



EU CAP Network Launch Event

Highlights report

The launch event explored four strands of the EU CAP Network: innovation, implementation, evaluation and communication. The launch looked to celebrate achievements of the existing ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks, take the new EU CAP Network to the next stage building on the experience and knowledge created so far, and signal that the network will grow further. This will bring together Member States (MS) and relevant stakeholders to share their best practices, experience and progress, but also their know-how in facing all types of constraints and challenges.

Event Information

Date: 6 October 2022

Location: Area 42, Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: CAP Implementation Contact Point (coordinator), EIP-AGRI Support Facility, Evaluation Helpdesk, Communication & Events Support .

Participants: 330 participants from 27 EU Member States and other European countries, including MAs, NRNs, European organisations, the European Commission, Local Action Groups (LAGs), national/ regional stakeholder organisations, farmers, advisors and researchers.

Outcomes: Agreement in developing four strands of EU CAP Network actions.

Web page: [EU CAP Network Launch](#)

EU CAP Network Launch



Maciej Golubiewski, Head of the Cabinet for the Commissioner for Agriculture, launched the event, celebrating an important development regarding networking in agriculture and rural development at the EU level. He pointed out the important milestone of CAP celebrating its 60th anniversary, and that the policy's original goals remain unchanged since 1957: increasing productivity, stabilising markets, providing fair living standards to farmers and ensuring the availability of food at reasonable prices.

He underlined that these objectives continue to respond to new challenges and are today as important as ever. The new CAP and national Strategic Plans, with design from many of the participants, seek a greener, fairer and more effective policy delivering results for EU farmers and citizens. CAP plays a key role in supporting Europe's agricultural sector and is now an even more important instrument in managing the transition to sustainable food production systems and in strengthening the efforts of European farmers to tackle climate change and protect the environment.

In this transition, supporting and learning from each other is crucial. The existing networks have played an important role in connecting rural stakeholders, sharing information, knowledge and good practices in the current programming period. With the new CAP, the role of networking becomes even more important, as it will involve new stakeholders, and cover the whole range of CAP interventions (Pillar I & II), including cross-cutting issues such as innovation or AKIS.

National rural networks will grow into national CAP networks, within 12 months of the approval of the respective NSPs, and continue providing its support to all CAP stakeholders at national level, but also through cooperation with other networks, building up on a good basis of rural networking;

The current two rural networks, ENRD with the Evaluation Helpdesk and EIP-AGRI, are now joining forces and merging into a single European CAP network, aiming to assure even better and more streamlined support in implementing the new CAP and Strategic Plans.



Innovation and Knowledge Exchange



Three working sessions were prepared and animated by the CAP Network Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge exchange – EIP-AGRI. At the start of the Innovation sessions, a snapshot of EIP-AGRI and the Support Facility was presented so that new stakeholders would be able to get acquainted with it and better understand the context of the session. Then, for each of the three consecutive sessions, a different representative of key types of actors was interviewed: a farmer, an advisor and a researcher. Then, for each of the three sessions, participants were invited to join discussion corners where topics were addressed which are relevant to the key question ‘How can we further strengthen networking for innovation and knowledge exchange in the next years?’.

The topics addressed were: networking activities, the gap between research and practice, engagement in the CAP Network, key issues for innovation networking at national /regional level and cross-border cooperation.

Inputs collected from participants were very rich and varied. Some conclusions / recommendations were as follows:

- Demonstrate the added value of networking for innovation, keeping in mind its spatial dimensions: Horizontal (within the same sector), Vertical (across the supply chain) and Territorial (national/regional & across borders);
- Involve new stakeholders along the supply chain considering the broader scope of EIP-AGRI
- Increase the involvement of advisors in networking activities as they are the key cornerstones in knowledge exchange with farmers, and foster peer-to-peer learning;
- Make use of innovative communication channels (e.g., podcasts, short videos or pictograms);
- Link CAP funding with other policies and funds as a strategy for sustainable innovation;
- Enhance accessibility of project results in understandable language;
- Engage OGs in Horizon Europe calls
- Organise a marketplace for cross-border cooperation and
- Foster synchronized calls in MSs for international Operational Group projects.

Implementation



There were three World Café format sessions dedicated to the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans and how the EU CAP Network can support it at its best. These mini workshops were facilitated by a team from across the support units of the EU CAP Network, led by the **CAP Implementation Contact Point**.

Participants actively discussed the lessons learned from EU networking for building the new CAP network, identifying success factors, as well as gaps and immediate priorities that should be addressed.

Success Factors

The identified success factors from existing networking actions can help to build a larger network. Key components include meeting on equal terms and enabling access across society. This can foster capacity building, peer exchanges on success stories, and targeting specific needs within a broader ‘coalition of interests’. Online tools have facilitated participation, and this has included cluster meetings between regional groupings of networks.

Enabling participation continues to be important, but new people and their involvement can stimulate the network. Sharing of experiences and inspiration provides the main added value from events, as ‘good ideas do not have boundaries’.



Gaps



Many of the gaps raised focus on ensuring networking remains at the heart of CAP implementation and building the links to newer, younger stakeholders. There is a continuing need for simplification, reaching out to regions, and for improving the general understanding of the CAP landscape, also by adopting a 'simple' and more accessible language and communication tools closer to the general audience (avoiding for instance self-referential and difficult-to-understand acronyms).

There will be a continued need for multi-actor events and connecting the network from the bottom to the top (EU, national, regional, local), and for increased peer exchanges between Member States at all levels. Real-life examples and visits to inspiring projects and initiatives are vital in enhancing understanding. Access to the network should be further improved for all types of stakeholders – and particularly for women and the younger generations, while maintaining input from LAGs - and ensuring two-way communication.

Immediate Actions

Participants identified the following priorities to be addressed by the new EU CAP Network: ensuring that existing stakeholders are not left behind, while continuing outreach across gender, age groups and to newer stakeholders, including farmers; 'breaking the bubble' and connecting stakeholders to decision makers, a core task of the networks; making Clear and simplified communication available in a range of EU languages can help convey these messages. The EU Green Deal, the 'greening' measures of the CAP, the energy crisis and sharing local and regional solutions to it, as well as the use of simplified cost options in the CAP have been mentioned as important themes to address.

Evaluation

Summary evaluation sessions at EU CAP network launch event



Three working sessions were prepared and animated by the **European Evaluation Helpdesk** for the CAP - one of the four support units of the EU CAP Network. The evaluation sessions during the CAP launch event included a short introduction to the Evaluation Helpdesk team, and then focused on a specific question, which was introduced by a panel of stakeholders from the Member States, the EU and NGOs to launch further discussion in working groups.

Why CAP evaluation matters – was the topic of the first evaluation session. Participants concluded that evaluation helps to let people know what the CAP delivers and to ensure accountability by proofing what public money is used for. Evaluation results help programme managers to better steer the policy and to adjust it when needed. Evaluation findings are used by stakeholders to communicate about the policy in an evidence based manner. Those involved in the policy implementation and design particularly appreciate the external view an evaluator can bring into the process. Evaluation can also help to systematically develop lessons learned and to transfer them from one programming period to the next. Formative evaluation helps to understand how the policy works and to understand what could be improved to better delivery the policy.

What is the recipe for a successful CAP evaluation - was the focus of the second evaluation session in which participants "cooked" a recipe for a successful CAP evaluation. Participants agreed that similar to a Grandma's bouillon the recipe should have a clear outcome and be prepared by a dedicated team, involve stakeholders whenever appropriate in order to tailor the evaluation to their needs. Moreover, the ingredients comprise good evaluation knowledge and skills, well developed tools and methods, as well as knowledge of good practices.

What is the role of the CAP network to support evaluation - participants were asked in the third evaluation session. CAP Networks do not only disseminate evaluation results, but they are also multipliers and have a key role in building a network between evaluation stakeholders like managing authorities, evaluators, paying agencies and other stakeholders. For this purpose, they may use tools such as promoting exchange, peer learning, providing information at EU level creating a dialogue and engage stakeholders, foster evaluation culture.



The main takeaway points from the three evaluation sessions were summarised by a keynote listener and will be used to inform the work programmes of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP in 2023 and beyond, to better support DG AGRI and the Member States in all activities related to monitoring and evaluating the CAP.

Focus on Communication tools & products



During this session, stakeholders were introduced to the newly formed Communication and Logistical Support Team. New communication tools (e.g. website articles, podcasts and videos), the EU CAP Network's Communication Strategy and stakeholder communication projects were the focus of the discussions.

New communication tools and products

The first session introduced participants to the new communication tools and products of the EU CAP Network. These include a brand-new visual identity, social media channels, a website plus an upcoming series of podcasts and videos. There was also a presentation about the new EU CAP Network headquarters (avenue des Arts 9bis, Brussels). The aim is for the communication tools to allow stakeholders to share news, stories and information relevant to others. Thematic publications will focus either on implementation, innovation and knowledge-sharing or evaluation.

For more information, please refer to the [presentation slides](#).

Developing a new Communication Strategy



In the second session, stakeholders shared their expectations with regard to the flow of communication within the EU CAP Network. The need for more concise publications, particularly newsletters, and the importance that participants attach to receiving information in their mother tongue were major highlights. The importance of communicating on different channels, as in some countries some work better than others, was also underlined. For example, stakeholders from Estonia and Czech Republic noted the relevancy of Facebook for their stakeholders, whereas Twitter appeared to be the most efficient social media tool in Belgium and France. Other ideas included focussing more on the exchange of good practices (e.g. in relation to CAP Strategic Plans), using podcasts, short videos and pictograms and having knowledge days focussed on farmers. The outputs of this session will be used to draft the next Communication Strategy.

Stakeholders' communication projects

The third and final session allowed stakeholders to share their communication projects. Many stakeholders took the floor to present written, audio and video projects organised at the national level. The responsible for these projects were encouraged to get in touch with the Communication team communication@eucapnetwork.eu to identify synergies and promote their projects at the European level.

Conclusions



In the overall summary, DG AGRI Deputy Director Mihail Dumitru summarised the outcomes, noting the importance of recognising that the EU CAP Network represents all stakeholders, and to use their collective and individual voices to promote the CAP in making a difference to agriculture and rural areas. He illustrated that any topics had been raised that we can commit to address, including that a new network allows us to refresh our connections, bringing in young people, regions, small farmers and encouraging greater equality in the delivery of our support.

Mr Dumitru highlighted the need to bring communication to a new level, allowing stakeholders to share what is important with them – their ideas and perspectives. We need to keep evaluation effective and simple in communication, using clear language, and it must be targeted, not only for the long term.

There is a continuing need to see the added-value of networking, to connect and exchange knowledge between all stakeholders – we need to create trust, commitment and time to foster innovation. If we extend the networks, it will be possible to build lasting active and meaningful new connections.