



# Fifth Meeting of the Subgroup on CAP Strategic Plans

12 March 2025

## Welcome and introduction by the Chair (DG AGRI)

Chair **Antonia Gamez Moreno (DG AGRI)** opened the [5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CAP Strategic Plans \(CSP\) Subgroup](#), highlighting the members' continued strong commitment and the importance of these meetings in the ongoing implementation of CSPs, as well as the role of the EU CAP Network in facilitating knowledge exchange.

Since the last meeting in [November 2024](#), significant developments have occurred, including the start of the third year of CSP implementation and the formation of a new European Commission. The new [Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen](#), has engaged with the EU CAP Network and has expressed his appreciation for the Agricultural & Rural Inspiration Awards (ARIA) 2024 that promotes CAP-funded inspirational projects. The Chair emphasised that the Commission has already begun working in line with the President's political guidelines, the Strategic Dialogue recommendations, and the recently established [European Board on Agriculture and Food \(EBAF\)](#).

A key focus of the meeting was the newly adopted [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), which aims to foster trust and dialogue across the food value chain, ensuring long-term sustainability and competitiveness. The Chair also stressed the importance of public consultations on the [next Multiannual Financial Framework \(MFF\)](#) and encouraged participants to engage in shaping future policy directions.

After providing the context of the meeting, the Chair detailed the agenda, underlining the importance of collaboration, and inviting participants to contribute actively to the discussions.

## CAP policy update (DG AGRI)

### Presentation of the Vision for Agriculture and Food

**Pasquale Di Rubbo (DG AGRI)** presented the recently adopted [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), which aims to address key challenges facing the EU agri-food sector, including geopolitical tensions, climate change, economic volatility, and structural shifts in farming. The Vision builds on previous strategic initiatives, including the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture, as well as reports from [Draghi](#) (European competitiveness), [Niinistö](#) (civil and military preparedness and readiness), and [Letta](#) (single market), and sets out a framework

to create a sector that is attractive, competitive, future-proof and fair, with a strong focus on young farmers and future generations.

**The Vision is structured around four key pillars:** (1) Attractiveness of the agri-food sector driven by a more targeted public support, market access, and income source diversification (e.g., bioeconomy and carbon farming); (2) Competitiveness and resilience, with a focus on helping farmers withstand market shocks and climate change, while reducing dependencies on imports; (3) Sustainability ensures that the sector contributes to climate neutrality by 2050, relying more on incentives than on strict regulations; and: (4) Fairness reinforces the role of farmers and rural communities in the food supply chain. A key element of the Vision is the shift towards a bottom-up approach, emphasising territorial adaptation rather than top-down regulatory imposition, with open points left for further discussion with stakeholders.

Presenting the vision, Mr Di Rubbo emphasised the central role of the CAP in **achieving the Vision's objectives**. The approach set down by the Vision seeks **simplification** and flexibility, giving Member States greater responsibility in implementation. The shift from strict conditionality to incentive-based payments will offer farmers more autonomy, ensuring that CAP funding is fairly distributed and targeted at those people who need it most.

The **Q&A session** following Mr Di Rubbo's presentation highlighted several important points. A key concern was raised regarding the future **definition of mixed farms** and how they would be classified. While small and medium-sized farms have clear definitions, the term mixed farming might cover different aspects (e.g., livestock, crops, etc.), for which analysis is ongoing to determine eligibility for support. Participants stressed the need for clarity, particularly regarding how income support and ecosystem services payments would be targeted.





The financing of **farm-level investments** was another major topic, with questions raised on whether the Competitiveness Fund would play a role alongside the CAP. It was clarified that the CAP would continue to support investments at the farm level, while discussions on the Single Fund's scope were still ongoing. A firm timeline for future CAP legislative proposals was requested, with assurances that drafts would likely be released after the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) discussions, possibly by July.

The **green transition** and the Vision's approach to sustainability were debated, with some participants questioning whether sufficient concrete actions had been included. The response emphasised that the transition is **already embedded in the CSPs**, and that rather than imposing additional regulations, the EU prefers an incentives-based approach to encourage sustainable practices. Some participants stressed the importance of maintaining strong environmental objectives, particularly as Member States gain more flexibility in CAP implementation.

The **bottom-up approach** was another area of discussion. Participants asked for more concrete mechanisms to facilitate this approach that go further than consultations. It was explained that the **EBAF, civil dialogue groups and the EU CAP Network** will play key roles in gathering stakeholder input. The Commissioner's engagement with stakeholders across Member States was also highlighted as part of the effort to make CAP implementation more responsive.



The **territorial approach** was widely supported, with calls for **stronger CAP synergies with other EU funds**. Some members were concerned that greater Member State autonomy could disadvantage rural areas with weaker representation and called for safeguards to protect smaller farms.



The discussion also covered the **livestock sector**, with participants asking about upcoming initiatives. It was confirmed that work is ongoing to explore ways to align livestock farming with sustainability goals, with a focus on grassland management and emissions reduction. Additional concerns were raised about the affordability of ecosystem service payments under the CAP budget, with discussions on whether private funding mechanisms could complement public support.

Lastly, the **MFF and CAP budget** were discussed, with participants seeking assurances that sufficient funding would be allocated to support the Vision's objectives, particularly for young farmers and rural sustainability. The Commission acknowledged the budgetary constraints, but reiterated its commitment to ensuring that **CAP reforms and sustainability initiatives** would receive adequate financial backing.

In conclusion, the session highlighted **strong stakeholder interest in the Vision's implementation**, with continued dialogue expected to refine key elements, particularly around funding, sustainability and fairness in CAP distribution.

## News from the EU CAP Network

**David Lamb** (EU CAP Network) presented **recent and upcoming activities within the EU CAP Network**.

In particular, he highlighted the preparation of the Annual Work Programme (AWP), which **integrates input from multiple sources, ensuring alignment with stakeholders' needs**. Moving forward, engagement will continue, particularly during the upcoming National Networks meeting, ensuring that Member States' perspectives are adequately represented. David Lamb also highlighted how **some of the topics** raised at the last CSP Subgroup meeting have been partially incorporated into existing and new thematic groups.

He then outlined the **EU CAP Network's activities** scheduled for the second quarter of 2025, including a CAP Implementation Seminar in June.



## Presentation of the Strategic Framework

Dana Freshley (EU CAP Network) **presented** the **EU CAP Network Strategic Framework**, recently published on the EU CAP Network's website. The framework establishes a common structure for monitoring and assessing the network's contributions to CAP implementation. Designed to **unify the work of the EU CAP Network Support Units**, it fosters **coherence and accountability**. Stakeholders contribute data and feedback to the framework through surveys, which then feed into the network's evaluation mechanisms. The **framework also helps guide the coordination of activities within the network and ensures alignment with policy priorities**. For the Subgroup on CAP Strategic Plans (SoCSP), the framework is particularly relevant, as it provides a structured way to track the impact of networking activities on CAP implementation, reinforcing transparency and stakeholder engagement.



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

The session continued with presentations of the **two recently concluded Thematic Groups (TGs)**.

Lisa Haller (EU CAP Network) presented findings from the **TG on Enhancing Biodiversity on Farmland for Improved Resilience**, which aimed to **examine how to encourage greater uptake and spatial coordination of biodiversity practices beyond single farms**. Members exchanged **practical approaches** to improving biodiversity, highlighting successful case studies where farmers worked together to **restore and manage habitats at a landscape scale**. Discussions also addressed **policy recommendations**, particularly regarding **CAP-funded biodiversity schemes**, with an emphasis on improving scheme design, monitoring, and communication strategies. The group collected best practice examples and explored **alternative approaches**, such as biodiversity credits and private sector involvement, to complement public funding and further incentivise biodiversity action on farmland. A publication summarising these findings is being prepared.

Alessia Musumarra (EU CAP Network) shared insights from the **TG on Gen Z: Leading Generational Renewal in Farming**, which focused on the **future of young farmers, the challenges they face,**

**and the factors enabling their success**. The group, primarily under 30 years of age, approached **generational renewal through five farmer profiles**, capturing the diversity of young farmers' aspirations and challenges over the next decade. Discussions explored key enablers for success, including agricultural education, tailored financial instruments and mental health support. **Policy recommendations included adapting CAP direct payments for new entrants, promoting fair market access, and strengthening advisory networks**. Members also highlighted the importance of initiatives like Erasmus+, farm incubators and mentoring programs. In addition, they shared **successful examples from their countries, particularly addressing the critical issue of land access**, a major barrier for young farmers, and discussed solutions to overcome this challenge for long-term success.

## Information about the current Thematic Groups

There followed an **update on the ongoing TGs**, including a presentation of their preliminary findings.

Alistair Prior (EU CAP Network) provided an update on the **TG on Economic Vulnerability of Farming**, which explores the **key drivers of financial instability in the agricultural sector** and how farmers can build resilience. The **first meeting in January** identified major challenges, including **market volatility, rising input costs, administrative burdens and weak bargaining power**, particularly for **small and medium-sized farms**. Participants examined existing **CAP interventions and risk management tools**, emphasising the need for greater policy coherence and better integration of public and private financial instruments, such as insurance and mutual funds. The group is now conducting a Member State survey to gather further insights, the findings of which will inform discussions at the group's **next meeting in April**.

David Lamb (EU CAP Network) presented findings from the **TG on Valuing Farmers' Wider Contributions to Society**, which seeks to **reshape public perceptions of farming beyond food production**. The **first meeting in February** highlighted how farmers play a crucial role as environmental stewards and community builders, but that these contributions are often overlooked. Discussions focused on **how to improve public engagement**, with proposals including **national awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and storytelling efforts to highlight the farmers' broader impact**. Members emphasised the need for **stronger links between farming and society**, particularly through **school partnerships, farm visits, and media outreach**. The group is now compiling best practices to strengthen the recognition of farming's wider role, with its **next meeting scheduled for May**.



**Lisa Haller** (EU CAP Network) introduced the **TG on Effective Approaches for Simplification within the CAP**, which aims to **identify practical solutions to reduce administrative burdens for farmers and national authorities**. The group focuses on specific elements of CAP implementation that could be streamlined at a European or national level, while ensuring that policy objectives remain intact. At its **first meeting in April**, members will discuss specific elements requiring simplification as identified through the Expressions of Interest (EoI), with a view to developing concrete proposals for addressing these elements, taking into account already existing solutions. A major goal of this TG is to **find case studies and successful simplification approaches** that could be **replicated across Member States**.



## Interactive session

Participants engaged in an **interactive session** aimed at assessing how **CAP implementation aligns with the Vision for Agriculture and Food** and at identifying ways to enhance this alignment within the existing CAP framework. Discussions focused on three key areas: **Attractiveness & Fairness, Competitiveness & Resilience, and Sustainability & Climate Action**. Structured group discussions allowed participants to assess current strengths, challenges and potential improvements within CSPs. The session also provided an opportunity to share examples of successful initiatives from different Member States.

## Reporting back

Rapporteurs from each group presented their conclusions in a plenary session, highlighting **common themes and recommendations for future policy development**.

### Attractiveness & Fairness

A recurring theme in the discussions was the **challenge of defining which farmers should receive targeted support**, as the situation varies across Member States. Participants emphasised that farmers implementing environmental and animal welfare measures should be appropriately rewarded, but there was also recognition that some new entrants do not fit into the traditional categories of young farmers. The issue of active farmers was highlighted as an area requiring further attention, to ensure that CAP funding supports those genuinely engaged in agricultural production.

The **continuation of young farmer support was acknowledged**, but participants stressed that access to land remains a major challenge, particularly as direct payments do not increase in proportion with rising land prices. Examples from Hungary and France were given

where schemes facilitate the transition of farms from retiring farmers to new entrants, ensuring business continuity and generational renewal. In some countries, such as the Czech Republic, financial support for young farmers has been well received, but additional qualifications and training measures were seen as necessary to improve the long-term viability of new farmers.

Discussions also acknowledged that **part-time farming and mixed farming are becoming increasingly relevant**, with some Member States having introduced financial incentives to encourage farm succession by allowing multiple generations to work together before an official transition. Participants noted that these approaches help maintain farm viability, while facilitating knowledge transfer between generations.

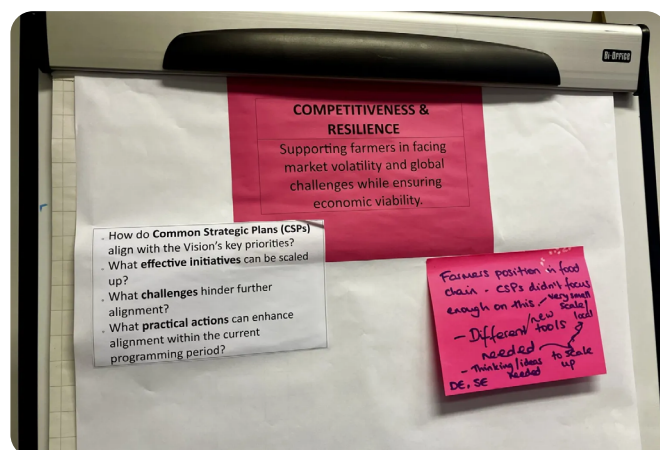
### Competitiveness & Resilience

Ensuring that **farmers can withstand market volatility and climate-related shocks** was a central concern. Direct payments (DPs) were identified as the main financial buffers against risk, but if DPs are reduced in future CAP revisions, new instruments will be needed. Participants called for more flexible risk management tools, particularly to address the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as floods and droughts.

The role of **diversification** in enhancing resilience was especially emphasised, with farmers needing to **adapt their production to include a wider range of crops and activities**. However, participants stressed that diversification strategies require stable policies and financial support to be effective. Successful examples of cooperative farming models, such as producer organisations and machinery-sharing initiatives, were highlighted as ways to reduce costs and increase profitability.

Risk management tools were also discussed, with participants noting that insurance schemes and financial safety nets vary significantly across Member States. Some members called for **better coordination between CAP measures and national risk management frameworks** to ensure adequate protection for farmers facing unexpected disruptions.

The role of **young farmer ambassadors** was highlighted as a positive example of promoting farming as an attractive career. Some Member States have successfully used ambassadors to showcase the benefits of agriculture, which has helped attract a new generation to the sector.



## Sustainability & Climate Action

**Eco-schemes emerged as a critical component** in driving sustainability, with participants emphasising that they **should be seen as incentives rather than as compensation**. A stronger **focus on result-based payments** was recommended to ensure that environmental measures deliver tangible outcomes. The balance between good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAECs), eco-schemes and agri-environmental climate measures (AECMs) was also discussed, with broad agreement that farmers should receive fair remuneration for implementing sustainability measures.

Concerns were raised about the **complexity of payment rate calculations**, with some participants arguing that farmers should be better rewarded for their contribution to climate and environmental goals. There were also discussions on alternative finance mechanisms, such as private sector investments, carbon farming, and biodiversity credits, which could help expand sustainability efforts beyond what CAP payments alone could finance.

Successful national initiatives were shared, such as the **local food days in Finland and Estonia**, which serve **as effective tools to engage farmers and consumers** in climate awareness. Participants stressed the need for greater transparency in CAP-funded sustainability efforts, ensuring that the public understands the impact of agricultural policies and taxpayer-funded initiatives.



## Final Observations

Overall, the discussions confirmed that **CSPs provide a solid foundation for achieving the Vision for Agriculture and Food**, but that more efforts are needed to improve financial stability, support generational renewal, and enhance sustainability. The importance of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) was highlighted, with calls to scale up these initiatives. Participants also emphasised the need for advisory services to focus on practical guidance rather than on administrative tasks for farmers. Another key point was **the need for long-term regulatory stability, as frequent policy changes create uncertainty for farmers and hinder investment**. A predictable policy environment is essential for long-term innovation in the sector.

Participants acknowledged that **Member States need flexibility in implementing CAP measures** due to varying farming conditions. Future policy discussions should strike a balance between EU-level consistency and national-level adaptability to ensure that the CAP remains an effective tool in a rapidly changing agricultural landscape. While **the CAP provides a strong policy framework, it cannot address all these challenges on its own**. There was a broad consensus that other financial mechanisms, including private sector investment and national initiatives, must complement CAP funding to ensure that there is sufficient support for European agriculture.

## Wrap-up of the day

In her closing remarks, Ms **Gamez Moreno** reflected on the key discussions of the day, emphasising the focus on the **Vision for Agriculture and Food** and its alignment with the ongoing implementation of the CSPs. The meeting also highlighted the work of the EU CAP Network in supporting thematic initiatives, such as **simplification**, which had been a priority identified in previous discussions. The Chair reiterated that ongoing collaboration, the sharing of successes and challenges, and the contributions from these discussions are essential to strengthening CSP implementation.



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