

## Position Paper on Rural Development Programme: Supporting the fur sector

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) offers an opportunity to develop the fur sector by fostering animal welfare improvement, financing young farmers and new entrepreneurs and promoting value chain organization.

Fur Europe is strongly committed to maintaining the highest standards of welfare for fur-farmed animals. It launched the WelFur Project in 2009, which is aimed to set a general certification protocol at European farm level. Based on the Welfare Quality® criteria, this scientific program will guarantee a high level of animal welfare on fur farms. The focus is on supporting innovation in animal welfare by allowing farmers to develop new animal welfare programs. This is crucial to keep high animal welfare standards in the EU and provide consumers with high quality products.

The involvement and active mobilisation of the younger generations in agriculture is a high priority and challenge that the Rural Development Policy has to face. The difficulty young farmers have in accessing the RDP is an important factor that negatively affects the fur sector and the agriculture in Europe. The young entrepreneurs and young farmers contribute to the generational renewal of the sector, ensuring its survival. The younger generations must be the focus of agriculture.

The fur supply chain connects important and diverse sectors of the European economy that are essential for the European growth. The craftsmanship and manufacturing of the fur sector are complex skills that take years of training to acquire. These skills are passed down through generations and this highly skilled profession demands a mixture of traditional and modern techniques.

Fur Europe believes that only a strong European agriculture sector that attracts innovation and investment will be able to face the challenges of contributing to the EU's growth strategy. The Rural Development Policy will be of great importance in developing the EU agriculture sector.

Therefore Fur Europe asks for:

- Financing for new research on animal welfare. The RDP should strengthen research and innovation links in agriculture by financing farmers in new research projects in light of higher animal welfare standards
- Increasing financial support for young farmers in setting up their first farm and providing specific measures to attract young entrepreneurs into farming
- Increasing training for young entrepreneurs in modern and competitive agricultural and non-agricultural activity
- Stimulating networks and partnerships connecting manufacturers and young entrepreneurs
- Transferring knowledge to young entrepreneurs
- Increased financing for manufacturing equipment