

European CAP Network Subgroup on CAP Strategic Plans

4th meeting - 06 November 2024

Brussels

Welcome and introduction by the Chair (DG AGRI)

Chair **Antonia Gamez Moreno** (DG AGRI), opened the **4th meeting of the CAP Strategic Plans** (CSP) Subgroup by welcoming the 47 subgroup members present, who together represented 24 Member States. She reflected on the progression of the EU CAP Network and the steady efforts made by subgroup members, noting that CSP implementation is now well into its second year and the EU CAP Network has moved into an established phase of knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

The chair emphasised that the subgroup is meeting at a particularly pivotal time for EU agriculture and rural policy, with significant developments on the horizon. She drew members' attention to the **recent hearing of the Commissioner-designate for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen**, who is expected to lead on strengthening the competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability of the EU's agricultural sector. Mr. Hansen's mandate will include a focus on addressing the challenges and aspirations of rural communities, in line with recommendations outlined in the recent **Strategic Dialogue report** and President von der Leyen's political guidelines. These recommendations will be essential as the new Commission formulates its Vision for Agriculture and Food, to be presented within the first 100 days of the new mandate.

She highlighted that the **Strategic Dialogue report** itself marks a milestone for EU agri-food policy, emphasising innovation and competitiveness as key drivers of sustainability. The report underscores the importance of networking, peer-to-peer learning, and the sharing of best practices to address the complex social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the sector. She noted that the Commission is closely reviewing the report's recommendations, which are expected to play a crucial role in shaping future CAP priorities.

Turning to the ongoing preparation of the next **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**, 16 working groups have been established to cover topics ranging from digital transformation to health, with DG AGRI contributing to 14 of these groups. Future CAP planning will consider major political priorities, including initiatives on water resilience, climate adaptation, and regional disparities, as well as EU enlargement.

Policy simplification is a key priority for the new Commission, with a coordinated push across the College of Commissioners to streamline EU policies and reduce administrative burdens.

After providing this policy context, the chair outlined the day's agenda, encouraging members to engage actively in discussions and share examples from their respective Member States, noting that these exchanges are vital for strengthening CAP implementation across Europe.



CAP policy update (DG AGRI) focus on simplification

Petros Angelopoulos (DG AGRI) presented an update on the **CAP Simplification Package**, a key initiative launched in response to concerns raised by farmers over administrative burdens, unpredictable incomes, and market volatility. Following widespread protests in early 2024, the European Council called for action, and the Commission, under the leadership of President von der Leyen, introduced a **Simplification Package in February 2024**. This package aims to reduce bureaucracy, alleviate compliance challenges, and enhance flexibility within the CAP framework while maintaining the CAP's environmental and climate goals.

Mr Angelopoulos outlined the **extensive consultation process that informed the package**, which drew over 500 suggestions from Member States, farming organisations, and the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee.

The agenda, presentations and other relevant material (MIRO board notes of the interactive session) are available on the [event page](#).

He explained that the feedback addressed five main areas: (1) CAP plan management and administrative processes, (2) the green architecture, (3) support for farm income and competitiveness, (4) additional CAP instruments, and (5) relevant legislation outside of the CAP (such as state aid, environmental and food safety regulations).

The **resulting simplification package introduced both short- and medium-term measures intended to relieve farmers of excessive administrative tasks while maintaining the CAP's sustainability goals**. An initial assessment of the package indicates substantial reductions in administrative costs, increased flexibility, and the potential for improved trust in the CAP processes. For example, the measures reduce on-site control requirements by over 200 000 annually, streamline reporting obligations, and increase flexibility in on-farm management decisions. Mr Angelopoulos emphasised that while these actions alleviate compliance pressures, they do not compromise the CAP's environmental and climate objectives. He also noted that these changes were carefully designed to strengthen trust between farmers and the CAP system by offering clearer feedback mechanisms and more adaptive monitoring processes.

The **Q&A session** following Mr Angelopoulos' presentation highlighted several important perspectives on the simplification measures. Members discussed the **potential mental health benefits of reduced administrative burdens**, recognising that streamlined processes and greater flexibility could help alleviate stress for farmers. Questions regarding the environmental and climate impacts of the package reflected some members' **concerns about conditionality adjustments**. Additionally, some members noted the **value of having ongoing, informal dialogues within the EU CAP Network** to share practical experiences and collaborate on continuous improvements of administrative processes across Member States.

In conclusion, Mr Angelopoulos emphasised that **DG AGRI will continue to monitor and refine the simplification measures**, with additional actions planned for 2024 and beyond. Studies on administrative burdens and the CAP's new delivery model will guide further simplification initiatives, with findings set to inform future CAP policy developments. Many of the suggestions that have not yet been implemented, as well as ongoing lessons from CAP operations, will contribute to the policy review for CAP post-2027, ensuring a responsive and farmer-centred approach to EU agricultural policy.



News from the EU CAP Network

David Lamb (EU CAP Network) presented **recent and upcoming activities within the EU CAP Network**. Mr Lamb highlighted the launch of the 2024 **Agriculture and Rural Inspiration Awards (ARIA)**, which focuses on youth empowerment in agriculture. With categories such as smart agriculture, environmental protection, and rural vitality, the awards aim to spotlight projects that exemplify the CAP's objectives in real-world applications. He stressed the awards' role in inspiring stakeholders across Member States and fostering the next generation of sustainable agricultural initiatives.

Further updates outlined the EU CAP Network's activities scheduled through early 2025, followed by two presentations on the **outcomes of previous thematic group meetings**.

Information about the outcomes of the previous Thematic Groups (TGs)

Lisa Haller (EU CAP Network) presented findings from the **Thematic Group (TG) on "Green Architecture: Designing Green Strategies"**, which focused on designing and implementing the six green architecture interventions tailored to local environmental needs. She noted that the TG observed substantial differences in Member State approaches, with many emphasising the importance of locally adapted strategies for sustainable outcomes. The group found that bottom-up initiatives involving farmers, the use of pilots to test scheme design, knowledge exchange, capacity building, and a functioning advisory system are crucial for a successful and effective implementation.

Alessia Musumarra (EU CAP Network) shared insights from the **TG on Supporting the Mental Health of Farmers and Farming Communities**, which convened to address mental health concerns within the agricultural sector. The group highlighted various community-based initiatives aimed at reducing stigma around mental health and fostering local support networks. She reported that the TG's discussions highlighted the importance of resilience and mental well-being in sustainable farming, identifying factors that contribute to positive mental health and assessing ways to provide resources effectively. Recommendations included creating awareness, encouraging open dialogues, and integrating mental health considerations into CAP frameworks.

Exchange of good practices from members

The meeting dedicated a session to the exchange of good practices, introduced by **Susan Grieve** (EU CAP Network), who presented an overview of **the CAP Network's repository of good practices**. She highlighted their role in showcasing successful examples of CAP implementation across Member States, providing valuable resources for knowledge exchange and inspiring practical solutions adaptable to local contexts.

Information about the current Thematic Groups

The session continued with presentations from **ongoing TGs focusing on the CAP's environmental and social dimensions**.

Exchanges of good practices with members

Kaley Hart (EU CAP Network) presented the TG on **Enhancing Biodiversity on Farmland for improved resilience**, which aims to improve biodiversity on farmland by promoting habitat connectivity and engaging farmers in landscape-scale conservation efforts beyond single farms. At the **first meeting**, held in September, members shared practical approaches for increasing biodiversity on farms. **Alessia Musumarra** (EU CAP Network) then provided an update on the **TG on Gen Z: Leading Generational Renewal in Farming**, which focuses on supporting young and new farmers to ensure long-term sustainability and vitality in rural areas. At the **first meeting**, members identified future farmer profiles, considering the impacts of climate change, societal demands and digital advancements on young farmers.

Some members of the Subgroup then presented examples related to the topics of the ongoing thematic groups, and shared how they integrate outcomes from the EU CAP Network activities and exchanges into their work.

The **first example** came from **Martin Leitner (Austria's Managing Authority)**, who presented the **"ÖPUL verbindet" project**. This initiative promotes farmland biodiversity through region-specific, collaborative approaches that involve both farmers and biodiversity experts. "ÖPUL verbindet" has implemented biodiversity-promoting land management practices across 37 hectares in Austria, creating model regions where the impact of such measures can be assessed and refined over time. Mr. Leitner noted that the project exemplifies the value of cooperative, locally-adapted interventions, and stressed the importance of knowledge exchange in building acceptance and awareness among farmers for agri-environmental measures.

Another valuable example shared by **Maria Custódia Correia (National Network, Portugal)**, showcased non-productive investments under the CAP's Rural Development programme aimed at supporting biodiversity and natural resource conservation. These investments include measures such as the eradication of invasive species, installation of ecological structures, and creation of wildlife shelters, all contributing to the sustainable management of natural resources, biodiversity protection and habitat preservation. By demonstrating the positive impacts of these actions, Portugal has fostered greater interest in sustainable land management practices that align with CAP's environmental objectives, with total support for these initiatives capped at EUR 27.6 million.

On the same subject, **Remco Schreuder (RVO, Netherlands)** presented the **Netherlands' initiatives** to improve biodiversity through "Future-Proof Farming" pilots, which focus on reducing environmental impact and enhancing biodiversity on farmland. These pilots include measures such as dairy farming extensification on peat soils to improve water quality and biodiversity. The Netherlands has developed a business model promoting nature-inclusive agriculture and encouraging sustainable practices.

Teemu Hauhia, (National Network, Finland) discussed **Finland's integration of EU CAP Network outcomes** into their national initiatives, specifically through **the EU CAP Network Young LEADER Forum**, held in June 2024.

The successful implementation of the Forum was made possible through preparatory meetings and extensive collaboration with the EU CAP Network, DG AGRI, and the Finnish National Network. The event brought together young people from rural areas, local LEADER actors, and stakeholders from various levels, emphasising the importance of youth engagement in LEADER. It provided a platform for exchanging ideas, empowering youth, and fostering an international community of young LEADER ambassadors.



Interactive session

Participants engaged in an **interactive session aimed at identifying potential topics for the EU CAP Network's Annual Work Programme**. Members were divided into groups representing the CAP's three primary goals, namely economic resilience, environmental protection, and rural vitality, and participants discussed potential areas of focus, evaluated them using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) framework, and proposed several key topics for future consideration. Discussions led to the **identification of six key topics**, such as enhancing business resilience, improving water resource management, and fostering multifunctionality in rural areas.

The **economic resilience group** addressed two main topics: business resilience and risk management. They underscored the importance of strengthening resilience within the agricultural sector, particularly in the light of unpredictable market conditions and climate-related challenges. For risk management, they proposed developing a catalogue of practices that would help Member States mitigate agricultural risks and enhance farmers' ability to manage economic fluctuations.

The **environmental group** focused on two topics: water quality and resilience, and raising impact while reducing administrative burden. They highlighted the urgent need for balanced water management, proposing an integrated approach to quality and quantity that aligns with other environmental policies and uses results-based indicators for continuous improvement. To reduce administrative burden while increasing impact, the group emphasised streamlining processes to make CAP measures more accessible and effective, including the potential of result-based approaches.

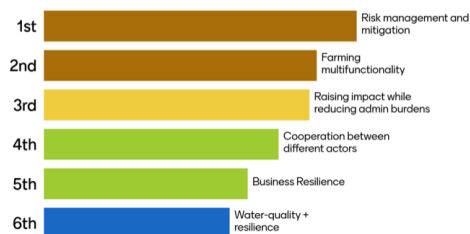
Lastly, the **rural vitality group** discussed farming multifunctionality and fostering cooperation to bridge rural-urban divides. Multifunctionality was seen as essential for enhancing farm income and social viability, particularly for small and medium farms that could benefit from simplified regulations and expanded skillsets.

The group also stressed the importance of cooperation within rural areas and between rural and urban communities, as a means to build trust, support generational renewal and strengthen connections between different regions.

The interactive session concluded with a plenary presentation of these priorities, followed by a vote using Mentimeter.

The topics will serve as valuable input for the 2025-2026 Annual Work Programme, ensuring that the EU CAP Network remains responsive to the evolving needs of its stakeholders and the agricultural sector.

Please rank the topics in order of preference:



Wrap up of the day

In her closing remarks, Ms **Gamez Moreno expressed appreciation for the active engagement of subgroup members** and the valuable insights shared throughout the meeting. She highlighted the importance of these exchanges in advancing CAP implementation, emphasising that collective action is central to achieving the CAP's strategic objectives. She reiterated the **Commission's dedication to supporting sustainable agriculture and fostering resilience within EU farming communities**, while underscoring the EU CAP Network's vital role in facilitating knowledge-sharing and innovation.

The next CSP Subgroup meeting is scheduled on the 12 of March 2025, where further progress on the themes and initiatives discussed in relation to the development of the AWP will be evaluated. The chair encouraged participants to continue engaging with their networks and sharing best practices within their own Member States.

