

Citizen Summary

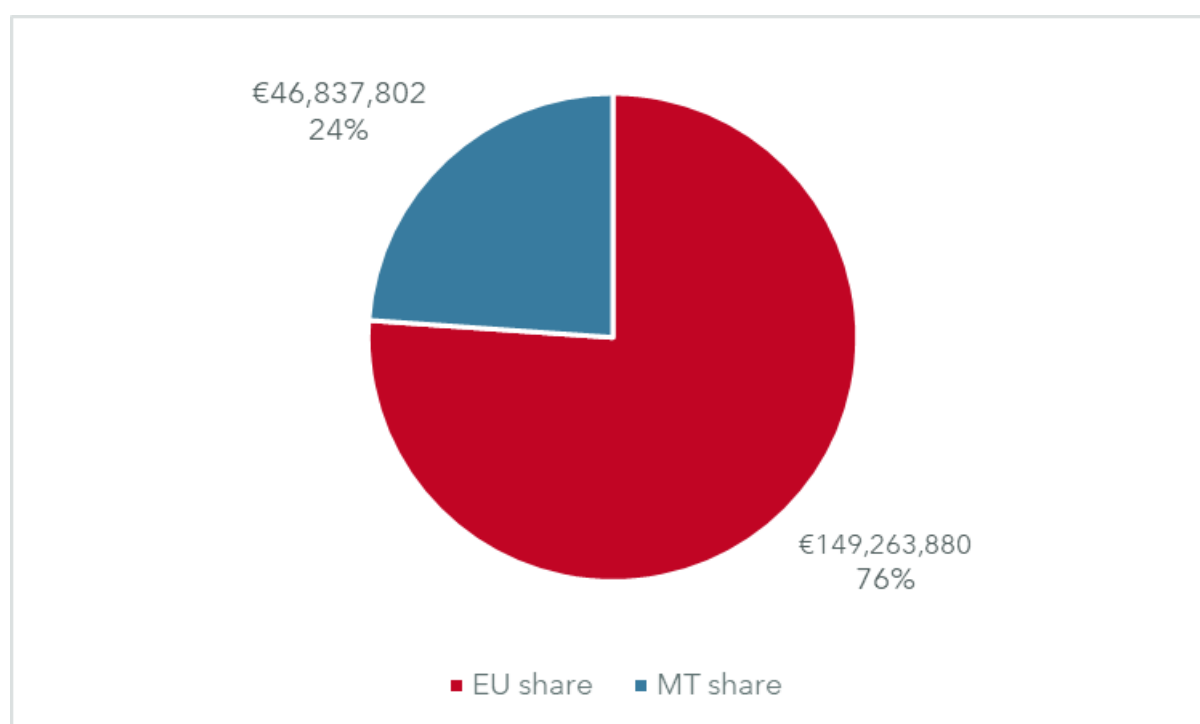
for Implementation Year 2023

Rural Development Programme 2014-2022

1. Introduction

Malta's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2022 covers the entire territory of the Maltese Islands. The Programme budget stands at €196,101,681¹. In 2023 budget shifts between two measures were affected. This relates to the introduction of Measure 22 under Priority 2, for which a budget of €2.2 million was allocated. The allocation for M22 was mobilised from M6.4 under Priority 6. For all other measures and sub-measures, no changes were recorded. The main allocation of the total budget derives from a 75% contribution from the EU and an additional 25% from National (Malta) funds, whilst EURI is financed at 100% from EU funds². The share of the programme between EU and Malta is illustrated in Figure 1.

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



During 2023, the Managing Authority (MA) issued a number of 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 (i.e. €8,750,475) 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 This means there is no national contribution for this instrument.

2. Progress Achieved

2.1 New calls for projects

During 2023, several calls for proposals were launched covering 4 batches under 4 sub-measures, as presented in Table 1. In the case of M10.2, the call was launched in Q4 2023 and was eventually closed in January 2024.

A considerable number of applications were received in response to these calls for proposals which led to the award of 123 new projects. The grant agreements for these projects were signed between 2023 and early 2024. Under M4.1, 50 projects were approved carrying a budget of €8 million. Table 1 provides the details on the number of approved projects. In the case of M4.1 and M4.4, the non-selected projects were rejected at selection stage; whilst those under M8.5 were placed on the reserve list.

TABLE 1: CALLS ISSUED DURING 2023 AND APPROVED PROJECTS

Measure	Calls issued	Applications received	Applications approved
M4.1 - Investment in agricultural holdings.	1	57	50
M4.4 - Support for non-productive investments linked to the achievement of Agri-environment-climate objectives.	1	82	72
M8.5 - Support for investments improving the resilience & environmental value of forest ecosystems.	1	5	1
M10.2 - Support for conservation and sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture.	1	4	TBD (2024)
Total	4	148	123

2.2 Progress at the level of the Programme

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.. As at 2023, in Malta, most progress was registered under Priority 2, which is now overcommitted by 102.13%. This is followed by Priority 5 and Priority 3, with a commitment value at 97.96% and 97.39% respectively. Priority 6 and Priority 4 have achieved a commitment value of 91.05% and 77.60% respectively. Overall, the programme's level of commitment was, as at end 2023, 91.68%. Table 2 outlines the Priorities of the programme and the respective Financial Allocation.

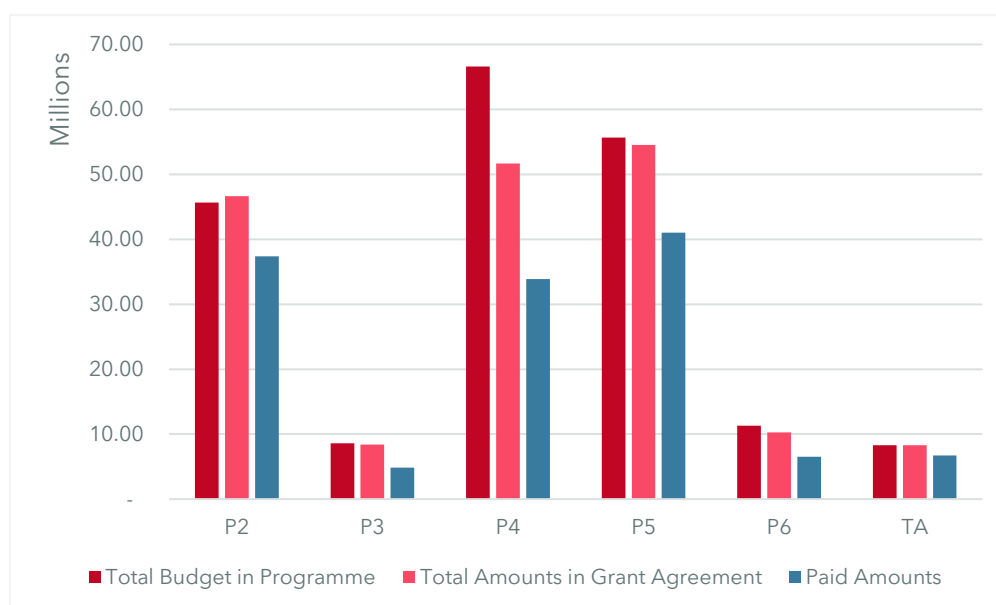
TABLE 2: PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

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	45.67
P3	Promoting food chain organisations, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture	8.60
P4	Restoring, preserving and enhancing eco-systems related to agriculture and forestry	66.60
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	11.29
TA	Technical Assistance	8.27
	TOTAL	196.08

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; The total budget does not match with the figure listed in section 1 due to rounding up.

In terms of realised expenditure, during 2023, the Programme has reimbursed over €24 million. As at end 2023, the programme has made payments equivalent to 65% of the programme allocation. Priority 5 is the highest 'spender', followed by Priority 2 and Priority 4. Figure 2 gives a snapshot of the commitment values and realised expenditure per Priority.

FIGURE 2: COMMITMENTS AND PAYMENTS AS AT 2023



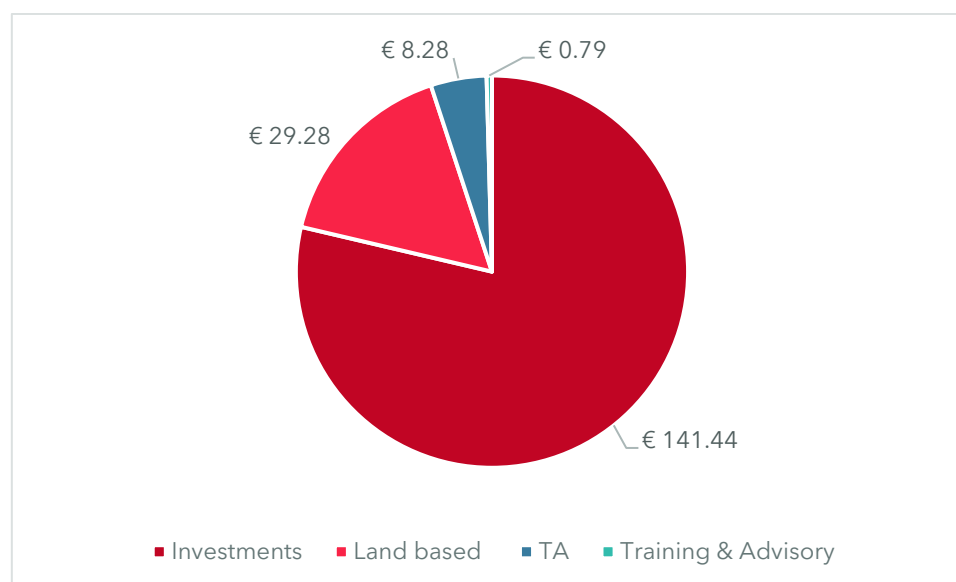
Note: P1 is not included in this table as it is considered as a horizontal priority and its allocation is covered under the other priorities of the programme.

2.3 Progress at the level of the Measures

Delving further into the support provided through the RDP during 2023, the programme saw the implementation and provision of training, 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



Note: The figures in Figure 3 are in € million.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the largest share of commitment values till the end of 2023, 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. 19 new projects are supporting on farm investment to enhance the farming activity, including through investment in farming equipment and technology and another new 15 (8 of which from the latest call that closed in September 2022) projects are supporting young farmers also through investment projects including support for their setting up as new head of holdings.

Water is an important yet scarce resource for the local agricultural sector. The RDP identifies this need as one of the main objectives for this programme, in fact, during 2023, the Water Services Corporation (WSC) embarked on a new project "Malta South New Water Capacity Upgrade and Southwest Network Extension". This project was allocated an EU Grant of €19.5 million under M4.3. This project aims to expand the Malta South polishing plant capacity by 6,000 m³/day whilst extending the New Water distribution network to the Southwest of the island by an additional 15.8km distribution network, over and above the recent Malta South extension, which is funded under the same instrument, spanning 36km. The investment shall also comprise the rehabilitation of one reservoir and the construction of two new boosting stations.

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 local stakeholders including organisations the possibility to invest within their respective territory. 2023 saw the award of an additional 61 projects, under the different action groups, 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. From

the 61 projects, 36 projects were led by NGOs, 9 by Local Councils, 8 by individual farmers, 6 by individual persons, and 2 by companies.

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. Commitments and payments related to land-based measures are now being committed under the CAP SP, as the RDP programming period draws to an end.

Training, albeit carrying a small budget, remains an integral part of the RDP and during 2023, circa 306 farmers benefitted from training on farming and business management. This initiative is part of the MCAST project that offers training courses to individuals that are implementing agri-environment climate measures. The project started in 2019 and training was drawing to a close in 2023. €785,000 is also allocated to the provision of **advisory services** to farmers. Just as in training, the advisory services at no charge to farmers and are still ongoing. During 2023, advice was provided to circa 181 farmers. Both of these measures will be re-launched in 2024, as part of the Managing Authority's efforts to continue offering similar opportunities.

3. Communication

Following intensive preparations throughout 2022, in January 2023, a new website (FONDI.eu) was launched. It acts as a one-stop shop for all information about EU funds and is the main portal in accessing information on EU funds, including the RDP and the CAP SP. The new website replaced the two websites previously used by the MA and NRN. This website is updated regularly by the MA to ensure that the information available is updated and relevant. The new website is the main portal for the MA's communication with its stakeholders and the public, informing them of the latest pre-announcements, 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 2023; 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.

4. Project Examples

Figures 4-9 present a snapshot of a few projects financed under the RDP 14-22.



FIGURE 4: INVESTING IN EGG PROCESSING AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.2 - 'SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN PROCESSING/MARKETING AND /OR DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS'



FIGURE 5: TALPE': DIVERSIFY TO FLOURISH IN AGRI-TOURISM, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 6.4 - 'SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES'



FIGURE 6: GREENHOUSE, RESERVOIR AND FERTIGATION SYSTEM FOR IMPROVED PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.1 - 'SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS'



FIGURE 7: INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIC AND CONVENTIONAL VINEYARDS, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.1- 'SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS'



FIGURE 8: DIVERSIFICATION THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.2 ' SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN PROCESSING/MARKETING AND /OR DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS'



FIGURE 9: RESTORATION OF WIED LIEMU, SUPPORTED UNDER MEASURE 4.4 -' SUPPORT FOR NON-PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENT LINKED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AGRI-ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES'



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