

## Implementation of the National Rural Network's Specific Programme in 2017

### Summary for the benefit of citizens

## The National Rural Network : who is it for, and why?

The Rural Network is a European initiative which aims to provide information, encourage dialogue and act as a sounding board in the promotion of all initiatives relating to rural development. 'Less densely populated areas, (...) rural areas can be regarded as urban society's most precious areas,' stated the geographer Martin Vanier during one of the Rural Network's highlights in 2016.

The National Rural Network (NRN) contributes to discussions and debates regarding rural areas and policies that further their development. It organises discussions between stakeholders (elected representatives, the administration, associations, syndicates, businesses, etc.) and develops relevant local practices in conjunction with Regional Rural Networks (RRNs). Finally, via the European Rural Development Network, it provides our territories with a cross-border connection to other European Member States.

The circular economy, agro-ecology, the link between urban and rural environments, local food governance, and the social and cooperative economy: these are the principal shared issues, on the subject of which the NRN facilitates meetings between stakeholders involved in the sustainable development of rural areas.

### Funding from EAFRD

A financial instrument for European Rural Development policy, EAFRD (the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) funds the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). EAFRD participates in the development of rural areas and of a more well-balanced, competitive, innovative and climate-friendly agricultural sector which is more resilient in the face of climate change. It intervenes via Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) which employ a set of 20 measures to implement a strategy for addressing EU priorities regarding rural development and the challenges identified within individual areas. In France, there are two national programmes (including the NRN) and 27 regional programmes.

### The reform of the CAP - post-2020 reflections

On 19th December 2017, on the initiative of Stéphane Travert, Minister for Agriculture and Food, a conference on the future of the CAP entitled 'Focus on CAP 2020' ('Cap sur la PAC 2020') was held in Paris; it was attended by ministers from Member States, by Members of the European Parliament, by Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development and by stakeholders in the rural community. It provided an opportunity for key players to share their thoughts following the publication by the European Commission of a guidance document on the future CAP, and in view of the legislative proposals being prepared in early June 2018 for the post-2020 period.

Three thematic round tables allowed almost 300 participants to identify ways to develop the CAP in forthcoming programmes in the priority areas identified by France :

- by freeing up the development of agricultural and agri-food businesses;
- by promoting the environmental services rendered by farmers and by encouraging climate-related, energy and regional transitions ;
- by managing uncertainties and by holding stakeholders to account.



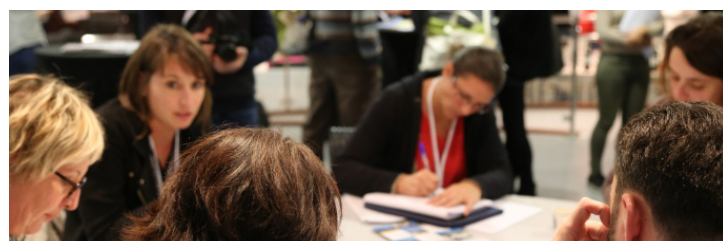
*Phil HOGAN,  
European Commissioner  
for Agriculture and Rural  
Development*

## A participatory approach to governance which enables stakeholders to have a say in rural development

As in previous years, the organisation of regular meetings with the stakeholders involved, [the minutes of which are available online](#), has assisted in the coordinated implementation of the NRN's action plan. Monthly meetings were held between the Network's three leaders (the Minister for Agriculture and Food, the General Commissariat for the Equality of Territories and the French Regions Organisation). A one-off monitoring committee was convened in June 2017, in the presence of the European Commission and other stakeholders. In addition, advisory committees on monitoring and evaluation, the European Partnership for Innovation (EPI) and the LEADER component were convened in January, in June and in September respectively. Moreover, two RRN meetings were convened in conjunction with the Rural Network committee which met in May and in October. Finally, the General Assembly took place in November.

## Working closely with the regions: effective coordination of the LEADER approach for the 340 LAGs

The NRN coordinates the LEADER approach at a national level on behalf of the 340 French Local Action Groups (LAGs) ([a map is available on the website](#)), and follows their progress by regularly participating in regional meetings. It has participated in two events: in a European seminar organised in Strasbourg in September to mark the 20th anniversary of the LEADER France association, and [in the first national LEADER cooperation meetings held in Grau-du-Roi](#) in December. Finally, a [LEADER brochure](#) has been created and published on the website in French and in English in order to highlight the Network's support for the approach.



## Research and innovation: a very positive EPI mid-term review

The EPI-AGRI has been implemented since the 2014-2020 programming, and supports multi-stakeholder cross-disciplinary projects involving farmers and timber producers, researchers, consultants, producers' organisations, communities, associations, small and medium-sized businesses, etc.

The purpose of these projects is to produce innovative and practical solutions in response to the needs of stakeholders in the field, in order to facilitate transitions in agriculture and forestry. Two policies support the EPI: the CAP (EAFRD) for EPI operational groups (OGs) at a regional level and the European Horizon 2020 Research Policy for multi-stakeholder transnational projects.

At the end of 2017, France has 102 OGs and over 70 active European multi-stakeholder projects. These projects generate knowledge and innovations relating to a diverse range of topics: product quality/safety, plant and animal health, sustainability of production systems, etc.

The NRN's specific coordination of the EPI at a national level facilitates access to tools, e.g. by providing the regional [Guides to support for innovation](#) included in RDPs; it also helps to develop projects and the connections between them. It equally lends its support to the Regions by means of an interactive digital document exchange platform and through the [dissemination of information](#), and it increases France's involvement in the European Network's initiatives.

The EPI's European Network website : <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/>

One of the highlights of national coordination was [the second EPI-AGRI seminar](#) held in Rennes in November, which was attended by over 150 participants and addressed the themes of self-sufficiency in proteins and collective initiatives for creating value.

Finally, alongside the National Forest Landowners Association (Centre national de la propriété forestière or CNPF), the Network contributes to [topical expertise in the 'forestry/timber, climate change and innovation' sector](#), which aims to bring together innovations motivated by this issue and to encourage the emergence of new projects related to the EPI's European activities.



## The Collective Engagement in Rural Development (MCDR) projects have been very productive

The year 2017 has been a remarkable one for the 14 Collective Engagement in Rural Development (MCDR) projects, introduced in 2015 for a 3 year period. These projects, which involve 150 different organisations, primarily relate to three topics (agro-ecology, local food governance and the social and cooperative economy) and have generated [a variety of deliverables](#) such as videos, web pages, practical guides, educational games; they have also been responsible for the holding of seminars and the establishment of stakeholder networks which focus on individual topics. [Videos](#) highlighting each of the projects and an [information brochure](#) have been produced.

[The second Agora day](#) in May brought together the projects' promoters and the RRNs. A number of the projects are examining how their topics are incorporated into RDPs so as to enhance their impact. At a European level, articles in English and in Spanish have enhanced the profile of these projects. Members of the Network and the RRNs were consulted late in 2017 regarding subsequent topics for inclusion in future calls for projects in 2018.



An AgroEcoDom event

### [Spotlight on... AGROECODOM: the inter-regional engagement of rural areas in the local development of agro-ecological practices in the French Overseas Départements](#)

In 2017, inter-FOD events based on topics of interest shared by these tropical regions were organised in Mayotte and in Réunion (livestock disease, service plants, etc.). Videos and posters were produced in order to encourage the transfer of knowledge, experience and technical progress for the benefit of the farmers.

### [Spotlight on... JEUNES: Focusing on young people in farming and rural development](#)

A number of products have been developed with the aim of facilitating the integration of young people into agriculture. The 'Ventures into Farming' ('les Agronautes') game provides a collective exploration of the establishment of a business via a simulation of its first eight years. The Dreams of Setting Up (Rêves d'installation) events are weekends set aside for discussions in a convivial atmosphere. Finally, the handbook for organisers of trips, which is designed to facilitate the sourcing of local products, is available to all citizens, farmers and non-farmers alike.



### [Spotlight on... USAGES: Innovation through practice, a driving force for agro-ecology and rural dynamics](#)

L'atelier paysan proposes to provide users of rural development services with engineering and public agricultural policies which will place them at the forefront of innovation. Consequently, over 40 self-build agricultural implements are freely available in the form of plans and tutorials on their website. A manual has been produced which is designed to increase the autonomy of organic market gardeners who operate agricultural machinery: the Self-Build Handbook.



The online self-build tools platform

## A survey of digital technology: a topical issue in terms of rural development

Whilst carrying out its missions, the NRN identified the need to work on the digital transition in rural areas. Consequently, a survey entitled '[the impact of the uses of digital technology on rural development: findings and issues](#)' was carried out, involving sixteen resource persons and experts. In addition, during the Network's National Seminar in Rennes in November 2017, an interactive sequence which used a digital application led to discussions and surveys regarding these issues. These complemented the study by introducing participants' ideas, findings and lines of thought.

[Other themed activities](#) are also ongoing. Two events on the subject of expertise in '[Forestry/timber, climate change and innovation](#)' were held in Metz and in Montpellier in October and November. Events focusing on the topics of gender equality, regional selectivity and animal diversity, and the uses of digital technology in rural development will be continued in 2018.

## Renewed communication to improve the NRN's visibility

The Rural Network's [National Seminar](#) was held on 17th November 2017 in Rennes, and involved both stakeholders in rural development and the general public. [The Rural Network's website](#), with its wealth of information, was updated so as to make it more attractive and informative; it is now linked to [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) accounts. Moreover, in addition to monthly [newsletters](#), two '[Revue du RRN \(NRN Journals\)](#)' were published this year. A number of videos are also available from the [video library](#) on the National Rural Network's website

The Rural Network's Website : <https://www.reseaurural.fr/>

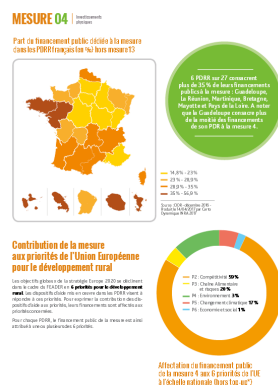


## The regional implementation of rural development programmes: the capitalisation of data to provide an overview of the implementation of the 20 measures

The Regions are the authorities responsible for implementing the RDPs. They therefore select specific objectives from amongst the 20 EAFRD measures so as to meet EU priorities. These measures have a broad scope in terms of rural development: investment in the agricultural, forestry and agri-food sectors, infrastructures and services in rural areas, training, advice, etc. Each region has the freedom to select the measures and therefore the objectives it wishes to address, which results in great diversity within regional RDPs.

In order to provide an overview of the objectives contained within the various measures and of their implementation within the various regional RDPs, the NRN has produced fact sheets ([available online](#)) which give specific examples of the types of activities that RDPs are able to finance.

Each fact sheet (one per measure) clarifies the objectives, eligible expenditure, arrangements for support and the various ways in which these are implemented within the RDPs. It also presents the various ways in which measures are funded according to RDPs and priorities. Finally, by focusing on one or more RDPs, they provide a concrete picture of what is achievable. These fact sheets provide the authorities in charge with a better understanding of the EAFRD's implementation in other regions and allow the general public and potential beneficiaries to gain a better understanding of the operation and objectives of European funding.



## The Rural Network's other achievements

The NRN's supports the monitoring and evaluation approach; it provides methodological support to the regional authorities in charge, to assist them in their assessment activities. In addition, the National Rural Network's Specific Programme (Programme Spécifique du Réseau rural national or PSRRN) is now midway through its 2014-2020 schedule. It has thus been evaluated for the Annual Implementation Report for 2017, along with the other RDPs.

The Observatory for Rural Development (ORD), administered by INRA, continues to ensure the monitoring of RDPs and the collection and synthesis of data.

The digital version of this document provides access to all the online resources, and is available at : <https://www.reseaurural.fr/centre-de-ressources/documents/les-resumes-citoyen>