



ANNEX C1: Twinning Fiche

Project title:

Twinning Agrifood

- Strengthening sector monitoring, data management and payment administration

Beneficiary administration:

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) of the Republic of Moldova as the central beneficiary, the **National Agency for Interventions and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA)**

Twinning Reference: MD 22 NDICI AG 01 24 (MD/43)

Publication notice reference: EuropeAid/182200/DD/ACT/MD

EU funded project

TWINNING TOOL

List of abbreviations

<i>Acronyms Term</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
AA	Association Agreement
AAIN	Agricultural Accounting Information Network
AIPA	National Agency for interventions and payments in agriculture
ANSA	National Food Safety Agency
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement
DCPPIE	Public Policy Coordination and European Integration Directorate
DNFR	Digital National Farm Register
EC	The European Commission
FSDN	Farm Sustainability Data Network
FID	Food Industry Directorate
GD	Government Decision
IACS	Integrated Administration and Control System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISAMM	Information System for Agricultural Market Management and Monitoring
MAFI	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MPAS	Market Prices Analysis Service
Moldova	The Republic of Moldova
MS	Member State (EU)
NARDS	National Agriculture and Rural development strategy 2023-2030
NDS	National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030”
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SND	National Development Strategy ‘Moldova 2030’
SNDAR	National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-2030
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
WLA	Work Load Analysis

1. Basic Information

- 1.1 NDICI Moldova/ACT-61535/EU4 Resilience and Governance - (JAD.1121752)
- 1.2 Twinning Sector: Agriculture
- 1.3 EU funded budget: EUR 900,000.00
- 1.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 2 Zero Hunger, 8 Decent work and economic growth, 12 Sustainable consumption and production, 15 Life on land, 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions, 17 Partnership for the goals

2. Objectives

2.1 Overall Objective

The overall objective is to improve agriculture sector performance in line with the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement, the EU Integration process, and international agreements.

2.2 Specific objective

The specific objective of the Twinning project is to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) and the Agency for Interventions and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA) for enhanced sector monitoring, data management and efficient administration of agriculture and rural development funds in line with EU requirements and international best practices.

2.3 The elements targeted in strategic documents (such as the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030”, EU-Moldova Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, Association Agreement, Sector reform strategy and related Action Plans).

The proposed project will support the Government of the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter ‘Moldova’) to build its institutional capacities to harmonize its legislation and implement it in line with the *acquis communautaire* and international commitments. The EU, its Member States, and the Republic of Moldova signed an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, in 2014 and fully applied it from 2016 after its ratification. An Association Agenda sets out a list of priorities for joint work on implementing the Association Agreement. The revised joint document, covering 2021-2027 guidelines, EU-Moldova bilateral relations under the Multiannual Financial Framework for the programming period 2021-2027. During the European Council on 23 June 2022, Moldova was granted EU candidate status⁴². Ahead of this decision, the country submitted the ‘Information requested by the European Commission to the Government of the Republic of Moldova for the preparation of the Opinion on the application of the Republic of Moldova for membership of the European Union’⁴³. Chapters 11 and 12 outline the status of areas to be addressed by this Twinning project.

This Twinning is also coherent with the national priorities set in the main strategic planning document of the country, the National Development Strategy (NDS) “European Moldova 2030” (approved by the Parliament in November 2022⁴⁴). The National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" indicates the priority areas and directions for the long-term sustainable development of the

⁴² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/moldova/>

⁴³ Part I: (general part): <https://gov.md/ro/content/informatii-solicitate-de-comisia-europeana-catre-guvernul-republicii-moldova-pentru-0> and Part II (specific part, with single chapters): <https://gov.md/ro/content/informatii-solicitate-de-comisia-europeana-catre-guvernul-republicii-moldova-pentru>

⁴⁴ <https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2022/11/17/22008740> and for the entire text use https://imf.md/press/SND2030_377.2022.ro_ENG_google.docx

Republic of Moldova. It represents the strategic reference document for all national, regional, and local policy documents.

The National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-2030 (SNDAR 2030), adopted by the Moldovan Government in early 2023, contributes to the implementation of pillars 1 and 4 of the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" related to the agricultural sector and rural development and ensures the performance of the provisions of Title IV from the Association Agreement, Chapter 12 – Agriculture and Rural Development, by aligning with the general objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy.

3. Description

3.1 Background and justification:

The agricultural sector of the Republic of Moldova remains of particular importance for the economy of the country: it contributes to 13.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)⁴⁵, but employs 21.5% of the total labour force (25.4% for men and 17.1% for women) in 2021⁴⁶ and accounts for nearly half of the total exports of goods. Agricultural land covers some 2 129 000 hectares with the vast majority of farm holdings (71%) owning less than 1 hectare and over 85% producing predominantly for own consumption. Employment opportunities with adequate salaries are scarce and jobs outside of agriculture are rare in rural areas – non-agricultural activity accounts for only 5% of income in rural areas, while social benefits account for a quarter. Moldova depends on the agricultural sector for employment, and food security and economic development.

EU-Moldova relations are strengthened through the Association Agreement (AA)⁴⁷, signed on 27 June 2014 and fully applied after ratification in 2016), as well as the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement (DCFTA)⁴⁸. During the European Council on 23 June 2022, Moldova was granted EU candidate status⁴⁹. Ahead of this decision, the country submitted the ‘Information requested by the European Commission to the Government of the Republic of Moldova for the preparation of the Opinion on the application of the Republic of Moldova for membership of the European Union’⁵⁰. Chapter 11 and partly chapter 12 outline the status in areas to be addressed by this Twinning project.⁵¹ Overall, the European Commission concluded ‘Moldova is at an early stage of preparation on agriculture and rural development. It will need to fully align with the EU acquis and establish the structures, systems, and the administrative capacity to be able to implement and enforce it effectively.’ An annual assessment of progress under Chapter 11 and 12 will be part of the annual Enlargement Packages.

⁴⁵ Production volume by economic activities, CAEM Rev.2, 2014-2021

https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/40%20Statistica%20economica/40%20Statistica%20economica_13%20CNT_CNT210_Resurse/CNT210050.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774

⁴⁶ Employed population by economic activities, level of education, age groups, sex and area, 2014-2022

http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_03%20FM_03%20MUN_MUN020/MUN120200.px/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774

⁴⁷ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/hr/ALL/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_2014.260.01.0004.01.ENG,
https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/moldova/pdf/eu-md_aa-dcfta_en.pdf,

https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/7048451_en_acord_asociere.pdf, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/association-agreement-with-moldova.html>

⁴⁸ http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/moldova/pdf/eu-md_aa-dcfta_en.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/moldova/>

⁵⁰ Part I: (general part): <https://gov.md/ro/content/informatii-solicitate-de-comisia-europeana-catre-guvernul-republicii-moldova-pentru-0> and Part II (specific part, with single chapters): <https://gov.md/ro/content/informatii-solicitate-de-comisia-europeana-catre-guvernul-republicii-moldova-pentru>

⁵¹ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/SWD_2023_32_%20Moldova.pdf

The Twinning is aligned with the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030⁵²” and the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for the Republic of Moldova⁵³, agreed in 2022. The MIP 2021-27 supports resilience, recovery, and reform in the Republic of Moldova in line with the Association Agenda 2021-2027. Its Priority Area Agriculture Action Plan focuses on four specific objectives. For the 3rd Specific Objective, Output 3.1. ‘Improved enabling environment that promotes a transition towards sustainable food systems’ identifies the following indicative activities targeted by the twinning project, namely ‘Provide expertise to improve agriculture sector, performance monitoring and evaluation, e-governance and data management, facilitate training events, exchange visits and other experience sharing and learning events and provide capacity building for institutional development towards an accredited EU Paying agency for agriculture and rural development’.

The central beneficiary for this Twinning project is the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI). MAFI is the national authority in charge of aligning toward the EU acquis related to accession chapters 11 ‘Agriculture and rural development’ and 12 Chapter ‘Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy’. The Ministry’s organizational chart was updated in 2023 to better face the challenges related to the implementation of the National strategy for agriculture and rural development 2023-2027 and EU integration. Three new Departments were created, subject to support through the Twinning project:

- a. Public Policy Coordination and European Integration Directorate (DCPPIE) has the mission to ensure the process of planning, elaboration, monitoring, and evaluation of public policy and planning and to facilitate communication between the internal subdivisions within MAFI and the State Chancellery and other institutions that coordinate external assistance, in the process of international cooperation and management of external assistance. Seven staff positions are assigned to DCPPIE, of which only four are currently covered.
- b. Food Industry Directorate -FID oversees the development and monitoring policies in the field of the food industry, the establishment, monitoring, and evaluation of the achievement of sector performance indicators, harmonization of legislation and standards for food products compliant with the Common Agricultural Policy, promotion of agri-food products on internal and external markets, etc. Five staff positions are assigned to FID, of which only four are currently covered.
- c. Market Prices Analysis Service – MPAS has the mission to implement two main agricultural market instruments and tools required according to the EU acquis, including the AAIN⁵⁴ and ISAMM⁵⁵. Two staff positions are assigned for MPAS, of which only one is currently covered.

The above-mentioned departments are still understaffed and lack specific guiding rules for job descriptions, organization, and functioning. They also need precise definitions of resources, workload and workflow estimates, and communication lines with the concerned MAFI departments concerning data collection and management.

Further efforts are required towards establishing an Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) for which Moldova is at the very early stage of preparation. A digital Farm registry or system for identifying agricultural parcels as a basis for sector progress monitoring is in a very early stage of preparation and subject of a pilot in 2024.

⁵² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=134582&lang=ro

⁵³ C(2022) 4323 final of 29.6.2022 - ANNEX of the Commission Implementing Decision on the annual action plan in favour of the Republic of Moldova for 2022 Action Document for EU4 Resilience and Governance, C(2022) 4323 final of 29.6.2022 on adopting a multiannual indicative programme for the Republic of Moldova for the period 2021-2027

⁵⁴ AAIN - Agricultural Accounting Information Network (in the official language of Moldova its name is RICA- Reteaua de Informatii Contabile Agricole)

⁵⁵ ISAMM - Information System for Agricultural Market Management and Monitoring (In the official language of Moldova, its name is SIPA - Sistemul Informatic al Pietelor Agricole)

The National Food safety agency established in 2022 the ‘*e-ANSA*’ - Integrated Information System Concept⁵⁶. *e-ANSA* is an integrated information system intended for the digitization of the Agency's activity in order to computerize the traceability processes of food products of animal and non-animal origin, the record of operators in the food chain and their holdings, the management of sanitary-veterinary measures, the record of investigations laboratory, recording and disseminating alerts, recording the performance of animals and plant crops, managing documents issued by the Agency and providing electronic services for citizens and the business environment. Information sources are the automated information system State Register of Animals, the automated information system ‘Management of sanitary-veterinary measures’, the State Register of Veterinary Medicines, the automated information system ‘Laboratory Management Information System’ and the automated information system ‘State Phytosanitary Register’. ‘*e-ANSA*’ is integrated with other information systems state through the interoperability platform (MConnect).

Furthermore, besides integrating existing registries/data banks into one integrated system, better data collection, cleaning, and maintenance strategies are required to obtain updated and real-time information for decision-making. These efforts contribute to achieving Moldova’s Digital Transformation Strategy (STDM) 2023-2030.⁵⁷

The Government’s key ‘tool’ for the development of the agri-food sector (incl rural development) is the National Agricultural and Rural Development Fund (FNDAMR). The Fund was established in 2010⁵⁸ in order to strengthen the farmers’ competitiveness and sustainability. According to the Subsidy Law the regulatory framework should cover a period of five years, thus, bringing stability in the development of agrifood sector. In 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry introduced advanced payment mechanism for the start-ups in the development of agribusinesses. In 2021, direct payments for animal premiums were introduced. Moreover, during the last five years the number of support measures for the increase of the farmer’s competitiveness and the wellbeing of the rural communities has grown substantially. In 2023, its allocations from the state budget amounted to MDL 1.7billion, approx. EUR75million. In 2024, the allocation was reduced to MDL 1.5 billion.

AIPA⁵⁹ is the Central Agency under MAFI subordination that oversees the financial management. It is ISO 9001: 2015 ‘Quality Management’ certified since 2017, confirming compliance with the principles of the quality management system. AIPA has also passed an external audit mission on the implementation of the international standard ISO 37001: 2016 - Anti-Bribery Management Systems. In 2021 and 2022, two accreditation audits for an EU Paying agency (*‘as if AIPA was an EU agriculture paying agency’*) were conducted at AIPA in the framework of the previous Twinning project, which showed the Agency's progress in strengthening its internal control system.

The National Bureau of statistics (NBS)⁶⁰ is the Central Agency that manages and coordinates the activity in the field of statistics from the country. It elaborates independently, or in collaboration with other central bodies, and approves the methodologies of statistical and calculation surveys of statistical indicators per EU and international standards. Its activities are guided by the Development strategy of the National Statistical System 2023-2030⁶¹ and National Statistical System development program for the period 2023-2026⁶².

NBS units, relevant to agricultural statistics, are the Agriculture and Environment Division, Agriculture Statistics Section, Statistical Sample Surveys in Agriculture Section, and Environment Statistics Service. NBS has local branches in each rayon and others in four regions that collect data and send it to the Headquarters.

⁵⁶ DECISION No. HG791/2022 of 16.11.2022

⁵⁷ <https://egov.md/ro/node/39487>

⁵⁸ 16 December 2016 the Parliament adopted the Subsidy Law no. 276

⁵⁹ As per GD 20/2019 regarding AIPA’s reorganization as a public institution.

⁶⁰ As per GD.935/2018 regarding the organization and operation of the National Bureau of Statistics

⁶¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135611&lang=ro

⁶² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138684&lang=ro

The first and only General Census of Agriculture was conducted in 2011 and registered over 900 thousand holdings with some agricultural activity. A new Agriculture Census is planned for 2025⁶³, but budget allocation and preparatory steps are delayed. Specific support to the National Bureau of statistics in aligning agricultural statistics to the EU is envisaged to be provided under another Twinning project, with which close cooperation will be required.

3.2 Ongoing reforms:

The National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (NARDS) 2023-2030 and the National Food Security Strategy 2023-2030 promote a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector.

The National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-2030 has 4 main objectives, of which objective 4 will be especially relevant to the Twinning support:

1. Enhancing the potential of the primary agricultural sector and promoting smart, sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices.
2. Development of the food industry and diversification of markets.
3. Supporting sustainable socio-economic development in rural areas.
4. Ensuring the transposition of the EU acquis and its progressive implementation in the field of agriculture, rural development and food security.

The formulation of the NARDS support programme for their operationalization has started. An amendment to the ‘National Subsidy law for agriculture and rural development’ for the financial measures under the National Fund for agriculture and rural development 2025-27 is undergoing consultations.

The monitoring and evaluation processes are ensured by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, through its Public Policy Coordination and European Integration Directorate (DCPPIE) in a participatory framework.

3.3 Linked activities:

Agri-food sector development is supported by a large number of diverse partners, EU member state organizations, UN agencies, Civil Society and (sub)sector organizations. Sector coordination is weak with the Coordination Council for external assistance yet to become functional. A milestone for coordination of support efforts has been the creation of the Agrifood Partnership Platform of EU-Moldovan Ministries of agriculture in October 2023.⁶⁴ An EU-High level advisor to the Agrifood sector is being deployed.

The below listed projects are an extract of the most relevant interventions for institutional capacity building of the Twinning project. Synergies shall be enhanced with other development partner’s interventions, whenever possible and as appropriate.

The Twinning Project “Further Support to Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Safety in the Republic of Moldova” started in September 2020 and was finalized in December 2022. Its specific objective was to strengthen the institutional capacities of national public institutions Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI), the Agriculture Intervention and Payment Agency (AIPA), and the National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) in the design and implementation of agriculture, rural development, and food safety policy and food safety and quality standards, in line with AA/DCF.

⁶³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138684&lang=ro reference to the Agriculture census on section 3.2.10. *Realizarea lucrărilor de pregătire către Recensământul general agricol (RGA), runda 2030*

⁶⁴ <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/eu-and-moldova-launch-agrifood-partnership-platform/>

This twinning project was a strong driving force for the improvement and development of the administrations concerned. However, its Final Report states that the initiated institutional processes should be continued and further developed through a new Twinning project to continue with the process of EU integration. From the perspective of the Twinning management, the following key issues are relevant to ensure proper project ownership and tangible results as follows: 1) Agriculture (MAFI and AIPA) should be seen separately and covered with different projects; 2) The Beneficiary institutions need to prove capacities for the implementation of the project in each component and activity of the Twinning project fiche/mandatory results; 3) The future Twinning work plan should be closely/100% linked with the requirements of the EU (screening report).

The Twinning project “Improving spatial data services in the Republic of Moldova following EU standards” (MD 16 ENI OT 01 09 (MD/35)) started in September 2020 and was finalized in October 2023. The beneficiary institution was The National Agency for Land relations and Cadastre. Among the main results of the twinning project was drafting the Technical Specifications for the National Metadata Geoportal of the national spatial data infrastructure, which served as the basis for creating the new Geoportal with digital information.

The project “Technical Assistance to Support the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova”, was started in November 2019 and finalized in July 2022. The specific objectives concerned to strengthen Bureau of Statistics’ coordination role of the National Statistical System and its capacity to access and use administrative registers and other data sources of Moldovan institutions for statistical purposes aimed at enhancing public trust, high quality, and accurateness of data provided and processed; and promoting harmonization of statistics in line with the EU and international standards by enabling efficient and effective production, analysis and dissemination of official statistics, following best practices as implemented in the European Statistical System by adopting new technologies and methods for data collection and processing. The agricultural statistics were not specifically addressed.

EU4Local communities programme 2022-2025: A TEAM EUROPE Initiative of the EU, Germany, Austria and Poland, that includes support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry in the area of rural development, especially promotion and institutionalization of the EU LEADER approach and digitalization of related processes in the Ministry and the Paying agency AIPA.

The **German-Moldovan Agricultural Policy Dialogue** (2023- 2025) encompasses three results:

1. Decision makers, managers and technical experts in the agricultural sector from Moldova and Germany (and other European countries) use the Agricultural Policy Dialogue as a platform to exchange on priority agricultural policy topics.
2. The screening of the alignment and the compiling of a road map for further alignment with chapter 11 and 12 (and potentially also chapter 13) of the EU acquis is prepared in an effective manner by MAFI.
3. MAFI’s capacities are improved in the field of programming and monitoring of the agricultural policy.

World Bank-funded projects:

- a) **Agriculture Competitiveness Project** (MAC-P). The objective is to enhance the competitiveness of the country’s agri-food sector by supporting the modernization of the food safety management system; and facilitating market access for farmers. The implementation period is November 2012 to December 2024. MAFI is the implementing agency for 2 components. The first component aimed at enhancing the human, institutional, and technical capacity of the country’s food safety management system, as well as ensuring regulatory harmonization with EU requirements. The second component aims at improving marketability

and market integration of Moldova's high-value agricultural products – specifically in the horticultural sector and addresses institutional and market access elements of the competitiveness framework.

- b) **The Agriculture Governance, Growth, and Resilience Investment Project (AGGRI)** aims to stimulate growth and improve the resilience of the agricultural sector, as well as promote smart agricultural practices. It will be implemented during 2023-2029. Its specific objectives concern enhancing services delivery and knowledge management for Paying Agency, food safety, and advisory services; enhancing value chain development for growth, livestock and vegetables.

UNDP and FAO have been supporting the digitalization and e-governance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry in past years. Currently, the establishment of the Farm registry is being supported within the project 'Accelerating Digital Transformation in Public Sector Republic of Moldova' as part of the Digital Transformation Strategy of Moldova (STDM) 2023-2030⁶⁵ in the agriculture sector. Within this pilot project the legal framework shall be established and the IT system developed with inclusion of up to 10,000 farmers in the registry. Interoperability and interconnectivity shall be ensured with the two main national registries, the State Population Registry (*Registrul de Stat al Populatiei*) and Registry of Legal Units (*Registrul Unitatilor de Drept*), as well as the sectorial registries, including State Animal Registry, Vine and Wine Registry, Agricultural Equipment Registry, Soil Registry, Cadastre Information System, and others. **USAID** support on digitalization has been focussed predominantly on agri-food enterprises innovation with some support to the Food safety agency, especially in development of a training platform.

FAO has also been an active partner supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry on policy and strategy development. **WFP** has established its Country office to Moldova in 2023 fostering the Humanitarian-Development Nexus with assessment on food systems and supply chains. Other interventions are currently in formulation, as for example the Agriculture Growth and Rural Innovation – Moldova (AGRI-M) with support (grant and loan funding) by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

3.4 List of applicable *Union* acquis/standards/norms:

- Regulation (EU) 2021/2116, repealing Regulation (EU) 1306/2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing rules on support for CAP Strategic Plans, performance monitoring and evaluation framework (PMEF), for the CAP from 2023 until 2027.
- Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, establishing rules on support for national CAP strategic plans, and repealing Regulations (EU) 1305/2013 and 1307/2013;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/2117, amending Regulation (EU) 1308/2013 on the common organisation of the agricultural markets; Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products; Regulation (EU) No 251/2014 on geographical indications for aromatised wine products; and Regulation (EU) No 228/2013 laying down measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the EU.
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1217/2009 of 30 November 2009 setting up a network for the collection of accountancy data on the incomes and business operation of agricultural holdings in the European Community Commission;
- Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/220 of 3 February 2015 laying down rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1217/2009 setting up a network for the collection of

⁶⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110039&lang=ro

accountancy data on the incomes and business operation of agricultural holdings in the European Union;

- Regulation (EC) No 2018/1091 on integrated farm statistics;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) (OJ L 330, 20 September 2021);
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2021/2236 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) (OJ L 450, 16 December 2021);
- Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.07.2018);
- Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 487).

Regulatory framework for IPARD III

- REGULATION (EU) 2021/947 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009
- REGULATION (EU) 2021/1529 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III)
- COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2021/2128 of 1 October 2021 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as regards setting out certain specific objectives and thematic priorities for assistance under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)
- COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2021/2236 of 15 December 2021 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
- COMMISSION DECISION C(2022)1857 of 31 March 2022 establishing a model for a financial framework partnership agreement between the Commission and the government of an IPA III beneficiary
- COMMISSION DECISION C(2022)5232 of 27 July 2022 establishing a model of a Sectoral Agreement between the Commission and the government of an IPA III beneficiary in the field of agriculture and rural development

<i>Domestic Legal Framework relevant to the Twinning project (extract, not exhaustive)</i>
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- Law no. 136/2017 ‘About the Government’ and Government Decision no. 386 of 17.06.2020 regarding the planning, development, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policy documents
- Law no. 179/2016 from 21.07.2016 regarding Small and Medium Enterprises
- Law no. 1353/2000, with latest amendments enforced as of 01.01.2023 regarding Peasant Farms (GT)

Support programmes for agricultural producers:

- Law No 72/2023 regarding principles of subsidies for agricultural and rural development;
 - Government Decision No 455/2017 on the allocation of the resources of the National Fund for Agricultural and Rural Development;
 - Government Decision No 507/2018 approving the Regulation on the conditions and procedure for granting advance grants for start-up projects from the National Agricultural and Rural Development Fund;
 - Government Decision No 476/2019 approving the Regulation on the award of subsidies to improve the standard of living and working in rural areas from the National Agricultural and Rural Development Fund;
 - Government Decision No 836/2020 approving the Regulation on the granting of direct payments per head of animal;
 - Government Decision No 277/2022 approving the Regulation on granting advance grants for local development through the implementation of the LEADER programme.
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- Legislation and policies in wine and spirits sector (for ex.: Law no. 57/2006 for vines and wine, Vine and wine Registry of Moldova, etc.)
 - National legislation on organic and ecological agriculture (for ex.: Law no. 237/2023)
 - National legislation related to IGP, DOP, STG products (for ex.: Law no.66/2008 regarding protection of geographical indications (IGP), DOP, and STG, etc.)

Digitalization:

- Law no. 982/2000 from 11.05.2000 regarding access to information
- Law no. 71/2007 from 22.03.2007 regarding registries
- Law no. 142/2018 from 19.07.2018 regarding data exchange and interoperability
- Government Decision (GD) no 963/2020 approving the State Registry formed by Informational System 'Record of applicants and beneficiaries of subsidies'

3.5 Components and results per component

Mandatory result/Component 1: Strengthened capacity of the MAFI for enhanced sector monitoring and evaluation and developing elements towards an Integrated Administration and Control System – IACS (e-governance)

Twinning component 1 shall focus on improving monitoring of sector performance and reaching policy objectives and indicators defined in the National strategy for agriculture and rural development 2023-2030 and the National programme 2024-27, in close alignment with the EU acquis and CAP. Thereby, use of existing administrative data sources and data integration shall be prioritized. Inconsistencies between data from different sources shall be identified, investigated and proposals made for improved sector data management and data quality (including its completeness). While a gradual approach shall be applied to the development, concrete measures shall be established that can be achieved within short and medium timeframes based on existing resources, facilitated with Twinning support. Twinning activities shall be based on a situation analysis (defined latest with the initial Twinning work plan) considering the progress achieved towards establishment of the Farm registry and its national roll-out, as well as the implementation of the IACS roadmap. Finally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry shall be enabled to prepare and publish annual progress reports and strengthen its governance and control/accountability systems via Joint sector reviews with key stakeholders.

Capacities shall be built in view of establishing the IPARD Managing Authority, improved programming and setting up of a reporting and information system to gather financial and statistical information on progress of its programme.

Sub-result 1.1: System for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of agricultural and rural development sector progress and policy implementation established

Achievements to be reached under this sub-component should include, among others, the

- establishment of a monitoring framework and Action plan for the National Strategy for agriculture and rural development, including manual of procedures, specific templates, revised and improved existing guidelines (such as the Data Management Manual and Data Analysis for sector monitoring and reporting), in line with institutional data sharing arrangements and updated functions.
- Defining operational procedures and tools related to institutional, administrative, infrastructural, and technical capacities shall ensure effective workflow, clear lines of reporting, and coordination among targeted MAFI units (including ICTS⁶⁶) and other concerned departments and agencies.
- Human resource development plan, budget framework, IT requirements.
- Amendments to the relevant primary and secondary legislation.
- Outline of the Governance Framework for monitoring and progress review of the National Strategy and programme (including Joint sector reviews with key stakeholders).
- Design an information dissemination strategy, including Agri-food sector Annual performance report(s) and its publication.

Sub Result 1.2: Agriculture data from various sources is integrated to support timely and qualitative sector monitoring, reporting, and evidence-based decision-making

- Action Plan setting out the requirements for integrating agriculture data from various sources into a unified system prepared (to be agreed upon following internal and external consultations).
- Prepared methodological guidelines for piloting the information system currently under development according to EU requirements (such as the sampling methodology for data collection, accountabilities of data collectors, typologies of farmers, the content of questionnaires, etc.).
- Data Exchange Manual⁶⁷ with specific information on the accountabilities of data users of concerned agencies, data formats, data flows, timelines, templates, and data quality according to the new requirements. The NBS annual work programme⁶⁸ shall be reviewed in close cooperation with the NBS and Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry to improve harmonization/adaptation to data needs, whereby a cautious and realistic approach considering available resources and avoiding increased reporting obligations of economic operators must be applied.⁶⁹

Depending the progress achieved regarding the establishment of the **Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN) and the National Farm register**, support should be provided to their national 'roll-out' through provision of Twinning expertise to overcome emerging bottlenecks.

Sub Result 1.3: Improved legal and organisational framework and operational capacities

- Drafted appropriate Amendments to MAFI's current legislation on organization and functioning, with fiscal and regulatory impact assessed, including support to internal and external consultations.
- Prepared assessments and recommendations for adjustments to the existing organisational structure of MAFI and upgraded internal acts and Manuals of working procedures (Rulebooks

⁶⁶ ICTS –Information and Communication Technology Service

⁶⁷ The version prepared under the previous Twinning Project should be revised and updated

⁶⁸ GD 952/2022 of 28.12.2022 for 2023 Work programme:

https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=134849&lang=ro

⁶⁹ Including with reporting of economic operators in the Farm registry and e-ANSA.

of the organisation and systematization) with a particular focus on the Departments of Public Policy Coordination and European Integration Directorate, Food Industry Directorate, and Market Prices Analysis Service.

- Developed updated job descriptions in the new context with appropriate lines of responsibility and accountability.
- Institutional mechanisms (HR Policy, Retention Policy, WLA) for human resource development, maintenance, and improvement of the performance of MAFI staff in charge of Policy Analysis, Formulation, Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation are established.
- Provide advice on system requirements and procurement of external services/delegated activities for establishment, operation and maintenance of digital systems and registries.
- Prepared TNA⁷⁰ of targeted departments and a Training Plan to be supported by the Twinning project. This shall include strengthening data analysis capacities.
- Selected staff⁷¹ trained on the implementation of EU quality standards for effective management of agricultural statistics, IACS modules specific aspects, among others.

Mandatory result/Component 2: Institutional and administrative capacity of the Agency for interventions and payment in agriculture (AIPA) towards an EU-like paying agency strengthened

Twinning support under component 2 is aimed at further strengthening the *Agency for intervention and payments for agriculture* (AIPA) towards an EU-like paying agency (an ‘IPARD Agency’ as intermediate step), more explicitly building capacities of the **Anti-Fraud** Department and **Post-Payment Inspection** Department (including a functional Sanction System) as well as improving **Information security** for achieving ISO27001 standards. Progress shall be monitored based on an initial **self-assessment report (checklist) prepared jointly by AIPA Management and Twinning experts**.

Sub Result 2.1: Improved legal framework for the competencies of the AIPA

- Prepared action plan for implementation of changes in the legal base (laws and bylaws) with the aim to closely comply with EU regulation and accreditation requirements;
- Prepared assessments and recommendations for the existing organisational structure of AIPA and upgraded internal acts of the AIPA (e.g. Rulebooks for organisation and systematisation reflecting the competencies and responsibilities of the AIPA).

Sub Result 2.2: Strengthened overall administrative and operational capacities of AIPA

- Self assessment report of AIPA towards accreditation as IPARD Agency prepared (min 3 assessments/initial, mid term, TWG final);
- Institutional mechanisms (HR Policy, Retention Policy, WLA) for human resource development, maintenance and improving the performance of the AIPA staff are established;
- Updated Training Plan, prepared TNA (training needs analysis) and a Training Plan for the next 2 years;
- Upgraded existing Manuals of working procedures and prepared new ones for all working organizational processes (e.g. project approval process, control inspection, authorisation of payments, accounting and debt management, execution of payments, advance payments) with a view to the AIPA competencies and responsibilities according to the best practises of the MS and pre-accession countries;

⁷⁰ TNA - Training Needs Analysis

⁷¹ Participation shall not be limited to the NBS, but include staff of the Prime Minister’s office, State Chancellery, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, sub-delegated institutions and other partners, as relevant.

- Detailed checklists for administrative controls (completeness and compliance with eligibility criteria) per measure and detailed checklists for on-the-spot controls;
- Developed operational tools (questioners and checklists for verification of conflict of interest, capital connection and other fraud indicators) related to anti-fraud measures and prevention of corruption for the Anti-Fraud Department;
- Developed operational tools for performing the risk assessment and sampling the projects for on-the-spot verifications in the Department for ex-post payments.
- Established Reference price database, developed methodology for calculation of reference prices and prepared Manual for working procedure for implementation of the methodology.

Sub Result 2.3: Improved Information security for achieving ISO27001 standards

- Upgraded IT Strategy and IT Policy;
- Prepared assessment of the adequateness of the AIPA premises with regards to the fulfilment of ISO 27001 standard or equivalent and including its IT infrastructure. The criteria stipulated in this standard should be applied in those specific areas where such criteria are applicable;
- Prepared assessments, recommendations and action plans for activities to be undertaken for full compliance with ISO 27001.

Sub Result 2.4: Enhanced AIPA staff skills

- Selected Staff trained through pilot simulations on new revised working procedures in compliance with accreditation requirements and making use of similar experience for assessment (administrative and on-the-spot verifications) of EU funds from the member states (techniques, working papers, sampling techniques);
- Selected Staff trained to use new templates of the checklists for administrative controls (completeness and compliance with eligibility criteria) per measure and detailed checklists for on-the-spot controls from the new Manuals of procedures;
- Improved staff capacities for preparing risk assessments including staff trained for preparing fraud risk assessments and anti-fraud measures and for preparing risk assessments and sampling of projects for ex-post verifications;
- Study visits and/or internships for selected AIPA staff to learn EU and IPA best practices on the implementation of the Rural Development Programme, execution of administrative checks in the Project approval and authorization of payment processes, performing on-the-spot checks in the processes of on-the-spot control/inspection before approval, on-the-spot-control/inspection before payment and ex-post on-the-spot control/inspection.

3.6 Means/input from the EU Member State Partner Administration(s)*:

The project will be implemented in the form of a Twinning contract between the Beneficiary Country and EU Member State(s). The implementation of the project requires one Project Leader (PL) with responsibility for the overall coordination of project activities and one Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA) to manage the implementation of project activities, Component Leaders (CLs), and a pool of short-term experts to cover each sub-result to be achieved.

Member State(s) inputs shall be concise and focused on the strategy and methodology and an indicative timetable, the quality of the expertise to be mobilized to clearly show the administrative structure and capacity of the Member State entities to ensure the achievement of overall and specific objectives and mandatory results/outputs. The set of proposed activities will be further developed when drafting the initial work plan and successive rolling work plans, keeping in mind that the final list of activities will be decided in cooperation with the Twinning beneficiaries.

The Twinning project will be implemented by close cooperation between the partners aiming to achieve the mandatory results in a sustainable manner. Interaction between beneficiary institution's

staff and the Twinning experts shall be based on ‘expert-to-expert’ cooperation through joint working sessions for review and elaboration of documents and mentoring and backstopping focussing on ‘on-the-job’ knowledge transfer rather than single short-term expert missions and participation in training.

Several study visits shall be organized, that cover a variety of Twinning areas of intervention, with a clear focus on practical application, for the exchange of good practices and experience for the representatives of the institutions involved in the project from the beneficiary country. Traineeships or internships can be proposed.

It is important to note that this Twinning project extends not only on transposition (of legal texts) but is focused on implementation (i.e., real-life practice).

The interested Member State(s) shall include in their proposal the CVs of the designated Project Leader (PL) and the Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA), as well as the CVs of the potentially designated Component Leaders (CLs).

3.6.1 Profile and tasks of the PL:

- Master's degree in a relevant field to this Twinning Project (agriculture, etc.) or equivalent professional experience of 8 years in the absence of the required degree;
- At least 3 (three) years of professional experience as a high-ranking or middle management official in the agriculture sector of an EU member state administration (required);
- Previous practical experience in project management;
- Experience in leading or managing a team is considered an asset;
- Professional work experience in EU accession countries, the western Balkans or neighbourhood east is an asset;
- Excellent communication skills in written and spoken English (minimum C1 level);
- Computer literacy;
- Proven contractual relation to a public administration or mandated body, as defined under Twinning Manual 4.1.3;
- Experience in an EU-funded Twinning Project is an asset;

The Project Leader should attend the Steering Committee meetings with at least a quarterly visit to the Beneficiary Country. The Project Leader is responsible to coordinate the activities, disseminate project information among all stakeholders, take part in discussions with high level officials, present and defend project input and expected outputs, manage the project team, prepare project management reports, help overcome project related obstacles, and assist the RTA for continuous development of project initiatives. In addition, he/she will coordinate, from the MS side, the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which will meet in Moldova every three months. He/she will involve other relevant entities, taking into account on-going horizontal public administration reform efforts and sectorial activities that could have an impact on the project, and bear – together with the Beneficiary Country Project Leader – the final responsibility for an efficient and effective implementation of the Twinning project.

Project Leader Tasks:

- Design, supervision, and coordination of overall project preparation;
- Overall coordination and management of the implementation of the project in cooperation with the Beneficiary Country's Project Leader;
- Timely achievement of the project results;
- Ensuring sound implementation of the envisaged activities;
- Monitoring and evaluating the needs and priorities in the respective sector, project risks, progress against the project budget, benchmarks, and outputs, and taking any necessary remedial actions if needed;

- Coordinate the work of the RTA;
- Ensure effective use of project resources and inputs to achieve the expected results;
- Liaise with the Beneficiary Country's Project Leader, particularly with respect to making any changes to the project work plan that are necessary during the life of the project;
- Together with the Beneficiary Country's Project Leader (and relevant EU Delegation), co-chair the regular meetings of the Project Steering Committee;
- Take responsibility for interim and final reports together with the Beneficiary Country's Project Leader;
- Provision of legal and technical advice and analysis whenever needed.

3.6.2 Profile and tasks of the RTA:

One RTA is foreseen to work in this Twinning project and will be based at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova and/or AIPA.

In order to reach the planned strengthened institutional development and cooperation among the beneficiary institutions, the RTA and involved institutions need to align project activities and cooperate closely together. The RTA will have the overall coordination, responsibility for the reporting and ensuring EU visibility of activities.

The RTA will provide full-time input and advice to the project for the entire duration of the project, as main liaison partner for the Beneficiary Project leader with the responsibility to coordinate in the field and on a day-to-day basis all the activities planned in the Twinning.

She/he RTA will be responsible for the selection and supervision of a RTA Assistant and RTA language assistant/secretary and the management of the short-term experts' input. She/he will brief, guide and support the STEs seconded to the project and participants of study visits and provide guidance and support in the organisation of workshops and roundtable discussions.

The RTA can come from a Member State administration or mandated bodies (full or ad hoc).

Profile of the RTA:

- University degree in a relevant field for this Twinning Project (i.e. agriculture), or at least eight years of equivalent professional experience ;
- At least 3 years of specific professional experience in the agriculture sector or at an agriculture paying agency related to the implementation of the Union acquis and CAP objectives. Having at least six years of experience is an asset;
- At least 2 years of experience in project management; in the agriculture sector will be an asset;
- Good knowledge of Agriculture and Rural Development related EU legislation and regulations is desirable;
- Professional work experience in EU accession countries, the western Balkans or neighbourhood east is an asset;
- Excellent communication skills in written and spoken English (verbal and written, minimum C1 level);
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills;
- Cultural and interpersonal sensitivity in working with diverse stakeholders and interest groups;
- Computer literacy;
- Knowledge of Romanian or Russian language is an asset;
- Proven contractual relation to a public administration or mandated body, as defined under Twinning Manual 4.1.6.

RTA tasks:

- Coordination of all Twinning project activities and experts' inputs in the country.
- Ensuring smooth correlation between the activities, deadlines and the envisaged results in the Work Plan.
- Provision of technical advice and assistance to the administration or other public sector bodies in the BC in the context of a predetermined work plan to ensure timely completion of project outputs.
- Guiding and coordinating assistants to the RTA.
- Coordination, facilitation and monitoring of the STEs work during their missions (organize briefings and debriefings, sharing of mission report and recommendations).
- Document and knowledge management allowing an appropriate record of the delivered outputs.
- Liaison with MS, Beneficiary Country's Project Leader, EU Delegation Sector/Programme manager; other Twinning projects in Moldova (as relevant). Daily contact with the RTA counterpart.
- Monitor and follow up on implementation of expert mission findings.
- (co-)Drafting of project progress reports with the Project Leader.
- Ensure visibility of EU support provided through the Twinning and establish the communication strategy.

The RTA shall be supported by a full-time project and a full/part-time language assistant.

RTA assistants will cooperate on the organisational matters under the direction of the RTA and will be recruited and funded by the project for the duration of the respective RTA assignment. The RTA assistants will provide logistical and administrative support, technical translation and interpretation services for the RTA to facilitate the implementation of the Twinning project activities and assist in the preparation of working documents, organisation of seminars, training and study tours. The profile of the RTA assistants will be specified by the RTA who will proceed to their recruitment following the provisions of the Twinning Manual.

3.6.3 Profile and Tasks of Component Leaders:

For each of the two mandatory results, the Member State(s) will identify and assign a Component Leader with appropriate skills and knowledge. Considering that the project will cover different institutions and areas of activities, it will be crucial to have skilled and autonomous Component Leaders. These Component Leaders will ensure continuity and consistency within each of the fields concerned as well as monitor progress and the implementation of recommendations. While Component Leaders will not be resident in Chişinău, they are expected to visit Chişinău and work locally (for extended periods) with the beneficiary institutions at least 4 times per working year. CVs and proposed activities of each Component Leader shall be an integral part of the MS proposal. Detailed expert input shall be established when drawing up the Twinning Work Plan. The Component Leaders of each Mandatory Result will work in close collaboration with the RTA. They will report to the Project Leader and cooperate with their counterparts and other beneficiaries at the PSC meetings. The main task of the Component Leaders is to coordinate the activities under the area of responsibility in liaison with the partner institutions.

The Components Leaders shall comply with the following minimum requirements:

- Be a civil servant or a staff member in a Member State public administration or mandated body responsible for the agricultural and/or rural development sector;
- University degree in a field relevant to this assignment or equivalent professional experience of 8 years in the absence of the required degree;

- At least 3 years of experience specifically in the field covered by the project component for which the Component leader will be responsible;
- Good knowledge of related EU legislation and regulations.
- Excellent communication skills in written and spoken English (minimum C1 level);
- Excellent analytical skills;
- Cultural and interpersonal sensitivity in working with diverse stakeholders and interest groups;
- Computer literacy;
- Previous experience in IPA or ENI countries is an asset;
- Knowledge of Romanian or Russian language is an asset.

Tasks:

- Coordination and implementation of the project activities related to their component in close cooperation with the Beneficiary Country's Component Leader, RTA, and RTA Counterpart;
- Preparation of Terms of Reference (ToR) for short-term expert (STE) missions relevant to their component and overseeing the implementation of STEs' missions;
- Continuing monitoring of objective achievements related to their component and comparing current progress with the specified benchmarks and time frame;
- Support RTA in preparation of the interim, quarterly, and final reports related to their component;

3.6.4 Profile and tasks of other short-term experts:

The project will require specialist expertise from a number of short-term experts (STE) in order to cover the full range of specialized expertise required, providing the necessary skills and experience according to the expected results mentioned above.

STE profiles (general requirements)

- University degree in a field relevant to this assignment or equivalent professional experience of 8 years in the absence of the required degree.
- At least 3 years of specific experience in the specific field of expertise;
- Good knowledge of related EU legislation and regulations.
- Experience in knowledge transfer and/or training of employees of supervisory and/or regulatory bodies in EU Member State.
- Institutional Strengthening, Strategic Planning, Good Governance and Cost Recovery and Business Planning expertise.
- IT/e-Government / Training and capacity building / Communication / Reporting expertise.
- Excellent analytical skills.
- Excellent communication skills in written and spoken English (verbal and written, minimum C1 level).
- Cultural and interpersonal sensitivity in working with diverse stakeholders and interest groups.
- Computer literacy.
- Moldova Country experience is an asset.
- Knowledge of Romanian or Russian language is an asset.

STE Tasks:

- To provide technical inputs in specific areas of project implementation in order to achieve mandatory results listed in the Twinning fiche, including organisation of workshops, training, coaching, drafting of methodological and relevant handout materials, as per the terms of reference provided by the RTA prior to each mission.

- Facilitating workshops and delivering training sessions.
- cooperate closely with all beneficiaries' experts in undertaking all activities.
- advance preparation and familiarisation with relevant documentation.
- report to the project team.

4. Budget

The maximum budget available for the Grant is EUR 900,000.00

5. Implementation Arrangements

5.1 Implementing Agency responsible for tendering, contracting, and accounting:

The European Union Delegation to Moldova (EUD) will be responsible for operational management, payments and financial reporting, and will work in close cooperation with the Beneficiary.

Contact person - Mrs Natalia Burciu

Contact person for Twinning

Address: 10 Str. Mitropolit Petru Movilă, MD-2004

Tel.: +373-22-505210

E-mail: Natalia.BURCIU@eeas.europa.eu

5.2 Institutional framework

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) is the leading beneficiary institution, specifically the Directorate of Policy coordination and European integration (*Direcția coordonare politici publice și integrare europeană*) and the National agency for interventions and payments in agriculture (AIPA).

5.3 Counterparts in the Beneficiary Administration:

The Project leader (PL), Resident Twinning advisor (RTA) and Component leaders (CLs) counterparts will be staff of the Beneficiary administration(s) and will be actively involved in the management and coordination of the project.

5.3.1 Contact person:

Ms Emilia Cebotari

Head of External Assistance and European Funds Coordination Department

State Chancellery

1, Piața Marii Adunări Naționale,

MD-2012, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

E-mail: emilia.cebotari@gov.md

5.3.2 PL counterpart:

Sergiu Gherciu, General Secretary,

Ministry of the Agriculture and food industry

162, blvd. Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt, office 1408, MD-2004

5.3.3 RTA counterparts

For component 1:

Liliana Martin, Head of the Directorate of Policy coordination and European integration,
Ministry of the Agriculture and food industry
162, blvd. Stefan cel Mare si Sfant, office 1409, MD-2004

For component 2:

Diana COȘALÎC, Deputy Director of the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture,
162, blvd. Stefan cel Mare si Sfant, MD-2004

6. Duration of the project

The overall execution period of the Twinning project is 27 months, with 24 months of implementation.

7. Management and reporting⁷²

7.1 Language

The official language of the project is the one used as contract language under the instrument (English). All formal communications regarding the project, including interim and final reports, shall be produced in the language of the contract.

7.2 Project Steering Committee

A project steering committee (PSC) shall oversee the implementation of the project. The main duties of the PSC include verification of the progress and achievements in line with the mandatory results/outputs chain (from mandatory results/outputs per component to impact), ensuring good coordination among the actors, finalizing the interim reports, and discussing the updated work plan. Other details concerning the establishment and functioning of the PSC are described in the Twinning Manual.

7.3 Reporting

All reports shall include as a minimum the information detailed in sections 5.5.2 (interim reports) and 5.5.3 (final report) of the Twinning Manual. Two types of reports are foreseen in the framework of Twinning: interim quarterly reports and a final report. The narrative part shall primarily take stock of the progress and achievements in line with the mandatory results and provide precise recommendations and corrective measures to be decided by to ensure further progress. As per section 5; 5.2 of the Annex A7, the member state PL can decide that an **extensive narrative reporting** will be conducted every 6 months. In this case, only an **interim report executive summary** (progress achieved, recommendations, corrective measures to be decided upon in order to ensure the further progress) will be presented at the **quarterly** Steering Committee.

A financial report should however – even in the case of the extensive narrative report being presented only every 6 months – still be presented quarterly and approved by the SC and the Contracting Authority.

⁷² Sections 7.1-7.3 are to be kept without changes in all Twinning fiches.

8. Sustainability

With the Twinning, the delivery of the long-term benefits from acquiring additional expert knowledge and skills, strengthening administrative capacities, improving regulatory framework, and harmonizing legislation with the EU shall be ensured – alongside ongoing reforms.

Expert recommendations must be reviewed according to their feasibility in the context of Moldova, its legal and regulatory framework, political will, and institutional and other stakeholder capacities. Joint monitoring of project progress and achievement of results will be conducted, fostering commitment and leadership by the beneficiary administration.

The project approach will focus on supporting beneficiaries by providing them with tools and approaches to analysis and by facilitating the development of policy options instead of offering solutions and delivering final outputs. The acquired expertise and skills of the staff and increased capability will continue to be used for further alignment with EU standards and best international practice after the project ends. The development and practical use of these skills during the project will also ensure sustainability in the future operations of the beneficiaries. Where relevant, the Twinning will explore to which extent training foreseen under it might be included or expanded upon in relevant training curricula of national training institutions.

The project will serve as a significant opportunity to further develop existing partnerships with EU institutions aiming at harmonization of the legislation with the EU Acquis.

9. Crosscutting issues

The principle of equal opportunity will be integrated into all stages of the project implementation, including equal opportunities in training, study visits, and participation in all the Projects' missions and events, contributing thus to the promotion of gender equality. The principle of equal opportunity shall apply both to the staff involved in the project and to other parties participating in the project activities. Every effort will be made to ensure broad gender representation at all stages of the project implementation.

The activities envisaged under the project will not negatively affect the environment. During the implementation of the project, the production of printed material will be minimized to have a positive influence on the environment.

10. Conditionality and sequencing

There is no general precondition set for this twinning project.

Mobilization of Twinning Short term experts under sub-components/results 1.2 and 2.3 is subject to sustained and persistent minimum staffing levels in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry and the National Paying agency IT-Departments towards absorption and implementation of relevant input under this project. Should this subjection become relevant, the Contracting authority reserves itself the right to suspend Twinning activities and/or mobilization of short term experts, even if foreseen in the Rolling work plan.

The project will ensure a well-coordinated legal approximation process involving all responsible parties in compliance with the recognized standards and good practices.

The twinning beneficiary commits to provide the contributions stated in the Fiche. They include such as:

- Strong commitment and support of management throughout the project implementation period;
- Strong involvement of assigned staff at all levels;
- Assigning dedicated staff according to the project components;

- Ensuring coordination between departments and institutions connected with the Project;
- Ensuring access to necessary information and documents, especially concerning the national regulatory framework.

The project-specific activities will be defined and prioritized in close coordination between the Twinning partners, Member states and Beneficiary partner country, based on the Logical Framework.

11. Indicators for performance measurement

The specific objective of the Twinning project is to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) and the Agency for Interventions and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA) for enhanced sector monitoring, data management and efficient administration of agriculture and rural development funds in line with EU requirements and international best practices. Therefore, a key performance indicator will be the progress reported in the Enlargement progress report chapter 11 ‘Agriculture and rural development’ as per the improved level of preparedness.

Overall, Twinning performance measurement will be based on the quality and timeliness of expert inputs (reports, mappings, training manuals, presentations etc.) provided as well as beneficiary satisfaction with the collaboration in response to the expressed needs for human resource and institutional capacity development.

Result:		Indicator:
1	System for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of agricultural and rural development sector progress and policy implementation established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality, timeliness and public accessibility of sector progress reports and implementation of the NARDS⁷³, programme(s) and financial support measures - No. of sector progress reviews with stakeholder participation - Enhanced staff skills for effective agricultural data management: No. of trainings, events, study tours; participants satisfaction and progress evaluations
2	Institutional and administrative capacity of the Agency for Interventions and Payment in Agriculture (AIPA) towards an EU-like paying agency strengthened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased level of preparedness and compliance with accreditation criteria as IPARD Agency / EU like paying agency

Annex 1 Logical framework includes a more detailed overview of project specific targets and indicators for performance measurement, complementing the mandatory results and sub-results enumerated in Chapter 3.5.

12. Facilities available

Office space for one RTA and one or two assistants as well as for (on average) two short-term experts during their in-country missions will be at MAFI or AIPA.

These offices will be equipped with all necessary equipment (computer, printer, internet access). Training and presentations will take place in conference rooms provided by the beneficiary, equipped with a projector and computer for presentations, flipcharts, and stationary items. STEs may

⁷³ National Agriculture and rural development strategy

also work with involved beneficiary experts in their offices and will be provided with the necessary equipment (computer, internet access, specific software).

Security-related issues will be assured according to the standards and practices applicable to all Moldovan public institutions.

ANNEXES TO PROJECT FICHE

1. Annex C1a: Simplified Logical Framework

SIMPLIFIED LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Twinning Agri-food - Strengthening sector monitoring, data management and payment administration					
	Description	Indicators (with relevant baseline and target data)	Sources of verification	Risks	Assumptions (external to project)
Overall Objective	To improve agriculture sector performance in line with the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement, the EU Integration process, and international agreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased agricultural incomes (comparison of agricultural income with non-agricultural labour costs) MDL5,683.6/8,899.6 (USD)⁷⁴ - Increased farm productivity / Value added per worker USD 6,205.19 (2019)⁷⁵ - Rural labour force participation rate (2022: 37.1%) - Increased percentage of young farmers/generation renewal (age structure of farm managers: ratio between young farm managers (less than 40 years) and farm managers of 55 years or older) 	National Bureau of statistics annual editions; MAFI reports; The World Bank data		
Specific (Project) Objective(s)	To strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) and the Agency	Level of compliance with the EU Acquis increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of legal acts, regulations and administrative procedures 	Enlargement progress reports; Official journal and tables of compliance for legal acts	Unclear mandates and responsibilities among involved entities causes	Continuation of Moldova's path of cooperation with the EU. The beneficiary

⁷⁴ <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/30%20Statistica%20sociala/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774>

⁷⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.EMPL.KD?locations=MD>

	<p>for Interventions and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA) for enhanced sector monitoring, data management and efficient administration of agriculture and rural development funds in line with EU requirements and international best practices.</p>	<p>formulated / revised with EU support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress on Enlargement chapter 11 Agriculture and rural development)/ improved level of preparedness 		<p>delays in counterpart mobilization and engagement as well as preparation and follow-up of activities</p>	<p>institutions are properly staffed and provided with necessary absorption capacity to receive and benefit from the proposed actions. Development of the Agri-food sector continues a Government priority and vested interests do not hamper reform processes. Favorable investment climate for agri-food is maintained, no extreme weather events that undermine initial production gains/results</p>
<p>Mandatory results/outputs by component 1</p>	<p>Strengthened capacity of the MAFI for enhanced sector monitoring and evaluation and developing elements towards an Integrated Administration and Control System – IACS (e-governance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality, timeliness and public accessibility of sector progress reports and implementation of the NARDS, programmes and financial support measures - No. of sector progress reviews with stakeholder participation (min 3) - Enhanced staff skills for effective agricultural data management: No. of trainings, events, study tours (min 2), internships (min 2), participants satisfaction and progress evaluations 	<p>Project documents; Reports and publications</p>	<p>Unclear responsibilities, conflicting staff assignments, high staff turnover, vacancies, overall workload; lack of sufficient information cause delays in effective preparation of activities/ STEs inputs</p>	<p>Human resources are reinforced to actively engage in Twinning activities and assimilate provided expertise; Required investments into IT hard and software are made; Intra-Governmental Cooperation regarding data access and exchange</p>

<p>Sub-results per component (optional and indicative)</p>	<p>Sub-result 1.1 System for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of agricultural and rural development sector progress and policy implementation established</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action plan, methodology and ‘Rulebooks of the organisation and systematisation’ (internal acts) drafted and approved, incl. key indicators (aligned to the Common Agricultural Policy as appropriate), data sets, data collection and reporting framework, internal procedures, roles and responsibilities; - No. of standards, technical guidelines and operational tools for data collection and validation, submission mechanisms, data sharing, protection etc. developed; 			
	<p>1.2 Agriculture data from various sources is integrated to support timely and qualitative sector monitoring, reporting, and evidence-based decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data sharing agreement(s) concluded between the NBS and MAFI (and others, as appropriate) - No. of registries interconnected / No. of agriculture producers covered by integrated sources - Data Exchange Manual with specific information on the accountabilities of data users, data formats, data flows, timelines, templates, and data quality according to the new requirements are prepared / updated 	<p>MAFI reports, Registries, Project documents</p>		
	<p>1.3 Improved legal and organisational framework and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amendments to MAFI’s current legislation on organisation and functioning 	<p>Project documents</p>		

	operational capacities	<p>with fiscal and regulatory impact assessment drafted and approved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource policy, Retention policy and Workload analysis for human resource development are prepared. - Job descriptions in the new context with appropriate lines of responsibility and accountability are developed / updated (min. for Department of Policy and EU Integration, Market and Price analysis, IT Department). - Training needs assessment report, the plan for capacity building, training programme and curricula are drafted and approved. - No. of staff trained / participants in workshops, seminars, study visits and internships 			
Mandatory results/outputs by component 2	Institutional and administrative capacity of the Agency for Interventions and Payment in Agriculture (AIPA) towards an EU-like paying agency strengthened	- Increased level of preparedness and compliance with accreditation criteria as IPARD Agency / EU like paying agency	Initial and final (self) assessment reports; Project documents	Institutional capacities insufficient to extend or develop new activities / strengthen control and enforcement	Development of the Paying agency (including strengthening anti-fraud and control measures) is prioritized by the Ministry of agriculture management; Integrity of AIPA Regional offices staff and willingness

					to actively participate in capacity building efforts
Sub-results per component (optional and indicative)	2.1 Improved legal framework for the competencies of the AIPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of changes in the legal base (laws and bylaws) with the aim to comply with EU regulation and accreditation requirements; - No. of legal acts drafted with project support 	Project documents		
	2.2 Strengthened overall administrative and operational capacities of AIPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of self assessment report of AIPA towards accreditation as IPARD implementing agency prepared (min 3/annual); - No. of procedures streamlined with the best practices and lessons learnt from the EU member states and IPA countries; - HR Policy, Retention Policy and WLA for human resource development are prepared; - Drafted and approved Training needs assessment report, plan for capacity building, training programme and curricula; - Reference price database established; - Number of Developed operational tools related to anti-fraud measures and prevention of corruption for the Anti-Fraud Department; 	Project documents		

		- Developed operational tools for performing the risk assessment and sampling the projects for on-the-spot verifications in the Department for ex-post payments;			
	2.3 Improved Information security for achieving ISO27001 standards	- Prepared written recommendations and action plans for activities to be undertaken for full compliance with ISO 27001 / degree of implementation of recommendations;	Project documents		
	2.4 Enhanced AIPA staff skills to implement delegated activities	- No. of trainings, events, study tours (min 2), internships (min 2), participants satisfaction and progress evaluations - in each relevant area of the AIPA processes	Project documents, Training, event, study tour reports, participants satisfaction and progress evaluations Publications, event agendas and participant lists		