



European CAP Network Steering Group

1st meeting - 10 October 2023

Avenue des Arts 9, 1210, Brussels

Welcome and introduction

Chair Mario Milouchev, Director at DG AGRI, welcomed members of the **Steering Group** (SG) to its **first meeting** and highlighted the SG's role in ensuring strong coordination of the EU CAP Network's diverse thematic work. SG membership is voluntary and focused on covering the network's overall activities.

Opportunities were noted for the SG to help coordinate and steer a wide range of thematic work undertaken by the EU CAP Network over the coming years. These SG outputs will help inform the work of the EU CAP Network's **Assembly**. Strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture could also draw on the potential of the EU CAP Network and the National CAP Networks (NNs).

SG members presented their own interests and insights for their specific contributions, such as providing more strategic thinking, bottom-up perspectives and inspirational CAP implementation ideas to enhance the EU CAP Network's activities.

Opening session

Procedural components for the SG were outlined in a presentation by DG AGRI, which explained the SG's legal framework and tasks.

Nominations for the EU CAP Network's different governance bodies was provided over the past six months and membership of these groups now comprises more than 460 representatives.

The SG adopted the rules of procedure. Discussions with SG members about meeting formats clarified that both online and physical meetings are options and that future meetings will only be held in English.

A review of the EU CAP Network's **Annual Work Programme** (AWP) and its different support teams was presented, noting the Evaluation Helpdesk is completing its final work planning for 2024. The AWP showed a range of support services planned to coordinate expert inputs, events, publications, website content and other networking operations at the EU level.

Discussion with the SG suggested that synergies with related stakeholders, like the **Rural Pact**, Civil Dialogue Groups and cohesion

policy bodies, could be reinforced through strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture. Further feedback from SG members underlined the benefits of strengthening the use of research across rural Europe and facilitating effective implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans (CSP).

Subgroup reports

Reports from the EU CAP Network's Subgroups were provided by SG members that are also Subgroup representatives. The **Subgroup on Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (SoIKE)** met in May 2023 with an agenda examining how the EU CAP Network is linking the CAP and the Horizon Europe programme, how EIP-AGRI and Operational Groups look like in practice, and how to enhance further activities and transnational cooperation.

Initial outcomes from the **Subgroup on CAP Strategic Plans (SoCSP)** have drawn attention on the possibilities for stakeholder collaboration in areas such as adding value to agri-food supply chains. SoCSP has also promoted peer-learning and digitalisation as significant enabling factors for helping Member States implement the national CSPs.

A first meeting of the **Subgroup on LEADER and territorial development (SoLTD)** in April compiled areas of progress with LEADER across different Member States. It advocated support to help make LEADER smarter, simpler and younger whilst also acknowledging LAGs' capacity to catalyse greater cooperation at local, regional, national and international levels.

In addition to the Subgroup reports, a monitoring and evaluation representative from the Expert Group on the Implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans Regulation also informed the meeting about the nature and remit of their work. The representative highlighted which of its topics and activities are particularly relevant for networking.

Interactive session

SG members worked in smaller groups to identify the SG's role and remit. Discussions centred on the different ways that SG members can contribute, which exchange mechanisms could function well and how the SG can help better networking among CAP stakeholders.

Insights and perspectives from different interests at SG meetings were considered an effective way to allow various voices of CAP stakeholders to be heard equally and within a neutral setting. Informal networking between SG meetings was recognised as another useful networking activity. The SG also highlighted the importance of gathering insights from all aspects of the CAP (such as the market measures), including new policy initiatives.

Understanding and addressing rural Europe's needs for support could be addressed by surveying the Assembly. The SG could help the EU CAP Network's website become more widely known by showcasing it as a flagship for CAP implementation.

Bottom-up channels, such as LEADER, can connect SG decision-making at the EU level with on the ground policy implementation at the local community level. An important SG role could be providing a bridge between the Assembly and the Subgroups. SG members also indicated an interest in steering the activities of the EU CAP Network's Subgroups and support units.

SG members held a common appreciation of sharing examples of good practices and personal testimonials from CSP stakeholders. Digital networking was also considered useful here, including through informal networking between SG meetings. Visual communication tools (e.g. infographics and video) were considered popular storytelling approaches capable of illustrating how the CAP connects citizens with the EU.

Assembly agenda setting

Discussions among the SG during this agenda item gathered proposals of topics for the 2nd EU CAP Network Assembly, taking place on 5 December 2023.

A report from the [previous Assembly in March](#) stated how the context for CAP networking is influenced by geo-political matters, such as climate action, sustainable food security and changing demographics.

A key message from the Assembly was to encourage user-oriented approaches when implementing CSPs because of their potential to produce efficient results with the new delivery model.

Another Assembly agenda point could discuss how to exchange knowledge on CAP simplification through networking.

The SG proposed other potential agenda topics for the Assembly including synergies with complementary initiatives (e.g. the Rural Pact and [LTVRA](#)), helping optimise NN operations and fostering outcomes from Subgroups. Interactive formats for governance meetings were also considered very useful.

The next Assembly meeting will be held in Brussels and associated with the [Agricultural and Rural Inspiration Awards \(ARIA\) 2023 ceremony](#). Topics suggested by DG AGRI could include: related policy updates concerning CSP implementation and the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture; updates on the ongoing activities of the EU CAP Network and strategic input and guidance from the Assembly for the next AWP and future activities; the SG meeting report; and any other points that SG members may wish to submit to DG AGRI.

A request was made to provide adequate time for discussing CAP implementation during the Assembly meetings and to include possibilities for considering issues emerging from the CSPs' annual performance reporting.

Next steps

Closing remarks from the Chair provided details about the planning of future governance meetings as well as thanking SG members for their participation.

