



RURAGRI call 2012

Announcement of the 1st Call

for applications for transnational research linking agricultural, rural and sustainable development aspects launched by
RURAGRI

Closing date for proposals: 30 November 2012, 13.00 CET

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Contract no. 235175

Background of the call

RURAGRI was set up within the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union (FP7-ERANET-2008-RTD, grant agreement number 235175) with the aim of improving coordination between on-going and future European, national and regional research programmes concerned with the interrelated issues of agricultural development, rural development and sustainable development. RURAGRI's full project title "Facing sustainability: new relationships between rural areas and agriculture in Europe" recognizes the three dimensions of the approach as an interlinked research field.

While the challenges and issues are mostly common, and despite of the historical coordination at the EU level for agricultural and rural development policies, research on agriculture and rural development is mostly carried out at a national level and remains fragmented. Research funding bodies from 20 European member states and associated countries agreed to establish RURAGRI in order to enhance co-ordination and co-operation between national research programmes and thereby contribute to the development of a lasting focused network that will identify and support new research fields. The activities of the network have focused on the development of a common Strategic Research Agenda and associated research funding supporting enhanced co-operation between researchers in the fields of agriculture and rural development.

The overall objective of RURAGRI is to achieve a better understanding of the implications of evolving or new interactions between agriculture and other land uses in order to support sustainable development. The Changes in spatial processes triggered by urban development point to an urgent need of analysis at the European scale which addresses a set of challenges influencing future development of rural areas in Europe. The current economic crisis puts our societies and rural areas under additional, severe strain and increases the urgency with which these issues need to be confronted.

Based on this understanding of rural potential the following three cross cutting issues are identified as core reference to any research in the field of RURAGRI:

- ❖ *Diversity.* Rural areas in Europe are highly socially, culturally, environmentally and economically diverse. Accepting that rural areas are highly diverse demands that long-established, simplistic approaches and viewpoints have to be overcome in order to understand the nature of rural development and to address place-specific challenges and potentials.
- ❖ *Rural-urban relationships.* Strengthening linkages between urban and rural areas is key to enhance territorial cohesion at EU, national and regional scales. The complex nature and role of linkages in supporting sustainable agricultural and rural development can only be fully understood by considering these within their wider spatial / regional perspective and integrated into networks or circuits of capital, knowledge, material flows and social development.
- ❖ *Governance.* Innovations in governance are considered to be crucial to enable current and future transition of rural areas in order to achieve balanced regional development.

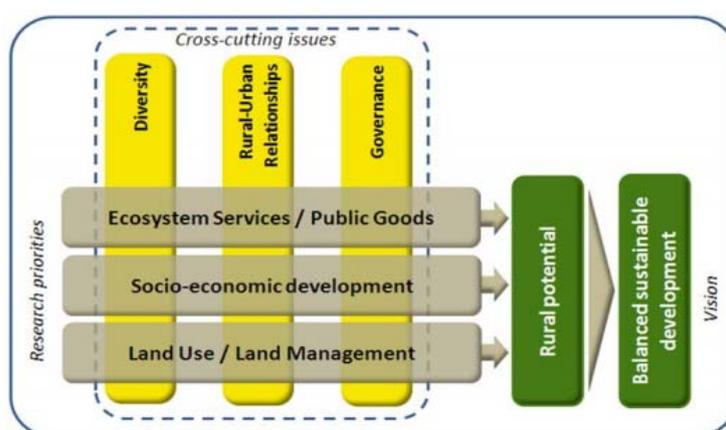
Successfully combining the cross cutting themes with the perspective of spatial differentiation outlined above will require trans-disciplinary research proposals that clearly demonstrate a

capacity tackling one or more of the research questions outlined in the next section. Project proposals will have to describe their relevance with regard to these cross-cutting issues, as well as in relation to the spatial differentiation. In this regard the spatial typologies (see Annex D in the “Guidelines for Applicants”) might be used as reference, but any other meaningful spatial classification method will be welcome, if properly argued. Moreover information on the trans-disciplinary research methods proposed will be required.

Thematic research areas

Research project consortia should develop proposals integrating at least two of the following three research priorities, which will be funded according to the scope of the funding contribution as indicated in Table 2. Proposals should be structured around (one or more) topics listed under each of the three thematic research priorities and are invited to highlight interrelations between the core topic of their proposal and other topics of the call (see RURAGRI Strategic Research Agenda – SRA:

http://www.ruragri-era.net/lw_resource/datapool/_pages/pdp_5/RURAGRI_SRA.PDF). The proposals should highlight how rural potential can be fostered and thereby contribute to balanced regional development.



Source: RURAGRI – SRA 2012, 15

a. Ecosystem Services/Public Goods (ES/PG)

With rising demands for sustainable management of natural resources more comprehensive research into the systems of interrelations of society and nature are needed. In this sense, Ecosystem Services are defined as the benefits of environments and ecosystems to households, communities and economies. These include *provisioning* services (e.g. food, fresh water, timber, and fibre); *regulating* services (e.g. climate regulation, floods prevention, and water purification); *cultural* services (e.g. providing aesthetic, spiritual and recreational benefits); and *supporting* services (e.g. photosynthesis, nutrient cycling and soil formation). The notion of public goods on the other hand focuses on assets that are non-excludable (this means, no one can be excluded from the benefits of a universally available good) and non-rival (i.e., if the good is consumed by one person it does not reduce the amount available to others). Both ecosystem services and the provision of public goods are vital for ensuring sustainable development. Despite this, a holistic analysis of the spatial processes conditioning the long-term future of agro-ecosystems and greater understanding of the varied aspects of valuation is missing. This is a critical gap in current knowledge given that ecosystem services and public goods cannot be achieved by market mechanisms, but can only be secured through a high level of public involvement and government activities at a range of administrative levels. Thus, it is important to identify, classify and evaluate those spatial processes supporting the valorisation and sustainable development of ecosystem services and public goods.

Proposed research should provide an overview and a classification of goods and services for all European areas as a basis for coordination of policy measures. They should avoid duplication of existing FP7 projects, other European transnational or national studies. In this sense, they should address one of the following research topics:

- 1) *Identify the various types and quality of ecosystem goods and services in different rural areas and improve monitoring systems of goods and services to ensure their sustainability*
- 2) *Enhance methods measuring the value of goods and services on spatial and temporal scales for monitoring, including indicators for follow up and impact assessment. Research could consider the development of governance systems, procedures and tools managing ecosystem goods and services in a regional perspective.*
- 3) *Increase understanding of how to achieve mutual benefits between economic development in rural areas and the delivery of public goods. Define tools for marketing these values to the general public and to decision makers. Assess the influence of production and consumption patterns on the use of ecosystem goods and services in different rural areas. Identify best practices, innovative solutions and system innovation suitable for use in rural areas.*

b. Socio-Economic Development (SED)

Rural economies are highly complex socially, environmentally and culturally embedded sets of socio-economic systems that vary across, and because of, geographic space. The development of such systems is determined by many kinds of flows (such as products, commuters, tourists, migrants etc.) and significantly shaped by the interaction of macroeconomic development and microeconomic processes. Socio-economic development of rural areas is conditioned by the spatial nature of these social, cultural, economic and ecological interlinkages. Understanding the preconditions influencing the linkages highlights the importance of space and scale in the study of socio-economic development and illuminates how challenges and opportunities arise. Understanding this complex set of interrelations (social, cultural, economic etc.) is fundamental to sustainable development of rural communities.

Research proposals should build upon emerging results of international and national studies in the field, but particularly focus on the understanding of mechanisms supporting, generating and hampering development potential in rural regions. They are encouraged not to be limited to one specific economic sector, but to address their contribution to overall regional performance and development. Results shall allow the formulation of concrete governance mechanisms and policy instruments with the aim of enhancing rural vitality in very diverse contexts. Research proposals should focus on the following research topics:

- 4) *Explore economic activities, public and private services, provision of infrastructure and technology to enhance sustainability and identify best practices supporting vibrant rural areas.*
- 5) *Identify barriers that hinder innovation and evaluate novel mechanisms and socio-economic structures (networks) which encourage innovation in rural areas.*
- 6) *Identify and evaluate agricultural development trajectories in different rural areas paying particular attention to the potential for specialisation and/or diversification.*

- 7) *Assess the reasons for migration and the impacts on the quality of life, culture and social identity for different types of rural areas. This should include studies on the potential of migration on the capacity for innovation in different types of rural areas.*
- 8) *Assess and evaluate the implications of mobility and commuting on the quality of life, culture and social identity for the potential and sustainable development of different types of rural areas.*
- 9) *Identify the diversity of urban-rural relationships and evaluate their potential to contribute to sustainable rural development, assessing best practices in the management of rural-urban relationships. Research in this area might also consider issues related to the use of ecosystem services.*
- 10) *Identify the mechanisms of interaction between sectoral policies and their intended and unintended territorial impacts. Formulate recommendations for the coordination of sectoral policies fostering synergies. Research in this area might also consider issues related to land use and/or ecosystem services.*

c. Land Use and Land Management (LUM)

Categories of land use include land for settlement and infrastructure purposes, food and energy production, other economic functions and those land uses that exclude or limit human impacts on the land, e.g. through the designation of nature reserves for conservation. Land use hence denotes how humans use the biophysical or ecological properties of land. Due to the spatially diverse forces shaping land use and management in rural areas, rural regions and their associated populations are confronting greater challenges in accommodating a variety of demands. This is resulting in changes between categories (or even within one land use category) of land use. These developments are frequently contentious and sometimes permanent. Further to this there is growing awareness of conflicting targets in land use, e.g. production vs. maintaining biodiversity, feeding a growing population vs. loss of arable land, production of food and feed vs. production of fuel and energy.

Land use change can have both positive and negative implications for rural regions. In this respect, land management can be defined as an information- and knowledge-based procedure which tackles these conflicting targets and strives for the integration of varying demands on land use in order to meet these demands in a sustainable way.

Proposals should address one of the following research topics:

- 11) *Explore and evaluate innovative land use and management practices to overcome conflicting demands on land and identify best practices.*
- 12) *Evaluate those economic networks utilising natural resources that result in increasing demands on land use; identify and explore novel resource efficient networks. This research could include consumer perspectives.*
- 13) *Assess multifunctionality of agriculture and how this concept could overcome land use conflicts and contribute to diversification of rural economies. Research linking the concepts of multifunctionality, ecosystem services and public goods is also of interest.*
- 14) *Assess land use implications of new paradigms (e.g. green growth).*

Basic requirements of proposals

Each proposal for the RURAGRI Call needs to be focused on an *interdisciplinary approach* and include trans-disciplinary dimensions/activities. Crossing disciplinary boundaries necessitates multi-disciplinary studies that contribute to the development of common concepts and models, leading to results that improve our understanding of the complex interrelations between challenges affecting rural areas. It also requires knowledge exchange and transfer processes, including non-peer stakeholders. In practice, this means that proposals have to interrelate different research approaches and should strive to integrate different research questions into a coherent (single) research framework.

Whilst research supported by RURAGRI will be undertaken at local or regional scales it is important that proposed studies and their results are placed within the wider European context. Research proposals will include a description of the selected case study region(s) whilst also including an overview of similar types of regions in other parts of Europe where results could be extrapolated. This can be achieved through the use of spatial typologies. A number of typologies have been assessed with regard to their relevance to the research priorities outlined above (see document “Guidelines for Applicants”, annex D). EU-LUPA’s Land Use Functions (LUF) typology provides a useful starting point for researchers interested in projects dealing with Ecosystem Services and Public Goods (ESPG) and Land Use Management (LUM). Similarly EDORA’s structural typology might be referred to if the topic of the proposal falls under Socio-Economic Development. It is recognized that each of these typologies have their limitations, not least of which is the variable size of the administrative regions used in their creation. This can have the effect of subsuming significant differences within region variations. Applicants are therefore free to use alternative spatial typologies where they think this will improve the quality of their application and transferability of results to other regions.

Who can apply?

Project consortia are eligible if they consist of at least three research institutions from at least three RURAGRI partner countries providing funding for the call. Applications with more than three participating countries will be given higher priority, if the projects hold equal scientific quality.

Research teams and institutions must be eligible for funding by their national funding bodies. In case of questions in relation to national aspects, please contact the National Contact Point (see table 3). Some countries have published their national eligibility criteria, these can be found on the website: www.ruragri-era.net under “Calls”.

Submission of proposals

This call announcement and the Guidelines for Applicants are available at the RURAGRI website: www.ruragri-era.net . The proposal application has to be filled in and submitted via the call submission website www.ruragri-era.net . Proposals must be submitted by 30 November 2012, 13.00 CET.

Call schedule

Table 1. Overview of the Call schedule.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Scheduled</i>
Closing date for proposals	30 November 2012
Evaluation by Peer Reviewers	December 2012 to February 2013
Project negotiations	February to April 2013
National contracts	May to June 2013
Start of projects	June to July 2013
Kick-off meeting	July 2013

Budget

Table 2. contributed funds of the RURAGRI call per country and thematic area

<i>Country</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>ES/PG</i>	<i>SED</i>	<i>LU/LM</i>
Austria	medium	X	X	X
Belgium	small	X	X	X
Denmark	medium	X	X	X
France	very large	X	X	X
Germany	very large		X	X
Ireland	medium	X	X	X
Israel	small	X*	X*	X
Italy	medium	X	X	X
Latvia	small	X	X	X
Lithuania	small	X	X	
The Netherlands**	medium	X		X
Poland	small	X	X	X
Spain	medium	X		X
Sweden	very large	X	X	X
Switzerland	medium	X	X	X
Turkey	small		X	X
TOTAL budget:	app.8,500,000 €			

* Encouraged only as additional thematic area to the LU/LM area.

** Subject to final approval

Budget size rank (in 1,000 €)

<i>Very large</i>	<i>More than 1,200</i>
<i>Large</i>	<i>Between 700 and 1,200</i>
<i>Medium</i>	<i>Between 200 and 700</i>
<i>Small</i>	<i>Less than 200</i>

Contact

The Call Secretariat will provide administrative support to applicants regarding the call, call documents and procedures. It is the primary point of contact between the Research Project Consortium and the Transnational Call Steering Committee (TCSC) for all general matters in relation to the call.

RURAGRI Call Secretariat:

Elfriede Fuhrmann

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The National Contact Points are supporting the Call Secretariat and should be contacted for all matters regarding national regulations and funding. Please see table 3 for contact information of National Contact Points.

Table 3. RURAGRI National Contact Points.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Name & Organisation</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>E-mail</i>
Austria	FUHRMANN Elfriede Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft (BMLFUW)	+43 1 71100-6817	elfriede.fuhrmann@lebensministerium.at
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