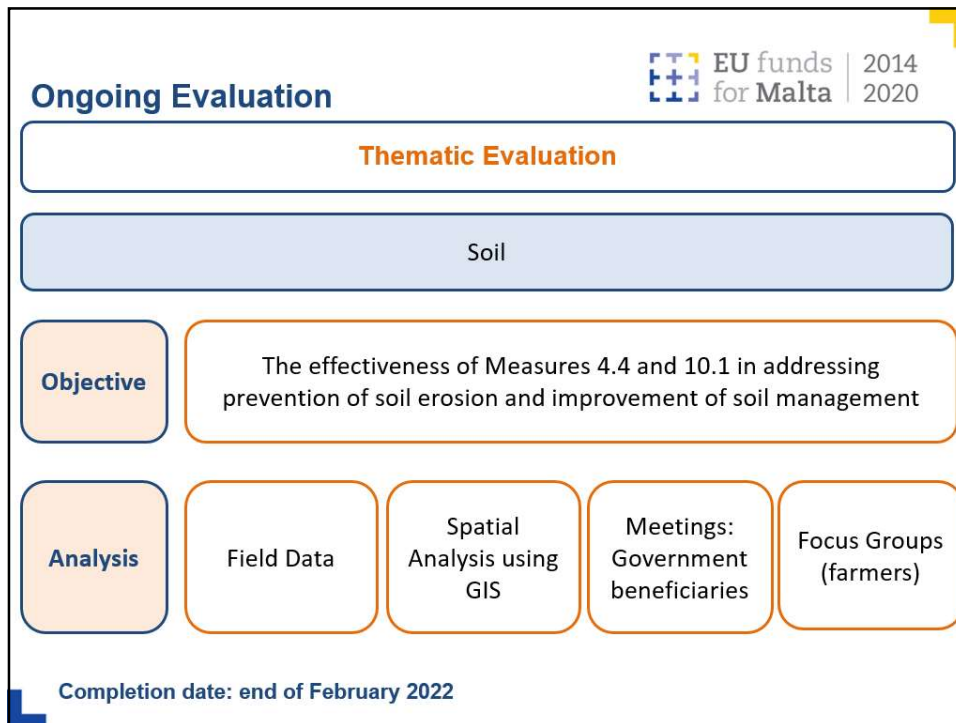
Programme Recommendations	
Extension of Measure 6.1	There is demand for the measure, and this thematic evaluation has highlighted the positive impact of the measure. The measure has been effective towards contributing to the financing needs of young farmers.
Support for young farmers who are new entrants to the sector	This measure has been more successful in supporting young farmers from a farming family. Funds are not easily obtainable by persons coming from outside the sector and even if there could be interest by youths to embark on new farming niches, funds are not easily accessible.
Selection Criteria	<p>More weight could be considered in the selection process for projects which include elements of innovation and marketing</p> <p>Project selection should not focus explicitly on 'enlarging' operations but also on improving the viability and competitiveness of the holding</p> <p>Any changes in criteria during the programming period, for any of the measures should be well-communicated</p>
Training	Development of tailor-made courses that are specific for young farmers such as in areas of marketing, IT and digitalisation skills and also courses focusing on the end phase of the supply chain and overall management.
Upcoming Programme	To consider preferential conditions for young farmers, promotion of collaboration between generations and greater focus on the needs of young farmers.

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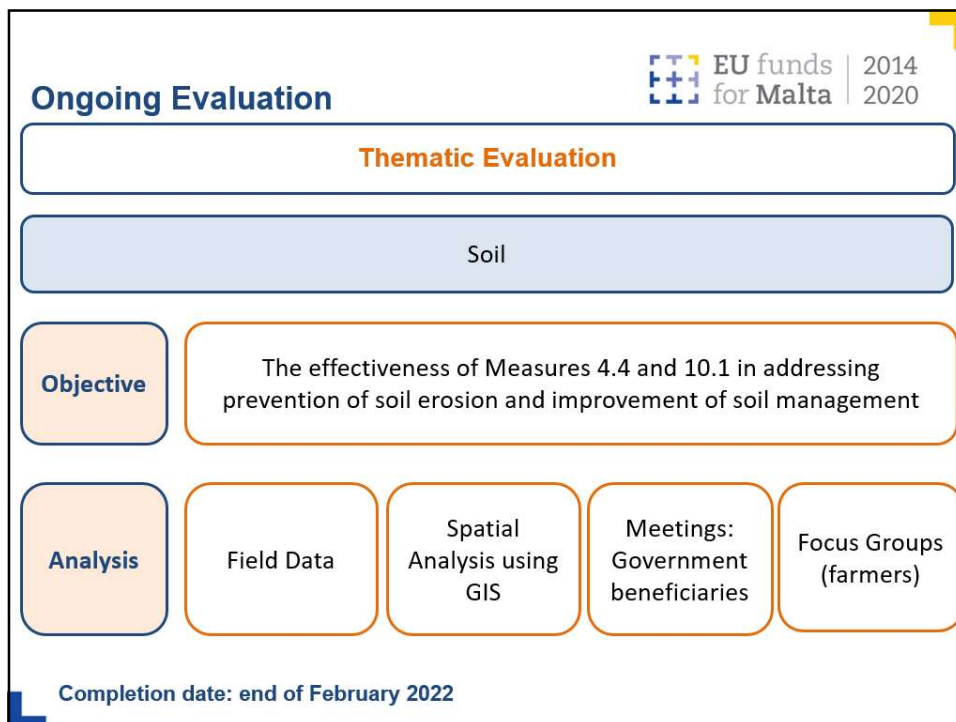
THEMATIC EVALUATION ON Soil



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Description of Measure 4.4

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Restoration and Repair of Rubble Walls

	Count	Project Cost	Grant Value	Grant Value (%)
LOCAL COUNCILS	27	€ 3,114,773	€ 2,491,819	11%
INDIVIDUAL FARMERS	147	€ 9,131,138	€ 7,266,015	32%
CO-CULTIVATORS	1	€ 28,199	€ 22,559	0%
PARTNERSHIP	1	€ 303,256	€ 150,000	1%
COMPANIES	3	€ 583,501	€ 424,041	2%
MINISTRIES	10	€ 17,596,462	€ 12,072,832	54%
TOTAL	189	€ 30,757,328	€ 22,427,265	100%

Project Cost - € 15,801,066
Grant - € 10,616,203
Fund absorption - 47.3%

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Description of Measure 10.1

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Agri-Environment Climate Measures

	Description	Commitment	Hectares
AECM 1	Control of weeds (vineyards, orchards) by mechanical means	€355,241	364
AECM4	IPM Plan (vineyards, orchards)	€ 79,002	53
AECM5	Soil Management & Conservation Plan	€ 1,773,093	932
TOTAL		€ 2,207,336	1,349

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Field Data

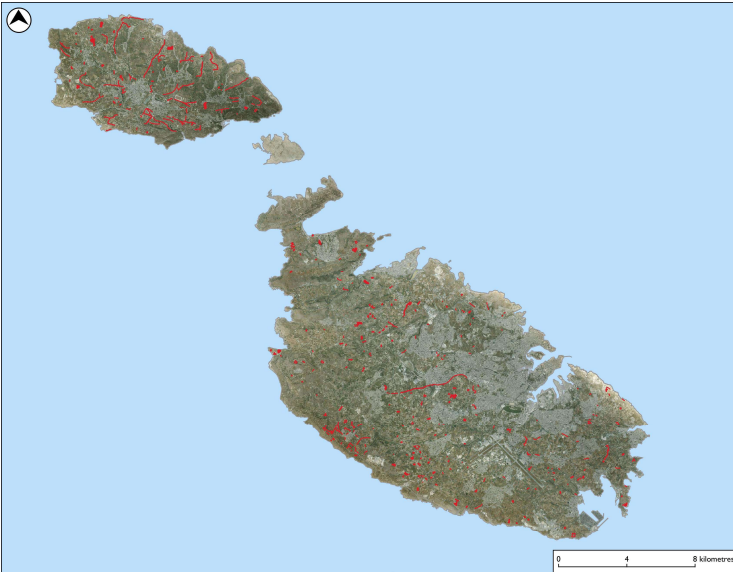
- M 4.4 Rubble walls –**
 - ✓ Length of rubble wall




- M10.1: Agri-Environment Climate Measures**
 - ✓ Soil Organic Matter by year

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GIS representation of data



Rubble walls Legend  Rubble walls
Ex-Post Evaluation of the RDP 2014-2020 
Map by  Class: EMCS Ref: EMC305 Date: 11/2021

Copyright: Planning Authority Basemap is for indicative purposes only and shall not be used for direct interpretation. P:\Mapping\Adi\Audit & Evaluation\EMCS5 - Ex-post Evaluation RDP 2014-2020\Evaluation 2020-2021

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Spatial Analysis using GIS


Measure 4.4:

- ✓ Data from Paying Agency on GIS – rubble wall length of approved projects
- ✓ Establish impact of rubble wall on parcel (area)
- ✓ Estimate impact of rubble wall intervention on soil erosion using RUSLE equation
- ✓ Use of ESDAC database to verify Malta soil erosion factors

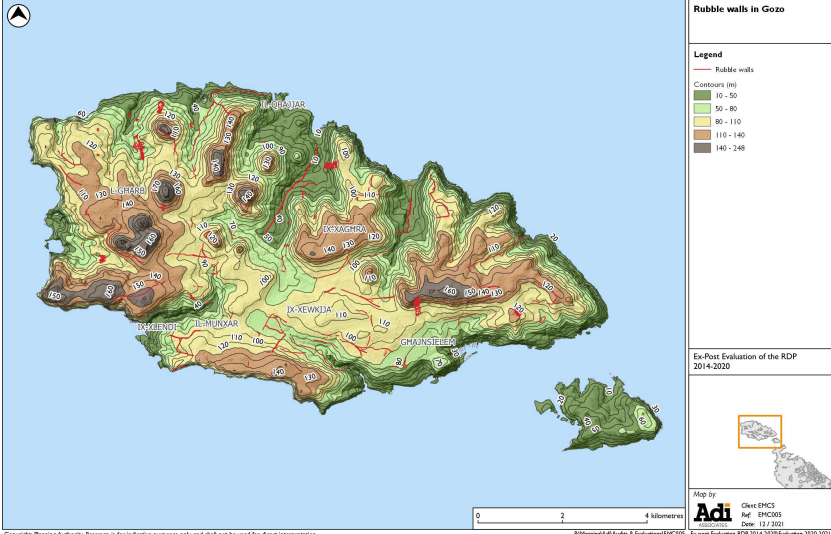
Measure 10.1: AECM 5:

- ✓ Obtain data on SOM by location
- ✓ Spatially analyse the data

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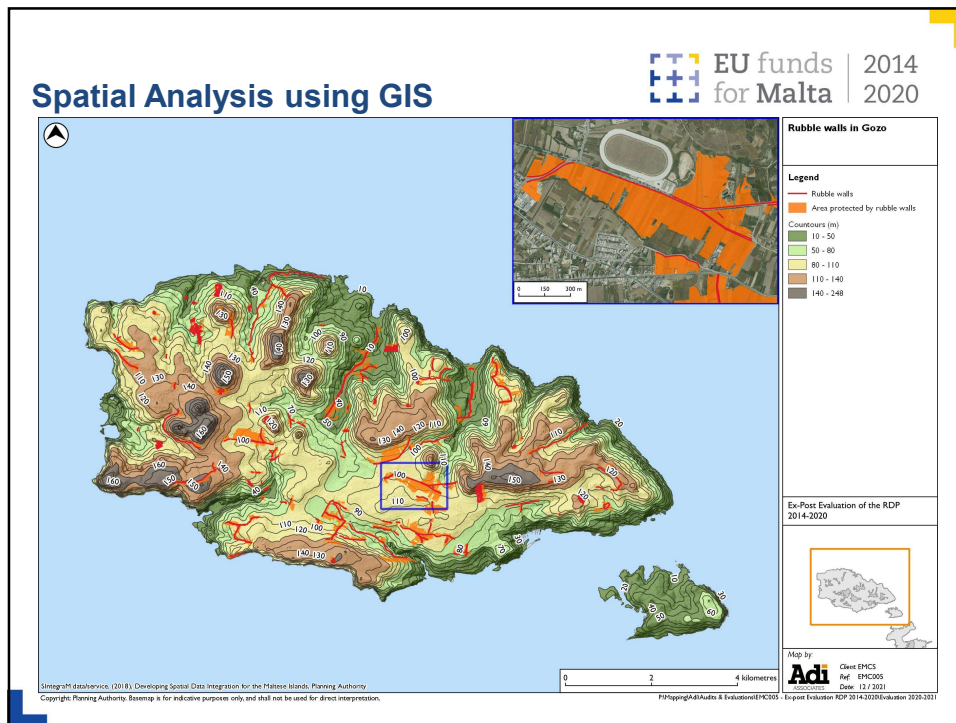


Spatial Analysis using GIS



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Meetings with beneficiaries



Measure 4.4:

- ✓ Private Individuals (farmers / land managers)
- ✓ Ministry for Gozo
- ✓ Ministry for Transport Infrastructure and Capital Projects
- ✓ Parks Malta
- ✓ Local Councils
- ✓ Private Companies

Findings:

- ✓ Most projects implemented
- ✓ Well received by farming community
- ✓ Enhanced benefit for landscape and local communities
- ✓ Some ancillary actions include clearing of water courses, planting

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Focus Group with Gozitan farmers

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Measure 4.4:

- ✓ All those interviewed confirmed that rubble wall construction has been effective in controlling soil erosion
- ✓ Positive feedback also from local communities in terms of enhanced landscape and more attractive access rural roads
- ✓ Although not direct beneficiaries, farmers gain from project implementation

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Main Evaluation Activities



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Evaluation Plan


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Moving Forward

1. Thematic Evaluation: Competitiveness (Focus Area 2A) - 2022

CEQ: *To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to improving the economic performance, restructuring and modernization of supported farms in particular through increasing their market participation and agricultural diversification?*

2. Thematic Evaluation : Biodiversity (FA4A) – 2022

CEQ: *To what extent have RDP interventions supported the restoration, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity including in Natura 2000 areas, areas facing natural or other specific constraints and HNV farming, and the state of European landscape.*

3. Thematic Evaluation : Biodiversity (FA5A) – 2023

CEQ: *To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture?*

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Thank you for your attention.



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