

Review of the implementation of EU-FAS policy in Member States of EU- Slovakia

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I- Executive summary

In Slovakia, there has been a long-term stagnation in the advisory system, which is due to the fact that the resources allocated for advisory services under the Rural Development Programme of the Slovak Republic for the programming period 2014-2020 (hereafter RDP) have not yet been possible to use. It should be noted that neither the farmers exert increased pressure on the quality of advisory services, which is largely underestimated on their part. And there is no interest in some areas of advisory services from the farmers.

According to the Farm Structure Survey for 2016, in Slovakia, there were 25 658 farms of legal entities and natural persons, which managed 1 889 819 ha of agricultural land (Ekonomika poľnohospodárstva, volume XIX. 1/2019).

For advisory services, the RDP targets are set so that the projected outcomes will represent more than 2 500 suggestions, i.e. advisory services, taking into account the maximum price of 1 500 EUR for one advisory service. If the average price for the advisory service is lower, this means that the number of advisory services will ultimately be higher. Taking into the account the Farm Structure Survey for 2016, which counts with more than 25 000 farmers, the number of pieces of advice would cover less than 10% of farms. On the other hand, the number of recipients of direct payments is around 19 000 people in Slovakia, so the number of pieces of advice would cover about 13% of farms. We will reach a much better result if we consider the fact that 85% of agricultural land in Slovakia is owned by 3 000 farms. Advisory services within RDP could cover all those enterprises that are critical in term of production and maintenance of the rural agricultural landscape in good condition.

However, it is necessary to ensure the quality of the provided advisory services, which depends on the quality of the advisors, their education, professional experience, so that the knowledge triangle (science, research - education - advisory) would work in practice, it should be closely linked and closely coordinated, what has been a long-term weakness in the Slovak Republic. It is also important that the advisory service providers are able to support innovation as well as a wide range of advisory services covering all the needs of farmers and forest managers as well as interest from farmers and forest managers for help and advice.

II- Extensive description of the implementation of the EU-FAS in Slovakia

A) Introduction – General overview of the implementation of the EU-FAS in Slovakia

Nowadays, in the information age, information is the main driving force and the most valuable asset, and in this respect, providing quality advisory services based on the transfer of knowledge, innovation and information into practice is undeniable and invaluable. With Slovakia's accession to the EU, farm advisory services gained in importance. Regulation (EC) No. 1782/2003 of 29 September 2003, establishing common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers, set new priorities for the granting of aid under the common agricultural policy (CAP) and led to the preparation of the Ministry of Agriculture for the obligation of the EU Member States to set up a system of agricultural advisory system in the area of legal requirements for management and respect of suitable agro-environmental conditions no later than January 1, 2007.

In 2009, the above Regulation was replaced by new Council Regulation (EC) No. 73/2009 establishing common rules for direct support schemes for farmers under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers. According to this Regulation, it is necessary to have a functioning integrated farm advisory system which follows the standards of modern and high-quality agriculture.

Since 2014, Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy applies. According to Articles 12 to 14 of this Regulation, Member States are required to set up a farm advisory system for beneficiaries about the land management and farm management.

In Slovakia, the legal framework for the development of the farm advisory system (hereinafter referred to as the FAS) was modified in 2017 by approving Act No. 280/2017 on Provision of Support and Subsidies in Agriculture and Rural Development and on the amendment of Act No. 292/2014 Coll. on the contribution provided by the European Structural and Investment Funds and on amendments to certain acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as Act No. 280/2017 Coll.).

The farm advisory system of the Slovak Republic is based on the following principles:

- Content orientation based on the requirements of the EU CAP while respecting the objectives of national agrarian policy,
- System management - strategic and conceptual management by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, methodological, administrative and educational activities of the Agroinstitute Nitra and National Forest Centre Zvolen (NFC),
- Active participation of self-governing, professional and non-governmental organizations,
- Private advisory bodies - certified advisors,
- Provision of professional background for advisors by organizing continuing education,

- Guarantee of professional competence of advisors - the system is based on the accreditation of educational programs, certification of advisors and their central registry,
- Ensuring the full availability of information to all parties involved,
- Effective application of information and communication technologies,
- Provide feedback to check the effectiveness of advisory services to improve the farm advisory system.

In Slovakia, the institutional provision of FAS is at four levels:

a) Managing and methodological - the highest level of FAS, which conceptually and methodically manages FAS and defines the main development directions - Rural Development and Direct Payments Section of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Commission for Implementation of the Farm Advisory System under RDP 2014-2020 as the advisory and expert body of the Ministry.

b) Organizational - middle level of FAS, which coordinates and manages the preparation of agricultural advisors - Agroinstitute Nitra, state enterprise and National Forest Centre Zvolen. Intermediate level also includes the cooperative research institutes associated in the NAFC (National Agricultural and Food Centre) and NFC, universities, professional organizations and associations of farmers and foresters, relevant secondary vocational schools, organizations and institutions of the agricultural sector as lecturers and creators of professional information, so-called information base for FAS oriented on the transfer of innovative knowledge into agricultural practice.

c) Executive - agricultural advisors as advisory services providers.

d) Target - represents the users of the advisory system - farmers, SEF (self-employed farmers), processors of agricultural products, forest managers and operators of small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas.

B) “Boundaries” of the implementation of the EU-FAS regulation

According to § 22 of Act No. 280/2017 Coll. the farm advisory system is a system of consultancy services for agriculture and forestry, which ensures the transfer of science and research results into practice in order to improve the management of agricultural and forestry businesses while respecting the requirements of sustainable agriculture and forestry. The farm advisory system includes the agricultural advisory system and the forestry advisory system.

According to § 22 par. 2 of Act no. 280/2017 Coll. the agricultural advisory system provides assistance and help to farmers as follows:

- (a) obligations at farm level resulting from the mandatory requirements relating to the management and standards of good agricultural and environmental condition of the land;
- (b) agricultural practices that are beneficial to the climate and the environment and the maintenance of agricultural area;
- (c) farm-level measures established in RDP for the modernization of farms, increasing competitiveness, sectoral integration, innovation and market orientation as well as promoting entrepreneurship;

(d) requirements at the level of the beneficiaries defined by member states for measures of water management;

(e) requirements at the level of beneficiaries to achieve the sustainable use of products for plant protection.

The Forestry Advisory System provides assistance to forest managers when it comes to ensuring sustainable forest management (http://www.nlcsk.sk/nlc_sk/ustavy/ulpav/poradenstvo.aspx).

According to § 22 par. 5 of Act no. 280/2017 Coll. the advisory service within the farm advisory system is provided by a farm advisor (hereinafter referred to as the “advisor”) who performs this service in his own name or as an employee of a legal entity or individual - entrepreneur.

Farm advisory system according to § 22 par. 4 of Act no. 280/2017 Coll. is operated by the Ministry of Agriculture authorized person who has the personnel and material and technical equipment for:

(a) ensuring the education system;

(b) maintaining the Central Register of Farm Advisors (hereinafter referred to as the 'Central Register');

(c) publishing and updating the central register;

(d) the operation of the Information System for the Farm Advisory System; and

(e) processing and distribution of authorized data.

In terms of FAS implementation, the Slovak Republic is not divided into regions and the boundaries of FAS implementation are formed by state borders. The only thing to emphasize is the fact that the financial contribution from the state is different in the less developed regions of Slovakia and in the Bratislava region (Table 5).

The Slovak Republic has a system of advisory services financed through the second pillar of the CAP within the Rural Development Programme of the Slovak Republic for the programming period 2014-2020 (hereinafter referred to as RDP) through Measure 2 - Advisory services, farm management assistance and farm support services in accordance with Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

In the RDP, a piece of excellent and independent advice is defined as a key competitive factor for Slovak agriculture and forestry. The tasks for the advisory system within the RDP 2014-2020 are important and the advisory services should cover the following priority areas:

- Advisory services ensuring the transfer of science and research results into practice to improve the competitiveness of farms;
- Tailored advisory services oriented to a particular problem to improve the competitiveness of the farms;
- Advisory products for the target group - young farmers to strengthen generational exchange in agriculture;
- Advisory services focused on projects ensuring product quality, marketing, new processes in product processing;

- Risk Management Advisory Services - to prevent damage, raise risk awareness, and mitigate the negative consequences of potential floods and soil flooding;
- Advisory services contributing to the restoration and enhancement of biodiversity in agriculture and forestry;
- Advisory services - to improve water management, including the management of the use of fertilizers and pesticides to maintain water quality and increase the environmental effectiveness of the support to protect against water pollution from agricultural activities;
- Advisory services for soil management oriented to more effective soil protection and preservation of its fertility;
- Advisory services oriented to improve the environment and mitigating the effects of climate change;
- Advisory services for the use of new information and communication technologies, the modernization of farms, the introduction of new methods of breeding, cultivation or even the processing and use of agricultural products contributing to the cross-cutting objective of "Innovation";
- Advisory services ensuring the transfer of the latest knowledge and experience in relation to the adverse agricultural impacts on the environment (such as soil degradation, biodiversity reduction, waste generation, etc.) with environmentally friendly management practices that help to protect the environment and preserve the countryside;
- Advisory services oriented to greenhouse gases, reduction of the greenhouse gases and implementation of adaptation measures.

The main objective of the advisory services is to provide advice in the most important areas in line with the EU CAP and under the Strategy 2020 and to help farmers, forest owners and agricultural processors to solve their problems, adapt production processes and management methods to the needs of today. The advisory service is divided into advisory services in agriculture and advisory in forestry.

The target groups are micro, small and medium-sized active farmers, forest managers, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and processors of agricultural products, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the rural areas.

The agricultural advisory service shall cover as a minimum one of the following elements:

- (a) Comply with the rules of cross-compliance provided in Chapter I of Title VI of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013;
- (b) The agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment as stated in Chapter 3 of Title III of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 and the maintenance of the agricultural area as referred to in point (c) of Article 4(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013;
- (c) Measures at farm level provided in rural development programmes aiming at farm modernisation, competitiveness building, sectoral integration, innovation and market orientation, as well as the promotion of entrepreneurship;
- (d) Requirements defined for the purpose of implementing Art. 11, par. 3 Directive No. 60/2000 / EC of the Water Framework Directive;

(e) Requirements defined for the purpose of implementing Art. 55 of Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009, especially abundance general principles of integrated pest management,

(f) Occupational safety standards or safety standards linked to the farm,

(g) Specific advisory services for farmers setting up an agricultural holding for the first time, young farmers in the areas of legislation, production, processing and marketing of products and specific advice for the efficient management of the holding

Forest management advisory services must include at least the relevant obligations according to:

(a) Directive 92/43/EEC - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora;

(b) Directive 2009/147/EC (conservation of wild birds);

(c) Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive).

Advisory services to forest managers may include, in addition to the mandatory content mentioned above, the issue of the economic and environmental performance of the forest enterprise. Advisors provide expert advice on the fulfilment of practical obligations under cross-compliance and greening, information about the goal of cross-compliance and related policies that contribute to sustainable agriculture.

Planned budget for measure 2 of the RDP 2014 – 2020 according focus areas: Tab. no. 1

<i>Focus area</i>	<i>Focus areas of advisory services (codes from Table 2)</i>	<i>Number of beneficiaries of advisory services</i>	<i>Total costs in EUR</i>
2A Improving the economic performance of the agricultural holding	(a), (c), (f)	1337	2 005 000
2B Facilitate the entry of farmers into the agricultural sector, generational renewal	(g)	250	320 000
2C Improving the economic performance of forestry	(h)	100	150 000
3A Improving the competitiveness of primary producers by better integrating them into the agro-food chain	(c)	50	105 000
3B Support for risk management	(b)	50	85 000
4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity	(e)	532	798 000
4B Improving water management	(d)		
4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	(b)		

4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity	(ch)	249	497 000
4B Improving water management	(ch)		
5E Supporting the conservation and sequestration of carbon dioxide in agriculture and forestry	(b)	25	40 000
PLANNED BUDGET		2 593	4 000 000

Focus areas of advisory services

Tab. no. 2

Scope of measure M02.1 of RDR on advisory services	
<i>Same domains as for the EU-FAS</i>	(a) CROSS-COMPLIANCE <i>Standards for Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC)</i> <i>Chapter I of Title VI of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013</i>
	(b) PRACTICES BENEFICIAL FOR THE CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT <i>(chap. 3 – Reg. No 1307/2013)</i> <i>Crop diversification, Permanent Grassland, Ecological areas</i>
	(c) FARM MODERNISATION, Competitiveness, Market, Entrepreneurship
	(d) WATER DIRECTIVE <i>Article 11(3) of Directive 2000/60/EC</i>
	(e) PESTICIDE DIRECTIVE <i>Good practices for pesticide use & Integrated pest management. Article 11(3) of Directive 2000/60/EC and Article 14 of Directive 2009/128/EC</i>
<i>Specific to M02.1</i>	(f) OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY STANDARDS OR SAFETY STANDARDS LINKED TO THE FARM
	(g) FARMERS SETTING UP FOR THE FIRST TIME INFORMATION related to CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY, WATER
<i>Specific to Forestry</i>	(h) Issues of the economic and environmental performance of a forestry enterprise
	(ch) According to the Directive 92/43 / EEC (Conservation of natural biotopes and wild animals and plants), Sub-Directive 2009/147 / EC (Protection of Wild Birds), Sub-Directive 2000/60 / EC (Water Framework Directive)

Table 1 - the different domains defining the scope of the measure M02.1 (Reg. (EU) No 1305/2013 Art. 15)

The aim of the RDP SR 2007 - 2013 was not to introduce new standards, but to assess individually the business management in terms of statutory management requirements and good

agricultural and environmental conditions and standards related to safety at work. Areas such as the phytosanitary area, soil protection, energy efficiency, biomass use, air and climate protection and rural development have remained uncovered. The eligible applicants and the final recipients of the non-repayable financial contribution were farmers, namely forest managers, individuals and legal entities engaged in primary agricultural production and forestry. The advisory body could be private individuals and legal entities, the non-profit sector, public authorities and chambers established under a special law, which have to meet the criteria of having:

- sufficiently qualified advisor staff - certification of advisors;
- appropriate administrative and technical equipment;
- experience in providing advice in these areas.

The certification of the advisors was carried out by the Agroinstitute Nitra under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic. The maximum amount of eligible costs was set at EUR 1 500 and the advisory service could only be used by the final beneficiary once every two years.

C) “Identity” of the suppliers selected for the implementation of the EU-FAS regulation

Farm advisory services in the Slovak Republic are provided in various forms:

- a) Basic advisory services provided by agricultural professional organizations and associations, non-profit organizations, through the National Rural Development Network, consultations offered on the purchase of goods and services from business entities. In the forestry sector, this role is partly fulfilled by professional forest managers.
- b) Expert advisory services, which is the direct transfer of knowledge from science and research to practice. This level of guidance is provided by departmental research institutes, universities and professional associations.
- c) Individual advisory services focused on the specific problems of the applicants which require more intensive cooperation of the advisor. Providers are advisors certified by the Agroinstitut Nitra, state enterprise, respectively NFC Zvolen.
- d) Provision of information through specialized web portals and applications (www.agroporadenstvo.sk, www.agroinstitut.sk, www.nlcsk.org, www.forestportal.sk).

The organizational and executive level is interconnected. Research institutions, professional organizations and associations are also an executive component, as they have certified advisors for the provision of advisory services. At present, there is no effective farm advisory institution operating nationwide. Advisory services are provided through private legal entities and individuals, scientific research institutions and self-governing bodies.

Since sending the report in September 2019, certified advisors for the provision of advisory services within the RDP 2014-2020 have been successfully prepared in Slovakia.

The SR has 92 certified advisors (as of 31 January 2020) of which 60 for agriculture and 32 for forestry, with the largest share of 57.61% being consultants from the private sector. Certified advisors chose

from the catalogue of advisory services approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the SR those advisory products (services) that they want to offer to farmers, small and medium-sized enterprises and also to young and beginning private farmers and forest managers. Since the certified advisors selected several products from the approved catalogue of advisory services before their entry into the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors of the SR, it follows that in the above table the advisory services from individual advisors are included in several categories, for example inputs, respectively outputs.

At the same time, the Agricultural Paying Agency published call no. 39 / PRV / 2019 for measure 2 - Advisory services, farm management assistance and farm support services, sub-measure 2.1 - Consultancy services aimed at assisting forest farmers and forest managers. Certified Consultants, Associations of Certified Consultants, or Associations may participate in this call. Companies and organizations employing certified advisors meeting the criteria of expertise. How many applications for a non-repayable financial contribution are submitted under this call - the Agroinstitute does not have this information. However, it is anticipated that all certified consultants will gradually join this call either as individuals or as employees of firms that have advisory services in the scope of their business. The last payment request under this call can be submitted by June 30, 2023.

Certified advisors within the RDP 2014-2020 (as of 31 January 2020)

Tab. no. 3

		Who owns the advisory supplier?				
		Civil society *	Public sector	Farmers (FBO)	Private capital	Partnerships
What do the suppliers provide (or sell) to farmers?	Only advice	3	28	2	53	6
	Advice and credit					
	Advice and insurance					
	Advice and bookkeeping					
	Advice and research					
	Advice and education or training					
	Advice and machinery or equipment	1	2		7	3
	Advice and inputs (seeds, pesticides, ...)	3	22	2	35	6
	Advice and buying outputs	3	12	2	18	6
	Advice and both inputs and outputs	3	11	2	12	6
	Total unique suppliers.	3	28	2	53	6

* NGO not controlled by farmers or by private firms

Slovakia is lagging behind the planned drawdown of funds in pursuance of an obligation under RDP 2014-2020 within Measure 2 - Advisory Services, Assistance in Management of Farms and Assistance for Farms (hereinafter only Measure 2).

The first call for sub-measure 2.1 - Advisory services focused on assistance for farmers and forest managers was declared on June 21, 2019, by the Agricultural Paying Agency under number 39 / PRV / 2019, as open calls. The indicative amount of funds to be drawn is 3 800 000 EUR. The amount of the non-repayable financial contribution per project is determined in the application for the non-

repayable financial contribution according to the number of certified advisors and the expected number of advisory services provided by each advisor in one year, to the following conditions:

- The maximum number of services provided by one advisor = 10 advisory services per year.
- The maximum amount of non-repayable financial contribution per one advisory service provided = 1500 EUR.
- The number of advisory services received by one recipient of advice is limited to a maximum of two per year.

The beneficiary of the financial assistance is a provider of advisory services (certified advisor, organizations associating certified advisors, or companies and organizations employing certified advisors meeting the criteria of qualification). The final beneficiaries of non-financial help are active farmers, subjects from the forestry sector and as well as small and medium-sized enterprises operating in rural areas.

The first call number 33 / PRV / 2018 under sub-measure 2.3 Support for the training of advisors ensuring the education and certification of agricultural advisors, declared by the Agricultural Paying Agency on June 11, 2018, was unsuccessful. The second call number 38 / PRV / 2019 was announced on February 14, 2019. The decision to approve the application for a non-repayable financial contribution was issued by the Agricultural Paying Agency for Agroinstitute Nitra, state enterprise on June 18, 2019, for the maximum amount of the non-repayable financial contribution of 129 317.13 EUR and the decision to approve the application for the National Forest Centre Zvolen was issued by APA on June 18, 2019, for a maximum amount of non-repayable financial contribution of 59 851.64 EUR.

Only one education training course for farm advisors in agriculture was held till August 31, 2019. It was organized by the Agroinstitute Nitra on June 24-25, 2019 and the course was attended by 14 advisors. The education was intended to renew the certificate of advisors operating within the RDP 2007 - 2013. As of August 31, 2019, Slovakia has 14 certified advisors in the field of agriculture. Their focused areas are shown in Table no. 4.

Focused areas of certified advisors

Tab. no. 4

Scope of EU-FAS		AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	Sum	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
<i>M a n d a t o r y</i>	(a) CROSS-COMPLIANCE Standards for Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC)	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
	(b) PRACTICES BENEFICIAL FOR THE CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT (chap. 3 – Reg. No 1307/2013)	x	x	x	x			x	x	x			x	x	x	10

	<i>Crop diversification, Permanent Grassland, Ecological areas</i>																	
	(c) FARM MODERNISATION, Competitiveness, Market, Entrepreneurship	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14		
	(d) WATER DIRECTIVE <i>Article 11(3) of Directive 2000/60/EC</i>							x					x			2		
	(e) PESTICIDE DIRECTIVE <i>Good practices for pesticide use & Integrated pest management. Article 11(3) of Directive 2000/60/EC and Article 14 of Directive 2009/128/EC</i>		x						x	x			x	x		5		
O p t i o n a l	(a) DIVERSIFICATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES <i>and conversion of farms (to organic farming??)</i>								x	x			x	x	x	x	6	
	(b) RISK MANAGEMENT <i>Vis-à-vis natural disasters; catastrophic events, animal & plant diseases</i>									x			x		x	x	4	
	(c) AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES & ORGANIC FARMING <i>Articles 28(3) and 29(2) of Regulation No 1305/2013</i>									x				x	x	x	x	5
	(d) INFORMATION related to	x			x	x					x	x			x	x		7

	CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY, WATER																	
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The database of the Agroinstitute Nitra and NFC Zvolen currently registers 150 candidates for the provision of advisory services under Measure 2.1 for agriculture and 26 candidates for forestry. Education training and subsequent certification of these candidates for the provision of advisory services will be carried out from September 2019. At present, it is not possible to precisely determine the focus areas of advisors, this will be possible only on the basis of their certification, but we assume that all priority areas within the FAS will be covered.

Within the RDP SR 2007 - 2013, 91 advisors were certified for agriculture, including 53 natural persons and 38 legal entities, and for forestry, 38 advisors, of which 21 were individuals and 17 were legal entities. Thus, one advisor accounted for almost 15 000 ha of agricultural land. A total of 1 390 000 EUR has been earmarked for measure 1.7 - The use of advisory services. A total of 1 214 applications for non-repayable financial contributions were received in the information system of the Agricultural Paying Agency. There were 650 projects approved and completed, representing only 53.54% of the total number of received applications for non-repayable financial contributions. 955 414 EUR was paid, representing almost 69 % contracting (Agricultural Paying Agency Summary, Overview of project measures of RDP SR 2007-2013 axes 1, 2, 3).

D) "Control" of the quality of the services implemented under the EU-FAS regulation

i) **Selection of advisors and qualification requirements**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic issued mandate no. 889 / 2013-100 on December 16, 2013, in which it entrusts the Agroinstitute Nitra, a state-owned enterprise with its registered office at Akademická 4, 949 01 Nitra, ID 36858749 to ensure:

1. The education training of farm advisors for agriculture and forestry for the programming period 2014-2020;
2. The management of a public portal for evidence of farm advisors for the programming period 2014-2020 (<http://agroinstitut.sk/sk/podohospodarske-poradenstvo/>).

The above mandate applies to:

1. Ensuring the education of agricultural and forestry advisors for the 2014-2020 programming period;
2. Issuing a certificate to advisors authorized to provide advisory services in accordance with the objective of the Rural Development Programme of the SR 2014-2020, Measure 2 Advisory Services;
3. Administration and updating the portal of evidence of agricultural advisors authorized to provide advisory services under the Rural Development Programme of the Slovak Republic 2014-2020, measure 2 Advisory services;

4. Provision of information concerning the evidence of the farm advisors of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Agricultural Paying Agency upon their request;

5. Cooperation with the National Forest Center - Institute for Forest Consulting and Education in Zvolen, ID 42001315, which is in the founding competence of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic in ensuring the education of farm advisors for forestry for the programming period 2014 - 2020.

Advisory services can be provided only by individuals or legal entities that have advisory services in the scope of their activities. If the advisory services are provided by a legal entity, it must have employees or other equivalent persons registered in the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors (CRAA). The farm advisor conducts business on the basis of authorization to provide advisory services, he fulfilled the conditions of professional competence, completed the training of farm advisors (education activities intended for farm advisors - initial and vocational training, or updating training), obtained a certificate, is irreproachable and pledged to adhere the advisor's code of ethics. According to § 22 par. 6 of Act no. 280/20174 Coll. an applicant for inclusion in FAS must meet the following qualification requirements:

1. Education: completed secondary education in a field of study with a focus on agriculture, forestry, rural development, veterinary sciences, and food science or university degree.

2. Professional experience: at least 5 years in the relevant field or advisory in agriculture in secondary education or 3 years of experience in university education, in particular in agriculture, food production, veterinary sciences, forestry, law or agricultural advisory services.

The farm advisor to be included in the FAS, gaining professionalism and professional competence is obliged to (Konceptia vzdelávania pôdohospodárskych poradcov na programové obdobie 2014-2020):

1. Submit an application for inclusion in the FAS. Documents proving the fulfilment of qualification requirements, including professional experience, are to be attached to the application;

2. Complete initial training for advisors in an accredited training program of 32 hours for agriculture and 24 hours for forestry;

3. Complete vocational training in an accredited training program of at least 10 hours.

The condition for completing the initial educational programme is successful completion of the final exam, which consists of an oral part (project defence) and a written test (30 questions, required 80% success rate). The Director of the Agroinstitute Nitra / General Director of NFC Zvolen appoints a three-member committee (chairman and two members) for the final examinations in the field of agriculture/forestry. After the successful completion of the final examination, the graduate will receive a Certificate of Achievement with nationwide validity and may subsequently apply for professional competence by inclusion in vocational training according to individual priorities of the RDP 2014-2020 for agriculture/forestry.

Completion of vocational training can be replaced by documenting III. degree of university education (PhD.) or documenting the acquired scientific degree (doc., prof.) in the relevant field, or documenting professional competence according to a special regulation (certificates issued on the

basis of the state examination –Professional forest manager, Forest reproductive material, Forest management programmes).

The condition for enrolling in the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors is the successful completion of vocational educational training, which fulfils all the conditions for certification of the consultant. Before enrolling in the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors, the advisor signs the Advisor's Code of Ethics. The registry administrator includes the farm advisor in the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors according to his professional competence within 14 days from the fulfilment of all prescribed conditions. The farm advisor obtains the Certificate of inclusion in the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors for advisory services in accordance with the requirements of the RDP 2014 - 2020. The certificate is valid for 5 years.

The selection of advisors is realised by the Agricultural Paying Agency on the basis of an application for a non-repayable financial contribution. The beneficiary of the non-repayable financial contribution is an advisory provider which is selected in an open, non-discriminatory, transparent, cost-effective, efficient, effective and beneficial manner that avoids conflicts of interest.

According to EU regulation no. 1306/2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy, farm advisors enrolled in the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors are obliged to be trained regularly.

A point system is created to control participation in educational activities. The farm advisor must achieve a minimum of 100 points in registered training activities during the first two years of the certificate's validity (five years). No learning activity may be counted twice in the score.

The farm advisor is obliged to register the training activities with the administrator of the Central Register of Agricultural Advisors no later than 7 calendar days after the activity has been completed. The form of registration of educational activity is electronically through the FAS Information System (<http://agroinstitut.sk/sk/monitoring-poskytovania-poradenskych-sluzieb/>).

A scheme of education of farm advisors within the RDP 2014-2020 is in Annex no. 1.

ii) Monitoring of the provided advisory services

Control activities of the fulfilment of regulations of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU as well as advisory services are provided by specialized institutions of the Ministry based on the decision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, namely the Agricultural Paying Agency. Agroinstitute Nitra and National Forest Centre Zvolen monitor the system of provided advisory services by questionnaire form for final beneficiaries - active farmers, forestry subjects, small and medium-sized enterprises. The purpose of this monitoring is to ensure quality control of the provided advisory services (Smernica o certifikácii poradcov a vedení Centrálného registra pôdohospodárskych poradcov SR).

- “Attributes” of the services implemented under the EU-FAS regulation

Advisory service financed through RDP 2014-2020 is only eligible if it is provided according to the specifications in the Catalogue of Advisory products. The catalogue of advisory products is published on the website of the Agroinstitute Nitra (<http://agroinstitut.sk/sk/katalog-poradenskych->

produktov/) and National Forest Centre Zvolen. There are 8 fields of advisory services defined in the catalogue. Each area contains specific advisory products (services). In table no. 5 there is an overview of the focus areas of the advisory service and the number of advisory products within the scope. The number of advisory products is not final and can be supplemented by new, up-to-date advisory products as required by practice.

Focus areas of the advisory service

Tab. no. 5

No.	Name of the field of advisory service	Number of advisory products
1.	Crop production	18
2.	Animal production	19
3.	Food production	13
4.	Economics	11
5.	Plant nutrition and soil science	19
6.	Mechanization	10
7.	Forestry	12
8.	Grassland and pasture management	11
	Total	113

Description of the concrete advisory product from the Catalogue of advisory products

(<http://agroinstitut.sk/sk/katalog-poradenskych-produktov/>)

Field: Crop production

1. Name of the advisory product: Advisory services for farmers setting up for the first time

2. Brief description of advisory activities:

- An analysis of farm management for the purpose of increasing its efficiency through the production, processing and sale of the products.
- An analysis of the regional situation with a focus on possibilities of partnership cooperation with potential for the local production-consumer chain.
- Consultancy services focusing on land and support legislation and options for supporting innovation from national and transnational levels.
- On the basis of the analysis of the situation of the farmer and the identification of problems, a proposal for concrete measures to solve the problems will be developed.

3. Benefit for the farmer:

A novice farmer will receive a comprehensive analysis of his business and, based on advice, he can improve his business structure by focusing on a new product, proposing an innovative process not only in the established new product but also in the technological process. The diversification of the farmer will increase competitiveness.

4. The activity rate of advisor in hours and the price of the advisory product:

12 hours of professional work per quarter (8 hours on a farm, 4 hours report processing), ie. 48 hours per year, max. 1500 EUR per advisory service

5. Other specific costs necessary for advisory services:

If necessary and with an agreement with the client, necessary analyses will be done. For example maps, hire contracts for agricultural property, submission of contracts and results from income operations in previous periods.

6. Proposed criteria to check the fulfilment of realization of the product:

- The submitted programme on the farm development
- Submission of quarterly farm management reports
- Statement of the farmer about the success or the realisation of the advisor's suggestion and measures.

E) "Financing" of the services implemented under the EU-FAS regulation

The indicative amount of funds to be spent under RDP 2014-2020 for Measure 2 is 4 000 000 EUR. The division of this amount into sub-measures 2.1 and 2.3 and less developed regions (outside the Bratislava Region - in the LDR column) and other regions (Bratislava Region - in the OR column) are shown in table no. 6.

Amount of funds earmarked for action 2

Tab. no. 6

Measure	Total indicative amount of funds (in EUR)	Indicative amount of funds for less developed regions - LDR (in EUR)	Indicative amount of funds for other regions - OR (in EUR)
2.1 Advisory services oriented to assistance for farmers and forest managers	3 800 000	3 718 300	81 700
2.3 – Support for the educational training of advisors	200 000	195 700	4 300
TOTAL	4 000 000	3 914 000	86 000

Table no. 7 shows the indicative amount of funds allocated to the RDP 2014-2020 for measure 2 by sources - European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the state budget divided into

less developed regions (outside the Bratislava Region - in the LDR column) and other regions (Bratislava Region - in the OR column).

Amount of funds earmarked for measure 2 by sources

Tab. no. 7

	EAFRD source + state budget	Less developed regions		More developed region/other regions	
2.1 Advisory services oriented to assistance for farmers and forest managers	EAFRD	75 %	2 788 725 EUR	53 %	43 301 EUR
	state budget	25 %	929 575 EUR	47 %	38 399 EUR
TOTAL 2.1		100 %	3 718 300 EUR	100 %	81 700 EUR
2.3 – Support for the educational training of advisors	EAFRD	75 %	146 775 EUR	53 %	2 279 EUR
	state budget	25 %	48 925 EUR	47 %	2 021 EUR
TOTAL 2.3	Total	100 %	195 700 EUR	100 %	4 300 EUR
TOTAL Measure 2			3 914 000 EUR		86 000 EUR

The actual amount of drawn funds is for objective reasons not yet known. These data will be available only after the implementation of measure 2 in the Slovak Republic. The maximum amount of funds provided for one advisory service is 1 500 EUR. If the cost of a specific advisory service exceeds that amount, the difference between the final price for provided advisory service and the amount of 1 500 EUR will be paid by the farmer or the forest manager.

The advisor can include the following items in the cost of providing the advisory services:

1. Transportation costs- reporting of transportation costs is a form of so-called "Simplified cost options", in particular by applying a single rate per km, which is an item of the standard cost scale under Art. 67, par. 1, lett. b) Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013. The uniform rate per km is established on the basis of a fair, impartial and verifiable calculation method (Art. 67 par. 5, lett. a) of Regulation (EU) No.1303/2013) at the level: **0.3 EUR/km**.

2. Personnel costs for the provision, preparation and implementation of activities, including remuneration for employees and payments for health insurance and social insurance companies. The reporting of personnel costs is a form of so-called "Simplified cost options", in particular by applying an hourly rate which is an item of the standard cost scale under Art. 67, par. 1, lett. b) Regulation (EU) no 1303/2013. The hourly rate includes the total cost of work and is based on a fair, impartial and verifiable calculation method (Art. 67, par. 5, lett. a) of Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013) at **35 EUR/hour**.

3. The reporting of other costs is based on the costs actually incurred and paid by the advisor (within the meaning of Art. 67, par. 1, lett. a) of Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013). Only those costs that are set for the given advisory product in the advisory services catalogue are eligible. This point does not cover the cost of the advisor's own activities.

III- Effectiveness of EU-FAS

Based on the information above, it is not possible to identify the FAS efficiency in the Slovak Republic until August 31, 2019.

IV- Discussion

It is not possible to express a view about the effect of FAS because it is just at the beginning.

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Program rozvoja vidieka SR na programované obdobie 2014-2020

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Smernica o certifikácii poradcov a vedení Centrálného registra pôdohospodárskych poradcov SR

Zákon č. 280/2017 Z. z. o poskytovaní podpory a dotácie v pôdohospodárstve a rozvoji vidieka

Zákon č. 292/2014 Z. z. o príspevku poskytovanom z európskych štrukturálnych a investičných fondov a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov

Annex

Scheme of education of agricultural advisors

Annex no. 1.

Compulsory education				Certification of advisors	Additional education		Renewal of the certificate after 3 years if the condition
Type of educational training	Initial training	Update training	Vocational training		A	B	
Points	30	30	20		20	5	

Applicant for inclusion in Central Register of Agricultural Advisors	•		•	•	•	
From the database of advisors		•		•	•	
Advisor				•	•	

- A Accredited educational activities oriented in the field of advisor specialization in the form of seminar, training, course, e-learning etc. These are organized by institutions responsible for the education of the advisors (Agroinstitute Nitra and National Forest Center Zvolen). The duration of the training activity is at least 10 hours. Maximum points: 20 points / activity
- B Participation in conferences with agricultural topics, participation in educational activities oriented in the field of advisor specialization in the form of seminars, training, courses, e-learning, etc. These are organized by entities which have educational training in the subject of the activity. The duration of the training activity is at least 10 hours. Publication activities and the organization of various events such as Field Days, Land of the Year, Forestry Days, training activities organized by the advisors themselves enrolled in the CRAA for farmers and forest managers can be counted. Minimum number of participants - 5. Maximum number of points: 5 points / activity