



COMMITMENT TO THE RURAL PACT for public authorities

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, wishes to submit a commitment to the Rural Pact to advance towards the **10 shared goals of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas**. These objectives summarise the common aspirations of EU rural communities and stakeholders in rural areas by 2040.

Finland has a long history of national rural policy. **The horizontal national rural policy** integrates rural issues across all government sectors (not just agriculture) for a holistic rural development focusing on vibrant communities, infrastructure, services, economic opportunities as well as structures that affect these. Using and developing tools like 'rural proofing', GIS-based urban-rural-typology and broad thematic networks to address challenges like shrinking populations and environmental justice, rural policy acts as a counterweight and crucial complement to siloed approaches. Rural policy work and activities are guided and outlined by the Rural Policy Council (MANE) appointed by the Government and chaired by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

The habitability and accessibility of rural areas are vital for farmers, rural entrepreneurs, those who consider starting a business in the countryside as well as rural residents and part-time residents. One of the general objectives for the National CAP Strategic Plan for the period 2023–2027 is to strengthen the socio-economic structure of rural areas. In the **CAP Strategic Plan**, Finland has made wide use of the opportunities offered by the CAP, based on experiences gained from previous financing periods and the evaluation of them as well as identified needs and research knowledge produced through Rural Policy. According to the evaluations of the Rural Development Programme of the previous period (2014–2020), diverse rural development instruments outside agriculture have contributed to the creation of new jobs and economic activities and increased skills and competence, innovation and cooperation. New businesses and jobs have been created, which has raised the employment rate. The network of **LEADER development** actors and active local communities and associations in all Finnish rural areas strengthen inclusion and community spirit, and the comprehensive security of society. Rural developers work in close cooperation with island policy actors in Finland.

A balanced development of rural areas requires a diverse structure of economic activities and a well-functioning business ecosystem. The importance of a viable – habitable and accessible - countryside has become even more evident due to the recent crises. For Finland with the approximately 1,300 kilometres long border with Russia, inhabited rural areas are crucial for national security, security of supply and overall societal resilience now that the geopolitical situation has changed dramatically.



The measures and funding offered by **EAFRD to rural areas** are in a key position among the set of tools for a balanced development, and to maximise the realisation of the potential of rural innovation and economy. Measures under EAFRD have contributed to responding to the challenges related to urbanisation, demographic change and territorial inequality including by providing support to non-agricultural enterprises and local development and connectivity of rural areas.

Finland's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MMM) focuses on **a strategy centred on a sustainable bioeconomy, viable rural areas, and data-driven security**, aiming to boost Finland's competitiveness and wellbeing by leveraging natural resources for food, energy, and products, ensuring food security, promoting climate resilience, and using digital information to support new growth, all while aligning with national and EU goals for green transition and resource efficiency. [The new Strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry](#) acknowledges that diverse business activities and successful countryside and archipelago; multi-locality and cooperation networks strengthen society.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland would like to formally commit to the Rural Pact to advance the long-term vision for EU's rural areas by engaging to work towards:

1. Reinforcing plans to enable continued diverse interventions for rural development in the future **National and Regional Partnership Plans**.
2. Implementing the upcoming **Government's Rural Policy Report** which lays out a path for stronger cross-administrative cooperation for comprehensive rural development in Finland at national level.
3. Hearing the voice of the rural areas also in the future. We are engaged in multi-level and **place-based governance**, developing integrated strategies using collaborative and participatory approaches and drawing benefits from tailor-made policy mixes and interdependencies between urban and rural areas. An important action includes appointing the **third Rural Policy Council (MANE)** for 5.3.2026-28.2.2031 with the following objectives:
 - Support the Government and central administration in preparing to address cross-administrative and -sectoral issues that are significant from a rural policy perspective, and to coordinate, anticipate, and monitor implementation. In addition, MANE is responsible for carrying out the preparation, implementation, foresight, and monitoring of major national rural policy entities.
 - Support the Government and central administration in implementing the **Rural Policy Report** and its cross-administrative implementation plan, as well as monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on its progress. It will monitor, anticipate, and assess the rural situation and the key drivers of change shaping it.
 - Implement the measures of the **seventh comprehensive Rural Policy Programme**, mobilise stakeholders to participate in its implementation, and monitor and report on its advancement. Alongside the Rural Policy Report and its cross-administrative implementation plan, MANE will prepare **the eighth comprehensive Rural Policy Programme**, carry out its measures, activate stakeholders in its implementation, and follow and report on the programme's progress.

- Conduct **rural impact assessments** and systematising the use of assessment methods to support the development of rural areas and interaction between different regions and actors. MANE will address **rural policy relevant information needs** through national rural research and development project funding, thematic work, and participatory processes, while also promoting funding for key themes in societal rural research from alternative sources.
 - Strengthen the rural policy planning system, including its operational bodies, tools, working methods, and thematic priorities, and serve as an advisory body on rural issues in the preparation of the EU's next programming period and actively participate in that process.
4. Enhancing effective **rural proofing** in all administrative and decision-making procedures.
 5. Implementing place-based rural development by turning rural areas into **places of opportunity** and providing local solutions to help tackle the local effects of global challenges.
 6. Promoting opportunities of and for rural livelihoods, including digitalisation. Opportunities to fully benefit from **digital innovation** with equal **access** to emerging technologies, widespread digital literacy and opportunities to acquire more advanced skills. Promoting **well-functioning and secure broadband connections** available to everyone in rural areas.
 7. Recognising rural areas as **places of diversity**, making the most of their unique assets, talent and potential, fostering **well-being**, including livelihoods, fairness, **prosperity** and **quality of life**.
 8. Strengthening the **sense of community**, participation, **security**, inter-generational solidarity, fairness and renewal and local development.
 9. Reinforcing the role of rural areas as providers of **food security, economic opportunities**, and **goods and services** for wider society.
 10. Promoting sustainable management of **natural resources** including commitment to measures aimed at phasing out fossil fuels.



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This document is hereby issued on 30 March 2026, recognising the commitment of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland to the Rural Vision and its objectives.

