Network Mapping Surveys Summary Report

Executive Summary

FINAL

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Two network mapping activities have been conducted by the EU CAP Network Implementation Contact Point (CAPI CP) during Q2 to Q4 2022. Firstly; a mapping of 60 stakeholder organisations and secondly; a mapping of the state of play and planning for the [mainly still forthcoming] National CAP networks (later only 'CAP Networks').

The primary purpose of this work has been to provide the most up-to-date information base possible on:

- the emerging institutional and operational landscape of the CAP Networks; and,
- the policy priorities and networking requirements of two of the EU CAP Network's most important stakeholder groups, namely the CAP Networks and European-involved stakeholder organisations.

27 out of a total of 28 Network Support Units (NSUs) were able to supply the information requested. It is important to recognise that the information provided is a working 'snapshot' based on the NSUs` practical situation in September 2022.

38 European stakeholder organisations covering all three of the CAP's general objectives were interviewed. Interviews were held with both key stakeholder organisations with an accepted representational role and organisations which, to date have not interacted with the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD, now CAPI CP). This, and ensuring that organisations representing CAP 'Pillar 1' stakeholders were well represented, was important in order to further extend the reach of the putative EU CAP Network. Additionally, 22 national stakeholder organisations with a European perspective were identified by NSUs and interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire.

Key Findings – Putative CAP Networks

The responses of the 2022 NRNs consultation clearly reflect that, although in the majority of cases the CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) had not been approved during the survey period (July to September 2022), in the new programming period most of the CAP Networks will continue to operate under the same or a similar governance and organisational structure. Of note is the fact that the two largest regionalised networks (FR; IT) which are undergoing substantial changes given the switch from regional RDPs to a single CSP, either did not respond to the consultation (FR) or mentioned that they are considering several options regarding the organisation/governance, role and functions of the CAP Network, as well as the activities to be implemented under the Technical Assistance (IT).

In terms of priorities for the new programming period, all CAP networks will aim to involve AKIS stakeholders. This will be interlinked with the need to support innovation in agriculture and rural areas, while placing a strong emphasis on making a contribution to the CAP environmental and climate change objectives. Here, the use of digital tools and communication and animation methods will play an important role, especially because involving Pillar 1 stakeholders is a common concern for many NSUs. Nevertheless, approximately 40% of respondents specifically mentioned that this stakeholder group is already embedded in their networks.

CAP SP priorities (as reported in September 2022)	No of NRNs
Exchange knowledge and networking with AKIS stakeholders	27
Support innovation in agriculture via EIP-AGRI Operational Groups	19
Support innovation in rural areas via LEADER including Smart Villages	15
Contribute to CAP's environmental / climate objectives e.g. green architecture	14
Contribute to EU level strategies, Green Deal, LTVRA, Rural Pact, F2F and others	14
Contribute to and disseminate M&E of the CAP	10
Increase the added value for farmers by promoting agri-food chains	6
Promote generational renewal and rural youth topics (e.g. youth entrepreneurship)	4

Although the CAP Networks will henceforth be covering - at least to some extent - both pillars of the CAP and accommodating the networking needs of a wider audience on specialised topics (such as the AKIS; the implementation of the LTVRA and Smart Villages; and core European Strategies such as the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy), it appears that the financial resources available to the networks will not increase for all CAP Networks. In fact, based on the available data, it is estimated that almost a third of the CAP Networks will operate with about the same or reduced financial resources. In some cases the provisional figures currently available indicate a very significant (one third or more) increase or reduction in financial resources. Thus, for some CAP Networks it may not be 'business as usual' in the coming programming period.

In this context, ongoing EU CAP Network support for networking and the exchange of experience between NRNs/NSUs is very much sought after. Topics related to environment and climate change, support to AKIS and EIP-AGRI OGs / Innovation are at the forefront of interests for thematic work to be facilitated by the EU CAP Network. LTVRA and Smart Villages are also highlighted by several MS networks.

The responses indicate that many NSUs desire a closer, more intensive support for exchange activities between each other for sharing knowledge, good practice and experiences both in relation to thematic activities and also in relation to improving their capacity and skills in animating the network.

Key Findings – Stakeholder Organisations

The 38 European organisations interviewed and 22 National stakeholder respondents represent a broad range of priorities and specific interests in relation to all three General Objectives (GO) of the CAP. The stated priorities for the majority of organisations interviewed are closely linked to one or more EU Strategies and policies associated with sustainability and/or climate action. The EU Green Deal, the Biodiversity Strategy, and the Farm to Fork Strategy were the most frequently quoted as linked to the priorities of interviewed organisations.

In relation to 'primarily GO1 (fostering a smart, competitive, resilient and diversified agricultural sector ensuring long-term food security) organisations', the increased interest in sustainability (broadly and linked to their other priorities) and specific measures and activities related to sustainability (carbon farming, reduction of pesticides, eco-schemes, etc.) is clearly observable.

'Primarily GO2 (sustainable management of natural resources and climate action) organisations' indicated climate action and sustainability issues high among their priorities, however, they also showed links to GO1 of the CAP - demonstrated by their interest in the Forestry Strategy, EU Soil Strategy, and sustainable carbon cycles.

While the priorities of 'primarily GO3 (strengthening the socio-economic fabric in rural areas) organisations' seem to be more diverse and divergent, their main interests overall appear to reinforce the above findings: the majority of them referred to the EU Green Deal among the most important EU Strategies they relate to, and they demonstrate strong interest in sustainability issues and working directly with stakeholders at the local level.

With regard to networking activities and participation in or support from the CAPI CP / EU CAP Network, overall the respondent organisations are mainly interested in participating in events or discussions focusing on their priority themes of interest. Several organisations emphasised the need for more in-depth analytical work (most frequently linked to specific themes in the CSPs). Some organisations also demonstrated interest in more sustained thematic work (not only participation in the occasional event or workshop) and suggested specific themes. Other important suggestions related to the improved use of indicators and maintaining – and in some respects enhancing – the involvement of stakeholders (e.g. small farmers) in EU networking activities.

Final Reflections

The planned actions in all MS are all closely predicated on each CSP, the overall priorities articulated are, for some CAP Networks, much more linked to CAP Pillar 1 objectives, while others still emphasise territorial rural development. Overall, the NSUs reported that they are very happy with the support they have received from the ENRD/currently CAPI CP (and by inference also the EIP-AGRI and Evaluation Helpdesk). Moving forward, of particular use will be spotlighting and fostering peer-to-peer exchanges involving those CAP Networks which will be adopting innovative ways of networking (such as new digital hubs) and innovative ways of engaging 'new' stakeholders (often farmers). In the current programming period there is likely to be a wider variation in the resources available to CAP Networks than was the case for the NRNs and a wider variation in the priorities of the new networks.

Overall, the stakeholder organisations, while representing a wide range of different interests, demonstrate an understanding of the inherent linkages between the CAPs objectives and often maintain clear advocacy positions relating to at least two of the CAP's GOs. Thus, the traditional categorisation of stakeholder representative organisations is often no longer valid. A little under half of the national stakeholder organisation respondents actively indicated that they considered their interests were fully represented by their respective EU level representative organisation(s).