



greenchange



LIFE17 NAT/IT/00619 GREENCHANGE

Green infrastructures for increasing biodiversity in Agro Pontino and Maltese rural areas



# GUIDELINES FOR INVESTMENTS IN RURAL AREAS

Action C.2– Orienting and training farmers to enhance ES in rural areas

**Date:**

20.01.2023

**Version:**

01.00

## ABSTRACT -ENG

This document summarizes the main elements of the national CAP Strategic Plan (CAP SP) for Malta 2023-27 and identifies among the measures activated, those of greater interest for the purposes of the Life Greenchange project. The document complements the more extensive one prepared by POLIEDRA for the Italian target areas, and is meant to support MIEMA in providing orientation and information to Maltese farmers around the opportunities offered by the CAP to promote green infrastructure and more environmentally sustainable agronomic and land management techniques.

## ABSTRACT -ITA

Il presente documento sintetizza i principali elementi del Piano Strategico nazionale della PAC (CAP SP) per Malta riferito al periodo di programmazione 2023-27 e individua tra le misure attivate quelle di maggiore interesse ai fini del progetto Life Greenchange. Il documento integra quello più ampio preparato da POLIEDRA per le aree target italiane, e mira a supportare MIEMA nel fornire orientamento e informazioni agli agricoltori maltesi sulle opportunità offerte dalla PAC per promuovere infrastrutture verdi e tecniche agronomiche e di gestione del territorio più sostenibili dal punto di vista ambientale.

## Table of contents

ABSTRACT -ENG .....	2
ABSTRACT -ITA.....	2
1. Introduction.....	5
2. The CAP strategic plan for Malta 2023-2027.....	6
2.1. Main contents and general structure.....	6
2.2. Enhanced conditionality .....	7
Statutory management requirements.....	7
Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions included in the CAP SP for Malta .....	7
2.3. Direct payments and sectoral interventions (I Pillar).....	10
Direct payments .....	10
Basic Income Support for Sustainability.....	10
Basic Income Support for Sustainability for Small Farmers .....	10
Complimentary Income Support for Young Farmers .....	11
Eco-schemes .....	11
Coupled income support .....	12
Sectoral interventions .....	12
2.4. Rural development interventions (II Pillar) .....	14
2.5. CAP SP contents more relevant to LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives.....	15
3. APPENDIX: Selected interventions’ factsheets from the CAP SP for Malta.....	18
DP ECO-Biodiversity - ECO-SCHEME 1 (ES 1) - Dedicating parcels to enhance biodiversity and pollination.....	19
DP ECO-IPM - Eco-scheme 2 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM).....	21
RD OnFarm NP Invest - On-Farm Non-Productive Investments.....	23
RD Off Farm NP INVST - Off-Farm Non-Productive Investments and Afforestation .....	25
AECC 1C - Conservation of indigenous species including Carob and Mulberry trees .....	28
AECC 2 - Measure for the maintenance of trees (Support for the maintenance of newly planted recommended tree species).....	30
AECC 3 - Environmental commitments to control weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical, instead of chemical methods .....	33
AECC 4 - Introduction of bee boxes on holdings .....	35
AECC 5 - Implementation of soil management and conservation plan on a parcel.....	37
AECC 7 - Organic Farming.....	39



## 1. Introduction

Action C2 of LIFE GREENCHANGE aims to counter some critical issues that hamper the achievement of environmental protection objectives in the farming sector, which for Malta can be identified as follows:

- Extreme fragmentation of land property and lack of farmers' associative bodies;
- Farmers' lack of awareness on the environmental impact of agronomic practices and on their potential role in the preservation of agricultural areas of ecological importance;
- Difficult adherence of farmers to the incentives provided within agro-environmental measures;
- Lack of higher level guidelines (supra-company or wide area) capable of enhancing the dimension of environmental conditionalities envisaged for access to funding under a territorial strategy perspective (Ecological Network).

This document is intended as a support tool in the context of the orientation and information activities offered to Maltese agricultural entrepreneurs, in order to facilitate the identification of the opportunities offered by the CAP SP for the pursuit of the LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives in terms of green infrastructure and of more environmentally sustainable agronomic and management solutions.

In general, it is necessary to specify that the two-year delay in the entry into force of the CAP 2023-27 and the related Strategic Plan forced the project to operate in the absence of an updated reference framework of the possible advantages that farmers could derive from the application of the good practices promoted by LIFE GREENCHANGE. This slowed down and complicated the involvement and activation of agricultural entrepreneurs on the environmental issues promoted by the project.

On the other hand, the level of environmental ambition of Malta's choices within the CAP SP can be considered satisfactory, and may also be considered a result of the sharing of the project approach with the competent national authorities, conducted in the first phase of project implementation.

## 2. The CAP strategic plan for Malta 2023-2027

### 2.1. Main contents and general structure

The first proposal of Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan (CAP SP) for Malta was submitted on 28 December 2021, after consultations with stakeholders. It then underwent a review process following the European Commission’s observations; the resulting reviewed version was submitted on 10 November 2022, and ultimately approved by the Commission on 30 November 2022.

The CAP SP aims to maintain overall consistency with Malta’s National Agricultural Policy 2018-2028, following meetings and discussions with relevant stakeholders and Government entities, which have been held since 2019. In line with the new European Policies and Regulations (including i.e. the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy), the CAP SP will support all three general objectives outlined in the regulatory framework, which aim to:

- foster a smart, competitive, resilient, diversified agricultural sector, ensuring long-term food security;
- support and strengthen environmental and biodiversity protection and climate action, and contribute to achieving the EU environmental and climate-related objectives;
- strengthen the socio-economic fabric of rural areas.

To achieve these objectives, the CAP SP foresees 30 interventions for a total allocation of more than EUR 160 million for the period 2023-2027.

Table 1 - Total public expenditure in EUR per category of intervention (2023-2027) (Source: European Commission)

	EU budget (EAGF+EAFRD)	National funding	Total public expenditure
Direct Payments - BISS, BISS-SF, CIS-YF	18,877,840	n/a	18,877,840
Direct Payments - Eco-schemes	9,076,765	n/a	9,076,765
Direct Payments - Coupled income support	14,999,957	n/a	14,999,957
Sectoral - Apiculture products	70,685	70,685	141,370
Rural development	79,288,028	41,114,846	120,402,874
<b>Total</b>	<b>122,313,275</b>	<b>41,185,531</b>	<b>163,498,806</b>

CAP SP resources will be primarily mobilised through the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and will target the needs of the Maltese agricultural sector, with the specific aim to meet future demands including environmental and climate objectives, new technologies and digitisation, fair income for farmers and workers, better rural conditions and farm resilience. Other commitments will target organic farming systems, animal welfare awareness, apiculture, more sustainable agricultural practices, and support to young farmers.

The plan will cover the entire territory of the Maltese Islands, and will be implemented in line with Government's commitment to earmark 10% of funds under Cohesion and Agricultural funds for the island of Gozo.

Next chapters provide an overview of each component of the CAP SP, with special reference to the more relevant ones to the objectives of the LIFE GREENCHANGE project.

## 2.2. Enhanced conditionality

The new CAP links payments to the beneficiaries to a set of mandatory requirements: Statutory management requirements (SMR), which express the compliance with the environmental regulations in force, and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC). Both categories are detailed below.

### Statutory management requirements

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SMR 1 Control of diffuse sources of pollution by phosphates

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SMR 2 Protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources

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SMR 3 Conservation of wild birds

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SMR 4 Conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna

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SMR 5 Food safety

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SMR 6 Prohibition on the use in stock farming of substances having a hormonal or thyrostatic action and beta-agonists

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SMR 7 Placing of plant protection products on the market

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SMR 8 Sustainable use of pesticides

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SMR 9 - 10 - 11 Protection of calves/pigs/animals kept for farming purposes

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### Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions included in the CAP SP for Malta

#### Climate change

GAEC2 Protection of wetland and peatland	In the sites of Simar, Salini, il-Ballut and il-Magħluq, active farmers who apply for funds under IACS interventions are prohibited from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Damaging wetlands as a result of agricultural activities;</li> <li>- Draining or converting wetlands;</li> <li>- Hunting, littering and allowing sewage overflow in wetland areas.</li> </ul>
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GAEC3 Ban on burning arable stubble, except for plant health reasons	In the entire territory of Malta, active farmers having arable land are forbidden to burn stubble or vegetation residues or any waste directly on the soil, except by order of the national Plant Protection Directorate. Following which cases, farmers shall adopt corrective actions, including green manuring or application of organic material prior to the establishment of the following crop. When harvested vegetable residues need to be destroyed for preventing transmissible plant diseases, this should be done in an area of the field not exceeding 10m <sup>2</sup> .
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#### Water

GAEC 4 Establishment of buffer strips along water courses	In the entire Maltese territory, farmers having arable land along water courses must comply with storage and distance requirements listed in Reg. 6.2 and 8 of SL 549.66 and in Annexes IV and V of the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides 2019-2023. Organic and Synthetic fertilizer must not be applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- directly or indirectly incorporated to water streams, valleys, ponds or any natural water courses</li> <li>- within a minimum distance of 5m from natural watercourses</li> <li>- within 5m from springs, galleries, gallery shafts, boreholes, karst features</li> <li>- within 30m of any borehole used for public water supply</li> <li>- within 100m from the coast</li> <li>- to any type of natural water courses</li> </ul>
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Plant Protection Products applications should not be applied:

- on any type of water streams, ponds, or any natural water courses
- to a minimum distance of 5 meters from passages of natural water, streams, boreholes, and cracks in rocks
- to a minimum distance of 30 meters from boreholes used for the provision of water to the public
- to a minimum of 30 meters from the coast

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## Soil

GAEC 5 Tillage management, reducing the risk of soil degradation and erosion, including consideration of the slope gradient	On sloping land, ploughing should always be practised in parallel with the contours of the field. On parcels having a slope greater than 10%, ploughing, cultivation and planting should be carried out across the direction of the slope. There should be no evidence of sheet, rill or erosion gullies on site. Machinery should not be used for normal agronomic purposes on flooded or water saturated soil. Unnecessary trampling on soil with heavy machinery should be avoided at all times. It is forbidden to enter into the field unnecessarily with a vehicle, and to use any part of the field as a parking space for vehicles and machinery. This measure applies to the entire territory of Malta and to all active farmers having arable land.
GAEC 6 Minimum soil cover to avoid bare soils in period(s) that are most sensitive	<p>In the period between the 1st of November and the end of January: Farmers who do not have a crop being cultivated must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leave the plant residue and/or stubble on 80% of arable land of each holding to serve as a cover, or leave spontaneous vegetation on at least 80% of the arable land of each holding to serve as cover (weeds during these months can only be controlled with a mower/grass cutter, and removed weeds shall be retained as mulch).</li> <li>- Do not till or disturb the land during these months.</li> </ul> <p>In the case of permanent crops, farmers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leave the plant residue of temporary crops on 50% of permanent crops of each holding to serve as a cover, or leave spontaneous vegetation during these months on at least 50% of the permanent crops of each holding to serve as cover (weeds during these months can only be controlled with a mower/grass cutter and the removed weeds removed shall be retained as mulch).</li> <li>- Do not till or disturb the land during these months.</li> </ul>
GAEC 7 Crop rotation in arable land except for crops grown under water	Farmers in the entire territory of Malta managing holdings of 10ha of arable land or more must carry out crop rotation. Each year, they must declare in their geo-spatial application their primary crop and secondary crop for that claim year (where applicable), which crops each year must belong to a different botanical family than the primary and/or secondary crop of the previous year (as applicable but the primary crop must be different compared to the previous year). Crop rotation shall be based on parcel level and shall be carried out on all parcels. This is applicable for each parcel with arable land unless that parcel is being cultivated with multiannual crops, grasses, and other herbaceous forage, or is left fallow, or more than 75% of arable land is used for the production of grasses or other herbaceous forage, for land laying fallow, cultivation of leguminous crops, or is subject to a combination of those uses. In cases where the farmer opts for a secondary crop, he/she must maintain this crop for at least 12 weeks.

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## Biodiversity and landscape

GAEC 8 Minimum share of arable land devoted to non-productive areas and features, and on all agricultural area, retention of landscape	<p>In agricultural holdings with 10ha of arable land or more in the entire territory of Malta, at least 4% of arable land at farm level shall be devoted to non-productive areas and features, including land lying fallow (exception: where more than 75% of arable land is used for the production of herbaceous forage, land laying fallow, leguminous crops, or a combination of those uses). Indicative list of eligible features and non-productive areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buffer strips along water courses and field margins</li> <li>- Rubble walls and 'girna', stone walls, terraces</li> </ul>
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features and ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird breeding and rearing season

- Field margins, patches or parcels buffer strips (naturally occurring vegetative strips such as reeds, and other habitat areas such as patches of garrigue land)
- Hedgerows individual or group of trees/trees rows
- Land lying fallow (for at least one claim year)
- Small ponds, small wetlands, streams, ditches

All farmers must protect and maintain landscape features on their holdings. There should be no destruction or deposition of soil or dumping of sub layer material on garrigue, ditches, ponds or any other habitat lying within the perimeter of the holdings.

## 2.3. Direct payments and sectoral interventions (I Pillar)

### Direct payments

The CAP SP for Malta confirms a “package” of direct payments, structured as follows:

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#### BISS (21):

- DP BISS Basic Income Support for Sustainability
- DP BISS SF Basic Income Support for Sustainability for Small Farmers

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#### CIS-YF (30):

- DP CIS-YF - Complementary income support for young farmers

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#### Eco-scheme (31) Schemes for the climate, the environment and animal welfare:

- DP ECO-Biodeg Mulch (Eco-scheme: Biodegradable mulch)
- DP ECO-Biodiversity (Eco-scheme: Land parcels dedicated for biodiversity purposes)
- DP ECO-IPM (Eco-scheme: Integrated Pest Management)

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#### CIS (32) Coupled income support:

- DP CIS-Beef: Coupled Income Support for the Beef Sector
  - DP CIS-Dairy: Coupled Income Support for the Dairy Sector
  - DP CIS-Sheep: Coupled Income Support for the Sheep Sector
  - DP CIS-Tomatoes: Coupled Income Support for the Tomatoes Sector
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Details on each scheme are provided below.

### Basic Income Support for Sustainability

The objective of this intervention is to support viable farm income in view of the difficulties faced by Maltese farmers, mainly due to the small size and fragmentation of agricultural holdings and by the challenging geophysical characteristics, resulting in high production costs and limiting economies of scale. The intervention is expected to provide active farmers with a minimum level of income, ensure a fair standard of living and long-term food security.

Basic income support is provided in the form of an annual decoupled payment per eligible hectare declared by an active farmer. Though the CAP gave Member States the possibility to grant the basic income support on the basis of payment entitlements, Malta chose to cease using payment entitlements and to pay a uniform rate per hectare to all farmers for all eligible areas in Malta instead.

The intervention was designed to target farmers with a minimum of 0.3 hectares of eligible hectares of eligible agricultural area, thus excluding those whose involvement in agricultural is marginal.

A farmer will be able to supplement this payment by opting to participate in one or more eco-schemes.

### Basic Income Support for Sustainability for Small Farmers

Given the small size of the agriculture holdings across the Country, Malta has dedicated a voluntary scheme to small farmers, replacing all Direct Payment interventions.

This intervention is designed to offer a simplified form of income support to active farmers with a minimum of 0.3 ha and not more than 1 ha of eligible land, excluding those whose involvement in agricultural is marginal.

Every farmer is entitled to receive the same amount of EUR 250.

### Complimentary Income Support for Young Farmers

This intervention aims to tackle the most significant push factors for young farmers to leave farming (irregularity of income, lack of capital to invest in modern machinery and equipment) as well as the problem of Malta's ageing farm population.

It was designed as an additional payment per eligible hectare on top of the Basic Income Support for Sustainability. It will take the form of an annual decoupled payment per eligible hectare, as declared by the farmer, addressed to target farmers with a minimum of 0.3 hectares of eligible agricultural area.

Eligible beneficiaries must comply with the definition of young farmers who have newly set up for the first time as defined in this Plan; ("Newly setup for the first time" refers only to farmers who registered their holding in the Nitrates Register within the last 5 years as at the closing date of the application campaign). They must also comply with the definition of "head of holding" for the first time as defined in the Plan.

Support will be provided either:

- for five years from the first year of submission of the application for this intervention;
- or in the case of those already receiving support under Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 for the remainder of the five year period from the first year of submission of the application;
- or five years from the first year of registration of the holding in the Nitrates Register; whichever comes first.

### Eco-schemes

The most important novelty of the CAP is the support for eco-schemes that Member States are obliged to offer to farmers so that they can voluntarily make more ambitious commitments in terms of environment, climate and animal welfare.

Malta chose to support three eco-schemes:

- **Land parcels dedicated for biodiversity purposes.** The scheme compensates farmers who commit to dedicating a whole area of at least one land parcel to biodiversity for 3 years by refraining from cultivating the land for crop production and avoiding the use of Plant Protection Products.
- **Integrated Pest Management.** The scheme compensates farmers who commit to following an integrated pest management approach in their agricultural activity, aimed to limit the use of pesticides in favour of alternative pest control measures.
- **Biodegradable mulch.** The scheme compensates farmers who commit to using biodegradable mulch for at least one crop cycle, instead of agricultural plastic mulch films.

The related payment is granted to the farmer for all eligible hectares.

## Coupled income support

The Member State may grant coupled support to address difficulties in sectors and productions that are of particular social, economic or environmental importance, by improving their competitiveness, sustainability or quality. The support is granted in the form of a payment per eligible hectare.

Within the range of eligible sectors, Malta chose the following ones:

**Tomatoes for processing** - A key sector of added-value significance to the domestic economy, particularly to that of Gozo, which is currently declining due to the high costs of production and narrow profit margins. Direct payments within the CAP SP shall help slow down and reverse this decline, by making the sector more competitive and financially sustainable, whilst supporting a quality Maltese traditional product (*Kunserva*).

**Beef and veal** - The beef sector in Malta is an offshoot of the dairy industry, offering a diversified income to such farmers, increasing their financial sustainability. The sector faces high production costs, in view of imported inputs used for production (i.e. fodder and supplements) and due to limited economies of scale coupled with Malta's insularity. Opportunity for growth is generally limited due to the scarce availability and high cost of land, proximity to residential areas, and limited natural resources such as water. Coupled income support ensures that this important sector remains financially sustainable and competitive and can continue offering quality produce to consumers, maintaining a level of food security.

**Dairy** - The sector has been experiencing a significant decline over the years, due to difficulties similar to those experienced by the beef sector, combined with prolonged droughts and heat waves. Furthermore, Maltese herders do not have access to grazing land, which translates in additional costs. Supporting this sector is important to prevent further decline and provide economic certainty to milk producers. One of the eligibility criteria is that farmers must have a contractual agreement with the processor, which ensures a certain level of quality while facilitating economic transactions between the different actors in the supply chain, making financial planning more feasible and increasing sustainability of the sector.

**Sheep** - Similar to other livestock sectors, the sheep sector also faces high production costs. Additionally, it faces numerous challenges due to limited supply chain organization, small farms and specific characteristics of the sector that inhibit competitiveness. Provided that the majority of farms are landless and have no access to other forms of direct payments, supporting this sector is very important to ensure its sustainability and competitiveness, enabling it to keep offering quality produce to consumers.

## Sectoral interventions

The CAP SP for Malta includes within the sectoral interventions only the support to the **apiculture sector**.

The Maltese Islands have long been renowned for the production of high-quality honey (in particular the wild thyme honey). Honeybees are also important for pollination of many horticultural crops and of the wild flora of local garrigue and maquis habitats. Beekeeping is mainly practised by recreational farmers having a small number of colonies, who, due to the small and fragmented nature of land parcels in Malta, suffer from lack of space for beekeeping and from pesticide application by farmers. The objective of the apiculture

interventions is to promote quality in honey production, to enable beekeepers to increase their incomes and improve their living standard. Four interventions are foreseen:

- ADVIBEES: advisory services, technical assistance, training, information and exchange of best practices, including through networking, for beekeepers and beekeepers' organisations;
- INVAPI: control of beehive invaders and diseases, restocking of beehives including bee breeding, rationalising transhumance;
- ACTLAB: actions to support laboratories for the analysis of apiculture products, bee losses or productivity drops, and substances potentially toxic to bees;
- COOPAPI: cooperation with specialised bodies for the implementation of research programs in the field of beekeeping and apiculture products.

## 2.4. Rural development interventions (II Pillar)

Rural development interventions for Malta include the following:

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### RD A: Environmental, climate-related and other management commitments (ENVCLIM)

- AECC 1: Integration and maintenance of autochthonous Maltese species
  - AECC 1A- Maltese Black Chicken
  - AECC 1B- Maltese Ox
  - AECC 1C- Carob and Mulberry (both white and black) trees
- Land Based management commitments
  - AECC 2: Maintenance of trees
  - AECC 3: Control of weeds in orchards and vineyards
  - AECC 4: Introduction of bee boxes on holdings
  - AECC 5: Implementation of soil management and conservation plan on a parcel
- Animal Welfare Schemes
  - AECC 6: Animal Welfare Scheme
- Organic Farming Scheme
  - AECC 7: Conversion of Organic Farming and Maintenance of Organic Farming

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### RD B: Natural or other area-specific constraints (ANC)

- RD AN CONSTRAINTS - Areas under natural or other area-specific constraints (\*)

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### RD D: Investments, including investments in irrigation (INVEST)

- RD OnFarm NP Invest - On-Farm Non-Productive Investments
- RD Off Farm NP INVST - Off-farm Non-Productive Investments and Afforestation
- RD Off-Farm INFRA - Off Farm Investments – Infrastructure
- RD Off-Farm INFRARd - Off-Farm Infrastructure Rural Roads for Competitiveness
- RD Off-Farm P.INVEST - Off-farm Productive Investment
- RD On-farm Invest P. - On-farm Productive Investments

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### RD E: Setting up of young farmers and new farmers and rural business start-up (INSTAL)

- RD INSTAL YF - Setting up of young farmers

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### RD G: Cooperation (COOP)

- RD COOP - Cooperation- Quality Schemes
- RD COOP - EIP - EIP Operational Groups
- RD COOP LEADER - COOPERATION: LEADER

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### RD H: Knowledge exchange and dissemination of information (KNOW)

- RD KNOW - Knowledge exchange, advice, training and dissemination of information
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(\*) This intervention provides an annual premium aimed at supplementing farming income to prevent land abandonment across the Maltese Islands, since the entire Maltese territory is considered as an area facing specific constraints within the CAP SP.

## 2.5. CAP SP contents more relevant to LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives

The interventions of the CAP SP for Malta that appear more relevant to the objectives of the LIFE GREENCHANGE project of improving the ecological connectivity of the rural territory and of enhancing green infrastructure are as follows:

### Eco-schemes (Direct Payments):

- Eco-scheme 1 – Dedicating parcels to enhance biodiversity and pollination;
- Eco-scheme 2 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM);

### Non-Productive Investments (Investments, including investments in irrigation):

- On-Farm Non-Productive Investments;
- Off-Farm Non-Productive Investments and Afforestation;

### Environmental, Climate-related and other Management Commitments (AECCs):

- AECC 1: Integration and maintenance of autochthonous Maltese species:
  - AECC 1C- Carob and Mulberry (both white and black) trees;
- AECC 2: Maintenance of trees;
- AECC 3: Control of weeds in orchards and vineyards;
- AECC 4: Introduction of bee boxes on holdings;
- AECC 5: Implementation of soil management and conservation plan on a parcel;
- AECC 7: Conversion of Organic Farming and Maintenance of Organic Farming

Among the Statutory management requirements, it is worth mentioning, in particular: SMR 4 Conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna, which is of special importance for Maltese rural areas included in (or adjoining to) protected areas within the Natura 2000 network, and SMR 8 Sustainable use of pesticides, which is essential to preserve pollinators.

The following table provides some details on the interventions listed above, summarizing their potential contribution to ecological connectivity and green infrastructure in the Maltese rural territory, as well as their potential to support the land stewardship role of farmers, consistently with the LIFE GREENCHANGE approach. For further details on single interventions, please refer to annexed factsheets.

Cod. Int.	Title of the intervention	Budget (EUR)	Why the intervention represents an opportunity
DP ECO-Biodiversity	Eco-scheme 1 – Dedicating parcels to enhance biodiversity and pollination	4.255.126,00	The scheme will compensate farmers who decide to forego their income on at least one whole land parcel, cultivating it instead with plant species that enhance biodiversity and attract pollinators. It contributes to enhance and restore biodiversity and pollination (by providing habitats that increase species diversity), control soil erosion, improve soil health, and facilitate water conservation. <b>This intervention is especially relevant to LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives, since it can support the creation of green infrastructure through the planting of wildflower strips in agricultural land and their management and custody by farmers.</b>
DP ECO-IPM	Eco-scheme 2 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM)	4.301.745,53	The scheme aims to encourage farmers to voluntarily adopt and follow an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP), install sustainable land management practices, and reduce pesticides use by encouraging alternative, less toxic pest control measures, with positive impacts on biodiversity, soil maintenance and structure. <b>Regarding the LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives, this scheme is especially relevant to the enhancement of Pollination Ecosystem Services in Malta, since pesticides represent a main threat to pollinating insects.</b>
RD OnFarm NP Invest	On-Farm Non-Productive Investments	1.250.000,00	This intervention provides support for: (1) establishing, restoring, or re-instating rural infrastructure needed for management of habitats, including, inter alia, the restoration and/or establishment of rubble walls and other rural landscape features, and the creation and/or restoration of terrestrial habitats such as garigue, steppe, maquis, woodland, rock pools, valleys and watercourses, saline marshlands and sand dunes; (2) planting of trees for agri-environmental and climate purposes, including soil management and erosion control. <b>This intervention is especially suitable to achieve LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives in Malta, in particular as regards the restoration of rubble walls as linear green infrastructure.</b>
RD Off Farm NP INVST	Off-Farm Non-Productive Investments and Afforestation	8.750.000,00	This intervention aims to the conservation and increase of woodland, in order to improve habitat and biodiversity across the Maltese islands. Therefore, it aims to enhance the multifunctional role played by woods and forests in the provision of ecosystem services regarding environmental protection, conservation of biodiversity, habitats and forest landscapes, cultural and socio-recreational services. Operations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of new woodland and amelioration of existing woodland.</li> <li>• Reconstruction and upgrading of rubble walls and other rural landscape features by Public entities, including also the creation/restoration of terrestrial habitats such as garigue, maquis, woodland, etc.</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of valleys to maximise their water retention capacity, including the cleaning of debris and the restoration of existing valley infrastructure with highest potential for aquifer recharge.</li> <li>• Planting of trees (outside agricultural parcels) for agri-environmental and climate purposes, including tree planting for soil management and erosion control and removal of invasive alien tree species.</li> </ul> <b>This intervention is consistent with LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives and can help integrate the green infrastructure network formed by rubble walls, wildflower strips and tree rows implemented on agricultural parcels under DP ECO-Biodiversity, RD OnFarm NP Invest, AECC 1C and AECC 2.</b>



Cod. Int.	Title of the intervention	Budget (EUR)	Why the intervention represents an opportunity
AECC 1C	Integration and maintenance of autochthonous Maltese species - Carob and Mulberry (both white and black) trees	8.008,20	This intervention supports farmers to maintain indigenous trees that are specifically vulnerable to genetic erosion, such as Carob and White/Black Mulberry, in a good condition, with the aim of conserving Malta's biodiversity and promoting practices which work in harmony with Maltese ecosystems. <b>This intervention is not directly contributing to LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives; however, it can support farmers willing not to eliminate greening elements that are consistent with the Maltese traditional landscape and local biodiversity. The species supported can also become in time a part of wider green infrastructure.</b>
AECC 2	Maintenance of trees	8.008,20	This intervention supports the planting and maintenance of indigenous trees, with the aim to reduce pressures on semi-natural features caused by agriculture, and to enhance the landscape and contribute to climate mitigation via enhanced carbon storage and sequestration. <b>This intervention is relevant to LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives, since it helps farmers in the structuring of green infrastructure that incorporates tree species which are consistent with the Maltese traditional landscape and local biodiversity.</b>
AECC 3	Control of weeds in orchards and vineyards	652.702,93	AECC 3 provides support to farmers who voluntarily commit to control weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical instead of chemical methods, within a general policy of chemicals reduction in agriculture (see also DP ECO-IPM) and <b>is thus relevant to the enhancement of Pollination Ecosystem Services in Malta.</b>
AECC 4	Introduction of bee boxes on holdings	47.480,75	Aimed to incentivise farmers to set up bee boxes on their holding and to support established beekeepers, this intervention is part of a policy of enhancement of the Maltese apiculture sector (see also the sectoral interventions). An interesting possibility is that the beekeeper may enter in an agreement with other farmers to increase the amount of supported bee-boxes and/or to use these additional parcels for the movement of bee-boxes. <b>Though not directly aimed at increasing ecological connectivity and green infrastructure, this intervention is relevant to the enhancement of Pollination Ecosystem Services in Malta, which is one of the LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives. Moreover, this measure would be particularly beneficial in areas with high percentage of garrigue/maquis, two relevant local habitats targeted by the project.</b>
AECC 5	Implementation of soil management and conservation plan on a parcel	3.230.274,97	This intervention focuses on encouraging farmers to implement a soil management and conservation plan (SMP), including actions to mitigate soil threats. <b>Though not directly relevant to LIFE GREENCHANGE objectives, implementing a SMP can provide a wider reference framework for the design and implementation of future operations under other measures to target soil erosion, i.e. the planting of trees, which can be integrated into green infrastructure.</b>
AECC 7	Conversion of Organic Farming and Maintenance of Organic Farming	2.320.042,00	Organic farming helps to reduce the risk of pollution and degradation of environmental matrices due to the use of plant protection products and fertilizers, and to promote the protection of water and soil, the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and rural landscape and the improvement of air quality. <b>Organic agriculture is not widespread in Malta, due to climate conditions (high temperatures and humidity make it difficult to control certain pests/diseases) and to high contamination potential caused by extreme land fragmentation. The relatively low amount allocated shows that organic farming is not a national priority.</b>

### 3. APPENDIX: Selected interventions' factsheets from the CAP SP for Malta

#### List of factsheets

DP ECO-Biodiversity	Eco-scheme 1 – Dedicating parcels to enhance biodiversity and pollination
DP ECO-IPM	Eco-scheme 2 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
RD OnFarm NP Invest	On-Farm Non-Productive Investments
RD Off Farm NP INVST	Off-Farm Non-Productive Investments and Afforestation
AECC 1C	Conservation of indigenous species including Carob and Mulberry trees
AECC 2	Measure for the maintenance of trees (Support for the maintenance of newly planted recommended tree species)
AECC 3	Environmental commitments to control weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical, instead of chemical methods
AECC 4	Introduction of bee boxes on holdings
AECC 5	Implementation of soil management and conservation plan on a parcel
AECC 7	Organic Farming

## DP ECO-Biodiversity - ECO-SCHEME 1 (ES 1) - Dedicating parcels to enhance biodiversity and pollination

**Description** The scheme will compensate farmers who decide to forego their income on at least one whole land parcel, cultivating it instead with plant species that enhance biodiversity and attract pollinators. The scheme will not incentivise holdings that are currently planting fodder. It aims to:

- Enhance and restore biodiversity and pollination by providing habitats that increase species diversity;
- Control soil erosion, improve soil health, and facilitate water conservation;
- Improve the quality of nearby agricultural land;
- Benefit the local apiculture sector;
- Raise farmers' awareness about the importance of biodiversity management and lead them to experience first-hand the potential benefits of biodiversity.

**Commitments/ activities**

- Farmers must commit to dedicating a whole area of at least one land parcel to biodiversity for at least 3 years by refraining from cultivating the land for crop production and without the use of Plant Protection Products, including fertilisers.
- Parcel must be maintained under annual minimum Agricultural activity;
- Farmers must make use of ARPA's mobile app BiedjaCam, uploading photos each year as evidence of the adherence with the commitments.
- The whole eligible area of the parcel must be planted with at least 3 of the following plant species (each species must cover at least 10% of the eligible area):

English name	Scientific name
Sulla	Hedysarum coronarium
Coriander	Coriandrum sativum
Borage	Borago officinalis
White clover	Trifolium repens
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis
Chaste tree	Vitex agnus-castus
Sage	Salvia officinalis
Common Lavender/True Lavender	Lavandula angustifolia
Peppermint	Mentha x piperita
Peppermint/Pennyroyal Mint/European Pennyroyal	Mentha pulegium
Fern-leaved Lavender	Lavandula multifida
Thyme	Thymus vulgaris
Marjoram	Origanum majorana
Oregano	Origanum vulgare
Great Sage	Phlomis fruticosa
Maltese Rock-Centaury	Cheirolophus crassifolius
Maltese Helichrysum	Helichrysum melitense
Mediterranean Heath/Mediterranean Heather	Erica multiflora
Olive-leaved Germander/Evergreen Germander/Shrubby Germander	Teucrium fruticans
Tree Spurge	Euphorbia dendroides
Hoary Rockrose/Cretan Rockrose	Cistus creticus
Grand Stature	Limoniastrum monopetalum
Spanish broom	Spartium junceum
Sicilian silver ragwort	Jacobaea maritima sicula
Common myrtle	Myrthus comunis
Caper	Capparis spinosa

<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers must comply with the definition of active farmer, as well as with the eligibility criteria set out under the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS);</li> <li>• At application stage, farmers must: identify one or more parcels within their holding to implement this measure as long as it covers the whole area of the parcel; declare the plant species (at least 3 of the ones listed above) in the IACS digital crop plan;</li> <li>• Committed parcels must: have a total eligible area of at least 0.04 Ha throughout the commitment period; consist of arable land; be maintained under annual minimum activity; be kept in good agricultural condition all year round;</li> <li>• Only one eco-scheme shall be allowed per parcel.</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<p>Support will take the form of an annual payment (Direct Payment- DP) per eligible hectare covered by the commitment, applying a uniform flat rate per hectare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• min. €1,700.00, max. €2,500.00 for the period 2023 – 2026;</li> <li>• min. €1,100.00, max. €1,197.70 for 2027.</li> </ul>
<b>Budget (total public contribution)</b>	<p>The total funding allocated towards this intervention shall be of approximately EUR 950,000 per annum (2023-2026) and approximately EUR 455,126 for 2027, for a total amount of EUR 4.255.126,00</p>

## DP ECO-IPM - Eco-scheme 2 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

<b>Description</b>	<p>Farmers under this scheme are required to follow an integrated approach in their agricultural activity, incorporating various agronomic practices, monitoring through enhanced knowledge and applying targeted solutions to specific problems.</p> <p>The scheme aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage farmers to adopt and follow on a voluntary basis an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP), developed in line with the Guidelines for IPM for Malta;</li> <li>• Install sustainable land management practices that allow farmers to move away from conventional use of Plant Protection Products (PPP);</li> <li>• Reduce pesticides use by encouraging alternative, less toxic pest control measures, with positive impacts on biodiversity, soil maintenance and structure.</li> </ul>
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IPMP must be drafted by competent individuals, and must be in line with the Agriculture Directorate’s guidelines (where applicable) with enhanced emphasis on monitoring, prevention and control mechanisms that favour the protection of biodiversity and de-risking of contamination from PPPs;</li> <li>• Beneficiaries must follow the IPMP on the whole area of the land parcel/s identified at application stage, for at least 3 consecutive years;</li> <li>• Based on the IPMP, farmers must install traps on parcels to allow for the identification of the kind of pest and of the severity of infestation; they must also retain a record, covering the date when monitoring was performed, the pest monitored, and the number of pest(s) recorded (if any);</li> <li>• Before submitting the application, farmers must declare the crop type in BiedjaCam app and record the use of PPPs on such crops;</li> <li>• The parcel must be maintained under annual minimum Agricultural activity;</li> <li>• Farmers must attend training organized by Agri connect related to the crops under cultivations by the end of the commitment period.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers must comply with the definition of active farmer, as well as with the eligibility criteria set out under the BISS;</li> <li>• At application stage, beneficiaries must identify one or more parcels within their holding to implement this measure. Committed parcels must: have a total eligible area of at least 0.04 Ha throughout the commitment period; consist of arable land and/or permanent crop land; be maintained under annual minimum activity; be kept in good agricultural condition all year round;</li> <li>• Only one eco-scheme shall be allowed per parcel;</li> <li>• The IPMP must be issued by a recognised Farm advisory service in line with LN 99/2019, or by a competent consultant approved by the Plant Health Directorate. It must be in line with Agriculture Directorate’s guidelines and should include at least 3 of the following techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural practices that can help prevent build-up of pests (e.g. pruning and tillage methods);</li> <li>- Field sanitation and seed bed sanitation;</li> <li>- Use of pest-resistant varieties;</li> <li>- Managing sowing, planting, or harvesting dates;</li> <li>- Water/irrigation management;</li> <li>- Soil and nutrient management (including mulching, zero/low tillage, fertilizer management);</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Practices to enhance the build-up of naturally existing predator populations;
- Use of traps or trap crops;
- Biological inputs;
- Biological control through release of predators, parasites, or pathogens;
- Bio-pesticides;
- Biological preparations;
- Chemical inputs;
- Chemicals that disrupt insect behaviour (e.g. pheromones);
- Growth-regulators.

<b>Support</b>	Support will take the form of an annual payment (Direct Payment – DP) per eligible hectare covered by the commitment, applying a uniform flat rate amount per hectare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• min. €1,500.00, max. €2,000.00 for the period 2023–2026;</li> <li>• min. €900.00, max. €958.00 for 2027.</li> </ul>
<b>Budget (total public contribution)</b>	The total funding allocated towards this intervention shall be of circa EUR 960,420.00 per annum (2023-2026) and circa EUR 460,041.18 for 2027, for a total amount of EUR 4,301,745.53.

## RD OnFarm NP Invest - On-Farm Non-Productive Investments

<b>Description</b>	This intervention aims to fund investments such as rubble walls, planting of indigenous trees/species, and other non-productive interventions with an environmental scope and/or management of habitats.
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<p>The intervention includes the following types of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support for establishing, restoring, or re-instating rural infrastructure needed for management of habitats.</b> Investments may include, inter alia: restoration and/or establishment of retaining and non-retaining rubble walls and other rural landscape features including: maintenance of existing terrace walls; creation and/or restoration of different types of terrestrial habitats, including garigue, steppe, maquis, woodland, rock pools, valleys and watercourses, saline marshlands and sand dunes. Targeted rubble walls need to be adjacent to an agricultural area on at least one side of the intervention (regardless of whether the area is currently in production).</li> <li>• <b>Support for planting of trees</b> and ancillary works for agri-environmental and climate purposes, including soil management and erosion control.</li> </ul> <p>An operation comprising investment in on-farm non-productive carries the below durability period obligations, regardless of the size of the beneficiary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years from the final payment to the beneficiary for interventions with a grant of up to €200,000;</li> <li>• 5 years from the final payment to the beneficiary for interventions with a grant of over €200,000.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible beneficiaries are farmers (whether natural/legal persons) and groups of farmers (including inter alia partnerships, cooperatives).</li> <li>• Projects should be compliant with the relevant appropriate level strategies, programmes and plans (if applicable) and should contribute to landscape, environment and ecological objectives for Malta.</li> <li>• Support will not be granted when this is already provided under EAGF.</li> <li>• Recipients of grants may be required to undertake training or seek advice.</li> <li>• General maintenance costs are not supported.</li> <li>• Investments aimed at facilitating rainwater collection are also envisaged.</li> <li>• Projects should be carefully examined in terms of appropriate selection of afforested areas and species. Only native and indigenous species are allowed to be planted (support will only be provided for planting of trees/shrubs listed in the guidance document provided by the Environment and Resources Authority).</li> <li>• Removal of invasive alien tree species not carried out by chemical means is eligible. Planting of new trees (not necessarily on the same areas/parcels where trees are removed) to replace invasive alien tree species must comply with ERA Guidelines.</li> <li>• Only expenditure incurred after the submission of the application shall be considered eligible. In the national guidelines, the MA may introduce an exception to the professional services incurred by successful applicants for the submission of an EAFRD application, including business plans where these are required.</li> <li>• Eligible investments for establishing, restoring, or re-instating rural infrastructure include, inter alia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restoration/establishment of retaining and non-retaining rubble walls and other rural landscape features including maintenance of existing terrace walls;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- creation and/or restoration of different types of terrestrial habitats, including inter alia garigue, steppe, maquis, woodland, rock pools, valleys and watercourses, saline marshlands and sand dunes. Targeted rubble walls need to be adjacent to an agricultural area on at least one side of the intervention (regardless of whether the area is currently in production).
- Eligible investments for planting of trees and ancillary works include, inter alia:
  - costs of materials and/or services, labour used for improving the environmental or public amenity value of forests;
  - costs of funding specialist contractors to undertake project management duties to realise the investment;
  - general costs such as architects, engineers and consultation fees, feasibility studies, acquisition of patent rights and licenses up to a maximum 15% of the total eligible project cost;
  - specific actions that have been recommended as part of the management, conservation or rehabilitation plans;
  - actual restoration, in situ reproductions, including but not limited to the restoration and installation of walkways and installation of security measures, the setting up of interpretation aids and visitors' centres;
  - restoration of small, man-made structures of rural heritage value located in rural areas, including traditionally built rubble walls and water channels;
  - removing (cutting) of trees, thinning and pruning, provided that the main purpose of the investment is to improve the ecological value of forests, such as improving the species composition for environmental interests (removing of non-indigenous or not habitat specific tree or shrub species) to allow existing woodland containing non-native tree species to become a close to indigenous nature mix;
  - planting of trees around the perimeter of the parcels;
  - planting of trees for afforestation in which the minimum size of the area to be supported for afforestation is a land area of 0.5ha or more and which has (or will have following afforestation actions) a minimum tree cover of 10%;
  - publicity/dissemination costs.

**Support**

Support will be provided in the form of grants. The support rates (aid intensity) shall be 80% of the eligible amount across the entire Maltese territory. Beneficiaries may request an advance payment of up to 50% of the public aid related to the investment, at the discretion of the MA and ARPA.

**Budget  
(total public  
contribution)**

The funding allocated towards this intervention shall be of EUR 50,000.00 for 2023, EUR 100,000.00 for 2024, EUR 200,000.00 for 2025, EUR 200,000.00 for 2026, EUR 250,000.00 for 2027, EUR 250,000.00 for 2028, EUR 200,000.00 for 2029, for a total amount of EUR 1,250,000.00.



## RD Off Farm NP INVST - Off-Farm Non-Productive Investments and Afforestation

**Description** This intervention will contribute directly to the conservation of existing woodland and support new planting that will contribute to improved habitat and biodiversity across the Maltese islands. Therefore, it may provide support for the creation and sustainable management of woodlands to improve biodiversity and climate change mitigation. Other support may include social benefits such as public access and recreation, basic management to ensure woodland sustainability, and operations that maintain or enhance environmental and social value such as pest management, coppicing, and uneconomic thinning as well as carbon sequestration.

**Commitments/ activities** Operations include:

- **Support for investments improving the resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems.** Interventions under this type of operation are envisaged by Public Authorities (who may designate NGO's to manage the site and/or the project in question) and will support both the creation of new woodland as well as the amelioration of existing woodland, through planting of indigenous tree species, replanting in existing woodland, and establishing bio-diverse woodland edge structure with appropriate trees and shrub species which can also serve for better microclimate creation purposes. Creation of woodland will seek to provide additional green open spaces for recreational purposes. In the case of the amelioration of existing woodland, investments must be complementary to existing or newly designated management plans or equivalent instruments, such as the biodiversity strategy, Natura 2000 management plans, landscape management plans, local plans, etc. Support can also be considered for water holes/reservoirs with the scope of both prevention of fire as well as ensuring basic water supply to targeted forested areas.
- **Reconstruction and upgrading of rubble walls by Public entities.** Investments may include the restoration and/or establishment of rubble walls and other rural landscape features including: the maintenance of existing terrace walls; the creation and/or restoration of different types of terrestrial habitats (including garigue, steppe, maquis, woodland, rock pools, valleys and watercourses, saline marshlands and sand dunes).
- **Rehabilitation of valleys around the Maltese Islands.** This intervention supports investments to maximise the water retention capacity of valleys, including the cleaning of debris and the restoration of existing valley infrastructure with highest potential for aquifer recharge. Infrastructural projects in valleys must be undertaken in a manner which does not negatively affect valley hydrology and biodiversity. Other complementary investments will include conservation, restoration and rehabilitation of biodiversity and ecosystems as well as areas of natural heritage. The protection of natural surface water environments with a particular focus on the protection of key water-dependent habitats and species will continue to be enhanced, including through frameworks for the regulation of water abstraction from water catchments that host sensitive habitats and species.
- **Support for planting of trees and ancillary works (not on agricultural parcels).** Support will be provided for tree planting and ancillary works for purposes of agri-environmental and climate objectives, including tree planting for soil management and erosion control action. Removal of invasive alien tree species is also eligible;

the planting of new trees (not necessarily on the same areas/parcels where trees are removed) to replace the invasive alien tree species need to be in accordance with ERA Guidelines. Such trees can also be productive trees, though the main scope would not be for productive purposes. Removal of alien species should not be carried out by chemical means. Investments include:

- Costs of forest propagation material (seeds, seedlings, saplings, etc.) and the related plant prevention (e.g. poles, irrigation equipment, etc.).
- Costs of materials/services, labour used for improving the environmental or public amenity value of forests. Removal (cutting) of trees, thinning and pruning, are eligible provided that the main purpose is to improve the ecological value of forests, such as improving the species composition (removing of non-indigenous or not habitat specific species), to allow existing woodland to become a close to indigenous nature mix. General maintenance costs are not supported.
- Costs of specialist contractors to undertake project management duties;
- General costs such as architects, engineers and consultation fees, feasibility studies, acquisition of patent rights and licenses up to 15% of the total eligible project cost;
- Specific actions that have been recommended as part of the management, conservation or rehabilitation plans;
- Visitors' management and provision of public access to sites;
- Actual restoration, in situ reproductions, including but not limited to the restoration and installation of walkways and security measures, the setting up of interpretation aids and visitors' centres;
- Restoration of small, man-made structures of rural heritage value located in rural areas, including traditionally built rubble walls and water channels;
- Construction and/or restoration of recreational infrastructure, information and interpretation facilities, public amenities, afforestation activities and regeneration of degraded areas to be converted for recreational purposes;
- Publicity/dissemination costs.

Durability period obligations, regardless of the size of the beneficiary:

- 3 years from the final payment to the beneficiary for interventions with a grant of up to €200,000;
- 5 years from the final payment to the beneficiary for interventions with a grant of over €200,000.

#### **Eligibility/ selection criteria**

- The main eligible beneficiaries are public entities/authorities, which may designate, or may have designated prior to the project application, NGOs, Private Bodies or Local Councils for the management and maintenance of such sites.
- Projects should be compliant with the relevant appropriate level strategies, programmes and plans (if applicable) and should contribute to landscape, environment and ecological objectives for Malta.
- Projects should be carefully examined in terms of appropriate selection of both afforested areas and species.
- The minimum size of the area to be supported for the purpose of afforestation is a land area of 0.5 ha or more and which has (or will have following afforestation actions) a minimum tree cover of 10%. The list of eligible tree/shrub species which may be planted as advised by ERA's Indicative List of Trees and Shrub Species that can be Planted in Rural Areas and included in the MA Guidance Document. Support will not be granted to holdings or enterprises in difficulty.

- Support will not be granted when this is already provided under EAGF.
- Recipients of grants may be required to undertake training or seek advice.
- Operations shall not be eligible for support where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application is submitted to the Managing Authority, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made.
- In cases of emergency due to catastrophic events or a significant and sudden change in the socio-economic conditions, permission may be granted for expenditure to be eligible from the date when the event occurred and thus before an application has been submitted.

**Support**

Support will take the form of grants.  
 Support rate (aid intensity) will be 100% of the eligible costs (no private co-financing will be applicable) for the entire Maltese territory.  
 Beneficiaries may request an advance payment of up to 50% of the public aid related to the investment.

**Budget  
 (total public  
 contribution)**

The funding allocated towards this intervention shall be of EUR 625,000.00 for 2024, EUR 625,000.00 for 2025, EUR 2,500,000.00 for 2026, EUR 1,250,000.00 for 2027, EUR 1,250,000.00 for 2028 and EUR 2,500,000.00 for 2029, for a total amount of EUR 8,750,000.00.

## AECC 1C - Conservation of indigenous species including Carob and Mulberry trees

**Description** This AECM regards the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources, and supports activities that enable the valorisation of varieties of plant that are specifically vulnerable to genetic erosion. It focuses on conserving Malta's biodiversity and is expected to enhance the countryside and promote practices which work in harmony with Maltese ecosystems. Support may be targeted towards assisting farmers to maintain indigenous trees such as Carob (*harrub*) and (White/ Black) Mulberry (*cawsla and tuta*) in a good condition. This AECM may also support other interventions promoting the conservation for rare, indigenous breeds of plants and trees.

- Commitments/ activities**
- Conservation projects for plant genetic resources shall focus on any of the following operations:
    - Identification: selection & sampling of fruit varieties, including DNA analysis of selections to establish the identity of the variety;
    - Characterisation;
    - Conservation: accessions from the selected plants would be identified and introduced into conservation fields then monitored to collect further data on physiological and morphological characteristics for the necessary registration to the National Register of Varieties;
    - Sanitation: testing of accessions and sanitation to produce virus free material;
    - Valorisation: to test aptitude to certain criteria, establishment of mother blocks of selected varieties for the production of healthy local varieties; promotion within the local farming community.
  - Conservation actions for plant genetic resources may include:
    - establishment & maintenance of seed collections from wild or cultivated sites;
    - germination testing for seed batches;
    - establishment of plots for the conservation of candidate stocks;
    - variety assessment and preparation of variety data sheets based on the morpho-pomological description of candidate stocks;
    - assessment of the sanitary status of candidate stocks;
    - sanitation of candidate stocks;
    - activation of certification programme;
    - activation of pro tempore nursery activity;
    - mandatory control of certain pests.
  - Beneficiaries will have to attend a free of charge training module, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme; they also are obliged to take advice for adequate fulfilment of all commitments and obligations. Advice should be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme. Whilst preferable, such advice shall not necessarily be received from a recognised Farm Advisory System. The Managing Authority shall notify as to the type of acceptable advice under this measure. Proof of service received will be requested;
  - Agricultural area committed needs to be maintained in line with annual minimum agricultural activity. The beneficiary must implement specific maintenance actions relevant to the tree species and ensure that the tree is maintained in good health;
  - Commitments shall be undertaken for a period of five years and may be annually extended after the termination of this period, at the discretion of the MA.

<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<p>Eligible beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers (whether natural/legal persons);</li> <li>• Land managers, including NGOs;</li> <li>• Site managers responsible for the management of protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites;</li> <li>• Group of Farmers (including inter alia partnerships, cooperatives);</li> <li>• A mixture of both who carry out, on a voluntary basis, operations consisting of one or more agri-environment-climate commitments on agricultural land.</li> </ul> <p>Specific eligibility conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to apply for aid a farmer must have a minimum of 0.1124 ha (1 tumolo) of agricultural land. Parcels less than 0.04 hectares of eligible land (e.g. any agricultural area taken up by arable land or permanent crops) are ineligible;</li> <li>• Carob/white and black mulberry trees need to be present on the parcel committed under the AECC, and must be located on eligible agricultural land. Parcels not containing any trees can still be included in order to reach the eligible area of 1 tumolo and/or to be able to increase the number of trees eligible<sup>1</sup>;</li> <li>• The scope of the conservation measure must be strictly targeted towards the conservation of genetic resources in plant species;</li> <li>• In cases of emergency due to catastrophic events or a significant and sudden change in socio-economic conditions, permission may be granted for expenditure to be eligible from the date when the event occurred, and thus before an application has been submitted.</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<p>Support will be based on actual costs incurred, following an appropriate procurement process, and the support rate shall be 100% of the eligible costs.</p> <p>Support is calculated based on the additional labour involved to maintain these species on farmland in view of their lower productivity and high maintenance required, especially in terms of pest control.</p> <p>Support rate for Carob/White and Black Mulberry: €44.49/tree/year up to a maximum of 18 trees/ha (which amounts to a maximum of €800.82/ha).</p>
<b>Budget (total public contribution)</b>	<p>The budgeted amount is EUR 800.82 per hectare per annum (2024-2028), and is expected to support a total of 10 hectares in the period 2024-2028, for a total amount of EUR 8,008.20.</p>

<sup>1</sup> For example, a farmer having a field of 1 tumolo which contains 18 eligible trees, may choose to add another parcel of 8 tumoli to obtain a total area of 1 ha and thus receive aid for all 18 trees, even though the second parcel would not contain any eligible trees.

## AECC 2 - Measure for the maintenance of trees (Support for the maintenance of newly planted recommended tree species)

<b>Description</b>	<p>Land-based management commitments provide payments to farmers in return for a service, in the form of a voluntary multi-annual commitment to observe a set of prescribed management practices over a period of 5 years.</p> <p>These commitments aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce pressures on semi-natural features caused by significant agricultural intensification and neglect;</li> <li>• Enhance the landscape and contribute to climate mitigation via enhanced carbon storage and sequestration.</li> </ul> <p>As for AECC 2, support shall focus on land-based management commitments aimed to the planting of indigenous trees.</p>
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of newly planted trees must be carried out in accordance with ERA Guidelines;</li> <li>• Depending on the tree being maintained, farmers must carry out appropriate canopy management, production pruning, and green pruning;</li> <li>• Farmers are obliged to keep a record pertaining to the trees present on the parcel;</li> <li>• Only in the event of a pest infestation or demonstrable lack of overall health of tree, the farmer is required to address any infestations/ deficiencies through responsible practices;</li> <li>• In the event that a tree planted dies, at any point during the 5 years commitment, the farmer is obliged to replace it at his own expense;</li> <li>• Beneficiaries will have to attend a free training module, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme (proof of attendance will be requested). They must also take advice for adequately fulfilling all commitments and obligations, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme. Whilst preferable, such advice shall not necessarily be received from a recognised Farm Advisory System. The Managing Authority shall notify as to the type of acceptable advice. Proof of service received will be requested.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<p>Eligible beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers (whether natural/legal persons);</li> <li>• Land managers, including NGOs;</li> <li>• Site managers of protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites;</li> <li>• Group of Farmers (including inter alia partnerships, cooperatives);</li> <li>• A mixture of both who carry out, on a voluntary basis, operations consisting of one or more agri-environment-climate commitments on agricultural land.</li> </ul> <p>Specific eligibility conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers must be registered in the IACS Farmer Registry and have a minimum of 1124 m<sup>2</sup> of agricultural land. Any parcels less than 0.04 hectares are ineligible;</li> <li>• Farmers must declare the type and location of the trees planted;</li> <li>• Trees must be planted on eligible agricultural land, eligible trees are listed in the table below.</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<p>Support rate: €44.49/tree/year up to a maximum of 18 trees per hectare (which amounts to a maximum of € 800.82 per hectare).</p>

**Budget (total public contribution)** The budgeted amount is EUR 800.82 per hectare per annum (2024-2028), and is expected to support a total of 10 hectares in the period 2024-2028, for a total amount of EUR 8,008.20.

List of non-productive trees

<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Maltese name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>Acer monspessulanum</i>	l-aġġru; l-aċer	Montpellier Maple
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	l-alnu	Black Alder; European Alder; Common Alder
<i>Anagyris foetida</i>	il-fula tal-klieb	Bean Trefoil Tree; Mediterranean
<i>Atriplex halimus</i>	il-bjanka	Salt Bush
<i>Betula pendula</i>	il-betula	Silver Birch; Warty Birch; European
<i>Calicotome villosa</i> s.l.	il-ġenista tax-xewk	Spiny Broom
<i>Carpinus orientalis</i>	il-karpin	Oriental Hornbeam
<i>Celtis australis</i>	il-buglar, iċ-celtis	Nettle Tree
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	is-siġra ta' Ġuda; il-harrub ta' Ġuda	Judas Tree; Mediterranean Redbud
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	il-ġummar	Dwarf Fan Palm
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>	iċ-ċipress	Italian Cypress
<i>Darniella melitensis</i> (= <i>Salsola melitensis</i> )	ix-xebb; is-siġra tal-irmied	Maltese Salt Tree
<i>Ephedra fragilis</i>	l-efedra	Shrubby Horsetail; Joint Pine
<i>Erica multiflora</i>	l-erika; is-saġitar l-aħmar; is-savina; leħjet ix-xiħ	Mediterranean Heath Garrigue and phrygana shrub
<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	il-fużanja; l-evonimu	European Spindle; Common Spindle
<i>Euphorbia dendroides</i>	it-tenġud tas-siġra	Tree Spurge
<i>Euphorbia melitensis</i>	it-tenġud tax-xaġri	Maltese Spurge
<i>Fagus sylvatic</i>	is-siġra tal-faġu	European Beech
<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i>	il-fraxxu; is-siġar tal-paċenzja	Narrow-Leaved Ash
<i>Juniperus macrocarpa</i>	Il-ġniepru x-xewwieki	Mediterranean Prickly Juniper
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>	Il-ġniepru x-xewwieki	Prickly Juniper; Prickly Cedar; Cade Juniper
<i>Juniperus turbinata</i>	il-ġnibr; il-ġniepru; l-ġħargħar	Southern Phoenician Juniper
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	ir-randa	Bay Laurel; Sweet Bay
<i>Lycium europaeum</i>	l-ġħawseg	European Tea-Tree; European Boxthorn
<i>Lycium intricatum</i>	l-ġħawseg selvaġġ	Mediterranean Tea-Tree; Mediterranean Boxthorn
<i>Lycium schweinfurthii</i>	l-ġħawseg selvaġġ	Southern Tea-Tree; Southern Boxthorn
<i>Myrtus communis</i> subsp. <i>communis</i>	ir-riħan	Myrtle
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	id-difla; siġret il-ġarab; siġret il-bass; issiġar tal-wirdien, l-oleandru	Oleander
<i>Olea oleaster</i>	iz-żebbuġ selvaġġ	Wild Olive
<i>Ostrya carpinifolia</i>	il-karpin falz; l-ostrija	Hop Hornbeam
<i>Paliurus spina-christi</i>	ix-xewk tal-kuruna; Ix-xewk ta' kristu	Christ's Thorn Tree; Jerusalem Thorn

<i>Periploca angustifolia</i> (= <i>Periploca laevigata</i> subsp. <i>angustifolia</i> )	siġret il-ħarir	African Wolfsbane
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	il-fillirja	Narrow-Leaved Mock Privet
<i>Phillyrea latifolia</i>	l-olivastru; il-fillirja l-kbira	Mock Privet; Jasmine Box
<i>Phillyrea media</i>	l-olivastru; il-fillirja ż-żgħira	Lesser Mock Privet
<i>Pinus halepensis</i>	iz-żnuber; is-siġra tal-prinjol; si-siġra tal-arżnu	Aleppo Pine; Jerusalem Pine
<i>Pinus pinaster</i>	iz-żnuber tal-baħar; iz-żnuber tax-xatt; il-prinjol tal-ġwienah	Maritime Pine; Cluster Pine
<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	id-deru; Id-delu	Lentisk; Mastic Tree
<i>Pistacia terebinthus</i>	il-botna; l-iskornabekk; is-siġar taturpentina; it-trementina; is-siġar talfosdoq; it-terebintu	Terebinth; Turpentine Tree
<i>Pistacia x saportae</i>	id-deru l-baġħal	Hybird Mastic Tree
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	id-dolf; id-dorf; id-dolb	Oriental Plane Tree
<i>Populus alba</i>	il-luqa; is-siġar taċ-ċopp	White Poplar
<i>Quercus calliprinos</i>	il-balluta x-xewwikija	Palestine Oak; Eastern Kermes Oak
<i>Quercus cerris</i>	ir-ruvlu; il-balluta l-ħorfiġa	Turkey Oak; Austrian Oak
<i>Quercus coccifera</i> s.l.	il-balluta x-xewwikija	Kermes Oak
<i>Quercus gussonei</i>	ir-ruvlu; il-balluta l-ħorfiġa	Gussone's Oak
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	il-balluta; is-siġar tal-ġandar	Holm Oak; Evergreen Oak
<i>Quercus petraea</i> s.l.	ir-ruvlu; il-balluta l-ħorfiġa	Sessile Oak; Cornish Oak; Durmast Oak
<i>Quercus pubescens</i> s.l.	il-balluta l-muswafa ; ir-ruvlu	Downy Oak; Pubescent Oak
<i>Quercus robur</i>	il-balluta ingliża; is-siġra tar-ruvlu	Pedunculate Oak; English Oak
<i>Quercus suber</i>	is-siġra tas-sufra; il-ballut tas-sufra	Cork Oak
<i>Retama raetam</i> s.l.	il-ġenista l-bajda; il-ġenista tar-ramel; ir-retama	Bridal Broom; White Weeping Broom
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	l-alaternu	Mediterranean Buckthorn
<i>Rhamnus oleoides</i> (= <i>Rhamnus lycioides</i> subsp. <i>oleoides</i> )	iz-żiju	Lesser Buckthorn; Olive-Leaved Buckthorn
<i>Rhus coriari</i>	ix-xumakk tal-konz	Common Sumach
<i>Salix alba</i> s.l.	iz-żafzafa; iz-żafzafa l-kbira; iz-żafzafa l-bajda	White Willow
<i>Salix pedicellata</i>	iz-żafzafa ż-żgħira	Mediterranean Willow
<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	in-nittiena; is-sebuqa s-selvaġġa; is-sambuka s-selvaġġa	Dwarf Elder
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	is-sambuka; is-sebuqa l-kbira	Common Elder
<i>Searsia pentaphylla</i> (= <i>Rhus pentaphylla</i> )	It-tizra; il-kunzatura; ix-xumakk talkonz	Tizra Tree
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	iz-żorba s-selvaġġa	Rowan; Mountain Ash
<i>Sorbus domestica</i>	iz-żorba	Service Tree
<i>Spartium junceum</i>	il-ġenista s-safra	Spanish Broom
<i>Tamarix africana</i>	il-bruka; it-tarfa	Tamarisks
<i>Tetraclinis articulata</i>	l-ġħargħar	Arar tree; Sandarac Gum Tree; Mediterranean Alerce; Barbary Arborvitae
<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>	It-tilja	Lime Tree
<i>Ulmus canescens</i> (= <i>Ulmus minor</i> subsp. <i>canescens</i> )	in-nemmiesia; is-siġar tan-nemus; l-ulmu; l-ulmu ta' Malta	Hoary Elm; Grey-Leaved Elm
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	il-meruna; il-viburnu	Laurustinus
<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	l-ġħadiba; il-virgi; il-bżar tal-patrijiet; l-ġħadbiera; is-siġar tal-virgi	Chaste Tree; Virgin Bush



## AECC 3 - Environmental commitments to control weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical, instead of chemical methods

<b>Description</b>	<p>Land-based management commitments provide payments to farmers in return for a service, in the form of a voluntary multi-annual commitment to observe a set of prescribed management practices over a period of 5 years.</p> <p>These commitments aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce pressures on semi-natural features caused by significant agricultural intensification and neglect.</li> <li>• Enhance the landscape and contribute to climate mitigation via enhanced carbon storage and sequestration.</li> </ul> <p>In the case of AECC 3, support shall focus on land-based management commitments aimed to control weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical instead of chemical methods.</p>
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 15 October and 15 March (28 February according to ARPA Guidelines), weeds can only be controlled with a mower/grass cutter. Farmers can retain the weeds removed during this period as mulch; if they do not so, they are required to cultivate intercrops between vines and orchards with nitrogen-fixing plants of the vicia.spp group (excluding vicia.faba) as well as hedysarum.spp;</li> <li>• The use of herbicides is prohibited throughout the year with the exception of specific herbicide targeting Bermuda grass between 15th June and 15th August;</li> <li>• Nitrogen based fertiliser must be split into a minimum of 2 separate applications;</li> <li>• Farmers are required to maintain records of use of herbicides and records in relation to Conditionality obligations, and to present them to the ARPA inspectors;</li> <li>• Beneficiaries must attend a free training module, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme (proof of attendance will be requested). They are also obliged to take advice for adequate fulfilment of all commitments and obligations. Advice should be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme. Whilst preferable, advice shall not necessarily be received from a recognised Farm Advisory System. The Managing Authority shall notify as to the type of acceptable advice. Proof of service received will be requested.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<p>Eligible beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers (whether natural/legal persons);</li> <li>• Land managers, including NGOs;</li> <li>• Site managers of protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites;</li> <li>• Group of Farmers (including inter alia partnerships, cooperatives);</li> <li>• A mixture of both who carry out, on a voluntary basis, operations consisting of one or more agri-environment-climate commitments on agricultural land.</li> </ul> <p>Specific eligibility conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers must have a minimum of 0.1124 hectares (1 tumolo) of permanent crops (fruit trees/olive trees/vines). Any polygons in parcels that are found to have less than 0.04 ha of orchards and vineyards are ineligible; adjacent polygons (touching each other) may be counted together;</li> <li>• Payment may only be granted on agricultural area that has been maintained in line with annual minimum agricultural activity;</li> </ul>

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- Farmers must observe the baseline Conditionality Requirements which include the statutory management requirements and the GAEC;
  - In case of transfer of holdings (or part of) following the first year of commitment obligations pertaining to the sub-measure must be maintained.
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**Support**

Support rate: €144.15/tumolo/year (equivalent to €1,282.45/hectare/year).

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**Budget  
(total public  
contribution)**

The budgeted amount is EUR 1,282.45 per hectare per annum (2024-2028), and is expected to support a total of 508.95 hectares in the period 2024-2028, for a total amount of EUR 652,702.93

## AECC 4 - Introduction of bee boxes on holdings

<b>Description</b>	<p>Land-based management commitments provide payments to farmers in return for a service, in the form of a voluntary multi-annual commitment to observe a set of prescribed management practices over a period of 5 years.</p> <p>These commitments aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce pressures on semi-natural features caused by significant agricultural intensification and neglect.</li> <li>• Enhance the landscape and contribute to climate mitigation via enhanced carbon storage and sequestration.</li> </ul> <p>In the case of AECC 4, support shall focus on introducing bee boxes on farm holdings.</p>
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep and maintain maximum of 5 bee boxes per hectare in good health;</li> <li>• Beekeepers will be required to identify the location where the bee boxes will be installed (the MA retains the possibility to include garrigue areas as zones where boxes can be placed, however, in that case, this area would not contribute towards the hectareage used for number of boxes i.e. 5 boxes /ha);</li> <li>• Beekeepers are required to keep a record of all bee boxes on their holding and/or under their ownership but located on a different holding, and to notify ARPA of the movements to be carried out every year: boxes have to be moved to different garrigue/maquis locations an estimated 3 times (two movements) in a year, each movement must be at least 3km apart and maintained for at least 4 weeks;</li> <li>• Upon registering bee boxes for support the beneficiary will be required to put physical identification on each box; upon inspection, all boxes must be clearly identifiable with no evidence of tampering in accordance with PA requirements;</li> <li>• Beneficiaries will have to attend a free training module, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme (proof of attendance will be requested). They must also take advice for adequate fulfilment of all commitments and obligations, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme. Whilst preferable, such advice shall not necessarily be received from a recognised Farm Advisory System. The Managing Authority shall notify as to the type of acceptable advice. Proof of service received will be requested.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers must be registered in the IACS Farmer Registry and have a minimum of 0.2 ha of agricultural land registered under this commitment (minimum land needed to be eligible for payment for 1 bee box). Parcels less than 0.04 ha are ineligible;</li> <li>• The beekeeper must be a member of an apicultural society.</li> <li>• The applicant must have a minimum of 5 active bee boxes;</li> <li>• Bee boxes must be kept on agricultural land (including garrigue) throughout the year; all bee-boxes are to also be linked/attached to agricultural parcel/s upon registration of land based management commitment;</li> <li>• Beneficiaries are to inform competent authorities on the exact location of bee boxes. In case of transfer of holdings (or part of) following the first year of commitment obligations pertaining to the sub-measure must be maintained;</li> <li>• All bee-boxes must be uniquely tagged for identification and control purposes;</li> <li>• The beekeeper may enter in a written agreement with other farmers with the aim of introducing parcels under this commitment to increase the amount of supported bee-boxes and/or to use these additional parcels for the movement of bee-boxes obligation. Each farmer is only supporting one beekeeper. The agreement must</li> </ul>

indicate that the farmer: i) permits the beekeeper to keep bee boxes on their holding, ii) retains responsibility for land eligibility conditions and conditionality obligations for all land linked to this AECC, and iii) will not be able to transfer the land attached to AECC 4 for the duration of the 5 year contract.

**Support** Support rate: €147.80/hive/year with 5 boxes/ha, corresponding to €739/hectare/year. €739 represents the maximum rate/ha, since Malta will only support a maximum of 5 bee-boxes per hectare. The beekeeper remains the sole beneficiary of CAP SP funds.

**Budget (total public contribution)** The budgeted amount is EUR 739.00 per hectare per annum (2024-2028), and is expected to support a total of 64.25 hectares in the period 2024-2028, for a total amount of EUR 47,480.75.

## AECC 5 - Implementation of soil management and conservation plan on a parcel

<b>Description</b>	<p>Land-based management commitments provide payments to farmers in return for a service, in the form of a voluntary multi-annual commitment to observe a set of prescribed management practices over a period of 5 years.</p> <p>These commitments aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce pressures on semi-natural features caused by significant agricultural intensification and neglect;</li> <li>• Enhance the landscape and contribute to climate mitigation via enhanced carbon storage and sequestration.</li> </ul> <p>As for AECC 5, support shall focus on encouraging the implementation of a soil management and conservation plan (SMP).</p>
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SMP must be drafted and signed by a competent person whose name is published on the website of the Plant Protection Directorate. It should be in line with the Plant Protection Directorate’s guidelines, which should include: list of soil threats identified on each parcel and the possible environmental consequence; map showing risks of runoff and water erosion; actions to mitigate the soil threats; composting, which has to be carried out on at least 1 parcel from the whole holding committed. The SMP may include actions such as crop residue incorporation, mulching, planting of trees to target soil erosion, green manuring, as well as other actions, as deemed appropriate by the competent person.</li> <li>• Farmers must implement the measures and actions included in the SMP.</li> <li>• Soil testing for Organic Matter must be carried out annually for Soil Organic Matter (SOM) throughout the commitment years. The soil test results must be submitted to ARPA during the annual payment claim. The annual soil samples for testing must be collected by the authorised advisor who prepares the SMP, who should follow soil sampling guidelines issued by the Plant Protection Directorate and needs to be collected according to the W spatial pattern. The cost of the soil tests and the SMP is to be borne by the beneficiary. On the spot checks will be carried out by ARPA. The SMP and soil test result will need to be updated and re-submitted annually; for the first year only, the farmer can submit a soil test result for each parcel collected by same farmer. Subsequently, the advisor will collect the soil samples.</li> <li>• Between 1st July and 1st October farmers cannot plant any crops, apply synthetic fertiliser/pesticides to the parcels in question.</li> <li>• In the case of irrigated land, the 2% SOM is an eligibility criterion which need to be maintained throughout the 5 years.</li> <li>• By the end of the commitment in the case of irrigated land, the soil organic matter must be at least 3%, in the case of non-irrigated land by the end of the commitment the soil organic matter must be of at least 1%.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers must have a minimum of 0.1124 hectares (1 tumoli) of arable land. Any parcels less than 0.04 hectares, are ineligible;</li> <li>• Only arable land is eligible. Permanent cropland is ineligible. Irrigable agricultural land with soil organic matter (SOM) below 2% is ineligible. This 2% eligibility requirement is not applicable in the case of non-irrigable parcels;</li> <li>• Each individual Landscape feature on the boundary of a reference parcel is eligible if the area does not exceed 15% of the total eligible area inside a reference parcel;</li> </ul>

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- During the request period, the farmer must present either a copy of the soil test results or a receipt proving that the soil sample has been submitted, covering all parcels being included in the commitment. Soil samples shall not be collected by the direct beneficiary, rather by advisors who were already recognised on the date the sample was submitted to the lab, under the supervision of the recognised competent person;
  - Farmers must also submit a crop plan and fertiliser plan with the SMP.
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**Support**

Support rate: €2,378.35/hectare/year.

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**Budget  
(total public  
contribution)**

The budgeted amount is EUR 2,378.35 per hectare per annum (2024-2028), and is expected to support a total of 1,358.20 hectares in the period 2024-2028, for a total amount of EUR 3,230,274.97.

## AECC 7 - Organic Farming

<b>Description</b>	<p>The Organic farming scheme provides for support for farmers to convert part or all of their production to organic farming practices for products aimed for human consumption (vegetables and horticulture). There are two levels of support payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AECC 7A – Support for in-conversion to organic farming;</li> <li>• AECC 7B – Support for maintenance for organic farming.</li> </ul>
<b>Commitments/ activities</b>	<p>General commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiaries will be required to attend a free of charge training module, to be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme. They are also obliged to take advice for adequate fulfilment of all commitments and obligations. Advice should be completed by the end of the 3rd year from acceptance on the scheme. Whilst preferable, such advice shall not necessarily be received from a recognised Farm Advisory System. The Managing Authority shall notify as to the type of acceptable advice under this measure. Proof of service received will be requested;</li> <li>• Farmers benefitting from Organic Conversion and Maintenance will be excluded from benefitting from the organic quality scheme for the same year.</li> </ul> <p>AECC 7A – Support for in-conversion to organic farming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support payments for conversion shall only apply for a maximum of 2 years (irrespective of crop type following the certification “in conversion to organic” issued by the Control Authority/Body) for all land converted to organic production, regardless of whether this moves onto Organic status or not. If the agricultural parcels supported do not reach Organic certification, the farmer will be subject to refunding the support received under conversion action, unless this is due to force majeure or exceptional circumstances recognised as such by ARPA.</li> <li>• Farmers will be required to demonstrate ‘in conversion’ certification in order to be eligible for support for conversion.</li> </ul> <p>AECC 7B – Support for maintenance for organic farming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support may be provided for farmers to maintain organic farming practices (supporting vegetables and horticulture) for a minimum of 5 years (where applicable), following the 2 years conversion period.</li> <li>• This action shall also provide support for farmers, who are already certified as organic producers and who have not benefitted under Conversion towards Organic farming, to maintain organic farming practices.</li> <li>• Farmers will be required to demonstrate ‘organic’ certification in order to be eligible for support for maintenance, and must commit themselves to maintain the certified organic land for a minimum period of 5 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility/ selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be active farmers engaged in food production and commit themselves to control management of land for the length of the conversion period;</li> <li>- be registered in the Farm Register, which also indicates the parcels being managed;</li> <li>- be in line with standard mandatory agricultural conditions and thus should be able to provide records of their actions;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- have at least 0.1124 ha of eligible agriculture land. Each parcel declared must have at least 0.01ha of eligible land cover specific to the sub-measure. The holding on which the application is submitted shall be in Malta. The land/parcels applied for shall be recognized as utilizable agricultural land;
- Farmers benefitting from the organic quality scheme shall not be eligible for support under this scheme for the same year;
- Farmers transitioning from conversion to maintenance will receive support for 5 years from the initial certification date of organic certification status, regardless of crop type;
- Support for maintenance for applicants who have not received aid under conversion but are already established as organic producers, will be available for a minimum of 5 years from the date of contracting.

**Support**

- AECC 7A: fixed support rate of €4,377.60/ha for land which under conversion to organic land, for all crop/production types (vegetables and horticulture).
  - AECC 7B: fixed support rate of €3,614.40/ha for organic land under maintenance (same rate applies for both land that has transitioned from organic and land that is committed directly under maintenance), regardless of crop/production type.
- Rates may be adjusted once the National Organic Action Plan is finalised (mid-2023).

**Budget  
(total public  
contribution)**

- AECC 7A: EUR 4,377.60 per hectare per annum (2023-2029).
  - AECC 7B: EUR 3,614.40 per hectare per annum (2023-2029).
- Total public expenditure: EUR 2,320,042.00.