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#### **Abstract**

The target of the IPARD (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Rural Development) Programme is the preparation studies for the implementation and the management of the acquis related to the Common Agricultural Policy of European Union and encouraging sustainable development in rural areas and agricultural sector and adaptation of EU standards on food security, animal welfare, plant health and environment. Under the IPARD Programme; “Preparation for Implementation of Actions Relating to Environment and the Countryside”, “Preparation and Implementation of Local Rural Development Strategies” and “Diversification and Development of Rural Economic Activities” are supported measures.

The aim of the agri-environment measures is to encourage farmers to implement sustainable and environmental-friendly farming methods that include the conservation of environment, landscape, natural resources, soil, biodiversity, underground and ground waters. Because landscape and natural resources are

important components not only for promoting rural tourism, but also for maintaining the population in rural areas.

Even though the process for the preparation and implementation of local development strategies (LEADER) is new for Turkey, after the determination of these strategies, the investments under the diversification of economic activities will be encouraged to be in the same direction with these local development strategies as far as possible.

“Diversification and development of rural economic activities” measure in the IPARD programme aims to create new job opportunities by improving the business activities, to protect the existing employment possibilities and to contribute to overcome regional rural development imbalances. Thus, local handicrafts, enterprises producing local food and rural tourism enterprises as alternative employment resources in rural areas will be supported to create side income resource and employment opportunities for people living in rural areas.

In this scope, IPARD Programme will be an important tool for sustainable development of rural areas.

**Keywords:** IPARD Programme, Agri-Environment, LEADER Approach, Rural Tourism

## **Introduction**

The target of IPARD (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Rural Development) Programme is the preparation of studies for the implementation and management of the acquis related to the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and encouraging sustainable development in rural areas and agricultural sector and adaptation of EU standards on food security, animal welfare, plant health and environment.

IPARD Programme is carried out by the General Directorate of Agricultural Reform under Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock designated as Managing Authority and Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution responsible for the payments. The Programme is currently implemented in 42 provinces.

The measures supported under the Programme are:

- Investments in Agricultural Holdings
- Investments in Processing and Marketing of Agricultural and Fishery Products
- Preparation for implementation of actions relating to environment and the countryside implementation of local development strategies
- Diversification and Development of Rural Economic Activities
- Technical Assistance

Beneficiaries of the Programme are agriculture and food enterprises, producer organisations and other local development actors. Under the Programme, support is provided for eligible projects at rates ranging from 50 percent to 65 percent.

## **What is Agri-Environment Measure under IPARD?**

Agri-environment measure adopts more environmental-friendly and sustainable implementations supporting the conservation of soil, underground and ground water, biodiversity and high nature value agricultural lands. The aim of agri-environment supports are to facilitate the implementation of environmental-friendly agricultural methods and their continuous use, to support the sustainable development of rural areas and meet the increasing demand of the society for environment.

Agri-environment measure is implemented as a pilot measure in the candidate countries. Therefore, it aims to show the new agricultural and environmental approaches by following experimental methods. It is not the repetition of currently implemented national or other supports as ÇATAK. The payments are done in order to compensate the income losses originating from commitments. Agri-environment measure under the IPARD Programme consists of four sub-measures, these sub-measures and the pilot districts are given below:

- Management of soil cover and soil erosion control (Beypazari)
- Water conservation (Şereflikoçhisar)
- Biodiversity - enhancing the steppe bird population (Polatli)
- Support for introduction and maintenance of organic agricultural production methods (Çanakkale-Saroz and/or Tuz Gölü/Peçenek)

Agri-environmental payments are given to the applicants who voluntarily agree to take up for 5 years environmentally-friendly commitments which go beyond the compulsory legislation. The related GAEC/Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions Standards will be taken as basis for this pilot measure. These standards named as GAEC are formed by selecting within our national legislation and current implementations.

Support is available for natural and legal persons registered under the Farmer Registry System who can hold the land cadastre ownership or a proof of lease at least for 5 years and who on a voluntarily basis makes the agri-environmental commitments for the land management for 5 years. Minimum size of the agricultural parcel in respect of which an application may be made is 0,2 ha and the minimum size of the land applied for the support is 1 ha.

### **What is Implementation of Local development Strategies - LEADER Approach under IPARD?**

LEADER (acronym: Liason Entre Actions pour le Developpement de l'Economie Rurale -Links between actions of rural development) is a method of mobilising and encouraging rural development in local rural communities, rather than a fixed set of measures to be implemented. It can play an important role in encouraging innovative responses to old and new rural problems and for meeting the needs of rural communities. LEADER approach, which is an area-based and local development strategy to be prepared and implemented by a Local Action Group (LAG, a public-private partnership), addresses all types of actions (in agriculture, environment, wider rural economy, the quality of life, cultural resources) with economic, social and multi-sectoral approaches. It also defines innovative actions and the transfer of knowledge between rural groups through networking and cooperation. Local development approaches, due to their integrated character and local participation in decision making, introduce extremely useful

context for rural development in Turkey, as they focus on local capacity building, establishing linkages between different development activities, creating self-sustaining forms of growth and part-time employment, contributing to the empowerment of local areas. LEADER approach is covered in the IPARD Programme implemented initially in the provinces where measure of diversification of rural economy component is projected by the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock.

The objectives of the LEADER measure in the IPARD Programme are as follows:

- to build capacity within local communities to participate in the processes of rural development by creating active partnerships on local level;
- to foster the development of rural areas through the implementation of innovative, locally-based, bottom-up development strategies designed by local groups;
- to diversify the economic activities, improve competitiveness of local products and develop higher-quality services catering for the needs and expectations of local people in order to create long term employment opportunities and to raise income levels in rural communities;
- to promote joint projects between rural areas through cooperation, in order to learn by doing, meet certain needs and become aware of best practice.

The Local Action Group (LAG) is the structure that leads the whole process and makes it easier to formulate an effective public-private partnership that will influence and shape a local development strategy. LAG has a legal status, which relies on the Turkish registered association legal framework. A local development strategy (LDS) is put together by the LAG that outlines how the group will work over the coming years. The strategy will meet the requirements of the IPARD Programme for Turkey and its objectives. The local development strategy is the way the LAG analyses the issues of its territory and defines his orientations. It must be established in a participative way.

The Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock has launched a pilot scheme at the local level, using the LEADER approach, by selecting two pilot rural areas. The districts selected to be pilot LAGs are situated in the provinces of Çorum (district of İskilip) and Şanlıurfa (district of Birecik). “Implementation of Local Development Strategies-LEADER Approach” measure includes four sub-measures under IPARD Programme:

- acquisition of skills, animating the inhabitants of LAG territories;
- implementation of local development strategies;
- running costs of LAGs;
- implementation of cooperation activities.

LEADER approach will not solve all the structural problems of the area. However, the LEADER can create synergies, especially in certain sectors as the driving force for local development. Due to the bottom-up approach of LEADER, with the mobilisation of local actors in the region, the implementation of local development strategies will serve as an important tool for the better coordination among the different support programmes.

### **What is Rural Tourism Sub-Measure under IPARD?**

Basic resource in strengthening the rural economy is the locally owned assets of rural areas. Variety of agricultural products, clean environment, natural resources, natural beauty, historical and cultural assets are the basic assets of the rural areas and the richness and diversity of these assets offer significant potential for the development of tourism and recreation activities.

Although Turkey's rich archaeological, historical and natural resources and social assets make tourism a sector with high potential and competitiveness in external markets, rural tourism is still an underutilised resource. It may play a much more important role in the future besides the developing urban centres or seaside resorts. Therefore, it should be supported to create side income and employment opportunities for people in the rural areas.

Under this scope, the aim of "diversification and development of rural economic activities" measure in the IPARD Programme is to create new job opportunities by improving the business activities, to protect the existing employment possibilities and to contribute to overcome regional rural development imbalances.

Measure comprises of four sub-measures under IPARD:

- diversification and development of on-farm activities;
- economic development of local products and micro-enterprises;
- rural tourism;
- aquaculture;

The aim of rural tourism sub-measures is to support the development of small boarding houses, bed & breakfast rooms and food serving facilities, to support creation and development of on-farm accommodation and to support the development of tourist recreational activities (sports activities, nature discovery, heritage discovery) by micro/small rural entrepreneurs or by farmers.

## **Conclusion**

IPARD Programme is an important instrument for the sustainable development of the rural areas. Within this scope, it is observed in the rural areas implementing LEADER that, the utilisation capacity of the rural development instruments other than LEADER approach, access and the utilisation rate of the rural development instruments were increased and support opportunities were also provided for the sectors and groups that were not supported or partially supported. LEADER also assists the activities regarding culture, protection and improvement of the environment, rehabilitation of the historical buildings, rural tourism, strengthening the relation between producers and consumers. In the meanwhile, LEADER supports the socio-economical actors concerning cooperation and the production of goods and services that would provide maximum added value to their local area.

Rural tourism serves for job creation and employment opportunities in rural areas and revealing natural and cultural values and protection of rural heritages. Using the rural areas with high landscape value, protected local cultural properties and unique local products, for tourism purposes besides carrying out agricultural activities will contribute to the rural economy. Many projects were contracted within the scope of rural tourism supports provided under IPARD Programme.

Landscape and natural resources are significant components not only for the promotion of rural tourism but also retaining the population in rural areas. Within the frame of the results of the recent proceedings, soil erosion, high consumption of water and excessive chemical usage are come up as important issues. On the other side, industrial developments and extensive agricultural activities in Turkey cause the disruptions over the environmental figures. Within the scope of IPARD Programme, with the publicity of Agri-environment measure to rural people and incentives regarding its implementation will create awareness.