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# Assessing the outcomes of EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects



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NEWSROOM



## Discover the latest publications and activities from the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP



### **New guidelines to effectively assess the impact of CAP income support interventions on farm income during the 2023-2027 programming period**

What is farm income and what affects it? How does CAP income support influence farm income level, volatility and distribution? What are the CAP interventions with the highest efficiency in supporting farm income? These questions can be interesting for Member States to consider when they evaluate their CAP Strategic Plans. The guidelines '[Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of CAP income support instruments](#)' notably recommend calculating the Income Transfer Efficiency of CAP income support interventions because it examines to what extent the support was effectively transferred into additional income for the beneficiaries. [Read the news.](#)





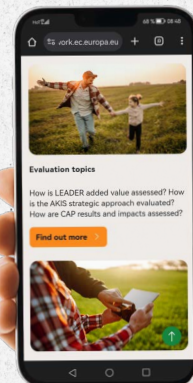
### A new classification scheme based on farm practices for the CAP Strategic Plans

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) has published [a classification scheme based on farm practices](#) supported by the CAP interventions related to environmental, climate and animal welfare objectives. The report presents the definition of each farm practice class, as well as the classification scheme itself, which is structured in a systematic way around eighteen different 'sections' (e.g. plant protection, fertilisation and soil amendments, landscape, etc.). The sections are further broken down into three tiers, each including different degrees of detail regarding the supported practice. The Evaluation Helpdesk and the JRC have used the [classification scheme](#) to label relevant CAP interventions. A recent publication explains this activity's purpose and various methodological aspects that could help ensure that farm practice labelling is used correctly. Read the report '[Labelling of interventions in CAP Strategic Plans by farm practices](#)'.



### Dive into evaluation learning portals

A new knowledge-sharing platform for the CAP evaluation community can help anyone interested in exploring various evaluation processes, topics and methods. It offers a section on the advantages and disadvantages of individual methods and their use in CAP evaluations, with relevant sources and structured learning paths. [Visit the evaluation learning portals!](#)







## SPOTLIGHT



# EIP Operational Groups: the cooperation among farmers, researchers and advisors is the key to fostering innovation

**The 'Study on outcomes achieved by EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects under the CAP' aimed to understand better how [Operational Groups \(OG\)](#) operate, how they design and run the processes of co-creation of innovation, and how they spread innovative solutions.**

The study was coordinated by the Evaluation Helpdesk of the EU CAP Network from September 2023 to June 2024. It assessed the outcomes of OG projects and aimed to identify the main drivers and barriers to achieving these outcomes, including the contribution of communication and dissemination activities and the role of calls for European Innovation Partnership (EIP) projects.

The research was based on two surveys targeting operational project partners and EIP/innovation stakeholders. The OG survey allowed the collection of 989 completed questionnaires from 24 Member States and the UK, corresponding to 768 OG projects. The innovation stakeholder survey collected a total of 233 completed questionnaires. Moreover, 15 OG projects across several Member States have been selected for case studies. OGs are the EIP's backbone, bringing innovation into the agroecosystem and improving its connection with research. They bridge research and farming practice by bringing together [AKIS](#) actors, such as farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs and others, to promote innovation processes and knowledge exchange in agriculture and forestry. A central element of OGs is the interactive work between partners with complementary expertise serving the common

objectives of the OG innovation project. OG partners collaborated to capture grassroots ideas and co-create innovative and practical solutions for the identified challenges. They also went beyond their project and networked with other OGs or Horizon Europe research projects, which helped further boost knowledge.

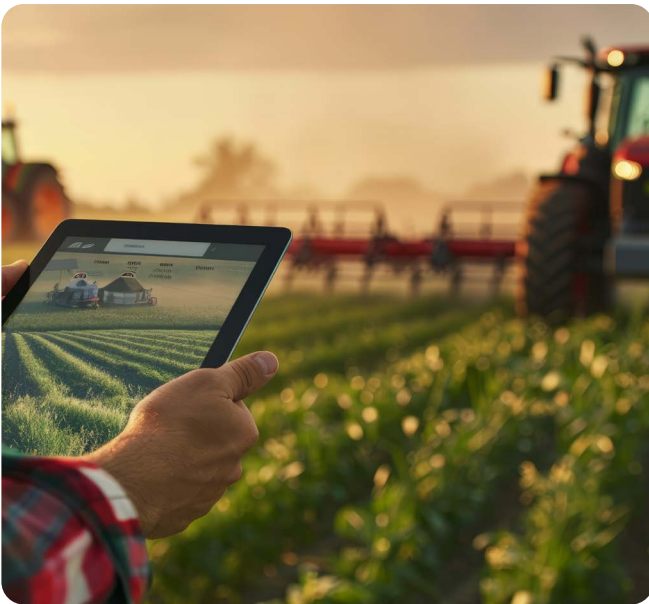


The first highlight of the study is the variety of innovative solutions produced by OGs according to their planned objectives. These solutions encompass agronomic practices and process innovation, technological innovation, knowledge exchanges, product innovation, service innovation, and organisational and rural social innovation.



One key factor that stands out as a facilitator of success is the composition of OG partnerships. These partnerships, with their diverse expertise and knowledge, including farmers, foresters, and other end users, play a crucial role in the success of the projects.

At the same time, the interactive model has proved to be a key tool for achieving OG outcomes. Evidence from specific projects indicates that the most successful projects were those whose partners had cooperation experience and those that promoted engagement involvement and effective communication amongst relevant stakeholders. This has been observed in involving OG stakeholders in decision-making and implementation processes, establishing good internal communication and close collaboration with innovation brokers.



Further evidence shows that success rests on the 'innovation triangle', the cooperation between farmers (practice), R&D partners (research) and advisors. The latter act as facilitators and help shorten the innovation transfer path.

OG projects are not limited to co-creating innovative solutions. Evidence shows that most innovative solutions produced have a high potential to be transferred and upscaled. This means they can be implemented on a larger scale, for instance, outside the OG partnership or create new opportunities through improved quality or product diversification. This transferability can spread even further and most OG projects have demonstrated that they strengthen innovation-oriented communities.

Several factors contribute positively to scaling up innovation. Stakeholders highlight the importance of showcasing the benefits and practical use of innovative solutions, for instance, through on-farm demonstrations and peer-to-peer events.

Reaching out to end users, choosing the right dissemination channels and continuing collaboration between partners after the project's end proved to be important facilitating factors for transferring and scaling up OG project outcomes.

Lessons also arise from less successful cases where it is shown that not considering end user needs when designing the objectives of the OG projects can be detrimental to the co-creation and transfer of an innovative solution, which risks being relevant only for a specific farm or stakeholder. Furthermore, an inadequate training and advisory system or the lack of demonstration farms limits the potential for disseminating innovations.

OGs do not operate in silos. Communication and dissemination activities are critical for creating opportunities outside the OG partnership and distributing OG project outcomes. Evidence from the study shows that the key elements for effective communication and dissemination include active communication throughout the project life cycle and beyond. The presence of an advisor or a communications expert in the OGs could be beneficial in increasing awareness of the importance of communication. Managing Authorities and National Networks are important multipliers/disseminators of information, mainly through their websites and events.







The last element analysed in the study is the EIP OG calls and how the approaches used in different Member States favoured or limited the achievement of OG outcomes.

The types of calls have, to a large extent, addressed grassroots needs and practitioners' needs and promoted innovative opportunities. This was the case of open calls, which allowed bottom-up ideas to emerge. Some Managing Authorities also used thematic calls to address specific needs identified by Rural Development Programmes. In most cases, the eligibility conditions and selection criteria of EIP OG calls favoured the gathering of partners with complementary expertise and promoted equal participation of all OG partners, which facilitated the co-creation of innovative solutions.

Many OGs expressed concern over administrative burdens, mainly linked to reporting rules or the time to receive payments. Therefore, simplification options can be applied, such as using advance payments, simplified cost options, and more flexibility to reduce budgetary issues, especially for smaller farmers and actors with limited funding capacity.

Overall, EIP OG calls can be instrumental in co-creating and using innovative solutions. Lessons from existing calls indicate that allocating time, tools and funds is necessary to prepare OG projects thoroughly. Evidence suggests that calls requiring structured planning, communication, and dissemination activities positively impact the achievement of project outcomes. In addition, call requirements need to be targeted, and too many rules must be avoided because they generate excessive burdens on beneficiaries and administration.

In conclusion, the study confirmed the positive contribution of EIP OGs to advance innovation in the agriculture and forestry sectors. This contribution is possible thanks to multi-actor partnerships with complementary expertise that interact continuously through a bottom-up approach to produce innovative solutions that can be spread further using the correct semination channels.

Read the full report [here](#).







## SHOWCASE



# Assessment of LEADER principles and LEADER added value: the case of Lithuania

**More than half of the members of Local Action Groups (LAGs) agree that the LEADER approach has increased the commitment of local people, businesses and civil society organisations to local development projects.**

The Lithuanian Managing Authority completed a comprehensive [evaluation of the LEADER intervention](#) from the 2014-2020 programming period in 2021. Among many other questions, the evaluation examined LEADER added value based mainly on a survey among LAG members.

“We started the evaluation of the LEADER added value with the theoretical definition mentioned in the guidelines ‘[Evaluation of LEADER/ CLLD](#)’. We found out that LAG members were not aware of the LEADER added value concept and it had therefore been a challenge for them to reply to the survey. This has been an important lesson for us,” explained Ms Neringa Viršilienė from Estep and leader of the evaluation team.

The evaluation approach combined qualitative, quantitative, data and opinion-based methods. The quantitative approach was one of the main strengths of the evaluation. Since the number of single indicators to assess the implementation of the LEADER approach is substantial (94 primary and 21 secondary indicators), a composite indicator was developed i.e. Performance Index of the LEADER approach (PILA), which consisted of seven dimensions (sub-indices) representing each [LEADER feature](#) (bottom-up approach, area-based approach, local partnership, an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy, networking, innovation

and cooperation). The aim of PILA was to facilitate the presentation and communication of evaluation results.

Detailed case studies at the level of the three LAGs were carried out and based on PILA. This allowed for the comparison of LAGs and helped to visualise evaluation findings better, showing that no LAG was successfully implementing all the LEADER principles equally. Some LEADER principles were better implemented in one LAG, while other principles were better implemented in others.

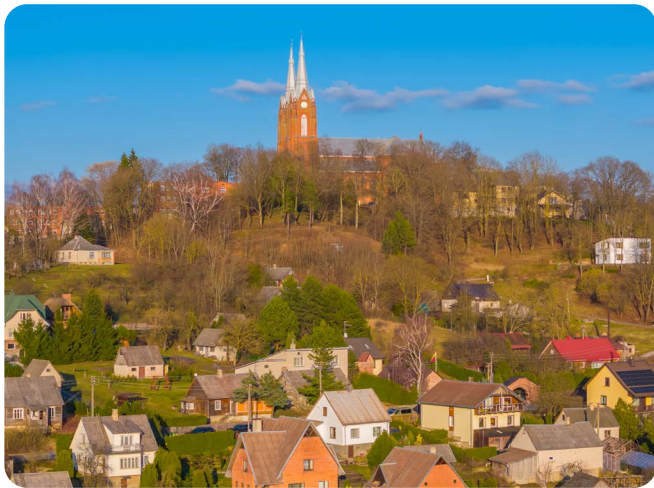


*“An interesting question for further research would be to explore the impact that internal and external factors have on the effective implementation of LEADER approach at local level.”*

**NERINGA VIRŠILIENĖ**

Leader of the evaluation team





Compared to similar projects directly funded by the Rural Development Programme, LEADER projects are believed to contribute more to meeting local needs and allow more project promoters to receive support. The results of LEADER projects are also considered to be more environmentally sustainable and in line with other projects in the LAG area.

It should also be noted that a relatively high share of surveyed LAG members did not have any opinion on the different components of LEADER added value. This confirms that the ability of LAG members to assess LEADER added value should not be overestimated. To obtain meaningful results from surveys, it is crucial to make concepts/elements of LEADER added value and survey questions understandable to LAG members.

Lithuania differs from many other EU countries in that the number of municipalities is relatively small but large in terms of area and population, considering the size of the country. LAGs of larger municipalities, as well as those covering the territories of multiple municipalities, faced challenges in ensuring that local projects were implemented across all parts of the LAG territory.

The share of total funding for local projects built on local assets and strengths varied from one-third (35%) to three-quarters (76%) of the total funding (bottom-up principle), with a subsequent impact on the level of valorisation of assets in local projects.

More than half of the members of LAGs agree (and a large number of them partially agree) that the LEADER approach has increased the commitment of local people, businesses and civil society organisations to the implementation of the projects. It has also improved the attitude of the rural population towards the future of their area and increased the involvement of the rural population in social and voluntary activities.







## NETWORKING

# A deep look at the contribution of carbon farming to CAP climate objectives – insights from a Good Practice Workshop

**The CAP will play a crucial role in achieving climate neutrality so evaluations related to carbon farming should not be limited to green architecture. This is one of the key messages shared by participants of the seventh Good Practice Workshop, which took place on 24-25 June 2024 in Nantes, France.**

Managing Authorities, evaluators, European Commission representatives, National CAP Networks, researchers, carbon certification experts and other relevant evaluation stakeholders gathered to share experiences on how to better [assess carbon farming's contribution to CAP climate objectives](#). The event was organised by the EU CAP Network and supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP and the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty.

On the first day, Ms Sophie Helaine and Mr Ruggero Fornoni of the European Commission (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)) set the scene by presenting the broader context in terms of EU climate targets, stressing the path to climate neutrality by 2050 and the evolution of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture.



Mr Guillaume Pierre, from the Evaluation Helpdesk, introduced the concept of carbon farming and outlined its relevance as an evaluation topic for the CAP. He pointed out that many interventions contribute to this under Specific Objective 4, and, as a result, ensure important potential contributions to achieving Green Deal targets.







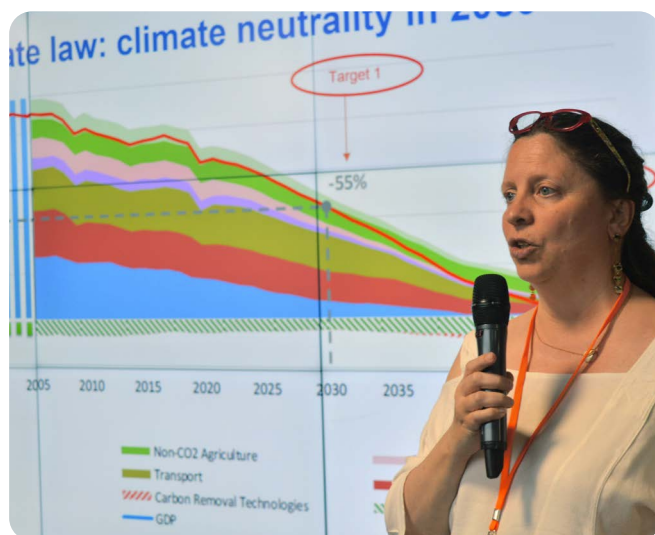
Ms Keesje Avis from Ricardo (UK) provided an overview of experiences from multiple EU level projects on estimating GHG mitigation in the agricultural and land sectors, and how this experience could be applied to national level evaluations. She underscored key steps for evaluating carbon farming practices at national level, notably the identification of interventions that increase soil carbon sequestration (SOC), the identification of relevant farm practices and the estimation of uptake using different sources (such as [the Agri-food data portal](#) or the [Joint Research Centre](#)).



Andrew Voysey, Chief Impact Officer at Soil Capital, presented an overview of the state of the carbon farming market in Europe. He highlighted the crucial role played by the private sector in the green transition and stressed that the public sector would unlikely be able to finance the innovation at the speed and scale needed to reach EU climate objectives. Participants also had the opportunity to learn from experiences with evaluations of carbon sequestration practices in Austria, Italy, Sweden and the UK, showcasing different yet interesting approaches to conducting a similar evaluation.

During the [Workshop](#) in Nantes, several challenges and needs pertaining to the evaluation of carbon farming were identified through group and plenary discussions. To answer evaluation questions, participants suggested several factors of success that complement existing ones. They are mainly linked to evaluation questions related to effectiveness and the role played by the knowledge of farmers or the contribution of different interventions and practices, such as “To what extent does knowledge exchange promote carbon farming?” or “To what extent CAP Strategic Plan interventions contribute to the EU climate targets?”.

Furthermore, the maintenance of stored carbon was also identified as a key issue and the participants of the workshop discussed ideas to maintain long-term results, such as the combination of private certification initiatives to stimulate the adoption of carbon farming practices with public funding. Member States were also advised to examine coherence with other national initiatives aimed at reducing GHG emissions (e.g. the [‘Label bas-carbone’](#) in France).





Other challenges that were noted include using and quantifying baselines, selecting the right methodological approach, and how to assess causality and/or estimating the net effects of the CAP. Finally, the innovative potential of farmers was highlighted while discussions urged Member States to incorporate the possibility of showcasing actions undertaken by farmers in their evaluation frameworks to help increase carbon stock and use subsequent findings to inspire better policy design in the future.



*“We should not forget that carbon farming is only one part of the equation; evaluations should be holistic and consider other sources of emissions, stemming from manure management or enteric fermentation. This means that land use, soil management and livestock management need to be combined to effectively contribute to the climate neutrality targets.”*

**MARILI PARISSAKI**

Co-chair of the Good Practice Workshop

Participants concluded that although the first step would be to identify interventions and farm practices that increase soil organic carbon, other interventions beyond [green architecture](#) should also be assessed, such as innovation, training and non-green investments.

The full report from the Good Practice Workshop '[Assessing the contribution of carbon farming to CAP climate objectives](#)' can be read on the [EU CAP Network website](#).

#### Evaluation reading corner

- > EU CAP Network (2024) - [Guidelines - Assessing the added value of LEADER](#)
- > European Commission (2024) - [Evaluation on the impact of LEADER on Balanced Territorial Development](#)
- > EU CAP Network (2024) - [EU CAP Network Magazine - Issue 2 - How to assess social resilience in rural areas](#)
- > European Commission (2024) - [Evaluation support study of the EU support schemes for agriculture in the outermost regions \(POSEI\) and smaller Aegean islands \(SAI\)](#)
- > Science Direct (2024) - [Europe needs better pesticide policies to reduce impacts on biodiversity](#)
- > FAO (2024) - [Evaluation of the project "Improving global forest management through improved global forest information"](#)





**GET INVOLVED**

## Know any interesting evaluation projects, events, publications or other initiatives?


CAP Evaluation News welcomes any contribution from its readers – get in touch by emailing [evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu](mailto:evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu)

## Events calendar

Below is a pick of the latest upcoming events that can help evaluation stakeholders improve the quality and effectiveness of CAP assessments across the EU.


-  24-26 September 2024 - Cordoba - REECAP - [Annual Meeting](#)
-  30 September - 11 October 2024 - Antwerp - [Evaluation Capacity Development \(ECD\) Seminar](#)
-  21-23 October 2024 - Berlin - German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture  
[International Research Symposium on Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Mitigation From Research to Implementation](#)
-  7-8 November 2024 - Budapest - EU CAP Network - [Good Practice Workshop: Assessing simplification of the CAP for beneficiaries and administrations](#)
-  13-14 November 2024 - Wageningen - [Financing sustainable and resilient transitions in agri & food systems](#)
-  28 November 2024 - Madrid - [10<sup>th</sup> annual EU conference on EAFRD financial instruments](#)

## European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP

 Rue Belliard 12, 1040  
Brussels, Belgium

 [evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu](mailto:evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu)

 [Website](#)

 +32 2 808 10 24

**Newsletter Editorial Team:** Margherita Sforza, Hannes Wimmer

**Contributors:** Alice Devot, Carina Folkesson, Marili Parissaki, Filip Stefanic, Neringa Viršilienė, Brigit Zomer

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