



MINISTERIO DE HACIENDA Y ADMINISTRACIONES PÚBLICAS  
Tribunal calificador de las pruebas selectivas para ingreso en el  
Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Montes de la Hacienda Pública

**SEGUNDO EJERCICIO DE LA FASE DE OPOSICIÓN DEL PROCESO SELECTIVO  
PARA INGRESO EN EL CUERPO DE INGENIEROS DE MONTES DE LA  
HACIENDA PÚBLICA ORDEN HAP/1199/2013 DE 14 DE JUNIO  
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**Foreword**

Rural Europe plays a central role in the provision of environmental services such as preserving biodiversity, contributing to climate regulation by reducing emissions and sequestering carbon, protecting water quality and availability, preserving soil functionality and air quality, reinforcing resilience to flooding and/or fire and maintaining landscape values. These services are often provided in combination, by ensuring appropriate land use practices.

The EAFRD is the largest source of EU funding for sustainable land use, and for improving the delivery of environmental services in all Member States.

The pressure on all aspects of the rural environment remains very high. Notwithstanding targeted legislation and incentives, and some positive outcomes, for example in reducing the environmental impact of agricultural and forestry activities, especially in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, EU objectives for biodiversity, climate and water — to name the most relevant — appear far from being attained.

Many current land management models have a high environmental impact, contributing to a decline in farmland birds and grassland butterflies, and in the conservation status of agricultural and forest habitats, as well as to high nitrogen loads in water resources and reduced water availability and lower levels of organic matter content in soils.

The importance of improving the delivery of environmental services as part of the wider challenge of moving towards a resource-efficient economy is recognised in the Europe 2020 Strategy, and reflected in specific rural development policy priorities for 2014—2020. Importantly, 'caring for the environment', along with 'contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation', are considered to be common goals for all Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

Clearer priorities and greater flexibility in the use of measures provide future RDPs with greater potential to tackle environmental issues. Doing this effectively, however, requires a coherent policy framework within which environmental concerns are carefully taken into account in every aspect of the programming cycle, starting with the programme design. It also means putting in place environmental safeguard mechanisms, which help to ensure that positive outcomes are not eroded or reversed and that all RDP measures work in synergy towards a common goal. In other words, it means ensuring that programmes are 'environmentally-proofed'.

When designing RDPs, an initial, careful assessment of environmental weaknesses and threats must be translated into coherent priorities and well-defined targets. During this process, it is crucial that RDPs are not considered in isolation. A wider and comprehensive environmental strategy is needed to take into account the full set of policy interventions and support instruments that operate in rural areas, at both national and regional level. In terms of the strategic approach, rural development policy should serve environmental priorities in the wider common strategic framework, embracing European structural and investment funds.

Effective design of future RDPs means making the best use of available tools, understanding what the different measures can achieve, and ensuring that they are used in a creative way to deliver the best environmental outcomes. This will likely require new approaches from Member States and may imply a need for guidance and practical assistance in order to better understand the implications of the new rural development regulations and to jointly build the capacity of administrations and stakeholders.

The European Commission's guidelines on programming for 2014—2020 mark an important step forwards and this issue of the EU Rural Review aims to be a complementary tool that provides some direction and potential inspiration to RDP programmers.