



Reteaua Națională de
Dezvoltare Rurală



REPORT

30 inputs for sustainable rural development of Moldova post 2021

Analysis on agro-rural policies implementation in Moldova

September 2019

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Introduction

The analysis on agro-rural policies implementation in Moldova “30 inputs for sustainable rural development of Moldova post 2021” was implemented from June 10 to September 1, 2019.

Objective of the study: Analysis of the implementation of policies in rural areas and providing inputs for the establishment of a permanent framework for discussions.

The analysis is conducted through:

- **evaluation of strategies implementation** using public reports and other relevant information;
- **semi structural interviews** with main stakeholders.

The current Report includes 30 inputs which are developed based on the analysis of the implementation of policies in rural areas, stakeholders interviews, and the experience of the implementation of rural development policies in the Member States of the European Union and EU in general.

During the development of respective policy, those inputs may serve as the discussion points for stakeholders of the agricultural and rural development policy, which will be formulated into the strategic document for Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2026.

Inputs are useful for the advocacy work of the emerging national rural network which can give way to the potential role of stakeholders on the process and the content of the design, implementation and monitoring of the policy.

The following qualitative research methods were applied within the framework of the study:

- Desk research of publicly available and accessible information;
- Review of the Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020 and other related policy documents, legislative acts and working materials;
- Interviews with stakeholders on July 9 to 12, 2019 (FARM, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, Intervention agency and payments for agriculture, LEADER National Network from Moldova, Federation of Farmers, Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova, ENPARD Moldova);
- Secondary processing of data;
- Expert judgment.

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Input 1:	Increase the transparent and inclusive involvement of all stakeholders in the programming and implementation of the strategy.
Rationale:	<p>Participative policy development, implementation, and monitoring are all evidence of a mature democratic society. The involvement of stakeholders ensures the representation of various interests, knowledge, and experience, which can help policies to better achieve the set objectives and solve identified issues. A transparent stakeholder involvement will be able to prove that strategic decisions on investing public resources is based on robust evidence. Inclusive stakeholder involvement process will reduce the risk of ignoring the needs or excluding some groups from the public support or the risk of developing policies which are not able to tackle issues related to socio-economic situation of particular groups of stakeholders.</p> <p>Stakeholders have to insist and call for actions that ensure inclusive involvement of stakeholders in the agricultural and rural development policy design, implementation, and monitoring. This requires checking as to what extent the involved stakeholders represent (e.g., composition of monitoring committee, network, etc.) the main target groups (particularly environmental interests, small scale farmers and producers, non-agricultural businesses, youth), which are addressed by the strategy.</p> <p>There is also a need to check the quality of the participation in designing and monitoring the agricultural and rural development policy. This is possible by having to prove as to what extent the interests and opinions of stakeholders are taken into account during the programming (e.g. setting targets, indicators, project selection criteria etc.) and monitoring the implementation of the strategy. This requests accurate documentation of the participation process (e.g. public availability of minutes of meetings, lists of participants) and ensures transparency.</p>
Sources:	Stakeholders interviews. Observations of researcher.

Input 2:	Active role in informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries on the benefits of rural development policy and capacity development measures to improve the quality of rural development strategy and to support stakeholder's involvement in implementation of agricultural and rural development policy.
Rationale:	<p>Stakeholders can play an active role to improve the quality of agricultural and rural development policy in Moldova. This can be done by taking an active role in informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries on the benefits of rural development policy and funding opportunities, as well as providing information on the developments in the rural areas of Moldova.</p> <p>In this respect, stakeholders can collect, consolidate, and disseminate good rural development practices, examples of projects covering all</p>

	<p>objectives of the Strategy. Such examples can facilitate spreading of diverse ideas on agricultural and rural development activities.</p> <p>In terms of improving the quality of agricultural and rural development strategy as well as building capacities of potential beneficiaries, the stakeholders are encouraged to set up and run thematic groups and/or workshops with a view on facilitating the exchange of expertise, supporting the implementation, monitoring, and further development of agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>Such activities which have to be covered by the technical assistance of the Strategy can increase the extent as to which stakeholders/potential beneficiaries are informed about the implementation of the strategy, the identified changes in the implementation, and the possibilities to participate in the implementation (receive grants, trainings etc.).</p> <p>This will also facilitate stakeholder’s understanding on the implementation process (e.g. timeline, when calls are organized etc.) of the Strategy and will increase their participation in the implementation (e.g. knowledge about writing projects, business plans, clear understanding of the requirements, access to the resources needed to implement the projects, clarity of the reporting and monitoring requirements, etc.).</p>
Sources:	Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 3:	Consider the development of technical and political working groups on supporting designing agricultural and rural development policy.
Rationale:	<p>Policy development has a major challenge in balancing the political agenda and the practical aspects of the its implementation. Political decisions require a lot of compromises between views on how the policy has to be implemented to satisfy public interests, wherein the technical side is more focused on the pragmatic analysis of consequences between needs, inputs, outputs, results and impacts of implementation of particular policy. Both aspects are important in the design and implementation of policies, but it can bring more transparency and robustness if the work of political and technical working groups would be kept separate, and their proposals for policy development could be combined in the agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>Stakeholders could request the differentiation between political and technical proposals in the agricultural and rural development policy.</p>
Sources:	Observations of the researcher.

Input 4:	Ensure transparent information exchange system in the Network.
Rationale:	The National Rural Network which functions as a platform for stakeholders networking and advocacy can have different expectations to be met from various parties. There should be a clear understanding on what stakeholders can expect from the network. For instance, operative and

	<p>reliable information about the programmes, and, collection of opinions on particular issues. Policy makers also have to have clear understanding on whose interests are represented when the opinion is expressed by the Network representatives. For the Network itself, there should be a developed and commonly agreed principles on when and how the joint opinion of stakeholders is expressed. Those principles have to reflect as well on how to deal with situations when opinions of stakeholders are different and it is not possible to provide joint opinion on the agricultural and rural development policy. That's why there is a need to invest in the development and maintenance of a transparent information exchange system in the Network which ensure effective flow of information in both ways.</p> <p>Considering that the number of involved stakeholders will grow and all of them have particular role in the agricultural and rural development policy, there should be a clear message to the public on what is National Rural Network and how it functions. This will help create a positive public image and also will gain recognition from stakeholders and partners of the network.</p>
Sources:	<p>Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.</p>

Input 5:	Capacity development of stakeholders (members of National Rural Network) on local, regional and national level.
Rationale:	<p>The performance quality and recognition of the Network depends from the activity, the level of the expertise, and the involvement of each stakeholder. That's why the Network has to work constantly on the capacity development of stakeholders (members of the network) by providing new information, new knowledge, and new experiences. This can be achieved through on-going needs assessment of stakeholders, development of needs-tailored workshops, and the organisation of study visits in Moldova and abroad for the exchange of experience.</p> <p>It is important that the capacity development takes place on all levels of the networking and particularly on the local level where new knowledge on the trends in agriculture and rural development are most needed.</p> <p>The network has to build a critical mass which will allow to express public opinion and not only the opinions of selected leaders.</p>
Sources:	<p>Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.</p>

Input 6:	Increased capacity and knowledge on advocacy approaches.
Rationale:	<p>Considering that the National Rural Network will play a distinct role in the representation of interests of agriculture and rural development policy, it is essential to establish the core team (e.g. Thematic Working Groups) that is able to mobilise stakeholders in the advocacy work. The core team has to be supported with sufficient policy analysis - which allows to make informed</p>

	<p>and evidence-based opinions. It also has to have a mandate to react promptly in the dialogue with policy makers. For this purpose, development of opinion papers which include well discussed statements of stakeholders on particular aspects of policy would be useful for daily work.</p> <p>To keep the advocacy on a high standard, constant capacity development is needed in terms of ensuring the training on advocacy together with the exchange with similar networks/movements in EU which have sufficient experience on advocacy.</p>
Sources:	<p>Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.</p>

Input 7:	<p>Foster involvement of the local level stakeholders in the networking and advocacy.</p>
Rationale:	<p>The range of stakeholders that are related to agriculture and rural development policy is wide and diverse. Currently, not all interests are represented in the policy development and monitoring process due to the lack of structured approach and also due to the insufficient experience of networking and advocacy, particularly on local level.</p> <p>Stakeholders who are currently involved in the development of rural network are encouraged to strengthen the link with organisations and communities on the local level. This can be done by establishing active dialogue plus the dissemination of information about the policy implementation and the benefits of networking. There is a need to invest in building networking capacity on the local level.</p>
Sources:	<p>Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.</p>

Input 8:	<p>Active involvement in the cooperation with networks in the EU.</p>
Rationale:	<p>Networking has become an essential part of the rural development policy implementation in the European Union. It allows collecting the best practices, exchanging experiences, and building new knowledge among stakeholders - who are involved in the agricultural and rural development policy. Networking supports creation of the information, knowledge and experience pool which could identify new trends in the development as well as innovative approaches to deal with various issues on agriculture and rural development.</p> <p>Therefore, stakeholders of the agricultural and rural development policy in Moldova have to play an active role in establishing close links with networks in the EU and should support transnational co-operation initiatives and the exchange concerning actions and experience in the field of rural development.</p> <p>In this respect, stakeholders could opt for activities regarding the participation in and contribution to the European network for rural</p>

	<p>development and/or develop closer links with particular National Rural Networks in EU Member States.</p> <p>For this purpose the ENRD website (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/home-page_en) can serve as an entry point for the ENRD activities, and country data (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/contact/country-data_en) can support finding of partners in the EU Member States.</p> <p>It is worth to mention that the European Network for Rural Development has three secretariats with their distinct role:</p> <p>Contact Point is responsible for overall coordination of the ENRD (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/about/contact-point_en)</p> <p>Evaluation Helpdesk provides support to evaluation of rural development policies in EU (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/who-we-are_en)</p> <p>EIP-Agri Service Point is established to facilitate innovation and knowledge-exchange in agriculture (https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/about/service-point-eip-agri-network)</p>
Sources:	Observations of the researcher.

Input 9:	Refigured collaboration between public policies affecting agricultural and rural development policy.
Rationale:	<p>Agricultural and Rural Development policy is one of the policies implemented in Moldova. It has a significant influence on the economic development of rural areas and also to the environmental and social situation of all regions of Moldova. In this respect, agricultural and rural development policy has to be developed and implemented hand in hand with other related policies of Moldova.</p> <p>The Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 has identified the lack of adequate integrated approach between NARDS, regional development, economic development and environmental policy. Some of the stakeholders during interviews also mentioned that there is a need for better coordination between policies, albeit some of the mentioned policies are developed and implemented within one ministry - The Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment.</p> <p>Stakeholders can facilitate the adequate integration of policies by harmonizing the interests of stakeholders and voicing them out to the respective responsible authorities. This whole process will also require an active collaboration of the National Network with several ministries where stakeholders can play more active role in programming, implementing and monitoring public policies linked to agricultural and rural development.</p> <p>Such integrated framework with functional integration of teams at the inter-ministerial and inter-institutional level can serve as a permanent working mechanism and can facilitate support to the improvements of the living conditions, economic activity, and the attractiveness of the rural areas.</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C4, C21)

	Stakeholders interviews.
Input 10:	Meaningful balance between objectives, sectors, territories and beneficiaries.
Rationale:	<p>Strategy is a political tool that helps allocate available resources to interventions that could generate the best possible results and would help achieve the objectives defined by respective policy. It also has to satisfy the public demand for economic, environmental and social aspects of the development. The Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 has flagged a number of issues. For instance; the share of financial support between objectives, the dominance of certain sectors in receiving support, the insufficient allocation of resources which hinders achieving the defined results in a number of actions and which also signal an unbalanced programming. It has also raised some criticisms from several stakeholders which evidently came out from interviews.</p> <p>Investments under particular objectives can also have secondary effects to other objectives. For example, mid-term evaluators have concluded that without the major investments in providing resources and improving the standard of living in the rural areas, sustainable growth of the sector cannot be maintained. Some investments to support the growth of the sector can cause a negative effect on the natural resources and consequently a negative impact on the achievement of the environmental objectives.</p> <p>Stakeholders can play a crucial role in balancing the objectives by requesting the programming authorities to provide an analysis of the potential effects of the investment. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How programmed contributions will ensure the balance between the objectives? - What will be the prospected impacts of the investments on the different sectors of agriculture and rural economy in general? <i>(If certain sectors are programmed to benefit more, then analysis has to show how such investments will influence (positively/negatively) other sectors and the rural economy in general?)</i> - What is the prospected territorial coverage of the investments? <i>(Are there any regions which will be in a more advantaged situation due to programmed investments? How investments in one region will influence socio-economic situation in other regions?)</i> - What part of the rural population and which groups of society will benefit most and how will it influence the general quality of life of the rural population? <p>Such analysis can justify political decisions on the allocation of resources by respecting the meaningful balance between objectives, sectors, territories and beneficiaries.</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C3) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 11:	Support to community-led local development initiatives.
Rationale:	<p>It has been concluded by several policy makers in the past decades that a number of issues which have to be addressed by public policies cannot be solved by top down approach or applying national policy instruments. Therefore, a number of policies of the European Union have acknowledged significant role of involvement of local communities into approaches, which provide innovative local solutions and sustainable territorial development. LEADER / Community-led Local Development (CLLD), aside from supporting socio-economic development, is also considered as an effective approach of local strategic governance; it also adds value in terms of increased social capital, and enhanced delivery of policies. Therefore, stakeholders are encouraged to continue programming and further development of the LEADER initiative by requesting the allocation of public support in the agricultural and rural development policy, which can foster meaningful implementation of such measures as development and running of Local Action Groups, development and implementation of local development strategies, animation (e.g. training, information, exchange of experience, research) of rural territories, interterritorial and international cooperation and networking.</p> <p>In this respect together with the recommendations of the NARDS for 2014-2020 Mid-term evaluation, stakeholders have to discuss the best practical approaches to involve local communities in the local development process.</p> <p>It is worth to emphasize that LEADER initiatives are well known and also further developed in all EU Member States. Thus, international cooperation and networking should not be underestimated because it is a venue on how to be actively involved in the EU networks of LEADER like ELARD and to gain latest knowledge on local development practices by being in constant contact with other LAGs through cooperation projects or active involvement in the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) (See https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_en).</p>
Sources:	<p>Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C24)</p> <p>Stakeholders interviews.</p> <p>Observations of the researcher.</p>

Input 12:	Emphasize the role of local authorities in rural development.
Rationale:	<p>Local authorities have its significant role in the socio-economic development because they are assigned to develop and sustain local public infrastructure and services in rural areas. The infrastructure and access to public services contribute to the vibrant socio-economic activity.</p> <p>Conclusions of the Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 as well as a number of interviewed stakeholders flagged that Strategy did not have relevant tools to make investments in local infrastructure and public services, plus the local authorities were not sufficiently involved in the Strategy implementation. This resulted with unbalanced commitments to improve the living conditions in the rural areas.</p>

	In this respect, stakeholders have to emphasize the role of local authorities in the programming and implementation of rural development policy, by proposing to include them as beneficiaries and allocate resources to the development of small-scale public infrastructure and services . It could also be considered involving the local authorities in cooperation with the economic agents during the development of small-scale infrastructure, which facilitates the development of businesses in the rural areas.
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C21, C23) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 13:	Exploring smart village development potential and integration in the rural development policy.
Rationale:	<p>The Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 as well as number of stakeholders have emphasized a slow development and even degradation of villages in terms of economic activity (unemployment, lack of economic diversity, etc.), and social situation (depopulation, social polarization, etc.). This urges the need for some revitalization measures which involve both local development approaches and national level policies by reconfiguring the village and reinforcing the role of the village in the society.</p> <p>Smart village is a new concept which has emerged in EU with the need to revisit the role of the villages in the rural development. Smart Villages are communities in the rural areas that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities. They rely on a participatory approach to develop and implement their strategy to improve their economic, social and/or environmental conditions, particularly by mobilising solutions offered by digital technologies. Smart Villages benefit from the cooperation and alliances with other communities and actors in rural and urban areas. The initiation and the implementation of Smart Village strategies may build on the existing initiatives and can be funded by a variety of public and private sources.</p> <p>Stakeholders could explore current experiences of the smart village development initiatives in the European Union and consider use of this potential by integrating it in the agricultural and rural development policy.</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C25) Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 14:	Support regeneration of rural areas by involving young people in the agriculture and rural development and by improving the quality of agri-food related study programs .
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Rationale:	<p>The aging population is an issue which was identified in the Mid-term evaluation the NARDS for 2014-2020. It requires strategic interventions that support the active involvement of young people in the agri-food sector as well as in rural development. Some of the interviewed stakeholders mentioned that the shift of agricultural and rural development policy has been noticed by introducing activities and measures which favor the support to agri-economic activities implemented by the youth. In this respect, stakeholders are encouraged to continue to increase the share of public resources available for the youth in rural areas, particularly in supporting the diversification of agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities.</p> <p>Additionally, stakeholders have to take measures which promote the participation of the youth in the programming and monitoring of agriculture and rural development policy as well as in the networking of stakeholders.</p> <p>A number of stakeholders highlighted that the involvement of young people is also dependent on the quality of the training, vocational education and life-long learning programs which could provide necessary knowledge and practices. At this moment, the quality of study programs is unacceptable. Stakeholders are called to act on taking measures which would initiate improvements in the quality of agri-food and rural development related study programs and trainings.</p>
Sources:	<p>Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C22) Stakeholders interviews.</p>

Input 15:	<p>Stimulate the diversification of agri-food and non-agricultural economic activity in rural areas.</p>
Rationale:	<p>The vital economic activity of rural areas does not only involve agri-food sector but it also demands provision of products and services which are developed based on the available natural resources. Mobility of resources as well as the development of information technologies and the availability of broadband internet give opportunity for the development of other types of businesses in the rural areas.</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 recommends to diversify the rural activities. Interviewed stakeholders have also supported the need to motivate the development of diverse agricultural and non-agricultural economic activity in the rural areas.</p> <p>Therefore, stakeholders could play an active role in proposing the development of public support measures. It could stimulate the diversification of agri-food sector by adding value to products, ensuring the food security, and developing internationally competitive products with added value.</p> <p>The support to diversification of non-agricultural economic activities would also be essential.</p>
Sources:	<p>Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C22) Stakeholders interviews.</p>

	Observations of researcher.
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Input 16:	Balanced investments in rural tourism .
Rationale:	<p>In many countries tourism is seen as significant instrument for regional and rural development, as it stimulates new economic activities and has potential to attract additional inflow of financial capital. It may have a positive economic impact. Although, stakeholders need to initiate discussion on most appropriate strategy to support rural tourism as part of agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>Rural tourism can be expressed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic side-activity that diversifies agri-food sector as side business (e.g. pensions or guest houses on farms, local wine and food tasting, visits on farms, etc.); - Stand alone economic activity (e.g. restaurants, SPAs, etc.); - Public infrastructure for tourism (e.g. signs on roads, viewing towers, etc.). <p>Each of abovementioned activity requires different volume of investments. For instance, tourism as economic side-activity might require small-scale investments. On other hand, it will give better benefits if will be developed as part of the tourism package. Support via local development strategies and LEADER approach would suit best for such initiatives. Tourism as stand alone business will require significant investments where public support could be provided via national measures. Public infrastructure should serve as linking element. The discussion should focus on the volume of the public support, type of supported activities and beneficiaries.</p>
Sources:	Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 17:	Strategic decisions on the support to increase the competitiveness of the agri-food sector has to be transparently discussed and agreed upon with stakeholders , considering the potential impacts to the development of the agri-food sector and rural economy of Moldova.
Rationale:	<p>One of the objectives of the agricultural and rural development policy in Moldova is related to the increased competitiveness of the agri-food sector. This is programmed to be achieved through the restructuring and modernization of the market. It can be achieved by strategic investments to increase the productivity of the agri-food sector with a view to ensure the food security of Moldova, to support higher added value production, as well as by supporting the competitive export of the agri-food sector.</p> <p>With respect to the limited available resources, policy makers together with stakeholders in an active and transparent dialogue have to make strategic decisions on how to invest public money in the agri-food sector, the best way possible.</p>

	<p>The Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 has flagged a dominance of receiving support to certain sectors which was not well accepted by a number of stakeholders. Stakeholders would like to propose a qualitative debate to reach an agreement, whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To keep sectoral neutrality or to prioritize support to sectors (e.g. zootechnics, Winery, viticulture, fruit growers, apiculture); - To ensure balanced support to different types of market players (depending on their size, production) or to prioritize investments in particular groups (e.g. small size producers) that require boost in order to increase competitiveness; - To balance public support between production for domestic consumption (e.g. ensuring food security) and export (e.g. generating additional inputs for economic development of the sector).
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C8, C9, C10) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 18:	Balance between domestic productions, adding value to products and export of products with added value.
Rationale:	<p>Several interviewed stakeholders have identified the issue of insufficient support to food security and production for domestic consumption in Moldova. The mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 has also spotted that the current system of support does not limit the export of primary products which are needed for domestic consumption and neither encourage adding value to those products and exporting products with higher added value.</p> <p>If strategic decisions are in favor to the food security and productivity of the agri-food sector, stakeholders need to request the development of such public support schemes (e.g. selection criteria, volume of the support), which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encourage to produce high quality products for domestic consumption, - support production of added value in Moldova and diversifies rural economy accordingly, - primarily foster export of products with high added value.
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C12) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 19:	Grant schemes and targeted support instruments for small producers .
Rationale:	Meaningful balance in the rural economy is encouraged through the diversity of players and production; although, it was observed and proven by the Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 together with stakeholders' interviews that subsidies mechanism benefits the major producers and able to provide major investments.

	<p>However, a large share of producers in Moldova are considered as small producers which still lack sufficient competitiveness in their economic performance. In this respect, stakeholders have to advocate for strengthening of more flexible and vital producer segment and particularly by developing interventions (e.g. grant schemes) for small producers taking into account their financial vulnerability, capacities (including knowledge and cooperation) and other socio-economic limitations (e.g. access to markets).</p> <p>Financial subsidies to small producers have to be coupled with a range of effective support instruments (e.g. training, advisory services, exchange of experience, cooperation, increased participation and improved access to supply chains).</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C13) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 20:	To support various forms of cooperation in the small scale production.
Rationale:	<p>Small scale agri-production is essential for sustaining a vibrant socio-economic activity of the rural areas in Moldova. Although, stakeholders in their interviews expressed a concern on the low effectiveness of small scale agri-producers. To improve the situation, stakeholders are encouraged to propose the development of agricultural and rural development policy measures that would foster and support long-term cooperation of small scale producers.</p> <p>Such measures can also include the support to establishment and development of various agri-production short food supply chains and local food systems where small scale food producers are better integrated.</p>
Sources:	Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 21:	Facilitate the introduction of risk management measures in the agriculture.
Rationale:	<p>Farmers are increasingly facing risks of income volatility, partly because of market exposure, partly because of extreme weather events and frequent sanitary and phytosanitary crises affecting the livestock and agronomic assets. Encouraging farmers to make savings from the good years to cope with bad years, and a robust framework to be set up to ensure appropriate risk management could alleviate the effects of the income volatility.</p> <p>With this aim, the government and farmers may be able to draw a platform on risk management for capacity-building in order to provide farmers with adequate financial instruments for investments and the access to working capital, training, knowledge transfer, and advice.</p> <p>In the light of the need to ensure appropriate risk management tools, insurance premia and mutual funds should be maintained which are</p>

	financed by the public funds and its use should be encouraged by stakeholders.
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C7) Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 22:	Specific support for promotion of the development of organic farming in cooperation with stakeholders.
Rationale:	<p>Organic farming practices are generally considered as a reasonable compromise between extensive economic activity and conservation of nature resources in the agriculture. However, according to the findings of the Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020, organic farming was not adequately covered.</p> <p>Several stakeholders have confirmed that there is a significant potential for developing organic farming in Moldova. It requires not only sufficient financial support, but also the development of the organic farming support schemes including capacity building, experience exchange actions, and elaboration of organic food supply chain initiatives.</p> <p>The role of stakeholders is essential both from the perspective of advocating for specific support to organic farming as well as facilitating the change of the mindset of conventional farmers.</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C18) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 23:	Participation in fostering sustainable management practices of natural resources in agriculture .
Rationale:	<p>The agriculture sector is highly dependent on the natural resources. This is why any investment or any other development activities are very sensitive in terms of possible effects to the environment. In this respect, sustainable managements of natural resources should be carefully considered and agri-food activities have to respect the rules and restrictions for a sustainable employment of natural resources.</p> <p>The mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 has identified several issues which put in question the sustainable management of natural resources in agriculture - particularly the protection of soil and water. Evaluators recommend establishing the clear principles of sustainable land management as well as encourage to create a united approach for soil and water resource management. In some cases, it may require a rearrangement of the current management practices among market players. It may involve some restrictions which could limit some benefits for market players. This means that raising the environmental awareness of the beneficiaries through informing, educating, developing good practices, and exchanging experiences are crucial to effectively implement the</p>

	<p>agricultural and rural development policy, particularly achieving the environmental objectives.</p> <p>Those market players who apply or plan to apply sustainable management practices in their business activity have to be recognized and stimulated (e.g. with relevant selection criteria, increased support rates) in the implementation of the policy. This also could include the development of selection criteria which limit the support to activities that create a negative impact on the environmental situation.</p> <p>In order to balance decision making and to have more transparent and informed decisions, environmental stakeholders (both governmental and non-governmental) have to be actively involved in the development and monitoring of the agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>Therefore, stakeholders have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop capacities that empower the involvement of environmental stakeholders in programming and monitoring agricultural and rural development policy; - participate in the decision making on how to recognize and stimulate the application of sustainable management practices; - promote best practices among market players.
Sources:	<p>Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C14, C15, C17) Stakeholders interviews.</p>

Input 24:	<p>Support to more active use of sustainable management technologies of the natural resources in agri-food sector.</p>
Rationale:	<p>Introduction of sustainable management technologies of the natural resources in agri-food sector could be a key element in achieving and/or sustaining good environmental conditions; although, the mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 has concluded that such technologies were attained minimally.</p> <p>In this respect, pro-active actions are needed to foster the development and use of sustainable management technologies.</p> <p>This can be achieved by supporting the development of good practices in the sustainable agriculture and purposely promoting such practices among market players.</p> <p>The development of trainings and advisory should be encouraged and supported, which help to increase information and the knowledge about sustainable management practices and use of technologies.</p> <p>As part of the networking and cooperation activities, new partnerships between economical agents and researchers should be promoted which focus on environment in agriculture.</p> <p>Stakeholders could play an active role in developing above-mentioned activities as part of the agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>In this respect, there are some inspiring examples of partnerships and cooperation projects available in the database of the European Innovation</p>

	Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) initiative. See https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C16) Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 25:	Competitive selection of projects.
Rationale:	<p>The public support which is available for the implementation of the agricultural and rural development policy is limited. In this respect, it has to be invested in the best way possible and has to give the highest possible return on the investment by achieving defined objectives. It is obvious that only limited number of market players will receive public financing for their support. This is why stakeholders have to advocate for such selection procedures which introduce a competitive selection of beneficiaries, and their project proposals that can demonstrate best potential achievement of results.</p> <p>During the Mid-term evaluation of the NARDS for 2014-2020 as well as in the interviews with stakeholders, it was mentioned that a number of measures were implemented on the “first come, first serve” basis. This ensured an advantage for those potential beneficiaries who were better informed about the availability of support, although those supported projects did not always achieve the intended results.</p> <p>When a high number of potential beneficiaries are lacking knowledge on how to develop the business plans and project proposals plus an ineffective system on information dissemination, competitive selection by introducing a relevant selection criteria is crucial.</p> <p>Stakeholders have to participate in the decision making on what selection criteria should be introduced.</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development (NARD) Strategy for 2014-2020. (C11) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 26:	To follow the development of the delivery system of the rural development policy implementation with a particular focus on the simplification and reducing administrative burden.
Rationale:	<p>Effective implementation of the agricultural and rural development policy requires the development of appropriate delivery system (e.g. organisation of calls, permits for production, verification of payments, etc.). For this purpose, a set of legislative acts are developed which have to be followed by the beneficiaries. It happens that by adding various requirements, the assessment of their impact on the beneficiaries is not done and it turns out as an additional administrative burden.</p> <p>Stakeholders are urged to check on the delivery system from the beneficiaries’ point of view and have a clear view if all activities (e.g.</p>

	to apply for support, to implement project, to report, etc.) are essential and with limited administrative burden.
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C7) Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.

Input 27:	Appropriate formulation and prioritization of identified needs justified by the evidence-based robust analysis of the socio-economic context and latest available data.
Rationale:	<p>Following the logic of the strategy development and in order to respond to the most actual needs of rural development in the best possible way, rural development strategy has to be based on a robust analysis of the socio-economic situation (context), which considers latest issues and strengths of rural areas of Moldova, taking into account the relevant opportunities and threats.</p> <p>Situation analysis has to be justified with the latest available statistical data and must have been discussed with stakeholders and experts. This will aid to a better way of prioritizing the needs which have to be addressed by the rural development strategy after 2021.</p> <p>Imbalance on how issues are developed, analyzed and how they were further detailed in actions, is highlighted in the Mid-term evaluation report of the NARDS for 2014-2020. It is also confirmed by a number of interviewed stakeholders.</p> <p>Stakeholders have to be aware of <u>what information has to be collected for the analysis of the socio-economic situation</u> considering that the analysis and collected evidence expressed as a baseline for measuring achievements, results and impacts will set the starting point for the evaluation of the implementation of the Rural Development Strategy. Therefore, it is essential to check if the collected information will be useful in showing the progress of the implementation of strategy as well as its long term impacts.</p> <p>Stakeholders should be involved <u>in the formulation (distinguishing sectoral problems and developmental needs) and the prioritization of identified needs</u> in a way that they can clearly see the link between identified needs and objectives (including planned actions and results), and additionally to better understand their role and focus of the strategic document for Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2026.</p>
Source:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C1) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 28:	Sound and well documented intervention logic showing clear link (logic) between identified needs and proposed strategy in order to achieve defined objectives.
Rationale:	<p>The strategy has a higher probability to achieve defined objectives if there is a clear connection established between main elements of the strategy (<i>problems - needs – inputs – actions – outputs – results – impacts – objectives</i>) and those links are clearly understood by the policy makers and stakeholders who will be involved in the implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>The intervention logic (can also be developed as a graphic representation) should provide clear answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Why the desired change shall happen? (Needs)</i> - <i>What is the desired change? (Link between actions and objectives)</i> - <i>How the desired change shall happen? (Link between inputs, actions, outputs and objectives)</i> - <i>What are the necessary outcomes to achieve the objectives? (Link between actions, outputs, results, impacts and objectives)</i> <p>The soundness of the intervention logic of NARDS 2014-2020 was an issue and the need to restructure the logic of the intervention was identified in the Mid-term evaluation report which were confirmed by a number of stakeholders during interviews. This highlight the necessity to check if the intervention logic of the strategic document for Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2026 is sound and well documented as well. For this purpose, recommendations for a restructured logic of intervention (See Annex 5 of the Mid-term evaluation) could be used as lessons learned from the current programming.</p> <p>Stakeholders have to be involved <u>in the assessment of the intervention logic</u> of the strategic document for Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2026. This is a way to improve the whole design of the policy, to identify potential gaps, and to flag possible inconsistencies from the point of the view of the beneficiaries.</p>
Sources:	Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C2) Stakeholders interviews.

Input 29:	Quality and availability of data to show achievements and positive impacts of the strategy.
Rationale:	<p>Well documented intervention logic means that it provides clear link to data, which are used to measure outputs, results and impacts as well. With this respect, stakeholders have to question the programming authorities about the quality and the availability of data. This also requires development of an adequate monitoring system - which allows to collect data from the beneficiaries; to aggregate necessary data on the operational level; and to develop measures which can check the validity of collected data.</p> <p>The data needed to assess the results and impacts of the implementation of agricultural and rural development policy are / can be collected by the different agencies. In this case, the issues that may appear are: the timing and the frequency of data collection, the possibility to link respective data</p>

	<p>bases, the transfer of data from one agency to another (legal and practical aspects), and ensuring that the data collection methodologies are comparable. This requires the development of appropriate capacities in institutions that are responsible for the monitoring of the Agriculture and Rural Development strategy 2021-2026, as well as the smooth coordination between institutions that could be under the leadership of different ministries.</p> <p>The quality, availability, and the adequate monitoring system of data was flagged in the Mid-term evaluation report of the NARDS for 2014-2020 and was also confirmed by a number of interviewed stakeholders.</p> <p>Data quality and availability are rather technical aspects of the policy programming and implementation cycle. In this regard, stakeholders need to be aware of how the programming authorities are going to deal with the data situation in an early stage as possible. Data collection might cause some extra administrative burden on the beneficiaries as well. That's why stakeholders should check how the <u>collection of data will affect the beneficiaries</u>.</p> <p>Stakeholders can also initiate inter-ministerial discussions on data coordination and management, if necessary.</p> <p>To ensure the appropriate monitoring system, having sufficient resources in place is needed and that also includes finances and knowledge. The authorities responsible for monitoring are encouraged to explore the experiences of Paying Agencies which are responsible for the monitoring of Rural Development Programmes in the European Union. For example, the informative system developed by Paying Agency in Latvia was awarded as the world's best IT tool in 2017.</p>
Sources:	<p>Mid-term evaluation and review of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) for 2014-2020. (C5)</p> <p>Stakeholders interviews.</p>

Input 30:	<p>Active role in collecting data for monitoring and evaluation purposes, as well as initiating analytical exchanges between stakeholders, sharing and dissemination of evaluation findings.</p>
Rationale:	<p>One of the generally accepted practices is to involve the functionally independent evaluators in the assessment of the implementation of policies; moreover, active involvement of the stakeholders in the evaluation process has proven to increase the quality of evaluation as well as presented a better understanding on what is needed to improve the quality of policy. Therefore, stakeholders can play a significant role in supporting the evaluation of agricultural and rural development policy. This can be achieved by an active involvement in collecting, analysing, and disseminating information on action in the field of rural development.</p> <p>The experience from a number of EU Member States (e.g. Italy, Germany) shows that stakeholders can provide meaningful support on evaluation processes together with data collection and management. Stakeholders can also initiate activities regarding the facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between rural development stakeholders, wherein sharing and dissemination of evaluation</p>

	<p>findings would increase the quality of the agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>Last but not the least, stakeholders can organise activities with regard to sharing and the dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings, thus initiating arguments and evidence for possible changes and improvements on the agricultural and rural development policy.</p> <p>The evaluation of the implementation of agricultural and rural development policy requires the assessment on the effectiveness of the means of information and capacity building which have been used to support beneficiaries (e.g. informing about calls, training of potential beneficiaries, collecting prove of achievement of results).</p>
Sources:	Stakeholders interviews. Observations of the researcher.