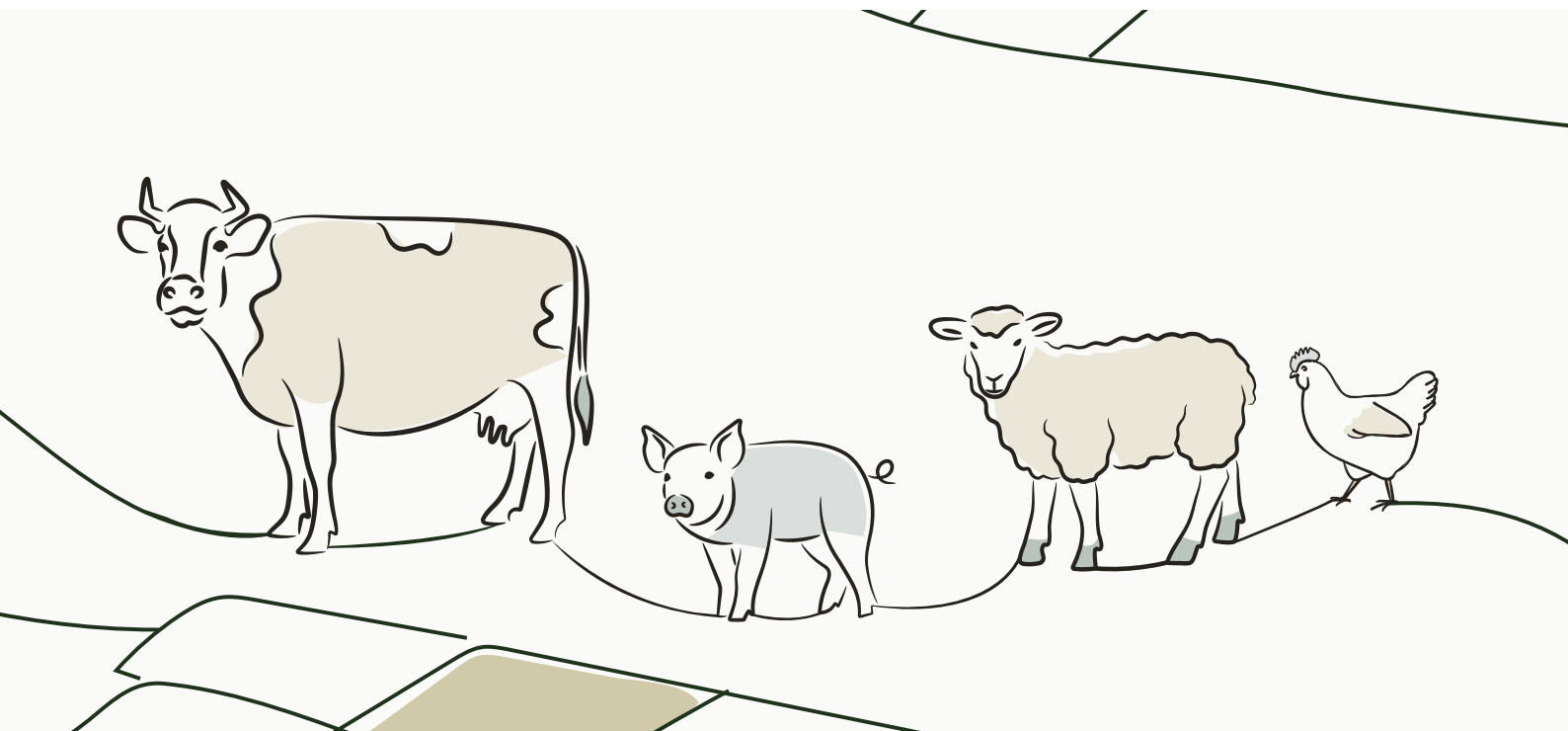


CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

A NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY FOR MALTA

APRIL 2026

WHITE PAPER



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR AGRICULTURE,
FISHERIES AND ANIMAL RIGHTS



MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Malta's economic, environmental and social fabric, contributing not only to food security but also to rural landscapes, natural resource management, livelihoods and cultural heritage. Safeguarding the long-term resilience and viability of the sector therefore remains a national priority, particularly in the face of growing pressures on land, climate, markets and demographics.

Since 2018, national policy has been guided by the Long Term National Policy for Agriculture 2018-2028, which established a structured framework addressing sustainability, competitiveness, land and water stewardship, and the professionalisation of farming. As the sector continues to evolve and regulatory complexity increases, and in line with obligations under the Agricultural Act, there is a clear need for a renewed and coherent National Agricultural Policy. This White Paper serves as a transitional step, bridging the current framework with a new policy direction for the decade ahead and supporting Malta's engagement in discussions on the Common Agricultural Policy post-2027.

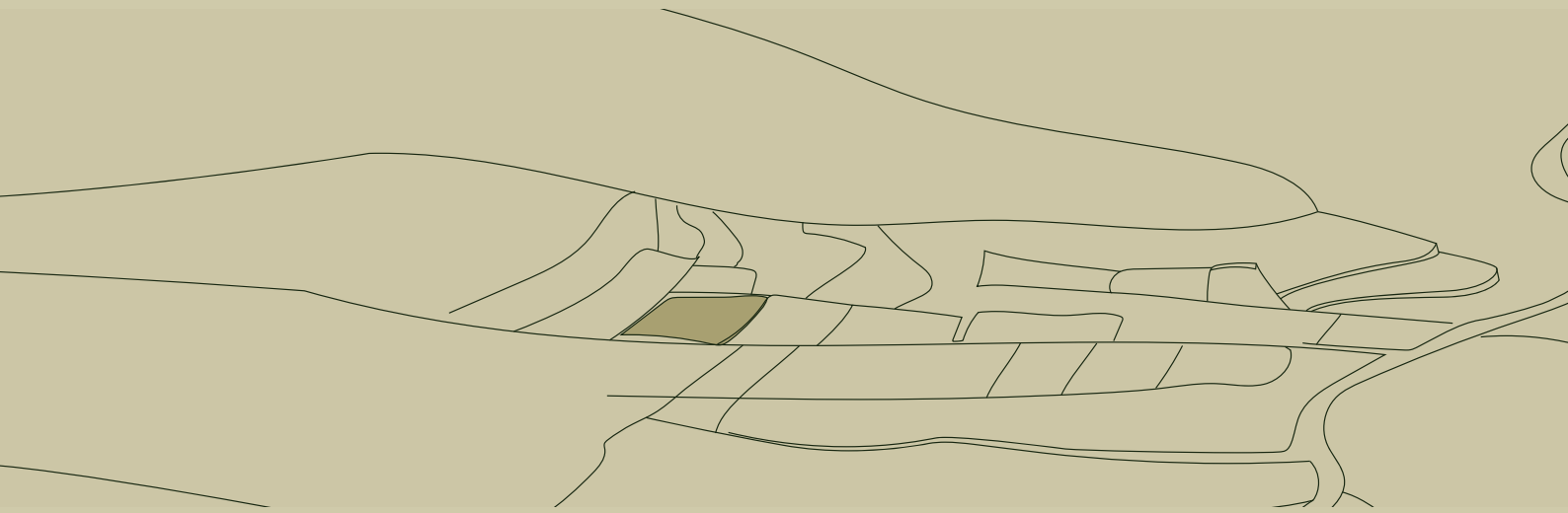
Aligned with Envision 2050, the proposed National Agricultural Policy recognises agriculture as a strategic land-based sector that underpins sustainability, climate resilience and food system security. Covering the period 2027-2037, it aims to provide a stable long-term framework for legislation, support measures and advisory systems, while acknowledging the diversity of Maltese agriculture and the role of both professional and non-commercial farmers. Central to this policy is effective advisory and knowledge transfer to ensure practical, farm-level impact.

This consultation document invites input from farmers, stakeholders and institutions. Contributions received will be essential in shaping a balanced, forward-looking National Agricultural Policy that supports Maltese agriculture over the coming decade.



ANTON REFALO

Ministru għall-Agricoltura,
is-Sajd u d-Drittijiet tal-Animali



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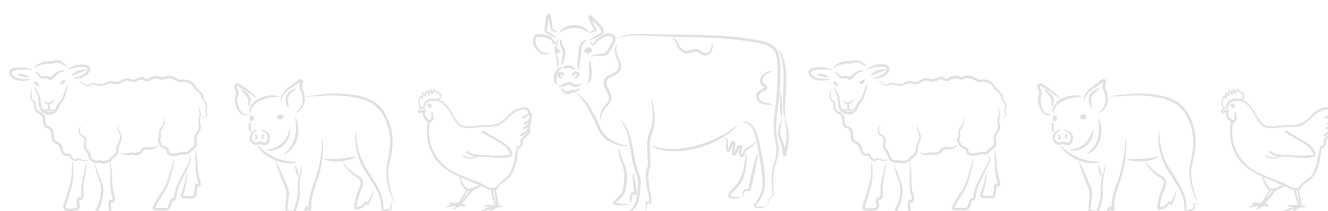
PURPOSE AND SCOPE

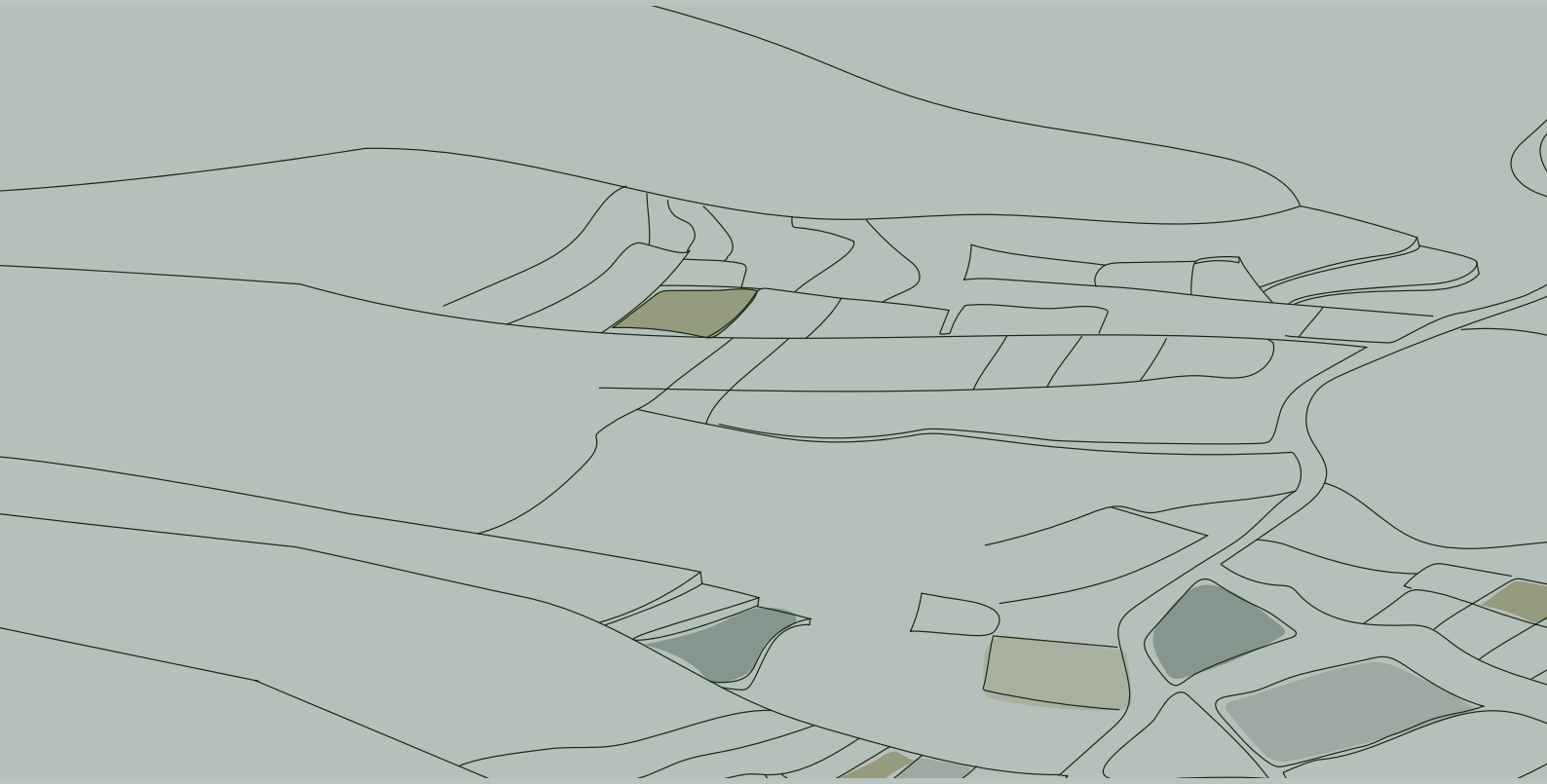
Malta's agricultural policy framework has, since 2018, been guided by the **Long-Term National Policy for Agriculture 2018-2028**, which provided the first structured national policy reference for the sector following EU accession. That policy sought to address the fundamental challenges facing Maltese agriculture through a focus on land stewardship, food security, environmental sustainability, fair income, competitiveness, generational renewal and the professionalisation of farming activity. Particular emphasis was placed on safeguarding agricultural land, improving water management, strengthening farm economic viability, promoting quality production, supporting young farmers and aligning agricultural activity with national environmental objectives, while recognising the role of advisory services, research and innovation as key enabling tools.

Maltese agriculture, however, operates within severe territorial, environmental and structural constraints. Agricultural land is scarce and subject to significant pressure from competing uses; holdings remain highly fragmented; water resources are limited; and production systems are increasingly exposed to climate and market volatility. At the same time, agriculture continues to play a strategically important role in food safety and security, landscape management, environmental stewardship, rural employment and cultural heritage. These realities, combined with evolving market conditions, demographic challenges and increasing regulatory complexity, have highlighted the need for a renewed and more coherent national policy framework that goes beyond fragmented or programme-driven interventions and extends beyond the scope and time horizon of the 2018-2028 policy.

The development of a National Agricultural Policy is therefore both a strategic necessity and a policy responsibility arising from the **Agricultural Act**, which places an obligation on Government to provide clear direction, coherence and long-term planning for the agricultural sector. A clearly articulated national policy is essential to guide legislation, regulatory practice, support schemes, advisory systems and administrative arrangements in a consistent and transparent manner. This White Paper represents a key transitional policy exercise, bridging the conclusion of the 2018-2028 policy and the establishment of a renewed National Agricultural Policy, particularly in the context of the **ongoing negotiations on the future Common Agricultural Policy post-2027**, where Member States are required to articulate clear national priorities, policy logic and intervention coherence.

The proposed National Agricultural Policy is intended to **set the strategic direction for the period 2027-2037**, providing a stable long-term framework capable of guiding future legislation, informing successive programming cycles and ensuring policy continuity across changing EU instruments. By establishing clear policy objectives, defined action areas and transversal enabling mechanisms—particularly advisory and knowledge-transfer services—the policy aims to support a resilient, sustainable and economically viable agricultural sector over the coming decade. This consultation document is issued to invite informed public and institutional input into the shaping of this renewed policy framework, ensuring that it reflects sector realities, legal obligations and Malta's long-term strategic interests.

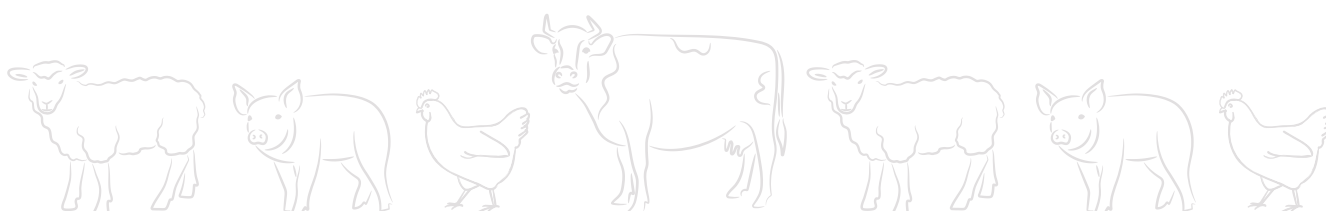


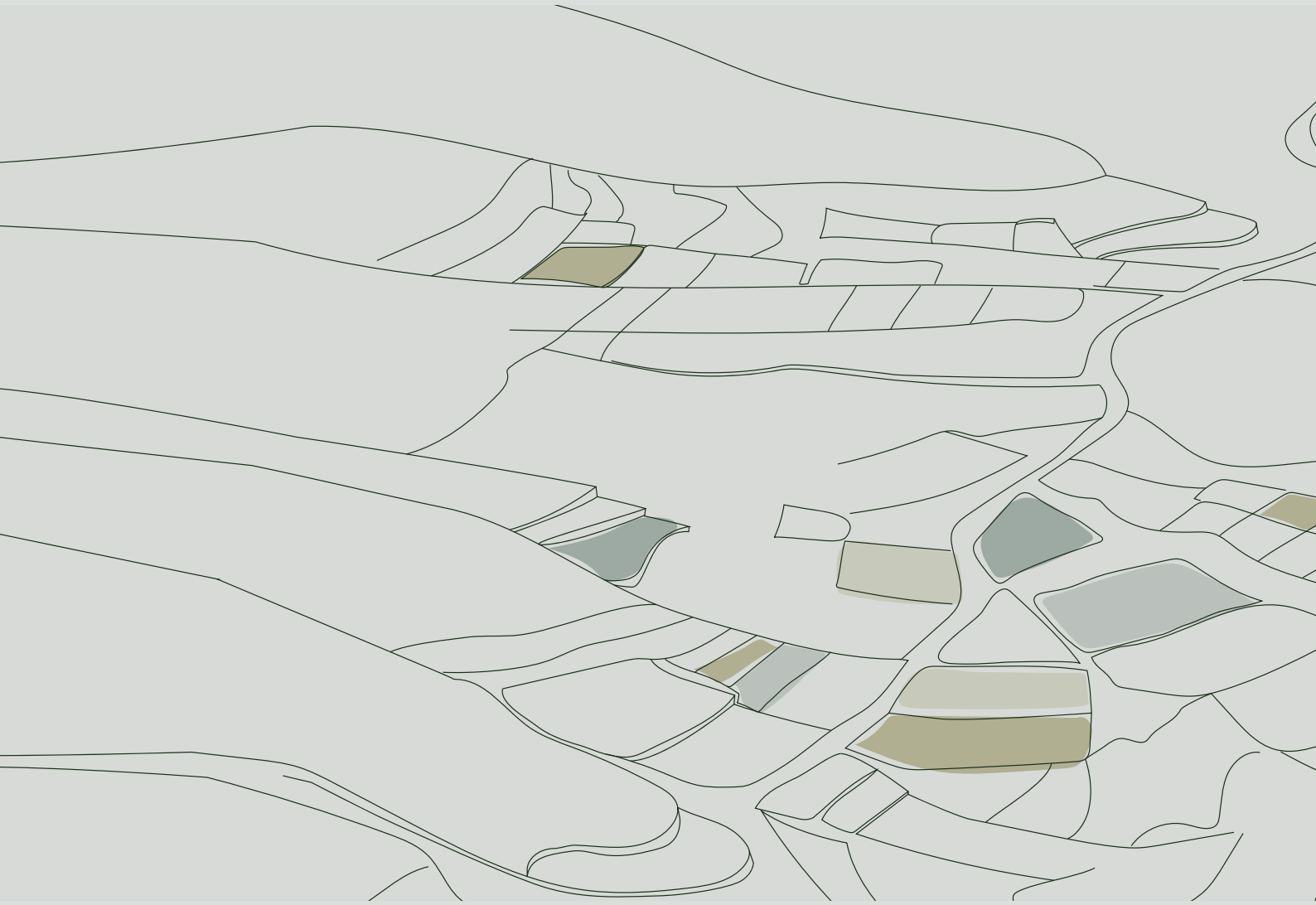


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POLICY VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The proposed National Agricultural Policy seeks to support a resilient, sustainable and economically viable agricultural sector that safeguards agricultural land as a national resource, strengthens professional farming activity and supports generational continuity. In doing so, the policy recognises the evolving structure of Maltese agriculture, including the significant extent of agricultural land that is actively managed by non-commercial farmers. While these operators may not be primarily market-oriented, their role in land stewardship, environmental management and landscape maintenance is substantial and carries clear public-interest responsibilities. The policy therefore aims to balance socio-economic viability with environmental responsibility by clearly identifying and differentiating roles within the agricultural sector, ensuring that all land managers—professional and non-commercial alike—contribute appropriately to national sustainability objectives, environmental protection and the long-term resilience of the agricultural landscape, while maintaining social fairness and policy proportionality.





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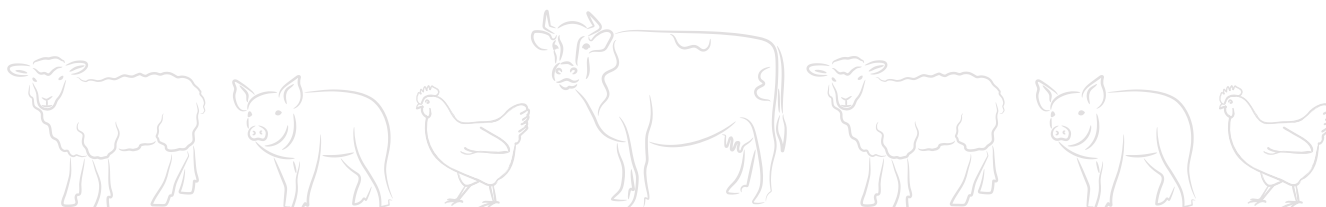
CONSULTATION PROCESS AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT

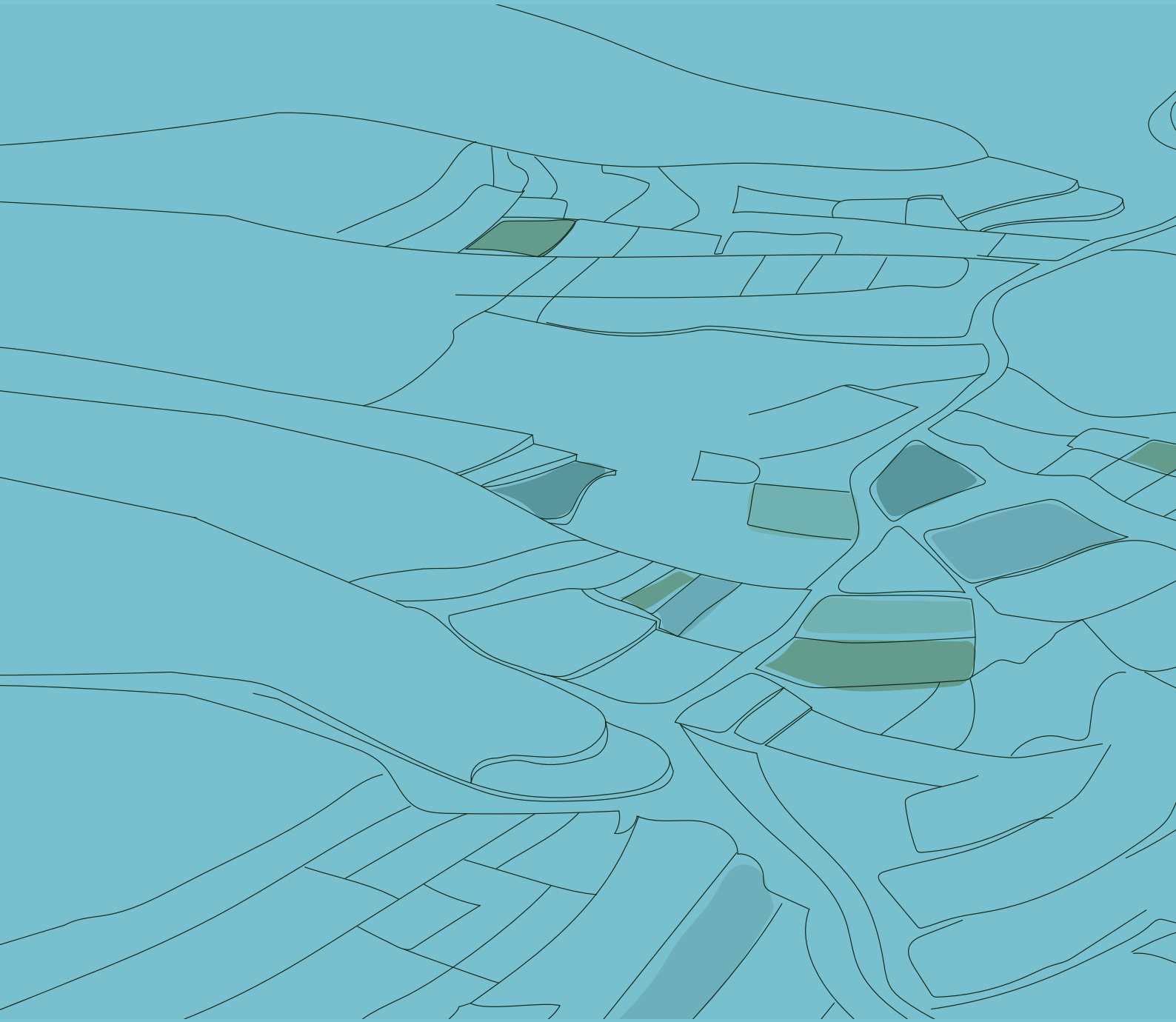
The development of this White Paper and the proposed National Agricultural Policy for Malta was supported by a structured and iterative consultation process designed to ensure policy relevance, sectoral balance and institutional coherence. The consultation process sought to identify key structural challenges affecting Maltese agriculture, assess stakeholder perceptions of existing policy and regulatory frameworks, gather input on future policy priorities and reform directions, test the relevance and coherence of the proposed policy action areas, and assess the role of advisory and support services in effective policy implementation.

Consultation activities were carried out through a combination of targeted instruments. These included bilateral meetings with farmers representing different production sectors, scales and regions; engagement with farmer organisations, cooperatives and value-chain actors; discussions with advisory bodies, professionals and relevant public authorities; thematic exchanges with technical experts, including specialists support from CIHEAM Bari; and a focused survey addressing issues related to land access, professionalisation, generational renewal, environmental challenges, market dynamics and governance.

Stakeholder participation covered a broad cross-section of the agricultural sector, including crop and livestock producers, full-time and part-time farmers, young farmers, advisory professionals, administrative bodies and institutional stakeholders. This approach ensured that diverse perspectives were captured while maintaining a clear focus on policy-relevant issues and long-term strategic considerations.

Feedback gathered through the consultation process was analysed thematically and cross-referenced with analytical work and existing policy evidence. Consultation outcomes directly informed the identification of the six core policy action areas, reinforced the emphasis on differentiation and proportionality, supported the positioning of advisory services as a transversal policy instrument, and contributed to the identification of governance and administrative reform priorities. Overall, the consultation confirmed broad consensus on the need for a clearly articulated National Agricultural Policy capable of providing long-term direction beyond individual programmes or funding periods.





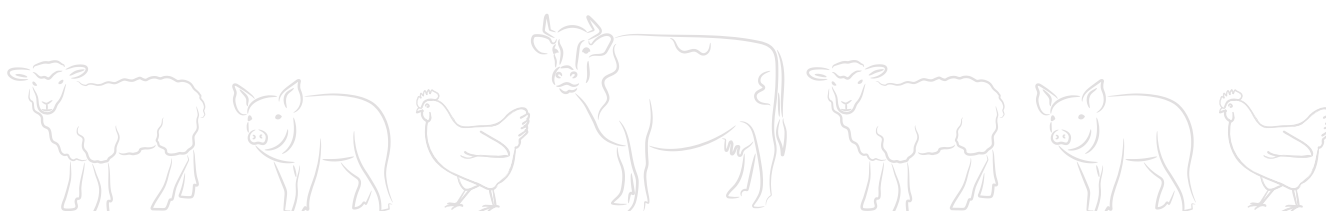
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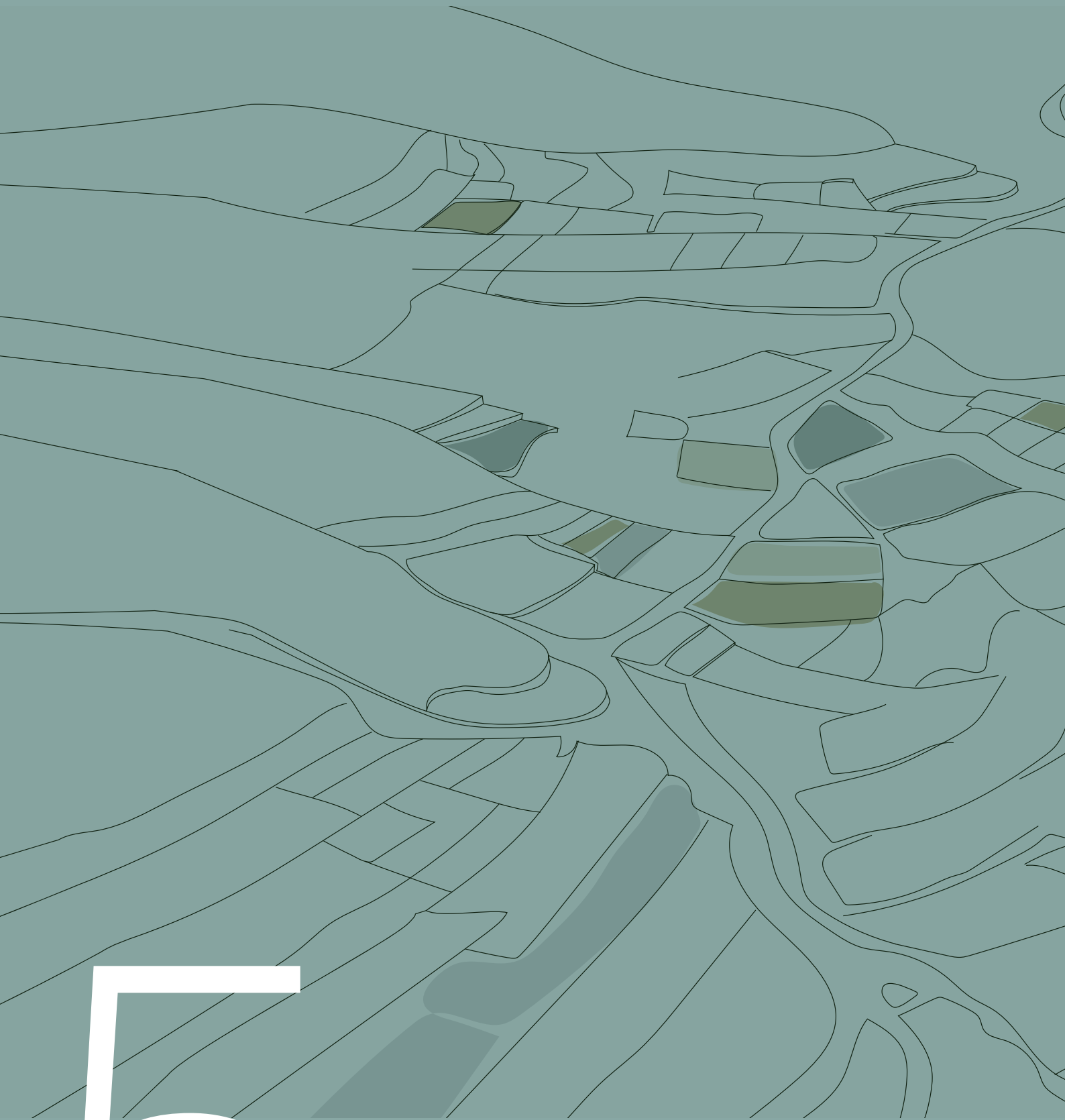
STRUCTURAL AND ANALYTICAL CONTEXT



This White Paper is underpinned by an updated analytical assessment of the Maltese agricultural sector, drawing on stakeholder input, CIHEAM Bari technical analysis and existing national and European analytical frameworks. The analysis highlights key strengths, including a strong territorial identity, diversified production systems and accumulated practical knowledge, with farmers demonstrating notable adaptive capacity in managing production under constrained land and water conditions while contributing to food security, environmental stewardship and cultural heritage. At the same time, persistent structural weaknesses remain evident, notably limited land availability, fragmented land tenure, water dependency, ageing farmer demographics, labour constraints and administrative complexity, all of which constrain economies of scale, investment capacity and generational renewal. The assessment also identifies clear opportunities linked to quality-based and value-added production, improved land governance, clearer differentiation of farming activity,

digitalisation, data integration and strengthened advisory and knowledge-transfer services, with enhanced policy coherence offering scope for more effective use of national and EU instruments. These opportunities must, however, be considered alongside significant threats, including increasing climate variability, exposure to market volatility, rising input costs, continued pressure on agricultural land from competing uses and the risk of further generational decline if structural barriers are not addressed. Overall, the analytical findings confirm that incremental or programme-driven approaches are insufficient to respond to these challenges, reinforcing the need for a differentiated, proportionate and long-term National Agricultural Policy supported by effective governance structures and transversal advisory services capable of translating strategic objectives into practical outcomes.





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CORE POLICY ACTION AREAS AND TRANSVERSAL ENABLING ADVISORY SERVICES



The National Agricultural Policy is structured around **six interrelated action areas**, directly derived from the technical analysis and stakeholder reprioritization performed by the Agriculture Directorate and CIHEAM Bari that together provide a coherent and integrated framework to address Malta's key agricultural challenges over the coming decade. These action areas span land protection, farm viability, sustainability and effective governance, and are designed as mutually reinforcing pillars of a single national policy framework. Across all six areas, the policy is supported by transversal advisory and knowledge-transfer services, which play a critical role in translating policy direction, regulatory requirements and support instruments into practical, farm-level outcomes.

5.1 Protection and Strategic Management of Agricultural Land

This action area focuses on safeguarding agricultural land as a finite national resource. Policy direction will prioritise stronger land governance, improved registration and monitoring systems, enhanced tenure security and effective enforcement to ensure that agricultural land remains available for productive use. A high-level consultation must underpin the identification of specific policy tools to mitigate chronic structural fragmentation. Advisory and technical support will play an enabling role by assisting land managers in complying with land-use obligations, regularising tenure arrangements and adopting sustainable land management practices.

5.2 Differentiation and Professionalisation of Farming Activity

Clear differentiation between commercial and non-commercial farming activity will underpin proportional regulation and targeted policy support. This approach recognises the diversity of farming activity within the sector while ensuring fairness, effectiveness and clarity in policy application. Advisory services will support this differentiation by providing tailored guidance aligned with the level and nature of engagement, helping farmers understand their obligations, opportunities and pathways for professional development.

5.3 Generational Renewal and Labour Sustainability

Policy measures under this action area will support young and new farmers through improved access to land, skills development, income stability and structured succession planning, while also addressing labour availability and working conditions within the sector. Advisory and training services will be central to supporting generational transitions, business planning, skills acquisition and the long-term sustainability of farming as a viable livelihood.

5.4 Water, Energy, Climate and Environmental Resilience

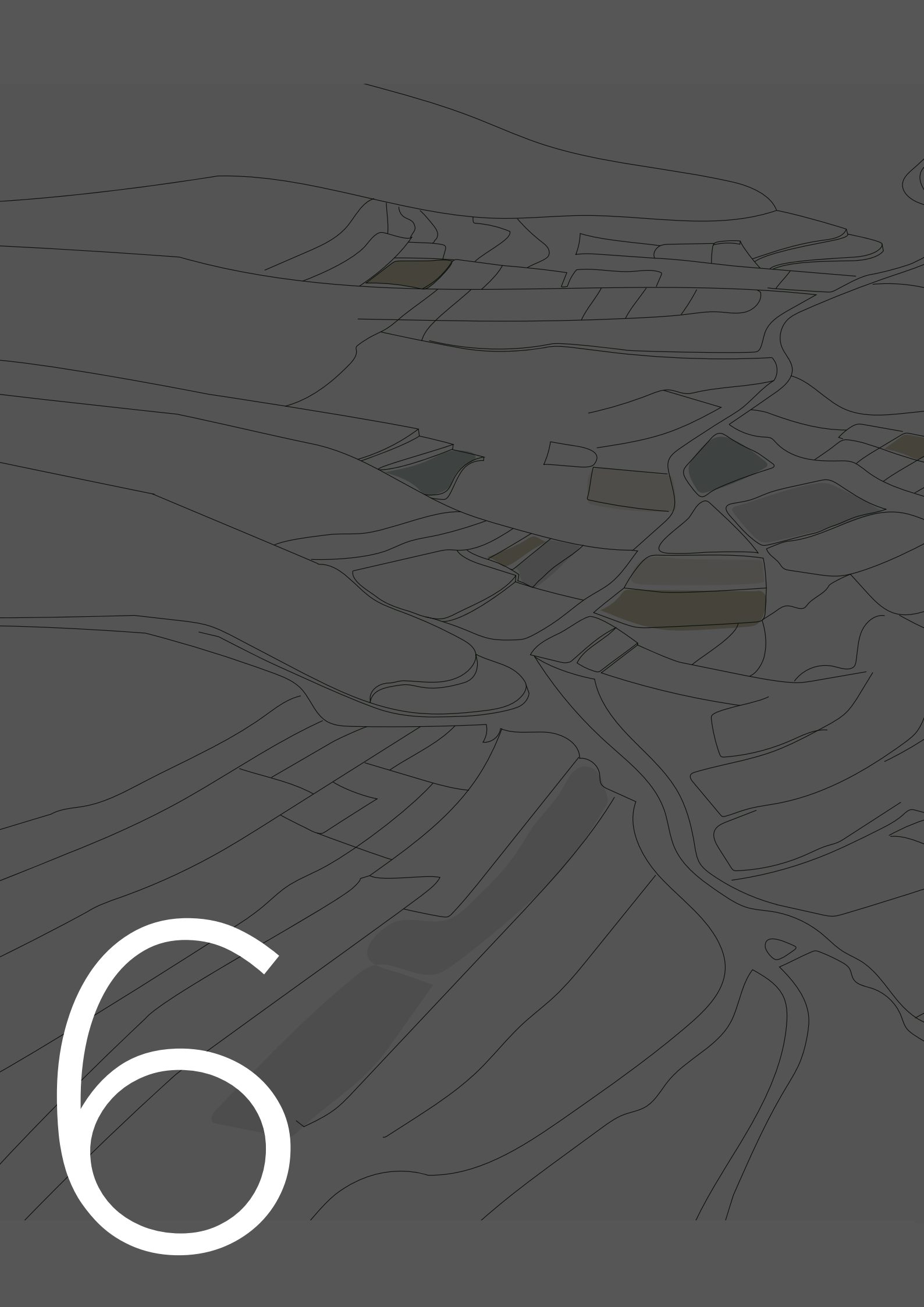
This action area promotes efficient water and energy use, climate-smart practices, ecofriendly growing methods, food loss and waste reduction, by-products reuse, and integrated environmental management, aligning agricultural activity with national climate adaptation and sustainability objectives. Advisory and knowledge-transfer services will support farmers in adopting resource-efficient practices, complying with environmental requirements and responding proactively to climate risks through informed decision-making and innovation uptake.

5.5 Market Orientation, Value Creation and Food System Resilience

Policy direction under this action area will support quality-based production, competitiveness, fair trade, market transparency, traceability, local food consumption, risk management and the development of short supply chains in order to strengthen farm incomes and national food safety and security. Advisory services will assist farmers in improving market orientation, value creation, business planning and risk management, thereby enhancing resilience to market volatility and external shocks.

5.6 Governance, Data Integration and Administrative Efficiency

Improved coordination, integrated data systems and streamlined administrative processes will underpin evidence-based decision-making and effective policy delivery. Advisory and support services will contribute to this objective by facilitating information flows between farmers and public authorities, supporting digital uptake and ensuring that policy implementation is informed by on-the-ground realities and feedback.



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WAY FORWARD

The consultation on the proposed National Agricultural Policy was formally launched on **17 April** and will remain open for a period of seven weeks, concluding on **5th June**. Following the launch, a series of consultation meetings will be held throughout this period to support informed discussion and stakeholder engagement. These meetings will provide an opportunity to further explain the policy proposals, gather feedback and clarify issues raised by stakeholders.

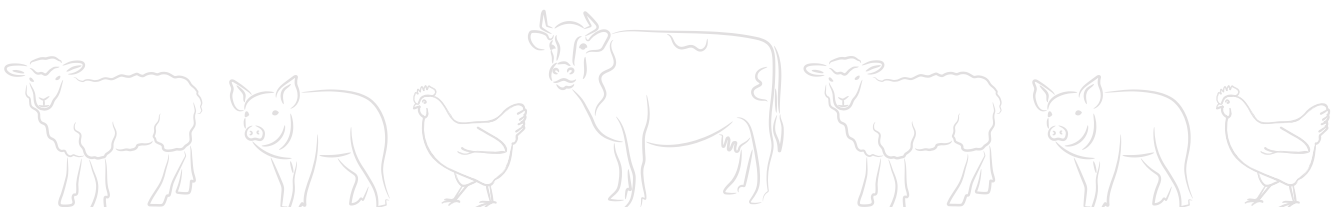
Stakeholders and the general public are invited to submit their feedback through the online submission form available on www.konsultazzjoni.gov.mt. Alternatively, submissions may be made in writing by addressing a letter to the competent authority.

The dates and details of public consultation meetings will be published on the policy website and communicated through the official **Agrikoltura** Facebook page to ensure broad public awareness. In addition to open consultation sessions, **sector-specific consultation meetings** will be organised to address the particular circumstances and needs of different agricultural sectors. Relevant representatives and stakeholders will be contacted directly through official communication channels to participate in these targeted engagements.

Feedback received through the consultation process will be analysed and taken into account in the refinement and finalisation of the National Agricultural Policy. The adopted policy will provide the strategic framework guiding future agricultural legislation, support schemes, advisory systems and external programming instruments, ensuring coherence, proportionality and long-term direction for the agricultural sector.

To support structured and focused submissions, stakeholders are encouraged to frame their feedback by responding to the following guiding questions, or by submitting comments related to these themes:

- **Are the proposed policy objectives and action areas appropriate for Malta's agricultural context?**
- **Are there additional long-term structural issues that should be addressed through the National Agricultural Policy?**
- **How can advisory services be strengthened to support different categories of farmers?**
- **What governance or administrative improvements are most urgently required?**





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