

COMMISSIONER RAY MAC SHARRY SIGNS LEADER AGREEMENTS WITH SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

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The EEC Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Ray Mac Sharry together with representatives of the Spanish and Portuguese Governments officially signed the Leader agreements for Spain and Portugal in Brussels today.

The LEADER programme is an initiative taken by the Commission within the framework of the Structural Funds that seeks to demonstrate the importance of direct support for local Community-based initiatives in the development of rural areas.

The main objective of the initiative is to find innovative solutions which will serve as a model for all Community rural areas and to provide valuable lessons for future EC policy in rural development.

The Commission has adopted a first set of decisions applying to the Community as a whole, involving 110 local groups to receive a total EC funding of 234 MECU; a further tranche covering approximately 90 additional groups receiving a total EC grant of 220 MECU will be decided in February next year.

The amount allocated by the Commission to Portugal and Spain represents approximately 40% of the total amount available for the Leader initiative.

For Spain, today's agreement relates to a grant of 83.083 MECU for 36 groups and represents 70% of the total amount (120 MECU) foreseen for Spain under the Leader initiative.

In the case of Portugal the Agreement covers a grant of 37.649 MECU for 13 groups and accounts for 72% of the total amount which is foreseen for Portugal.

A further tranche including the remaining finance and eligible groups will be decided in February.

Mr Mac Sharry was complimentary of the quality of the projects put forward by the Spanish and Portuguese groups and expressed the view that the projects should provide a significant contribution to the development of the rural areas concerned.

Note 1.

The agreement relating to the Spanish projects will be signed by Mr Luis Atienza President of IRYDA (National Institute for the Reform and Development of Agriculture), the organisation designated by the Spanish Government as the Intermediary.

Mr José Alberto Guerreiro dos Santos, Director General of the Directorate General of Planning and Agriculture which has been designated as the intermediary body will sign the agreement on behalf of Portugal.

Note 2.

Community Financial Allocation by funding source:-

	FEOGA	FEDER	FSE	TOTAL
PORTUGAL	16.362	20.241	1.046	37.649
SPAIN Obj.1	31.929	31.929	4.225	68.083
SPAIN Obj.5b	6.340	7.500	1.160	15.000