



# MONITORING THE MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT(MSSD)

## AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT National Study Italy, Summary

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable rural development strategy must include different dimensions, as is it also outlined in the MSSD: structural and economic, environmental and social dimension. This holistic approach however has been recognized in different institutional places, but very rarely has been actually pursued by public policies. A sectoral approach usually prevails, essentially because sectoral forces and pressure groups are able to drive public policies towards this objective.

Mediterranean countries and regions in the enlarged EU are using rural development policies more in the field of structural adjustments due to the strong need in the modernization and renovation of their agriculture. Italy does not differ from the other Mediterranean countries. Nevertheless, in the last years more financial resources than in the previous years has been targeted to environmental objectives. The financial effort towards other objectives within the sustainable rural development strategy is inadequate: this is especially true in the field of economic diversification, improvement of quality of life in rural areas, and finally a better governance of endogenous resources at local area. This critical point emerge from all European countries, Mediterranean countries included.

Effectiveness of policies for structural adjustments, better environmental management and diversification of rural economies is very variable according to regions and type of instruments. In any case, the Italian experience has shown that effectiveness has substantially been improved by the adoption of a territorial and integrated approach. This is true both in the field of rural development and in the regional development policies funded by the European Union. This is the reason why territorial and integrated approaches have become more popular in the last decade, so that the recent National Strategic Plan for rural development has been further oriented towards these approaches.

Territorial, integrated and bottom up approach in Italy has produced several effects (creation of employment, effects on private investments, effects on local governance and effectiveness of policies, other effects). But at the same time these effects were not uniformly distributed across regional territories. And at the same time, these effects are seen as difficult to be reached and very costly in administrative terms because they involve more human resources and expertise. However these experiences confirm that the ratio cost-effectiveness is more positive than that obtained in the more traditional approach. Moreover there are important intangible effects on social capital of rural areas which should be taken into account.

A great attention should be given to the conditions for reproducing the best results, especially to the main factors explaining the success or the failure of integrated placed-based rural development policies. Among the most relevant factors of success can be mentioned the following ones: the characteristics of the territory and the social and economic context; the design of the strategy; the quality of the project leadership; the vertical governance (the relations between EU, State and Region).