

National Rural Network for Malta

newsletter

2nd Edition

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Dear All,

Welcome to the second edition of the NRN newsletter! Following the positive feedback received after the publication of the first edition, the NRN team has decided to start publishing this newsletter on a regular basis.

The newsletter will be tackling issues affecting all actors in the agricultural sector, such as climate change and alternative sources of energy. This issue will introduce the importance of water and its importance to humans, agriculture and natural ecosystems. Water is an essential part of our lives however it is taken for granted because some believe that it is an infinite resource. While desalination has solved most of our water shortage issues, this water comes at a hefty price.

The second issue will also focus on the LEADER programme which is a Rural Development Programme part-funded by the European Union. Local Action Groups which administer these funds are now fully functional and their work will be introduced in this issue.

We hope you enjoy this edition!

The MNRN Team
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Water - The driving force of all nature

Sustainable Water management for the Rural Environment

With only 315km² and limited rainfall, it is thanks to our rock formation that underground aquifers store our most precious and strategic resource - water. Currently, groundwater supplies around half of the water used, the rest comes from desalination. Demand arises from a population over 409,000 and around a million visitors annually. We often forget that our natural environment is also dependent on fresh water. Healthy ecosystems secure greater biodiversity, which in turn sustain natural process including soil formation. The link between the importance of water to the rural environment, the rural landscape and the value that these provide for residents and tourists alike is now recognised.

Many a time the agriculture sector was under the spotlight on issues related to water management. As the largest consumer of groundwater, agriculture used this resource without restrictions and through lack of proper management contributed to exacerbate the issues of over exploitation and nitrate pollution.

A balancing act is needed by all water users. Different plans tackle different aspects of water management, and all call for greater co-operation amongst stakeholders. The Rural Development Plan, the Water Catchment Management Plan, the Draft Water Policy and the Draft National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy set the way forward. The National Environment Policy, which has been issued for public consultation provides the overarching government direction and commitment towards policy integration in the environment field. Implementation is the remaining challenge.

The farmer is a key environmental manager. Harnessing better water management through better practices sustains agriculture, the rural environment, and enriches the economic performance of rural communities. This is our chance to hand down a precious resource in good status rather than creating environmental debt to the future generation which is already living amongst us.

- **Tourism and Sustainable Development Unit (OPM)**

Climate Change, Water and Agriculture

Global climate change is one of the most important and serious environmental issues which have emerged in the past few decades. The impacts of climate change are numerous and include changes in temperature, a higher frequency of heat waves, changes in precipitation patterns, extreme weather phenomena, melting of glaciers, flooding of low-lying areas, higher migration pressures, spread of disease, water scarcity and lower agricultural yields.

Globally there is enough freshwater to meet everyone's needs however not all areas have access to water. In certain locations extraction rates exceed recharge rates, putting pressure on this resource. Water demand and competition with rural areas have increased as urbanisation spreads and cities expand. Also, as global food requirements increase and change, greater water quantities will be required to guarantee food security for expanding populations.

The IPCC in its Fourth Assessment Report (2007) states that since 1950 more regions are being affected by droughts as precipitation on land has decreased and evaporation increased. Heavy daily precipitation which leads to flooding has also increased. Climate models suggest that global precipitation will increase during the 21st century. However, this increase will not be experienced by all regions. Whereas in North America and Northern Europe precipitation has increased over the past 40 years, a decrease was observed in Southern Europe, the Sahel and West Africa.

Climate change therefore exacerbates water scarcity in the driest areas of the world, home to more than 2 billion people and half of the world's poor. Changes in rainfall intensity, duration and frequency will negatively effect crop growth since they alter the existing pattern of soil moisture, groundwater recharge and runoff. In locations where agriculture is mainly rain-fed, adaptation measures will be required, such as change in type of crops and growing periods. Irrigated land is also at risk since if rivers, reservoirs and underground water sources are depleted faster than they can regenerate, water shortage will result.

- **Marilyn Tanti, EU Fund Officer, Managing Authority**

In order to highlight the importance of water, the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs launched the 'Catch the Drop Campaign' earlier on in 2011. The scope of this campaign was to provide water saving tips and emphasise that all individuals should safeguard this important resource. For more information please [click here](#)



Promoting the Sister Isle – Gozo as a Distinct Destination

The Gozo Action Group Foundation (GAGF) is a public-private partnership composed of representatives of the public sector such as Local Councils and other Government entities together with private entities such as the business community, NGOs and other non-profit organizations. It is running the LEADER Rural Development Programme for Malta (2007-2013). As one of the three Local Action Groups for the Maltese Islands, the Gozo Action Group has developed a local development strategy for its region.

The GAGF will soon be launching its first action: Promotion of Gozo as a Distinct Destination. The purpose of the action is to provide assistance to the development of marketing initiatives focusing on Gozo's distinctiveness. This action aims to generate further tourism demand in Gozo, especially in the shoulder months. The marketing campaign will use different communication channels and will include the creation of a web-portal, setting of Gozo Action Group standards and promotion of the Island, both locally and abroad. The campaign will be targeted towards those forms of tourism that make Gozo a distinct destination from Malta, particularly focusing on the rurality of the Sister Isle.

- **Katya Scicluna, Manager GAGF**

LAGs in Action – Measure 125

The three Local Action Groups have launched an Expression of Interest for Measure 125 of the Rural Development Programme for Malta (2007-2013). The objective of Measure 125 is to facilitate the development and adaptation of agriculture by supporting the improvement of necessary infrastructure. It aims to address one of the major limitations affecting agricultural land quality and productivity: farm accessibility. Lack of adequate access to these holdings, particularly those situated in terraced hills and coastal cliffs, is one of the major driving forces causing land abandonment. Therefore improvement in accessibility to these holdings through the upgrading of farm access roads will constitute an increase in farm utilisation, improve farm management, and increase farm efficiency.

Eligible investments supported through this call shall be limited to the upgrading and resurfacing of existing access passageways to agricultural holdings located within the territories of each respective Local Action Group.

Local Councils, legally constituted farmers' groups and associations NGOs are eligible to apply for funding under this Measure. Application forms and more information can be obtained from the respective LAG offices and websites.

- **Marisa Marmara', Manager MAGF**



NRN Activities



Well known ceramic artists together with amateur potters and craftsmen demonstrated various techniques such as throwing on a wheel, hand painting, modeling with clay and raku. An activity aimed at children was held at St Nicholas College Primary School in Attard. Children's Commissioner Ms. Helen D'Amato paid a short visit to the large group of young participants, all absorbed in practicing the craft of pottery making.

During the final festival night ceramists exhibited their creations and demonstrated their techniques, creating a beautiful atmosphere. Closing the event, vice Prime Minister Dr. Tonio Borg praised the initiative shown by the organizers, ceramic artist and architect Valerio Schembri and Alka Ceramics Managing Director Ms. Joan Haber, together with their supporters, Attard Local Council and the Malta Arts Fund.

- Marisa Marmara', Manager MAGF

The First Ceramic Festival kicked off with a 'Tribute Exhibition' dedicated to Neville Ferry, Julie Apap and Joe Casha, three well known ceramic artists who passed away in the last six months. This exhibition was inaugurated by Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Chris Said who emphasized the government's commitment to keep supporting Local Councils, NGOs and individuals who organise activities which enhance and celebrate our identity, culture and history.

The Maltese NRN is particularly instrumental in promoting the RDP Axis and Measures. NRNM played an important role in the setting up and the developing of the Leader approach in Malta. It is continuously working to involve and include the participation of all rural actors and stakeholders on horizontal thematic areas.



Fish Fest

The Fish Fest in St Paul's Bay was organised by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs in conjunction with St. Paul's Bay Local Council and various establishments from the locality.

Freshly caught fish was available for sale, together with various freshly cooked fish dishes prepared by restaurants in the area. The crowd was entertained by band marches and a full varied musical programme. Boat rides in a traditional luzzu around St. Paul's Islands were also organised, delighting locals and tourists alike.

The Fish Fest also had an educational aspect: informative brochures on typical fish caught in Maltese Waters were distributed. The Malta Aquaculture Research Centre within the MRRRA also set up a sea-water aquarium displaying different types of fish reared in the Centre.



NRNM is constantly working in parallel with DG AGRI and ENRD. Throughout the year NRNM organises Steering Committee and Coordination Committee meetings to discuss the current situation of Rural Development in Malta and ways forward for the agricultural sector. NRNM representatives also attend and participate in NRN meetings organised by the different Member States.

NRN Activities



NRN Malta, with the collaboration of Malta based consultants Gordon Cordina and Stefano Mallia, has embarked on a study together with a team from The Countryside and Community Research Institute, based in the UK. This strong research team has a high level of capacity to successfully generate the draft strategic policy and action plan outcomes required for this project.

The study will incorporate in-depth analysis of the current conditions and trends in farming and rural development on the Islands, with a broad understanding of the key actors and institutional processes shaping these sectors and processes.

The research team will take into account of a range of factors that exert influence upon rural development and agricultural activity in Malta, and which also have an important bearing upon the main future challenges and opportunities for Malta arising from the new CAP, post-2013.

The Project will deliver a final report bringing together the detailed analysis and synthesis of evidence, along with the proposed vision, strategic policy direction and action plan for creating the RDP 2014-20.

- Maria Carla Ciscaldi, EU Fund Officer, Managing Authority



Launch of Rural Development Measures

The Paying Agency within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs has launched a number of Measures, co-financed by the European Union, aimed at improving the competitiveness of agriculture, improving the environment and the countryside and improving the quality of life and the management of economic activity in rural areas:

- Measure 121 - Modernization of agricultural farms
- Measure 125 - Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture
- Measure 133 - Information and promotion activities on food quality schemes
- Measure 142 - Setting up of Producer Groups
- Measure 214 (Sub-measure 10) - Support for the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture

Applications will be open until Friday 2nd December 2011.

Further measures will be launched on the 24th of October:

- Measure 123 - Adding value to agricultural products
- Measure 124 - Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sectors
- Measure 132 - Participation of farmers in food quality schemes

Applications will be open until Friday 16th December 2011.

More information regarding these Measures can be found [here](#). Application forms can be downloaded from [here](#) or collected from MRRRA Front Office which can be contacted on 25904204.

The MNRN aims to carry out continuous discussions with rural stakeholders regarding subjects relevant to Maltese rural development policy, especially in meeting the objectives of the RDP for Malta and the challenges related to the CAP reform.

Upcoming Events

Commissioner Dacian Ciolos visit 28th - 30th October 2011

Commissioner Ciolos, the EU Commissioner responsible for agriculture and rural development, will be visiting Malta and meeting with rural stakeholders and members of the Maltese National Rural Network.

Estonian NRN Study Visit 15th - 18th November 2011

The Estonian NRN will be conducting a short study visit in Malta. The group will be visiting a number of attractions including several EU funded projects. A meeting with MNRN stakeholders will also be held.



Spread the word:

Inform and encourage other stakeholders to be added to our mailing list by sending us an email on: rdd.mrra@gov.mt

Let us know what you're up to:

Send us information about relevant news, campaigns, initiatives within your organisation, area or region for us to promote on our website

Do have any suggestions?

The NRN newsletter team looks forward to receiving feedback and suggestions as to continue improving this publication. Send us an email on: rdd.mrra@gov.mt

Want to make your voice heard?

Send us articles related to rural development and we will publish them in this newsletter.

Make the National Rural Network for Malta more known:

Post a link to the MA website, www.mrra.gov.mt/ma on your website

L-Awtorita' ta' Tmexxija

Programm tal-Iżvilupp Rurali għal Malta 2007 – 2013

Dan il-fuljett għe ko-finanzjat mill-Assistenza Teknika taht il-Fond Agrikolu Ewropew għall-Iżvilupp Rurali
Rata ta' Ko-finanzjament: 75% Unjoni Ewropea, 25% Gvern ta' Malta

