



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE CAP ON HABITATS, LANDSCAPES AND BIODIVERSITY IN EUROPE: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE APPROACH

FACTSHEET OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT - SEPTEMBER 2020



IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY IN EUROPE

In 2019, the European Commission published an evaluation support study on the impact of the CAP on habitats, landscapes, biodiversity. Its aim was to 'evaluate the direct and indirect impacts of the 2014-2020 CAP on biodiversity and landscapes in areas under its direct influence, which include many protected habitats'.¹ The evaluation covered all 28 EU Member States and 10 of which were addressed through in-depth case studies. The time frame of the evaluation was the current programming period 2014-2020, with the previous programming period 2007-2013 used as a reference period. The evaluation answered 15 evaluation study questions (ESQs), which focused on relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and added value and have been formulated by the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development through the support of a public consultation process. Only those CAP instruments and measures deemed most relevant were considered in this evaluation.



CAPTURING THE IMPACTS OF THE CAP

Evaluation approach

The evaluation approach was based on the Commission's Better Regulation guidance and toolkit (European Commission, 2015a) and follows the same logic design of the CAP instruments and measures at the EU level and those which are implemented in the Member States. This logic follows the



FURTHER INFORMATION

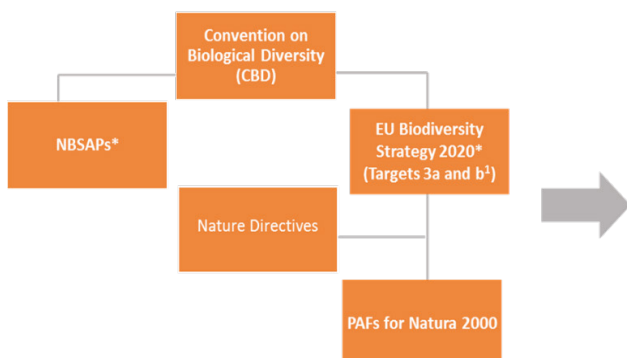
Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on habitats, landscapes, biodiversity

Alliance Environnement, November 2019
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chain of decisions made by land managers which result in changes in farming and forestry practices. Those changes in turn lead to impacts on biodiversity and it is these impacts that determine the scope to which biodiversity objectives

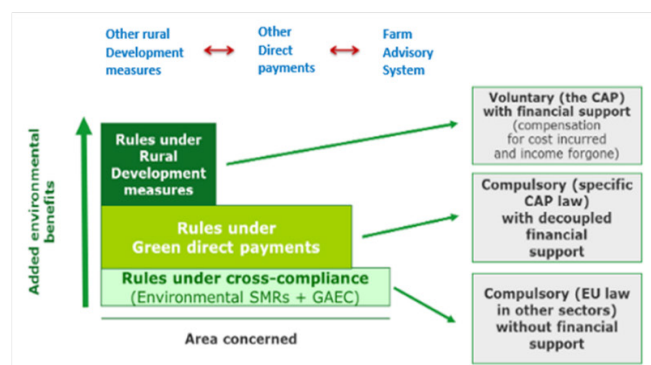
EU Biodiversity Policy Framework for Agriculture and Forestry



¹Achieve more sustainable agriculture and forestry

*National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans - Main tools to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Key elements of the CAP (2014-2020) relevant for biodiversity and landscapes



Source: Adapted from European Commission, 2016

have been accomplished. The starting point for the evaluation was the development of an intervention logic for the CAP instruments and measures to identify their potential direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity, habitats and landscapes. A broad selection of CAP instruments and measures were initially examined, and all of those that were considered to have the potential for significant impacts were then evaluated. The evaluation has used context, output, result and impact indicators from the CAP's Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), the Streamlining European Biodiversity (SEBI) indicators, indicators of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) reported by Member States to Forest Europe and the

agri-environmental indicators compiled by Eurostat. Data at farm level for production, profitability, location (inside or outside a Natura 2000 area) and uptake of CAP measures were obtained from the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN).

Methods applied

The main methodological tools used in this evaluation were, hypothetical counterfactuals, case studies from 10 Member States, analysis of statistical data and literature reviews.

The main data used was:

- Member State information on implementation of CAP horizontal, Pillar I and II instruments and measures;

Evaluation Criteria	Method(s) Applied
Causal Analysis (ESQs 1-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research, case studies and analysis of statistical data
Effectiveness (ESQs 4-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical analysis, case studies and literature review. Expert judgement is used to summarise the likely impacts in descriptive and semi-quantitative terms
Efficiency (ESQs 9-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical analysis and interviews • Literature review • Theoretical reasoning and expert judgement
Coherence (ESQs 11-13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical reasoning • Statistical analysis • Case study comparisons • Analysis of previous evaluations and studies
Relevance (ESQ 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Expert judgement, drawing on the previous evaluations and studies • Case study report analysis
EU Added Value (ESQ 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hypothetical counterfactual • Assessment based on analysis already undertaken in previous ESQs

- Results from previous evaluations including greening and forestry measures;
- Indicators from the CAP CMEF;
- Statistical data from FADN and Eurostat.

Case studies were especially effective in this evaluation to gather data that is not usually available at the EU level. By zooming in on one Member State or region, case studies allowed for the access to qualitative or quantitative information which is typically difficult or impossible to access. Case studies played a vital role in this evaluation in order to provide a context to the specificities seen in each Member State concerning the relationship between policy and impacts. Case studies were chosen based on four broad themes: biogeographical characteristics and main land use types; farm sector structure and land management; habitats and biodiversity trends in the agricultural sector; and CAP instrument and measure implementation choices (using a first examination of the available statistical data on key CAP instruments and measures relevant to biodiversity).²

For other topics, this evaluation has analysed differences in

Member States' implementation temporally (to see what has changed over time in a single Member State) and spatially (to compare different Member States). As is the case in this study results are often more qualitative than quantitative. In general, in order to attempt to separate the net impacts of the CAP, this evaluation unavoidably depends on a number of assumptions, however, this is made clear in their reporting on the results of the evaluation, which is imperative.

Primary data from the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) for the ten case study Member States was analysed for ESQ 3 to provide contextual information on how certain indicators of the intensiveness of farming, such as livestock concentrations, have changed between the period under evaluation and the previous one. This analysis was supplemented with modelling findings from literature in order to cast light on the impacts of Basic Payment Schemes (BPS) and Voluntary Coupled Support (VCS). In this evaluation when the assessment relied on expert's judgements, information was then triangulated across multiple sources, or if this was not possible the evaluation acknowledged the partial nature of the available information in a reasonable and transparent way.

Lastly, EU added value was examined by using expert judgment plus any available evidence from the case studies to construct a scenario for how Member States' approach to biodiversity might have differed from the actuality had the CAP measures not been in place. This was not a modelling approach but more a 'thought experiment' using expert judgment to compare the two scenarios. This type of analysis looks at factors, such as, the level of ambition towards biodiversity, the strength of incentives to participants, the degree of legal certainty in a Member State as opposed to EU legislative approaches, and any benefits arising from coordinating actions at EU level rather than leaving individual Member States to act alone. While establishing a counterfactual for an evaluation on the effects of the CAP on biodiversity and landscape is hardly an easy exercise as many different factors (e.g. market conditions, social trends and climate) can influence effects on biodiversity outside of CAP support and untangling these related factors can be problematic and not always possible, it is still a worthy exercise to attempt. There are significant challenges associated with the methods used in this evaluation. These unavoidably limit the extent to which it is possible to draw some conclusions.

The challenges can be summarised as the following:

- The inherent difficulty of establishing causal relationships for biodiversity impacts, which are often long term and with multiple influences;
- Establishing a true counterfactual to identify CAP net impacts as opposed to other factors;
- Absence of data for this programming period, including data for many statistical indicators;
- Secondary impacts on biodiversity of measures used for other purposes is not usually monitored;
- Reliability of information provided by stakeholders including through interviews;
- Difficulty of scaling up results from case studies to form generalised judgments at the EU level.

To mitigate these challenges this evaluation has used triangulation through combined methods where appropriate to provide greater robustness and has tried to clarify sources and assumptions made.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FILLING DATA GAPS FOR FUTURE EVALUATIONS

The following data gaps were found during this evaluation and were recommended to be filled to allow for more effective design and implementation of CAP instruments and measures as well as to enable improved evaluations of their impacts in the future:

- Much greater long-term monitoring of CAP interventions at field and landscape level through controlled studies;
- Better mapping of grasslands and other pastoral habitats so that CAP protections can be put in place.

Read the Full Report:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cmef/sustainability/impact-cap-habitats-landscapes-biodiversity_en



Send your questions to:

info@ruralevaluation.eu

¹ Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on habitats, landscapes, biodiversity, Alliance Environnement, November 2019.

² ten case studies were chosen in Croatia, France (département of Val de Loire), Germany (Land of Baden-Württemberg), Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia and Romania.

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The Evaluation Helpdesk works under the supervision of Unit C.4 (Monitoring and Evaluation) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

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