

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

Annual Implementation Report 2018



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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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 – 2020 is **€643m**, with funding coming from the EU (€228m) well as from the Northern Ireland Government (€415m). The EU contribution consists of funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The Northern Ireland Government Funding includes up to £250m to fund a 'Farm Business Improvement Scheme' approved by the Northern Ireland Executive as requested by the Agri-Food Strategy Board in their 'Going for Growth' report.

The Programme has been modified four times to take account of editorial amendments and amendments to some measures to provide clarification for the support offered. As part of the fourth amendment, carried out during 2017, the co-financing rates and the financial plans were revised. This resulted in a decrease to the overall indicative Programme budget due to a reduction in the Northern Ireland Government contribution, 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 2018.



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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 our progress on delivering the Programme. The report has to be sent to the European Commission by 30 June each year and sets out the progress for the previous calendar year. This progress report will cover the period from the start of the Programme up **to the 31 December 2018**. 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 Family Key Skills

Expenditure so far: €74k

Number of participants: 5,389

Number of Training Days Delivered: 118



€74k

No
recorded
spend



Farm Innovation Visits

Expenditure so far: NA

Number of visits completed : 1

€4.8m



Business Development Groups

Expenditure so far: €4,839,233

Number of Groups: 149

Number of participants in Training: 3,380

Number of Training Days Delivered: 1,652



€13.3m

Farm Business Investment - Capital

Expenditure so far: €13,343,710

Number of applications: 14,590

Successful applications: 7,507

Number of beneficiaries so far: 2,511*

*Successful applications where payment has been drawn during reporting period



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Objective 1 – Competitiveness – Indicative Allocation €286.7m

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)

The 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. There are currently just under 150 active BDGs operating across Northern Ireland and 3,380 farmers have participated in 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 5,389 individuals have participated in training. All courses have exceeded the set target of improving the knowledge base for 85% of attendees.

Farm Innovation Visits

This is a scheme that gives farmers the opportunity to visit farms outside Northern Ireland to see first-hand experience of on-farm innovative approaches. One visit to Denmark took place in 2018 to learn about innovations in Pig Disease Control.

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. There were 6,499 applications across two tranches of Tier 1 (project costs up to £30,000) and a total of 2,507 projects have been completed so far. Tier 2 of the scheme (project costs greater than £30,000) closed for applications in March 2017. A total of 189 applications were received for consideration and 102 projects were approved for farm holdings investing in poultry, dairy, pigs, horticulture and arable projects. So far 4 projects have been completed.

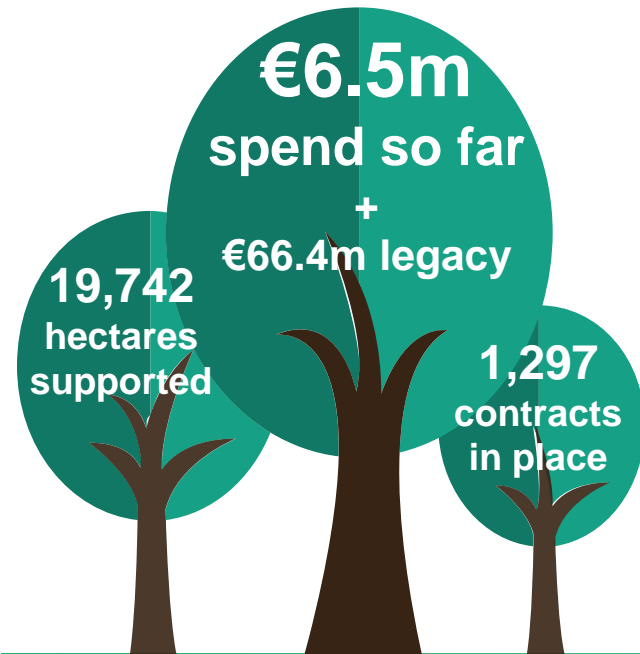
**What progress has been made
in the sustainable management
of the region's natural
resources?**



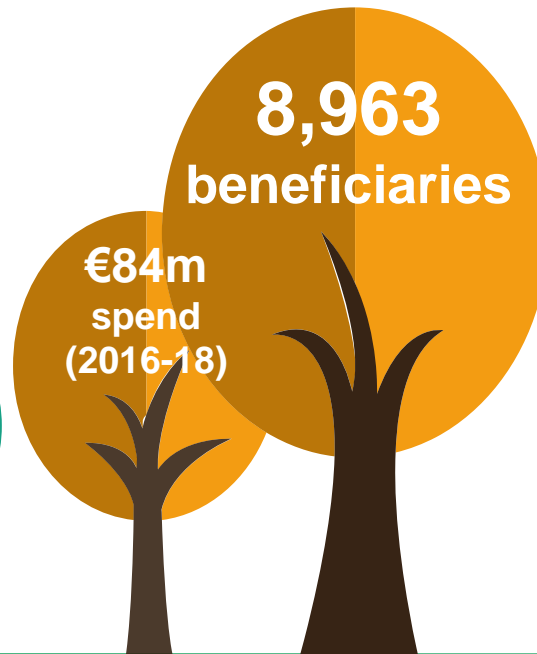
Progress snapshot

Objective 2 – Environment

Environment Farming Schemes



Areas of Natural Constraint



Forestry Schemes



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Objective 2 – Environment – Indicative Allocation €253.0m

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 €6.5million financial support has been provided to the first tranche of applicants. 1,297 contracts have been signed, placing 19,742 hectares of agricultural land under EFS support to enhance and protect biodiversity, water and soils. A further €66.4m 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 with an expenditure of €84 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 €7.5million. This has helped to sustain approximately 4,000 hectares of woodland created under the previous Programme and create 657 hectares of new woodland. The additional forest cover created through the schemes has an estimated life time carbon capture of 305,995 tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is equivalent to taking 102,313 passenger vehicles off the road for a year. Overall, 1.9% of agricultural and forest land is under management contracts, contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation exceeding the Programme target of 1.74%.



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**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 €70.5m




Leader

LEADER assists rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. Up to 31 December 2018, 640 projects have been supported, with a total spend of €19.8m.

- €9.6m 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.
- €9m invested in support for the creation and development of 452 small and medium enterprises. Support is provided for capital investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities. The scheme's primary objective is to create new jobs.
- €240k in capital investments for 122 projects that provide access to basic services or improvements in social infrastructure. The aim of the investment is to improve the welfare and access to basic services of those living in rural areas in line with the Council Community Plan and emerging priorities.
- €891k in investment support for 66 projects aimed at drafting of integrated Village Plans including renewal plans. Support for Village Renewal must fit with the Council Community Plans, integrate with the Village Renewal plans supported under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme and integrate with funding from other government departments and agencies. The scheme addresses rural dereliction and prioritises reuse of existing derelict buildings, particularly to provide community infrastructure.
- €50.3k on networking and preparatory technical support for 11 co-operation projects. When developing their local development strategies, LAGs were encouraged to identify issues or sectors which could benefit from interterritorial or transnational cooperation.

How much 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 2018.

Objective	Indicative Allocation in Euros (€)	Spending up to 31 st December 2018	Percentage Spent
 Competitiveness	€286.7m	€26.1m	9.1%
 Environment	€253.0m	€164.4m	65.0%
 Rural Areas	€70.5m	€19.8m	28.0%
Total	€610.1m	€210.3m	34.5%

Figures correct at 31 December 2018 - NIRDP 2014-2020 v5.2.

Allocation for technical assistance (€33.6m) not included – spending up to 31 December 2018 €4.7m.

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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