

Citizens' Summary: Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2014-2020

Annual Implementation Report 2022



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
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'The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas'.

What is the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020?

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the single largest common policy across the European Union and is based on a two-pillar structure:

- Pillar 1 supports both direct payments to farmers and market management measures
- Pillar 2 focuses on improving the structural and environmental performance of agriculture and promoting local/rural development

The NIRDP is supported through Pillar 2 and has three objectives for the development of our rural areas:



How much is the Rural Development Programme (RDP) worth to Northern Ireland?

Each region, within a Member State, can design their Rural Development Programme (RDP) from a selection of the measures set out in the EU Rural Development Regulation. Northern Ireland, as a region, has developed a Programme of support taking into account the problems and needs identified for our rural areas. This Programme of support was approved by the EU on the 25 August 2015.

The indicative budget for the NIRDP 2014 – 2021 is **€441m**, with funding coming from the EU (€228m) as well as from the Northern Ireland Government. The EU contribution consists of funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The Programme has been modified nine times to take account of editorial amendments and to provide clarification for the support offered under some measures. As part of the most recent amendments, the co-financing rates and the financial plans were revised. Increasing the ratio of EU support has the effect of reducing Northern Ireland Government contribution hence the modification resulted in a smaller overall indicative Programme budget, while still allowing the full allocation of EU funds to be accessed.

The following is a summary of the progress that has been made in implementing the Rural Development Programme up to 31 December 2022.



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What is the purpose of this Summary?

What is an Annual Implementation Report?

Each year DAERA must send the European Commission an Annual Implementation Report (AIR) setting out progress on delivering the Programme. The report must be submitted to the European Commission by 30 June each year and covers the period from the start of the Programme up **to the 31 December 2022**. This Citizens' Summary explains the report for the general public.

How is progress measured?

For each of the measures selected in the Programme a budget is allocated and targets are set for what is expected to be delivered. These targets are monitored throughout each year and progress towards them is included in the annual report sent to the European Commission. This monitoring ensures that money is being spent in the way which DAERA planned in the Programme.

Many of the agreements for agri-environment and forestry schemes signed under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme have extended into the 2014-2020 programming period. Under the EU rules, expenditure for these agreements transferred in September 2014 to the 2014-2020 Programme. Expenditure for the Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme also transferred to the new Programme from the 1 January 2015. Due to the overlapping nature of EU programmes this expenditure is known as transition or legacy expenditure and is included in the AIR.



What progress has been made in improving the competitiveness of the agriculture, forest and food industries?



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Progress snapshot

Objective 1 – Competitiveness

Farm Innovation Visits

Expenditure so far: €234,002
Number of visits completed: 26
Number of participants: 397



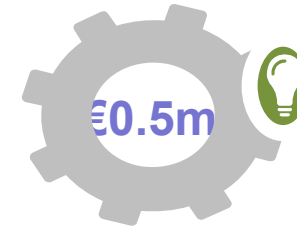
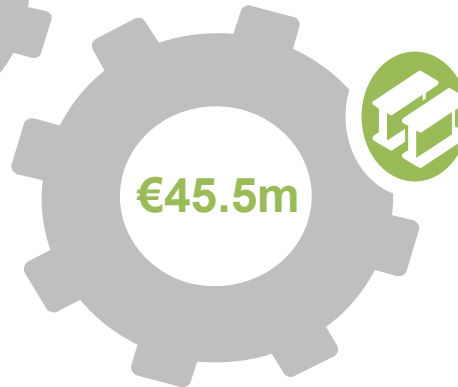
Agri-Food Co-operation Scheme

Expenditure so far: €1,156,987
Number of groups supported: 74
Number of participants: 424



Business Development Groups

Expenditure so far: €14,071,641
Number of participants in training: 3,149
Number of training days delivered: 3,317



EIP Operational Groups

Expenditure so far: €467,278
Number of groups supported: 7

Innovation Technology Evaluation Demonstration Scheme

Expenditure so far: €457,043
Number of actions organised: 42
Number of training days delivered: 2,011

Farm Family Key Skills

Expenditure so far: €1,062,906
Number of participants: 22,640
Number of training days delivered: 413

Farm Business Investment - Capital

Expenditure so far: €45,542,393
Number of farms supported: 11,265



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Objective 1 – Competitiveness – Indicative Allocation €286.9m

The Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) is a package of measures aimed at improving the competitiveness and sustainability of the farming sector.

Business Development Groups (BDG)

This scheme uses a group approach to improve the technical efficiency of farm businesses and provide a forum for peer to peer learning, sharing ideas and an opportunity to keep up-to-date with new technology. In 2022, there were 3,149 farmers still actively participating in the on-farm training events.

Farm Family Key Skills

This scheme aims to increase the levels of knowledge and skills in agricultural and commercial horticulture businesses and has the flexibility to respond to emergency DAERA priorities. Training has been delivered 22,640 individuals in 5 key areas - Health and Safety, Business Management, Environmental Sustainability, Animal Health and ICT.

Innovation Technology Evaluation Demonstration Scheme

This scheme uses farms that have adopted innovative technologies to demonstrate their business benefits to visiting groups of farmers. The scheme opened during 2019 and has appointed 42 demonstration farms to date including 14 dairy, 12 beef, 6 sheep, 2 pig, 2 crops and 6 environmental farms. A total of 414 visits have taken place that have delivered 2,011 days of training to 4,022 attendees.

Farm Innovation Visits

This scheme opened in 2018 to give farmers the opportunity to visit farms outside Northern Ireland to gain first-hand experience of on-farm innovative approaches. To date, 26 visits have taken 397 farmers to the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, England, Scotland and Wales to learn about a wide range of innovations across 8 farming sectors.

Objective 1 – Competitiveness – Indicative Allocation €286.9m

The Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) is a package of measures aimed at improving the competitiveness and sustainability of the farming sector.

Farm Business Investment Scheme – Capital (FBIS-C)

FBIS-C is a two-tiered scheme which supports on-farm investment projects costing £5,000 and above. Currently, 11,154 farms have benefitted under Tier 1 (project costs up to £30,000 including 24 EIP Capital payments) of the scheme and 111 farms have benefitted under Tier 2 (project costs greater than £30,000). Including match funding from supported businesses the scheme has invested €114 million to date to increase competitiveness in the sector.

European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Operational Groups

This scheme was opened in 2020 to bring together agri-food industry advisers, researchers and businesses to work in partnership with an applicant farmer to consider how practical solutions might be developed to address a particular problem or opportunity within the sector. Ten Operational Groups were initially selected to receive Stage 1 funding of up to £4,987 to assist in developing a project plan and apply for Stage 2 funding. Seven of the Operational Groups were then selected for Stage 2 funding of up to £120,000 to deliver their projects. 24 members of the seven Operational Groups have been paid £71k for new machinery to help deliver their projects through FBIS-EIP Capital to date.

Agri-Food Co-operation Scheme (AFCS)

This programme supports those in agri-food supply chains to develop their business / business idea. The lead applicant must be a primary producer and funding is available through a range of support tools to assist the group to develop branding, marketing strategies and business planning. As of 31 December 2021, 74 groups had been selected for support consisting of 424 participants.

**What progress has been made
in the sustainable management
of the region's natural
resources?**



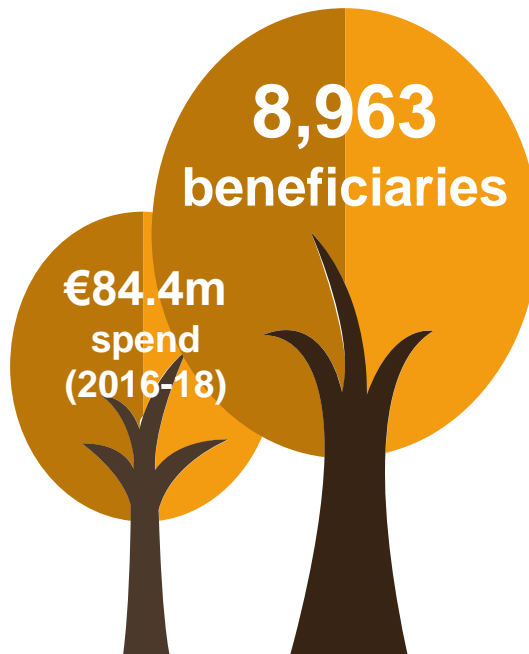
Progress snapshot

Objective 2 – Environment

Environmental Farming



Areas of Natural Constraint



Forestry



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Objective 2 – Environment – Indicative Allocation €254.5m

Environment Farming Schemes (EFS)

The EFS is a package of schemes that contracts farmers and land managers to carry out environmentally beneficial farming practices on agricultural land for a period of five years (N.B. EFS Wider Tranche 1 contracts last 5.5 years). So far under EFS, almost €63.3 million financial support has been provided to five tranches of applicants. 5,495 contracts have been signed, placing 62,062 hectares of agricultural land under EFS support to enhance and protect biodiversity, water and soils. A further €67.7 million has been spent on legacy agri-environment schemes.

Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC)

This scheme was implemented as part of the NIRD 2014-2020 under transitional arrangements based on the old Less Favoured Area land designation for the payment period 2016-2018. The scheme supported 8,963 beneficiaries on average per annum with a total expenditure of €84.4 million over three years.

Forestry Schemes

Support for woodland expansion and the management of existing woodland under the RDP is designed to provide both woodland owners and the general public with a wide range of benefits obtained from ecosystems. So far, schemes have a total spend of over €17.3million. This has helped to sustain 1,981 hectares of woodland in 2022 and plant 2,199 hectares (including EFS options) of new woodland since the beginning of the programme.



**What progress has been made
in the development of rural
areas?**



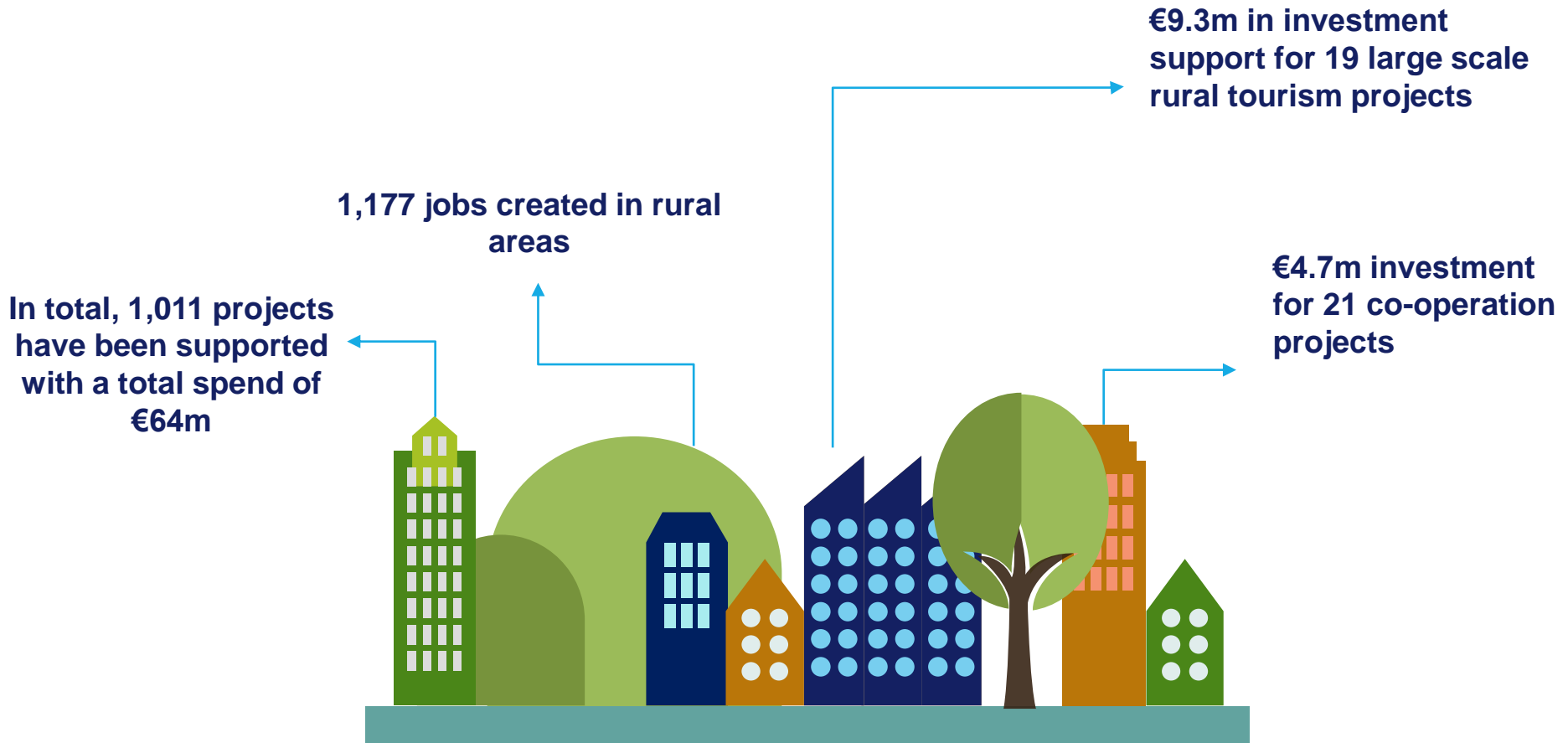
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Progress snapshot

Objective 3 – Development of Rural Areas



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Objective 3 – Development of Rural Areas – Indicative Allocation €89.2m

LEADER

LEADER assists rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. Up to 31 December 2022, 1,033 projects have been supported with the following investment:




- €12.9m invested in setting up 10 Local Action Groups (LAGs) for each of Northern Ireland's rural based local authorities and supporting their running and animation costs. This method of community-led local development aims to increase the capacity of local rural community and business networks to build knowledge and skills, innovate and co-operate in order to tackle local development objectives
- €64.0m invested in 1,011 projects to support:
 - the creation and development of small and medium enterprises under the Rural Business Investment Scheme
 - access to basic services and improvements in social infrastructure under the Rural Basic Services Scheme
 - integrated village plans and renewal of rural villages under the Village Renewal Scheme
- €4.7m invested in 21 co-operation capital projects. When developing their local development strategies, LAGs were encouraged to identify issues or sectors which could benefit from interterritorial or transnational cooperation.

Rural Tourism

- €9.3m invested in 19 natural and built heritage capital projects that can act as a key driver for encouraging rural tourism and particularly out of state visitors whilst preserving the natural assets of the rural community.

How much public money has been spent so far?

The table below shows the indicative allocation of Euros in the NIRDP for each of the three objectives. The table also shows how much was spent at the end of December 2022.




Objective	Indicative Allocation in Euros (€)	Spending up to 31 st December 2022	Percentage Spent
 Competitiveness	€76.3m	€70.9m	92.9%
 Environment	€249.4m	€232.7m	93.3%
 Rural Areas	€92.3m	€90.9m	98.5%
Total	€418m	€394.5m	94.4%

Figures correct at 31 December 2022 - NIRDP 2014-2020 v9.1.

Allocation for technical assistance (€21.5m) not included – spending up to 31 December 2022 €20.1m.

How much EU money has been spent so far?

The table below shows the EU allocation of Euros in the NIRDP for each of the three objectives. The table also shows how much of the EU allocation was spent at the end of December 2022.

Objective	EU Allocation in Euros (€)	Spending up to 31 st December 2022	Percentage Spent
 Competitiveness	€29.3m	€25.9m	88.4%
 Environment	€159.2m	€146.9m	92.3%
 Rural Areas	€30.8m	€30.6m	99.4%
Total	€219.3m	€203.4m	92.7%

Figures correct at 31 December 2022 - NIRDP 2014-2020 v9.1.

Allocation for technical assistance (€9.1m) not included – spending up to 31 December 2021 €7.9m.

Where can I find more information?

More information on the Rural Development Programme and the schemes can be found on the DAERA website using the following link:

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/rdp

Information about the Rural Network is available at:

<http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/>



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