

Sub-measure fiche (annex III to the measure fiche "forestry")

Prevention and restoration of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events

Measure 8.4

Article 21(1) (c) and 24 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

This fiche is based on the text of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 [EAFRD] and, when relevant, on Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. The Delegated and Implementing Acts supplementing these regulations have also been considered in this guidance fiche.

This guidance does not represent a binding legal interpretation of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 or its Delegated and Implementing Acts. It is therefore essentially non-binding in nature and complements the related legal acts.

1. RATIONALE OF THE MEASURE

This sub-measure aims at preventing and restoring (clearing and replanting, natural regeneration) forestry potential after forest fires and other natural disasters including pest and diseases outbreaks and climate change related threats (such as desertification, droughts, storms). The forest area concerned by preventive actions from forest fires should be classified as medium to high forest fire risk according to the forest protection plans.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO FOCUS AREAS AND CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVES

In the context of strategic programming¹ the prevention and restoration activities contribute to the Priority 4 "*Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related agriculture and forestry*".

3. SCOPE, TYPE AND LEVEL OF SUPPORT

3.1. Type of operation

The eligible types of operations may be:

- Actions to prevent damage to forests by biotic and abiotic agents and related investments

¹ See Annex III of the Commission Working Paper "Elements of strategic programming for the period 2014-2020".

- Restoration actions after calamities and natural disasters and related investments

3.2. Beneficiaries

The eligible beneficiaries may be:

- Private forest holders
- Public forest holders
- Other private law and public bodies (as defined by the Member State)
- Associations of above mentioned entities

3.3. Eligible costs and conditions

3.3.1. Eligible costs – prevention of damage

General establishment costs:

- Protective infrastructures, such as forest paths, tracks, access roads, water supply points (including landing zones for aerial means of transport), excluding landing facilities for commercial activities.
- Clearing of firebreaks and phytosanitary felling in infested or quarantine areas, forest related water engineering; e.g. prevention of gully erosion and avalanche control.
- Local / small scale prevention activities, including grazing.

Specific fire prevention costs:

- Operations to maintain protective infrastructure, such as forest paths, tracks, water supply points, firebreaks, cleared and felled areas.
- Preventive forestry practices, such as repetitive vegetation control, cleaning, thinning, pruning and diversification of vegetation structure (e.g. diversifying and creating vertical and horizontal discontinuities of the cover).
- Use of grazing livestock²: the use of grazing livestock may decrease the risk of fire in such forest areas where herbaceous vegetation forms a serious risk to fire but can be easily avoided by placing livestock in that particular forest area³. The additional costs occurred in transferring animals to the area with fire risk shall be compensated⁴. The forest area concerned should be classified as medium to high risk forest fire risk according to the forest protection plan.

² By livestock it is meant domestic animals, not wild animals

³ In some occasions, grazing livestock is the only option due to the fact that some fire risk areas are not always easily accessible to machinery.

⁴ The purchase of animals or other costs shall not be covered. The payment should be calculated on the real additional costs incurred in **transporting/moving** grazing animals to the forest area and costs related to **keeping** those animals in that area **before/during the season of fire risk**.

- Communication equipment

Prevention costs related to specific natural hazards, pests and diseases:

- Costs related to prevention of storms, fire, snow and ice damage, pests and diseases, drought and desertification shall be acceptable in case the proposed intervention is in compliance with a public programme (e.g. forest protection plan, climate change adaptation, etc.).
- Preventive actions against drought and desertification may include forestry interventions, such as introducing drought tolerant species, under-planting with suitable tree or shrubs and bushes species. Under duly justified cases also watering may be covered.
- Prevention of infestation by and spread of fungi, pests or insects on damaged wood by using water treatment (including spraying or submerging the wood creating unfavorable conditions for fungus and insects). These preventive actions have to be justified by scientific evidence of their necessity.
- Establishment costs (or improvement/upgrading) of forest fire, pests and diseases monitoring facilities (including the observation towers and related equipment or establishment of monitoring/observation forest plots).
- Communication equipment.

3.3.2. Eligible costs - Restoration

- Costs for restoring forest potential damages by fires or other natural disasters including pests, diseases as well as catastrophic events and climate change related events.
- The cost of restoration may include (as a non-exclusive list): clearing and re-planting of damaged forests, replanting damaged vegetation with high environmental interests (habitat restoration), restoring damaged investments, protective facilities, engineered works, installations, paths and fire observation points.

3.3.3. Further conditions

- The Member States have to ensure that the forest fire and pest and diseases prevention and restoring measures considered above are consistent with the respective national (or appropriate regional, sub-regional level) forest protection plans.
- Fire prevention actions should take place in areas classified by Member States as medium or high fire risk.
- The risk of a disaster occurrence caused by pests and diseases should be supported by scientific evidence. The list of species (pests, diseases) which may cause such disasters should be provided. Forest institutes (research center, university, monitoring services) can provide lists of potentially dangerous species and identify areas at risk.

- The necessary preventive actions have to be targeted according to the objectives of a public program (national forest program/strategy, forest protection program, climate change adaptation strategy, watershed management program, desertification strategy, etc.).
- In order to obtain support for restoring damage, a formal recognition by public authorities acknowledging officially an occurrence of natural disaster is necessary. In order to support the restoration activities a minimum of 20 % of relevant forest potential should be recognised as destroyed. The Member State/region should detail in the Rural Development Programme the method of calculation of such damage.
- As regards the creation of forest firebreaks, cleared areas, eligible costs may comprise, beyond the cost of establishment, subsequent maintenance costs on the area concerned. However, this support shall not be granted for agricultural-related activities in areas covered by agri-environmental commitments.
- Only material related to prevention of occurrence of damage should be covered under this measure. Fire-fighting equipment such as helicopters, etc. are not considered as eligible.
- Other kinds of structural fire prevention investments such as fire protection belts are possible and can be considered as eligible.

3.4. Principles with regard to the setting of selection criteria

See the European Commission document *"Guidelines on eligibility and Selection Criteria"*.

3.5. Links to other legislation (e.g. "baseline" for measures that compensate for costs incurred / income foregone)

A link to the relevant legislation should be established in the Rural Development Programme.

3.6. Aid intensity/amount of support

The Rural Development Regulation does not fix a maximum support rate for this sub-measure.

As regards the use of flat-rate and standard costs, the legal reference is in article 67 of the Common Provisions Regulation.

3.7. Co-financing rate(s)

This measure is among the measures which contribute to the compliance with the requirement stipulated in Article 59(6) of Regulation 1305/2013 and which requires that at least 30% of the total EAFRD contribution to the rural development programme shall be reserved for measures contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as environmental issues.

The EAFRD contribution rate applicable to this measure is defined in Article 59 of Reg. (EU) No 1305/2013.

4. INDICATORS

In planning the indicators it should be taken into consideration the principles detailed in the Annex IV of Working Paper "Elements of strategic programming for the period 2014-2020".

5. VERIFIABILITY AND CONTROLLABILITY

Reference to be made to the "*Guidelines on verifiability and prevention of errors*".

6. BEST PRACTISES

Restoration actions should be in line with the relevant and appropriate level plans and programmes, (national forest program/strategy, forest protection program, climate change adaptation strategy, watershed management program, desertification strategy, etc.). A special attention is to be paid to the selection of areas and species for reforestation.

Reports and studies can be found on the website of EFFIS (European Forest Fire Prevention System): <http://forest.jrc.ec.europa.eu/effis>