

The long-term vision for rural areas: key achievements and ways forward

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Steering group of the EU CAP network

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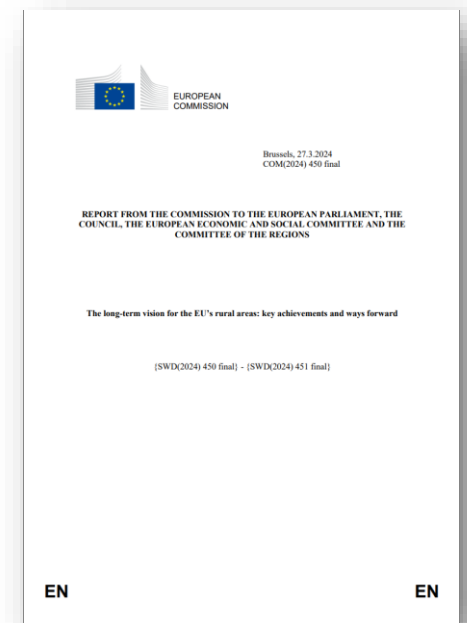
#RuralVisionEU

Report on the implementation of the long-term vision for EU's rural areas

1. **New evidence under the four action areas**
2. **Looking back at 30 months of implementation**
 - 2.1. How do **EU policies** contribute to rural areas?
 - 2.2. Where are we with the **implementation of the EU rural action plan**?
 - 2.3. The **launch** and development of the **rural pact**
3. **Looking forward**
 1. **Consolidating** achievements and implementing the **EU rural action plan**
 2. **Consolidating the rural pact**
 3. **Reflecting on how to enhance support for rural areas** in the future
4. **Conclusions and next steps**

Staff working documents: [‘Taking stock of rural action plan implementation’](#) & [‘Reviewed EU rural action plan’](#)

Report from the EC
(March 2024)



Areas of synergy – LTVRA / EU CAP Network

EU CAP network contributions to the EU rural action plan (examples)



LEADER

LTVRA: [‘Enhanced networking for LEADER and Smart villages’](#)

EU CAP Network [Subgroup on LEADER and territorial development](#)

Research and innovation

LTVRA: [Flagship ‘Research and innovation for rural communities’](#)

EU CAP Network:

[Workshop: Young entrepreneurs - Engines of innovation in rural areas](#)

[Focus Group ‘Social farming and innovations’](#)

[Focus Group competitive and resilient mountain areas.](#)



Soil health

LTVRA: [Flagship action on ‘A soil deal for Europe’](#)

EU CAP Network: [Focus Group ‘Regenerative agriculture for soil health’](#)

Carbon farming

LTVRA: [Flagship action on ‘Addressing climate change in peatland through carbon farming’](#)

EU CAP Network: [Good practice workshop ‘Assessment of carbon farming’](#)



Bioeconomy

LTVRA: [Promoting the development of a sustainable bioeconomy in rural areas](#)

EU CAP Network: [Focus group on Supporting the needs of forest dominant rural areas and municipalities](#)



Areas of synergy – Rural pact / EU CAP Network (1)



Highlights report

Strengthening digital skills of rural people to benefit from the digital era

Summary

This Good Practice Webinar organised by the Rural Pact Support Office (RPSO) brought together around 60 practitioners from 20 EU and four non-EU Member States. It offered the opportunity to learn from experiences and initiatives that boost digital skills development in rural areas. Also, participants exchanged about the main success factors and challenges in the design and implementation of digital skills initiatives and drew recommendations for policy makers and practitioners wishing to take action in this field.

Organiser: Rural Pact Support Office

Date: 8 June 2023

Location: Online

Participants: 60 participants (local practitioners, researchers, public authorities, advisors, business, producers, other EU-funded projects, etc.)

Presentations & recordings: [View](#)

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Funded by the European Union



EU CAP NETWORK

Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector

Thematic Group - 1st Meeting

The first Thematic Group (TG) meeting allowed members to get to know each other and to reach a common understanding about skill needs and gaps in the agricultural sector. With ample time devoted to group and panel discussions, members could exchange experiences and co-design the next steps of the TG.

Setting the scene

Thematic Group (TG) members were welcomed to their first meeting by the CAP Implementation Contact Point (CACP) team. In the opening presentation, Alessia Musumara (CACP) noted the TG's primary objectives and stressed that, with 42 members from 18 countries and EU stakeholders' representatives, the TG composition is bound to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and well-balanced outcomes.

An ice-breaking activity revealed that TG members consider crop and soil management, administration and finances, water management, and marketing to be communication as the most useful skills for agricultural professionals. This provided a helpful starting point for further discussion during the day.

Agricultural economist Andrew Mosey (CACP) set the scene with a presentation based on the background paper prepared ahead of the meeting. He emphasised the working demands for agricultural professionals, notably adaptability and key skills such as planning, communication and lifelong learning alongside technical abilities. He noted that, with its 17 million workers, the EU's agricultural sector faces challenges like labour shortages and skill gaps, which affect farm productivity. Family farms may be particularly limited by regional factors. EU strategies and policies, including the European Green Deal and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), aim – and can help – to boost skills and competences for agricultural professionals.

In relation to farm development and diversification, participants discussed the need for key skills to enhance farming and income diversification, considering factors such as climate change, the bioeconomy, artificial intelligence and the role of farmers in the supply chain. A variety of skillsets were identified as crucial, among them time management skills as well as openness to self-development. Agricultural professionals can acquire these skills in various ways, including via digital tools and skills-based roadmaps that identify what skills are needed. Collaboration, informal advisory services where groups of farmers could assist each other, and European programmes such as Erasmus and Horizon Europe can support diversification and align with macro-initiatives like the MS2 framework, CAP and the CAP Farm-Tool for enhanced growth.

The discussion on sustainable farming practices highlights essential skills for sustainable farming, including crop and water management, digital proficiency, marketing and financial skills. The whole farm approach, systems thinking and practice evaluation were also noted as crucial. Participants stressed the importance of farmers' well-being, resilience and their role within the community. Effective methods to equip farmers with

Event information

Date: 09 October 2023

Location: Virtual meeting

Organiser: CAP Implementation Contact Point (CACP)

Participants: 42 participants from 18 EU Member States, including farmers and farmers' organisations, MSAs, NGOs, European organisations, the European Commission, national/regional stakeholder organisations and researchers.

Outcomes: Exchange of experiences and insights on skill needs in agriculture, and tools for skill acquisition, outline of future activities of the Thematic Group.

Web page: [CAP meeting on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector](#)

Interactive session

Participants were divided into three groups to discuss skill needs – and tools for skills acquisition – in relation to the following topics: Farm development and diversification, sustainable farming practices, and digital and technological literacy. The group discussions used the world café methodology, with groups rotating from one topic to the next in three phases, building on each other's inputs.

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Skills

Rural Pact: [Good practice webinar on Strengthening digital skills of rural people to benefit from the digital era](#)

(8 June 2023)

EU CAP Network: [Thematic Group on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector](#)

(9 October 2023 – 16 January 2024)

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EU CAP NETWORK

Supporting the Mental Health of Farmers and Farming Communities

Thematic Group - 1st meeting

The first Thematic Group (TG) meeting allowed members to get to know each other, to reach a common understanding of the root causes of mental health issues faced by farmers and farming communities, and to learn from practical initiatives across the EU. TG members exchanged thoughts on the key ingredients for an efficient provision of farmers' mental health support and discussed the next steps of the TG.

Setting the scene

TG members were welcomed to their first meeting by the EU CAP Network team. In the opening presentation, Alessia Musumara (EU CAP Network) noted the TG's primary objectives and stressed that the TG composition is structured to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and well-balanced outcomes, with 40 members from 18 countries and three representatives of European organisations.

During an icebreaker activity, participants shared their reasons for joining the TG. These included the challenges faced by farmers, the pressure to produce sustainably, economic uncertainties, the need for a holistic approach to farmers' mental health at EU level, and the importance of increasing awareness in policy.

Professor Sella Shortall (CAP Implementation Contact Point, non-permanent expert) gave a brief framing presentation on farmers' mental health. She noted that terms such as 'mental health' and 'mental well-being' are complex to define and often used interchangeably. However, they are not exact synonyms, and by using them as such, we run the risk of overlooking the importance of attending to well-being. In short, defining and using these terms is key. Professor Shortall explained that mental health includes psychological, emotional and social well-being, and is also affected by factors like economics, politics, geography, environment, social dynamics and culture. Increased concern about suicides in farming communities, stress, anxiety, and occupational safety health measures emerged as major challenges. A key aspect in farming is the importance of work-life balance, as the workplace is often also the home.

Enhancing access to health services in rural areas

Introduction

This good practice webinar brought together 70 participants representing 20 EU Member States and 4 non-EU countries. Organised in collaboration with [LIFE4P](#) and the [World Health Organization](#), this event aimed to showcase EU-level initiatives and international and local experiences enhancing access to healthcare in rural areas. It also sought to empower participants by boosting their capacity and motivation to develop initiatives to meet rural needs. The webinar fostered discussions on strategies to attract and retain healthcare professionals to create a workforce fit for purpose, design innovative healthcare services, and create integrated, community-based solutions.

Organiser: Rural Pact Support Office

Date: 30 November 2023

Location: Online

Participants: 70 participants (local practitioners, healthcare professionals, public authorities, experts and researchers, other EU-funded projects)

Presentations & recordings: [View](#)

If you see this icon, click to watch the recording

Health

Rural Pact: [Enhancing access to health services in rural areas](#) (30 November 2023)

EU CAP Network: [Thematic Group on Supporting the Mental Health of Farmers and Farming Communities](#)

(27 February and 28 May 2024)

Areas of synergy – Rural Pact / EU CAP Network (2)

Actions targeting the national level

LTVRA:

- ▶ Work with **National experts** from the **Rural pact support office** + **Rural pact coordination group** members on actions to take in various countries
- ▶ Policy brief "[Making the Rural Pact happen in Member States](#)" (2023) and work on making it happen at local level (2024)
- ▶ Elaboration of **country fiches** (2024)

EU CAP Network/CAP networks:

- ▶ **National networks** knowledge cluster on LTVRA (RPSO invited)
- ▶ **Finland** web page on the rural vision



Available in 24
EU languages

Looking forward – EU policies



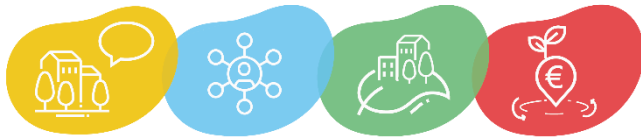
**Contributions from
EU institutions &
stakeholders**

Ways forward – Questions for reflection

- ▶ What are the **key challenges** arising from depopulation, ongoing transitions and structural changes?
- ▶ What are the best ways to **address them** in a targeted way?
- ▶ How to **enhance financial support** for rural areas and communities through EU, national and regional funds, including improving synergies and complementarities?
- ▶ What is needed to **improve financing, quality of delivery and effectiveness** via e.g. CLLD/LEADER?
- ▶ How to improve the **monitoring and assessment of the resources** from the different EU funds and programmes?
- ▶ What is needed to **improve access to support** for the final beneficiary?
- ▶ What can be done for wider implementation of the **rural proofing mechanism** at all levels?
- ▶ What are the best policy tools to ensure **institutional, governance and integrated support** for rural areas?
- ▶ How to improve the **availability of policy-relevant rural statistics and data**, without increasing the administrative burden?

Ways forward - Opportunities for debate

- 9th Cohesion forum (11-12 April 2024)
- Rural Pact coordination group (16 April + November 2024, spring 2025)
- Joint technical workshop 'Solidarity and rural communities' (16-17 May 2024)
- Two Rural Pact policy labs (September, December 2024)
- The next Rural pact conference (Spring 2025)
- EU CAP Network events (to be discussed)
- Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture (January to summer 2024)



Join the Rural Pact Community and online platform

https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/become-member_en



<https://www.rural-vision.europa.eu>

