



# Rural Evaluation **NEWS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## Improving evidence-based evaluations in view of the ex post evaluation

The ex post evaluation is a critical milestone for all programmes as it allows for policy makers and citizens to take stock of the results and impacts of the programmes and provide valuable lessons to be carried over to future programming periods.

**A**lthough the ex post evaluation of rural development programmes (RDPs) 2014-2020 will not be submitted until 2026, Member States are already slowly beginning to prepare and making sure that they will have the data needed for robust evaluations. Therefore, last year's EvaluationWORKS! 2020 yearly capacity building events focused on 'Improving evidence-based evaluations in view of the ex post'. The workshops were an opportunity to collect and clarify open issues, raise awareness of available support, and help Managing Authorities and evaluators to prepare for the upcoming activities related to the ex post evaluation. Furthermore, these workshops served as a reflection point and first look for screening data gaps and data availability issues for future preparations of data management systems for the next programming period.



### NEWS

Extending RDPs 2014-2020 and the EURL: Implications for programming, monitoring, and evaluation

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### GOOD PRACTICES

The 15<sup>th</sup> Good Practice Workshop: 'Assessing the contribution of RDPs to a competitive and viable agricultural sector'

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### BACK TO BASICS

Adapting the evaluation design in times of COVID-19: Questions to guide decisions for RDP evaluations

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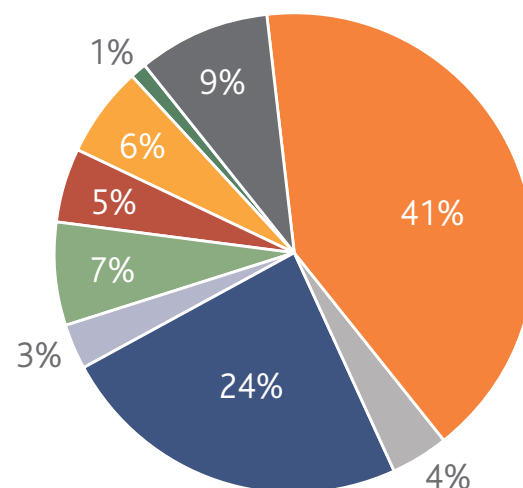


### EVENTS

Upcoming and Past Events Calendar

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Figure 1: Total participants by role

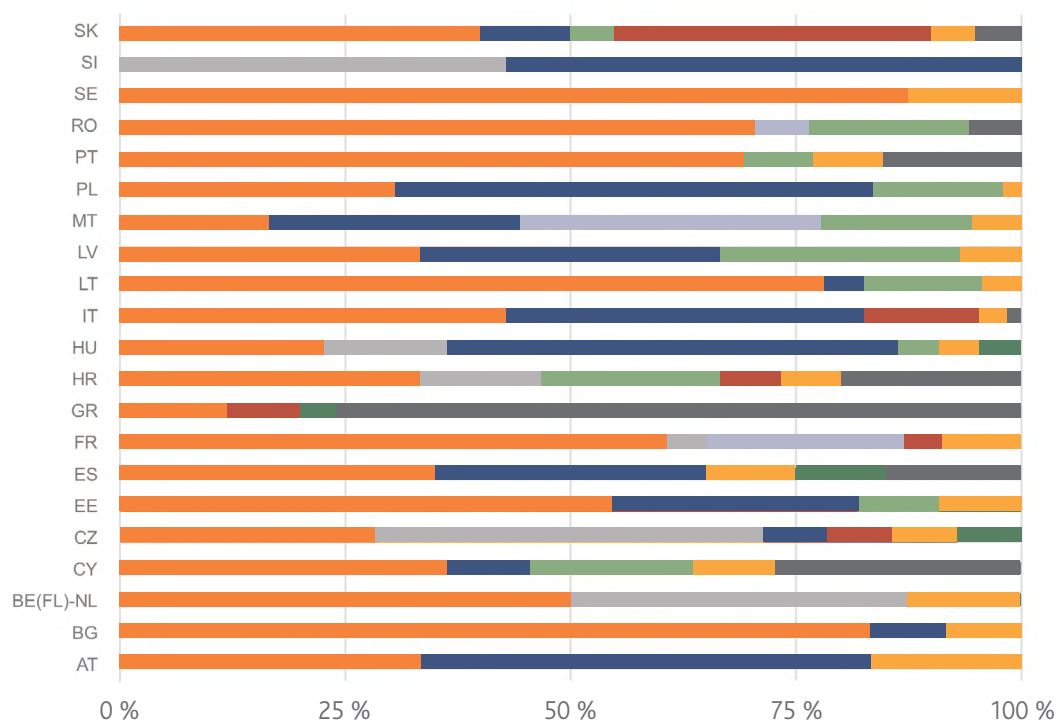


The EvaluationWORKS! 2020 yearly capacity building events aimed to:

- Follow up on the lessons learnt from the evaluations in 2019 through identifying potential weaknesses.
- Overcome challenges in data management and data quality in view of the ex post evaluation and beyond.
- Address specific priority areas in the fields of environment, climate change and social indicators.

These events provide the opportunity for evaluation stakeholders in each Member State to identify and discuss challenges they have faced and come up with potential solutions in order to improve their evaluation capacity for the future. In order to facilitate the potential participation of as many local stakeholders these events are held in the local language.

Figure 2: Participants by event and role



- Managing Authority
- Data providers
- Evaluation Helpdesk
- Evaluation Units at the ministries
- Paying agency
- European Commission
- Evaluators
- National Rural Network
- Other (e.g., Research)





Send your  
questions to:

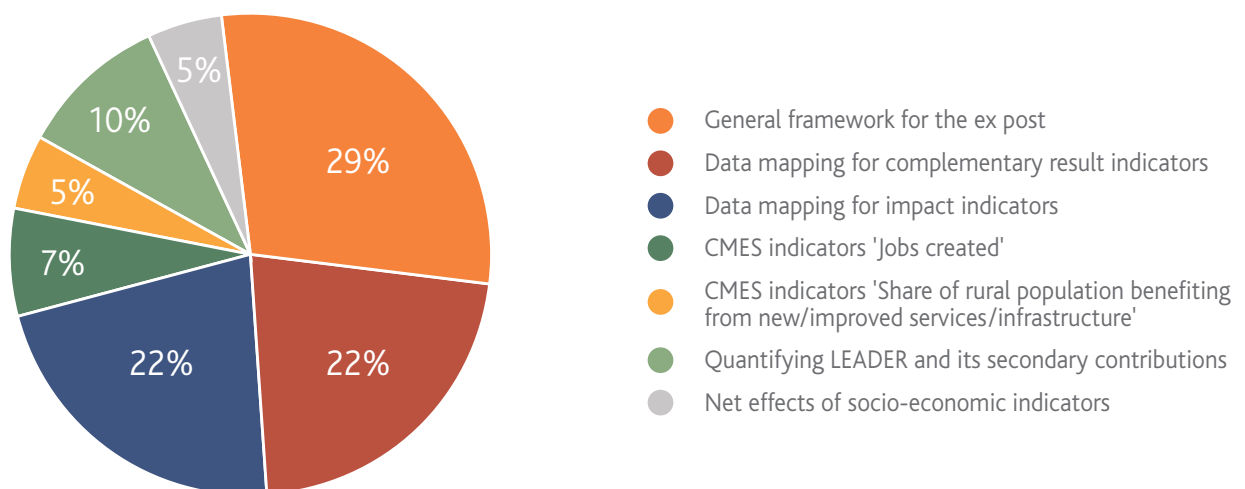
[info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu)



The workshops took place between September 2020 and January 2021. In total, 21 events were conducted for 22 Member States with over 431 participants. The primary participant groups were Managing Authorities (41%), followed by evaluators (24%) and Paying Agencies (7%). Given the Covid-19 situation in the Member States all capacity building events took place online.

EvaluationWORKS! 2020 events offered a wide variety of ex post related themes which Member States could choose from.

Figure 3: Topics covered in the 21 yearly capacity building events





# Hungary



*'The Yearly Capacity Building Event 2020 has shown clearly that active participation of the evaluators in the workshop is an important condition for a successful meeting.'*

- Géza Raskó, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

**DATE OF  
WORKSHOP**

**10 November 2020**

**ONLINE**

## DATA MAPPING FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RDP RESULTS AND IMPACTS

### R.13 Increase in efficiency of water use in agriculture in RDP supported projects

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monitoring tables:</b> data on reliable volumes of irrigated water, as well as, on standard outputs before and after the projects are usually missing.</li> <li>• <b>FADN:</b> data collection on irrigated water use is not in line with the necessary data for calculating this indicator.</li> <li>• <b>Farm Structure Survey:</b> there is often no data on the use of irrigation water by crop type.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the lack of data collected by the Paying Agency from the beneficiaries, data has to be collected from the irrigation statistics of the Agricultural Research Institute, as well as from FADN.</li> <li>• Further data collection can be carried out from the farm management logs of beneficiaries.</li> </ul>	<p>For a robust calculation of the indicator the following data is still needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volume of irrigation water before and after the project.</li> <li>• Irrigated area and crop cultures on the irrigated fields.</li> <li>• Technical information on the implemented investments.</li> </ul>

### R.14 Increase in efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food processing in RDP supported projects

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Operations database:</b> after the implementation of the project, reliable values on the reduction of energy use and the value of standard outputs are missing.</li> <li>• <b>FADN:</b> data collection on energy use is not in line with the necessary data for calculating this indicator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional data collection from the beneficiaries is necessary.</li> <li>• Analysis of additional data will be carried out by energy experts.</li> <li>• A survey will be conducted with beneficiaries to capture their experiences and results.</li> </ul>	<p>For a robust calculation of the indicator the following data is still needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominal size of energy-savings by the project.</li> <li>• Use of energy and standard output before and after the project.</li> </ul>







## IMPROVING THE CALCULATION OF NET CONTRIBUTIONS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT INDICATORS

- **Key issues:**  
Labour Force Survey, income and living conditions and Regional Economic Accounts data is not applicable for complex econometric modelling purposes due to the territorial aggregation level (NUTS 3).
- **Useful elements from other Member States' experiences:**
  - The use of proxy indicators can contribute to a more precise calculation of the indicator and assessment of the real impacts of the RDP.
  - The use of computational econometric models can be a solution for separating RDP effects from other sources.
  - Several data sources should be used to calculate the socio-economic impact indicators.
- **Actions needed:**  
The development and use of proxy indicators is necessary to calculate the socio-economic impact indicators.

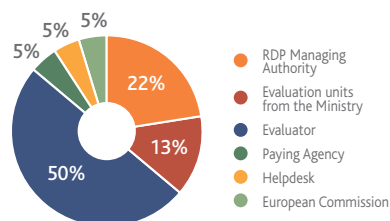
## FUTURE SUPPORT IDENTIFIED DURING THE EVENT

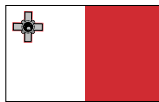
- Efficiency of the data collection system (monitoring) should be improved continuously so that by the time of the evaluation(s) most of the data is available for the evaluators. This would ensure that evaluators spend their time on the evaluation activities instead of looking for missing data.
- Evaluation practices and methods of other Member States disseminated by the Helpdesk should be studied and possibly adapted to the Hungarian context.
- Evaluation capacities of LAGs should be established based on the experiences of other Member States where these capacities already exist. Adaptation of their training materials should be considered, if applicable.

*'My biggest lesson learnt from the capacity building event was that the challenges regarding the indicators should be addressed early in the programming period, because later (after the first reporting period) it is very problematic to review the definitions'.*

- Mr Tamás Cserneczy, Evaluator -

## PARTICIPANTS STATISTICS





*'Evaluation efforts to determine the impact of the RDP which require resource-intensive methodologies such as the distribution of surveys to beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, should be adopted for those areas where the programme is expected to have the most impact.'*

- Stephanie Vella, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

**DATE OF  
WORKSHOP**

4 December 2020

**ONLINE**

## DATA MAPPING FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RDP RESULTS AND IMPACTS

### R.2 Change in agricultural output per annual working unit (AWU)

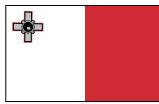
Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output is only captured at the application stage and it is not updated unless it is a requirement of the closure report.</li> <li>The standard output is not captured for every measure, not even at the application stage.</li> <li>Data on AWU is not available through the monitoring system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing methods to capture the required data for evaluation at the end of the project.</li> <li>Developing methods to capture the required data for non-beneficiaries for the evaluation.</li> <li>Mapping the data from the operations database with that available in FADN to determine whether beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries can be identified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further collaboration between stakeholders, with the aim of achieving more centralisation of data and ensuring that data is available for evaluation purposes.</li> </ul>

### R.13 Increase in efficiency of water use in agriculture in RDP supported projects

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output is captured at the application stage, but it is not updated and it is not captured for every measure.</li> <li>No data on water consumption is being collected in the monitoring system. Relevant data collected from beneficiaries who construct a reservoir, namely in terms of the size of the reservoir.</li> <li>In FADN, it is not possible to distinguish between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. This requires mapping and comparison with the monitoring database.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying which farms captured in FADN are beneficiaries of the RDP to possibly allow for the use of a counterfactual analysis.</li> <li>Mapping of available databases to get a better understanding of the variables which exist and the respective sources.</li> <li>Relevant data on water may exist across different entities and thus discussions should be ongoing between the main data providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration is required between different data holders to map available data for better understanding on data availability.</li> <li>It would be useful to identify best practices which may be relevant for Malta.</li> </ul>







## R.18 Reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide and R.19 Reduced ammonia emissions

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In Eurostat, the reported value is in absolute terms, which is a very small value for Malta given the country's size. This gives the impression that no emissions are generated (reported value of '0').</li><li>Data gaps exist in the derivation of emissions, which are specific to the agricultural sector.</li><li>It is difficult to estimate the reduction in emissions from some of the RDP measures, such as, agri-environment-climate measures, as they focus more on climate change adaptation.</li><li>Lack of awareness on the information available in the animal register database.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An evaluation effort should be directed towards the areas where the RDP is expected to have most impact.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A common national platform for sharing data is required.</li><li>Quantifying climate change adaptation is not always straightforward.</li></ul>

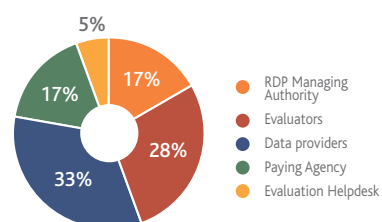
## FURTHER SUPPORT IDENTIFIED DURING THE EVENT

- Address gaps identified for the ex post evaluation through ongoing discussions with main stakeholders.
- Data collection is often based on regulatory requirements and not linked to the requirements of an effective evaluation.
- Discussions on the data that will be required in the future to enable data providers to start working on the collection of data as soon as possible and avoid duplication of efforts.

*'The data requirements for the evaluation of the RDP should not be considered in isolation - they are tied to other national data commitments, particularly when it comes to environmental and climate change indicators. Towards this end, the outcome of today's workshop shows us the need for a national data management strategy. The data requirements of the future will be increasing, and effective future policymaking, including that which is required for the establishment of national targets, strongly depends on reliable and effective data management'.*

- Saviour Vassallo, Malta Resource Authority -

## PARTICIPANTS STATISTICS







# Belgium (Flanders) & The Netherlands



*'Preparation of the ex post evaluation is still in the early stages, but it was good to make participants aware of certain issues that will certainly come up, mainly related to the result indicators.'*

- Steven Knotter, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

**DATE OF  
WORKSHOP**  
28 November 2020

**ONLINE**

## DATA MAPPING FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RDP RESULTS AND IMPACTS

**R.13 Increase in efficiency of water use in agriculture in RDP supported projects and  
R.14 Increase in efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food processing in RDP supported projects**

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The data provided does show something about the efforts undertaken and the progress on the indicator, but it does not fully show the overall results of these efforts.</li><li>• Considering the current provisions and requirements it will be challenging for The Netherlands to report precise values on these indicators.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflection should be made on a measure to calculate the 'efficiency' aspect of the indicator, not the absolute total, but a value relative to some overall productivity measure.</li><li>• In the Netherlands, combining general data from various agencies such as the RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency), CBS (Statistics Netherlands), PBL (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency), WEcR (Wageningen Economic Research) could potentially help to solve numerous data gaps.</li><li>• Samples of projects could be taken to form a better picture of the effects of the investments made.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a closer look at how the standard output can be calculated and how to coordinate the data.</li><li>• Include more specific data delivery requirements in future agreements.</li></ul>







# Belgium (Flanders) & The Netherlands

## QUANTIFYING LEADER CONTRIBUTIONS AND ITS SECONDARY EFFECTS

- **Issues:**  
Existing common indicators are insufficient for capturing the full effect of LEADER. This, together with issues on improving the evaluation capacity at the LAG level and governance issues jointly cause difficulties in gaining deeper insights into the effects of LEADER.
- **Additional judgement criteria and indicators:**  
It would be interesting to develop evaluation elements related to an in depth-analysis of the LEADER process in the field, rather than quantifying contributions to programme objectives.
- **Areas for improvement:**  
More can be done to communicate to LAGs beforehand and raise awareness of LAGs' own contribution to the various focus areas. The requested information should be qualitative and focused on the LAG's processes.
- **Challenges affecting the information flows:**  
There are currently too many levels to report from local level to programme level, especially given the timing.
- **Suggestions for improvement:**  
Managing Authorities could have more flexibility to consult with various stakeholders involved on what data is feasible and useful.

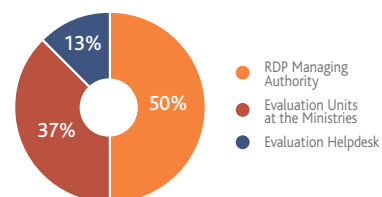
## FUTURE SUPPORT IDENTIFIED DURING THE EVENT

- Clarity on the assessment framework of the European Commission for the next programming period.
- Clarity about the possible flexibility in capturing LEADER effects and its inclusion in the ex post evaluation.
- Besides monitoring and evaluation issues, participants also raised some questions related to implementation (ringfencing, information on how the Managing Authorities from other Member States implement and organise RDPs).

*'The yearly capacity building event allowed me to gain insight into our blind spots in the field of indicators and the requirements of the European Commission in relation to the topics discussed. We still need to take some steps to properly value these indicators'.*

- Carlo Vromans, Coordination Office of the Rural Development Programme -

## PARTICIPANTS STATISTICS





*'Several solutions have been discussed during the event in relation to complementary result indicators linked to climate change. The decisions to prepare the methodology to measure emissions from agriculture and on the farms will improve the assessment of RDP results and consequently also the impacts on climate change.'*

- Jela Tvrdonova, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

## DATE OF WORKSHOP

24 November 2020

ONLINE

## DATA MAPPING FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RDP RESULTS AND IMPACTS

### R.15 Renewable energy production from supported projects

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no major challenges. The operations database collects the energy production capacity through application forms as information provided either by the certified installer or seller. The investment includes the energy production used by the applicant to cover the applicant's energy need and the energy which goes to the network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In view of the ex post, access to data from the operations database on the renewable energy capacities will be necessary.</li> <li>It will be important to plan the indicator R.15 on green energy from agriculture and forestry, including the calculation of target values according to planned interventions and financial allocation.</li> <li>The production of renewables will be included in the balance sheet of farm emission production.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A survey should be conducted which looks closely at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were the unit costs used?</li> <li>What was the support per unit and the price per unit to introduce simplified costs options?</li> <li>In what circumstances do applicants not need to conduct the public procurement for purchasing production facilities, but only to comply with certain parameters?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Cooperation with the Ministry of Economy to get more contextual data on renewable energy production and use.</li> </ul>

### R.18 Reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide

Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More information is needed on the decrease of CO<sub>2</sub> production, since there is no tracking of animal numbers. This should be included by the Paying Agency into the operations database.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of various management practices in relation to emissions production (e.g. incorporation of plant residues into the soil as compared to other practices).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the Joint Research Centre study on emissions linked with farm management practices.</li> <li>Agreement between the Managing Authority and research institutes</li> </ul>







Data challenges	Actions to support a more robust ex post evaluation	Covering data gaps in the future
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using the ongoing Joint Research Centre study which will provide emission coefficients per farm activity at the EU level. Following this study, a similar study should be conducted for conditions in Slovakia.</li><li>• Meanwhile, a partial data source could be the UKSUP (Central Control and Testing Institute for Agriculture) database on fertilising, where details per crop can be found.</li><li>• Data from animal breeding services will be used to obtain the information on animal performance.</li></ul>	to start to develop coefficients for farm management practices in the Slovak context and start collecting the data.

## IMPROVING THE CALCULATION OF THE INDICATOR 'JOBS CREATED'

- **Key issues:**
  - Compliance with the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System fiche: currently only new jobs are accounted for.
  - Data collected via application forms/payment requests: the quality of the data depends on the beneficiaries' approach and honesty.
  - There is a concern that the target value of the indicator will not be achieved.
- **Action points for improvement:**
  - Improve data collection quality through the contracts.
  - Clarify for the ex post, if jobs created via Measure 19.4 shall be counted.
  - Continue the practice of double checking through available databases of other state and public institutions.
  - In terms of implementation, introduce more measures which could foster job creation within the next years.
- **Adjustments needed for future monitoring:**
  - Some measures are affecting job creation in a negative way, such as modernisation. To see the real effects of interventions, jobs created should be netted out (for indicator R.31).
  - Regarding LEADER, jobs created through running operations for indicator R.3 could be considered.

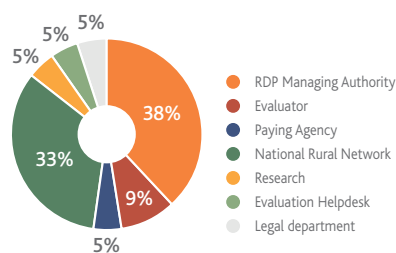
## FUTURE SUPPORT IDENTIFIED DURING THE EVENT

- Increase the number of data providers.
- Involve research in developing a system to monitor emissions for various farm management practices.
- Review the RDP architecture in favour of jobs created.

*'A good understanding of the methodology for each indicator is key for setting the targets realistically'.*

- Jana Juhaszova, Head of the Department of Project Support,  
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development -

## PARTICIPANTS STATISTICS





# Extending RDPs 2014-2020 and the EURI: Implications for programming, monitoring, and evaluation

Rural development programmes (RDPs) will be extended by two years according to Regulation 2020/2220<sup>1</sup> (the transitional regulation), amending Regulation 1305/2013<sup>2</sup>. For these extended RDPs, the programming period runs until 2022, and the implementing period runs until 2025. New financial resources will become available to Member States to cover the additional programming years 2021 and 2022 with a requirement that these resources should be used by the third financial year following the commitment (the so-called N+3 rule).

**A**cross RDPs, EUR 26.9 billion will be allocated from the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Additionally, EUR 8 billion will be provided to Member States through the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI). Annex I Part 2 of the amended Regulation 1305/2013 show the distribution of these funds to the different Member states.

For the 2021 and 2022 MFF resources no new ring-fencing rules will be applied except to ensure that at least the same overall share of the EAFRD contributions are reserved for the measures related to the environment and climate (measures referred to under Art. 59(6) of Regulation 1305/2013).

Concerning new implementing rules for measures in view of the transition the following can be observed:

- For multi-annual measures (environment-climate (Art 28), organic (Art 29) and animal welfare (Art 33)) new commitments from 2021 can only be programmed for 1-3 years, unless specifically justified. From 2022, annual extensions of multi-annual commitments are limited to a duration of one year.
- ANC degressive payments may continue until the end of 2022 if they have not already reached the four-year maximum threshold (Art 31(5)).
- A new minimum loss threshold has been introduced for risk management tools.





- COVID-19 measure implementation deadlines have been extended by six months: applications made by beneficiaries have to be approved by 30 June 2021 and payments done by 31 December 2021 (Art 39b).
- For LEADER, the eligible costs are extended to include capacity building and preparatory actions related to the design and implementation of LEADER/CLLD strategies that will be selected under the future CAP strategic plans.

For EURI funds certain ring-fencing rules will apply. For example, the minimum ring-fencing of 5% for LEADER and 30% for operations benefitting the environment and climate will not apply. However, an environmental non-regression principle must be applied, meaning that in every RDP at least the same share of EURI funds must be programmed for measures referred to in Art. 59(6) as that RDP has done previously with the MFF funds. Additionally, at least 37% of EURI funds must be reserved for measures under Art. 33, 59(5) and (6) (e.g. animal welfare, LEADER and operations beneficial for the environment and climate). Lastly, at least 55% of EURI funds must be reserved for measures under Art. 17 (investments), 19 (farm and business development), 20 (basic services) and 35 (co-operation) in order to promote economic and social development of rural areas, resilient, sustainable and a digital economic recovery in line with agri-environment-climate objectives.

With that said, Member States may deviate from the non-regression principle or the 55% threshold to the extent necessary to comply with either of the two requirements.

The new resources provided by the EURI to the current RDPs should be programmed and monitored separately from the MFF resources, while still applying the general rules set out in Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.

## Implications for programme strategies and measures

Although no change to the current approach towards the programme strategy and target indicator setting has been taken in general<sup>1</sup>, the extension of the programming period, availability of additional funds and the need to address the COVID-19 pandemic are all important reasons for Member States to adapt their strategies and target setting (i.e. make a strategic RDP amendment). Strategies can be changed if circumstances change, new information becomes available, or a change in the approach to address identified needs is necessary. Measures and their descriptions can be adapted as necessary. Where EURI funding is added to measures, the measure descriptions have

to outline the relevant programming information that apply to EURI funded actions separately to the programming information that apply to regular MFF funded actions.

## Implications for indicators, targets and AIRs

All indicators (planned target indicators and planned output indicators) need to be reviewed in line with the updated RDP strategies, referring to the implementation objectives in 2025 (instead of 2023), especially where the additional financial resources will be allocated. For all planned outputs, sub-totals of outputs planned to be financed by EURI must be indicated. For the 2021 AIR, which will be submitted in 2022, and all those that follow, the EURI commitments for expenditures and the outputs realised through EURI will need to be reported on separately from the implementation data referring to the regular MFF. The last AIR will now be submitted in June 2026, in line with the two-year extension of the programming period.

Across RDPs, EUR 26.9 billion will be allocated from the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Additionally, EUR 8 billion will be provided to Member States through the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI).

## Implications for Evaluation

In line with the two-year extension of the programming period, the due date for the ex post evaluation report Member States need to draft for each of the RDPs has been moved to 31 December 2026. Therefore, the EU level synthesis report of these evaluations will be conducted in 2027. No new requirements for evaluation have been introduced, however, various scenarios could have consequences for the evaluation design, including:


- If RDPs introduce programmes amendments with significant changes to the intervention logic, triggered by COVID-19 related crisis.
- If RDPs redefine the content of their measures to adapt to the next context.

Furthermore, as EURI funds will be monitored by financial and other output indicators, this will facilitate tracking these contributions to performance as part of the overall RDP evaluation. ■

1. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/AUTO/?uri=celex:32020R2220>

2. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1305/2021-01-01>

3. Article 4 of implementing regulation 808/2014 applies as before the transitional regulation came into force. The only change is that due to the prolongation of the implementation period, now four strategic RDP amendment are allowed throughout the period, instead of previously three.



# Update on the work of the Evaluation Helpdesk's thematic working groups

## **New Working Documents: Thematic Working Group 8**

One of the long-term objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is viable food production which requires enhancing the competitiveness of the EU's agriculture. Rural development programmes (RDPs) implemented in Member States play an important role in the achievement of this policy objective. Independent evaluators analyse the data collected for various indicators which help to demonstrate evidence as to what extent RDPs have contributed to the above mentioned policy objective. The 3rd Working Package of the Thematic Working Group 'Ex post evaluation of RDPs 2014-2020: Learning from practice' has analysed selected evaluation issues related to the assessment of RDP effects on fostering the competitiveness in agriculture and provides evaluation experts' practical recommendations for addressing these issues.

**The recently published Working Document proposes some recommendations, including practical examples, on how FADN data can be used to answer the Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) 4, 6 and 27**

## **Making better use of FADN**

Robust analysis requires high quality and timely available data. The Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) has become a primary source of information for the assessment of farms' economic performance throughout the Member States. However, ensuring the representativeness of the FADN data is one of the major challenges reported by several Member States in their Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), yearly capacity building events and Helpdesk good practice workshops. Therefore, the recently published Working Document 'Best use of FADN for the assessment of RDP effects on fostering the competitiveness in agriculture' proposes some recommendations, including practical





examples, on how FADN data can be used to answer the Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) 4, 6 and 27 with consideration of the representativeness issues of farm-level data samples.

EXAMPLE: What should an evaluator do when answering CEQ 4 and 6 when all farms from the FADN dataset which were identified as supported by a given RDP (under Focus Areas 2A or 3A) were randomly selected in the FADN?

Find the answer by downloading the Working Document 'Best use of FADN for the assessment of RDP effects on fostering the competitiveness in agriculture'

### Going beyond common indicators to achieve more robust results

The common evaluation questions related to the assessment of RDP effects on the competitiveness in agriculture (notably CEQ 4 and CEQ 6) encompass a broad range of aspects that are not necessarily captured by the existing common indicators. For example, farm viability and competitiveness (CEQ 4) involve more than just the increase of outputs or the modernisation and restructuring of farms. Additionally, the integration of primary producers in the agri-food chain (CEQ 6) goes further than just the percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets, short supply circuits and producer groups/organisations. Therefore, additional judgment criteria and indicators may offer more detailed evidence for providing robust answers on the achievements of each respective focus area of RDPs.

With a view to capture those additional aspects, evaluation experts have suggested possible solutions in the form of additional judgment criteria and indicators updating the relevant parts of the Annex 11 of the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017'. The suggested judgment criteria and result indicators are related to, for example, promotion of local markets and participation in producer groups.

DOWNLOAD the updated fiches of [Annex 11](#)

### Adapting evaluations to a changing environment

An important challenge in assessing the RDP's effects in the ex post evaluation is related to the consideration of multiple intervening, confounding or external factors which influence the programme's effects. For example, confounding factors related to the socio-economic consequences caused by COVID-19 and

the EU's response through the recovery aid under the Next Generation EU. All these confounding factors influence the RDP's intervention logic, targets, and results. Furthermore, contextual changes may influence the preparation and performing of the evaluation of the RDP's impacts (e.g. the specification for tendering and contracting the ex post evaluation, defining its scope, and selecting the approaches and methods used, as well as, the associated data collection).

In the recently published working document 'Evaluating RDP effects on competitiveness of agriculture in a changing context' experts provide practical suggestions and checklists to be considered in the tender specifications and examples of evaluation elements such as evaluation questions, judgment criteria, and additional indicators.

DOWNLOAD the Working Document '[Evaluating RDP effects on competitiveness of agriculture in a changing context](#)'

### Launch of Thematic Working Group 9: Research projects to support better data for evaluating the CAP

The Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with DG AGRI has launched its 9th Thematic Working Group 'Research projects to support better data for evaluating the CAP'. The Thematic Working Group aims to take stock of the knowledge accumulated in initiatives and projects at the EU-level and Member States level who are working on data-infrastructure and data use which have the potential to contribute to the data management and information systems for evaluating the CAP. This knowledge will be accumulated in a knowledge bank, which will be presented as an interactive tool of projects' outputs. The thematic working group will further develop tools (guidance, practical recommendations and examples) to support the knowledge transfer of these projects' outputs to the evaluation community in the Member States. ■



Find more information on the Evaluation Helpdesk's [Thematic Working Groups](#) in the Evaluation Section of the ENRD Website.







# Heightened progress in implementing the evaluation plans reported in 2020

Managing Authorities have in 2020 reported on the progress in the implementation of their rural development programmes (RDPs). Due to the COVID-19 situation, the submission of the AIRs covering the year 2019 was postponed from June to September 2020.

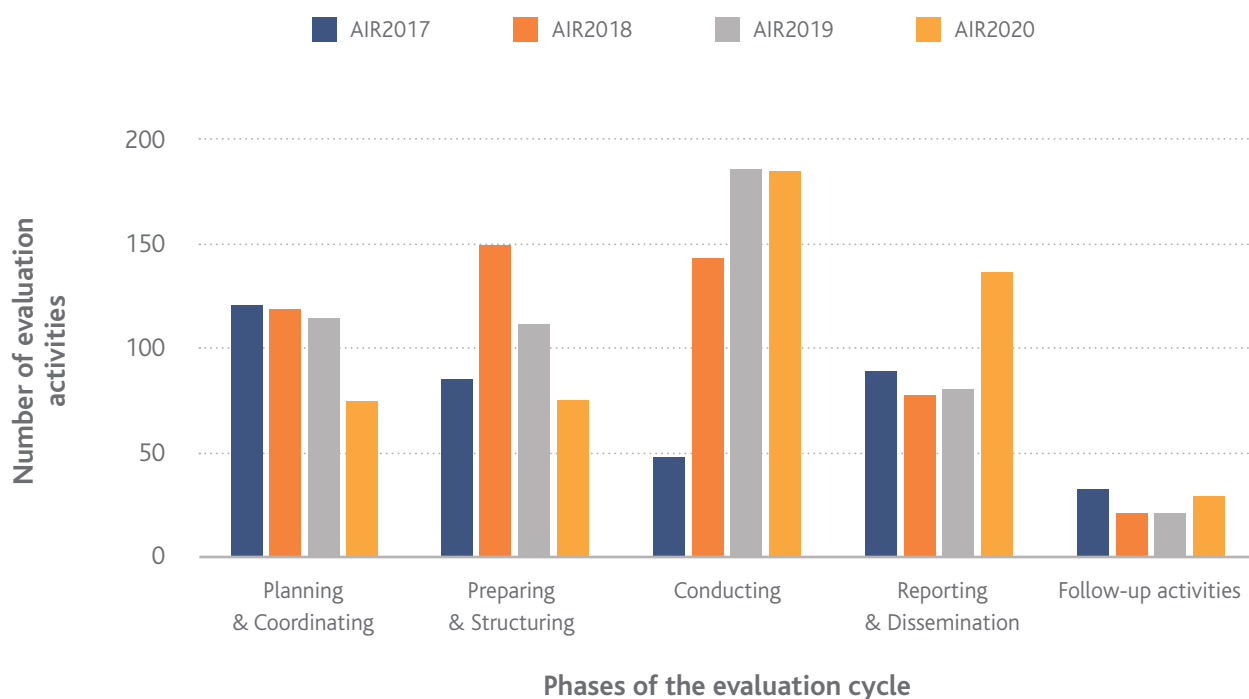
**T**he Evaluation Helpdesk has synthesised and analysed Chapter 2 of the 2020 AIRs. In Chapter 2, Member States report on their progress regarding the implementation of their RDP's evaluation plan.

The section on completed evaluations and evaluation findings has been more complete compared to previous years. More than 90 AIRs included completed evaluations and their summaries, compared to roughly 75 in 2019.

The RDP evaluation plan is composed of eight different sections, which can be modified and adapted along the programming period if needed. Modifications to the RDP evaluation plan decreased markedly by 37% compared to the previous year. Altogether, only 26 modifications were reported in eight AIRs submitted in 2020, which is about one third compared to 2019. The modifications were primarily related to governance and coordination arrangements for evaluation, changes to the topics of their evaluations and the adjustment of resources for evaluation.



Figure 1: Distribution of reported evaluation activities across the main phases of the evaluation cycle and across different AIRs



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (2020)

Following the trend from previous years, Member States have performed a high number of evaluation activities (449). The types of evaluation activities reported indicate that most RDPs have shifted from the planning and preparing phase of the evaluation cycle to the conduction, dissemination and follow-up of evaluations (Figure 1). Activities related to 'planning and coordinating', as well as 'preparing and structuring' have naturally decreased compared to previous years, which can be seen as a normal progression as we are now at the end of the evaluation cycle.

### More completed evaluations with encouraging findings

The number of completed evaluations reported in the AIRs in 2020 (N=285) increased by almost 25% compared to 2019.

Among these, 23% were related to the CAP Objective 2 'Environment' (RD Priorities 4 and 5), 12% to the CAP Objective 3 'Territorial balance' (RD Priority 6), 5% to CAP Objective 1 'Viable food production' (RD Priorities 2 and 3) and the remaining

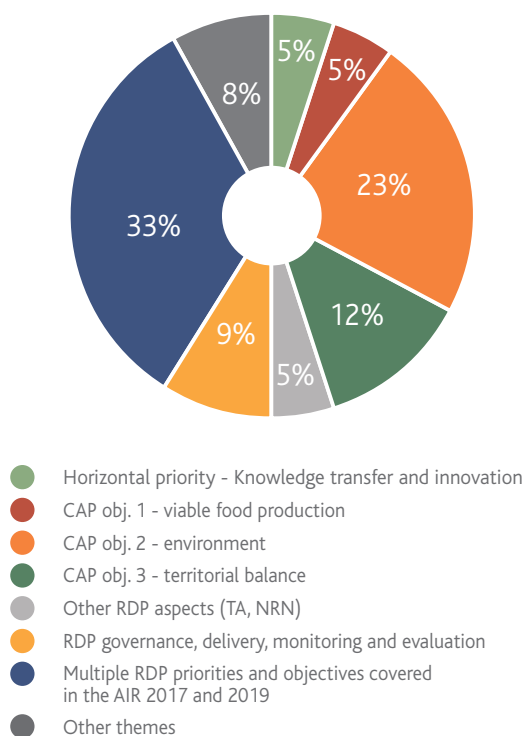
**The number of completed evaluations reported in the AIRs in 2020 increased by almost 25% compared to 2019.**

5% were associated to the horizontal RD Priority 1 'Knowledge transfer and innovation'.

The vast majority of completed evaluations (33%) however covered multiple RDP priorities and objectives. This can be explained by the fact that many of the reported evaluations were related to the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports submitted in 2019 (e.g. background evaluations, studies) which by nature focus on all RDP priorities.



Figure 2: Completed evaluations across main topics reported in 2020



### Focusing on assessing impacts

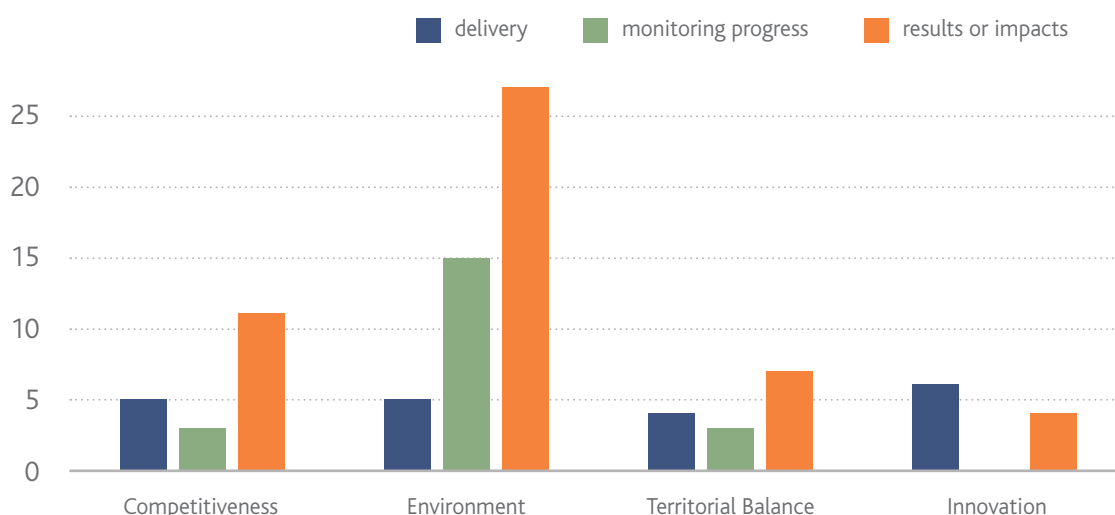
Overall, Member States have reported on a large variety of evaluation findings. Although the reported findings mainly concern RDP results and impacts (42%) they also relate to a

broader range of evaluation outcomes. 18% of the findings were related to monitoring the progress against the objectives/targets (e.g. uptake under measures, progress in monitoring indicators). A considerable share of reported findings (31%) concerned how the RD policy was delivered (assessment of selection criteria, budget, communication activities, etc.). 4% concerned recommendations of evaluations and 5% other aspects (e.g. update of SWOT analysis, SEA findings) (Figure 2).

### Don't forget to follow up!

Member States have also made a big effort in the follow-up of the evaluation results. Related activities have increased three times compared to the previous year. Most of the follow-up actions were related to improving the RDP delivery mechanism. In Malta, for example, following the recommendations presented in the AIR in 2019, the NRN is taking a more active role in identifying and disseminating innovative projects and preparing the CAP Strategic Plan for the post-2020 period. While in Slovakia, the recommendations were used in the preparation of the draft intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan. Lastly, follow-ups have also been made to the adaptation of the RDP monitoring and evaluation system in some Member States, for example, the creation of a network of agri-environmental schemes focused on monitoring and evaluation in Rhône-Alpes (France), or the update of the Information Systems for the collection of data for the output and result indicators from the applications for support in Greece. ■

Figure 3: Types of evaluation findings reported in relation to the CAP objectives



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (2020)

# What do the **Green Deal Targets** mean for CAP Strategic Plans

The European Green Deal is a sustainable growth strategy that responds to the increasing climate and environmental-related challenges faced across Europe and aims at achieving sustainable growth that will benefit all citizens equally. Its main goals are achieving climate neutrality, reducing pollution and establishing sustainable energy, transport and food systems.

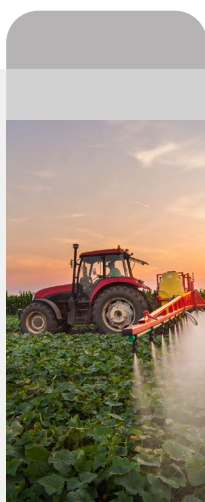
**A**griculture plays a major role in the achievement of the new Green Deal targets. The Green Deal specifically targets agriculture and sets sustainability objectives for the sector and for rural development, which are reflected in the Farm to Fork Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy.

## What do these targets mean for Member States?

First, it is important to point out that the targets as defined by the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy are non-binding aspirations to be achieved collectively and EU wide. This means that these

### What are the Green Deal Targets?

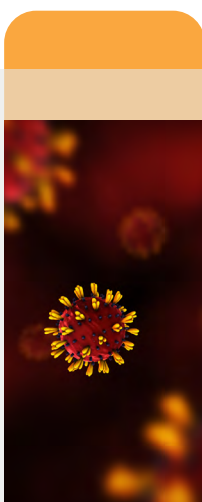
Green Deal EU targets for agriculture: Defined by the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy



Reduce by 50% the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides and reduce use by 50% of more hazardous pesticides by 2030



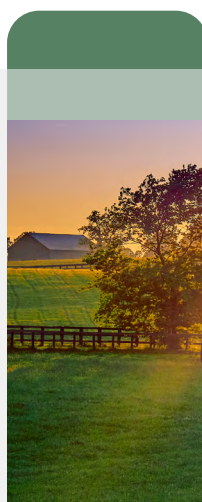
Achieve at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming and a significant increase in organic aquaculture by 2030



Reduce sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% by 2030



Reduce nutrient losses by at least 50% while ensuring no deterioration in soil fertility; this will reduce use of fertilisers by at least 20% by 2030



Bring back at least 10% of agricultural area under high diversity landscape features by 2030



Achieve 100% access to fast broadband internet in rural areas by 2025





targets should not be read as national targets to be achieved at the level of each Member State, but that the individual contribution of each Member state should help to allow the EU, as a whole, to reach these goals.

Any potentially legally binding targets will be set in the legislation and will be preceded by an impact assessment (e.g Directive on sustainable use of pesticides).

### EU Recommendations to achieve better results and impacts

Against this backdrop, last December, the Commission provided each EU country with tailor-made recommendations, to assist in the drafting of the national CAP strategic plans by identifying the key areas on which each EU country should focus, aiming to ensure the compliance with Green Deal ambitions and more specifically the six Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy targets. The Commission also asked Member States to determine

specific national values for these targets and align their CAP strategic plans thereto.

These recommendations result from the ongoing dialogue between the Commission and Member States and based on an analysis of their agricultural sector and rural areas. They aim to show the direction that the CAP strategic plans need to take to fulfil these objectives and targets by identifying key issues that need to be tackled by Member States and how to address them. To do this, the recommendations also provide a state of play in terms of Green Deal objectives.

The recommendations provided by the European Commission pay particular attention to the Green Deal targets and the consistency and coherence with other policy instruments. The recommendations have been published at the end of 2020 and are intended to be used by Member States before formally submitting their draft Strategic Plans.







## EU Green Deal Targets

Pesticides

Fertilisers

Antimicrobial

Organic farming

Broadband

Landscape features

Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and Member States



National values



### CAP Strategic Plans: Target setting

#### SWOT Analysis



Identification, prioritization and ranking of needs



Intervention strategy



Selection of the interventions and financial allocations



Targets for result indicators



## What are the 'national values' of the Green Deal targets?

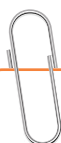
To ensure that the Green Deal targets are appropriately reflected in the CAP Strategic Plans, the European Commission invited Member States to set explicit national values for indicators to show how they plan to contribute to the new EU ambition, thus indicating a clear direction of the efforts to be made at national level. The national values will consider the efforts made over the years, the starting point and the potential for improvement, thus acknowledging in this desired collective effort, the specific situation of each Member State.

## Achieving targets as a collective

The success of the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy and its targets will only be possible as a collective and the CAP Strategic Plans are not the only tool contributing to the achievement of their ambition. Some of these targets will be challenging and therefore it is vital to acknowledge the unique situation in each Member State. Nevertheless, each Member State can make a vital contribution to the success of these important policies. ■

### Indicators in Annex I of the proposed CAP Strategic Plan Regulation associated to Green Deal targets

Green Deal targets related to the agricultural sector	Impact indicators (as laid down in Annex I) or Context indicators (as envisaged in secondary legislation)	Output and result indicators (as laid down in Annex I)
Reducing by 50% the use and the risk of chemical pesticides by 2030  Reducing by 50% the use of high-risk pesticides	I.27 Sustainable use of pesticides reduce risks and impacts of pesticides	R.37 Sustainable pesticide use share of agricultural land concerned by supported specific actions which lead to a sustainable use of pesticides
Reducing by 50% the sale of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030	I.26 Limiting antibiotic use in agriculture sales/use in food producing animals	R.36 Limiting antibiotic use share of livestock units concerned by supported actions to limit use of antibiotics
Reducing nutrient losses by at least 50% in 2030	I.15 Improving water quality gross nutrient balance on agricultural land	R.21 Sustainable nutrient management share of agricultural land under commitments related to improved nutrient management
Achieve 25% agricultural area under organic farming by 2030	C.32 Agricultural area under organic farming	O.15 Number of ha with support for organic farming
Completing fast broadband internet access in rural areas		R.34 Connecting rural Europe share of rural population benefitting from improved access to services and infrastructure through CAP support
Increasing land for biodiversity, including agricultural area under high diversity landscape features	I.20 Enhanced provision of ecosystem services share of UAA covered with landscape features	R. 29 Preserving landscape features share of agriculture land under commitments for managing landscape features, including hedgerows



Read the [European Commission's tailor-made recommendations](#) for Member States and learn more about the CAP reform







# The 15<sup>th</sup> Good Practice Workshop: 'Assessing the contribution of RDPs to a competitive and viable agricultural sector'

The 15<sup>th</sup> Good Practice Workshop of the Evaluation Helpdesk on 'Assessing the contribution of RDPs to a competitive and viable agricultural sector', took place online on 9-10 December 2020. This workshop had the overall aim of bringing together evaluation stakeholders to share and reflect on experiences in relation to assessing the contribution of RDPs to a competitive and viable agricultural sector within a properly functioning food supply chain and the EU capacity for crisis management.



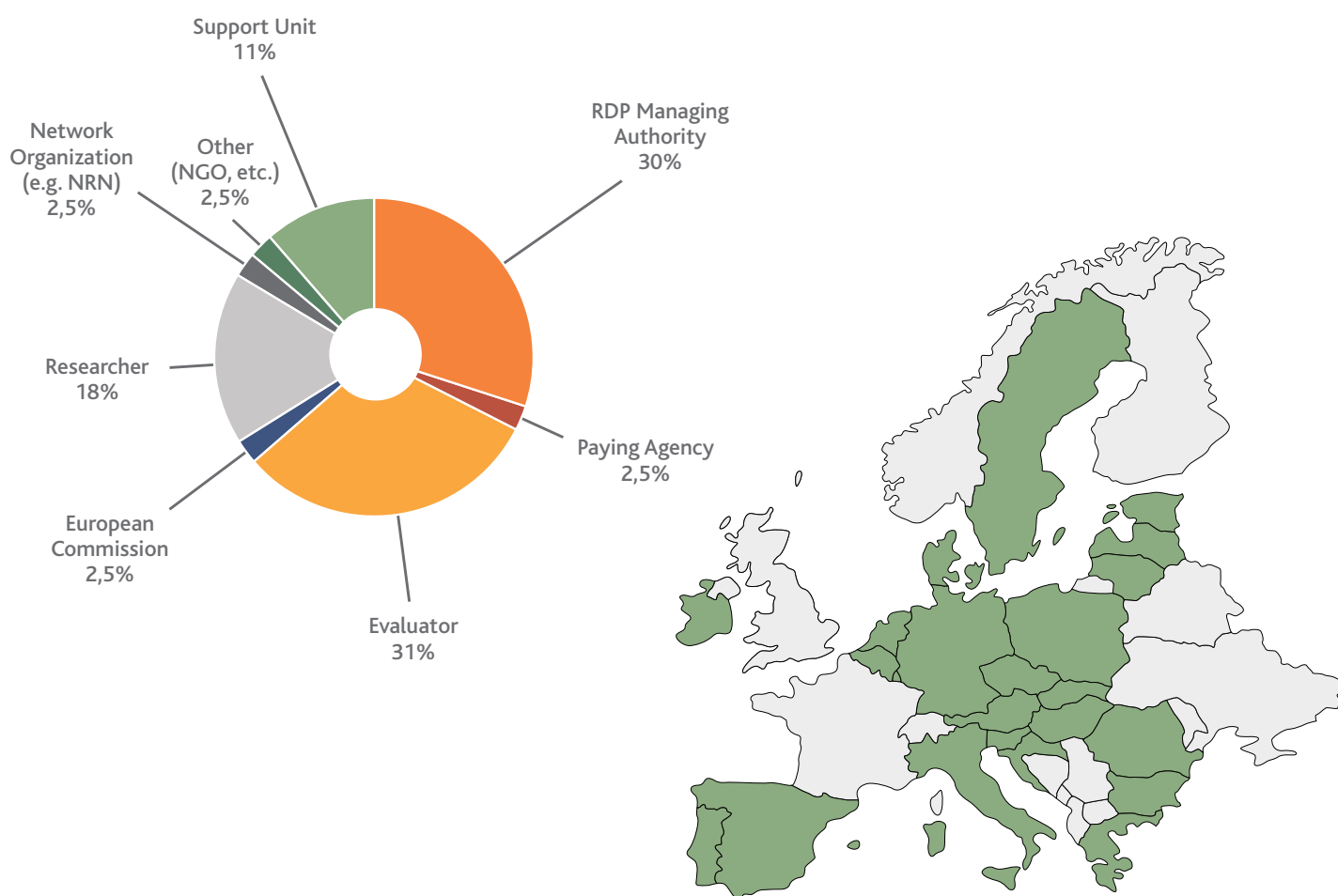
The workshop brought together 80 participants from 25 Member States. On the first day, the workshop focused on specific Member State's experiences from assessing the effects of RDPs on competitiveness. Two case studies from Hungary were presented, one on the calculation of Priority 2 effects and another on Priority 3 effects on food processing and the involvement of producers in the food chain. A third case study from Spain collected lessons learnt from the evaluations of the previous programming period looking specifically at the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, including the agri-food chain and its quality. The second day of the workshop explored holistic approaches used in Italy to analyse the competitiveness and environmental impacts along the food supply chain, as well as the results of research studies from the University of Pisa on the assessment of competitiveness and sustainability of rural areas through the non-farming sector.

The Helpdesk's thematic expert on economic and sectoral issues provided further input on the estimation of RDP's effects on the agri-food sector and complemented the case studies as well as guided the group discussions throughout the workshop.

### Lessons Learnt and recommendations for the future

The outcomes of the discussions on the case studies, research studies and expert input, together with the group discussions provided several lessons learnt and suggestions for facilitating and improving the evaluation of competitiveness taking into account the available methodological experiences and good practices.

Figure 1: Participants by role and Member State







## How can one improve the assessment of fostering competitiveness in agriculture with consideration for the non-farming sector?

- It is important to combine quantitative methods that work well, such as PSM, macro models and general equilibrium models with qualitative approaches for understanding the causalities and other effects that are not captured by quantitative methods (e.g., behavioural or contextual effects).
- Be inventive when assessing the counterfactual, if FADN data is not sufficient, explore all possible alternatives, such as, regional databases, undertaking sectoral surveys or comparing neighbouring regions with similar characteristics.
- Use additional evaluation elements, notably judgment criteria and indicators for covering existing gaps and answering the CEQs.
- Use all available data sources to overcome data availability and accessibility issues. Data sources may include: FADN for the basic characteristics of supported farms, especially for small farms; farm-bookkeeping data and business registers for larger samples of micro data; regional databases (e.g. for agri-food companies); as well as combining IACS with FADN and the operations database. To this end, it is also important to ensure cooperation with data providers (e.g. Paying Agencies, tax offices).
- Beneficiary surveys are also relevant for obtaining data from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries along the food supply chain (production, processing, distribution, consumption).
- Begin the evaluation by clarifying its scope through defining the non-farming sector and the extent of the effects that will be analysed (i.e. macro level (entire ecosystem effects) or micro level effects). An analysis of the delivery model of the measures can help one to understand the various expected effects of different RDPs along the supply chain.

**Making the best use of available data sources** is important when using quantitative methods for a counterfactual assessment of the actual effects of the RDP on supported beneficiaries of measures related to competitiveness.



## Why are broader methodological approaches useful?

- Holistic approaches can be useful for analysing the complex system of human relations and human behaviours by analysing not only how farmers behave and what decisions they make but also how this behaviour and their strategies evolve and the underlying reasons for this evolution.
- Broader approaches may use clusters or networks as a means to analyse complex agricultural systems and processes, including internal and external links and their interconnectedness.
- Policy making is at the centre of broader approaches. The involvement of Managing Authorities in the evaluation process and the provision of a holistic picture to policy makers on what is of relevance for assessing and redesigning policies, can contribute to transferring the results into better policy design.
- Triangulation is common in these broader approaches in terms of methods (quantitative and qualitative), data (through various sources, such as expert assessments, surveys and stakeholder inputs, including the farmers themselves) and governance (increased involvement of Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, evaluators, technical experts and other evaluation stakeholders such as data providers). This is particularly relevant for the assessment of competitiveness, which covers both the farming and non-farming sectors and is characterised by multiple internal and external linkages.

**The added value of triangulation** is that it provides context and a story to findings reflecting linkages in a multi-step value chain.



### How can one make the best use of FADN for assessing the competitiveness in agriculture?

- Ensure a good understanding of the different focuses of CEQs related to competitiveness, notably that CEQ 4 focuses on supported farms while CEQ 27 focuses on the whole agricultural sector. For CEQ 4 in particular, FADN information on small farms is sufficient, but evaluators need to be aware of the potentially limited comparability between countries and different thresholds.
- Use available solutions to ensure representativeness when FADN does not offer a representative sample (e.g. using farm bookkeeping data, using information from neighbouring RDPs, applying qualitative methods and conducting independent surveys).
- Use case studies to complement the assessment of net effects bearing in mind that non-beneficiaries need to be covered as well.



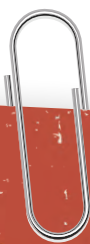
**Adaptability and resilience to contextual changes,** such as COVID-19, the European Green Deal with the Biodiversity Strategy and the Farm to Fork Strategy may become the subject of evaluations in the future.

### What are the implications of contextual changes for evaluation?

- Economic, environmental or health related contextual changes may imply unanticipated outcomes in terms of policy implementation (e.g. socio-economic crisis, health crisis) and can affect all stages of the value chain (production, processing, distribution, consumption).
- RDPs may introduce amendments to their strategies to adapt to the new reality, which will be reflected in their intervention logic, including in the mix and focus of measures and their delivery. The revision of the intervention logic will provide a better understanding of any direct and indirect effects on the farming and non-farming sector due to contextual changes and will offer information on renewed needs (e.g. COVID-19's effect on the food sector) and revised assumptions for certain measures (e.g. some food industries may not implement new investments).
- Future evaluations related to competitiveness cannot ignore the important effects on the food chain from external shocks like the current health crisis. As a consequence, evaluations may need to potentially complement the existing evaluation elements (evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators) with revised or additional elements due to the changing context.
- Revised or additional evaluation elements for the assessment of competitiveness are important for looking inter alia into the participation of producers in the food chain, increased quality, higher levels of processing, added value and successful integration of beneficiaries into the food chain. The assessment of the actual effects of the RDP on supported beneficiaries (through a counterfactual assessment) using these evaluation elements can be an important driver for future policy decisions because it is important to be able to determine whether the mix of interventions and their delivery models can improve competitiveness and to what extent along the food chain, also taking into account the potential effects of contextual changes. ■







# Back to BASICS: Adapting the evaluation design in times of COVID-19: Questions to guide decisions for RDP evaluations

## Why is it important to consider contextual changes in evaluations?

In programme evaluations, effects cannot always be attributed to the intervention, sometimes, confounding factors, rather than the intervention itself, or external and intervening factors may be responsible for shaping the outcomes. Whatever the source is for such changes (economic, environmental or a health crisis) they not only affect the planned implementation of the programme, but also, the evaluation activities related to it. For evaluation, it is important to identify whether there is a causal link between an outcome and a policy intervention. The evaluation therefore should assess the extent to which the effects are due to the changing contextual situation or due to the RDP.

## What are relevant contextual changes and their potential direct/indirect effects?

The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a contextual change that significantly influences the delivery of the existing RDP interventions in terms of uptake, delays and profitability of funded projects, as well as in terms of the behaviour of (potential) beneficiaries. New needs in rural areas may also emerge. Moreover, the implementation period of RDPs has been extended by two years (transition period), which does not only provide more time to spend money, but also may require a different approach to

**These contextual changes need to be taken into account in the ex post evaluation, but will ultimately also affect future CAP evaluations in the post 2020 period.**

assess the RDP's effects from a temporal perspective. It is therefore important to understand and map these contextual changes and to take their potential effects into account during the evaluation of RDPs.

## What is the policy response to the contextual change?

The EU has implemented an immediate policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing a concentrated recovery effort. For rural development the EU is addressing this through the EURI under the Next Generation EU and the MFF resources for the extended programming period. These resources open the possibilities for Member States to update their RDP strategies following an assessment of the changes in the socio-economic context in order to better adapt or create new interventions to meet their needs. Generally, a revision of the targets and outputs, but also of the expected outcomes of the policy is advisable.



## Why is it important to consider contextual changes in RDP evaluations?

Causal link between outcome and policy intervention needs to be established.

Confounding, external or multiple intervening factors may shape policy outcome.

Evaluation method must separate impacts from other confounding factors.

## What are relevant contextual changes and their potential direct/indirect effects?

Health and economic crisis (COVID-19)

...related delays in delivery and profitability of projects

...related behavioural changes of beneficiaries

...related new needs in rural areas

Extension of implementation period by 2 years.

## What is the policy response to the contextual changes?

New financial resources (MFF and EURI)

Separately programmed and monitored resources

Adapted RDP strategies (new or adapted measures, revision of targets and outputs)

Changed timeline and scope for evaluation and reporting

## What to consider when preparing the evaluation (Evaluation Plan, Terms of Reference)?

Adapt objectives and scope of evaluation

Adapt evaluation topics and activities

Adapt evaluation elements if necessary

Adapt resources and timeline of evaluations

## What to consider when conducting the evaluation?

Review the intervention logic

Adapt data sources and evaluation methods

Split evaluation period, if appropriate

Answer adjusted and additional evaluation questions



## What to consider when planning and preparing evaluations (Evaluation Plan, Terms of Reference (ToR))?

These contextual changes need to be taken into account in the ex post evaluation, but will ultimately also affect future CAP evaluations in the post 2020 period. This will impact the questions that evaluators will ask to assess the policy, as well as change the actual evaluation process and the methods used for evaluating the policy's outcomes.

The objectives and scope of the planned evaluations could for example explicitly address the assessment of the effects of the contextual change (e.g. COVID-19), if this is in the interest of the contracting party. This could lead to the introduction of new evaluation topics to assess for example the validity of the existing programme's intervention logic and its suitability to cope with the challenges caused by the changing contextual conditions. Furthermore, the RDP's operational and managerial ability to adjust to the new situation could become a subject of the evaluation.

In order to operationalise the new evaluation focus, Managing Authorities may decide to introduce new evaluation topics in the Evaluation Plan or to adjust existing and suggest additional evaluation questions, which will be accompanied by new judgement criteria and indicators, if necessary.

Furthermore, Managing Authority may need to adapt the necessary budgetary resources for the modified or newly prioritised evaluations and also adjust the timeline for the evaluation activities. These changes will typically lead to a modification of the RDP's evaluation plan and be further specified in the tendering documents (ToR) for specific evaluation contracts (ongoing evaluations, evaluation studies, ex post evaluations).

## What to consider when conducting the evaluation?

The review of the intervention logic is the first step in any evaluation and should take into consideration the timing and the scope of changes in the socio-economic context as well as the corresponding changes in rural development policies. The injection of additional funding to mitigate some of the effects of the current health and economic crisis will have consequences on the activation and implementation of RDP measures, which need to be reflected in the revised intervention logic.

Existing data sources and methods for evaluation will remain by large valid. However, some adaptations may be needed to take into account barriers for accessing data or implementing certain evaluation methods as a result of contextual changes.

The evaluator's task is to select methods that will allow separating out the influence of confounding variables from impacts of the interventions. Counterfactual analysis allows for the establishment of causality – attributing observed changes in outcomes to the programme, while removing confounding factors. In this context a splitting of the evaluation period, may be considered, whenever confounding factors affect programme beneficiaries and control groups in different ways. One possibility to learn more about such effects would be a division of the analysed period in two periods, i.e. 2013-2019 (until breakout of COVID-19) and 2019-2025 (after breakout of COVID-19). This decision would require the collection of data on result/impact indicators not only for years 2013 and 2025, but also for 2019. Finally, it should be noted that programmes that have low uptake up to 2019 do not offer a sufficient number of observations to assess impacts, and therefore it may be better to evaluate the whole period and not follow the suggested split to answer the relevant Evaluation Questions. ■

### Learn more:

Further examples and recommendations for dealing with contextual changes in evaluation can be found in the Working Document '[Evaluating RDP effects on competitiveness of agriculture in a changing context](#)'.

### Further Reading

[OECD /UNDP IEO. Good Practices during Covid 19](#)

[An Annotated Bibliography of Evaluation in Crisis](#)

<https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/topic/covid-19-coronavirus-response>

[http://web.undp.org/evaluation/media-centre/infographics/evaluation\\_covid19.shtml](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/media-centre/infographics/evaluation_covid19.shtml)





Send your  
questions to:

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# UPCOMING AND PAST EVENTS CALENDAR

Please note, due to the current COVID-19 situation please be aware that many events are being cancelled or postponed. Therefore, this list is only indicative, and we encourage you to check on the respective websites of the events you are interested in attending to see the current status of the event.

- **Online - TBD 2021 - 17<sup>th</sup> Good Practice Workshop**  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **Online - 25 May 2021 - 15<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks Steering Group**  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **Online - TBD 2021 - 24<sup>th</sup> Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP**  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **Denmark - 10 September 2021 - 14<sup>th</sup> EES Biennial Conference: Evaluation in an Uncertain World: Complexity, Legitimacy and Ethics**  
[Read more >>>](#)

## What's Going on in YOUR Member State?

Share evaluation related events by emailing  
[info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu)





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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.

*The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily express the official views of the European Commission.*

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