

Citizen Summary

for Implementation Year 2024

Rural Development Programme 2014-2022

1. Introduction

In 2024, Malta's rural areas continued to be supported through the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022 (RDP). From supporting farmers modernise their machinery and developing their techniques, to supporting greener agricultural practices, as well encouraging stronger rural communities, the Programme aimed at making a real difference in farmers' and people's lives. Whether it was a new tractor on a family farm, a learning garden in Gozo, or advice for young farmers just starting out, the RDP continued help turn ideas into action.

This support is made possible through the Rural Development Programme, which has a total budget of €196.1 million, and is co-funded by the EU (75%), with the rest coming from national funds. Additional support comes from the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI), which is fully EU-funded and helped address the effects post COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2024, the way funds were distributed was fine-tuned to better meet the needs of rural communities. For example, more support was directed to farmers through Measure 4.1 – Investment in Physical Assets. Some measures were consolidated, with some actions being merged into other measures. Consequently, some sub-measures were also phased out, ensuring that resources were used where they could have the greatest impact.

These adjustments ensure that the RDP's mission continues to be relevant within today's reality, including improving the economic, environmental, as well as the social wellbeing of Malta's rural areas. It continues to support, inter alia:

- Training and advisory services
- Farm modernisation
- New business initiatives
- Stronger rural communities.

2. Progress Achieved

2.1 New calls for projects

In 2024, the RDP continued to open doors for new ideas and initiatives across Malta's rural communities. Several new funding opportunities were launched to support farmers, producers, and advisors in building skills and improving practices.

One of the key areas of focus was **vocational training and knowledge sharing**. Through Measure 1 – Knowledge Transfer and Information Services, four training projects were approved to help those active in the agricultural sector gain new skills and stay up to date with evolving standards.

Support also extended to **advisory services** under Measure 2.1, where one project was approved to provide expert guidance to farmers—helping them make informed decisions and improve their operations.

Efforts to promote **quality agricultural products** continued under Measure 3. While no applications were received for participation in new quality schemes (Sub-measure 3.1), one application was submitted under Sub-measure 3.2, which supports promotional activities by producer groups. Although this application was later withdrawn, the call demonstrated ongoing interest in raising the profile of local produce.

Under Measure 10.2, which focuses on **preserving Malta’s agricultural heritage and** launched in 2023 (call closed in 2024), initially led to four approved applications aimed at conserving and sustainably using genetic resources in agriculture. One of these projects moved forward with a signing of a grant agreement.

TABLE 1: CALLS ISSUED DURING 2024 AND APPROVED PROJECTS

Measure	Calls issued	Applications received	Applications approved
M1.1 – Support for Vocational Training and Skills Acquisition Actions	1	4	4 ¹
M2.1 - Support to help benefitting from the use of advisory services	1	2	1
M3.1 – Support for new participation in Quality Schemes	1	-	-
M3.2 – Support for information & promotion activities implemented by group of producers in the internal market	1 ²	1	1 ³
M10.2 – Support for conservation and sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture	1	4	4 ⁴
Total	5	11	10

Source: Managing Authority

2.2 Continued Progress

As the Programme is drawing to an end and fewer new projects were approved in 2024, some beneficiaries received additional support to extend the scope of their project by introducing new activities, thereby bringing even more value to the agricultural sector and rural communities.

As a result of these adjustments, the programme’s overall level of commitment increased. In fact, all priority areas reached at least 95% commitment, with some even going beyond their original targets. This is a remarkable and important achievement, especially as 2025 marks the final year of the programme.

Table 2 outlines the Priorities of the programme and the respective Financial Allocation.

¹ One Grant Agreement was signed in 2025.

² Call issued in 20223 and closed in January 2024.

³ This application was eventually withdrawn by the Applicant.

⁴ Three of the approved applications withdrew their application after the receipt of the Award Letter.

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	47.5
P3	Promoting food chain organisations, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture	6.5
P4	Restoring, preserving and enhancing eco-systems related to agriculture and forestry	68.7
P5	Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry	54.2
P6	Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas	10.9
TA	Technical Assistance	8.3
	TOTAL	196.1

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.

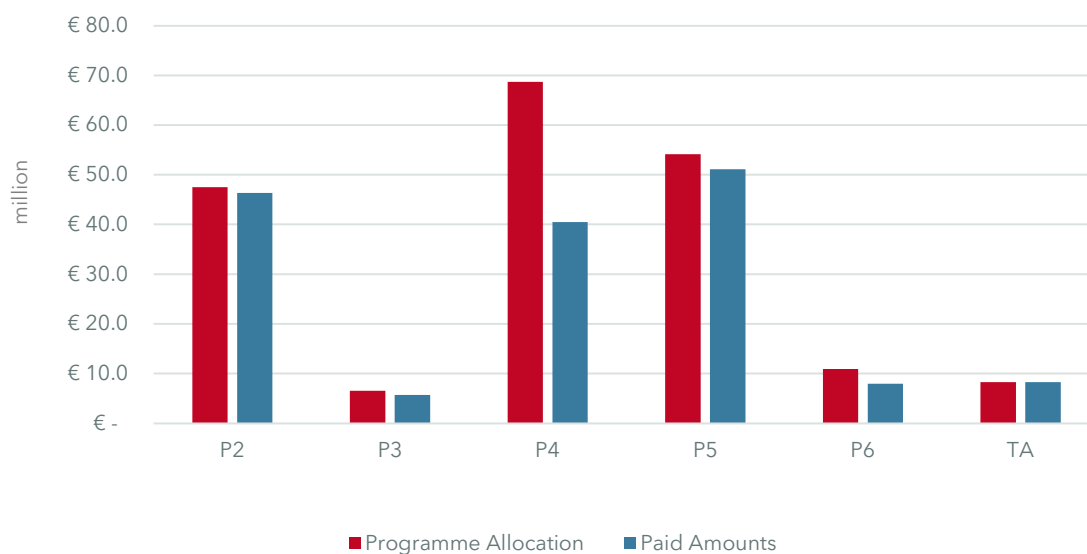
The Rural Development Programme made significant financial progress in 2024, with a disbursement rate of nearly 82% of the total budget.

Several priority areas registered significant improvement. For example:

- **Priority 2**, which supports farm viability and innovation, disbursed 98% of its budget.
- **Priority 5**, focused on climate resilience and resource efficiency, achieved 94%.
- **Priority 3**, which promotes food quality and risk management, also performed strongly at 87%.

These figures reflect the programme's commitment to delivering real value and ensuring that funds are translated into meaningful outcomes for Malta's rural communities. A visual breakdown of allocations and spending by priority is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: PROGRAMME ALLOCATION AND PAYMENTS AS AT 2024



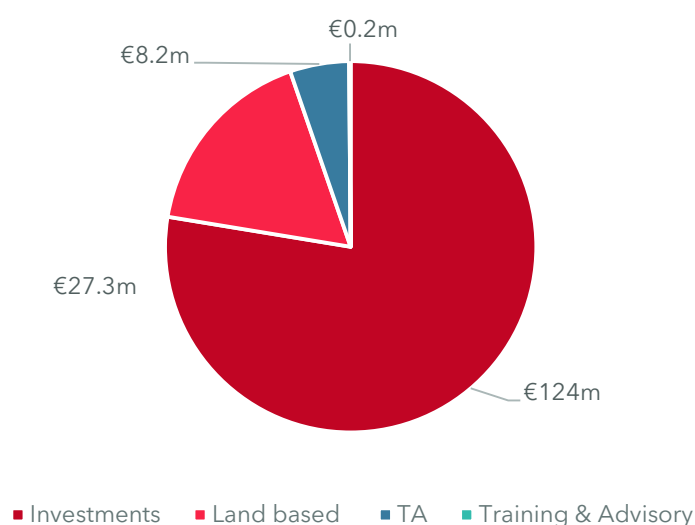
Note: P1 is not included in this table as it is considered as a horizontal priority, and its allocation is covered under the other priorities of the programme.

2.3 Supporting Farmers and Local Communities

In 2024, the RDP continued to deliver support across a wide range of areas, ranging from training and advisory services to environmental afforestation projects and farm investments.

A significant share of the programme's funding went to **investment projects**, which helps farmers modernise their operations, adopt new technologies, and improve productivity. These projects also benefit young farmers starting out, as well as public organisations and local councils working to strengthen the agricultural sector. In total, nearly **1,000 operations** have been supported so far.

FIGURE 2: TYPES OF SUPPORT UNDER THE RDP IN PAID EXPENDITURE



As shown in **Figure 2**, investment projects accounted for the largest share of spending by the end of 2024. These initiatives are central to the programme’s mission of building a more resilient and forward-looking rural economy.

Under **Measure 4.1 – Investment in Physical Assets**, 47 new projects were approved in 2024 following a call launched the previous year. Although the call was approved in December 2023, grant agreements were signed in early 2024. Out of 57 applications submitted, 45 were approved under Focus Area 2A (improving farm performance), and 2 under Focus Area 5A (enhancing water-use efficiency). Together, these projects brought in an additional **€6 million** in new financial commitments.

Another milestone was reached under **Measure 8.5**, which supports investments that improve the health and resilience of forest ecosystems. In 2024, this measure recorded its first commitments—over **€10 million** in total—funding three projects. Two of these are being implemented by Public Organisations, one of which is dedicated to investing in green public spaces in a number of localities, the other concerns the launching of the Silva Green Pathways initiative, which seeks to regenerate woodland areas around Malta through the removal of invasive species and planting of new indigenous trees. The third, led by a private farmer, involves restoring woodland, replacing invasive tree species, and introducing fire prevention measures. These efforts mark a major step forward in protecting Malta’s natural landscapes.

The **LEADER Programme** also played a key role in 2024 by empowering local communities to invest in their own development. Through **Measure 19.2**, 28 new projects were approved across Malta’s Local Action Groups as shown in the table below.

TABLE 3: APPROVED APPLICATION BY LOCAL ACTION GROUP

Local Action Group	Approved Applications
Majjistral Group Foundation	13
Gozo Local Action Group	1
Xlokk Local Action Group	14
Total	28

Source: RD Investment Database, Managing Authority

These projects reflect the diverse needs and ambitions of rural communities across the islands.

In addition to investments, land-based measures received the second-largest share of funding. These support farmers in adopting environmentally friendly practices—such as soil conservation, mechanical weed control, and integrated pest management in orchards and vineyards. As the RDP nears its conclusion, some of these important green ambitions are now being carried forward under the new CAP Strategic Plan.

On the **training** front, in 2024 three new training projects were approved, with another added in early 2025. Since grant agreements were signed late in the year, efforts focused on onboarding participants and preparing for delivery. Training began in early 2025. Unlike previous mandatory schemes, these new projects are voluntary and designed to help stakeholders in agriculture, food, and forestry build the skills they need to meet evolving standards and market demands. Over the course of the programme, more than 1,300 participants have benefited from training—contributing to a more skilled and adaptable rural workforce.

Finally, under **Measure 2.1 – Advisory Services**, €400,000 was committed in 2024 to a project led by AgriConnect Farm Advisory Services. This initiative provided expert guidance to 95 farmers during the year, bringing the total number of supported farmers to over 400.

3. Keeping Stakeholders Informed and Involved

In 2024, the Managing Authority continued its outreach efforts to ensure transparency and stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the Rural Development Programme. A number of targeted information sessions were held to support the launch of specific RDP measures, including training, advisory services, and quality schemes. These sessions aimed to inform potential beneficiaries about available opportunities and their related responsibilities.

Stakeholder consultation also took place through formal structures such as the Monitoring Committee, which met in December to review programme progress, financial execution, and ongoing evaluations. Additionally, the Annual Review Meeting with the European Commission, also in December, focused on programme results, audit findings, communication activities, and upcoming amendments.

The Project Selection Committee convened several times during the year to evaluate applications received under five sub-measures. To strengthen administrative capacity, staff from the Managing Authority participated in a wide range of training and EU-level workshops.

4. Conclusion

As the RDP 2014-2022 draws to a close, its impact across Malta's agricultural sector and rural communities at large, is clear and far-reaching. Beyond the numbers and financial allocations, the RDP sought to be, and indeed has been, an indispensable tool empowering farmers for protecting the environment and strengthening local rural economies.

From modernising farm holdings and supporting young farmers, to afforestation projects and creating community spaces, the programme has helped turn ideas into action. It has equipped the farming sector with the tools, knowledge, and support to adapt and grow in an ever-changing and challenging world.

Ultimately, the RDP is about investing in the agricultural sector, laying the groundwork for a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable sector, as well as the wider rural communities. As the Programme draws to a close, this fund will seek to cement progress and targets achieved whilst establishing foundations for further ambitions through future support to the farming and rural communities.

5. Project Examples

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



FIGURE 3: REJUVENATING GOZO

The Ghajnsielem Local Council, with BirdLife Malta and GFDP, transformed the Triq Filfa playground into a modern Learning Garden. Inspired by the Learning through Landscape concept, it encourages children to learn through nature while offering a welcoming space for community interaction (M19.2 – Gozo Action Group).



FIGURE 4: INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

A new tractor was purchased to improve efficiency in key farming tasks such as tilling, sowing, harvesting, and transporting produce. Featuring modern, energy-efficient technology and safety features, it works with specialised implements to enhance soil management (Measure 4.1).



FIGURE 5: REJUVENATING GOZO (2)



FIGURE 6: REJUVENATING GOZO (3)

A new professional space for vocal and musical performance was created in Gozo to enhance the island's artistic scene. Designed with perfect acoustics, the hall supports ensemble music recording and production. Local artists and groups now have access to professional equipment and a venue that encourages high-quality musical output with international potential (M19.2 - Gozo Action Group).



FIGURE 7: UPGRADING OF CHEESELET PRODUCTION FACILITY

This project involves the refurbishment of an existing farm to accommodate a cheeselet production room, along with an anteroom, quarantine area, and fodder store, in line with sanitary regulations and to support an anticipated increase in herd size. The upgraded facility will include a dedicated corridor, shower, and a fully equipped production area that integrates packaging, refrigeration, and all necessary operations under one roof (Measure 4.1).



**European Agricultural Fund
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