


Thematic Group on Green Architecture: designing green strategies


Thematic Group - 2nd meeting

The second meeting of the Thematic Group (TG) provided members with the opportunity to build on the topics discussed during two informal group discussions between TG meetings. These discussions aimed to identify the key elements that need to be in place for MS green strategies in their CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) to be coherent and effective, and develop recommendations as to how these could be put in place.

Reporting back from the informal sessions between Thematic Group meetings

Since the first TG meeting on 11 April, two informal, member-driven online group discussions were organised and facilitated by TG members. Both discussions were well attended and very active. The facilitators reported back the key messages from each session to the group:

 **Thomas Weber (Austrian Chamber of Agriculture)** gave feedback on the discussions on simplification while enhancing environmental ambition (16 May). A key topic discussed during this session was the need to find ways to simplify the interactions between the two CAP funds to make it easier to design and implement environmental schemes. Currently, the financial ringfencing requirements and the different rules between eco-schemes and agri-environmental-climate commitments make this complicated, which leads to issues with communicating the role of the different schemes to farmers. Other issues raised were the opportunities for greater use of results-based schemes and how to increase the use of investment, cooperation, and advisory measures to complement eco-schemes and environment-climate commitments.

 **John Murphy (Irish CAP Network)** highlighted the key points discussed in the session on innovative approaches and fostering cooperation (22 May). He highlighted the benefits of giving local people the opportunity to develop local solutions, building trust, which in turn breeds innovation (e.g., through Operational Groups within IIP). Developing a culture of trust and innovation takes time and needs to be embedded in governance and institutional structures (outside the CAP) to ensure longevity. TG members also flagged the role LEADER can play in supporting agri-environmental action and the importance of having good networks of advisers in place.

Event Information

Date: 4 June 2024

Location: Brussels, EU CAP Network premises

Organisers: EU CAP Network

Participants: 38 participants from 19 Member States (MS), representing a range of organisations including Managing Authorities (MAs), Paying Agencies, [National Networks](#) (NNs), farmers, farming organisations, environmental NGOs, European and national/regional stakeholder organisations, farm advisors and the European Commission (DG AGRI).

Outcomes: Exchange on key elements needed for coherent and effective 'green strategies', and development of recommendations for the CAP's green architecture.

Web page: https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-green-architecture-designing-green-strategies_en

Framing presentation



Kaley Hart (EU CAP Network) provided a brief [overview](#) of the analytical work carried out in parallel to the TG, examining how eight MSs had programmed the interventions under the CAP's green architecture. This is a data-driven analysis based on approved CSP without judgement. Kaley highlighted the diverse way in which environmental and climate needs were being addressed. She also emphasised the low target values set for certain result indicators in some MSs, despite needs having been identified or priorities set under other policies, e.g. the Farm to Fork or Biodiversity Strategies, particularly improving Natura 2000 management, sustainable use of water and livestock emissions.

TG members stressed the importance of understanding the rationale behind the programming decisions made, including interdependencies with national policies and programmes. They also stressed the importance of the regional context, as well as of monitoring so as to focus on the quality of outcomes.



Parallel group sessions: Key factors for designing and implementing effective green strategies



TG members were split into three breakout groups, each exploring the key elements that need to be in place for green strategies to be coherent and effective.

The key elements identified in the group discussions related to:

- Involving farmers in the development and implementation of schemes, placing a greater focus on environmental outcomes;
- Offering flexibility in scheme design to reflect diverse situations within a streamlined set of rules that are focused on achieving environmental outcomes;
- Flexibility in the EU CAP rules and framework to enable MSs to design effective interventions – e.g. control requirements – particularly the Area Monitoring System (AMS) requirements, indicator frameworks;
- Greater use of the full suite of green architecture interventions, including adding the cooperation and knowledge/advisory measures within the 35% ringfencing to encourage greater use by MSs;
- Better communication between actors, including farmers, MAs, PAs and advisers;
- Attractive payment rates and inclusion of an incentive element with flexibility available for the calculation of payment rates;
- Clear communication on the purpose of environmental schemes to farmers and wider society in order to explain the necessity of action for the long-term viability of farming and food security;
- Piloting and testing interventions in the field to help identify what works well, before converting such practices into CAP interventions;
- Stability in the overarching CAP framework across programming periods, to enable MSs to focus on improving scheme implementation;
- Given limited overall CAP budgets, exploring the potential use of other funding sources (e.g. private / blended finance) may be beneficial, something that is being used increasingly for climate and biodiversity.

2nd round of parallel group sessions: The way forward for coherent green strategies



TG members then worked in small groups to develop recommendations on how the ambition of green strategies could be improved, specifying the actions required. These were then voted on by TG members to identify the most relevant ones.

The following sets down the **main recommendations** identified in order of importance to TG members:

1. Merge the two CAP funds or find a way to bring the eco-schemes and agri-environment-climate interventions together to simplify scheme design and implementation, particularly administration, and make it easier to communicate to farmers.
2. Provide a stable framework to allow enough time for implementation, certainty for farmers and for results to become evident, rather than changing the structure and rules every seven years.
3. Reinforce the use of advisory services and develop regional action plans to guide advisors and farmers to choose the most effective actions in the optimal locations. These plans would also help increase coherence between the use of different interventions.
4. Review good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAECs), including making them more agronomically robust and assessing the costs of compliance, which in some cases have become quite high. The requirements of GAEC 8 (minimum share of non-productive areas and landscape features on arable land) that have moved to eco-schemes could be made mandatory to access other area-based payments.
5. Turn payments into incentives to reward the provision of public goods. More thinking about the basis for payment calculations is required to pay for results achieved and give more visibility to farmers' actions. The involvement of all actors, from producer to consumer, will be key to ensuring farmers are suitably rewarded by the value chain.
6. Adopt a 'menu approach' as part of scheme design, offering payments for basic practices with top ups for more demanding actions – 'pay more to do more', which also provides flexibility for farmers. Depending on the type of practice, one-year commitments may encourage greater uptake compared to multi-annual commitments.
7. Piloting/testing new approaches should be encouraged, using EIP Operational Groups as a safe space for testing new approaches for delivering environmental and climate outcomes (e.g. result based payments).





Next steps and concluding remarks



A factsheet will be drafted, based on the TG members inputs, summarising in more detail the lessons learnt and recommendations on the way forward for the design and implementation of CSP green strategies. The factsheet will include key findings of the analytical work conducted on the use of green architecture interventions in eight selected MSs.

