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CONTRIBUTION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Working Party on Horizontal Agricultural Questions (Post-2027 CAP)
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Subject:	Regulation establishing the conditions for the implementation of Union support under the CAP - Comments from Malta on block V

Malta's Written comments on

Proposal for a regulation establishing the conditions for the implementation of the Union support to the Common Agricultural Policy for the period from 2028 to 2034 (CAP post-2027)

Block 5

Article 18 – Leader

- Malta insists that the definition of rural areas must be determined by Member States to reflect their territorial realities. Article 110(c) of the CAP SP regulation allows national definitions to be used for CAP implementation - a similar provision is required in the CAP or the NRP proposal. EU-wide statistical definitions are unlikely to be fit for purpose, given the country's high population density and small geographic size.
- Article 18, paragraph 2 states that 'Member States shall support LEADER at least in rural areas with specific disadvantages defined by the Member States'. Malta's rural areas are not remote and residents have similar access to services as those in urban areas (e.g., jobs, education, healthcare), therefore, disadvantages that are specific to rural areas such as limited access to services, economic and employment challenges and connectivity issues remain limited. The following drafting suggestion is being proposed:

Member States shall support LEADER ~~at least in rural areas as with specific disadvantages defined by the Member States'~~

- Paragraph 3 states that 'Member States shall provide support through LEADER for projects implemented by local action groups involving...'. The understanding of the text as is currently worded is that the LAG would be the beneficiary receiving support. The LAG may be a beneficiary, as outlined in Article 76 paragraph 4 of the NRP proposal, however, not within this context.

Also, in relation to paragraph 3, the list of actions that LEADER is expected to support, is too extensive and prescriptive and Member States may want to finance such actions outside LEADER. In relation to this and the comment above, the following drafting suggestion is being proposed:

~~'Member States shall provide support through LEADER for projects implemented by local action groups involving startups, value added capacity in transformation, diversification of farm activities, including agrotourism, direct sale of agricultural products and innovation, as outlined in the respective local development strategy.'~~

- On paragraph 4, the following is being suggested to improve flexibility as LEADER in Malta normally also supports projects that are culture oriented:

Support provided from LEADER shall be focused on rural development fields with added value for farmers, ~~and~~ forest holders **and rural citizens**, such as social, environmental, **cultural**, digital and economic transformation of rural areas, improvement of well-being of rural citizens, **and** strengthening social capital.

Article 21 - Authority in charge of data governance under the CAP

This article requires that each MS designate one authority for data governance under the CAP. This Authority will need to ensure that national and cross-border interoperability is maintained. Additionally, a roadmap with measures and timeframes as well as reports will need to be submitted by the selected authority.

Sub-article 3 of this Article states that "the Member State shall consider in particular the need to establish a single digital identity framework and shall consider alignment with Regulation (EU) No 910/2014, including as regards the European Digital Identity Wallet for natural and legal persons." Given that point 15 of Article 5a of Regulation (EU) 910/2014 states that "The use of European Digital Identity Wallets shall be voluntary", for purposes of consistency, such consideration should also be on a voluntary basis.