

NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK MALTA



PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR THE EU PRESIDENCY 2017 AND EU FUNDS

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AND THE IMPLEMENTATION
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Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings

MEASURE 4.1

Support under this operation within the Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Malta 2014-2020 will include on-farm support for investments in more efficient equipment, improvements aimed at both reducing energy consumption as well as capturing and storage of energy, and investments in agricultural waste management. Investments in water harvesting such as new water reservoirs (*ġiebjja*) as well as investments in improved crop storage or other activity to improve the quality of the product are also eligible.

The measure also supports the construction, acquisition as well as improvements to immovable agricultural property; this may include buildings for specialised handling, storage, provision of ventilation, insulation and refrigeration.

Beneficiaries can include farmers or group of farmers.

This sub-measure (M4.1 of the RDP) has an allocation of €25m and it is expected that over 200 farmers receive grants that can reach up to €150,000 per farmer, with an aid intensity of 50%. This

measure will be complementing the three measures announced earlier this year, where €30 million have been committed for farmers working agricultural land to specific agricultural practices that respect and support the environment.

In order to ensure maximum transparency and an even level playing field for all, potential beneficiaries are being given a two month pre-launch period so they can adequately prepare for submission of their project proposals. Beneficiaries will be

selected through a competitive procedure and applications will be received in the first weeks of January 2017. An open rolling-call system will be adopted with periodical selection stages.

All potential beneficiaries are reminded that eligible expenditure can only be committed to after the signing of an agreement between the farmer and the Managing Authority within the Funds and Programmes Division, Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto.



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

Part financed by the European Union
Co-financing Rate:
75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



*The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas*

PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT FOR MEASURE 4.3

Supporting the Construction and Improvement of Farm Access Roads

ACCESSIBILITY REMAINS A MAJOR CHALLENGE WITHIN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR; INADEQUATE ACCESS ROAD ADD TO THE DIFFICULTIES POSED BY THE FRAGMENTED NATURE OF LAND-HOLDINGS. THESE MAKE ACCESS A PARTICULAR PROBLEM FOR FARMS, BOTH IN TERMS OF INPUTS (DELIVERY OF ITEMS TO BE USED ON FARMS) AND ALSO REMOVING PRODUCE FOR MARKETING PURPOSES.

The efficient management of local infrastructure is not only vital to ensure competitiveness in agriculture but also to ensure the sustained preservation of farm holdings that are increasingly under threat of land abandonment. The improvement in accessibility to farm holdings through the upgrading of farm access roads will increase farm utilization, improve farm management and increase farm efficiency.

Beneficiaries (in terms of eligible applicants) under this measure are entities with a remit of constructing and upgrading farm access roads.

This sub-measure (M4.3 of the RDP) has an allocation of €10m and will complement measures announced throughout this year, bringing the total value for calls issued to €65 million.

MEASURE 4.4 SUPPORT FOR NON-PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENTS

Linked to the Achievement of Agri-Environment Climate Objectives

This measure aims at supporting agri-environment-climate objectives under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Whilst most farmers find this measure as relevant for the restoration of rubble walls support under this measure will include the restoration of habitats and landscapes, soil conservation and water management where there is no significant economic return to a farmer or other rural business from such action. Actions may also

include management plans, and works, establishing, restoring, or re-instating infrastructure needed for management of habitats. This includes rubble wall establishment or restoration, terracing, and soil conservation measures as well as corbelled stone huts.

Beneficiaries can include farmers, businesses, public entities and non-profit organisations.

This sub-measure has an allocation of €12m with a aid intensity of 80%. A limit of €150,000

per applicant applies. This measure will be complementing the two measures launched earlier this year, where €18 million have been committed for farmers working agricultural land to specific agricultural practices that respect the environment.

Beneficiaries will be selected through a competitive procedure and applications will be received in the first weeks of December 2016. An open rolling-call system will be adopted with periodical budgeting and selection stages.

Malta Youth in Agriculture Foundation

WHEN THE TOPIC ABOUT YOUNG FARMERS IN MALTA CROPS UP, WE ARE OFTEN FACED WITH ONE CRUCIAL QUESTION; DO WE STILL HAVE YOUNG FARMERS IN MALTA? THE ANSWER IS CLEAR; YES WE DO! THE MALTA YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE (MAYA) WAS PURPOSELY SET UP TO SUPPORT YOUTHS STUDYING AND WORKING IN THE LOCAL AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY, PARTICULARLY, YOUNG FARMERS. SURPRISINGLY THERE ARE DOZENS OF YOUNG FARMERS IN MALTA AND GOZO, AND A MUCH LARGER NUMBER OF YOUTHS WHO ARE WORKING AND STUDYING IN THIS DYNAMIC INDUSTRY.

A farmers' job is definitely not a nine to five job, and MaYA does realise that unless these dedicated people are given due importance, Malta risks losing more of them in the near future. This threat is happening all throughout Europe, and to address this, the European Commission has laid out a policy and funds to attract youths to work in agriculture. Locally funding for the establishment of young farmers is also envisaged to boost the number of young farmers through funding from the Rural Development Programme for 2014 - 2020.

Over the past few months the Malta Youth in Agriculture Foundation has been particularly active in connecting youths together but also in raising awareness amongst the general public. Networking is crucial for youths to share and develop ideas. Thanks to social media this has become an easier task when compared to the past. Traditional means of communication are still valid especially to reach different audiences. Members within the core team of the MaYA Foundation regularly attend to radio and television programs to

disseminate information about success stories in the industry and to address concerns brought forward by consumers and colleagues.

Malta is facing an exciting time ahead, but at the same time we need to gear up for the many challenges that are pressing over farmers. Needless to say, constant liaison with government institutions and associations in the agricultural industry is the way forward to keep our supporters informed about what is happening. We strongly believe that information has to flow both ways. Farmers are the front liners of the industry and they have first hand experience of how and what is affecting their business. This is why, MaYA needs to listen more actively to their views and take action whenever their work is hindered.

MaYA is positive that with hard work, determination and synergy amongst all stakeholders, farming and rural areas in Malta and Gozo can be improved.

Ms Jeanette Borg
Founder
Malta Youth in Agriculture
Foundation





Working with Our Communities

to Develop the New Local

Development Strategy



FOLLOWING THE CLOSURE OF THE LEADER PROGRAMME 2007-2013, THE THREE LOCAL ACTION GROUPS KEPT THEMSELVES BUSY WITH THE PREPARATIONS OF THE NEW PROGRAMME. MAJJISTRAL ACTION GROUP FOUNDATION LAUNCHED A CALL FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND THE FIRM ERNST AND YOUNG LTD WAS CHOSEN BASED ON THE CHEAPEST COMPLIANT CRITERIA.

The primary task which was carried out was the assessment of the localities in order to determine which would be the localities in the Majjistral territory that fall within the remit of the rural criteria as laid down by the European Commission. Such assessment resulted in the identification and confirmation of the same localities as the LEADER Programme 2007-2013, with the exception of Hal Lija which was replaced by the locality of Swieqi.

The importance of adopting the bottom up approach for the development of an optimum strategy was always stressed and this was in fact utilized throughout the whole process. Several meetings were held with the government departments and related entities whereby Majjistral Action Group Foundation could identify measures that would be adopted by the government in the coming years. This was done in order to enable Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF) to focus on the horizontal principles in the formulation of the LDS and also to identify measures that it could adopt in order to cover certain aspects which may not have been covered by other funding opportunities.

The month of July was entirely dedicated to the public consultation meetings and other

individual meetings which allowed MAGF and the experts to meet the Majjistral communities, and the different stakeholders emanating from various sectors including agriculture, farming, voluntary, tourism, micro and small businesses amongst others, and thus identify the needs of the communities of the Majjistral territory. The enthusiasm with which the local communities participated in such meetings was noticeable and this allowed MAGF and the key experts to formulate and assess clearly the needs of such communities.

During the month of August other meetings were held and the key experts concentrated on the necessary studies, SWOT analysis and the formulation of the draft measures. In September 2016, the final public consultation session was held whereby the draft measures were presented to the communities and discussed thoroughly in order to ascertain that such measures would target the specific problems that the locals had discussed during the previous sessions. The following objectives with related measures to satisfy each objective were eventually drafted:

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 1: TO INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND SOCIAL HERITAGE OF THE TERRITORY

- Measure 1: Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value
- Measure 2: Strengthening a healthy cultural identity
- Measure 3: Promoting the cultural heritage

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 2: TO INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL LANDSCAPE OF THE RURAL AREAS

- Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 3: TO INVEST IN THE TRANSFER OF SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF THE RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Measure 5: Training and education
- Measure 6: Innovation, collaboration and development of the knowledge base

OTHER OBJECTIVES

- Trans-national and inter-territorial co-operation
- Running costs and animation"

The proposed measures with the overarching objective of improving the quality of life of the local communities in the Majjistral territory, if approved, will be launched in the coming years.

GAL Xlokk Foundation

proposed LDS (2014-2020)

THE GAL XLOKK FOUNDATION IS ONE OF THE POTENTIAL LOCAL ACTION GROUPS THAT MAY BE CHOSEN TO IMPLEMENT THE LEADER PROGRAMME FOR MALTA (2014-2020) IN THE XLOKK TERRITORY. THE AIM OF THE FOUNDATION IS TO HELP IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY IN THE SOUTH-EAST RURAL AREAS IN MALTA. THE PROPOSED LDS PRESENTED BY GAL XLOKK WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT BOTH THE CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL TERRITORY IN ORDER TO BETTER IDENTIFY SPECIFIC NEEDS ATTRIBUTED TO THE LOCAL AREA, SUPPORT INITIATIVES LEADING TO IMPROVED WELL-BEING OF THE TERRITORY'S COMMUNITIES, AND WORK WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO DEVISE POLICIES THAT ADDRESS SUCH NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS.

THE "BOTTOM UP APPROACH" METHOD-PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

In May 2016, Gal Xlokk engaged a team of experts after a detailed evaluation process amongst the received bidders has been conducted. The team of experts together with the Gal Xlokk administration has managed to do a comprehensive public consultation within the South East territory of the Maltese Islands. The public consultation involved:

- **3 Public Consultation meetings in different localities of the territory to better understand the people's needs** – Gal Xlokk attempted to reach the maximum amount of interested people. Gal Xlokk published newspaper adverts, sent emails and SMS to all contacts, made use of social media such as Facebook. During meetings, minutes were taken by the team of experts to verify the possibility that common ideas are transformed into Measures.
- **Meetings with key government entities and Ministries.** This ensured that there is no overlapping between the Maltese government's measures and the

Action Plan. At the same time, the LDS has to adhere to the local and EU policies.

- **One-to-one meetings** for all those interested to present their proposals into more detail. Minutes were taken and presented to the team of experts.
- **One final public consultation meeting** to present the proposed Strategy's measures to the general public.

THE PROPOSED MEASURES AS PER THE PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:

Finally, Gal Xlokk Foundation has proposed the following measures as part of its LDS:

OBJECTIVE 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND SOCIAL HERITAGE OF THE AREAS

- 1.1 Restoration of assets of artistic and cultural value
- 1.2 Strengthening a healthy cultural identity

OBJECTIVE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT LANDSCAPE OF THE AREAS

- 2.1 Development of green infrastructure

OBJECTIVE 3: DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL ENTERPRISE AND TRADING ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 Development of regional arts and crafts trading centres

OBJECTIVE 4: TRANSFER OF SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

- 4.1 Training and education
- 4.2 Innovation, co-operation and strengthening of the knowledge base

OBJECTIVE 5: DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT

- 5.1 Promotion of the cultural heritage

OPERATIONS BY THE FOUNDATION

- Transnational and inter-territorial cooperation
- Running costs and animation

Upon its approval Gal Xlokk will make use of such Strategy, as a tool for funding of operations within the territory. Projects must abide to the principles of the LEADER approach and fulfill the criteria that define the strategy. Moreover, Gal Xlokk intends to accept ideas that are adequate and fit-for-purpose, in that it provides a means by which actions that add value to the region are implemented.

Local Development Strategy for Gozo & Comino



GOZO IS THE GEOGRAPHICALLY THE SECOND LARGEST ISLAND OF THE MALTESE ARCHIPELAGO. ANOTHER SMALLER ISLAND, COMINO, IS LOCATED IN THE CHANNEL SEPARATING MALTA AND GOZO. GOZO AND COMINO ARE CONSIDERED AS ONE REGION FOR LEADER PURPOSES. ALL THE FOURTEEN (14) LOCAL COUNCILS IN GOZO ARE CONSIDERED AS RURAL AS THEY MEET THE CRITERIA SET OUT IN THE MALTA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014-2020. THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (LDS) FOR THE GOZO & COMINO TERRITORY SETS OUT THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE REGION OF GOZO FOR THE 2014-2020 FUNDING PERIOD AND OUTLINES THE MEASURES PROPOSED FOR FUNDING UNDER THE LEADER PROGRAMME.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

Following the engagement of a team of experts, a stakeholder consultation programme was carried out to inform the formulation of the Local Development Strategy. Steps were undertaken to identify the key stakeholders, where their input was considered to be essential or important for the formulation of the Local Development Strategy. The consultation Programme was also widely advertised, in order to capture the attention of any unidentified key stakeholders, as well as to invite the participation of the wider public in the formulation of the Local Development Strategy. The stakeholders included Government Ministries and agencies; the Gozitan Local Councils and Administrative Councils; non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with an interest in Gozo; and national entities and associations with an interest in Gozo.

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

This section describes the method used by the LAG to transpose the

regional needs into objectives and the objectives of the Strategy into projects. The following six objectives were identified:

1. Increase investment and job creation in firms in 'new economy sectors'.
2. Create innovation and evolution of food supply verticalisation.
3. Increase number of Gozo business and infrastructural amenities employing sustainable environmental and climate-friendly approaches.
4. Increase younger people and families within the population.
5. Increase amenities valorising Gozo lifestyle, environment and cultural heritage for tourism, educational and other activities.
6. Increase the number of projects in Gozo involving partnerships between public and private entities, and which further enable NGOs.

The following are the Actions (or measures) identified to address the needs and objectives aforementioned:

- **GAG1:** Develop an ICT Media Platform for the valorisation of Gozitan lifestyle concept.

- **GAG2:** Maximize the contribution of Gozitan agriculture to the Gozitan culinary tradition, its evolution and future sustainability.
- **GAG3:** Develop Gozo's all-season tourism product offering.
- **GAG4:** Improve the attractiveness of living in Gozo for young persons and young families

OPERATIONS BY THE GAGF

- **Transnational Projects-** These refer to projects undertaken in collaboration between different rural areas, involving from at least two Member States.
- **Running and Animation Costs-** The scope of this budget is to ensure efficient administration of the LAG.

Following the approval, the Local Development Strategy will be implemented by the Gozo Action Group Foundation through calls which will be issued over the funding period. Projects will be assessed so that to ensure that they are in line with the Strategy and that can be funded under LEADER initiative.

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AECM

AECM 1 - MEASURE TO CONTROL WEEDS IN ORCHARDS AND VINEYARDS BY MECHANICAL, INSTEAD OF CHEMICAL, METHODS

The objective of this measure is to incentivise farmers to control weeds growing in vineyards and orchards between 15th October and 15th March, using mechanical means. The measure will oblige farmers to use a grass cutter/mower to control weeds growing in vineyards and orchards during the winter season.

This measure promotes biodiversity and supports local flora and fauna. Farmers would also be supplying temporary foraging area for bees leading to a potential increase in the pollinator population which is an essential component of Maltese agricultural systems and elemental to enhancing the diversity of its animal and plant life.

This measure will aid in the prevention of soil erosion and runoff. This will be achieved as the weeds will act as a cover crop during the winter months, when the majority of rain fall occurs. Erosion occurs most rapidly on areas where there is no soil cover. The weeds, naturally occurring in vineyards and

orchards, can reduce the impact of raindrops that otherwise would detach soil particles and make them prone to erosion. In addition surface runoff is slowed by the cover, allowing improved moisture infiltration.

AECM 2 MEASURE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF TREES

The aim of this measure is to allow for regular clearing of weeds, the removal of dry undergrowth in summer months to prevent any fire outbreak, any trimming, pruning or support (fertiliser/pesticide application) required to safeguard the health and protect the trees.

This measure will have a positive impact on biodiversity, enhancing the countryside with non-alien species which work in harmony with our unique ecosystems.

As well as providing an expanded habitat for local flora and fauna, through the introduction of the measures it will indirectly promote the planting of new trees which can be designed as buffer zones between agriculture and valuable natural assets such as watercourses. In addition, through

increasing the number of trees present on a holding and the location of such trees, farmers are indirectly targeting issues such as water logging, and erosion caused by water and wind.

This measure is further divided into 2 sub-measures as follows:

- Support for the maintenance of tree species planted on sloping land $\geq 11\%$. and terraces that are prone to soil erosion **2A**;
- Support for the maintenance of tree species planted to replace invasive alien species, from here on known as **2B**.

AECM 3 - MEASURE SUPPORTING THE INTRODUCTION OF BEE BOXES ON HOLDINGS

The objective of this measure is to incentivise beekeepers to set up bee boxes on agricultural land located not farther than 3km from garigue land. The intention is to support registered established beekeepers. This measure would be particularly beneficial in areas which have a high garrigue/maquis to agricultural land ratio, due to the wild flower varieties naturally occurring in such areas.



This measure promotes biodiversity and supports local ecosystems and the species which reside within these systems. Beekeepers would be increasing the pollinator population which is an essential component of Maltese agricultural systems and instrumental to enhancing the diversity of its animal and plant life.

Whilst increasing the pollinator population, numerous other endemic and indigenous species which support the local biodiversity will benefit, enhancing the overall biodiversity of Maltese farm land and neighbouring ecosystems.

This will also have a positive impact on biodiversity, enhancing the countryside and promoting a practice which works in harmony with our unique ecosystems. Farming depends on biodiversity. Many crops need the pollination provided by bees and other insects - more than a third of the world's agricultural crops depend on pollination.

AECM 4 - MEASURE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN TARGETING VINEYARDS AND ORCHARDS

The objective of this measure is to incentivise farmers to have an Integrated Pest Management Plan which is implemented on vineyards and orchards. IPM programs seek to

account for economic benefits and environmental costs by combining biological, cultural, and chemical pest control techniques to reduce pest infestation to economically acceptable levels.

The introduction of an IPM will assist in the creation of a suitable ecological infrastructure within the agricultural landscape. It will have a positive impact on biodiversity, enhancing the countryside and promoting a practice which works in harmony with our unique ecosystems, whilst reducing the need for pesticides and harmonising a balance between agriculture productivity and natural pest control concepts.

Pesticides can contaminate soil, water, and the crop itself. In addition to killing insects or weeds, pesticides can be toxic to a host of other organisms including birds, fish, beneficial insects, and non-target plants. Insecticides are generally the most acutely toxic class of pesticides, but herbicides can also pose risks to non-target organisms.

In taking an ecologically based pest control approach the measure is reducing the reliance on synthetic chemical pesticides, alternatively enhancing biodiversity, the countryside and promoting a practice which works in harmony with our unique ecosystems.

AECM 6 MEASURE FOR THE INTEGRATION AND MAINTENANCE OF AUTOCHTHONOUS MALTESE SPECIES

The aim of this measure is to promote the protection, maintenance and enhancement of autochthonous Maltese farm species encouraging an increased level of awareness and responsibility amongst farmers for native breeds.

AECM 6A - this sub-measure for the integration and maintenance of autochthonous Maltese species - Maltese Black Chicken. €20 per head per year with a minimum requirement of 30 heads or 0.315 livestock units (LU), which equates to €600 per 0.315 LU per year.

AECM 6B - This sub-measure for the integration and maintenance of autochthonous Maltese species - Maltese Ox. The rate of aid €1557.28 per head per year, which equates to €1557.28 per Livestock Unit (LU) per year.

AECM 6C - This sub-measure for the integration and maintenance of autochthonous Maltese species - Carob & Mulberry - The rate of aid for carob and mulberry trees is set at €38.99/tree/year up to a maximum of 18 trees per hectare amounting to €701.82/Ha/year.