European CAP Network Assembly

1st meeting - 6 March 2023

Albert Borschette Congress Center

Welcome and introduction

Assembly Chair Mario Milouchev, Director at DG AGRI, welcomed members to the **first meeting of the EU CAP Network Assembly**. He explained the meeting had the objectives to: welcome new members; present the governance structure, explain the role of Assembly members and what is expected from them; discuss the next steps in the setup of the governance structure; provide an update on the CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) and EU activities; discuss the key role of the National CAP Networks in the implementation and evaluation of the CSPs as well as promoting innovation; and provide an update on the activities of the EU CAP Network.

Opening session

DG AGRI's Deputy Director-General Mihail Dumitru made an opening speech to the Assembly focusing on the CAP's new delivery model, the importance of networking and the key support that the EU CAP Network will be expected to provide.

The new CAP delivery model is focused on results. Thanks are due to all involved following the approval of all 28 CSPs in 2022. This first year of implementation of the new ambitious policy is very important with all CAP actions now being integrated through a single programming document in each country. Assembly members will make the new governance structure work and are being relied on to effectively link the EU and Member state levels. Inputs from new stakeholders and other policy networks will offer useful added value opportunities for CAP networking.

The duration of the CSP programming period provides a period of certainty for CAP beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Within this period, adjustments of the Plans are possible to adapt to changing circumstances such as concerns about food security or cost-of-living issues.

Key points regarding the new CAP were underlined including the scale of income support provided overall to farmers, the increased CAP funding for small and medium-size farms, as well as the significant level of assistance to young farmers. CSP monitoring committees now cover both CAP Pillars and their multi-sector membership will help steer successes during the programming period.

The new EU CAP Network has already been proactive in helping CSP stakeholders during the early stages of the new CAP period and productive outcomes are anticipated from strengthening links between different activities of the network mandate. For example, opportunities exist to continue optimising connections between researchers and the CAP via Horizon Europe and particularly in relation to the European Green Deal.

Ricard Ramon from DG AGRI then presented an **update on CSP Implementation** which reflected the 28 approved CSPs and the 'bigger picture' they have now established collectively for the CAP during 2023-2027. An initial '**At a glance**' summary of 28 CSPs has already been published and further analysis will continue to be published in the next months. The new CAP shows progress in the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social dimensions).

Continuity can be found among many of the CAP implementation topics but the emphasis on levels of funding has evolved to align with the new strategic priorities established at EU level. Income support remains important and eco-schemes are also crucial within Pillar 1 interventions. Pillar 2's rural development funds will help encourage agri-food investments in addition to climate and environmental management, alongside the other dimensions of sustainability.

Some key targets were highlighted: one-third of the EU's agricultural area will be supported with measures to reduce carbon emissions or enhance carbon storage; half of the EU's agricultural area will be covered by voluntary environmental measures (going beyond mandatory requirements) and approximately 400 000 jobs are forecast to be created by the CSPs - contributing to reinforcing the resilience of EU food security and rural Europe as a whole.

Answers to Assembly members' questions put forward observed that:

> With the information on planning (as established in the CSPs), it can be seen that Member States have contributed to CAP's level of ambitions and CSPs are committed to go beyond minimum requirements in some areas.

> A report will be published before the end of the year on the joint efforts of all the CSPs. This is in addition to the annual performance reports that will show progress in CSP implementation.

> In many Member States communication with farmers and other stakeholders started early, and a large amount of information about forthcoming schemes was shared.

> Hemp as a crop offers opportunities for fibre, protein, and the circular bioeconomy.

> AKIS is a key tool for helping to improve knowledge sharing and to mobilise resources.

> The social dimension is very important in the new CAP; the progress on domains such as generational change and Smart Villages will be measured through a variety of indicators, milestones and mechanisms (including the annual performance reports). Social conditionality is a key new tool (even if only mandatory since 2025, some Member States have advanced its implementation).

EU CAP Network Governance - state of play

A session provided information about the Assembly's draft rules of procedure and setting up of the other governance bodies.

Background about the membership application process to the Assembly was provided by the Chair. Tatjana Borbas from DG AGRI then made a presentation dedicated to the **EU CAP Network Governance**. This covered the legal basis for the Assembly and its rules of procedure (RoP), which had been issued in advance to members. The same approach regarding RoP is being applied to the Assembly as is used for other DG AGRI expert groups.

The procedure for confirming Agenda items was explained in response to a related question from an Assembly member. Requests were made by members for the Assembly to schedule meetings online as well as in person and this will be considered. EU-wide organisations representing local and regional authorities will be involved with the Network's governance arrangements on the basis of the call for applications, which is being prepared.

Thematic groups will not directly be part of the governance structure. The Network's thematic activities will be able to support the governance structure.

Information was provided about the Assembly's three permanent Subgroups (Innovation and knowledge exchange, LEADER and territorial development, and CSP implementation). The membership composition for each Subgroup was explained including the point that the Assembly and Subgroup members can be different representatives of an individual organisation.

Each Subgroup's tasks were reviewed including their inputs into the EU CAP Networks' Steering Group and Assembly. Scope exists to consider increasing the proposed number of NGO representatives in the Innovation Subgroup. The use of interactive sessions when Subgroups feed back their information and updates to the Assembly was suggested and DG AGRI indicated that this can be envisaged.

Information about the rationale and detail for the new Assembly's Steering Group was explained. It will be a smaller group focused on management matters for the EU CAP Network including integration of the Network functions, and composed of the representatives from the Assembly and its Subgroups. DG AGRI presented a proposal for representatives of the Assembly in the Steering Group, based on the voluntary commitment of Assembly members.

Assembly members did not raise objections to the governance arrangements and DG AGRI answered Assembly members' points.

Update on the Long-term vision for rural areas

The Chair provided background on the long-term vision for rural areas (LTVRA) in terms of the Rural Observatory, Rural Pact, and its Action Plan. This included a summary of national and EU level actions.

Pascale Van Doren from the new **Rural Pact Support Office** presented the Support Office's operational context and its planned activities aiming to support the LTVRA and the Rural Pact objectives. This presentation raised Assembly members' awareness about the scope of the Support Office mandate over the next three years and pointed, in relation to the EU CAP Network, its complementary

mission guided towards broadening the stakeholder partnership for the integrated development of rural areas and enabling cooperation among authorities, stakeholders and funds beyond the EAFRD.

Assembly members provided feedback on their interests in the Rural Pact, Rural Observatory, and related LTVRA work.

Update on EU networking activities strands (implementation, innovation, evaluation, communication)

Team leaders of the **EU CAP Network support units** presented updates on the EU networking activity strands: implementation; innovation; evaluation; communication.

David Lamb from the CAP Implementation Contact Point drew attention to the complementarity between the Contact Point's (CP) work and the other support units. He explained how the work is structured around the CAP's three General Objectives (GOs) referring to the full potential of stakeholder networking in the 2023-2027 period. Good practices and other CAP implementation support will be delivered and the presentation mapped the CP's focus over the coming months.

Pacôme Elouna Eyenga from the Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange including EIP-AGRI presented the Support Facility's activities in relation to the objectives of the Annual Work Programme of the EIP-AGRI Support Facility that bring together the CAP and the EU Agricultural Research & Innovation strategic approach. This covered a wide range of relevant activities involving CAP stakeholders, such as the workshops 'Innovative arable crop protection - using pesticides sustainably' and 'Animal welfare and innovation', the ongoing Focus Group 'Social Farming and Innovations' and the upcoming seminar 'Fostering an effective and integrated AKIS in Member States'.

Hannes Wimmer from the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP outlined the Helpdesk's mission for Assembly members. He reviewed thematic working groups and priority topics in research, analysis, guidance and capacity building.

Tommaso Codazzi from the EU CAP Network's Communication and Events Support team then gave a synopsis of communication actions. These included information about the Network's logo and visual identity, new communication channels, including the new website, meeting spaces, and a calendar of forthcoming events.

Activating the CAP Networks

Assembly members participated in an interactive exercise to help inform networking priorities at EU and national levels. All Assembly members were able to input about forthcoming activities in their Member States and organisations related to each CAP GO and horizontal matters.

Outcomes from GO 1 identified the importance of networking results in terms of the CAP's economic stakeholder cooperation, coordination, and empowerment. GO 2 outcomes highlighted technical assistance in environmental and climate fields. GO 3's focus was on the CAP's social dimensions such as Generational Renewal, the long term vision for rural areas, LEADER, and Smart Villages. Horizontal matters highlighted the relevance of two matters the Assembly Members are involved in: AKIS and advisory services. Within this context, participants referred to activities related to the setting up of AKIS governance and to its implementation, as well as to the inclusion of advisors in the AKIS through activities such as cross-visits, calls, dedicated structures, etc.

AOB & Next steps

Dates for upcoming meetings of the different governance structures were presented and Assembly members were thanked for their productive contributions.