Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 05/07/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: the adoption of Community strategic guidelines for Rural Development (Programming period 2007–2013).

PROPOSED ACT: Proposal for a Council Decision.

CONTENT: On 5 July 2005, the European Commission adopted EU strategic guidelines for rural development. Following political agreement by the Agriculture Council on the new Rural Development Regulation on 20 June, the guidelines set out a strategic approach and a range of options which Member States could use in their national Rural Development programmes.

Since the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, Rural Development is playing an increasingly important role in helping rural areas to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Rural areas make up 90% of the territory of the enlarged EU and the new Regulation broadens the possibilities to use Rural Development funding to boost growth and create jobs in rural areas – in line with the Lisbon Strategy – and to improve sustainability, in line with the Göteborg sustainability goals.

The future Rural Development policy 2007-2013 will focus on three areas in line with the “three axes” of measures laid down in the new Rural Development Regulation: improving competitiveness for farming and forestry; environment and countryside; improving quality of life and diversification of the rural economy. A fourth axis based on experience with the Leader programme introduces possibilities for locally based bottom-up approaches to rural development.

The new programming period provides a unique opportunity to refocus support from the new rural development fund on growth, jobs and sustainability. The target date for the adoption of the EU strategic guidelines is autumn 2005. Member States can finalise the detailed programming of their national strategy plans in the first half of 2006.

For each set of priorities, key actions are suggested. Member States shall prepare their national rural development strategies on the basis of six community strategic guidelines, which will help to:

- identify the areas where the use of EU support for rural development creates the most value added at EU level;

- make the link with the main EU priorities (Lisbon, Göteborg)

- ensure consistency with other EU policies, in particular cohesion and environment;

- accompany the implementation of the new market orientated CAP and the necessary restructuring it will entail in the old and new Member States.

Guidelines

1. Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors

2. Improving the environment and countryside

3.Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification

4. Building Local Capacity for Employment and Diversification

5. Translating priorities into programmes

6. Complementarity between Community Instruments.