Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

Seminar for Knowledge Exchange

November 24–25, 2003
Vienna and Lower Austria
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Organised by

**WWF**
in cooperation with the
**Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Environment and Water Management**
and the
**Department of Nature Conservation of the Province of Lower Austria**

Presentations from the **field trip** (November 24, 2003)
and **seminar** (November 25, 2003)
are available on request from:
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I. Introduction

In joining the European Union, the Accession Countries of Central and Eastern Europe have committed themselves to draw up rural development plans. This process is well advanced in the first wave accession countries. As a cross-sectoral issue, nature conservation challenges programme implementation on a conceptual as well as on an institutional level.

With a rural development programme covering two thirds of the agriculture budget, Austria has a significant amount of experience to offer. To draw on this experience and exchange experience between accession countries, the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Environment and Water, the province of Lower Austria, and WWF organised in November 2003 a two-day seminar for knowledge-exchange, including a field trip to Lower Austria (November 24) and a subsequent workshop that was held in Vienna (November 25).

Approximately 30 people participated, including representatives of Ministries of Environment and Agriculture as well as NGOs from most Central and Eastern European accession countries as well as Austria who are directly involved in implementation of rural development and agri-environment.

The seminar was designed to help participants:

- to concretise implementation issues arising particularly in the context of nature conservation;
- to prioritise implementation issues for the respective countries;
- to develop systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007–2013 funding period.

The field trip, which was organised by the province of Lower Austria, highlighted implementation issues through direct contact with farmers. In this way, the field trip facilitated informal information exchange as well as demonstrated practical implications of implementation issues. In the morning, participants had the opportunity to visit an area with great potential for conflict between interests of agriculture and nature protection – an area that is of high agricultural productivity as well as an important habitat for the Great Bustard, a protected species that is of European importance. We examined how this conflict has been addressed through the rural development programme. In the afternoon, participants visited a marginalised area of relatively low agricultural productivity to round out the perspective of issues related to agri-environment.

The workshop on the following day focused on four main issues: area payments; complementary measures; partnership structures; and monitoring and evaluation. Presentations and follow-up discussion in the morning session was followed by deeper discussion on these issues in afternoon break-out sessions. The stage was set by an opening address on the results of the recent European Commission conference on the future of the CAP and Rural Development as well as a survey of preparations among the accession countries for rural development.

The following pages present chief results or “lessons learned” that were highlighted in the morning and afternoon sessions followed by a summary of presentations and discussion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the partners that helped make this project possible: the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and the Province of Lower Austria, and WWF-Austria. At a personal level, I would like to give very special thanks to Mr Wolfgang Suske and his colleagues in the department for Nature Conservation for the Province of Lower Austria; Mr Alois Posch and Lukas Weber of the Austrian Federal Ministry; as well as to Ms Simone Lughofer of Policy Affairs Consulting. Their expertise, energy and commitment made this event a stimulating learning experience for all involved.

Andreas Beckmann
EU Accession Coordinator, WWF-International
II. Insights and
designs learned –
Highlights from presentations
and discussion

Area payments

- State support has been essential for nature conservation and maintaining farmer incomes in Austria. Important has been providing appropriate money packages (small farmers, big farmers), adequate area calculations (not only income losses), yet keeping the system not too complicated.
- Education and awareness-raising. One of the strengths of the Austrian system are the non-monetary aspects – the educational and awareness-raising aspects of the programme, which helps farmers to appreciate the nature values of their farms. In Lower Austria, for example, farmers not only participate in evaluations with consultant ecologists, but also receive materials regarding the nature values on their farms, including specially marked maps of their lands as well as information materials regarding individual species and features found on their land. The clear pride of farmers involved in the Great Bustard protection programme, visited during the field visit, underlined that money is important, but it is not everything!
- “Bottom-up” approach. Seminar participants appreciated the “bottom-up” approach of the Austrian system, in which farmers can choose how to participate in the programme, either in whole farm or single site.
- Programme flexibility versus bureaucracy. There is a trade-off between flexibility on the one hand and bureaucracy on the other: more flexible and responsive systems require greater administrative capacity – while participants appreciated the flexibility of the Austrian system, Austrian representatives admitted that this came at the cost of considerable bureaucracy. There is no easy solution – each country must find its own balance between maximising programme flexibility and responsiveness on the one hand, and on the other hand minimising administrative capacity needed.

Complementary measures

- Complementary measures can maximise conservation. Rural Development Programming presents a variety of opportunities for financing nature conservation measures – conservation can be maximised through flexible and creative application of these different measures, including not only articles 22–24 (Area payments), but also Articles 33 (investments) and Article 9 (education).
- Cooperation with the private sector extends the possibilities for using EU money and achieving conservation as well as social goals. Broad stakeholder involvement also ensures input and feedback that optimises programme flexibility and responsiveness.

Partnership Structures

- Importance of partnership structures. Partnership – stakeholder involvement – is not only a legal obligation, it is also politically and practically very useful for ensuring long-term effective programme design and implementation and resolving conflict between political interests, stakeholders, and interests of agriculture and environment. Austria’s experience with the ÖPUL Advisory Board has been very successful, praised by political interests and the various stakeholders involved. It is strongly recommended for the accession and candidate countries.
II. Insights and lesson learned – Highlights from presentation and discussion

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Monitoring versus evaluation.** Monitoring is an ongoing process, focused on collection of administrative data e.g. how many farmers, hectares, contracts, etc., while evaluation is focused on data collection and analysis for assessing the environmental impact of the programme.

- **Monitoring and evaluation is of key importance** – crucial for determining whether programme objectives are in fact being achieved, and providing a feedback loop for programme adjustment and improvement.

- **Estonia a leader, experience elsewhere limited.** Many countries have started late with monitoring. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluation is often unclear, and there is often no clear or coherent strategy. Estonia stands out in its proactive approach to developing a good monitoring and evaluation system, with a good methodology and high level of expert knowledge (including from existing EU member states) involved.

- **Importance of partnership structures.** Stakeholder involvement is as important to programme evaluation as it is to initial programme design, as it leads to further programme development and optimisation.

- **Many difficulties surrounding development of an effective monitoring and evaluation system** include: technical problems related to collecting data and compatibility of databases; ensuring independence and impartiality of evaluations; and the difficulties of evaluating nature conservation, e.g. selecting suitable indicators and having an appropriate time-frame (for nature, even four years is a very short period!). Linking measures and impacts is difficult!

- **Future challenges.** Among future challenges are integrating different monitoring and evaluation systems, e.g. monitoring and evaluation for the Rural Development Regulation and Agri-Environmental measures with that for the Natura 2000 network of specially protected areas; regionalisation of objectives and monitoring and evaluation; identifying real benefits and effects for farmers.

- **Need for clear guidelines from European Commission.** There is a problem with unclear and shifting standards and goalposts, particularly with ongoing discussion and planning regarding the next financial perspective, 2007–2013. To ensure proper evaluation there is a need for more initiative and guidance from the EU level (European Commission).
III. Summary of Presentations and Discussion

Opening address

Rural Development in the context of CAP Reform – Future perspectives in the light of the “Salzburg Conference”

Hans Kordik, Head of Department – EU affairs, Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Environment and Water

- Rural Development is key in Austria, with ca two-thirds of CAP payments now going to Rural Development.
- Growing emphasis on Rural Development. The European Commission’s recent Salzburg conference follows on the Cork Conference in its focus on Rural Development, and sets a similar emphasis on trends in EC policy development.
- Simplification. Rural Development in future should only be funded under one heading – i.e. including relevant sections of both the CAP and Structural Funds.
- Enlargement. Connection between Salzburg and today’s seminar in representation by different stakeholders from both existing and new member states focused on sustainable rural development.
- Multifunctional. Agriculture in future must meet different demands, including production of high-quality food and sustainable land management.

Preparations of Rural Development

Plans across accession countries

Overview of the current state of preparations of National Rural Development Plans, their contents as well as structural arrangements

Presentation: Yanka Kazakova, WWF – Danube Carpathian Programme, Sofia and follow-up discussion.

See also Annex 3, Background paper: State of Preparations of Rural Development Plans – Survey across the Accession and Candidate Countries

- Agri-environment obligatory: agri-environmental measures are the only obligatory measures for both the SAPARD pre-accession programme and the Rural Development Regulation National Plans!
- Financial share of agri-environmental measures in the planned SAPARD and Rural Development Plans for 2004–06:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accession Country</th>
<th>SAPARD</th>
<th>RDP 04–06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>~ 3%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>~ 1%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>~ 2%</td>
<td>8.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>~ 4%</td>
<td>12.41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- SAPARD versus Rural Development Plans for 2004–06 period, in terms of agri-environmental measures: in CZ, more horizontal schemes in RDP, easier for implementation; in HU, only soil conservation measures in SAPARD; in PL, much simpler and more horizontal in RDP than in SAPARD; in SK, both SAPARD and RDP rather similar.
III. Summary of Presentations and Discussion

- Agriculture Ministries responsible for agri-environmental measures in all countries surveyed – not environmental authorities.
- Stakeholder involvement – Ministry of Environment and NGOs involved in design of agri-environmental measures in all countries surveyed. Research institutes also included in BG, HU, and PL, and regional authorities have been consulted in CZ and HU, and informed in BG.
- Farm management approach for agri-environmental measures: “Whole farm” in all countries surveyed, combined with “Part farm” approach in CZ, ET, HU, and SK.
- Natura 2000 at least partially targeted in all countries surveyed (e.g. 15% incentive given for Natura 2000 areas in Estonia).
- Complementary measures at least partially used in all countries surveyed – especially information campaigns (all countries), training (BG, ET, HU, PL), and demonstration (BG, HU).
- Lack of capacity in Ministries of Environment: According to participants, in many accession and candidate countries, including Slovakia, Poland, and Bulgaria, closer input from environmental authorities is limited by lack of capacity in the Ministry of Environment to participate in programme development and monitoring. In Bulgaria, where the Ministry of Environment is already overloaded with work on a range of other priority issues, including preparation for Natura 2000, input from the Ministry of Environment depends on one person who attends all working groups.
- In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Environment “woke up” to the importance of agri-environmental measures rather late, and now has even more capacity for work on the issue than the Ministry of Agriculture itself.
- Involvement of NGOs: In Hungary, NGO’s have been included in working groups focused on individual measures, including agri-environment and LFA’s, though only thanks to the invitation of the committee chair. steering committee for SAPARD, including NGOs – but no wider consultation process.
- National funds. Many of the CEE countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, and Slovenia, have already implemented agri-environmental measures with national funds.

Improving nature conservation through area payments

The Austrian Rural Development Plan and Nature Conservation


Austrian agriculture and EU accession

- Austria before its accession to the EU in 1995 was characterised by relatively low intensity agricultural production (low level of fertilisers used); a high share of less-favoured areas; a high percentage of forests; a dramatic price drop for agricultural products caused by the accession to the EU; a long tradition of environment-related compensatory payments for farmers; and relatively strong appreciation enjoyed by farmers for the services they render.
- The decline in prices would have forced farmers to take drastic measures, including greatly intensifying production in productive areas, and abandoning farming in less favoured (e.g. Alpine) areas. Both developments would have caused severe environmental problems; this is why co-financing for a large-scale agri-environmental programme (AEP) was negotiated in the course of the accession negotiations.
- In the candidate countries, the effects of accession on agriculture will be quite different than those faced in Austria. For example, prices are not going to drop to the same extent as happened in Austria; on the contrary, prices are going to rise. Higher prices are going to cause a trend toward more intensive production, but it is possible to implement necessary extensification measures when they are needed, i.e. later on.
The financing of CAP measures in Austria and the EU

- European Agricultural Policy is based upon two important pillars: marketing organisations and Rural Development.
- The higher the share of Rural Development in the agricultural budget, the more specific and targeted that environmental protection can be.
- In Austria, roughly two-thirds of the agricultural budget is spent on Rural Development – compared with about 15% in the EU (in the programme period 2000–2006).

Austrian budget for Rural Development

- The Austrian Agri-Environmental Programme (ÖPUL) is primarily focussed on less-favoured areas and agri-environmental issues, which account for close to 90% of the total value of the measures.
- Experience from recent years has shown quite clearly that strong focus on these two chapters has brought a number of disadvantages, particularly within these two measures, since the budget is allocated for a five-year period, making it impossible to react more flexibly to different needs and developments.
- The percentage of farmers’ income from payments of public funds has increased since Austria’s accession to the EU.

The Austrian Agri-Environmental Programme (ÖPUL) – overview:

- Implemented all over Austria, not only in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Principle to involve as many areas as possible in the obligation (whole farm, all grassland, all arable land, all vineyards...).
- Payments according to performance defined in contracts.
- For special areas, there is the possibility for partial participation (wet meadows, dry meadows, etc.).
- Flexible adaptation to regional requirements by specifically designed measures or by obligations to be met for special areas.
- The programme unites the advantages of broad application and the possibility of setting regional focal points (Natura 2000).
- 31 measures (and about 50 “sub-measures”).
- Contracts with farmers for 5 years; in “nature conservation measures” contracts with a duration of 10 or 20 years are possible.
- Annual payments per hectare or animal.
- Only private farms.
- Minimum size of the holding 2 ha (0,5 ha in case of special crops).
- Minimum size of cultivable acreage per measure.
- Premium ceiling per hectare for arable land, grassland = 690 € (upper ceiling for combined measures).
- Lower limit of payments per holding: Reduced payments for large holdings (more than 100 ha: 85–65 (92,5–82,5)% of the premium per hectare).
- Some measures can be combined, but do not have to be.
- Certain measures are possible only in combination with certain others.
- Organic farmers: must sign up for a basic subsidy.
III. Synthesis of National Reports

ÖPUL approach – The programme takes a two-fold approach:

- Horizontal measures have a more or less positive general effect on single environmental resources, which however are not aimed at specific requirements. For example: basic subsidy, organic farming, greening of arable land.
- Measures aimed at specific environmental requirements, which are very much defined and apply to very small areas.

Only the combination of both approaches has a sufficient effect on large areas (highly efficient measures on a small number of areas have only a marginal effect on the ground-water situation)!

Horizontal measures are needed to bring farmers into the programme; then special measures can be applied. In horizontal measures applied in Lower Austria, soil and water protection are not treated as well as nature protection – this is one area where improvement is needed.

Structure of ÖPUL – 5 main groups of measures:

1. Maintenance of “ecological standards“ (basic subsidy).
2. Extensive farming respecting nature on the whole farm or as regards the whole culture (e.g. organic farming, integrated fruit production).
3. Maintenance of traditional farming (e.g. maintaining cultivated landscapes on sloping sites, Alpine pasturage and herding).
4. Special measures to protect soil and water (e.g. Greening of arable areas in autumn and winter).
5. Projects to maintain cultivated landscape and resources (e.g. Designing new landscape elements).

A simple structure with a handful of main groups of measures (rather than all 33 individual measures) is useful for negotiations with the European Commission.

Reaching environmental targets: mandatory versus voluntary measures

- Environmental targets can be achieved with specific laws which provide concrete production limits. However, if such obligations must be respected, it is no longer possible to pay premiums within the Agro-Environmental Programme – AEP payments can only compensate for voluntary production limits!
- Thus, Austria tries to reach environmental targets particularly by applying voluntary measures. It would have a disastrous effect on the commitment of farmers if the system would (financially) favour those farmers who have intensified at an early stage (e.g. by draining ecologically valuable wetlands), but would disadvantage those farmers who have so far protected these areas (which would mean partial expropriation).

Planning of nature protection projects makes ÖPUL flexible

- In Austria, an additional level has been inserted between the farmer and the paying agency which controls whether the submitted areas are subject to overlying interests of nature protection and which obligations and compensatory payments are necessary for this purpose.
- At this level, planning for the efficacy of the measures taken is essential. “Projects” are planned and the farmer is invited to submit concrete areas, encouraged by certain incentives.
- In a project file, the necessary obligations and the relevant premiums are laid down. With this flexible instrument, the varying requirements ranging from wetlands apt for intensive production to dry meadows can be dealt with specifically. This also enables the definition of obligations necessary for the protection of endangered animal species.
Important factors for nature protection projects

- Close co-operation between representatives of agriculture and nature protection is indispensable. In Austria, this relationship has not always been without friction. Consensus on new measures has been sought within the ÖPUL monitoring and evaluation board.
- Strict rules for IACS calls for tender have been new for nature protection authorities.
- The complex structures for handling submitted files and control are very demanding.
- Society must be willing to spend much money – importance of communicating what farmers do for the environment.

In ÖPUL there are 3 area-related nature protection measures:

- **Maintaining ecologically valuable areas**
  Scope: Applied areas of grassland, arable land and viticulture of a holding; e.g. dry-meadows, watermeadows, meadows with larches.
  Agricultural inputs: With special conditions and restrictions for nature conservation; depending on the individual project; no chemical-synthetic pesticides, no freely soluble commercial fertilisers, farm manure only if necessary in the project.
  Number of participants: 17,572
  Subsidised area: 46,477 ha
  Total of premiums: 20,3 mil. €

- **Designing new landscape elements**
  Scope: Applied areas of arable land or grassland of a holding.
  Agricultural inputs: No chemical-synthetic pesticides and no fertiliser. No sewage sludge. Hedge-planting, interconnection of biotopes for instance by allowing set-aside corridors, etc.
  Nature conservation: Management over 5, 10 or 20 years in accordance with the restrictions and conditions by the nature conservation authority; depending on the individual project.
  Number of participants: 4,093
  Subsidised area: 7,681 ha
  Total of premiums: 4,5 mil. €

- **Maintenance of small structures**
  Scope: Applied areas of arable land or grassland of a holding; in many cases not the whole area is ecologically valuable, but only parts of it, such as large stones or hips of stones or sodden fields and wet patches.
  Nature conservation: Management over 5 years in accordance with the restrictions and conditions by the nature conservation authority; depending on the individual project.
  Number of participants: 2,184
  Subsidised area: 10,365 ha
  Total of premiums: 1,2 mil. €

In contrast to the measures regarding ecologically valuable areas and designing new landscape elements, this measure can be combined with a large number of other measures. This is an advantage in particular for organic farms.

Programme monitoring and evaluation:

- Done on a regulation by the Federal Ministry, for the European Commission.
- Controlling: handled by the paying agency, Agrar Markt Austria (AMA).
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

III. Summary of Presentations and Discussion

Natura 2000 – linkages to agri-environmental schemes via:

- Nature Conservation Plans
- Investment (revitalisation, abandoned grasslands, wetland restoration)
- Education

Implementation of Natura 2000 and administration of area-related agri-environmental measures is the responsibility of conservation authorities at the provincial level, e.g. Lower Austria.

Article 16 – problems from the Austrian perspective: New rules included in the Mid-Term Review of the CAP make it possible to award compensation to farmers related to implementation of Natura 2000. Austrian authorities see a number of problems with this new measure:

- Award of compensation can effectively reward previous destruction of valuable areas and disadvantage those farmers that have managed their lands in an environmentally sensitive manner – a farmer who previously destroyed a valuable wetland habitat can now receive compensation for income lost due to its restoration, while no such payment is available to the farmer who has maintained this habitat all along.
- Another practical problem is the need to prove that there is no double payment between agri-environmental measures and Article 16.

Multiplying effects through complementary measures

Specifically Territorial Nature Protection Work According to ÖPUL – experience from development and realisation of the programme

Presentation by Wolfgang Suske,
Department for Nature Protection,
Provincial Government of Lower Austria
and follow-up discussion

Practical application of area-related agri-environmental measures in Lower Austria

- Farmer applies for consulting nature conservation contract
- Ecologist visits farmers and designs contract
- The province of Lower Austria verifies and confirms the contract
- Payment of contract
- Control of contract

Actors in Lower Austria

- Farmers – can apply for nature conservation contract, either as whole farm or single site.
- Agricultural Chamber – helps farmers orientate themselves among funding opportunities.
- Department of Nature Protection, Provincial Government of Lower Austria – in charge of programme administration, including approving measures contracted with each farmer.
- Clearing Board (AMA) – a public/private partnership that is in charge of processing and controlling payments.
- Ecologists/consultants – evaluate farms/sites and negotiate with farmers regarding implementation of measures. Private consultants under contract with the Department of Nature Protection of Lower Austria. In Lower Austria, 20% of the costs of consultations is born by the farmers – this helps the farmers appreciate this service.
### Project confirmation

- Documentation of mapping results and agreed requirements (e.g. time for mowing, fertilisation, etc.).
- Requirements and location are specified in the project outline.
- All the project confirmations are stored in a database which serves as a basis for payment in all Austrian provinces.
- Analyses like evaluation, budgetting, priority setting.
- Control of adherence to requirements by AMA (payment agency).

### Nature Conservation Plan versus Single Sites – Farmers have a choice between two systems of mapping:

- Single sites, in which ecologist/consultants evaluate individual sites selected by farmers, or:
- Nature Conservation Plan, in which the ecologist/consultant evaluates the whole farm and suggests optimal sites to the farmer. “Priority” sites must be taken under contract. The farmer receives more money for priority sites – additional to area payments for single sites under contract, he receives ca 17 €/ha for participation in the Nature Conservation Plan, – for a maximum of 10 fields.

Which system is used depends on the ecological value of the farm as well as the farmer’s own plans for organisation of the farm.

### Advantages of Nature Conservation Plan over single site approach

- Generally easier to reach conservation objectives.
- Substantial consulting (1–2 days), with more time for evaluation and discussion with farmer.
- Follow-up activities (e.g. workshops together with other participating farmers).
- Overview of the whole agricultural enterprise – more efficient solutions for problems regarding nature conservation and operation of the enterprise (e.g. fertilisation).
- More targeted conservation measures (e.g. time for mowing – phenology).
- Better understanding of the aims of nature conservation and land use for operational marketing.
- NCP can be used as tool for regional nature conservation concepts, e.g. Natura 2000, involving all farmers of a region to achieve regional nature conservation objectives.

### Programme implementation

Maximise conservation through combined use of measures.

- Rural Development Programming presents a variety of opportunities for financing nature conservation measures – conservation can be maximised through flexible and creative application of these different measures!
- For conservation planning, it is best to start with the general idea and aim – e.g. conservation of the Great Bustard – and then to look at how this can be realised by tapping the different funding opportunities available, including e.g. article 22 (area payments), article 9 (education), article 33 (investments).
Examples of specific use of the different measures

(Nature conservation measures administered by Lower Austria and other Austrian provincial governments.)

**Article 33:** Nature conservation projects to preserve the regional characteristics, basis, organisation and investment (farmers and other target groups as well). Project proposal covers three years.

*Use for:*
- Mapping
- RGV propagations of regional woody plants
- Diversity in varieties of fruits
- River restoration
- Beaver protection programme
- Programmes in cultivated land
- Nature park projects
- Clearing abandoned grassland
- Stables
- Management plans
- Land purchase possible, but discouraged by European Commission

**Article 9:** Further education of agricultural protagonists (only farmers)

*Use for:*
- Nature conservation plan folders
- Description of natural features and characteristics
- Nature guides
- Nature conservation trips

**Articles 22–24:** Premium for ÖPUL sites

*Use for:*
- Nature conservation plan – additional premium
- All premiums for sites

Programme responsiveness and flexibility through public-private cooperation

A “bottom-up” approach, including possibilities for farmer initiative (choice of whole farm or single site approach), and involvement of AMA payment agency, agricultural chamber, and private ecologist consultants to evaluate sites and consult with farmers increases flexibility and responsiveness to local conditions, including an effective feedback mechanism that helps with further programme evaluation and development.

Standardisation of consultations/appraisals: In order to ensure that evaluations and appraisals do not significantly vary:

- Ecologist/consultants are coordinated by a coordinating unit (reporting to the Provincial Nature Conservation authorities).
- Specific issues are discussed and publicized for all ecologist/consultants via email discussion lists.

Protection of specific regional characteristics:

- Possible through Article 22: protection and development; habitats and species; grassland and landscape elements.
- Through pilot regions and zonal programmes, e.g. for Natura 2000: Combining the NCP with Article 9 and Article 33 measures.
Three good reasons for partnership

1. Legal requirements
   - Regulation 1257/1999: Requires consultations and designation of associated environmental authorities as well as social and economic partners. It also requires detailed information regarding the role, composition and rules of procedure of any monitoring advisory boards.
   - Structural Funds: NGOs are defined as part of the „social partners“.

2. Effectiveness versus Efficiency
   - Adjustment of agriculture targets through the social and environmental perspective (e.g. nature conservation, soil conservation, water protection).
   Participation means dialogue, and dialogue means discussion and sometimes conflicting opinions. This needs time, and can slow down implementation of agri-environmental programmes. On the other hand, the solutions reached efficiently are not necessarily effective. What is the benefit if solutions do not sufficiently reflect social and environmental requirements and therefore are not sustainable over the long-term? In contrast to efficiency, effectiveness means having the end in mind before you begin – this means reflecting broadly on the programme before starting with implementation.

3. Political Prudence
   - Involvement of potential critics
   - Stable basis for ongoing „dispute settlement“

Partnership must engage all relevant partners at all levels

National level
- Programme supervision and development: Agriculture and Environmental Ministries, co-ordination of regional governments, national NGO’s.

Regional level
- Approval of nature conservation measures: Regional agriculture and nature conservation authorities.
- Farm advisory schemes: Agricultural organisations and nature conservation authorities.

The „ÖPUL Advisory Board“: What are our „lessons learned“?

Established as a political trade-off: What can be learned?

Background of establishment
- The advisory board was founded in 1995, the first year of Austrian EU membership.
- Agri-environment-Programmes stimulated dialogue between agriculture and nature conservation.
- The Austrian Conservative Party proposed the establishment of an „ÖPUL advisory board“ to get the votes of green MPs for a finance agreement on agri-environment.

Lessons learned:
- Though introduced as a political compromise to solve a specific political crisis (finance agreement on agri-environment), the ÖPUL Advisory Board has proven an effective, long-term mechanism for solving conflict between political parties, stakeholders, and interest of agriculture and environment.
Membership and structure – what can be learned?

Membership structure
Nominated members
- Regional authorities of the Austrian provincial governments
- Ministry of Environment
- NGOs: WWF, BirdLife, Friends of the Earth
- Experts “on request”
- Water protection
- Agriculture

The Advisory Board does not include representation of agricultural stakeholders, which are seen as already very close to and represented by the Agriculture Ministry.

Institutional setting
- Chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture
- Expert advisory board, not political grouping

Preparation process:
- Informal talks to consider expectations
- Internal co-ordination of NGOs
- Internal co-ord

„Rules of Procedure“ provide clear rules. Unanimity is always strived for – to the advantage of all partners. Content of the rules of procedure: Chair, members, voting rules, definition of tasks, minutes, reporting.

Lessons learned:
- Voting rules: Nature conservationists have the majority – an incentive for participation as well as co-operation of members.
- Reporting to the minister of agriculture: Unanimous recommendations reflect strategic consensus – incentive for the minister to follow recommendations.
- Formal, official minutes: Document state of discussion – a useful reference for the members and the minister (e.g. in negotiations with the European Commission).

Mode and main areas of operation: Defined by the standing rules, with time further tasks evolved.

Programme evaluation
- Consultation on Evaluation concept
- Commissioning of Evaluation projects

Lessons learned:
- Co-ordination of project design
- Effects of the whole programme
- Links to cross compliance

Programme establishment
- Consultation of draft programme
- Checked against evaluation results

Lessons learned:
- Proposals enrich the programme
- Broad acceptance is secured
- Early involvement necessary

Programme monitoring
- Consultation on Monitoring concept
- Addition of own data sources

Lessons learned:
- Timely preparation is vital
- Data collection process needs to be defined

Dispute settlement
- Recognition of programme short-comings
- Common search for solutions

Lessons learned:
- Mutual trust developed over time
- „Sitting in the same boat“
Future development of the ÖPUL?

To end 2003: Mid-Term Evaluation of ÖPUL 2000.
- Mid-Term evaluation report is compiled.
- Approval by the “ÖPUL advisory board”.

To 2006: Development of new EU rules for Rural Development?
- Partnership structures in all member states?
- Extension of scope to the whole programme?
- Little time for programme adaptation!
- Early involvement of the advisory board.

Comments of ÖPUL Advisory Board members

“The advisory board has provided a useful structure for reconciling agriculture economy and ecology. Although the battlefields are still existant, without this structure dialogue would be much more difficult.”
Gerhard Poschacher, Chair of the “ÖPUL Beirat”, Ministry of Agriculture

“The real power of the ÖPUL advisory board was created through its members – their competence and human qualities. There is still need for improvement, e.g. for monitoring, and we need to hold on to it!”
Wolfgang Suske, Co-ordinator of the Nature Conservation Authorities of the Austrian Bundesländer

“An ‘export’ of our model to other countries and to the whole Rural Development programme would be very useful. Most important is the opportunity to participate in programme development.”
Gerald Pfiffinger, NGO representative, WWF Austria
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

III. Summary of Presentations and Discussion

Monitoring and evaluation

Development of administrative capacity for monitoring and evaluation of agri environment measures in Estonia

Presentation of Pille Koorberg, Head of Agri-Environmental Monitoring Bureau, Estonian Control Center of Plant Production, and follow-up discussion.

Presentation of and lessons learned from a Phare-supported twinning project between The Netherlands and Estonia.

Project objectives:

- To develop a functioning system for monitoring and evaluation of agri-environmental measures.
- To develop a manual for monitoring and evaluation activities.
- To train the staff of the institutions involved in the monitoring and evaluation process.
- To strengthen capacity at the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, and other stakeholders for implementation of EU requirements related to agri-environment.

Participating organisations:

- Estonian Ministries of Agriculture and Environment
- Dutch Pre-Accession Adviser
- Short-term experts (UK, Netherlands, and Austria) and Local experts (from different Estonian institutions)

Project structure – 3 general components:

- Collecting background information (Estonia, UK, Finland, The Netherlands, Austria), development of evaluation questions with criteria indicators.
- Designing evaluation methodology by topics and indicators (landscape, soil, water, socio-economics, biodiversity), compiling a manual, costs analyses, IT.
- Training and PR activities, + study visits to Finland, Austria, The Netherlands.

Lessons to be learned from Estonian experience with monitoring and evaluation

- Programme monitoring and evaluation should be given high priority.
- The first objective should be to provide feedback in order to ensure ongoing programme development and improvement.
- Current list of common evaluation questions is intended for the Mid Term Review – but the requirement may be changed by the time of the ex-post evaluation for 2004–2006.
- Conduct all evaluations against the aims and objectives of the measure, including all schemes and sub-measures, as agreed with the European Commission in the Rural Development Plan.
- Much of the data for the typical “results indicators” included in the European Commission’s Common Questions should be collected through the routine administration of the measure with extra surveys, etc. only used where it is not possible to collect data by any other method.
- Collecting data for the “impact indicators” needed for more comprehensive evaluation of the measure against global objectives will require more sophisticated research approaches (special ‘agri-environmental evaluation programmes – e.g. duration of 5 years – with funding for research projects distributed to many different organisations).
- Consult closely with scientists, environmental and agricultural NGOs, relevant government agencies – the establishment and maintenance of an agri-environmental working group is highly recommended.
- Data collection should be integrated as much as possible into the ongoing work of government agencies, scientific and academic bodies, and NGOs, as this will save costs and add value.
- Maintain good relations with and learn from other EU member states in order to facilitate the ongoing exchange of information, ideas and experience, including the possibility of linked research.
Unanswered questions

- Who can be an independent evaluator?
- How to guarantee the acceptance of the project results by the evaluator?
- When to conduct the evaluation?
- Can the agri-environmental measure be evaluated as a separate project?
- Are there any major changes foreseen by the European Commission?
- Is there any long-term evaluation that would reveal whether the AE scheme has the exact impact on biodiversity and landscape stability that was intended?: Theoretical – need for clear objectives; difficulty of linking measures and impacts.
- In Austria, monitoring and evaluation is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry. A real monitoring system (providing ongoing feedback) does not really exist at present. The next general evaluation is planned to occur in 2005, when programmes will be reviewed and sites examined for changes in status. The problem, however, is that for nature, even 4 years is a very short period!

Comments from seminar participants

- Ideas what to improve in our country and which obstacles to face.
- Contacts to people with whom I can discuss other ideas.
- The similarity of problems was striking – more exchange is needed!
- Austria has a lot of experience with agri-environmental measures which can be very useful for accession countries.
- Further exchange of views, information – a network for exchange of experience is needed!
- New horizons on a fascinating and important issue.
- A lot of good ideas, e.g. integrate monitoring, what data to collect, how important evaluation is.
Annexes
Seminar Programme

Implementing Rural Development Plans in EU Accession Countries

Field Trip

The field trip will begin at 9.30 a.m. on Monday, November 24, 2003 at Hotel IBIS. We will be back at the hotel at around 18.00 p.m.

At 19.00 p.m. those interested to reflect upon the field trip will resume at 19.00 at the hotel lobby.

At 19.30 p.m. we will all leave together for the restaurant PlutzerBräu, 7 Schrankgasse 2.

Seminar

The seminar will start at 9.00 a.m. and take place at Hotel IBIS.

Opening address (9.00–9.15)

Chair: Andreas Beckmann, Co-ordinator of WWF Accession Initiative

I. Setting the scene (9.15–10.00)

Presentation: Overview of the current state of preparations of National Rural Development Plans, their contents as well as structural arrangements. Yanka Kasakova, WWF DCP, Bulgaria

Discussion/Feed Back

II. Implementation Issues: Area Payments | Complementary Measures (10.00–11.00)


Presentation – Wolfgang Suske, Rural Development co-ordinator of the Austrian Federal Provinces: Multiplying effects through complementary measures.

Questions of Clarification

Coffee (11.00–11.15)

III. Implementation Issues – continued: Structural Arrangements | Evaluation & Monitoring (11.15–12.00)

Presentation – Simone Lughofer, Policy Communications Consultant: Structures/institutional arrangements for partnership between environment and agriculture authorities/NGOs.


Questions of Clarification

IV. Establishing an overview (12.00–12.30)
Facilitated plenary discussion

Lunch (12.30–14.00)

IV. Workshops (14.00–15.30)

§ Four parallel workshops on implementation issues

Coffee will be served during workshop sessions

V. Identifying strategies (15.30–17.00)

Presentations of workshop results to the plenary | Plenary discussion aiming to identify implementation strategies as well as strategies for RD Programs for the period 2007–2013

VI. Wrap up (17.00–17.30)

Simone Lughofer, Policy Communications Consultant: Summary of key issues that have arisen during the seminar
State of Preparations of Rural Development Plans

Survey across the Accession Countries

Information compiled from answers to questionnaires completed by participants from each country.

Slovakia

Compiled by: Eva Viestová and Dobromil Galvánek, Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology

Rural Development Plan(s) 2004–2006: How many are being prepared in your country? What is its/their state of preparation?

Slovak Government in July 2003 approved draft of the Rural Development Plan in Slovakia for years 2004–2006. Till December 2003 the final version (changed due to the comments of the DG Agriculture) has to be approved.

Programme design: What measures – apart from obligatory agri-environment measures – will be offered?

Activities, which are planned within the draft of the RDP are the following:

- Measure 1 – Investments to the agricultural subjects
- Measure 2 – Education
- Measure 3 – Less Favoured Areas
- Measure 4 – Agri-environmental support
- Measure 5 – Improvement of processing and marketability of agricultural products
- Measure 6 – Forest management
- Measure 7 – Afforestation of agricultural land
- Measure 8 – Land reform
- Measure 9 – Advisory customs
- Measure 10 – Support of halfaloneproviding farms
- Measure 11 – Support for fulfilment of Community norms
- Measure 12 – Sale organisations of producers
- Measure 13 – Restoration of agricultural development potential destroyed by natural calamities and misguide of relevant tools for prevention
- Measure 14 – Technical support
- Measure 15 – Incentive to direct payments
Indicative financial shares: What is the financial share of the measures of your country’s Rural Development Plan(s) – as listed in question 2?

In the draft of the Rural Development Plan in Slovakia (years 2004-2006) the financial plan is the following:

- Measure 1: 261,105 mil. €
- Measure 2: 3,521 mil. €
- Measure 3: 229,662 mil. €
- Measure 4: 60,415 mil. €
- Measure 6: 29,807 mil. €
- Measure 7: 3,456 mil. €
- Measure 8: 37,258 mil. €
- Measure 9: 6,500 mil. €
- Measure 10: 5,000 mil. €
- Measure 11: 52,089 mil. €
- Measure 12: 3,900 mil. €
- Measure 13: 17,143 mil. €
- Measure 14: 3,661 mil. €
- Measure 15: 70,46 mil. €

In AES we pursue both ways – it is easier for farms to include the whole farm into this measure. For Natura 2000 sites it is obliged to be involved in the basic scheme (for SPAs) and to be involved in protection of natural and semi-natural meadows for pSCI. Within the SAPARD were already included AES and they will be almost the same within the RDP.

Agri-environment measures: Do you pursue a “whole farm” or a “part farm” approach? Do you offer special measures targeted to Natura 2000 areas? If agri-environment programmes where already in place within your SAPARD programme, are there any differences to agri-environment programmes within the RD Plan? Why?

Daphne together with SOVS and Agency SAPARD prepared 5 seminars for each pilot sites for the Measure 6 (agri-environmental schemes) of the programme SAPARD and we will continue with this type of seminars for whole Slovakia. State Nature Conservancy of the SR will be involved in the communication with farmers especially in the protected areas.

Complementary measures: Do you give incentives for reviving high nature value agricultural areas? By what measures do you plan to ensure knowledge and acceptance of the schemes amongst farmers?

Daphne is active in discussion between the state environmental organisations and state agricultural organisation and in all-important activities (especially on grassland protection). SOVS is also partly involved in this process through protection of birds and their habitats. For the future these partnerships will be continuing and NGOs will be deeply involved in the process, while communication between the both state sectors is limited due to the lack of personal capacity.

Institutional setup: In your country, do agriculture and environment ministries exist as separate authorities?
Who is going to administer agri-environment? Who is going to administer Art 9, Art 33? Programme co-ordination? Programme evaluation? What is the role of regional authorities?

Ministry of Agriculture of SR is a separate ministry responsible for agricultural sector and the Ministry of Environment of SR is a separate ministry for environment.

Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for agri-environmental measures and everything connected with this topic, but they closely co-operate with the Department of Nature and Landscape Protection at the Ministry of Environment, as well as with the State Nature Conservancy of the SR and with the environmental NGOs (Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology and Society for Birds Protection in Slovakia – SOVS).
Evaluation/Monitoring: Will you apply any systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007-2013 funding period? Which?

Daphne is properly monitor and comment the steps within the SAPARD programme and tries to influence the Rural Development Plan for years 2004-2006. We hope that these activities will continue also for the next time period.

Other implementation issues: What other implementation issues – apart from those mentioned above – should be discussed at the seminar?

Detailed information on AES for grasslands, how is the data and information on grasslands collect, used for their protection and so on. So detailed grassland measures.

Bulgaria

Compiled by: Yanka Kazakova, WWF – Danube Carpathian Programme (Sofia)

Rural Development Plan(s) 2004 – 2006: How many are being prepared in your country? What is its/ their state of preparation?

BG is not joining the EU in 2004 and therefore, it will continue the implementation of its SAPARD National plan. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) has proposed amendments to the SAPARD regulation on the basis of which it would like to amend the existing national plan. These are:

Regarding the need to address specific problems in the agrarian sector, MoAF suggests that the European Commission considers the inclusion of the measures “Farm advisory and extension services” and “Support for semi-subsistence farms, undergoing restructuring” in the SAPARD Regulation.

Regarding the acceleration of the uptake of funds available under SAPARD, MoAF proposes the following modifications:

The intensity of public co-financing rate to be increased to 60% for farmers, and to 65% for young farmers; Certain modifications in the rules for implementation of SAPARD in Bulgaria are also needed to allow for the establishment of a credit mechanism by State Fund Agriculture (accredited as SAPARD Agency). Such crediting mechanism will meet the needs for upfront financing of the project by the beneficiaries under SAPARD. Along with that MoAF proposes that the applicant farmers should prove upfront access to funds to the amount of 50% of the investments value, compared to the present situation when they have to prove 100% of such upfront access to funds.

The national budget co-financing rate under SAPARD to be reduced to 20%.
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

Regarding the strengthening of the administrative capacity of the structures that are currently involved with managing, monitoring and evaluating SAPARD, MoAF proposes that the scope of support under the Technical Assistance measure should be expanded to include:

Elements of institution building in the areas of programme preparation, management, control, monitoring and evaluation, including Local Community Programmes for Integrated Rural Development. Integrated rural development is practically impossible without the active involvement of the local population in setting and implementing Integrated development programmes at local level. The new member states will have access to the specifically designed “LEADER + type measures”. The implementation of these measures requires the existence of sufficient expertise and administrative capacity both at central and local level. Therefore, MoAF proposes that the scope of activities of the Technical Assistance measure be further broadened to cover the establishment of such administrative capacity, as well as to cover expenses in acquiring the respective expertise from the European Union.

So far these proposals are not approved by EC.

All answers below are given for the existing SAPARD National plan.

Programme design: What measures – apart from obligatory agri-environment measures – will be offered?

The measures are separated into 4 priority areas:

**Priority area 1** – Improvement of the production, processing and marketing of agricultural, fishery and forestry products in compliance with EU acquis; promotion of environmentally-friendly farming and environmental protection.

With the following measures: Investments in agricultural holdings | Improving the processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products | Setting up producer groups | Afforestation | Water resource management and Irrigation | Agri-environment.

**Priority area 2** – Integrated rural development aimed at protecting and strengthening rural economies and communities

With the following measures: Diversification of economic activities | Renovation and development of villages- protection of the rural heritage and cultural traditions | Development and improvement of rural infrastructure.

**Priority area 3** – Investment in human resources – vocational training for agricultural producers and other persons working in the agricultural sector, involved in the agricultural production, forestry and diversification of activities in the rural areas

With only one measure: Vocational training.

**Priority area 4** – Technical assistance.

With measure: Technical assistance.

Indicative financial shares: What is the financial share of the measures of your country’s Rural Development Plan(s) – as listed in question 2?

SAPARD financial allocations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority area/measures</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority area 1</strong>: Improvement of the production, processing and marketing of agricultural, fishery and forestry products in compliance with EU acquis; promotion of environmentally-friendly farming and environmental protection</td>
<td>78,4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1.1. Investments in agricultural holdings</td>
<td>37,27 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1.2. Improving the processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products</td>
<td>28,41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1.3. Agri-environment</td>
<td>1,48 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1.4. Afforestation</td>
<td>7,38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1.5. Setting up producer groups</td>
<td>0,57 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1.6. Water resource management and Irrigation</td>
<td>3,29 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority area 2</strong>: Integrated rural development aimed at protecting and strengthening rural economies and communities</td>
<td>15,70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 2.1. Diversification of economic activities</td>
<td>7,58 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 2.2. Renovation and development of villages</td>
<td>4,70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 2.3. Development and improvement of rural infrastructure</td>
<td>3,41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority area 3</strong>: Investment in human resources</td>
<td>2,63 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 3.1. Vocational training</td>
<td>2,63 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority area 4</strong>: Technical assistance</td>
<td>2,3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 4.1. Technical assistance</td>
<td>2,3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

State of Preparations of Rural Development Plans | Bulgaria

Institutional setup: In your country, do agriculture and environment ministries exist as separate authorities? Who is going to administer agri-environment? Who is going to administer Art 9 Art 33? programme co-ordination? programme evaluation? What is the role of regional authorities?

Yes, there are 2 separate ministries – Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) and the Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW) – a basic outline of their respective responsibilities is visible from their names;

However, the Agri-environment policy is within the MoAF; the is a special Agri-environment unit within the Rural Development Directorate.

So far, all national support for agriculture is administered by the State Fund “Agriculture” (SFA) which is a separate legal entity but is still under the ‘umbrella’ of the MoAF. SAPARD programme is also administered by this institution, however a separate sub-institution is established with the SFA, namely the SAPARD Agency.

The plans are that SFA prepares to become the future Paying Agency as well.

Complementary measures: Do you give incentives for reviving high nature value agricultural areas? By what measures do you plan to ensure knowledge and acceptance of the schemes amongst farmers?

For the moment such incentives are not considered (answer given by MoAF).

Partnership structures: How will partnership between agricultural and environmental authorities be organized? How will this be reflected within programme operation? How will partnership with environmental NGOs be organized?

It is planned to organise a working group including all of the different stakeholders (NGOs relevant institutions, research organization. Such working groups have been established during the period of the development of the AE measure. It is previewed that this group will take active part in the implementation of the project as well. (answer given by MoAF).

Evaluation/Monitoring: Will you apply any systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007–2013 funding period? Which?

Yes – on-going evaluation and assessment of the uptake and implementation of the measure, by development of a set of indicators, analyses and proposals for modification. It is planned to test the draft NAEP with SAPARD AE measure, so all of the modifications could be incorporated in the NAEP (answer given by MoAF).

Other implementation issues: What other implementation issues – apart from those mentioned above – should be discussed at the seminar?

The national accreditation process of the SAPARD AE measure. (answer given by MoAF).

Agri-environment measures: Do you pursue a “whole farm” or a “part farm” approach? Do you offer special measures targeted to Natura 2000 areas? If agri-environment programmes where already in place within your SAPARD programme, are there any differences to agri-environment programmes within the RD Plan? Why?

A ‘whole farm’ approach is to be applied by the pilot SAPARD agri-environment measure. The same is planned in the draft National Agri-Environment Plan. Natura 2000 areas are not yet identified in BG. However, this is taken into account in the design of the pilot AE measure and there is an action “Management of semi-natural habitats”. This action is going to be applied in 3 pilot regions all of them potential N2000 areas.
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

State of Preparations of Rural Development Plans | Czech Republic

Czech Republic

Compiled by: Jaroslav Pražan,
Czech Research Institute of Agricultural Economics

Rural Development Plan(s) 2004–2006: How many are being prepared in your country? What is its/their state of preparation?

- Operational Plan (investment support etc.)
- Horizontal Rural Development Plan (LFA, Agri-envi... etc.)

Programme design: What measures – apart from obligatory agri-environment measures – will be offered?

Operational Plan (investment support etc.)
- Investment to agricultural holdings
- Improvement of processing and marketing
- Forestry
- Support to adjustment and development of rural areas
- Training
- Fishery
- Technical assistance (to implement those above)

Horizontal Rural Development Plan (LFA, Agri-envi... etc.)
- Early retirement
- LFA
- Agri-environmental measures
- Forestry
- Setting up producers groups
- Technical assistance

Indicative financial shares: What is the financial share of the measures of your country’s Rural Development Plan(s) – as listed in question 2?

Note: as both plans are not agreed with EU yet the figures are preliminary and therefore it should be treated as such!

Operational plan – 100 mil. € per year (294 mill. € for period 2004–2006) – budget is not broken down into measures but to priorities and these are only two while one is technical aid (small amount).

HRDP (total budget per period 2004–2006):
- Early retirement ............................................. 7,9 mil. €
- LFA ........................................................ 289,1 mil. €
- Agri-environmental measures.................. 278,4 mil. €
- Forestry ..................................................... 18,2 mil. €
- Setting up producers groups ................. 5,2 mil. €
- Technical assistance ................................. 3,2 mil. €

Institutional setup: In your country, do agriculture and environment ministries exist as separate authorities? Who is going to administer agri-environment? Who is going to administer Art 9, Art 33? Programme co-ordination? Programme evaluation? What is the role of regional authorities?

There are two separate ministries in Czech Republic (MoA and MoE). MoA will administer agri-environment. Art 33 will be administered by Ministry of Regional Development. Both Operationa Plan and HRDP will be coordinated and evaluated under MoA governance.

Regional authorities have limited role in case of OP and HRDP mainly consultation (not designing) in initial stages (SWOT, Goals setting) and in final stages (comments on drafts) but these authorities were not addressed directly.
Agri-environment measures: Do you pursue a “whole farm” or a “part farm” approach? Do you offer special measures targeted to Natura 2000 areas? If agri-environment programmes where already in place within your SAPARD programme, are there any differences to agri-environment programmes within the RD Plan? Why?

In AEM package are both “whole farm” and “part farm” schemes. There are two schemes for bird areas in framework of Natura 2000 (for corncrakes and waders). Current AEM in SAPARD is different in comparison to new in HRDP framework. The reason is: there is intention to implement rather horizontal schemes than many regionally specific to start with more simple schemes having in mind implementation threat.

Complementary measures: Do you give incentives for reviving high nature value agricultural areas? By what measures do you plan to ensure knowledge and acceptance of the schemes amongst farmers?

There are not such targeted schemes to specific areas (except to SAPARD schemes). There is intention to undertake information campaign amongst farmers to promote the schemes.

Partnership structures: How will partnership between agricultural and environmental authorities be organized? How will this be reflected within programme operation? How will partnership with environmental NGOs be organized?

There is inter-ministerial team meeting ad hoc – when needed with relatively high power in decision making (currently not meeting frequently).

In SAPARD there is experience in close cooperation and there is intention to extent it to HRDP – MoE people in region (protected areas staff) helped to persuade farmers to apply, in targeting the schemes, in compliance check and application filling (it was necessary to have approval the application is correct for the protected area concerns).

NGOs have been invited to help in design of some schemes (birds) and all to comment on the draft.

Evaluation/Monitoring: Will you apply any systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007–2013 funding period? Which?

It is supposed the system started in SAPARD will be used for AEM too (baseline monitoring have started this year) and the approach is similar to approach used in Northern Ireland (insects traps and plants surveys).

Other implementation issues: What other implementation issues – apart from those mentioned above – should be discussed at the seminar?

Issues in Czech Republic:

- Land ownership/tenure authorisation for the application, what else is it necessary to bring as documents with application form as minimum requirements (with IACS and without IACS)?
- Information spreading/explanation of new and complicated issues to farmers in case of more targeted measures as bird areas or more difficult to comply with (grassland introduction etc.).
- Way of targeted areas identification for farmers (where are priorities to convert arable land into grassland? Where are bird areas? Etc.) – technical issue.
- Integration of MoE and MoA activities towards farmers on regional level (not too different instructions/advice etc.).
Estonia

Compiled by: Pille Koorberg,
Estonian Control Center of Plant Production

Rural Development Plan(s) 2004–2006: How many are being prepared in your country? What is its/their state of preparation?

In Estonia one Rural Development Plan will be prepared. On 13th of November it was officially sent to European Commission.

Programme design: What measures – apart from obligatory agri-environment measures – will be offered?

In Estonian RDP five different measures are proposed:

- **Agri-environment:** Support for less-favoured areas and areas with environmental restrictions.
- **Afforestation.**
- **Compliance of Community standards.**
- **Support for semi-subsistence farming.**
- **Also additional direct aid payments** will be financed under RDP.

Indicative financial shares: What is the financial share of the measures of your country’s Rural Development Plan(s) – as listed in question 2?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Financial Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agri-environment</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance of Community standards</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA-support</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional direct aid payments</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-subsistence farming</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afforestation</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional setup: In your country, do agriculture and environment ministries exist as separate authorities? Who is going to administer agri-environment? Who is going to administer Art 9, Art 33? Programme co-ordination? Programme evaluation? What is the role of regional authorities?

In Estonia Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment are different institutions. Ministry of agriculture will administrate agri-environmental support and also Art. 33. Art. 9 will not be implemented in this programming period. Programme evaluation will also be administrated by Ministry of Agriculture.

Agri-environment measures: Do you pursue a “whole farm” or a “part farm” approach? Do you offer special measures targeted to Natura 2000 areas? If agri-environment programmes where already in place within your SAPARD programme, are there any differences to agri-environment programmes within the RD Plan? Why?

In Estonian agri-environmental support three activities are “whole-farm activities” six activities are “part farm activities”. We don’t offer special activities targeted to Natura 2000 areas, but we plan to pay 15% incentive for some activities in Natura 2000 areas, in nature protection areas and in valuable landscapes.

Complementary measures: Do you give incentives for reviving high nature value agricultural areas? By what measures do you plan to ensure knowledge and acceptance of the schemes amongst farmers?

First part of the question – look answer No 5.

As we have implemented some activities already in pilot areas and some activities nationally, in some regions knowledge is quite high. To raise the knowledge about agr-environmental support, information and training activities are planned.
Partnership structures: How will partnership between agricultural and environmental authorities be organized? How will this be reflected within programme operation? How will partnership with environmental NGOs be organized?

Ministry of environment will help administrating some activities under agri-environmental support. Environmental NGOs will be our partners mainly in training and information spreading activities.

Evaluation/Monitoring: Will you apply any systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007-2013 funding period? Which?

Programme design: What measures – apart from obligatory agri-environmental measures – will be offered?

Operational Plan
- Investment to agricultural holdings
- Improvement of processing and marketing
- Forestry
- Support to adjustment and development of rural areas
- Training
- Fishery
- Technical assistance

Rural Development Plan
- Agri-environmental measures
- LFA
- Early retirement
- Forestry
- Setting up producers groups
- Semi subsistence farm support
- Meeting EU standards
- Technical assistance

Indicative financial shares: What is the financial share of the measures of your country’s Rural Development Plan(s) – as listed in question 2?

Note: as both plans are not agreed with EU yet the figures are preliminary!
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

State of Preparations of Rural Development Plans | Hungary


RDP: 668.00 mil. € for the period 2004–2006, of which

- Agri-environmental measures .......... 291,92 mil. €
- LFA ............................................. 68,14 mil. €
- Early retirement .......................... 64,69 mil. €
- Forestry ....................................... 19,37 mil. €
- Setting up producers groups .......... 18,11 mil. €
- Semi subsistence farm support ........ 35,80 mil. €
- Meeting EU standards ................. 150,55 mil. €
- Technical assistance ................... 19,44 mil. €

Institutional setup: In your country, do agriculture and environment ministries exist as separate authorities? Who is going to administer agri-environment? Who is going to administer Art 9, Art 33? Programme co-ordination? Programme evaluation? What is the role of regional authorities?

There are two separate ministries in Hungary (MoA and MoE). MoA will administer and implement both plan (Agricultural and Rural development Paying Agency).

Regional authorities have limited role in case of OP and RDP mainly consultation (not designing) in initial stages (SWOT, strategy) and in final stages (comments on drafts) but these authorities were not addressed directly.

Agri-environment measures: Do you pursue a “whole farm” or a “part farm” approach? Do you offer special measures targeted to Natura 2000 areas? If agri-environment programmes where already in place within your SAPARD programme, are there any differences to agri-environment programmes within the RD Plan? Why?

AEM are both “whole farm” and “part farm” schemes. There are several schemes (16) for valuable habitat and bird areas both under current AEM and the RDP from next year.

Complementary measures: Do you give incentives for reviving high nature value agricultural areas? By what measures do you plan to ensure knowledge and acceptance of the schemes amongst farmers?

See answer 5, and we operate a demonstration farm network and regularly organise training course for farmers.

Partnership structures: How will partnership between agricultural and environmental authorities be organized? How will this be reflected within programme operation? How will partnership with environmental NGOs be organized?

There is a Agri-environment Management Committee where several relevant NGOs participate. NGOs have been invited to help in design of some schemes (birds) and all to comment on the draft.

Evaluation/Monitoring: Will you apply any systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007–2013 funding period? Which?

There is an Agri-environment Information and Monitoring System to be set up. The operation of AIMS will provide output to be used for the planning purposes for the next period.

Other implementation issues: What other implementation issues – apart from those mentioned above – should be discussed at the seminar?

Establishment of AE advisory systems, marketing of products from AE schemes, network for exchange of knowledge skills and information between (old and new) EU countries.
Poland

Compiled by: Inga Kolomyjska, WWF – Poland

Rural Development Plan(s) 2004–2006: How many are being prepared in your country? What is its/their state of preparation?

National Rural Development Plan – the third version of August 2003. (Now next – the fourth version is being prepared).

Programme design: What measures – apart from obligatory agri-environment measures – will be offered?

- Early retirement
- Support for semi-subistence farms
- LFA
- Agri-environmental schemes
- Afforestation of farming land
- Adjustment of farms to UE requirements
- Setting up producers groups
- Technical assistance
- Supplementation of the direct payments

Indicative financial shares: What is the financial share of the measures of your country’s Rural Development Plan(s) – as listed in question 2?

- Early retirement ........................................ 701 mil. €
- Support for low-production farms ........ 132 mil. €
- LFA .................................................. 1 098 mil. €
- Agri-environmental schemes .............. 277,5 mil. €
- Afforestation of farming land ............. 79 mil. €
- Adjustment of farms to UE requirements ......................... 215,5 mil. €
- Setting up producers groups ............ 22 mil. €
- Technical assistance ............................. 25 mil. €
- Supplementation of the direct payments ........................................ 628 mil. €
- Total budget of NRDP .................. 3 178,0 mil. €

Institutional setup: In your country, do agriculture and environment ministries exist as separate authorities? Who is going to administer agri-environment? Who is going to administer Art 9, Art 33? Programme co-ordination? Programme evaluation? What is the role of regional authorities?

In Poland there are two separate authorities: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Ministry of Environment.

The authority responsible for administration of article 33 is Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The article 33 will be implemented in frame of Sectoral Operational Plan. Agri-environment measures: Do you pursue a “whole farm” or a “part farm” approach? Do you offer special measures targeted to Natura 2000 areas? If agri-environment programmes where already in place within your SAPARD programme, are there any differences to agri-environment programmes within the RD Plan? Why?

In RDP packages are intoned for farmers who is the owner or who rents “a farm” of the size minimum of 1 ha. Nevertheless the certain packages of activities can be applied to the “part farm”.

Agri-environmental schemes shall be realised in frame of SAPARD, but the Paying Agency has not been accredited for this measure yet.

The agri-environmental programmes are much simpler that those foreseen in National Rural Development Plan (e.g. Do not include such activities as: grazing, cultivation of old orchards).
Implementing Rural Development Plans in Central and Eastern European Accession Countries

Complementary measures: Do you give incentives for reviving high nature value agricultural areas? By what measures do you plan to ensure knowledge and acceptance of the schemes amongst farmers?

For packages: sustainable agriculture, marinating of extensive grasslands, protection of soil and water certain areas of implementation have been established.

For the rest of activities – organic agriculture and protection of traditional animals breeds are applicable on the whole territory of country.

The Ministry of Agriculture and rural development has a intention to train group of farmers and inform them on agri-environmental schemes, but till today no informative campaign has been carried out.

Evaluation/Monitoring: Will you apply any systems for knowledge management and ongoing evaluation within current plans that can feed into development of plans for the 2007–2013 funding period? Which?

Other implementation issues: What other implementation issues – apart from those mentioned above – should be discussed at the seminar?

Experiences of ACs in carrying out informative campaign on agri-environmental schemes targeted on farmers and rural society.

Consultancy process- transparency of Rural Development Plans designing and decision making processes.

Cooperation between MoE and MoA and between local authorities in the field of agri-environmental schemes.

Partnership structures: How will partnership between agricultural and environmental authorities be organized? How will this be reflected within programme operation? How will partnership with environmental NGOs be organized?

At present MoA and MoE are planning to establish working group. Also the representative of MoE – Secretary of State is the member of the SAPARD monitoring committee.

At present only one representative of environmental NGOs is a member of SAPARD monitoring committee. The consultation of the NRDP are rather weak and consist mostly on the ex-ante evaluation done by experts and placing of the RDP on the MoA web-site.

To the third version of the NRDP – 52 NGOs have prepared their comments and sent them in the form of open letter to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, but till today those comments were not taken into account by authorities.
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