

POLICY POSITION

Agriculture in Gozo

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GOZO REGIONAL
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GRDA Policy Position

Agriculture in Gozo

Following the publication of a Discussion Paper entitled 'Regional Agriculture: A Gozitan Perspective' in June 2023¹ and the subsequent consultation process, the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) is publishing its official policy position on agriculture.

Consistent with the Regional Development Strategy published in September 2023², the GRDA emphasises that key to Gozo's future is the sustainment of a formula that safeguards sustainable development. The agricultural sector was and will remain critical for our island since it serves a multifunctional role that extends beyond its direct economic contribution. This ranges from food production and food security, culinary tradition, land stewardship, environmental conservation, and recreational landscape, while offering various benefits to local communities, including recreational access, aesthetically pleasing green space in the countryside, and improved quality of life for residents.

Considering its importance, the agricultural sector should be safeguarded and sustainably managed to ensure its benefits continue to be realised by current as well as future generations. Hence, the agricultural sector necessitates a holistic policy vision that steers it into a more sustainable direction.

To embark on a more sustainable path, the local agricultural policy needs to be revisited so as to reflect the main changes in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the international food situation and to also meet and address local challenges while tapping new opportunities. This with special emphasis on young farmers, who are vital for the sector to continue functioning, as well as the two innovative principles embraced by the new CAP, Greening and Farm to Fork, which aim to achieve a fair, healthy, and sustainable sector.

It is clear that the regional agricultural policy should be based on a holistic vision that looks at the sector in a multi-dimensional manner whilst keeping the Gozitan context, as well as the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats into consideration. This will enable the formulation of policies that address issues and challenges in a scientific manner and based on actual facts and data. Such research-based policies would act as the basis on which the regional agricultural sector could be developed.

The GRDA will work together with other stakeholders to steer the agricultural sector into a more sustainable direction in line with other important targets including the European Green Deal,

¹ <https://grda.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Regional-Agriculture-Policy-Discussion-Paper-05.06.23.pdf>.

² https://grda.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/GRDA_RDS-Document_A4_VH_2023_Web-1.pdf.

Farm to Fork Strategy and Biodiversity strategy, as well as remaining within the parameters of the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027, the Gozo Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2023-2033, and other pertinent regulations.

Thus, the GRDA is formalising a set of critical objectives to guide policy for the agricultural sector in Gozo. These are:

- Enhancement of the competitiveness and economic viability for both full time and part time farming activities by focusing on quality and embracing diversification;
- Facilitation of entry of young farmers by creating a cost-effective agri-business sector, and encourage more part-timers to contribute to the sector whilst holding another full-time position in other sectors;
- Strengthening of the value of Gozitan food and produce under the EU Framework on Geographical Indications (GIs) and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG);
- Increase productivity, sustainability, and resilience of the regional agricultural sector, through utilisation of digital technologies as well as research and innovation, to achieve a fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly food system;
- Preservation of agricultural land and the proper enforcement of existing laws and regulations, pertaining the use of agricultural land, to ensure that farmland is managed by genuine farmers for agricultural purposes and related activities; and
- Sustain water and key resources, and support farmers in building sustainable enterprises to counter climate change impacts and, in doing so, increasing rural employment, particularly among the younger generation.



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