

Thematic Evaluation - Young Farmers

RDP 2014-2020

Between December 2020 and February 2021, the Managing Authority of the EAFRD within the Funds and Programming Division launched an evaluation study on the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, more specifically a thematic evaluation on young farmers covering Measure 6.1, Business Start-Up Aid for Young Farmers, of land stewardship, environmental the same programme. This is being implemented as part of the evaluation contract that the Managing Authority has with EMCS Ltd in collaboration with E-Cubed Consultants Ltd and Adi Associates. As advocated by the European Evaluation Helpdesk, the evaluation consisted of a mixed-methods approach which ensured appropriate triangulation of different data sources. More specifically, the evaluation design consisted of the following elements:

- Overview of the implementation of Measure 6.1;
- An assessment of the Business Plans and Performance Progress Reports submitted by beneficiaries;
- Telephone survey with beneficiaries of Measure 6.1;
- Interviews conducted with key stakeholders working with young farmers; and
- Structured focus groups with selected beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the agricultural sector in Malta produced about 0.5% of the total Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the economy (Eurostat) and accounted for about 0.8% of the total gainfully occupied population (NSO, Registered Employment). As highlighted in the Agricultural Policy for the Maltese Islands (2018-2028), while the sector's contribution to the

Maltese economy is low, it plays a multifunctional role ranging from food production and food security which are particularly important for an island state. The sector also plays an important role in conservation, recreational landscape, and a backdrop for the tourism industry, that go beyond the direct economic relevance.



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

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



older farm workers, thereby leading to an overall decline in the size of the sector.

While young farmers contribute to about 15% of the total standard output produced by the sector, it is interesting to note that the standard output per farmer is higher for young farmers than it is for the elderly farmers, potentially due to more efficient techniques of production.

Similar to the EU, the majority of Maltese young farmers have practical experience but limited training. However, unlike the EU, the percentage of young farmers in Malta with full agricultural training is significantly low at 1.5% compared to 19.1% in the EU. Indeed, most young farmers in Malta opt for basic training. The reason behind this low percentage could be attributed to succession without training or lack of access to relevant training needs.



OVERVIEW OF MEASURE 6.1

The original budget allocated to Measure 6.1 for young farmers stands at €4.3 million, effectively representing 82% of the budget allocated for Focus Area 2B which is concerned with facilitating the entry of adequately skilled farmers into the agricultural sector and, in particular, generational renewal. The implementation of the measure in Malta has registered very good progress. The result target of 60 farm holdings supported under this focus area has been attained as there are 60 beneficiaries for Measure 6.1 by the end of 2020. The committed expenditure by the end of 2020 amounted to circa €4.3 million with realised expenditure amounting to circa €3.3 million.

Young farmers applying for support under Measure 6.1 of the RDP are proposing projects which are reflective of the strategic objectives defined by the National Agricultural Policy, such as food presentation and labelling, competitiveness and diversification and adaptation to and mitigation of geo-climatic conditions. Measure 6.1 has been mostly successful amongst

the lower age cohorts as it attracts younger farmers to set up their business and enter into the sector. It has also been more effective in supporting young farmers who are already in the sector through their family's participation rather than 'new' young farmers who are interested in entering the sector.

YOUNG FARMERS IN MALTA

On the basis of data from the farm structure survey (Eurostat), in 2016, there were a total of 9,310 farms, of which around 660 farms were managed by young farmers (up to the age of 39), accounting for 7% of the total farms in Malta as compared to the 11% at an EU level. In 2016, for every 10 older farmers (over the age of 65), there were 3 young farmers in the EU. In Malta, there are only 2 young farmers for every 10 older farmers. The trends observed in Malta over the period 2010 to 2016 indicate that despite a marginal increase in young farmers (those up to the age of 39), the number of farmers over the age of 40 has declined significantly. This implies that young farmers are not replacing, in a sufficient manner, the

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG FARMERS IN MALTA

The thematic evaluation identified six main challenges faced by young farmers in Malta. These are listed below in order of importance:

1. Availability of land;
2. Access to new and useful knowledge and the access to useful training/workshops/networks;
3. Access to the market, in terms of the value chain reaching customers;
4. Lack of access to subsidies and credit;
5. Inheritance law and legal issues; and
6. Availability of qualified labour and seasonal workers.

These are consistent with the challenges faced by young farmers in Europe, as outlined in different literature sources. Public consultations undertaken by the Commission on modernising and simplifying the CAP have also pointed towards the prices and availability of land, low profitability and burdensome administrative requirements as being the main barriers to entry for young farmers.



KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

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. The majority of the expenditure is linked to construction works, the development of greenhouses and purchase of equipment. Around 75% of the total investment expenditure enabled by Measure 6.1 will have a secondary contribution towards Focus Area 2A, Facilitating restructuring of farms facing major structural problems, notably farms with a low degree of market participation, market-oriented farms in particular sectors and farms in need of agricultural diversification, which is concerned with improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernization, notably with the view of increasing market participation and orientation as well as agriculture diversification.

In terms of progress, by the end of June 2020, the average completion rate of the projects being supported by Measure 6.1 stood at around 39%. Delays in the implementation stage are attributed to various factors such as the time taken to acquire the necessary permits, finding contractors, obtaining quotations from suppliers and contractors and procurement delays due to the COVID-19 situation.

On the basis of the telephone survey, which was conducted amongst beneficiaries, 71% of the respondents indicated that they would not have executed the project without the support provided through Measure 6.1. This provides a

good indication of the importance of the assistance awarded by the Measure. In addition, most of the respondents, that is around 86%, indicated that as a result of the implementation of Measure 6.1 their competitiveness is expected to increase.

CONCLUSION

As the sector continues to be faced with an ageing farming population, more emphasis is being made on the importance of young farmers entering into the agricultural sector to ensure its sustainability. The ageing farming population has a significant influence on the production of agricultural produce, succession planning, successors, and farmland usage.

Given recent trends, particularly in terms of increased opportunities for off-farm work, ageing farmers increasingly face problems with farmland succession. This movement away from agriculture risks eliminating the agricultural sector in its entirety. Within this context, attempts to safeguard the agricultural sector are being made to encourage young people to enter or stay within this sector and take on an entrepreneurial role.

This attests to the importance of Measure 6.1 which serves to facilitate generational renewal by providing the support necessary for young farmers to enter the agricultural sector and set up their agricultural holding. Indeed, the thematic evaluation highlighted the demand for Measure 6.1 and its positive impact on the sector.

Message from the Network Support Unit

The NRN would like to invite beneficiaries of the Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020 who have successfully completed their projects and received the final payment, to submit their interest in providing articles of best project exemplars to be included in the NRN newsletter. Any RDP beneficiaries who are interested in this can contact Mr. Bradley Agius (Network Support Unit (NSU)) on rdd.opm@gov.mt for further information before drafting the article. Approved submissions will have to be accompanied by pictures linked to the project.

Furthermore, please note that currently no measures are open but the public is invited to visit our website www.eufunds.gov.mt for all necessary updates with respect to the programme.

TOWARDS ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY IN A BIDNIJA FARM HOLDING

Miżura 4.1: Appoġġ għal investimenti f'azzjendi agrikoli: *Ġiebjja fl-Bidnija*



Jiena jjsimni Francis Fenech u naħdem diversi għelieqi n-naħa tal-Bidnija. Għadni kif bnejt ġiebjja f'waħda mill-għelieqi illi għandi ġol-Bidnija. Dan ix-xogħol stajt inwettqu grazzi għall-għajnunna li akkwistajt mill-Programm għall-Iżvilupp Rurali għall-Malta (2014-2020).

Jiena issa qed noqrob biex nirtira u nħalli r-raba' lit-tfal tiegħi biex jaħdmu hom huma bħal ma għamel missieri lili. Ovvjament nixtieq illi jkollhom faċilitajiet aħjar bħal konservazzjoni tal-ilma li huwa riżors prezjuż u mingħajru ma naħdmux.

Jien persuna li nħobb li jkollni kolloxx sew. Hekk darrieni missieri u hekk qed ngħallem lit-tfal. Il-konservazzjoni tal-ilma jfisser li ma nimlewx il-ġiebjja b'ilma mill-pjan. Il-ġiebjja tintela mill-ilma tax-xita li jaqa' fuq is-serra. Fis-Sajf nimlewha bl-ilma riċiklat mill-impjant taċ-Ċumnija.

Meta jgħaddu n-nies minn dawn l-inħawi, jieħdu pjaċir jaraw ir-raba' f'kundizzjoni tajba. Din huwa promozzjoni pożittiva għall-bdiewa għax meta turi lin-nies u lit-turisti li għandek darek sew, aktar jieħdu pjaċir jieklu ikel lokali frisk.

Il-vantaġġi ta' din il-ġiebjja huma bosta. L-ewwel huwa l-konservazzjoni għax qed naqdbu ilma mis-serra li altrimenti kien jintilef. It-tieni ma bqajniex intellġhu ilma mill-pjan u t-tielet qed ikollna riżerva ta' ilma viċin fejn għandna bżonnu u b'hekk qed naħarqu anqas 'fossil fuels' biex insaqqu. Fl-aħħar net, aħna nużaw sistema serja ta' saqwi fejn ma naħlux ilma.

Apparti mil-ġiebjja, xtrajt ukoll sistema ta' irrigazzjoni li qeda mqabbdha mal-ġiebjja u tintuża biex insaqqi l-għelieqi tal-qrib, 'mulcher' aċċessorju li tqabbdha mat-traktor biex aktar nipproteġi l-ħamrija, 'sprayer' li ukoll huwa aċċessorju li tqabbdha mat-traktor biex inkun iżjed effiċjenti f'xogħli u biex niġġenera enerġija nadifa xtrajt sistema ta' pannelli fotovoltajċi.



Corbelled Stone Structures of the Maltese Islands

Jeffrey Sciberras



The smaller, more common rubble-walled hut-like hides which hunters and trappers use are called 'Dura' in Maltese.

The Girna is relatively a small hut, with normally one round chamber inside. Very few are rather large, or have more than one chamber, or they are squarish. The round ones are older than the squarish ones, some are over 500 years old, while the others are merely 100 to 150 years old. The majority have a domed roof, but very few have a flat roof. The largest of the squared ones resemble the Dammuso, which is a house dwelling found on the islands of Lampedusa and Pantelleria, but the Dammusi have a binding mortar in their interior, while a typical Girna does not. The majority of Giren, plural for Girna, occur in the limits of Mellieħa, very rare elsewhere. As per material, most Giren are built with Upper Coralline Limestone in the north and west of Malta, Gozo and Comino, while in the south of Malta

In a cultural sense, the Maltese Islands are covered with important heritage sites and features, being either of the natural and/or historical kind. While it might seem that Malta is losing a lot of these gems, some have become protected and seem safely out of development's way, some even restored to their original state. A particular category of historical structures in our archipelago are of the corbelled-stone type, such as the rubble walls and the corbelled stone-huts, locally known as 'Ħajt tas-Sejjieh' and 'Girna' in Maltese. While rubbles walls are rather widespread in the Mediterranean, and in other parts of Europe, the stone-huts are rather rare, and each country where such structures have been build, have their own unique shapes and materials, depending on the natural resources available at the time of construction, and type of geology in the nearby vicinity. The ones closer to the Maltese Islands, such as those of Italy, Sardinia,

Croatia, Greece, and the far off of Ireland are all stone-based, (though of Sardinia have wooden roofs) some with slabs and others are corbelled, some are volcanic and others are of the sedimentary-rock type. While rubble-walls are known purposely built to divide fragments of ownership and to prevent soil erosion, the use of stonehuts is not properly known, but only assumed. The most likely use was to keep some agriculture tools in the nearby vicinity, or for the farmer to rest in them after some time under the sun after some hard work, or to shelter from bad weather.



they are built with Globigerina Limestone. Same goes for rubble walls and other stone structures.

Very few pocket farms are also built with rubble, therefore the use of the round Girna eventually might have been replaced by their large square giren and small rubble-walled farms, then ultimately by large built farms which we call a 'Razzett', 'Irziezet' in plural.

Another, even rarer type of stone-structure in Malta is the open-roof round-walled garden, which from afar it looks like a

roof-less Girna. However it is actually, structure-wise, more related to the Pantescan gardens, which are called Jiardinu, occurring in Pantelleria. This structure is mainly to shelter small fruit trees from the strong winds that prevail in some months. Despite the strong winds that hit the Maltese Islands, these structures are very rare in Malta, as locally other materials of shelter are used, such as planted Prickly Pears, Cypress, Pomegranates and Olive trees along the borders of the fields, or put Great Reed Stems one next to each other in the form of

a fence. The Great Reed is more used in Gozo than in Malta. These small rubble-walled round gardens are more associate with other Mediterranean islands, hence they are almost a strange existence in Malta.

Some caves in the Maltese Islands have their openings walled up, either having the same purpose of the Girna, or used as farmed bee hives in olden times.

The countryside holds many gems that can be appreciated and should be observed with care, thus preserving them for future generations.

