

Measure fiche

Forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation

Measure 15

Article 34 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

Article XX of Commission Regulation [...]

This fiche is based on the text of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 [EAFRD] and, when relevant, on Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. Since the Delegated and Implementing Acts supplementing these regulations have not yet been adopted, some modifications to this guidance fiche might be needed after their adoption.

This guidance does not represent a binding legal interpretation of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013. It is therefore essentially non-binding in nature and complements the related legal acts.

1. RATIONALE OF THE MEASURE

First of all, the measure “Forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation” responds to the needs of promoting the sustainable management and improvement of forests and woodland, including the maintenance and improvement of biodiversity, water and soil resources and combating climate change.

Secondly, this measure responds to the need to conserve the forest genetic resources, including activities such as development of different varieties of forest species in order to adapt to specific local conditions. A rich genetic diversity between and within tree species is needed in order to ensure that the forests contribute in full to all the environmental, climatic and societal objectives, as mentioned in the measure fiche “Forestry” detailing the role of the forestry sector in the European Union. Without such diversity, the forests become less vital and less resilient to pests and diseases, thus unable to provide the expected level of ecosystem services.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO FOCUS AREAS AND CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVES

In terms of intervention logic¹ foreseen for the 2014-2020 Rural Development programming period, this measure contributes to all the Focus Areas of the Priority 4 "*Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry*".

3. SCOPE, TYPE AND LEVEL OF SUPPORT

1. Type of operation

The eligible types of operations may be:

- Forest-environment commitments
- Conservation of forest genetic resources.

2. Beneficiaries

The eligible beneficiaries may be:

- Public forest holders
- Private forest holders
- Other private law and public bodies
- Associations of above mentioned

The forest land can be owned by the State on condition the holder (manager) of the forest is a private body or municipality. Support may be also provided to public entities for the conservation and promotion of forest genetic resources. In this case, the forest may also belong to and be managed by a public entity.

3. Eligible costs and conditions

3.1. Eligible costs – supported operations

Payments shall compensate beneficiaries for all or part of the **additional costs** and **income foregone** resulting from the commitments made.

Payments for **forest-environment and climate service commitments** may include;

1

[□] See Annex III of the Commission Working Paper "Elements of strategic programming for the period 2014-2020".

- Ensuring specific forest habitats and the conditions for natural forest regeneration with high diversity.
- Restructuring including;
 - actions allowing regeneration and broader species diversity in order to improve biodiversity and climate resilience.
 - maintenance of diverse forest edge or second crown layer to preserve forest microclimate and prevent the carbon content of the forest soil.
- Environmental management for recreation.
- Low impact silviculture, e.g. protection of the forest soil and ensuring its development, soil friendly harvesting, transporting and regeneration methods (continuous cover instead of clear cutting).
- Habitat improvements, including the improvement of wildlife corridors, e.g. maintenance of micro-habitats, small open areas, leaving behind decaying and dead trees for biodiversity reasons.
- Leaving groups of trees after final felling, maintenance of mosaic-character forest structure, postponement of final felling to protect habitats, soil and water sources, preservation of wetland habitats, repression of aggressively expanding non-indigenous tree and shrub species.

Payments for **conservation of genetic resources** may include;

- Targeted actions: actions promoting the *ex situ*² and *in situ* conservation³, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in forestry, including web-based inventories of genetic resources currently conserved *in situ*, including *in situ*/on-holding conservation⁴, and of *ex situ* collections⁵ (gene banks) and databases.

2

□ '*ex situ* conservation' means the conservation of genetic material for forestry outside its natural habitat

3

□ '*in situ* conservation' means the conservation of genetic material in ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable population of species in their natural surroundings.

4

- Concerted actions: actions promoting the exchange of information for the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in EU forestry, among competent organisations in the Member States.
- Accompanying actions: information and dissemination of information.
- These actions in conserving genetic resources could cover various activities adapted to the local situation and specific needs, examples such as:
 - (a) in the case of specific forest designated as "seed production stands" as source for production of verified reproductive material: costs of approval/concession including the related administrative costs and official declaration, maintenance, and management plan, conservation and breeding of rare tree species and shrubs for seed production and harvest.
 - (b) forest stands to conserve important genetic resources: maintenance of stands for production of verified reproductive material, including maintenance and harvest of reproductive material (in particular seedlings direct from forest rather than from nursery), forest genetic library and natural regeneration with suitable provenances to conserve and enhance genetic resources.
 - (c) usage of seeds/plants of certified/verified provenance, including usage of suitable seeds and wild seedlings from own production for seeding/planting.
 - (d) in situ conservation: in-situ units of conservation may need different types of silviculture works:
 - prevention a dynamic development from other species than the conserved species,
 - harvest seeds, grow seedlings and completion of natural regeneration by plantation of genetic resources from the in-situ units of conservation, when natural regeneration is not sufficient,
 - silviculture works required by the management plan,

□ 'in situ/on-holding conservation' means *in situ* conservation and development at the level of the forest holding

□ 'ex situ collection' means a collection of genetic material for forestry maintained outside its natural habitat

- conservation and breeding of rare tree species and shrubs, such as elm or resistant ash provenances for seed production and harvest.

(e) ex-situ conservation: inventory, harvest of forest genetic resources, creation and maintenance of ex-situ units of conservation.

- No support under this measure shall be granted for activities funded by the EU framework programme for research and innovation.

3.2. Further conditions

- Payments shall cover only those commitments going *beyond* the relevant mandatory requirements established by the national forestry act or other relevant national legislation. All such requirements shall be identified in the programme.
- Commitments shall be undertaken for a period of between five and seven years. However, where necessary and duly justified, Member States may determine a longer period in their rural development programmes for particular types of commitments.

4. Principles with regard to the setting of selection criteria

See the European Commission document "*Guidelines on eligibility and Selection Criteria*".

5. Links to other legislation (e.g. "baseline" for measures that compensate for costs incurred / income foregone)

A link to the relevant legislation should be established in the Rural Development Programme.

The article 49 (Revision clause) of the Rural Development Regulation is applicable to this measure.

6. Aid intensity/amount of support

According to the Rural Development Regulation the maximum support rate is 200 Euros per hectare per year. The amount may be increased in duly substantiated cases taking into account specific circumstances to be justified by the Member State/region in the Rural Development Programme.

The basis for payment calculations should be established according to the article 62(2).

In duly justified cases, in operations concerning environmental conservation, support may be granted as a flat-rate or one-off payment per unit for commitments for renouncing commercial use of trees and forests⁶, calculated on basis of additional costs incurred and

income foregone. In this case, the use of other unitary cost the result of the calculation should be expressed / transformed to area based annual payment format (euros/hectares/year) as it is indicated in the Annex of the Regulation. This calculation method should be expressed explicitly in the Rural Development Programme.

7. Co-financing rate(s)

This measure is among the measures which contribute to the compliance with the requirement stipulated in Article 59(6) of Regulation 1305/2013 and which requires that at least 30% of the total EAFRD contribution to the rural development programme shall be reserved for measures contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as environmental issues.

Furthermore, this measure can also benefit from a higher co-financing rate (75%) as it contributes to the objectives of environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation (Article 59(4)(b) of the RD Regulation). In case of the less developed regions, in the outermost regions and in the smaller Aegean islands this co-financing rate can be even higher (85% of the eligible public expenditure) as stipulated in Article 59(3)(a).

4. INDICATORS

In planning the indicators it should be taken into consideration the principles detailed in the Annex IV of Working Paper "Elements of strategic programming for the period 2014-2020".

5. VERIFIABILITY AND CONTROLLABILITY

Reference to be made to the "*Guidelines on verifiability and prevention of errors*".

6. BEST PRACTISES

Some good examples of what could be done under this measure (based on past experience) are found in the ENRD website or brochures.

This measure may be combined as a complementary instrument with the sub-measure under article 25 "Investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems" of the Rural Development Regulation.

As regards the accompanying actions to this measure: advisory actions involving non-governmental organisations and other relevant stakeholders, training courses and the preparation of technical reports can be supported under other measures available under the Rural Development Regulation.

□ In case of ecological needs, such as enhancing biodiversity, beneficiary renounces the commercial use of wood. This one-off payment is a supporting action in order to facilitate the process.

EU Rural Review No. 9: Forestry and rural development:
http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=ED57142C-E0C7-3E97-E70E-E40EC9E8CCB1

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Examples of Forestry projects:
http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=6871F084-FDA8-A93F-FF0C-DC38AD30D86C