

CAP Implementation Contact Point Webinar

2nd Thematic Group meeting on Landscape Features & Biodiversity

This was the second meeting of the Thematic Group (TG) on Landscape Features & Biodiversity, whose aim was to bring Member State (MS) representatives and stakeholders together to discuss how to encourage improved diversity, coverage, connectivity and condition of landscape features within agricultural areas. The objectives of the meeting were to share experience on designing schemes that maintain, restore and create landscape features, identify key factors for successfully stimulating uptake of these schemes to enhance biodiversity and deliver ecosystem services and to turn the lessons learned into key messages and recommendations.

Event Information

Date: 15 December 2022

Location: Virtual meeting

Organisers: CAP Implementation Contact Point

Participants: 41 participants, 28 TG members from 16 EU Member States, including representatives of Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks, environmental NGOs, agricultural and forestry organisations, farm advisers, researchers and the European Commission

Outcomes: Recommendations for policy support and good scheme design to promote the maintenance, restoration and creation of landscape features

Web page: [2nd meeting of the TG Landscape Features and Biodiversity](#)

Multiple benefits of landscape features

Two TG members provided feedback from the informal group discussion held on 23 November, which had focussed on the multiple benefits of landscape features. Sean O'Farrell (Cloncannon Biofarm) highlighted that experience from projects in Ireland demonstrates the need to provide advice and support to farmers in the implementation of schemes and for funding to continue beyond the life of a project to avoid subsequent abandonment or removal of landscape features. Gerry Lawson (European Agroforestry Federation) spoke about the need for clear, standardised definitions of landscape features as well as more detailed data for their identification and monitoring. He stressed the need to focus not just on the coverage of landscape features in the agricultural landscape, but also on their management, which is critical for their biodiversity value.



Andreas Gumbert (DG ENV) spoke about the biodiversity declines in the EU related to habitat loss and fragmentation. The scientific evidence shows that a 10-20% share of non-productive areas on farms is required to reverse declines in insects and that greater connectivity between these areas is required for insects and wildlife to move between habitats, which is also important for climate change adaptation. Critical factors for landscape features are their longevity, management, location and species composition. They also provide a variety of benefits to agricultural production such as supporting pollinators, preventing soil erosion, flood management and habitats for pest antagonists. The EU pollinators initiative aims to enhance practitioner engagement on landscape features in order to address one of the drivers of pollinator decline.



Alvaro Perez Ruiz (Service Public de Wallonie, agriculture, natural resources, environment, Belgium) presented the approach taken in the Wallonian CSP to support landscape features. Through consultation with farmers, they designed a new eco-scheme to provide payments for features that enhance habitat connectivity. The eco-scheme was preferred due to its annual nature (rather than multi-annual under agri-environment) and because a higher payment rate is possible, increasing the likelihood of sufficient uptake from farmers. Copernicus and on-the-ground surveying were used to map existing features and reduce administrative burden. Training for farmers and advisors was also undertaken, with a network of 42 dedicated advisors providing technical management advice to farmers as well as assistance with paperwork.



Antonella Trisorio (Council for Agricultural Research and Agricultural Economic Analysis (CREA), Italy) spoke about two long-term schemes in the Emilia-Romagna region that incentivise ecological connectivity of landscape features. Ten-year agreements have led to increases in pollinators on farmland and production benefits, validating the need for long-term commitment as the longer the management for biodiversity, the greater the environmental results.



Gregorio Davila Diaz (DG AGRI), Raluca Sandu (DG ENV) and Andreas Gumbert (DG ENV) offered reflections on these examples, commenting on the need for Member States to be clear about which landscape features are declared by farmers to meet their obligations under conditionality and which ones are used to meet ecoscheme/EAFRD requirements. The value of long-term maintenance of landscape features was acknowledged. They stressed that monitoring is important to demonstrate the effectiveness of schemes and that advice for farmers is crucial for effective delivery. Equally important is providing the necessary legal security in order to get farmers on board and overcome resistance to establishing landscape features because of a fear that this might restrict their future options.



Breakout Group Discussions

TG members were allocated to three different breakout groups to discuss two questions:

1. How can CAP interventions best be used and schemes designed to lead to an enhancement in the condition, diversity and coverage of landscape features?
2. What needs to be put in place to increase engagement and action by Managing Authorities and farmers to maintain, restore and create landscape features?

Key points from the discussions were captured on [Miro boards](#) and can be summarised as follows:

- › Incentives to manage and establish landscape features adequately need to be sufficient for farmers, taking into account the time, effort and investment required.
- › Flexibility is essential, both for implementation and control systems, e.g. pay for what has been done, not penalise for what has not, especially where this may have been beyond the farmer's control.
- › Top-down and bottom-up approaches should inform each other to reduce unintended consequences and low uptake of schemes.
- › Landscape features should be further mapped and integrated into Member States' Land Parcel Identification Systems (LPIS) so that they can be included within the CAP eligible area.
- › Encourage declaration of landscape features by reducing administrative burden (e.g. having a digitalised system in which landscape features are already identified and farmers can choose whether / how to declare).
- › Results from schemes will take time to emerge - need to take a broader, longer-term view to contribute to biodiversity improvements.
- › Foster landscape connectivity through increased farmer cooperation.

- › Training of farmers and advisors is important for effective uptake, networking and administrative support, with peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and demonstrations offering real-life examples.
- › Guidance from the European Commission to Member States (e.g. Paying Agencies) would be useful as well the provision of clear guidance and advice to farmers in terms of what types of landscape features may be funded and contribute to the 10% Biodiversity Strategy target.



Closing panel

Four TG members offered their key takeaways and recommendations from the TG meetings and activities: Karolien Michiel (Flemish Land Agency, Belgium-Flanders), Lenka Svobodova (Ministry of Agriculture, Czechia), Karin Ellerman-Kuegler (German Federation of Chambers of Agriculture) and Aidan Mullally (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland). They emphasised the need to focus on the quality/condition of landscape features so that they are really beneficial for biodiversity. They stressed the importance of prioritising advice and knowledge exchange, including demonstration activities for farmers to see the value of landscape features, e.g. improving resilience to climate change and the potential to be part of carbon farming schemes. Sharing experiences and good practice could become common practice through networks such as EIP-AGRI, Horizon Europe and LEADER. Scheme design needs to be more creative to achieve effective management, with more thought given to how to better remunerate farmers' contributions and how different measures could interact to contribute to the outcomes required. Planning needs to be strategic to allow for the identification of target areas - establishing landscape features in places where they are lacking as well as improving connectivity in places where they are already plentiful. Cross-border cooperation may be helpful in providing ideas about scheme design and how actors are brought together.