

National Rural Network Malta

newsletter

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Dear All,

It's time for the sixth issue of the NRN Malta newsletter, the first since the beginning of the new year.

The last two editions of the NRN newsletter, inter alia, clearly featured the dynamic consultation process being undertaken through the National Rural Network in the drafting of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The sixth edition updates rural stakeholders with the last developments of this consultation process. However, the sixth issue particularly focuses on the LEADER Programme. The three Local Action Groups (LAGs) operating in Malta namely Gal Xlokk, Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF) and Gozo Action Group Foundation (GAGF) are at different stages in the implementation of their respective Local Development Strategy. Given that LEADER covers all rural areas in Malta and Gozo, we envisage a meticulous interest by rural stakeholders to review what's taking place thanks to LEADER in Malta.

Close to the end, one could find a synopsis of the major activities held by the Managing Authority and project beneficiaries in the last quarter since the publication of the fifth newsletter, concluding with a highlight of the planned activities and events during the first quarter of 2013.

The team hopes that through this newsletter, the Rural Development Programme is well communicated to rural stakeholders. Clarifications or request for additional information on any action being implemented by the LAGs would be gladly provided by the LAGs themselves or by NRNM team.

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An overview on LEADER



LEADER characterises the implementation of integrated development strategies for local rural areas, drawn up and implemented by local public-private partnerships, called Local Action Groups (LAGs). It presents local communities and policy makers with a win-win situation. Local actors have

the opportunity to develop and implement integrated strategies specifically elaborated for the region, without the restrictions of priorities that may be too generic or not specific to the needs of their area.

The main objectives of LEADER are to:

- Support small-scale community projects which are innovative in nature;
- Increase capacity of local rural community and business networks to build knowledge and skills;
- Encourage innovation and cooperation in order to tackle local development objectives. In Malta, LEADER started off with the implementation of Measure 341 which led to the development of 3 Local Action Groups, way back in 2009. These include;

- Gal Xlokk
- Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF) and
- Gozo Action Group Foundation (GAGF)

Following approval of the strategies by the Managing Authority, an agreement for the implementation of the respective Local Development Strategies was signed in 2010.

Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF)

The MAGF's territory currently consists of 16 localities. It brings together public, private and voluntary sector organizations and a population of approximately 124,000 people. MAGF aims to help improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in the North-West rural areas in Malta.



Amongst the various fruitful actions rolled out by MAG, one could find;

- €1.54 million for the encouragement of tourism activities through Measure 313

Almost €475,000 under Measure 313 are being utilised by Rabat Local Council to upgrade the infrastructural amenities in the village core's square as well as the trail that links the outskirts to the centre of Rabat. This project is conceptually converting Rabat's centre into an organised tourist destination - a Mediterranean culture experience combined with religion and history. This project will complement other Axis 3 funded projects being implemented by Heritage Malta and MTA including the restoration of St. Paul's Catacombs and the Heritage Trail respectively.

- €192,000 for a culinary and crafts festival through Action 413.1

The Grand Culinary and Crafts Festival for the Majjistral territory was held between the 7th and 9th of December 2012. This new initiative launched by MAGF is another project aimed to improve the quality of life of the Northwest territory in Malta. Farmers, craft persons, artists, cultural societies and SMEs had the opportunity to exhibit, promote and sell their local products during the festive season. 15 local councils forming part of MAGF participated in this festival, providing space to around 70 exhibitors. Local band clubs and choirs animated the event. Local culinary competitions both between professional and food amateurs were successfully held during this festival.



- €48,000 to support capital investment projects by the crafts sector through Action 413.3

A number of capital-investment projects are being financed through Action 413.3 to enable the crafts sector to become more competitive through an improvement in production and quality of local crafts.

The four direct beneficiaries of this action include; ArtClub 2000 - a voluntary organisation that teaches students different skills, promoting crafts and traditional artisan skills, Davinia Laferla

Turner who is a self-employed crafts artist; Limestone Heritage which hosts tourists in a traditionally local setting and Ceramika Maltija Ltd - a small business involved in hand-made ceramics. These beneficiaries have been awarded LEADER funds to purchase furniture, lighting, IT equipment, show-cases to display products and small-scale improvements to premises.

GAL Xlokk Foundation

The Gal Xlokk Foundation was founded by a group of local councils and private entities in the Southern part of Malta. The Xlokk region holds a population of 109,023 inhabitants covering an area of 72.8km².

The diversified actions, which are managed by the LAG, cover a wide spectrum of rural community activities such as rural development events, sports, culture, drama, rural infrastructure and other community well-being activities.

As at February 2013, Gal Xlokk issued the following Actions and Measures;

- €1.54 million for the Encouragement of Tourism Activities under Measure 313

Measure 313 is facilitating economic growth and promoting the rural heritage as a tourist product in Southern rural areas. Five Local Councils are benefiting through Measure 313 issued by Gal Xlokk including; Marsascala, Żejtun, Luqa, Ghaxaq and Qormi. A project is also being implemented by a private entity; Chateaux Heritage.



- €204,000 for infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture under Measure 125

This measure is addressing one of the major limitations affecting agricultural land quality and productivity in Malta: farm accessibility. A significant number of applicants expressed their interest to receive funds through this measure. In February 2013, Galxlokk issued a formal call for applications for those farmers or entities who showed interest in the first stage.

- €270,834 for the Communication and Branding of the Region through Action 413.A1 and the setting up of a tourist hub

Galxlokk is using this action to re-inforce the attributes of the Southern region by publishing information on the territory. Various mediums are being used including an interactive web-site, booklets, brochures and calendar of events. So far, a conference was held to promote the fireworks trade and its safety in the Xlokk region.



- €150,000 for voluntary organisations in the Southern region through Action 413.A3

This action induced interest among volunteers to contribute towards the well being of the citizens. Gal Xlokk had several meetings with entities interested in this action, which are likely leading to promising results in the coming years. The following band clubs are being contracted under this measure: Lourdes Band Club (Qrendi), St. Catherine Band Club (Żurrieq), St. Leonard Band Club (Kirkop), St. George Marthyr Club (Qormi), Fratellanza San Mikiel (Qormi), San Pietru tal-Ktajjen (Birżebbuġa), Żejtun Band Club, St. Joseph Band Club (Kirkop), Sant Andrija Band Club (Luqa), Union Band Club (Luqa), St. Sebastian Band Club (Qormi).



- €125,000 for Sports Activities through Action 413.A8

For this open call, beneficiaries could decide on what type of activity to pursue. Priority was given to actions that promote community cohesiveness through sports initiatives that address children and youths. The main beneficiaries for this action are Sports Organizations, NGO's and Voluntary Organisations. Upon the launch of this call, Gal Xlokk officials had several meetings with all the interested entities and provided the necessary support in compiling the application. These projects are being verified by the Managing Authority prior to contracting.

- €72,000 for Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation under Measure 421

In April 2012, a Gal Xlokk representative had the opportunity to take part in an EU-wide seminar/workshop on Measure 421. A transnational cooperation project entitled "Dieta Mediterranea" shall be implemented together with LAG Sulcis Iglesiente Capoterra e Campidano di Cagliari as the lead partner.

The overall objective of this transnational cooperation project is to promote and enhance the healthy Mediterranean diet as a source of identity and culture. Increasing awareness on the Mediterranean diet will increase the demand for products available from local producers by the local population and operators in the tourism industry.

The project aims at bringing a more sustainable way to visit the territories, where tourists can taste and purchase traditional products, whilst increasing income for local producers and processors and learning the knowledge of traditional production processes.



Gozo Action Group Foundation (GAGF)

GAGF represents all the 14 Local Councils within the territory of Gozo, Comino and other entities from the private sector. Its main aim is to improve the quality of life of the 31,000 inhabitants of the island. The members affiliated with the local action group cover economic, social and environmental interests concerning the island.

The following are some of the actions being implemented by GAGF:

- €1.45 million allocated to encourage tourism activities under Measure 313

GAGF launched Measure 313 'Encouragement of Tourism Activities' in March 2011 with the aim of contracting projects for the setting up of trails that interlink various sites of tourist value and the provision and one-time restoration of small scale recreational amenities such as leisure parks.

A total of ten applications were received for Measure 313 issued by GAGF. Two were submitted by private companies and eight by Local Councils. Seven public entities and one private company have been contracted under this measure including: Kercem Local Council, Victoria Local Council, Gharb Local Council, Fontana Local Council, Xaghra Local Council and Cottage Products Ltd. Projects are currently being implemented.



- €192,000 for the development and adaptation of agriculture under Measure 125

Another Measure that attracted substantial interest within the Gozo territory was Measure 125. This measure shall lead to the upgrading and resurfacing of existing access passageways to agricultural holdings located within the territory of GAGF. The call for applications will be launched later on this quarter.

- Measure 410

Until February 2013, GAGF launched two actions under Measure 410

- €150,000 to promote Gozo's produce under Action 411.1

The action for the promotion of Gozo Produce was launched in March 2012. It aims to support a marketing campaign on Gozo's agricultural products to improve the competitiveness of the local agricultural and food sectors. Five applications were received, evaluated by GAGF and will be contracted in this quarter.

- €354,000 for landscaping under Action 413.4

GAGF launched this action in August 2012. Through this action, Local Councils shall undertake landscaping of public areas; street furniture and lighting systems; embellishment of public spaces; cleaning of valleys; improvement of water catchment systems. Ten applications have been received by the GAGF and will be evaluated in this quarter.

- €52,800 for a transnational co-operation project under Measure 421

The transnational cooperation project proposed by GAGF aims at developing a wine and food route in the island region of Gozo. This itinerary shall be linked to a network of similar itineraries which will be developed by the other LAGs also taking part in this transnational cooperation project.



NRN Activities

between November 2012-February 2013

The Maltese NRN is particularly instrumental in promoting the RDP Axis and Measures. NRNM played an important role in the setting up and the development 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.

1. Payment Claims Campaign Conference - 15th February 2013

A conference has been organised by the Managing Authority and Paying Agency informing farmers and other agricultural entities of the Axis 2 applications process for 2013.



2. Working group meetings and NRN Conference - 16th January 2013

An encouraging number of farmers and other rural stakeholders actively met in small working groups for each of the six thematic areas to discuss and prioritise on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats pertaining to each theme. The six thematic areas NRN Malta is working on include:

- Theme 1** - Increasing returns to the fresh produce sector and improving efficient input use.
- Theme 2** - Improving the long term sustainability of the livestock sector in Malta.
- Theme 3** - Food processing and adding value.
- Theme 4** - Direct Sales of Fresh Produce.
- Theme 5** - Making a high quality rural visitor experience.
- Theme 6** - Enhancing the landscape and adapting to future water challenges.

Discussions culminated in a joint-working group conference held on 16th January 2013 at Mount St. Joseph. The common issues stemming through the six themes were presented during the conference, attended by around 70 people. Participants were randomly grouped in four groups of around 15 participants each, having a representation from each of the six strategic themes.

During this workshop, resources were classified under three categories - Investment, support and training. Working group participants allocated percentages towards each category; implying the sub-categories which in their view should be allocated the highest proportion of funds in the 2014-2020 Programming period. Among the most popular were; water conservation, facilities that facilitate rural tourism, renewing youths interest in agriculture, quality assurance, packaging, storage, educating consumers, promotion and marketing of local produce.



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.

3. Sub-sectoral committee meetings

Discussions taking place in working groups have been escalated to a higher level in the form of weekly sub-sectoral committee meetings starting on 10th December 2012 till 28th February 2013. Representatives from agricultural entities, members of the NRN and other key government officials involved in the implementation of the Partnership Agreement for the Common Strategic Framework actively participated in such meetings to ensure that the rural development policy is being discussed in line with other key government policies and targets.

4. NRN Committee Meetings

Two NRN committee meetings were held since the publication of the last NRN newsletter, one on 30th October 2012 and another on 18th December 2012. The former meeting informed committee members of the success of Measure 121 and 123 together with an update on the NRN consultation process. The last NRN meeting for 2012 updated Committee members on the Partnership Agreement, the Common Strategic Framework, the discussions in working groups and the work being undertaken by the University of Gloucestershire for the drafting of the RDP 2014-2020.



5. Participation during the Majjistral Action Group Culinary and Crafts Festival - 7th, 8th, 9th December 2012.



The Managing Authority was cordially invited to set up a manned stand during the Culinary and Crafts Festival organised by Majjistral Action Group Foundation on 7th, 8th and 9th December 2012 at the Malta Fairs and Convention Centre. Through its stand, the Managing Authority (MA) promoted the scope and objectives of LEADER in Malta and other projects funded through the RDP 2007-2013.

As part of the promotion for Measure 114 - 'Use of Farm Advisory Services', an information session has been delivered by FAS Consortium during the Culinary and Crafts Festival. The MA sent 2 SMSs to all farmers registered on the IACS system to promote this information session.

6. Participation in the Almonds Festival - 10th, 11th November 2012, Sliema

The MA set up a stand during the almonds festival held in Sliema on 10th and 11th November 2012. This festival was organised by the Sliema Filarmonic Society to revive local traditions and produce. The general public has been the target audience of this promotional activity, enabling more educational awareness on the benefits being felt through RDP 2007-2013 funds.



7. RDP funded projects inaugurated between November 2012 and February 2013

1. **18th December 2012** - The embellishment in front of Providenza Chapel by MTA
2. **29th January 2013** - The embellishment and upgrading of Ġibjun Gardens in Żurrieq by MTA
3. **2nd February 2013** - Phase 1 of Selmun: Archaeological and Rural Heritage Trail, being implemented by Mellieħa Local Council.
4. **3rd February 2013** - Restoration of San Dimitri Chapel - Għarb Local Council
5. **24th February 2013** - Inauguration of Għarb Local Council Measure 323 project - Restoration of Taż-Żejt Chapel.
6. **24th February 2013** - Inauguration of Wasteserv's Family Park in Marsascala financed through Axis 3.
7. **1st March 2013** - Inauguration of Buskett Farmhouses restored through measure 323.



8. Published results of Measures 123, 124, 142, 214

The MA published the results of the following measures:

- **Measure 123** - Adding Value to Agricultural Products
- **Measure 124** - Cooperation for Development of New Products, Processes and Technologies in the Agriculture and Food Sector
- **Measure 142**, 2nd Call - Setting Up of Producer Groups
- **Measure 214**, Sub-measure 10 - Support for the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture.

9. Biedja u Sajd Publication

Another booklet 'Biedja u Sajd' has been published in December 2012 by Naturalment Malti in collaboration with the MA. This booklet is distributed to almost 10,000 rural stakeholders. One of the articles showed facts and figures for Axis 2, 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. A case study on Mr. Salvu Attard and his Measure 121 investment for the production of cheeselets showed the benefits being felt by farmers through RDP funds. Another case-study gave an overview of the restoration works being undertaken on Buskett Farmhouses, financed through Measure 323 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 to ensure local heritage in rural areas is not lost.

10. New series on Malta u lil Hinn Minnha

From October 2012, the MA continued the sponsorship of TV Programme Malta u lil Hinn Minnha featuring every Sunday morning on TVM.

11. Ongoing Evaluation of the RDP 2007-2013

The Managing Authority, in collaboration with KPMG Hungary is undergoing an ongoing evaluation process in order to reflect on the performance of the RDP and receive independent feedback on its effectiveness and outcomes.

- A survey for beneficiaries under Measures 121, 123, 313 and 323 is being conducted. A number of detailed case studies, including site visits, have already been carried out with few beneficiaries in July 2012. This survey aims to upscale these studies and provide data for the calculation of impact and result indicators. The data requested helps to understand the beneficiary's concerns, difficulties and opinions. These questionnaires requested general information about the holding and the results achieved. Financial data related to the holding over the past five years was also requested. Surveys for Measure 121 were carried out on a one to one basis with an interviewer while surveys for Measure 123, 313 and 313 were carried out online and by email.

Upcoming Events

Gal Xlokk is planning to launch another two measures in the next quarter. These include;

413.A4 - Training for Project Managers

Gal Xlokk stakeholders will receive training and hands-on experience on various topics especially those related to environment, land management and diversification of agriculture. The beneficiary for this measure will be the Local Action Group itself.

413.A7 - Community Support for children

This action consists of providing training to the elderly in helping youths/children improve their education after school hours. Schools and Local Councils shall be the direct beneficiaries for this action.

413.2- Folk and Traditional Activities Support

This action shall provide assistance to folk and traditions-related NGO's to undertake initiatives that enhance and revalorise the intangible heritage of Gozo. This action aims to revive traditions and improves citizens' quality of life.

413.6- Festivals and Events

A festival together with other events focussed on Gozo's rural heritage shall be supported.

Later on in 2013, GAGF shall be launching another three actions identified in their strategy;

413.1- Promotion of Gozo as a Distinct Destination

Having a total allocation of €280,000, this action will eventually lead to the creation of a web portal, the setting up of standards, local and foreign promotion of Gozitan crafts.

413.3- Crafts Sector Support

The aim of this action is to promote and enhance product distinctiveness for Gozitan traditional hand made products and activities. It seeks to improve the competitiveness of this sector by funding initiatives such as innovative production ideas, buying new equipment, training in human skills, and marketing. Craft makers and associations registered with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations are the main potential beneficiaries for this action. €75,000 are being allocated to support the crafts sector in Gozo.

413.5 - Signposting

Through this action, Gozitan Local Councils shall be assisted to improve the signage of places of interest in the island of Gozo thereby increasing tourists accessibility.

Upcoming Events

Locality meetings

The Paying Agency shall be organising a number of locality meetings during April to encourage applications for Axis 2 Measures as follows:

- Notre Dame Parish Church, Zabbar
- Mgarr Farmers Cooperative Society, Mgarr
- Ninu Cremona Boys Secondary School Rabat, Gozo

Registered Farmers would be informed via sms with the dates of these meetings

NRN Committee Meeting

Date and Venue to be announced

ENRD footage of RDP 2007-2013 funded projects

On the 25th and 26th March 2013, the ENRD in collaboration with the NRNM shall be carrying out interviews with 3 beneficiaries of the RDP 2007-2013 and footage of Malta's rurality.



Link with our European Counterparts:

European Network for Rural Development (ENRD):

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>

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Inform and encourage other stakeholders to be added to our mailing list by sending us an email on:

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Make a link to the MA website on your own website.

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Let us know what you're up to:

Send us information about relevant news, campaigns and initiatives within your organisation, area or region to be promoted on our website.

Do have any feedback or suggestions?

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

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Rural Development Programme for Malta 2007 – 2013



Co-financed through Technical Assistance
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Co-financing Rate: 75% European Union, 25% Government of Malta



Europe Investing in Rural Areas