

Citizen Summary

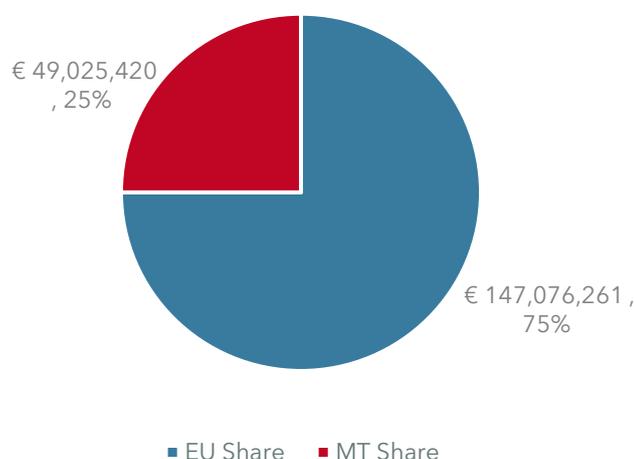
for Implementation Year 2022

Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

1. Introduction

Malta's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 covers the entire territory of the Maltese Islands. Following programme changes which were adopted at the end of 2021, the Programme has seen its budget increase to € 196,101,681¹, an increase of more than 50% from the original allocation approved for the programme. Soon after the allocation of these funds, the MA launched new calls and commenced the implementation of this new, additional budget in January 2022. As a result of the new allocation, the programme was also extended by a 2-year period, and now covers a 9-year period from 2014 to 2022, instead of 2014-2020. The allocation of the total budget derives from a 75% contribution from the EU and an additional 25% from National (Malta) funds. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: MALTA'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014-2022 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION



Following this new injection of funds, during 2022, the Managing Authority (MA) issued several calls across the different measures. This ran in parallel with progress in implementation of projects approved in previous years.

¹ Note that part of the allocation derives from another fund, the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI), which is a temporary recovery instrument to help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

2. Progress Achieved

2.1 New calls for projects

The calls for projects issued in 2022 are presented in Table 1. A considerable number of applications were received in response to these calls for proposals which led to the award of 144 new projects, 64 of which through the LEADER programme which will be explained further down in this summary table. The grant agreements for these projects were signed between 2022 and early 2023. Under M4.1, 38 projects were approved carrying a budget of €3.5 million. Under M6.1, 29 projects for young farmers were approved with a commitment value of circa €2 million. Most of the approved applications under M4.1 have been primarily taken up to improve the farm holding for improved competitiveness. In the case of M6.1 support is directed towards young farmers aiming to introduce new farm activities or upgrade current farm operations, whilst establishing themselves as new head of agricultural holdings.

TABLE 1: CALLS ISSUED DURING 2022 AND APPROVED PROJECTS

Measure	Calls issued	Applications received	Applications approved
M4.1 - Investment in agricultural holdings	4	71	38
M4.2 - Investment in processing / marketing / development of agricultural products	1	4	4
M4.3 - Investments in infrastructure related to development, modernisation or adaptation of agriculture and forestry	1	11	8
M6.1 - Business start-up aid for young farmers	4	68	29
M6.4 - Investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities	2	2	1
M19.2 - Implementation of operations under the CLLD Strategy	35	75	64
Total	47	231	144

2.2 New financial commitments and payments

As a result of the award of these new projects referred to under Section 2.1, the budget commitment of the programme has progressed considerably. Progress is measured under the Priority Areas (the Programme has 5 Priority (P) Areas, starting from P2 to P6), which are high level Strategic Objectives set at EU level for support under the RDP (refer to Table 2 for more information). During 2022, in Malta, most progress was registered under Priority 3, which is now nearly committed in terms of budget (at close to 100%). This means that the allocation of budget in the RDP for this Priority is signed for under a number of grant agreements. It is followed by Priority 2 with a commitment value at 98% and Priority 4 with a commitment of 80%. Priority 5, 6 and the Technical Assistance (TA) of the programme are moving in parallel at circa 60% in terms of commitment values. Overall, the programme's level of commitment is at 76%. Table 2 outlines the Priorities of the programme and the respective Financial Allocation.

TABLE 2: PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

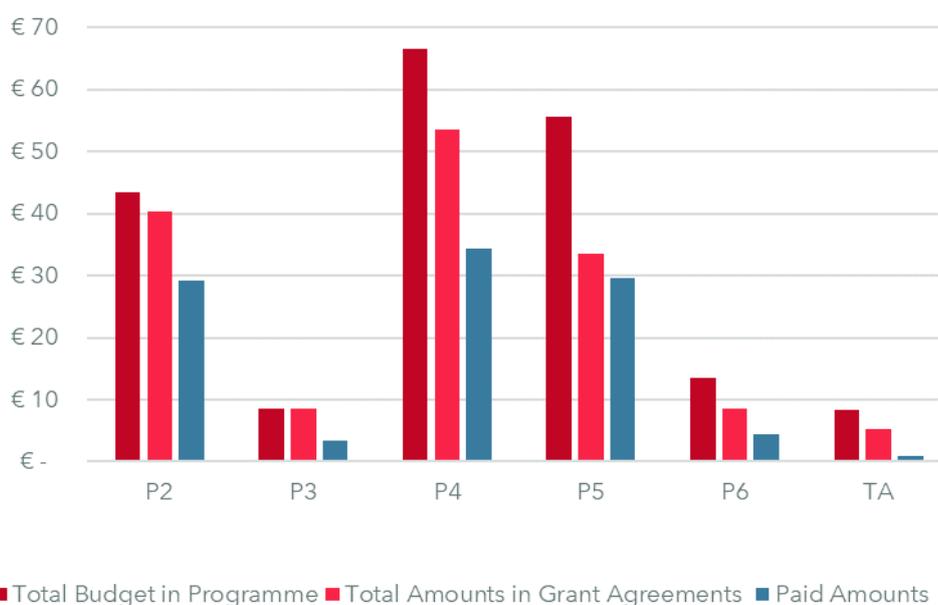
No.	Title	Financial Allocation (in millions) €
P2	Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests	43.5

P3	Promoting food chain organisations, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture	8.6
P4	Restoring, preserving and enhancing eco-systems related to agriculture and forestry	66.61
P5	Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry	55.65
P6	Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas	13.49
TA	Technical Assistance	8.28
	TOTAL	196.10

Note: P1 is not included in this table as it is considered as a horizontal priority and its allocation is covered under the other priorities of the programme.

In terms of realised expenditure, during 2022, the Programme has reimbursed over €10 million. To date, the programme has made payments for slightly more than 50% of the programme allocation. Priority 4 is the highest 'spender', followed by Priority 2 and Priority 5. Figure 2 gives a snapshot of the commitment values and realised expenditure per Priority.

FIGURE 2: COMMITMENTS AND PAYMENTS AS AT 2022

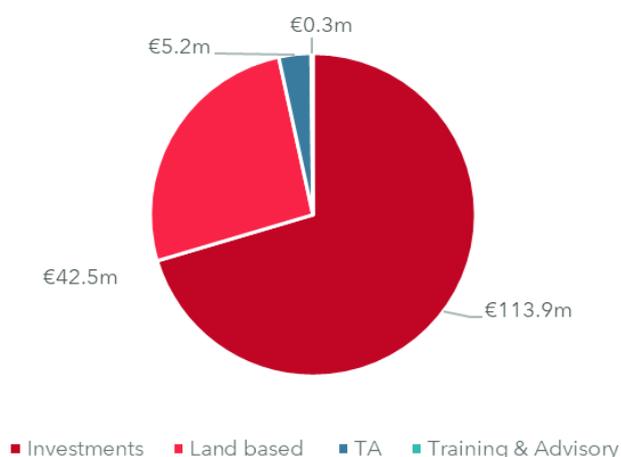


Note: P1 is not included in this table as it is considered as a horizontal priority and its allocation is covered under the other priorities of the programme.

2.3 Implementation Progress Across Measures

Delving further into the support provided through the RDP during 2022, the programme saw the implementation and provision of training interventions, advice to farmers, as well as land based measures (i.e., support to farmers for environment and climate actions), besides investment projects. The share of approved projects across these types of support is provided in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: TYPES OF SUPPORT UNDER THE RDP



As can be seen in Figure 3, the largest share of commitment values till the end of 2022, is directed towards **investment projects**. Investment projects primarily support farmers, agricultural holdings and young farmers in various initiatives. Investment projects can also be steered by Public Organisations and Local Councils to support the agricultural sector. In fact, 8 of the new projects that were approved in 2022 are led by Local Councils and are earmarked towards improving accessibility for farmers through investment in rural roads. 23 new projects are supporting on farm investment to enhance the farming activity, including through investment in farming equipment and technology and another new 19 projects are supporting young farmers also through investment projects and helping these farmers setting-up as new head of holdings.

Water is an important yet scarce resource for the local agricultural sector. The RDP identifies such need as one of the main objectives for this programme; in fact, during 2022, the Water Services Corporation (WSC) gained momentum towards reaching the final stages of a project that aims at facilitating the access of high-quality 'recycled' water (Highly Polished Tertiary Treated Water), thereby lessening the pressure on the aquifer. This project has an allocation of over €21m under M4.3.

An important strand of investment projects which was already referred to earlier in this summary, relates to the LEADER Programme. The **LEADER** Programme aims to address the region's needs and opportunities by providing a wide range of people and organisations the possibility to invest within their respective territory. 2022 saw the award of an additional 64 projects, under the different geographical action groups that are set up, namely: Gozo, Majjistral, and Xlokk Local Action Groups. These projects concentrate on the priorities set at the level of the action group which cover areas such as culture, green infrastructure and, in the case of Gozo, also targeting the general rejuvenation of Gozo. Very often these projects are led either by local councils or generally smaller voluntary organisations within the localities. Largely, these are smaller projects with an average budget allocation of around €20,000.

Land based measures carry the second largest share of funds approved in support towards farmers in relation to environmental actions. Support here includes the implementation of a soil management and conservation plan on a holding; the control of weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical, instead of chemical methods and the implementation of an integrated pest management plan targeting vineyards and orchards.

Training, albeit carrying a small budget, remains an integral part of the RDP and during 2022, 734 farmers benefitted from training on farming and business management. This initiative is part of the MCAST project that offers training courses to individuals operating in rural areas. The project started in 2019 and is currently still ongoing.

€500,000 is also allocated to the provision of **advisory services** to farmers. Just as in training, the advisory services are free of charge for farmers and are still ongoing. During 2022, advice was provided to circa 80 farmers.

The remaining commitments are related to the **Technical Assistance** budget, which is the budget allocated to support the main administrative stakeholders, such as the Managing Authority and ARPA, in the management, implementation, control and evaluation of the programme.

3. Communication

During 2022, the MA kept updating its website to continuously inform relevant stakeholders about programme implementation. This website is updated regularly by the MA to ensure that the information available is updated and relevant. The website acted as one of the major MA's means of communication with its stakeholders and the public, informing them of the latest pre-announcements, newsletters, events, circulars, contact points and other useful resources. Information sessions are also held with potential and interested applicants before the launch of RDP applications.

The use of the **BiedjaCam** mobile application furthered its deployment during 2022; the app serves as a link between Maltese Authorities and local farmers. The app provides users (farmers) with a platform through which the Authorities may communicate directly with the farmer with any notices, information requests, clarifications, and also announcements on new calls.

Following intensive preparations throughout 2022, in January 2023, a new website (FONDI.eu) was launched and acts as a one-stop shop for all information about EU funds. This website shall continue to be the main portal in accessing information on EU funds, including the RDP and the CAP SP.

4. Project Examples

Figures 4-8 presents a snapshot of a few projects financed under the RDP 14-20.



FIGURE 4 - INVESTMENT IN GREENHOUSES, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.1 - 'INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS'



FIGURE 5 - THE SUPPLY OF HIGHLY POLISHED TERTIARY TREATED WATER TO FARMERS, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.3 - 'INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE RELATED TO DEVELOPMENT, MODERNISATION OR ADAPTATION OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY'



FIGURE 6 - THE CONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION OF RUBBLE/ DRY STONE WALLS, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.4 - 'SUPPORT FOR NON-PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENTS LINKED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AGRI-ENVIRONMENT-CLIMATE OBJECTIVES'



FIGURE 7 - THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW RABBIT FARM, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 6.1- 'BUSINESS START-UP AID FOR YOUNG FARMERS'



FIGURE 8 - RESTORATION OF LOCAL FEATURES IN RURAL LOCALITIES, SUPPORTED UNDER LEADER



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