

Finland's Rural Policy and the Report on Rural Policy 2009-2020

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Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

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Rural Policy Network and its working methods

GOVERNMENT

MINISTERIAL GROUP ON RURAL POLICY

RURAL NETWORK OF THE PARLIAMENT

RURAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)

- **Members of RPC** (31 members from 27 organisations incl. 7 ministries, other government organisations and rural associations)
- **Secretariat**, steered by the **Secretary-General**, prepares the matters. About 60 secretaries from various organisations.

PARTNERS OF THE RPC

- Island Committee (SANK)
- Village Action Association of Finland (SYTY)
- MUA Association (rural research and development) and Network of Rural Professors

WORKING METHODS OF THE RPC

Rural Policy Programme

- Action programme of the RPC 2009–2013

Preparation of Government's rural policy outlines

- Reports, special programmes, resolutions

Theme and work groups (a total of 14 to 17 groups)

- Themes include rural living, food, tourism, Leader, well-being, enterprise, culture, civic activity

National rural research and development projects (50 to 70 projects financed each year)

Communication

- About 10 publications/year
- Ruralpolicy.fi website
- Newsletters, press releases and internet communication of theme and work groups
- Internet newsletter Liiteri

Negotiations and seminars

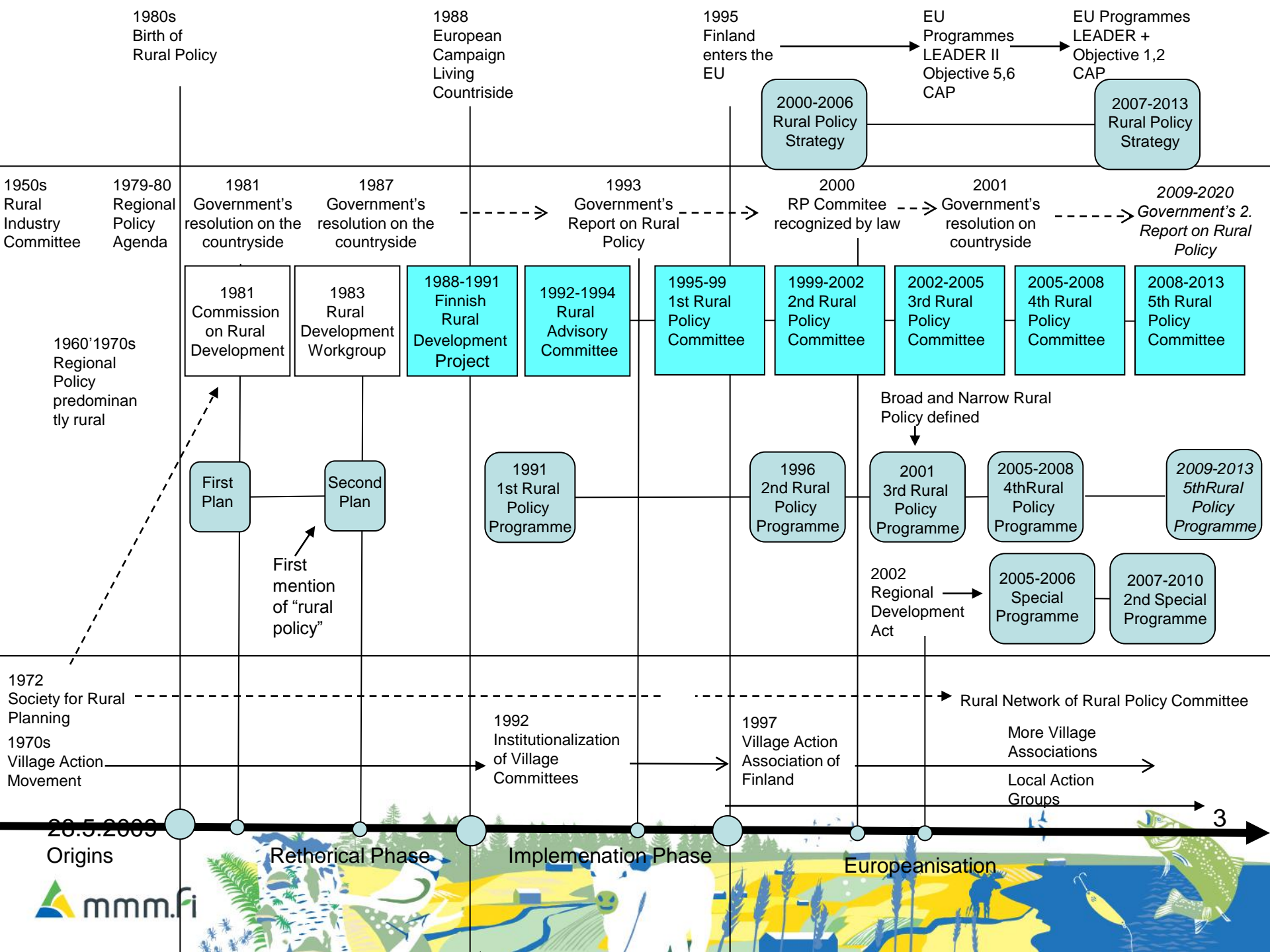
- **Rural proofing ("rural impact assessment")**
- **Implementation reports**

OTHER PROGRAMMES TO PROMOTE RURAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- EU Programmes
 - Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland, regional rural development plans of T&E Centres and local plans of LAGs
 - Structural Fund Programmes (ERDF and ESF)
- National regional development programmes
 - Regional Cohesion and Competitiveness Programme (KOKO)
 - Centre of Expertise Programme (OSKE)
 - Island Development Programme and Resolution on Island Policy
 - Resolution on Urban Policy
- Programmes of the Regions

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

EU, OECD, Nordic Council of Ministers, development cooperation, bilateral cooperation (esp. Sweden and Estonia), several international organisations



Rural policy solutions

- Exploiting rural resources in the future will require that the vitality of the countryside is successfully maintained.
- The availability of services, strengthening entrepreneurship based on rural resources, and developing opportunities to work are basic requirements for living and working in the countryside.
- Rural policy tools include the following:
 - Government Report on Rural Policy 2009
 - Action Programme of the Rural Policy Committee, Rural Policy Programme 2009-2013
 - Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland 2007-2013, co-financed by the EU

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The Countryside and a Prosperous Finland

-report to Parliament

- A viable countryside is a common interest, advantage and resource for the entire nation.
- Several global trends are strengthening the importance of the countryside's tangible and intangible resources.
 - High-quality living environment
 - Natural resources
 - Space
 - Tourism, mining activity

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Report's 3 key objectives

- Improving the quality of life in rural areas
- Developing the rural economy
- Developing the rural policy system

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- Timetable and implementation of the report:
 - Government 20 May 2009
 - Preliminary debate in Parliament 27 May 2009
 - Parliament's response, autumn 2009
 - Government's operational programme at the start of 2010
 - Previous report on rural policy 1993

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Report's strategic policies

1. Special measures to be directed at sparsely populated rural areas
2. Sustainability and a focus on residents will form the basis to living in rural areas
3. The availability of services in rural areas will be safeguarded
4. The accessibility of rural areas will be ensured through well-functioning connections

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Report's strategic policies

5. Rural businesses, entrepreneurship, and business services will be diversified and strengthened
6. Human capital in rural areas will be exploited and increased
7. Rural innovation systems will be developed
8. The labour shortage and special needs of rural areas will be met through labour policy
9. Renewable energy will be produced in rural areas in a decentralised way on the basis of local energy sources
10. Forests will be exploited in a diverse way as a source of employment and income
11. Farms will be developed as the foundation of food production and security of supply and as enterprises undertaking multiple functions
12. The growth in tourism will be promoted in rural areas

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Report's strategic policies

13. Rural policy management will be developed at all operating levels
14. Local development tools will be significantly enhanced
15. Programme-based work will be developed
16. The climate for civic activity and its role in society will be strengthened
17. The special features of rural areas will be taken into consideration in decision-making

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Special measures will be targeted at sparsely populated rural areas

- ***The weakening in the relative position of sparsely populated rural areas will be halted.***
- The Government will draw up a report on the use of various alternative means (including tax policy) to develop sparsely populated regions and will choose the most suitable measures to be implemented on the basis of the report.
- Sparsely populated rural municipalities and municipalities in a financially weak position will be taken into consideration on a permanent basis in the system of central government transfers to local government in accordance with the decision on spending limits made by the Government in winter 2009.

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Rural policy at the regional and local level

- ***Rural policy will be enhanced at all levels of operation.***
- *Effective negotiation and agreement mechanisms for developing democracy and services will be created at the local level between local government and village residents and associations.*
- *The preparation of rural policy at the local level will be strengthened; a cross-sectoral division of the Rural Policy Committee, which handles rural issues, i.e. a “regional RPC” that will work on drawing up, developing and implementing rural policy at the regional level and will bring together all the rural actors, will be established in all the regions.*

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Vision of the Finnish countryside in 2020

The countryside is a diverse and valued element of Finnish society. The space, sparse population and local solutions are being put to good use as a source of Finnish welfare and as the foundation for sustainable development. Society safeguards the basic structures for living and working in the countryside and encourages and supports people's independent development work. Rural residents, communities and companies are succeeding and the sense of community, state of the environment and competitiveness have improved, similarly benefiting all of society. The international links of actors have materially increased.

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