

Information on possibilities to support on-farm biosecurity under the rural development policy 2007-2013

The EU Animal Health Strategy¹ promotes on-farm biosecurity measures with the view to reinforce the prevention of threats to animal health. The Animal Health Strategy defines biosecurity as those measures taken to keep diseases out of populations, herds or groups of animals where they do not currently exist or to limit the spread of disease within the herd. Biosecurity measures can include the isolation of new animals brought to the farm, isolation of sick animals, regulation of the movement of people, animals, and equipment, correct use of feed and procedures for cleaning and disinfecting facilities and so on.

Biosecurity may be supported by the Member States as part of their rural development programs via different measures within the framework of the relevant EU legislation as described below.

Principles of the rural development policy 2007-2013

The rural development policy for the period 2007-2013 (also referred to as the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy), aims at contributing to the sustainable development in rural areas. It is focused on three specific objectives:

- to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector;
- to improve the environment and the countryside by supporting land management;
- to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage the diversification of economic activity in rural areas.

For each of these specific objectives, priorities have been defined at Community level to ensure a targeted use of resources. These priorities are defined in the Council Decision 2006/144/EC² on Community strategic guidelines for rural development for the programming period 2007 to 2013.

The rules governing rural development policy for the period 2007 to 2013, as well as the policy measures available to Member States and regions, are set out in Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005³ on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The policy is co-funded by the EAFRD and by Member States' national or regional budgets.

Every Member State must establish a National Strategy Plan defining the national priorities for using the EU support. These priorities reflect the EU priorities taking into

¹ COM(2007) 539 final, http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/docs/animal_health_strategy_en.pdf

² OJ L 55, 25.2.2006, p. 20, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2006D0144:20090119:EN:PDF>

³ OJ L 277, 21.10.2005, p. 1, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2005R1698:20100101:EN:PDF>

account the Member States' specific needs. Then every Member State (or region, in cases where powers are delegated to regional level) must set out a rural development program, which specifies which measures will be supported and an indicative budget allocated to each measure for the period 2007 to 2013. These programs are approved by the European Commission and can be amended on proposal of the Member State or region. These amendments could for instance involve a change of the indicative budget or the introduction of a new type of measure.

Possibilities of funding on farm biosecurity under rural development

Although not explicitly addressed in the Community Strategic guidelines for rural development, biosecurity related measures can be supported under rural development (RD) policy to the extent that biosecurity contributes to the sustainable management of holdings and animal welfare.

RD policy can contribute to the promotion of biosecurity through the support of different types of actions:

- Training, information actions and advisory services to spread knowledge and awareness on biosecurity issues to farmers and other persons engaged in the agricultural and food sector;
- On-farm investments to adapt holding infrastructures to biosecurity requirements;
- Support to farmers to adopt new EU obligatory biosecurity standards;
- Application by farmers of specific farming practices going beyond mandatory requirements in order to improve significantly bio-security through voluntary commitments.

The support can be provided mainly through the following rural development measures within the limits set by Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006⁴ laying down detailed rules for its application.

– Measure 111 Vocational training and information actions

This measure allows supporting training and information actions dedicated to people working in the agricultural and food sector. Training courses supported cannot be part of the normal educational program. The support can cover up to 100 % of costs of the actions.

This measure may be used by Member States to improve the knowledge and awareness on biosecurity of farmers and agricultural workers.

– Measure 114 Use of advisory services

Support can be granted to farmers to help them meet costs arising from the use of advisory services. The advisory service should at least cover the aspects related to cross

⁴ OJ L 368, 23.12.2006, p. 15, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2006R1974:20100216:EN:PDF>

compliance and safety at work based on community standards. The support can cover up to 80 % of costs limited to 1 500 euros per service.

Member States may support advisory services covering in addition aspects related to biosecurity. Thus, support could be granted for the use of one-to-one advice to help farmers identify the practice to develop and investment to carry out on his farm to enhance biosecurity.

– **Measure 115 Setting up of management, relief and advisory services**

Temporary support can be granted for the setting up of advisory services delivering advices related to biosecurity with the restriction mentioned for measure 114. The support may cover up to 100% of costs arising from the setting up of the service during the first year and shall be degressive in equal step in order to reach a 0 % level in the sixth year.

– **Measure 121 Modernisation of agricultural holdings**

The measure gives the possibility to support tangible and intangible investments on the holding with the restriction of application of art 55 of Regulation No 1974/2006. The investment supported must improve the overall performance of the agricultural holding and respect the EU standards applicable to the investment concerned.

If investments are made in order to meet compulsory EU standards, the support is only possible:

- before the entry into force of the standard according to the national law;
- during a period of grace of maximum 36 months from entry into force of the standard according to the national law, or, in the case of young farmers 36 months from the date of setting up.

The maximum rate intensity varies from 40 % to 75 % of eligible costs according to the situation of the farmer (young farmer) and the location of the holding (mountain and other less favoured areas, Natura 2000 areas etc.)

This measure may be used by Member States to support investments to adapt on-farm facilities to voluntary or mandatory biosecurity requirements.

– **Measure 131 Meeting standards based on Community legislation**

Temporary support can be granted to farmers to cover partly costs incurred and income foregone (management costs) caused by the application of newly introduced standards based on Community legislation in the fields of the environmental protection, public health, animal and plant health, animal welfare and occupational safety. Standards must be newly introduced in national legislation implementing Community law and imposing new obligations or restrictions to farming practice which have a significant impact on typical farm operating costs and concerning a significant number of farmers. The support can be granted during a maximum of 5 years from the date the standard becomes mandatory according to the Community legislation. The payment stands at a maximum of 10 000 Euros per holding and per year and is degressive over the period of support.

Biosecurity standards meeting the conditions for support may be covered by the measure.

– Measure 215 Animal welfare payments

Support can be granted to farmers undertaking voluntary animal welfare commitment going beyond relevant mandatory standards (cross compliance and other national legislation identified in the RDP) for a period of 5 to 7 years. The support is granted annually, covers additional costs and income foregone resulting from the commitments made and is limited to a maximum of 500 euros per year and per Livestock Unit (LU) concerned by the commitment.

Under animal welfare payments, commitments related to farming practices contributing to prevent disease from being introduced and spread on the farm can be supported provided that:

- the commitments correspond to clear higher standards providing clear welfare benefits to animals on the farm compared to a normal correct treatment. Therefore costs of the treatment of ill animals, vaccines as well as analysis unless their result is determining for further action improving animal welfare, are not eligible.
- the commitments correspond to concrete operations, clearly identified (e.g. clear procedure for the management of new livestock), controllable, and result in additional costs and income foregone.

Veterinary actions already funded by the veterinary fund under Council Decision 2009/470/EC⁵ on expenditure in the veterinary field are not eligible.

For further information on the current support possibilities of biosecurity related measures in a specific region or Member State, please consult the rural development program 2007-2013 approved for the corresponding area⁶.

⁵ OJ L 155, 18.6.2009, p. 30–45, (previously Council Decision 90/424/EEC), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009D0470:EN:NOT>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/countries/index_en.htm