

## **Evaluation of the measures 2.1.3, 2.2.4 (payments for Natura 2000 areas) and the measure 2.2.6 (restoring forestry potential and introducing preventive actions) of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013**

### **Summary of the Report**

The report is prepared in the scope of the Ongoing Evaluation System (OES) of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP 2007-2013) regarding the measure 2.1.3 (*Natura 2000 payments and the payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC*), measure 2.2.4 *Natura 2000 Payments (to Forest Owners)*; and measure 2.2.6 *Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions*. Evaluation of the measures was carried out in 2012, while the reports were supplemented in 2013, using the updated data. Evaluation of measures was carried out and the conclusions were drawn based on the available data. Summary of data in tables and individual schematic maps are attached to the report.

Data from the Rural Support Service (RSS), State Forest Service (SFS), State Land Service (SLS) and Nature Conservation Agency (NCA) were used for the evaluation of measures. The report was prepared, using the most recent available data. Combined data contain extensive information regarding each Natura 2000 area and its nature values, as well as regarding condition of the agricultural and forest land. The prepared database may be used not only in the scope of RDP 2007-2013 OES, but may also be useful for the planning of nature protection in Latvia.

The measure 2.1.3 in the scope of RDP 2007-2013 is implemented already since 2007, while the measure 2.2.4 is in effect since 2008. The disbursed amount of the public funding within the measure 2.1.3 in 2012 was LVL 1.67 million, but in the measure 2.2.4 – LVL 1.17 million. Supported area of the agricultural land in 2012 in was 54.6 thousand ha, but in forests - 28.1 thousand ha. Even though the achievable areas were supported in both measures, improvements must, however, be made in the implementation of the measures in order to achieve better results. It is recommended to specify the grounds and conditions for receiving support in the measure 2.1.3. Specification of data appropriate for the conditions of receiving support must be carried out for the private forest areas Natura 2000, in order to switch from a single payment to a differentiated payment, which is subjected to the amount of specified limitations. Since the currently available data are not sufficient to carry out a detailed evaluation of the role and impact of the measures, all involved parties (MoA, RSS, SFS and NCA) would have to carry out specification of data and improvement of quality.

The number of applications received annually in the scope of the measure 2.2.6 has been steady, i.e. 50 applications were received in 2008, 71 application - in 2009, 68 applications - in 2010 and 2011, 43 applications - in 2012 and 52 applications - in 2013. Even though the volume of damage (windthrow, windbreaks snow crush, snowfall, fire) each year fluctuates and in the recent years has a trend to reduce, the number of the received annual applications compared to the damaged areas is relatively small – approximately 17% of the damaged area in other forests (in possession and use of natural and legal persons). Small number of applications could be related to the small volume of damages and ability to eliminate them with minimum expenses, because expected increase of yield was lost, but wood was

obtained in the sanitary felling and sold in the market. It is possible that a part of damages was not eliminated, thus worsening the sanitary condition of the forest.

The greatest support for elimination of the damages was received in Madona municipality - LVL 360.6 thousand, in Kuldīga municipality - LVL 99.4 thousand and in Skrunda municipality - LVL 42.5 thousand. The largest funding was received in Kurzeme region. Even though RDS reports do not show the sanitary condition of the forest stands and the factors causing destruction of the forest stands, it can be concluded that it is related to elimination of consequences caused by windthrows in 2005, wherein Kurzeme region suffered the most. Investment in the development of infrastructure for protection of forest against fire was also made in the scope of the measure 2.2.6. Statistical data show that the forest area burned out in the forest wildfires has significantly reduced, thus confirming the improvement of preventive measures and the condition of operative forest protection.

Evaluation of Natura 2000 payments was prepared by *Dr.geogr.* Peteris Lakovskis (*Pēteris Lakovskis*), an expert in environment issues of the Rural Development Evaluation Department (RDED) of the Latvian State Institute of Agrarian Economics (LSIAE), in cooperation with the department staff and upon consultation with the experts of the University of Agriculture of Latvia. An evaluation of the measure 2.2.6 (Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions) was carried out by *Dr.silv.* Dagnis Dubrovskis.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

### *Conclusions regarding the measures of Natura 2000 payments*

1. Output and result indicators of RDP 2007-2013 Natura 2000 payments in the measures 2.1.3 and 2.2.4 are being reached, more than 90% of the target areas have been supported during the recent years.
2. Since in Natura 2000 payments the achievable areas in the forests in the measure 2.2.4 are defined in small quantity, and the differentiated payment have yet to be introduced, we can conclude that improvements must be made in the measure 2.2.4.
3. The grounds of the measure 2.1.3 provided in RDP 2007-2013 must be specified, because it was established during evaluation that the limitation for the use of land for agricultural purposes does not exist in some Natura 2000 areas pursuant to the grounds included in RDP 2007-2013 and provisions of the Rural Regulation.
4. Complete determination of baseline indicators and impact evaluation of the measures is currently impossible due to limitations in data (on forest stands, EU biotopes and agricultural land, HNVP) availability and quality (precision, overlapping). The data necessary for the baseline indicators must be obtained by 2014.
5. Both the current single rate and potential differentiated payment is inadequate in Natura 2000 payments to the forest owners (measure 2.2.4). The compensations for the areas, wherein the economic activity or the main activity and thinning is fully prohibited, are insufficient, while they are overrated in the areas, where the economic activity is partially limited.

6. Based on currently available data, the role of the measures 2.1.3 and 2.2.4 in protection of species provided in the Directive 79/409/EC (Birds) and 92/43/EC (Biotopes) and maintaining the biotopes may be rated as having medium importance.
7. Precision and overlapping of the data on forest stands must be improved for more successful implementation of the measures, followed by the differentiated payment.
8. Measures should be implemented also in individual places outside Natura 2000 areas – in micro-reserves, EU protected biotopes and the locations, where species can be found, both on the forest and agricultural land.
9. Where specific biotechnical measures are necessary for maintaining or restoration of the biotope quality, it is recommended to link them with the provisions for receiving support or to implement separate support measures.
10. An opportunity to apply for Natura 2000 payments for UAA (in the measure 2.1.3) separately from SAP payment should be ensured, similarly to Agri-environment, because the analysis of available data shows that a part of target areas is located outside the rural blocks (not eligible for support).

*Conclusions regarding the measure 2.2.6*

11. The number of applications received annually in the scope of the measure 2.2.6 has been steady, i.e. 50 applications were received in 2008, 71 application - in 2009, 68 applications - in 2010 and 2011, 43 applications - in 2012 and 52 applications - in 2013. Even though the volume of damage (windthrow, windbreaks snow crush, snowfall, fire) each year fluctuates and in the recent years has a trend to reduce, the number of the received annual applications compared to the damaged areas is relatively small – approximately 17% of the damaged area in other forests (in possession and use of natural and legal persons). Small number of applications could be related to the small volume of damages and ability to eliminate them with minimum expenses, because expected increase of yield was lost, but wood was obtained in the sanitary felling and sold in the market. It is possible that a part of damages was not eliminated, thus worsening the sanitary condition of the forest.
12. The largest support for the elimination of damages was received in Madona municipality - LVL 360.6 thousand, in Kuldiga municipality - LVL 99.4 thousand and in Skrunda municipality - LVL 42.5 thousand. The largest funding was received in Kurzeme region. Even though RSS reports do not show the sanitary condition of the forest stands and the factors causing their destruction, conclusion can be drawn that it is related to elimination of consequences caused by windthrows in 2005, wherein Kurzeme region suffered the most.
13. 368 applications were received during the reporting period (wherefrom 329 LFA), and analysis of recipients of the approved projects shows that the support in the scope of this measure is mostly received by the natural persons (both based on number and area).
14. Investment in the development of infrastructure for protection of forest against fire was made in the scope of the measure 2.2.6. The large funding granted to

the outer Riga region is related to the costs of construction and reconstruction of fire observation towers and the costs for the purchase of means of communication and development of the system necessary for the fire protection and control, which were applied for and implemented by the State Forest Service. Statistical data show that the forest area burned out in the forest wildfires has significantly reduced, thus testifying to improvement of preventive measures and the condition of operative forest protection.

#### *Recommendation*

1. Pursuant to the previously prepared recommendations regarding the information provided in the required reports for the measure "Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions", the activity "Restoring forestry production potential in the areas of damage caused by fire and natural phenomena" (L226.1) contains more detailed information regarding the indicators necessary for the analysis of the measure results. Attached information regarding the composition of restorable forest stands and selection of target species is important. Issues regarding the justification for selection of restorable tree species must be resolved on political level. Statistical data show that upon regenerating the damaged forest stands, a proportion of coniferous forest stands is relatively small.
2. Request of the forest inventory data and spatial information regarding the damaged areas must be made in the next planning period. It would ensure an opportunity to more precisely evaluate the intensity of support and the achieved results. It would also prevent from receiving double support per one area unit.