

# Effective Approaches for Simplification within the CAP

## Thematic Group - 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

The first meeting of the Thematic Group (TG) provided an opportunity for members to examine how to simplify CAP implementation and to remove unnecessary administrative burdens while not compromising the intended outcomes, either by drawing on existing solutions or by developing new approaches within the group. The meeting served as a platform for peer-to-peer exchange, facilitating the scaling up of effective practices from different Member States.

Simplification is defined as the minimisation of costs that are not strictly necessary for achieving the policy's objectives, and the reduction of administrative burdens on both administrations and beneficiaries.

### Setting the frame



In her **framing presentation**, **Lisa Haller** (EU CAP Network) shared an overview of the responses received during the Expression of Interest (Eoi) process for this TG. The full analysis can be found in the **Background Paper**.



**Marco Mazzei** (EU CAP Network) **presented preliminary findings** from a study carried out for DG AGRI on simplification and administrative burden for farmers and other beneficiaries under the CAP.

The main ways to simplify CAP implementation suggested included to streamline procedures, reduce bureaucracy, and build greater trust in the system. It was also clear that there is limited awareness among stakeholders regarding simplification initiatives in other countries.

### Event Information

**Date:** 2 April 2025

**Location:** Virtual meeting

**Organisers:** CAP Implementation Contact Point (CAPI CP)

**Participants:** 50 participants from 23 EU Member States, including Managing Authorities (MAs), Paying Agencies (PA), farming organisations, National CAP Networks, other stakeholder organisations, research, advisory services and the European Commission (DG AGRI).

**Outcomes:** Exchange on elements of CAP implementation causing complexity and administrative burdens, and how these can be addressed through simplification.


**Web page:** [https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/1st-meeting-thematic-group-effective-approaches-simplification-within-cap\\_en](https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/1st-meeting-thematic-group-effective-approaches-simplification-within-cap_en)



Examples of best practices identified during the study were presented. Digitalisation, particularly in data collection and verification (e.g. via integrated portals and mobile apps), was identified as a way to streamline these processes. In relation to the implementation phase, simplifying cost structures was highlighted as a way to accelerate processes and improve access to funding. A range of solutions such as Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), payments on the basis of draft budgets and the use of umbrella projects were proposed, particularly for small beneficiaries. Other suggestions emphasised the need to design future CAP frameworks with simplification in mind.





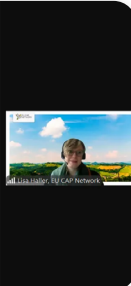


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### Aim for Today

- Take stock of challenges faced by beneficiaries and administrations when implementing CSPs (in relation to e.g. application process, implementation, reporting and controls).
- Begin to explore responses on how to overcome complexity or administrative burden without undermining the CAP's objectives or creating trade-offs.
- Identify the main areas of interest for further in-depth activities.

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This included reducing the number of interventions further, improving alignment between legislative requirements at different levels (national/regional), and fostering better dialogue between stakeholders. Complementary solutions that do not require legislative changes – such as enhanced communication, advisory services, and training – were also widely valued by respondents.

 **Petros Angelopoulos** (European Commission, DG AGRI) **outlined the Commission's ongoing work to simplify the CAP.** This second simplification package is being developed with input from Member States, stakeholders and farmers within the context shaped by several high-level strategies, including the **EU's Competitiveness Compass**, the **Vision for Agriculture and Food**, and the need to respond to farmers' concerns, particularly regarding bureaucracy and overlapping requirements. It will be structured around four key thematic areas:

1. On-farm simplification and streamlining of requirements to better adjust to different situations and to various farming practices;
2. Streamlining support for smaller and medium-sized farms;
3. Providing measures that can help boost competitiveness;
4. Increasing Member States' flexibility in managing CAP strategic plans.

Although this simplification effort focuses on short-term and actionable measures under the current legal framework, it also seeks to create greater stability and predictability, paving the way for more ambitious changes in the post-2027 CAP.

## Q&A

In response to questions on the study, **Mr Mazzei** confirmed that both qualitative and quantitative assessments were carried out to quantify administrative burden, both in terms of the number of farmers affected and financial impact, covering not only administrative effort, but also compliance-related costs.



Participants also highlighted the importance of considering simplification from the perspective of administrations (particularly PAs), so that they are able to translate EU requirements into national rules that are timely and easy to understand and implement for farmers. Particular issues raised included the rules for arable land and permanent grassland, the need for tolerance margins for controls, and de minimis requirements that consider the specific needs of different farm sizes.



Questions were also raised on the consultation process and on the timeline for the adoption and implementation of the second simplification package. DG AGRI explained that the current work builds on previous consultations and inputs from Member States and on exchanges with stakeholders. The proposal is expected to be adopted in May.

## Parallel group discussions



TG members were split into three breakout groups to assess the challenges in relation to different aspects of CAP design and implementation and to explore possible ways to address them through simplification. The groups were structured around three core themes:

### 1. CAP Applications/Implementation

**Issue:** Complexity of application forms.

**Solutions:** Malta has introduced streamlined application forms with closed and open questions, increased user friendliness (e.g. drop down menus) and information pre-filled from previous periods. Further improvements to connect different databases are planned. In Lithuania, geo-tagged photos can be automatically uploaded. In addition, Austria and Ireland has made use of geo-tagged photos on a voluntary basis. Estonia has introduced an electronic passport related to cattle identification to save time and paperwork.

**Issue:** Eligibility criteria not clear enough or too rigid.

**Solutions:** Suggestion to introduce practical tolerance and de minimis rules depending on farm size. Ireland uses Area Monitoring Systems (AMS) to give an early warning to farmers, so corrections can be made before sanctions are applied.



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### Agenda

TIME	AGENDA ITEM
08:00 – 09:30	Introduction
09:30 – 10:30	Setting the scene: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from the Expression of Interest (EU CAP Network)</li> <li>Insights from Study on Simplification and Administrative Burden for Farmers under the CAP (EU CAP Network)</li> <li>Simplification at the core of initiatives of the European Commission (DG AGRI)</li> </ul>
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 12:30	Interactive session, focusing on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handling CAP Applications / Implementation</li> <li>Reporting requirements</li> <li>Controls &amp; Inspections / Monitoring</li> </ol>
12:30 – 12:45	Harvesting from the parallel discussions
12:45 – 13:00	Next steps.

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**Issue:** Difficult calculation of costs/applications for investment interventions.

**Solutions:** SCOs were introduced by some countries, but practical issues remain as these options are difficult to apply to investments in practice (e.g. Lithuania), payments need to be checked if they are above a certain threshold (e.g. Luxembourg), or the calculation of costs is not in line with auditors' calculations (e.g. Italy).

**Issue:** Rules are not aligned to conditions on the ground or communicated on time.

**Solutions:** Ensure information about requirements reaches farmers promptly. Give more flexibility to MS and provide consistency of rules between different areas, particularly in regionalised countries. Italy has a coordination body that ensures timely information and coordination across regions. Spain has increased the cooperation across regions.

## 2. Reporting requirements

**Issue:** Overly complex and detailed reporting requirements.

**Solutions:** Some countries, like Sweden, introduced SCO as the way forward. Sweden reduced the number of quotes needed to ease the burden on beneficiaries and ensure that administrations can process applications more quickly. Digital tools can simplify the process by making it more accessible, but where there are discrepancies between the information provided and the actual situation, the burden might increase.

**Issue:** Duplication of efforts.

**Solutions:** The Netherlands introduced an external certification system to provide information (e.g. control of grazing hours). In Belgium, Flanders uses a data sharing tool ([Djust connect](#)) to minimise the data that needs to be provided. Finland and France followed up on this idea. Ireland has established a single, integrated eco-scheme to make it easier for farmers to apply. Austria is developing an interface to allow young farmers to provide information only once (it is currently needed twice) for CAP interventions and insurance. Currently, the information needed for different types of livestock varies considerably – and this should be standardised.

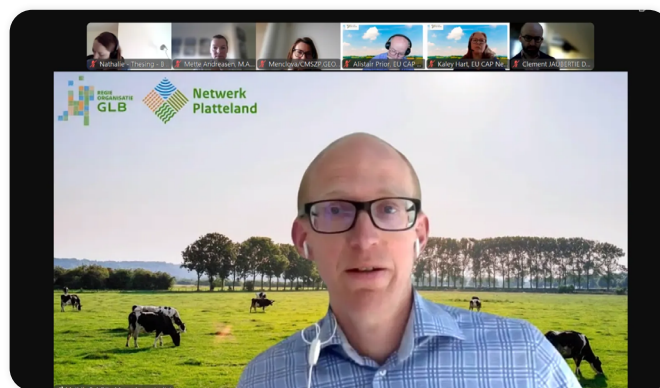
**Issue:** Member States adding complexity or requirements due to 'fear' of audits.

**Solutions:** Improved communication between MAs, PAs, the European Commission and auditors. In the past or for social funds, MAs were checking with auditors what requirements are accepted.

## 3. Controls & Inspections/Monitoring

**Issue:** Overly complex control requirements for investment support/non-Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) support.

**Solutions:** In the Netherlands payments are made on the basis of draft budgets. If the payment is over €25,000, the beneficiary must get an accountant to certify that the costs are reasonable. Since CAP funding is 40% of total costs, the risk of overpayment is considered to be small. Estonia and Latvia have developed price catalogues setting out reasonable costs for different items, built up over the years. This helps in situations where there can be myriad small expenses (e.g. for LEADER). A fall-back option can always be to pay on the real costs incurred.



**Issue:** Number of farm visits for controls.

**Solutions:** In France there is an attempt to have no more than one control per year for a farm, but this will need some reorganisation of the authorities concerned and the coordination of controls. Ireland also aims to coordinate controls to minimise on-farm visits, but different checks still need to be carried out by different responsible authorities and these cannot be combined. To understand the burden for beneficiaries better, the number of hours spent could be considered instead of the number of controls. Another suggestion was for a greater focus on risk-based controls, with exemptions where risks are small. The greater use of digital tools was promoted as a way of reducing On The Spot (OTS) checks, and the AMS has helped. However, in Germany, there have been technical glitches with the roll out of new technologies to farmers (smart devices), and each region has developed different apps and tools, which leads to issues.



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Follow-up activities will be arranged in May and the second TG meeting will take place on 12 June in Brussels.

