EU CAP NETWORK

Measuring what matters – Approaches to netting out CAP impacts

Good Practice Workshop

Bucharest, Romania

16-17 October 2025

Funded by the European Union

Recommended citation:

EUROPEAN COMMISSION – Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Unit A.3 (2025): Measuring what matters – Approaches to netting out CAP impacts, Report of the Good Practice Workshop 16-17 October 2025. Bucharest, Romania.

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EU CAP NETWORK

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP is responsible for providing support for monitoring and evaluation activities at the EU and Member State level. It works under the guidance of DG AGRI's Unit A.3 (Policy Performance) of the European Commission. The European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, Managing Authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building and communicating with network members on evaluation-related topics.

Additional information about the activities of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP is available on the internet through the Europa server [https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/support/evaluation].

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List of acronyms

AECM	Agri-environment-climate measures
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSP	CAP Strategic Plan
CCO	Cross-cutting objective
DIB	Data on intervention and beneficiaries
DiD	Difference-in-differences
DG AGRI	Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development
FADN	Farm Accountancy Data Network
GAEC	Good agricultural and environmental conditions
GNB	Gross nitrogen balance
GPW	Good Practice Workshop
IACS	Integrated Administration and Control System
MA	Managing Authority
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NN	National Networks
PA	Paying Agency
PMEF	Performance and monitoring evaluation framework
PSM	Propensity score matching
SMR	Statutory management requirements
SO	Specific Objective(s)

Executive summary

The eleventh Good Practice Workshop of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (Evaluation Helpdesk) explored the rationale, challenges, and key approaches for netting out CAP impacts. It took place in Bucharest (Romania) on 16-17 October 2025, kindly hosted by the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It was attended by around 100 participants from 24 different Member States, including Managing Authorities, evaluators, European Commission representatives, Paying Agencies, researchers and other relevant stakeholders.

The workshop aimed to demonstrate and analyse approaches for netting out the impacts of the CAP via a capacity building component and presentations of practical experiences from Italy, Germany and Sweden, as well as input from Evaluation Helpdesk experts.

Key messages from the workshop were:

- **Netting out CAP impacts is essential for demonstrating real policy value.** Evaluations must isolate the effects directly attributable to CAP interventions from external factors and wider economic or environmental trends, to ensure that assessments of CAP Strategic Plans reflect true policy impact and cost-effectiveness rather than gross trends.
- **Robust methodologies and quality data are fundamental for obtaining reliable evaluation results.** Counterfactual and econometric techniques, such as propensity score matching, difference-in-differences and dose-response function, are essential tools provided they are supported by reliable individual-level data (e.g. Farm Accountancy Data Network, Integrated Administration and Control System). Avoiding aggregation bias and improving access to microdata should be key priorities for evaluation stakeholders.
- **Evaluations must start from clear questions/objectives, not from available data.** The selection of netting out methods should be driven by evaluation objectives; it is therefore essential to know which questions need to be answered. The availability of data should not be the main criterion, but a way to refine the chosen methods for netting out CAP impacts. Combining multiple methodological approaches enhances robustness but requires more time, resources and technical expertise.
- **Collaboration, capacity building and shared learning strengthen evaluation practice.** Close collaboration between Managing Authorities, evaluators, researchers and the Commission can help overcome data and methodological constraints. Developing shared guidance and fostering a common evaluation culture across Member States will improve comparability and the overall quality of CAP impact assessments.
- **Effective communication of evaluation findings supports better policymaking.** Translating complex analytical results into clear, accessible messages enables policymakers and stakeholders to understand the real contributions of the CAP and strengthens the evidence base for future strategic and programming decisions.

Participants at the Good Practice Workshop on 'Measuring what matters – Approaches to netting out CAP impacts'' on 16-17 October 2025 in Bucharest, Romania.

1. Introduction

The eleventh Good Practice Workshop (GPW) of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (Evaluation Helpdesk) took place in Bucharest (Romania) and focused on various approaches for netting out CAP impacts.

Netting out CAP impacts (i.e. distinguishing policy-driven effects from other influences) is essential, as Member States are to measure the contribution of their CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) to the nine Specific Objectives (SO) and cross-cutting objective (CCO) based on the impact indicators outlined in Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 [1], as well as to quantify the CSP contribution(s) to at least the nine common impact indicators set out in Annex III of Regulation (EU) 1475/2022 [2]. Furthermore, according to the EU level CAP evaluation framework [3], the cost-effectiveness calculation must be based on net impacts, not mere gross outputs, ensuring that assessments reflect only those improvements directly attributable to CAP interventions, isolating external trends.

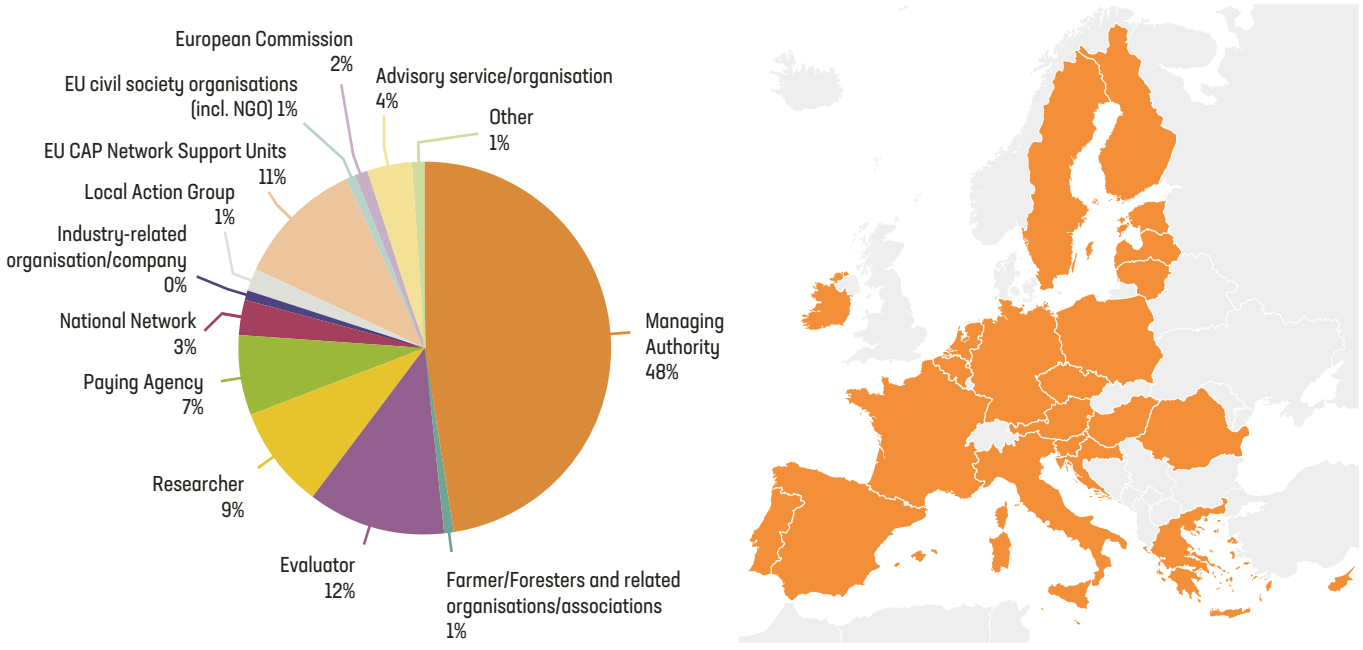
In the context of CAP evaluations, impacts are netted out using methods like counterfactual analysis (comparing beneficiaries of CAP support with similar non-beneficiaries), econometric modelling that controls for external variables in statistical models, before-after comparisons that adjust for confounding factors and theory-based approaches that use logic models and contribution analysis to trace causality. However, evaluating the CAP's net impacts poses several challenges, such as identifying a credible counterfactual, ensuring data availability and quality, accounting for variability in effects across farm types and regions, considering timing and lag effects, and addressing resource constraints, to name a few.

The overall objective of the eleventh GPW was to demonstrate and analyse approaches for netting out the impacts of the CAP. The GPW's specific objectives were to:

- **Build capacity of CAP evaluation stakeholders** about the rationale for netting out CAP impacts and the best ways to carry out the netting out exercise.
- **Share knowledge through the exchange of practical experiences** from evaluations of net impacts of the CAP under different CAP objectives.
- **Provide an opportunity for networking and identification of needs for further support** for Managing Authorities (MA), Paying Agencies, CAP networks and evaluators in relation to the limitations and opportunities for netting out CAP impacts.

Participants from 24 different Member States attended the event across the two days, including MAs, evaluators, Commission representatives, Paying Agencies, researchers and other relevant stakeholders.

Figure 1. Participants of the Good Practice Workshop per role and Member State



Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025)

[1] Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) Nº 1305/2013 and (EU) Nº 1307/2013. OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1-186. ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115/oj.

[2] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1475 of 6 September 2022 laying down detailed rules for implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans and the provision of information for monitoring and evaluation. OJ L 232, 7.9.2022, p. 8-36. ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2022/1475/oj.

[3] EU CAP Network, *EU level CAP evaluation framework*, 2024, EU level CAP evaluation framework | EU CAP Network.

2. Day 1

2.1. Setting the scene

2.1.1. Preliminary considerations on netting out CAP impacts

Simone Severini, University of Tuscia, Italy

Mr Simone Severini (University of Tuscia) gave a presentation on how counterfactual impact evaluation isolates the true effects of CAP policies by comparing treated and control groups to determine what would have happened without the intervention. It highlighted the importance of causality, data quality, and method selection based on context and available data. Key methods include propensity score matching (PSM), dose-response, fixed effects and difference-in-differences (DiD). It concludes that robust evaluation requires high-quality panel data, advanced statistical expertise and a deep understanding of policy design and context.

Link to Mr Severini's presentation: Preliminary considerations on netting out CAP impacts

After the presentation, participants posed the following questions and/or comments	
An important takeaway from the **Evaluation Helpdesk** was that a method is selected based on the topic, and then one determines which data is available; a method cannot be chosen based on the data. The method can be adjusted based on the available data, but it should not be the deciding factor.	Mr Severini agreed and emphasised that the first thing is the topic and that the evaluation question is the key. However, he underlined that data is useful for developing the right theoretical framework, as it can give one a hint as to whether the framework is appropriate. For example, when one compares groups, one needs descriptive statistics.
The **Dutch MA** asked if reaching non-participants is also part of the research bias.	Mr Severini clarified that it would be a bit odd to request information from a non-participating group, but also that it was not the focus.
An **evaluator (IT)** found that to reduce the selection bias, it is important to focus on the correct variables to compare groups and asked if there is a golden rule to understand and select the correct variable(s).	Mr Severini stated that it depends on the topic, as some variables are useful to correct for selection bias on a specific topic. This is why people with knowledge of the relevant sector should talk with the people in charge of the analysis. He stressed that there is no golden rule.
An **evaluator (DE)** stated that the definition of the question they want to answer determines the methods. Their evaluation questions are already defined, and they asked if this makes it easier as only data availability is the issue.	In his experience, Mr Severini found that evaluation questions are quite broad, and that it would be a good idea to break them down further and see any limitations for the indicators. There may be a one-to-one correspondence between the evaluation question and indicator, but there may also be additional indicators one might want to use.
An **evaluator (DE)** commented that Member States are to deliver quantitative figures in relation to the defined indicators. There can also be a set of methods to choose from. The common ground is therefore the indicators and the questions.	Mr Severini agreed that it would be an advantage to have a defined set of methods that would allow an EU-wide comparison. He cautioned however that indicators are not methods.
An **evaluator (EL)** found that the main issue is not the data. The main problem with netting out CAP impacts was the lack of a comparison group, since the majority of EU farmers receive CAP support.	Mr Severini shared that for direct payments, there may be no non-participants, but there is variability across beneficiaries with limitations within the beneficiary group (can be measured with the dose-response function).

A **researcher (PL)** wondered if there are farms within the EU that are not affected by the CAP, as even if the farm is not a beneficiary, it still has to compete (i.e. pricewise) with the farms that do receive CAP support.	Mr Severini countered that there are many other policies that farmers participate in, as well as many measures. The idea of the overall market impact of the CAP is (more or less) the same for all farms. There is no method that accounts for all the policies, so one must focus on the most relevant policy when netting out the impacts.
A **representative of the Romanian farmers' organisations** underlined the importance of considering how the CAP affects/impacts the farms that choose not to be involved in the CAP (e.g. not receiving payments but still having to uphold the requirements).	Mr Severini stated that this is an additional topic in relation to policy transaction costs. Policy transaction costs can be too high, pushing farmers out of the CAP. The income transfer efficiency approach tries to take into account the cost of CAP participation. This issue should be considered in evaluations, when possible.

2.2. Sharing experiences

2.2.1. Agricultural policy and farm income variability

Simone Severini, University of Tuscia, Italy

Mr Severini gave a presentation on how to measure farm income variability (performance and monitoring evaluation framework (PMEF) Indicator I.3) and assess the stabilising role of CAP support. It defined variability as year-to-year income fluctuations due to unpredictable factors, highlighting aggregation bias when using national data. Three main methods were discussed (i.e. with/without analysis, variance decomposition and econometric regression), showing that direct payments reduce income volatility because of their stability and weak correlation with market income. It concluded that while CAP helps stabilise farm income, causality remains difficult to prove due to data and methodological limits.

Link to Mr Severini's presentation: Agricultural policy and farm income variability

After the presentation, participants posed the following questions and/or comments	
The **Evaluation Helpdesk** asked what is implied by using different methods and comparing results in terms of resources and time.	Mr Severini explained that using multiple methods brings more resource constraints and emphasised the importance of avoiding aggregation bias. He recommended using the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) for individual data rather than aggregated data. Variability is higher with individual data, and with aggregated data, one can see where variability is highest (small or large farms). Therefore, aggregated data is a good place to start, followed by going in-depth with individual data.
An **evaluator (LV)** asked whether it would be better to use the output-input ratio from FADN data since the indicator should provide a single figure for all farms, as it is an absolute value and is easier to compare across farms.	Mr Severini stated that using the output-input ratio is possible and could be a useful alternative to income support, as it allows for an easy comparison between individual farms. While he had not seen this approach used in research, he found it to be feasible.

An **evaluator (IT)** asked how to account for overlap(s) between two different programming periods, given the challenges of evaluating the impact of the whole programme.	Mr Severini replied that this is difficult and recommended focusing on specific policy measures that are closely linked to income support, rather than the entire programme. He emphasised the need to recognise the limitations of such an analysis and suggested that a counterfactual analysis could help address these challenges.
The **Luxembourgish MA** raised the issue of the time delay between the publication of impact indicators and the timing of evaluations, noting that the most recent data available on the Agri-Food Data Portal was from 2022. Therefore, they questioned how to navigate this when evaluating new indicators.	Mr Severini acknowledged that data availability is a significant challenge, especially as assessing variance requires 5-10 years of data. However, MAs may have access to more current individual-level data (e.g. FADN, administrative data, data on interventions and beneficiaries (DIB)) compared to what is available at the EU level. He also noted that, in cases where programming periods change, it may be possible to use historical data from previous periods, provided the limitations are recognised. A representative of DG AGRI added that there is a wealth of information at Member State level, and using available microdata can provide valuable insights, even if EU-level data is delayed.
An **evaluator (EL)** commented that, in the former CAP programming period, there was greening, whereas now there are eco-schemes, with differences in both the amounts and methods of support. This highlights the risks of comparing across programming periods, and therefore, they suggested that the EU should provide guidance on how to net out these indicators using available data.	

2.2.2. Causal interference - Continuous treatment

Carl Strömberg, Swedish Board of Agriculture, Sweden

Carl Strömberg (Swedish MA) gave a presentation on the calculation of farm income variability (PMEF impact Indicator I.3). Evaluating policy effects with a dose-response approach reveals critical differences in how varying support levels influence outcomes. An analysis of Swedish direct payment data shows that moderate support yields the strongest income gains, while low or high intensities have limited or even negative effects. These insights help identify thresholds and optimise targeting, making policy design more efficient and evidence-based.

Link to Mr Strömberg's presentation: Causal interference - Continuous treatment

After the presentation, participants posed the following questions and/or comments	
An evaluator (DE) asked from which years the data was collected and whether they allowed comparisons across multiple years.	Mr Strömberg explained that the data for direct payment support was from 2017 to provide a baseline. He noted that long-term effects were analysed for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. The effects were most visible in the first two years after support, with a diminishing impact in subsequent years, likely due to new support payments and other intervening factors.

A researcher (RO) requested further clarification on how the threshold was decided and whether any proxies were used.	Mr Strömberg stated that the threshold choice depends on the variable. For intensity variables, quantiles or percentiles of the distribution can be used as thresholds. In some cases, the threshold is determined by identifying the point of maximum marginal effect, which is a mathematical task based on the data.
The Dutch MA asked whether the results differed from what they expected. The MA also asked what the findings on the dose-response function mean for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (particularly regarding the effectiveness of targeting support to small farms).	Mr Strömberg explained that the skewed graph on his presentation reflected differences in support intensity across farms. While most received moderate shares, a smaller group reached considerably higher levels due to variation in farm structure and participation in multiple measures. He noted that this pattern was somewhat more pronounced than expected. In terms of the new MFF, the findings suggest the current approach is close to optimal but may require adjustments to better target support, especially in the context of the new proposal.
The Belgian MA asked what the sample size was.	Mr Strömberg answered that the sample was from the Swedish FADN, comprising approximately 1 000 companies and is representative of 90% of production in Sweden.
An evaluator (IT) asked how the evidence influenced the allocation of resources and whether it supported evidence-based decision-making for future programming periods.	Mr Strömberg answered that this type of study had not been done before. The results were discussed internally, raising new questions for Sweden. The work is evolving, the data are not yet published, and further analysis is ongoing.
A researcher (IT) asked if the results were in line with a similar published study, and about transfer efficiency and the resources needed to increase it.	Mr Strömberg explained that he was aware of the referenced study but had not examined it in detail. He noted that improving transfer efficiency is a complex issue, as higher precision in targeting often comes with an increased administrative effort and resource requirements. The analysis, therefore, raises important questions about how to balance efficiency with practicality.

After the presentations, participants exchanged experiences regarding the challenges of netting out CAP impacts and how to overcome them.

3. Day 2

3.1. Sharing experiences

3.1.1. Netting out CAP impacts – A case study on water quality in Bavaria (DE)

Philipp Mennig, Technical University of Munich, Germany

Mr Philipp Mennig (Technical University of Munich) gave a presentation on a study that assessed the impact of agri-environment-climate measures (AECM) on reducing the gross nitrogen balance (GNB) in Bavaria, Germany, in 2014-2022. Using farm-level data (FADN, Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS)) and focusing on measures aiming at water protection, it combined PSM and DiD methods to estimate effects. Methodological challenges included overlapping funding periods and the existence of various schemes with similar goals, while qualitative expert interviews were used to contextualise quantitative findings.

Link to Mr Mennig's presentation: Netting out CAP impacts – A case study on water quality in Bavaria (DE)

After the presentation, participants posed the following questions and/or comments	
The **Evaluation Helpdesk** asked why the FADN in Bavaria (DE) is of such high quality.	Mr Mennig shared that in Bavaria, a large subset of farmers is selected for sampling to obtain a representative picture of the farming structure, and that significant resources are available for data collection.
An **evaluator (IT)** commented that the focus was only on a number of schemes directly addressing water quality. He asked if they took into account other components, such as good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAECs), statutory management requirements (SMRs) related to water quality and other CAP schemes (e.g. organic farming, eco-schemes).	Mr Mennig clarified that the farms included in this evaluation were only specialised dairy and arable farms, and that differences in effect due to size, crop type, etc. have not yet been investigated. He stated that this would be complicated due to the number of observations. He stated that it was assumed that Pillar I payments affect both treated and untreated farms equally and therefore can be ignored when measuring AECM effects. As for other AECMs, only farms that had recently entered the water protection schemes were considered, and the control group did not participate in any scheme. However, there are Bavarian programmes outside of the EU-level programmes (e.g. organic flagship region programme) that were not considered.
A **researcher (IT)** asked what types of data were available on manure management, as the amount of manure can be reduced through trade/selling.	Mr Mennig answered that they had to rely on what the FADN data shows, as it includes variables on farm inputs and outputs, as well as on fertiliser purchases and sales. If one sells manure, for example, this is to be registered – though it is known that this is not always done – so there is a level of assumption.

An **evaluator (LV)** commented that the usual approach is to compare the first and last year of a programme and asked if it would be possible to use the first three and last three years to avoid the influence of potential extreme situations.	Mr Mennig explained that there was panel data to show developments over time, although he clarified that what was measured in the end is an average effect (i.e. the average over time, and over the control and treated group). If there are differences across years, this approach averages them out. A DiD approach was also used to include more farms. This approach smooths out extreme years, however, one can see in the data how the gross nitrogen balance varies over time and still focus on the average treatment effect. In terms of statistical significance, that is what was of interest: whether the programme overall had an effect.
The **Dutch MA** asked how usable the presented model is for other situations.	Mr Mennig stated that if the data are good, the approach works everywhere. However, it could still be the case that there would be a situation where farmers participate in several schemes and one does not get the size of pure participants in one scheme that would be needed to estimate effects for a specific scheme.
The **Romanian MA** asked how many interviews were carried out to obtain robust data.	Mr Mennig answered that there were three rounds of interviews (10-15 participants in each round) at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the period.
DG AGRI asked about the magnitude of the effects (e.g. in terms of cost and benefit approach).	Mr Mennig explained that the untreated farms started with a gross nitrogen balance of 60 kilogrammes of nitrogen per hectare utilised agricultural area, and the treated farms had 45 kilogrammes. A reduction of 15 kilogrammes as a scheme effect is not bad, but by getting information on fertilizer prices, a cost-benefit analysis could be done. This however, had not been done.

3.1.2. Distribution of CAP support

Luigi Biagini, University of Tuscia, Italy

Mr Luigi Biagini (University of Tuscia) gave a presentation on how to measure and evaluate the distribution of CAP support (PMEF Indicator I.26 ('A fairer CAP')), emphasising its role in assessing equity and efficiency. It presented key inequality metrics (i.e. Gini index, quantile ratios, Herfindahl-Hirschman index, and Shannon index) to capture concentration and diversity in payments. A case study from Italy showed that the 2023-2027 CAP reforms substantially reduced payment concentration. The presentation concluded that I.26 offers a robust, evidence-based tool for monitoring fairer CAP outcomes and guiding future policy targeting.

Link to Mr Biagini's presentation: Distribution of CAP support

After the presentation, participants posed the following questions and/or comments	
The Dutch MA raised the issue of defining beneficiaries and noted that netting out is necessary because CAP support includes not only income support but also measures such as LEADER, investments, and nature protection measures from Pillar 2 (rural development).	Mr Biagini agreed that this is an important point and explained that, due to limitations in FADN data, it is difficult to identify individual companies or farmers, as the data is only representative. He noted that further steps are needed to connect variables with specific problems and that this area requires further development.
An **evaluator (EL)** described simulations conducted for the Greek CSP to assess the impact of redistributive basic income support, noting similar conclusions to those in Italy, and questioned whether land size alone should determine Pillar 1 (direct payments) support or if other factors such as family labour should be included, and highlighted the challenge for the EU in finding the right mix of variables.	Mr Biagini noted that in Italy, direct payments are not based solely on land size, but also on historical entitlements. He emphasised that this issue is complex and requires further investigation.
The **Croatian MA** asked about the relevance of I.26 to the new proposal, given future obligations to cap and degressify payments. They questioned the logic of measuring the indicator for only one period.	Mr Biagini considers that this indicator is related to the protests over the past years. He responded that the indicator is important because it is perceived by farmers, and perception can differ significantly from reality. He emphasised that the indicator is closely linked to the distribution of CAP support and is particularly relevant for understanding motivations behind different distributions.
An **evaluator (IT)** asked for confirmation that I.26 had been tested in an example and whether the conclusion was that it can be calculated, that it is useful, and that combining different types of indices is suggested.	Mr Biagini confirmed that it is necessary to combine different indices.

3.1.3. Netting out CAP indicators – Useful Evaluation Helpdesk references

Alice Devot, European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP

Ms Alice Devot (Evaluation Helpdesk) presented an overview of existing Evaluation Helpdesk resources, available on the EU CAP Network website, which offer technical guidance for netting out CAP impact indicators. These include detailed guidelines for 'Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of CAP income support instruments' which developed an evaluation strategy for netting out income-related indicators (PMEF Indicator I.2, I.3, I.4 and I.5) or guidelines developed under the previous programming period, which present different options for setting up the counterfactual design and deciding on the evaluation approach. Other useful resources include examples of CAP evaluations implemented by Member States focusing on SO4 and SO5, and Evaluation Learning Portal on quantitative methods in CAP evaluations.

Link to Ms Devot's presentation: Netting out CAP indicators – Useful Evaluation Helpdesk references

3.2. Expert panel discussions

Panel of experts, from the left: Victoria Chorafa (Cyprus), Virgilio Buscemi (Italy), Simone Severini (Italy), Francesco Gianola (European Commission), Bernardica Bošnjak (Croatia), Nynke de Jong (the Netherlands)

A panel of experts was combined with the group work to further investigate what could be done to address barriers and facilitate the use of methods for netting out of CAP impacts, considering the different roles GPW participants have (e.g. MA, evaluator, researcher, etc.). Six GPW participants representing various stakeholder types (MAs, evaluators, researchers and DG AGRI) have provided their opinion on the matter, summarised below.

In relation to **the purpose of CAP impact evaluations**, the experts agreed that evaluations should not only serve to meet regulatory obligations but also aim to understand the real value of positive CAP impacts. They highlighted the importance of fostering a shared culture of evaluation and improving awareness of findings to make evaluations more meaningful and useful.

Data access and reliability remain major challenges. Experts highlighted the need to balance data demands on farmers with evaluators' needs and called for clearer rules and flexibility on using FADN and Paying Agency data.

In relation to **methodological and technical challenges**, experts noted that counterfactual methods are complex and resource-intensive, often limited by data suitability. They emphasised the need for adapting methods to context, developing technical skills, and improving collaboration between technical experts and policymakers.

The experts called for **collaboration and learning across Member States**. Sharing knowledge and pooling resources through joint work across Member States was suggested to strengthen evaluation capacity, while also ensuring diverse perspectives by combining experienced and new evaluators.

Managing Authorities stressed the importance of asking the right questions and having clear, stable indicators from the start of programme planning. Early involvement of the MA in selecting methods and creativity in data collection, while balancing the demands of both data providers and evaluators, is crucial for producing meaningful and timely evaluations.

In relation to **communication and dissemination**, experts agreed that translating complex, technical findings into accessible language for policymakers and the public remains a major challenge. Effective communication was seen as key to ensuring that evaluation results are understood and used.

In combination with the panel, participants discussed in groups what actions they could take within their own roles to overcome existing barriers and to effectively employ these methods. Participants also identified the support or resources they would require from others to address these obstacles, as well as the assistance or expertise they could offer colleagues or stakeholders to help surmount these challenges.

4. Concluding remarks

The presentations and discussions during both days of the workshop identified a series of challenges in netting out CAP impacts, as well as key actions to facilitate the use of methods to do so.

Methodological challenges are the main hindrance to the use of methods for netting out CAP impacts. They relate to a frequent weakness of impact evaluation methods, notably the fact that they measure correlation but not causality. In the case of direct payments, a common methodological challenge is the absence of control groups, as all farmers are beneficiaries. In the case of environmental impacts, it is also complex to identify counterfactuals, and there is a need for aggregation and context-specific approaches. Finally, the comparability and transferability of evaluation methods between Member States is questionable, while the frequent changes in CAP regulations and indicators make it difficult to maintain methodological consistency across programming periods.

In response to these challenges, participants and experts proposed the use of specific methods for cases where control groups are not possible, such as the dose-response function presented at the workshop. They also proposed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (i.e. triangulation) to capture the context and validate results. The stability of environmental indicator definitions also needs to be ensured, despite changes in EU regulations. Furthermore, there was a call to simplify evaluation approaches and increase flexibility for Member States to adapt methods to local contexts.

Data availability and quality are another frequent challenge. Weak integration of different data sets (e.g. FADN, IACS, environmental data), including the lack of common identifiers for linking administrative and monitoring data, points to the frequently mentioned interoperability challenge. There are also issues in relation to incomplete or inconsistent data across beneficiaries and regions, e.g. FADN not representing all beneficiaries (e.g. small farms may be underrepresented), missing variables for linking farm-level and environmental data sets, and missing information for environmental indicators.

Related to data availability are **timing-related challenges**. For instance, it is widely recognised that there are long time lags between policy implementation and observable effects, especially for environmental outcomes (e.g. water quality). In addition, delays in data availability (e.g. FADN is published annually, and there is limited current data for indicators) lead to misalignment with the policy cycle.

To address data availability and quality issues, participants and experts identified actions such as encouraging Paying Agencies to provide data to evaluators in a timely manner, to ensure farmers understand why they should provide data and how, or to prioritise the use of existing data sets before requesting new data. In addition, the stability of impact indicators over time would reduce the challenge of time lags, as the necessary data can be collected over multiple periods.

Evaluation capacity is hindered by limited technical capacity to use advanced methods and by limited experience with counterfactual methods in several Member States. These resource constraints limit the ability to test and refine methods. At the same time, effective evaluation requires collaboration between relevant ministries, evaluators and external experts.

A twofold approach was proposed to improve evaluation capacity. First, **to build the capacity** of evaluation stakeholders through training, PhD funding and collaboration with research institutes and data providers. Second, **to promote collaboration** between MAs, evaluators and data providers, including between Member States, early in the process. To this end, the establishment of framework contracts and expert groups may help maintain continuity and shared learning, while pooling resources and expertise across Member States can yield benefits by learning from others.

For **communication and dissemination** challenges were also identified, for instance, evaluation results can be too long or technical, thus also entailing difficulties in translating such findings into an accessible language for policymakers and the public.

Participants and experts proposed a number of actions to address these challenges, ranging from resource allocation to communication within evaluation budgets. This would enable the use of a variety of tools, such as infographics, webinars and participatory processes, and communication tailored to target audiences (e.g. policymakers, farmers, stakeholders). Building an evaluation culture within organisations and among stakeholders was also emphasised.

In summary, the presentations and discussion during the workshop highlighted the complexity of assessing the net impacts of the CAP, with recurring themes around data challenges, methodological limitations, collaboration, timing, privacy and the need for flexible, context-sensitive methodological approaches. An overarching conclusion is that fostering the use of methods for netting out CAP impacts requires consistent and interoperable data systems, stronger evaluation capacity and closer collaboration among MAs, evaluators and data providers to ensure that robust, comparable and policy-relevant evidence can be produced across Member States.

Field visit to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Bucharest, Romania

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Funded by
the European Union