

# Enhancing Biodiversity on Farmland for Improved Resilience

Thematic Group - 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting

In the second meeting of the Thematic Group (TG) members discussed and identified the factors that need to be in place for the effective design and implementation of interventions to improve biodiversity outcomes on farmland at scale.

## Reporting back from the informal discussions between meetings



**Attila Nagy (MA, Hungary)** and **Ole Ostermann (Agroecology Europe)** provided feedback on the two informal discussions held between the TG meetings.

Attila Nagy outlined the main points coming from the first discussion on 'practical scheme design for engaging farmers and encouraging landscape-scale approaches'. Key points included: involve all stakeholders in the scheme design process; design packages of interventions; need for greater flexibility in terms of agreement length and payment rate calculations; improved use of monitoring data to support scheme design, recognising that some farmers may have limitations in using new digital tools; secure funding from a range of sources beyond the CAP.



From the second discussion on 'improving the understanding of economic and environmental benefits of biodiversity action', Ole Ostermann flagged the importance of sound advice and good communication, with the rationale for new types of management clearly explained to farmers, using appropriate language with a feedback loop. He outlined the need for greater use of 'lighthouse' examples and of social media for promoting new ideas; and that knowledge should be seen as an 'input', i.e. the more you put in, the more you get out. Thematic Group members felt that decision-makers should be required to visit farms at least three times a year to better understand

## Event information

**Date:** 13 November 2024

**Location:** In person, Brussels

**Organisers:** EU CAP Network

**Participants:** 47 participants from 20 Member States (MS) representing a range of organisations including Managing Authorities (MAs), Paying Agencies (PAs), **National Networks** (NNs), farmers and farming organisations, environmental NGOs, European and national/regional stakeholder organisations, farm advisors and the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG ENV).

**Outcomes:** Recommendations on how to improve biodiversity outcomes on farmland at scale.

**Web page:** [https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-enhancing-biodiversity-farmland-improved-resilience\\_en](https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-enhancing-biodiversity-farmland-improved-resilience_en)

the business of farming. They emphasised that a paradigm shift was required in the way the whole food system operates to enable fair prices for farmers and an improved and more harmonious balance between consumers, retailers and farmers.

## Delivering for biodiversity - inspiration for coordinated action



**Michele Nori (DG AGRI)** and **Vujadin Kovacevic (DG ENV)** jointly **presented** their thoughts on how coordinated action could help enhance biodiversity on farmland.

They highlighted that habitat connectivity, and landscape-scale and territorial approaches are emphasised in the Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) and the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture. The potential exists under the current CAP to design collective approaches for environmental schemes, but these are not yet common. A change in approach is necessary, bringing different interests and expertise together to focus efforts where greatest added value is likely to be generated, and learning from experiences under LEADER and LIFE. Collective approaches will be beneficial to a range of targets within the NRR, such as those relating to landscape features, pollinators and habitats. The CAP will be an important tool to fund some of these activities, with results-based approaches having the potential to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness. **Experience to date** shows that effective communication, trust and a network of good farm advisers is key to their success.





In response to a comment about the need for harmonised rules on the measurement of indicators (e.g. favourable conservation status) and to synchronise the timing of data collection for indicators to create solid baselines, DG ENV highlighted that the delegated act for the NRR (under development) would set the rules for monitoring.



### Group Discussions - enabling factors and recommendations for improving biodiversity outcomes on farmland at scale

TG members were split into three breakout groups, each exploring the factors necessary for improving biodiversity outcomes on farmland at scale, with a focus on scheme design; scheme implementation and monitoring; and communication and developing capacity. Based on the factors identified, TG members developed recommendations for the changes required in the future to make these factors a reality.

Once all recommendations had been harvested, members voted on which ones they considered to be the highest priority. The main recommendations under each theme are set out below, with those receiving most votes put first.

#### Scheme design:

- Funding for biodiversity needs to be increased, particularly for collective action (Action for EC/MS).
- The creation and use of private sources of funding to complement CAP funding should be investigated, without creating issues of double funding (Action for EC/MS).
- Piloting new approaches for delivering landscape-scale action before they are rolled out should become the norm, using opportunities available under the CAP's cooperation intervention and involve farmers in scheme design (Action for MS).

- Change the narrative behind the CAP to one where funding is used to provide real incentives for multiple purposes, with a focus on the provision of ecosystem services across the whole farm, using different approaches (mandatory / voluntary) to achieve different outcomes (Action for EC/MS).
- Consider the monitoring requirements, including the indicators to be used and their measurability, when designing schemes (Action for MS).
- Design low threshold results-based schemes to generate high uptake as part of a learning process for farmers, advisers and scheme administrators - thresholds can be increased over time (Action for MS).

#### Scheme implementation & monitoring:

- Greater investment in collective action should be prioritised (Action for EC/MS).
- Improvements in monitoring are required to streamline what is monitored, who is monitored and how monitoring is done, e.g. use of citizen tools and farmer inputs, alongside other tools (Action for EC/MS).
- All reporting to the EC should be harmonised (across all DGs and regulations) and adequate funds should be made available for this purpose (Action for EC).
- Reduce the complexity of rules and requirements relating to scheme implementation to allow more flexibility for farmers e.g. through increased use of results-based schemes (Action for EU/MSs).
- Give farmers the option to test result-based schemes first without formally committing to a multi-year contract to reduce the risk to farmers (Action for MS).







### Communication and capacity building:

- Peer-to-peer learning should be put in place, not just between farmers but also policy makers, implementation bodies and other stakeholders, both within and between Member States, in order to share experiences and increase understanding of what works (Action for MS).
- Explain to farmers the reasons for managing their land for biodiversity, including the economic and social benefits so that the added value is clear (Action for EC / MS).
- Consider new ways of communicating research findings and monitoring results to farmers, e.g. through focus groups, podcasts, exhibitions etc. (Action for EC/MS).
- Invest in training for Paying Agencies so they are aware of the latest data and monitoring technology to avoid good measures being rejected because PAs cannot monitor them with existing tools (Action for EC).
- There should be greater cooperation between stakeholders in relation to monitoring and advisory services, e.g. AKIS stakeholders, CAP Networks, agricultural chambers and environmental experts (Action for EC/MS).
- Continued investment in research and innovation on biodiversity and agriculture is essential to improve the achievement of results on the ground (Action for EC/MS).
- Engage consumers more directly in appreciating the value of products from farms with enhanced biodiversity via a range of routes, involving also food and retail organisations (Action for MS).

### Next steps



This was the last meeting of the TG. A document setting out relevant examples proposed by TG members will be produced, showing how biodiversity can be incentivised at scale.

