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## A participatory approach for preparing rural investment plans

FACTSHEET

# RURAL INVEST

RuralInvest is a free multilingual methodology and toolkit for preparing sustainable agricultural and rural investment projects and business plans. It is participatory, interactive and bottom-up and designed to be used with communities, entrepreneurs, government field technicians, project staff and local financing institutions.

Developed by FAO with the support of national and international development partners, it assists FAO's efforts in **enabling inclusive and efficient agricultural food systems**. It has been introduced in countries in Latin America, Africa, Central Asia, Asia and North Africa.

Any organization or project managing funds or mobilizing resources for small- and medium-scale agricultural and rural investment can apply RuralInvest.

It is ideally suited for:

- **Income-generating projects** in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, fish farming, forestry, agro-industries, tourism, transport services, handicraft manufacturing, retail stores, wholesale services and storage services.
- **Non-income-generating** (or social) projects to improve living standards in rural areas, including health centres, schools, environmental protection, roads or drinking water.

### RuralInvest in Mongolia



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Adopted by the Mongolian University of Life Sciences' School of Economic and Business in 2013, over 30 trainees, including seven master trainers, are applying RuralInvest to their work, including managing large-scale FAO and World Bank rural development projects.

### Multilingual toolkit

RuralInvest is available in eight languages: Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Turkish, Mongolian and Tswahili.

## RuralInvest Toolkit

FAO provides tailored courses designed to strengthen an agency's or institution's ability to use RuralInvest. A basic introductory e-learning course and preparatory materials can help an interested institution understand the steps involved in preparing effective investment project proposals.

The institution must then decide which RuralInvest modules are relevant for its operations. Training is required for each module adopted, and **a training session ranges from 2 to 6 days per course**, according to the modules being taught. While every effort will be made to meet the particular needs of the adopting agency or institution, a typical training and support schedule encompassing all modules requires at least three separate training of trainers and capitalization and knowledge exchange sessions over a period of 3 to 6 months.

The host agency is responsible for providing a training space and suitable computers for Modules 2 and 3, and other costs for FAO trainers and participants to attend. Typical institutions include governments, academia, the not-for profit and the private sector.



FAO will provide the training manuals, teaching materials and computer software.

### Getting started

Introductory tools have been developed to get you started:

- An introductory **e-learning course**

Plus online modules:

- **Module 1:** Participatory identification of investment needs.
- **Module 2:** Preparing and using project profiles – turning ideas into projects.
- **Module 3:** Detailed project formulation, analysis, results monitoring and building of project database.

You can also access:

- a demonstration of the **RuralInvest software**.

### RuralInvest in Lebanon

In February 2015, FAO trained 21 participants representing 14 institutions, including the Lebanese Government, universities and non-governmental organizations. The Lebanese *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* hosted the five-day training on FAO's RuralInvest toolkit.



The event was carried out by the FAO Investment Centre at the request of the Government of Lebanon, and supported by the FAO office in Beirut. It provided training on identifying and appraising investments, both income-generating and non-income-generating, like those aimed at achieving broader social and environmental objectives, such as reforestation.

## DEVELOPING IN-HOUSE CAPACITY

The adopting institution needs to develop an internal support unit that is familiar with the RuralInvest methodology and software and can provide key services: including:

- **Enabling participants to pass on their skills.** Staff turnover is often high, so having internal trainers can help an institution avoid the relatively high cost of repeatedly hiring external trainers.
- **Providing technical support.** This entails troubleshooting and answering questions from RuralInvest methodology and software users.
- **Ensuring quality control.** Reviewing investment proposals before submission for funding is crucial for identifying and rectifying any significant errors.
- **Linking to the FAO RuralInvest design team.** The support unit acts as a bridge between the FAO RuralInvest team and field staff, receiving and distributing software upgrades and manual updates, providing feedback on the use of the methodology and software and suggesting software upgrades.
- **Carrying out monitoring and evaluation (M&E).** The support unit often takes on key M&E functions, including preparing periodic reports.
- **Defining system parameters.** These include common standards for all users, such as local

currency, geographic areas, project and beneficiary types, environmental categories, project duration, loan conditions, etc. The system administrator can modify and distribute the parameters electronically to field staff to ensure consistency.

### INOGE RABBIT FARM

in 2016, RuralInvest trainee, **Gilbert Tarimo**, from the United Republic of Tanzania, won the best start-up business plan awarded by the International Labour Organization and the National Economic Empowerment Council



Photo credit: Gilbert Tarimo

### RuralInvest in Haiti

In June 2016, the FAO Investment Centre delivered an intensive two-week training on RuralInvest in Les Cayes, Haiti, for 34 participants from 16 different government institutions. The training was organized with

the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture in Haiti and the FAO Representation in Port-au-Prince.

Upon the Ministry of Agriculture's request, a team of senior officials from various government offices were trained to increase their technical skills to prepare and assess rural investment projects, with the ultimate aim of increasing investments in the rural areas.



## RURALINVEST

### Useful Links

**Webpage:**

<http://fao.org/2/ruralinvest>

**E-learning course:**

<http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/course/RI>

**Online demo software:**

<http://apps3.fao.org/riv-demo/login>

RuralInvest software is available in nine languages.

## CONTACT

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