



European Network for
Rural Development

How to mainstream the bioeconomy in rural areas?

Recommendations from the ENRD Thematic Group
on 'Mainstreaming the bioeconomy'

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The ENRD Thematic Group also produced the following documents:

- > European rural bioeconomy: policy and tools
- > How to use RDPs to support rural bioeconomy?
- > Exploring the role of awareness-raising and communication in promoting the development of sustainable bioeconomy value chains

All documents are available for free download from the [ENRD website](#).

#bioeconomy



The content of this document is based on the work of the ENRD Thematic Group on Bioeconomy, and does not represent the views of the European Commission.

INTRODUCTION

Starting in July 2018, the ENRD animated a Thematic Group (TG) on ['Mainstreaming the bioeconomy'](#) with the overarching objective to "encourage the development of sustainable bioeconomy value chains in rural areas in order to promote employment, economic growth, and social inclusion, while preserving eco-systems." The TG was structured as an open group of interested stakeholders across Europe and involved among others Managing Authorities, researchers, farmers and representatives of environmental NGOs.

The TG's work was rooted in the use of EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and particularly Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), in support of its stated objectives. The TG identified the different element of rural value chains that can benefit from the development of the bioeconomy, how these benefits can be delivered in rural areas and how they can be made sustainable and self-supporting, particularly through the use of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The TG has drawn a series of recommendations based on outcomes of the TG meetings, over 30 interviews with national and regional authorities, civil interest groups, support services and farmers, desk-based research on literature, policy and strategy documents and direct input from selected experts involved with the TG work.

The following page summarises the recommendations developed by the TG. A more detailed version of the recommendations and the other documents produced by the TG are available for free download from the [ENRD website](#).



RECOMMENDATIONS

Enable support to rural bioeconomy within the RDPs: ensure a shared understanding of the concept and its significance for rural development and rural actors.

- Set a clear definition of what is meant by 'bioeconomy' within the RDP context, and the results that it is expected to deliver, covering expected economic, social and environmental outcomes simultaneously.
- Integrate awareness-raising activities of the definition and of the available support opportunities at all levels, from RDP administration to local authorities, advisory services, farmers, rural businesses and others.
- Build a vision for the rural bioeconomy enabled through RDPs, linked where possible to national or regional visions (and the EU Strategy on Bioeconomy) and other funding instruments.
- If wanted, the adopted definition for 'bioeconomy' can be used to set eligibility criteria for (some) RDP funding.

Bring actors together to create and support the development of resilient and innovative bioeconomy 'value webs'.

- Use existing (or develop new) networks, clusters and supply chains to enable innovation and entrepreneurship for new bioeconomy value chains, involving small and large players, at different stages in the chain.
- Encourage innovative linking together of different sectors and value chains that evolve in synergy.
- Make sure expert advice and support is available at all developmental stages, from launch to learning.

Use RDP measures smartly to provide coordinated support to rural bioeconomy initiatives.

- Make available combinations of RDP measures that can together respond to the needs in launching, supporting, sustaining and improving rural initiatives around bioeconomy. For example, match knowledge transfer activities or advisory services supporting the set-up of new bio-based business models with availability of investment measures; or support to innovation or pilot projects with investment or promotion and dissemination support (see Bioeconomy briefing "How to use RDPs to support rural bioeconomy?").

Facilitate territorial approaches where appropriate to optimise long-term buy-in and impact.

- Build synergies with existing territorial dynamics and resource availability to ensure that bioeconomy initiatives contribute to sustainable development and management of land and resources.

- Ensure all stakeholders' – even small ones' – interests and existing initiatives are taken into account in the process and local needs are being answered.
- Prioritise activities that add and maintain value within the local rural economy through circular value chains and synergetic 'value webs', promotion of local demand and upgrading of local employment, services and knowledge base. This includes the integration of producers into other stages of the value chain.

Find synergies with other ESIF instruments and tools.

- Ensure Managing and Paying Authorities are aware of synergetic objectives relevant to rural bioeconomy and complementary funding instruments of different ESIF funds, how they can be accessed and used in this context to support rural bioeconomy value chains and their diverse stakeholders.
- Explore opportunities to provide complementary funding from diverse ESIF funds, possibly in 'packages' according to eligibility and applicability of each fund. For example, using ERDF support to carry out a feasibility study for a rural bio-based enterprise and RDP funding to support related investments in business start-up and infrastructure.
- Streamline the funding advice and application processes for the rural beneficiary as much as possible. For example, setting up a one-stop-shop for all rural bioeconomy initiatives to access different funding and support streams; developing on-line application systems.

Develop indicators that reflect the distinctive and varied nature of bioeconomy initiatives.

- These will help assess and negotiate initiatives that are labelled as bioeconomy in the first place (see first recommendation – Enabling support) as well as enable monitoring.
- Do not reinvent the wheel: extensive work has been done on indicators for different elements of the bioeconomy, which should be built upon to reduce administrative burden and data collection needs. Within an RDP, apply the ones that are relevant and that are in line with indicator frameworks already applied in your RDP context.
- Use indicators that allow the effective demonstration of economic, social and environmental impact which can be expected from the bioeconomy.
- Explore new tools that enable further value creation for rural bioeconomy initiatives through market recognition and reward.