



European Union
European Structural
and Investment Funds

**European Structural and Investment Funds
2014 - 2020**

Growth Programme for England

ESI Funds Growth Programme Board
Progress on EAFRD Growth Programme

Purpose:

To provide the Board with an update on the current position on the EAFRD part of the EU Growth Programme.

Recommendations:

The Board is invited to note the information set out in this paper.

Summary:

During 2015, calls totalling £24.5m were issued in 27 of the 37 LEP areas with RDPE funding. The Rural Payments Agency is now processing 17 full applications arising from the March calls. Outline applications from the July, August and September calls are also now being assessed. Experience with the 2015 rounds has identified a need to improve the quality of calls. This will be addressed through writing workshops and local support.

Defra Ministers have recently confirmed their intention to launch up to £64m of calls under the EAFRD Growth Programme in 2016/17. Defra has written to LEP contacts to inform them of this intention and to confirm that the Rural Payments Agency will shortly be contacting ESIF Sub-Committees to discuss local plans and ambitions.

EAFRD GROWTH PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Overall, during 2015, calls totalling £24.5m were issued in 27 of the 37 LEP areas with RDPE funding.
2. The initial set of calls for EAFRD applications, issued in five LEP areas in March, offered a total of £3.3m funding for the development of rural-based micro and small businesses and food processing enterprises. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is now processing 17 full applications worth £2.25m arising from these calls.
3. A total of 41 further calls were issued in 26 LEP areas over summer 2015 in 3 tranches, with a total value of £21.2m. These invited applications for business development, tourism and food processing projects, and ranged in size from £75k to £2.5m. The RPA received 333 outline applications in response to these calls, and these are now being assessed by the RPA with advice from local ESIF sub-committees.
4. Experience with the 2015 rounds has identified an issue with the quality and focus of some calls as well as a high attrition rate in terms of turning outline applications into viable projects. The calls issue will be addressed through writing workshops, prior to further calls in 2016, and the RPA is considering what other local support might be provided for potential applicants to improve the quality of applications.
5. Defra and the RPA Rural Development Team are also continuing to work closely with representatives of the LEP areas who have issued calls in order improve procedures and processes. This includes ongoing discussion of options that might be made available to LEP Area ESIF Sub-Committees where they wish to accelerate the processing of applications.
6. Following the conclusion of the Spending Review and consideration of the risks presented to the Rural Development Programme by adverse exchange rates, Defra Ministers have recently confirmed their intention to launch up to £64m of new calls under the EAFRD Growth Programme in 2016/17. Defra has written to LEP contacts to inform them of this intention and to confirm that the Rural Payments Agency will be contacting ESIF Sub-Committees to discuss local plans and ambitions over the coming weeks.

1 March 2016
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