



Rural Evaluation **NEWS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

INTERACTIVE CAP INDICATOR DASHBOARDS: TRANSPARENCY AND GROWTH FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW



The common agricultural policy (CAP) benefits the European Union's agricultural and farming sector as well as rural development and has allowed it to become progressively more market oriented, which has led to an increase in the EU's competitiveness and trade performance. Through the support to nearly 7 million beneficiaries, the CAP also contributes significantly to the reduction of poverty, increased employment and the renewal of rural areas.

While all these claims can be substantiated, how does one really know that the CAP is achieving all that it states it does, and more importantly, where is the data?

In order to increase transparency and facilitate the assessment of policy achievements, like those stated above, as well as to capitalise on the vast amount of information at its disposal, the European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development,



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has launched a new 'CAP Indicator [Dashboard](#)' portal of selected CAP indicators presented visually and interactively. This portal was launched at the end of 2018 and it is going to be updated and expanded as new data arrives.

Dashboards visualise the trends in the CAP indicators. They are interactive and data on different levels (output, results, context and impact indicators) are combined to allow for the visualisation of indicators organised by specific topics. These dashboards compile different databases, including those from Pillar I and II of the CAP. Each dashboard is accompanied by a fiche providing information on the indicator.

Measuring Success

The AGRI common CAP indicator dashboards are made up of data from the common CAP indicators, which are used for the assessment of the CAP's performance. The European Commission established the common monitoring and evaluation framework (CMEF) in order to assess the performance it has made in achieving the targets laid forth in the Europe 2020 strategy to achieve smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The CMEF is a set of rules, procedures and indicators, which allows for the evaluation of the CAP (income support, market measures and rural development). The European Commission and Member

States use the CMEF to assess whether the CAP is achieving the following objectives:

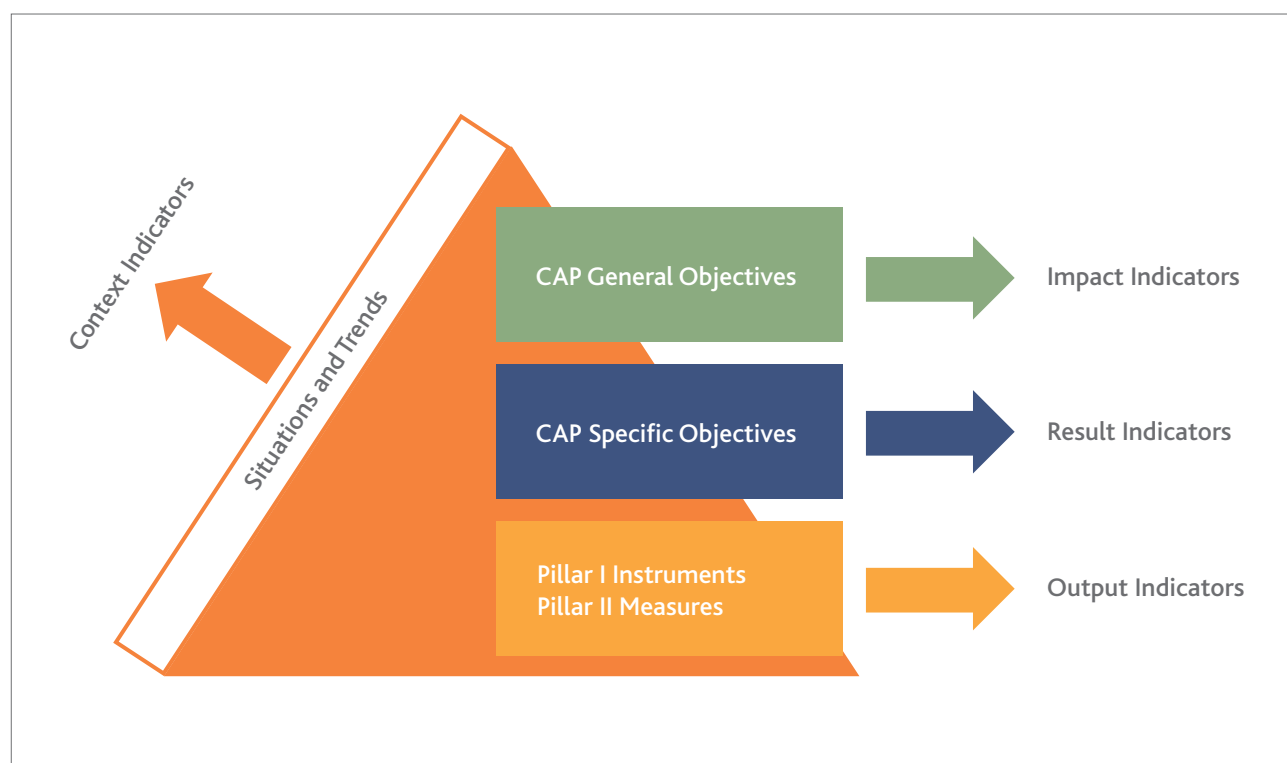
- viable food production, with a focus on agricultural income, agricultural productivity and price stability;
- sustainable management of natural resources and climate action, with a focus on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, biodiversity, soil and water;
- balanced territorial development, with a focus on rural employment, growth and poverty in rural areas.

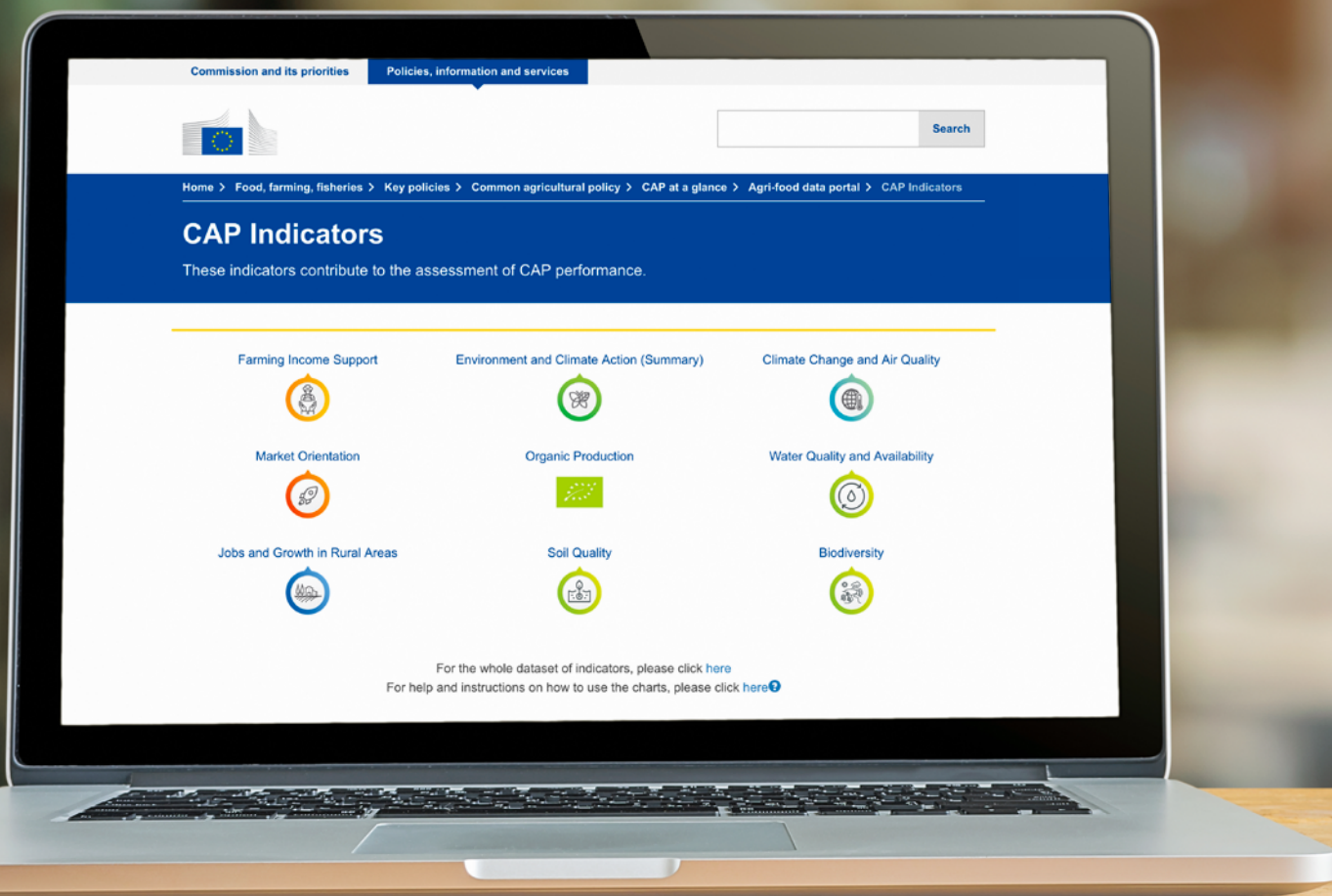
The CMEF provides key information on the implementation of the CAP through the use of indicators and sub-indicators. These indicator types include:

- [Context indicators](#)
- [Output indicators](#)
- [Result indicators](#)
- [Target indicators](#)
- [Impact indicators](#)

Visualising Progress

The indicator dashboard is broken down into nine themes. Each theme consists of one interactive dashboard, which provides data and visualisations for an array of context, output, result and impact





indicators. These dashboards are searchable and customisable and can be easily downloaded.

Each dashboard contains several data panels which can be filtered and viewed at the EU level as well as by Member State for different years (2015-2016, and 2017 will be added soon). *Figures 1-3*

Additionally, each specific dashboard has a detailed background information sheet which explains where the data came from and how the indicators are calculated. Additional links are also provided to give the user even more information. Other data which is currently available (e.g. productivity), but that is not in one of the nine dashboards can still be easily accessed and downloaded through the '[data explorer](#)'. *Figure 5*

From Compliance to Performance

With the future CAP changing its emphasis from compliance towards results and performance, a new Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will establish a single set of objectives at the EU level for direct payments, market measures and rural development. These dashboards and the additional data which have been published can already begin to serve as valuable contributions to the decision-making process in the Member States by providing a basis to identify priority actions and for the formulation and preparation of the upcoming CAP Strategic Plans. These dashboards further serve as an important conduit of information to communicate the main messages of the CAP both in the remainder of this programming period and for the next. ■

Figure 1: Dashboard for Market Orientation

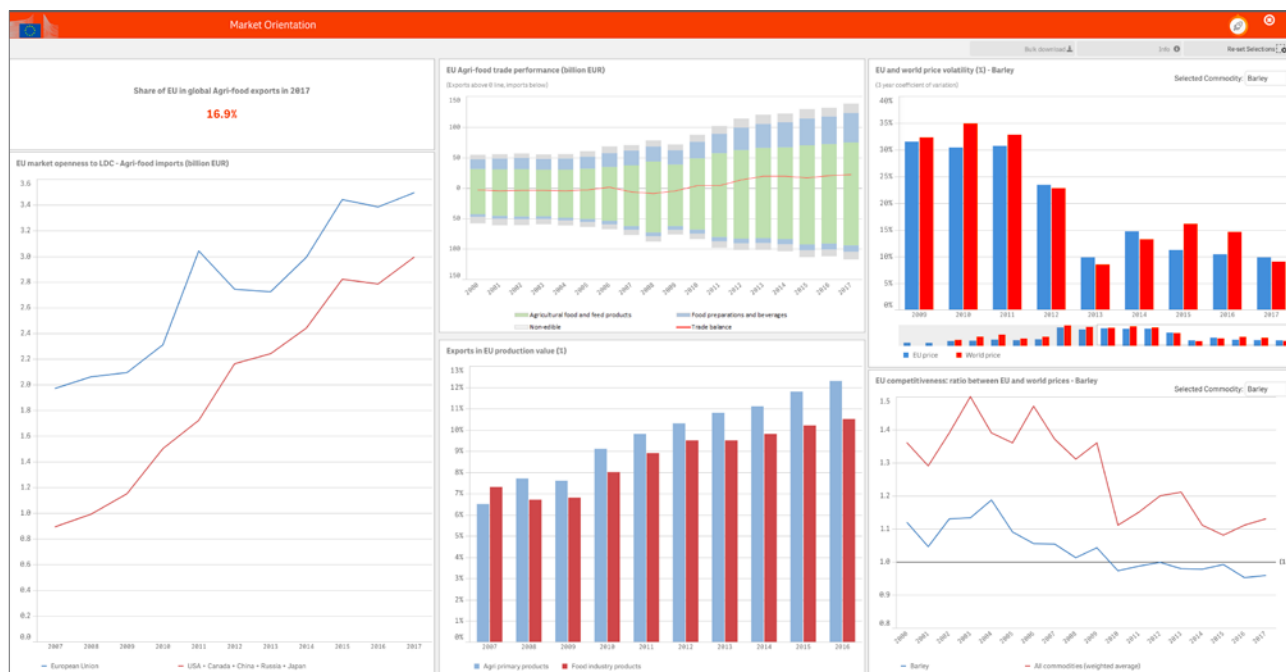
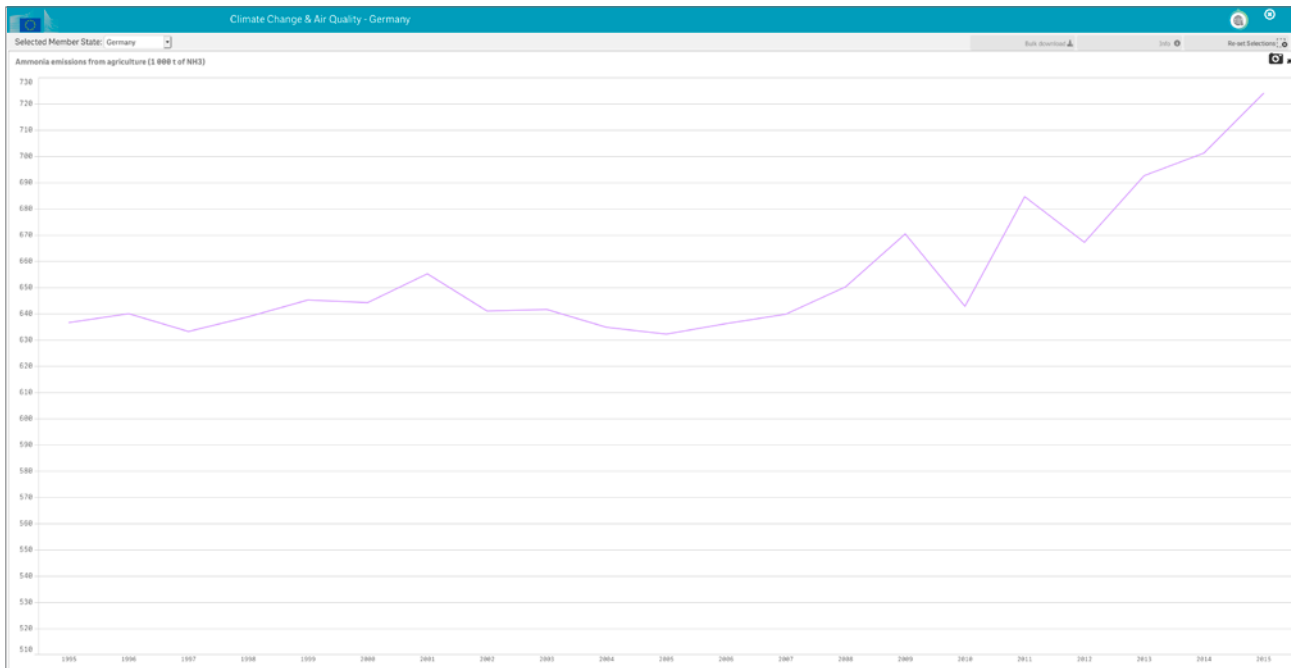


Figure 2: Dashboard for Climate Change and Air Quality



Figure 3: Panel view by Member State: Germany



These dashboards can be viewed in comparison between Member States, giving users a vast selection of possibilities. *Figure 4*

Figure 4: Panel View by Multiple Member States

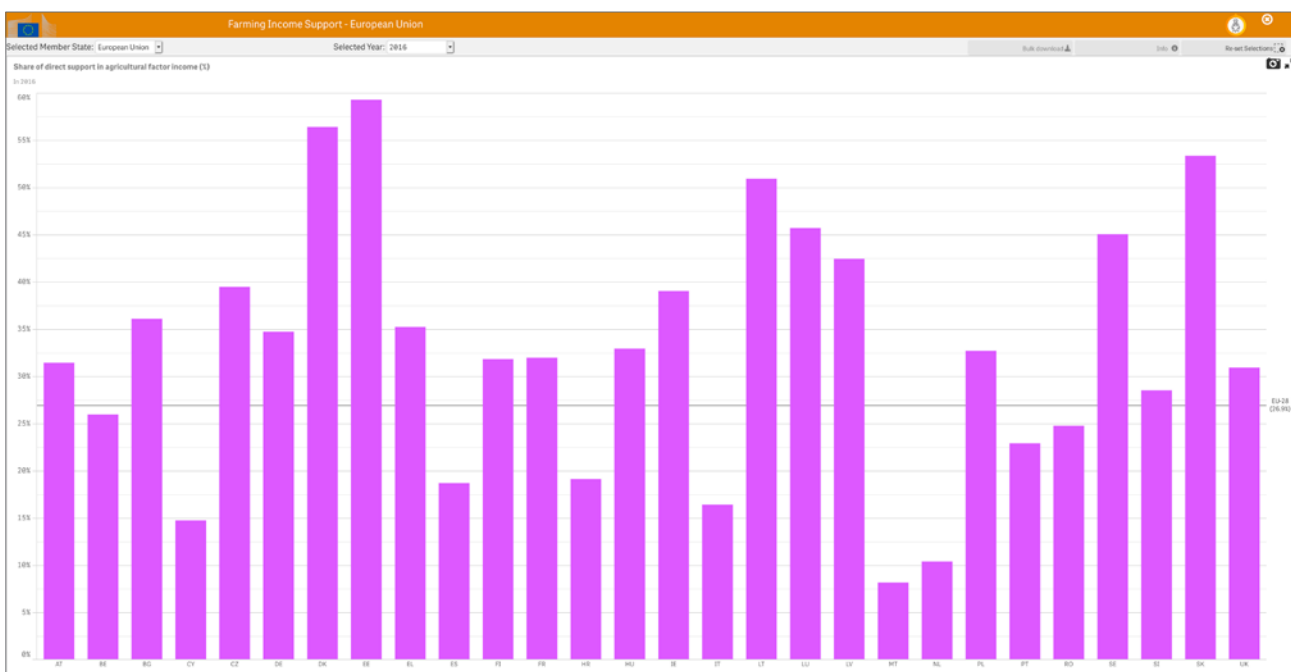




Figure 5: Data Explorer

Data Explorer																				
Indicator Type		Indicator Category				Show Flag?		Download data		No selection										
CHEF Indicator data																				
Indicator	Sub-indicator	Parameter	Unit	Code	Member State	MS Code	Year													
C 61 Population	Distribution of population by type of region	Intermediate regions	rural	CTX_SOC...	European Union	EU-28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
					Austria	AT	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Belgium	BE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Bulgaria	BG	-	-	-	-	-	79.64	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Croatia	HR	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Cyprus	CY	-	-	-	-	-	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00					
					Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Denmark	DK	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Estonia	EE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Finland	FI	-	-	-	-	-	79.65	79.65	79.64	79.64					
					France	FR	-	-	-	-	-	32.78	32.83	32.88	32.92					
					Germany	DE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	22.81	22.87	22.83	22.84					
					Hungary	HU	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Ireland	IE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	9.18	9.79	9.95					
					Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Lithuania	LT	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-	-	-	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00					
					Malta	MT	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Portugal	PT	-	-	-	-	-	23.25	23.35	23.45	23.54					
					Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	22.51	22.57	22.54	22.54					
					Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Spain	ES	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					Sweden	SE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
					United Kingdom	UK	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
							rural regions		CTX_SOC...	European Union	EU-28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
										Austria	AT	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Belgium	BE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Bulgaria	BG	-	-	-	-	-	11.27	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Croatia	HR	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Cyprus	CY	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Denmark	DK	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Estonia	EE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Finland	FI	-	-	-	-	-	43.18	43.17	43.14	43.11
										France	FR	-	-	-	-	-	32.69	32.64	32.61	32.59
										Germany	DE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	32.75	32.81	32.84	32.84
										Hungary	HU	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
										Ireland	IE	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	8.14	8.77	8.93
Italy	IT	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Lithuania	LT	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-						-	-	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00					
Malta	MT	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Poland	PL	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Portugal	PT	-	-	-						-	-	23.25	23.35	23.45	23.54					
Romania	RO	-	-	-						-	-	22.51	22.57	22.54	22.54					
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Spain	ES	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
Sweden	SE	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					
United Kingdom	UK	-	-	-						-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00					

The European Commission's **2018 annual update of data for context indicators** has been released. These indicators reflect relevant aspects of the general contextual trends likely to have an influence on the implementation, achievements and performance of the CAP



Send your questions to:

info@ruralevaluation.eu



INTERACTIVE DECISION TOOL 'DATA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RDP ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS'

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development has published the interactive decision tool, '[Data for the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts](#)', which aims to assist RDP evaluators and Managing Authorities in their decisions on which evaluation approaches and data they can use for the assessment of the RDP common impact indicators.

Finding the right fit

The choice of a suitable evaluation approach is a critical step in the evaluation process. The wish to carry out a robust assessment of the policy's effects needs to be matched with those aspects which factor into conducting an evaluation (e.g. data and information availability, budget and resources, and the skills of the evaluators).

The interactive decision tool focuses on data and information sources pertinent for the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts in 2019 and the ex post evaluation.

The tool consists of a set of 7 logic models covering the 13 common CAP Pillar II impact indicators.

The interactive tool is based on a logic model approach created by Envieval¹, which has also been applied in the non-binding [Guidelines: Assessment of RDP impacts and achievements in 2019](#). The tool allows users to gain valuable insights into each step of the decision-making process when choosing an evaluation approach.

Sector-related impacts



I.01 Agricultural entrepreneur income



I.02 Agricultural factor income



I.03 Total factor productivity in agriculture

Socio-economic impacts



I.14 Rural employment rate



I.15 Degree of rural poverty



I.16 Rural GDP per capita

Environmental impacts



I.07 Emissions from agriculture
I.07-1 GHG emissions from agriculture
I.07-2 Ammonia emissions from agriculture



I.08 Farmland Bird Index (FBI)



I.09 High Nature Value (HNV) farming



I.10 Water Abstraction in Agriculture



I.11 Water Quality:
I.11-1 Gross Nutrient Balance (GNB) (Gross Nitrogen Balance (GNB-N) and Gross Phosphorus Balance (GNB-P)
I.11-2 Nitrates in freshwater



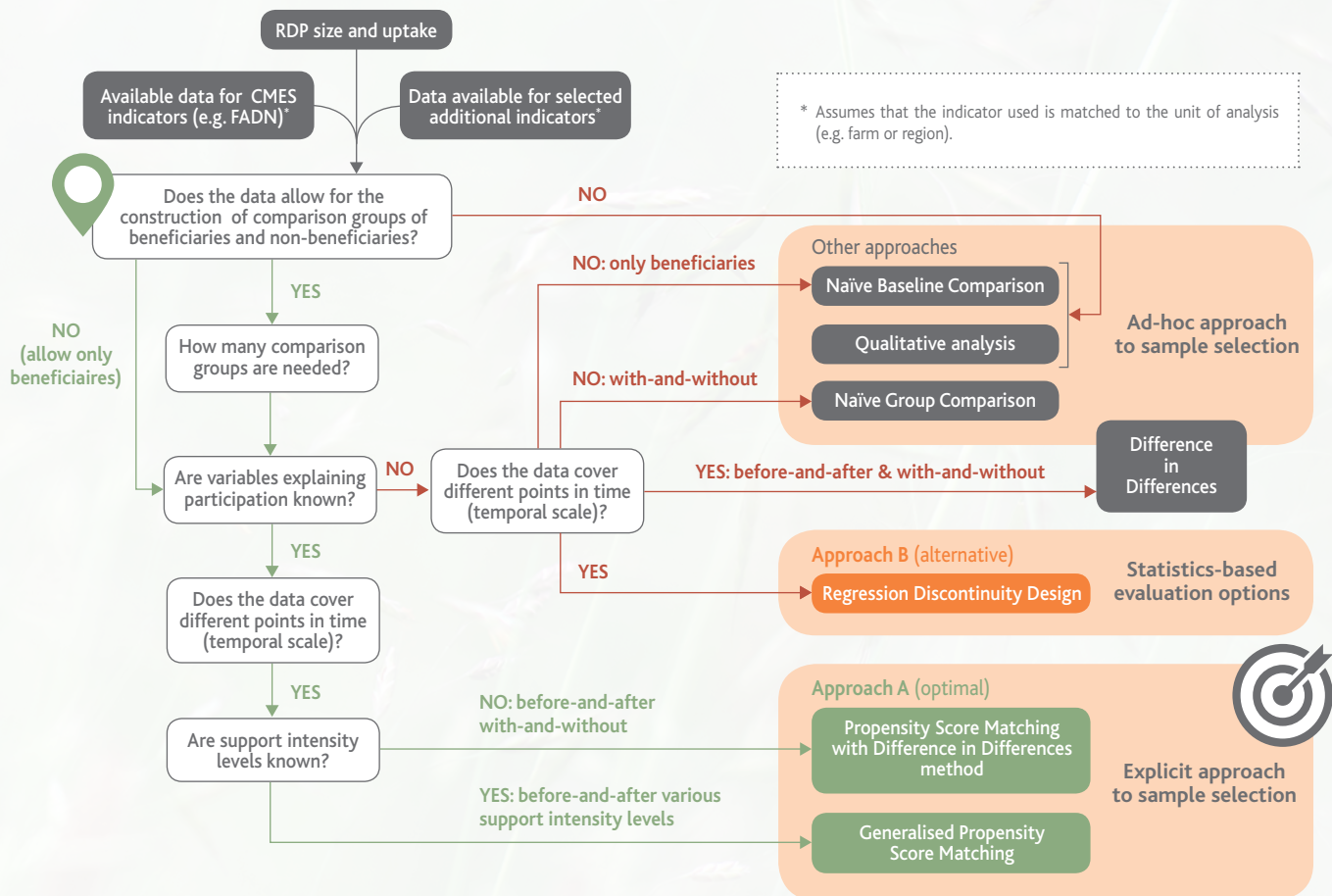
I.12 Soil organic matter in arable land



I.13 Soil erosion by water



Impact indicators: I.01, I.02 and I.03



Does the data allow for the construction of comparison groups of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries?

Why is this question important?

What are the conditions in order to answer the question with YES?

Are there any specificities to be considered for regionalised RDPs?

What can be done to improve the data situation?

Short-term solutions (for AIR 2019)

Long-term solutions (for ex post)

Each logic model begins with a description of the:

- RDP size, uptake and other aspects that have to be considered for the selection of the evaluation approach.
- Data availability for CMES indicators needed to assess net impacts at the micro and macro levels, as well as, the specificities in the data availability for regionalised RDPs.
- Data availability for selected additional indicators.

The tool facilitates the users journey through a set of decision questions. Each question is followed by a short description of the rationale. A short list of essential conditions that have to be met in order to answer the decision question is provided at each step. The tool further reflects on the specificities to be considered for regionalised RDPs and provides practical recommendations on what to do in the case of data gaps both in the short and long term.

Additionally, the tool contains links to existing data sources and examples from different Member States. ■



**We want to hear
your feedback on this tool!**

**Please send us your experiences to
info@ruralevaluation.eu**

'I see the advantage of this tool as a support to less experienced evaluators helping to organise the evaluation approach which is usually of high complexity. It can help to structure the work load and suggests relevant sources of data. This tool can also facilitate better communication between the evaluator and Managing Authority which can be quite difficult because of the high complexity of the subject. Both can already refer to the described processes for example when discussing the evaluation process and content when using the interactive tool'.

Jaroslav Pražan,
researcher from Czech Republic

1. [Envieval 2015](#)



EVALUATION OF THE EU SCHOOL FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND MILK SCHEME

Giulia Medico (DG AGRI, Unit G.3 – Animal Products) presented the guidelines for the evaluation of the EU school scheme at the 15th Meeting of the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP, which took place on 27 November 2018.

The EU school scheme in a nutshell

The EU school scheme is laid out in Art 22. of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 on the common organisation of the agricultural markets. It aims at increasing children's consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk, as well as promoting healthy eating habits as part of a wider education programme aimed at combating increasing rates of child obesity and the consumption of highly processed foods with high levels of added sugar, salt, and fat.

The scheme allocates EUR 250 million per school year, through the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) expenditure (Pillar I of the CAP). The EU budget is broken down by Member State based on the number of children, the development of the regions, and for the milk part, previous use of funds.

How does the scheme work?

Member States notify the European Commission of the main elements of their strategies for 2017/2023¹. This allows Member States a large degree of subsidiarity to choose how the programme will be run, what age groups will be targeted, what will be the priorities and what products – approved by the health and nutrition authorities – will qualify. Additionally, Member States are free to choose at what level of governance the programmes are organised (e.g. central vs regional/local).

Enhanced focus on monitoring and evaluation

The new scheme merges two former separate schemes, one of which – the school milk scheme that began in 1977 – which did not have any evaluation requirements and only



minimal monitoring activities and the EU school fruit and vegetables scheme. The current scheme enhances monitoring and evaluation activities. Member States are now obliged to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their scheme against the objectives and targets in their strategies. Member States are required to provide annual monitoring reports on physical and financial outputs (funds used for the supply of fruit, vegetables and milk, number of participating children and schools, quantities of products supplied, average portion size and cost) and multiannual evaluation reports.

The Commission services produced guidelines to assist Member States in their evaluation of the school scheme, with common evaluation questions and indicators and an outline of the evaluation report.

Common evaluation questions and indicators

1. 'To what extent has the scheme increased children's consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk products'
 - Change in direct/indirect consumption
 - % of children meeting the recommendations of 5 portions of fruit/veg per day
2. 'To what extent has the scheme increased children's awareness of the variety of agricultural products and the health benefits of their consumption?'
 - Change in children who know how many portions of fruit/veg should be eaten daily



Member States are expected to evaluate the activities carried out under the three main parts of the school scheme:

- distribution of fruit, vegetables and milk;
- accompanying educational measures - role and impact in connecting children with agriculture, increasing their consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk and stimulating healthy diets;
- information and communication activities and monitoring and evaluation arrangements –effects on the awareness and uptake of the school scheme and their contributions to the adequate functioning of the scheme.

Purpose of the evaluation of the school scheme:

- Improve the quality of implementation of the school scheme by identifying areas for improvement.
- Foster transparency and accountability towards stakeholders and citizens (Member States' evaluation reports will be published)
- Provide evidence for EU policy-makers for future possible reforms of the school scheme.

The Member States' evaluations on the implementation in the first five school years will be submitted on 1 March 2023² and will feed into the evaluation of the scheme that an external evaluator will carry out under the responsibility of the European Commission. ■

1. The strategies, not approved by the Commission, are available at: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/school-scheme/eu-countries_en
2. Art 110(1)(b) of Reg (EU) No 1306/2013, Art 24(2)(b) and 25(d) of Reg (EU) No 1308/2013, Art 9 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/40

LAUNCH OF THE NEW THEMATIC WORKING GROUP 'PREPARING FOR THE EX ANTE EVALUATION OF THE CAP STRATEGIC PLAN'

In 2019, while the Member States are submitting their second enhanced Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) they will at the same time begin preparing their new CAP Strategic Plans for the post-2020 programming period.

The legal proposal on the support for the CAP Strategic Plans¹ has been published on 1 June 2018 and marks a shift from a compliance-oriented approach to a more performance-based approach. This will be achieved through the establishment of the new Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF), which will allow the European Commission and the Member States to assess and monitor the performance of the policy in the next programming period more effectively.

With a view to help improve the evaluation cycle, the ex ante evaluation plays a crucial role. The ex ante will be carried out by the Managing Authority responsible for the preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan and will help to improve the quality and design.² The ex ante evaluation will appraise among other aspects the SWOT and needs assessment, the external and internal coherence of the CAP Strategic Plan, the budget, the targets, the performance framework and the planned arrangements for the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan at the Member State level.

In March 2019, the Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with DG AGRI launched its 7th Thematic Working Group to support evaluation stakeholders in preparing for ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans. The Thematic Working Group aims to:

- collaboratively draw lessons from the experiences and challenges in implementing the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) of the current programming period;
- develop tools and practical solutions which will support Member States to set up the PMEF of the next programming period, in particular, in the preparation of the ex ante evaluation.

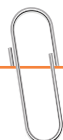
The process and outputs of the Thematic Working Group have been structured along the process of a typical ex ante evaluation, which is structurally linked to the programming of the CAP Strategic Plan. The Thematic Working Group will consist of four Working Packages:

1. preparing the ex ante evaluation,
2. appraisal of the SWOT and needs assessment,
3. appraisal of the intervention logic and targets of the CAP Strategic Plan,
4. appraisal of the planned monitoring, data collection and implementation arrangements of the CAP Strategic Plan.

Each working package will focus on the development of practical tools that will be aimed at supporting Managing Authorities and evaluators at each step. To highlight the practicality of these tools, the Working Package No 1 'Preparing the ex ante evaluation' will, for example, include a list of suggested ex ante evaluation questions, a list of tasks for the ex ante evaluation including links to the CAP Strategic Plan's programming, information on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a draft template for the Terms of Reference and other practical elements that will help stakeholders to prepare a robust ex ante evaluation.

Each working package will be published on the Evaluation Helpdesk's Thematic Working Groups section of the website.

To ensure that each working package meets the objectives of the Thematic Working Group, ongoing consultations will take place with evaluation stakeholders through periodic Sounding Board Meetings and other means of written feedback. ■



Find more information on the Evaluation Helpdesk's [Thematic Working Groups](#) on our website.

1. [COM \(2018\) 392 final](#)
2. Article 125 of the proposal COM (2018) 392 final

8TH GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP: APPROACHES TO ASSESS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SECTOR RELATED RDP IMPACTS IN 2019

The eighth Good Practice Workshop (GPW), '[Approaches to assess socio-economic and sector related RDP impacts in 2019](#)', was co-organised by the European Evaluation Helpdesk and the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Warsaw on 24-25 October 2018. This workshop facilitated the exchange and discussion of evaluation approaches to assess socio-economic and sector related CAP Pillar II impacts, important for answering the Common Evaluation Questions in the Annual Implementation Report to be submitted in 2019.



66 participants from 20 different EU Member States attended the event, including RDP Managing Authorities, evaluators, researchers, EU level representatives (e.g. European Commission, European Evaluation Helpdesk), National Rural Networks, and other actors (e.g. Paying Agencies and NGOs). Evaluators from Austria, Greece, Latvia and Poland presented their practical

approaches used for netting out impacts at both the micro and macro levels. The methodologies presented included Propensity Score Matching (PSM) combined with Difference in Difference (DiD), Generalised PSM, Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modelling techniques, and econometric models.



The presented approaches were discussed with the participants, and the main lessons identified include:

<p>Plan and start the evaluation of impacts well in advance</p>	<p>Early planning and cooperation between the evaluator and Managing Authority can help to build the evaluation capacity and improve the availability of data. Early planning can enable the development of databases necessary for using quantitative methods in a timely and cost-effective manner.</p>
<p>Focus your approach on different levels of analysis</p>	<p>At the micro level, quantitative methods, such as PSM combined with DiD can overcome the limits of qualitative methods or macro models. A pre-condition, however, is the availability of data at the micro level.</p> <p>At the macro level, modelling techniques (computational general equilibrium model for socio-economic impacts or national macro models for sectoral impacts) can produce robust findings and sound estimations of the net impacts. However, as models are based on assumptions, the findings should be tested with sensitivity checks.</p>
<p>Finding alternative solutions to deal with problems of data availability and data gaps</p>	<p>Qualitative methods can be used not only for developing hypotheses (that are then tested with quantitative methods), validating findings, or identifying causalities, but also for constructing control groups (e.g. surveys to collect data on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries).</p> <p>Another cost-effective solution to collect data is linking the FADN data with the beneficiary database. Additionally, beneficiary surveys can be useful in cases where there is a low number of beneficiaries in the FADN database.</p> <p>Finally, the use of additional evaluation elements (indicators, judgement criteria) can be useful when there are problems related to the collection of data for the common indicators. Additional indicators can also serve to make the overall evaluation more tailored to the RDP's evaluation needs.</p>

The results of the workshop, including the discussions and group work outcomes, have helped to formulate some recommendations for the main RDP evaluation stakeholders.

Recommendations for Managing Authorities

<p>Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term contracts with evaluators contribute to better data management, time efficiency and the building of evaluation capacity. • Select evaluators with pertinent skills → analytical and modelling capacity is important for applying robust quantitative approaches. • Evaluation approaches/methods which are resource demanding (e.g. CGE) should be applied preferably only when the level of uptake or the RDP size is large.
<p>Cooperation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish close cooperation and meetings between evaluators, as well as between evaluators and Managing Authorities → this helps develop and implement robust evaluation approaches and overcome data issues.
<p>Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a database and begin managing it from an early stage → this will ensure the right data is available and will make the work of the evaluators more cost-effective. • Prepare the evaluation early → this saves time and resources.





Recommendations for Evaluators

Cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use robust methods that rely on easily accessible data, such as PSM-DiD, CGE, input/output or other already developed models. • However, try to find a balance between robustness and cost-effectiveness → For example, you may use sensitivity checks to test the validity of the CGE model's assumptions, but these may increase the cost of the evaluation.
Counterfactual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use robust methods (e.g. PSM-DiD/CGE) to assess the counterfactual → provided databases exist and data is available for your country/region. • Be open to alternatives for constructing control groups → For example, if data is missing at the regional level, use 'control variables' to compare regionalised RDPs. Furthermore, when the number of RDP beneficiaries is low, you may use surveys to construct control groups.
Qualitative methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not underestimate the use of qualitative methods → they can be used for several purposes (validate and explain quantitative findings, obtain missing data, cover gaps in the indicators (e.g. socio-economic)). Analyse factors that influence the RDP's effects and formulate hypotheses that can be tested with quantitative methods such as PSM-DiD.



For further outcomes of this workshop read the full report on our [website](#).





SHARING EVALUATION KNOWLEDGE IN THE EU THROUGH NETWORKING

In European Union rural development policy, networks play an indispensable role in sharing knowledge and building capacities and can support the evaluation of the policy through a wide variety of activities.

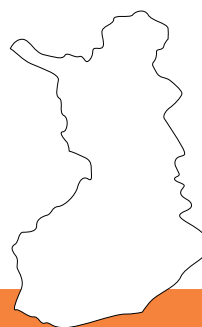
One of the more commonly known tasks of networks is to support the sharing and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings. However, networks can also support evaluation in many more ways, including, developing trainings, assisting in the collection of data related to Rural Development Programme (RDP) indicators, establishing evaluation

related thematic groups and drafting publications. Networking at the national and local level is where needs and challenges are captured, and experiences are synthesised to provide essential learning into the structure to further strengthen other parts. At the national level, this is primarily conducted by National Rural Networks (NRNs).



Collaborating to identify evaluation needs

In Italy, the NRN has established a dialogue on monitoring and evaluation issues through the national RD network (a specific project/task force), which provides capacity building through seminars, practical trainings, and workshops on thematic issues. A cycle of seminars has been launched which targets administrations and evaluators. These seminars focus on transversal issues related to the governance and planning of evaluations (e.g. designing and analysing the feasibility of RDP evaluations, the quality of evaluation reports and the use of sources and indicators for evaluation purposes). Other thematic topics include the evaluation of innovation in RDPs and other trainings have been planned to support evaluations at the LAG level. Simona Cristiano, a researcher at CREA states, 'compared to the previous programming period, the NRN now works in a much more collaborative and participatory way with administrations and evaluation stakeholders to understand and meet their common needs and build guidance together, facilitating learning for all'.



Helping to better understand the added value of the policy through evaluation

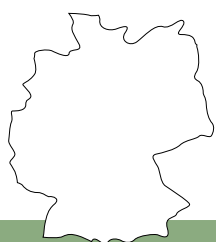
The Finnish NRN has conducted trainings with their LEADER Group in which they have worked with LAGs to prepare for their peer-to-peer evaluations as well as providing a space for LAGs to exchange on how they have or are planning to conduct their evaluations. The aim is to share practices, enable learning and help LAGs to build successful evaluation processes. Juha-Matti Markkola, an expert from the Finnish NRN recommends, 'this is a great way for LAGs to see what the benefits and challenges for each evaluation approach are and to work together towards useful solutions to those problems encountered'. In Finland, a future-orientated think tank process 'Countryside 2030' was conducted in the beginning of 2018. The purpose of this development was to build a multiparty picture of how rural areas should look like in 2030 and postulate what will be their needs. One of the prominent themes identified was showing the added value of rural development programmes through evaluation. Juha-Matti Markkola states, 'for us, proving the added value of the RDP is very important and evaluation is the main tool that can provide this understanding'.



Networks in the EU play an indispensable part of the EU's rural development policy, especially concerning evaluation, both as collectors of information and transferrers of knowledge. Each network at their own respective level of governance plays a valuable part in connecting evaluation stakeholders and linking them to the larger EU level. NRNs at the national and regional level can collect practices and support administrations in their individual evaluation related tasks, while multi-national networks can bring together groups of Member States to share this information. The Evaluation

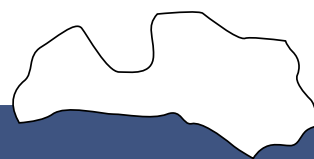
Helpdesk at the EU level serves as a hub to transmit all of these practices to stakeholders making sure that all Member States can learn from each other and that knowledge can be collected to the benefit of all. As Lauri Hyttinen, network coordinator of the Finnish NSU and member of the Nordic-Baltic Network concludes, 'The only reason to contribute to a network is if you get something out of it and if a network is truly successful these activities will overflow from network meetings into coffee breaks and Christmas parties to each individuals' life. ■

Find out more about how networks support evaluation at different levels in the [Rural Review Spring Issue 2019](#)



Providing a platform to learn from evaluation and through evaluation

The [German evaluation network MEN-D](#), has organised numerous events concerning raising the capacity of evaluation. In February 2018, MEN-D held a workshop discussing the experiences with the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) 2017 and how to prepare for the AIR 2019. In October 2018, these discussions were continued and serve as a practical means to support Managing Authorities (MAs) and evaluators. Additionally, events on result indicators in the AIR 2019 and examples of IT-systems for monitoring have been conducted. Sebastian Elbe, Project Leader from MEN-D states, 'what is important and what we believe we succeed in is having mixed participation in these workshops, which for our participants is considered of high added value'. Sebastian continues, 'this allows Managing Authorities and evaluators to know precisely what is expected and what is needed for both groups to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently'. MEN-D has also established a working group termed the 'Think Tank' which brings together rural development stakeholders from both Pillar I and Pillar II as well as other ESI Funds to discuss future CAP policy.



Gathering evidence on the achievements of the policy

Many NRNs are also supporting evaluation and raising capacity through data collection. The [Latvian NRN's](#) comprehensive database is a prime example of how an NRN's database can support evaluation even further as Vija Veisa, the former project coordinator of the Latvian Rural Network illustrates, 'through the NRNs activities a database has been created to support the self-assessment of NRNs and provide data for evaluations in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Furthermore, by linking the accumulated data on farm economic performance indicators with the data collected by the NRN, it is possible to trace how stakeholders have used the available information and educational support and how this has affected the economic performance of the holding'.

In Italy, the NRN has built an extensive database of information collected from the regions on [all the common CAP indicators](#), which are updated on a yearly basis. Moreover, data is collected additionally for other ESI Funds to provide further support to MAs. The Italian NRN also provides support with the improved use of FADN data.



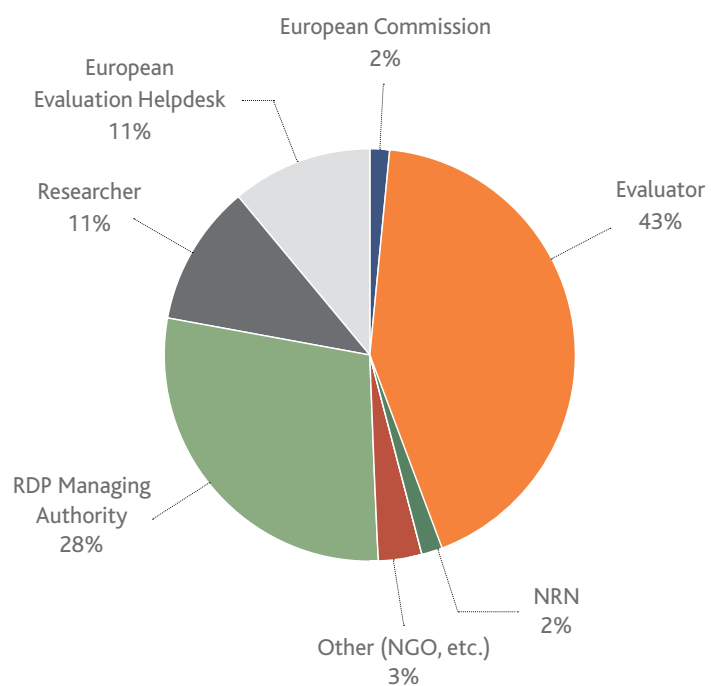
9TH GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP BRATISLAVA: APPROACHES TO ASSESS ENVIRONMENTAL RDP IMPACTS IN 2019

The ninth Good Practice Workshop, '[Approaches to assess environmental RDP impacts in 2019](#)', took place in Bratislava on 12-13 December 2018. It brought together 63 participants from 22 Member States, including RDP Managing Authorities, evaluators, EU level representatives (e.g. European Commission, ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk), Researchers, National Rural Networks, and other actors (e.g. NGOs).

The aim of the workshop was to present and discuss examples of evaluation approaches for assessing the environmental related CAP Pillar II impact indicators and for answering the related Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) in 2019. This workshop complemented the [previous Good Practice Workshop held in Warsaw](#), which focused on the assessment of sectoral and socio-economic RDP impacts in 2019. Both workshops aimed at addressing the challenges that Managing Authorities and evaluators are facing for the quantification of impacts, drawing on Member States' experiences, and providing practical recommendations and solutions.

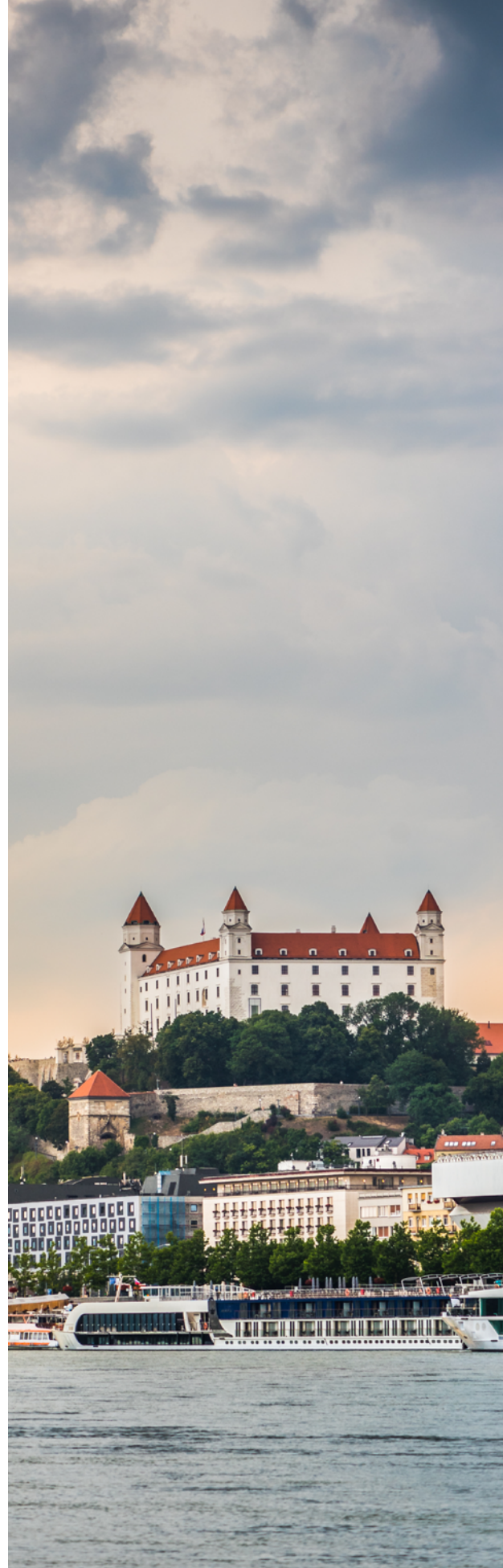
Practical examples from Ireland, the United Kingdom (England), Italy (Emilia Romagna), Austria, Greece (Thessaly) and Slovakia were presented covering all seven common environmental impact indicators. In addition to these practical evaluation approaches, workshop participants were offered a hands-on experience to a model that can be used to estimate total 'irrigation requirements' at the farm level (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) for the evaluation of RDP impacts on water. ■

Participants by role and Member State



Hands-on demonstration of a crop growth model

The AquaCrop Model was developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to estimate the net irrigation requirements and schedules under different irrigation techniques and field management types. The model can be [downloaded](#) for free in English and French and it is adaptable to many water conditions in the world.



The discussion of the case studies identified a number of key messages for the evaluation stakeholders.



The outcomes of the case studies, discussions and group work culminated into a set of interlinked recommendations for the main RDP evaluation stakeholders.

Data Collection and accessibility

- Sign agreements with data providers to increase data availability for the different actors (evaluators, researchers, etc.). In addition, the MA can organise data collection from different providers according to the RDP's intervention logic in a single database.
- Establish requirements for increasing the frequency of data collection and details of collected data, including new questions to be asked by established EU level surveys (Eurostat, FADN).
- Explore new solutions for data collection (e.g. satellite data collection systems or precision farming data).
- Create an expert platform to identify solutions for adapting frequently used databases to the farming contexts and methods of different Member States (e.g. the LUCAS database).

Resources

- Increase synergies between monitoring and evaluation stakeholders, notably the Managing Authority, evaluators, relevant ministries (e.g. agriculture and environment) and associations (water associations, etc). Have a well thought out evaluation plan as it is an important tool for ensuring cooperation between evaluation stakeholders.
- Set-up an evaluation group from the beginning of the policy cycle and incorporate the institutional memory related to evaluation.



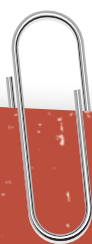
Methods for netting out impacts / matching techniques

- Try to utilise modelling techniques already developed in other countries (e.g. models for GHG emissions in Ireland, water quality models in Italy, the Farmland Bird Index in the UK or water abstraction in Greece).
- Develop a monitoring system that covers both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to facilitate the netting out of impacts. If the whole territory is covered by the RDP, build control groups based on the intensity of RDP support. There are solutions even if there is no access to databases on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, for instance, surveys to farmers (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) or data from specific stakeholders depending on the indicator (e.g. water associations) or use qualitative methods.
- Check the validity of the findings and analyse causalities with triangulation, including expert groups, associations (e.g. water user and Farmer associations) and use qualitative surveys.

Use of evaluation findings

- Clearly define responsibilities, tasks and a timeline for following up the evaluation recommendations (who, what and when). Accountability is important when reporting recommendations.
- Use communications experts or include the dissemination of evaluation findings to the different target groups in the evaluators' tasks (e.g. simpler and more user-friendly language and infographics should be used to reach a wider audience).





BACK TO BASICS: How EVALUATION CAN SUPPORT NETWORKS

Networks and networking are powerful tools for learning and for improving the wellbeing in rural areas but also for delivering rural development policy. Networks help to generate and multiply social capital (e.g. a sense of sharing, changing behaviour, developing common capacities and skills, fostering innovation and enhancing the trust among network members).

Evaluation can help networks to understand if they are conducting the right activities for the right stakeholder groups. Before starting an evaluation, one should ask the questions 'What do we need to know about our own work? For which areas would it be most beneficial to get an external point of view? And, are we open to use evaluation findings to help us improve our tasks?'

The Evaluation Helpdesk has discussed the above questions with representatives of National Rural Networks and learnt that most networks have the ultimate goal to use evaluation to identify areas for improvement on what they are doing and to learn about key factors for successes and failures. External evaluation is also seen as an important tool to provide an independent view and to generate impartial recommendations on the future work of the network. Furthermore, in times of decreasing public resources, it is seen as important to establish robust evidence on the extent in which networks are meeting their objectives as well as on the impact and added value of the network itself. This type of evidence can help networks show their stakeholders and taxpayers how money was spent, what has been achieved and at what cost (transparency and accountability). ■



Evaluation can help networks to:

better understand the context and needs in which they operate

The context in which the network operates is characterised by a set of parameters (e.g. variety of stakeholders, links between stakeholders, level of decentralisation, innovativeness). Changes in these parameters may imply changes in the scope of the network's objectives and interventions.

check if network's objectives and activities meet the needs of the stakeholders and the territory (relevance)

When it comes to readjusting the networks' design and activities, evaluation can serve as a useful tool to analyse the network's intervention strategy against the network's context and needs. Evaluation can also suggest readjustments, if appropriate through this process.

demonstrate what has been achieved in terms of results and impacts (effectiveness)

The evaluator will assess the outcomes of the network's activities in relation to the objectives established by the network and the policy. This activity will assist in providing an answer to the questions: 'to what extent have the objectives of the network been achieved?' and 'what is the added value of the network's activities?'

critically reflect if the network's activities provide the best value for money (efficiency)

Efficiency is usually examined together with effectiveness. The assessment explores at what costs have the generated network outputs, results and impacts been achieved.

identify the factors of success and failure.

The assessment of the factors of success and failure of the network's interventions looks both at the internal and external factors which foster or weaken the network's interventions. This examination is an important part of the learning function of the network evaluation.

Read more about what evaluation can do for networks in the [Helpdesk Guidelines: Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020](#).



CALENDAR - WHAT'S ON?

- **BE – 21 March 2019 – Getting prepared for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan:**
Organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk. This Good Practice Workshop provided a forum for Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, data providers and evaluators to discuss different approaches, challenges, and solutions related to preparing for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 11-12 April 2019 – NetworX - Inspiring Rural Europe:**
'NetworX' aims to recognise the value of networking for rural development, demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking and proactively look at its future.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 13 May 2019 – 11th Rural Networks Steering Group:**
[Read more >>>](#)
- **LT – 23-24 May 2019 – 8th bi-annual international evaluation conference 'Evaluation post 2020: evolution or revolution:**
The conference provides an international platform for sharing the best ideas and practices, networking, and mutual learning. This year's conference will focus on three main themes:
1) The future of investment evaluation; 2) Changing methods of data collection and analysis for evaluations; and 3) Evidence-based policy making and effectiveness of public interventions.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **IT – 18-21 June 2019 – The 24th European Seminar on extension and education:**
The conference will provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences among researchers, technicians and others who are involved in Extension and Education.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **RO – 20-21 June 2019 – Evaluation Conference - DG REGIO, Evaluation and European Semester Unit:**
[Read more >>>](#)
- **DE – 11-13 September 2019 – Evaluation and Sustainability:**
This event is organised by the German Evaluation Society DeGeval.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **CZ – 30 September – 4 October 2019 – Evaluation for Transformative Change: bringing experiences of the Global South to the Global North:** This event is organised by IDEAS.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **SE – 2-4 October 2019 – SVUF:**
This event is organised by the Swedish Evaluation Association.
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 13 October 2019 – 12th Rural Networks Steering Group:**
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 16 December 2019 – 6th Rural Networks Assembly:**
[Read more >>>](#)

What's Going on in YOUR Member State?

Share evaluation related events by emailing info@ruralevaluation.eu

The Evaluation Helpdesk works under the supervision of Unit C.4 (Monitoring and Evaluation) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily express the official views of the European Commission.

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