



Rural Evaluation **NEWS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

From the AIR in 2019 to the ex ante evaluation of the **CAP Strategic Plan**



After reporting on their evaluations in the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) 2019, Member States are now taking stock of the lessons learned to prepare for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan. In order to support Member States, learn from their experiences and better prepare, the Evaluation Helpdesk's EvaluationWORKS! 2019 yearly capacity building events have addressed two main questions:

1. What are the key lessons from the AIR in 2019 for the set-up of the monitoring and evaluation system post 2020?
2. What lessons shall be taken into account during the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans 2021-2027?

These capacity building events took place in 2019 with a few being held in January of 2020. In total 23 events took place for 25 Member States.

The Evaluation Helpdesk provides the overall methods and materials for the EvaluationWORKS! trainings, offering tools to cover general open issues in a structured way, which were further tailored to the needs of the different Member States by the corresponding Geographic Experts. These events provided the opportunity for evaluation stakeholders in each Member State to identify and discuss



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challenges they have faced and come up with potential solutions in order to improve their evaluation capacity for the future.

The EvaluationWORKS! 2019 events aimed to:

- achieve a shared understanding on the quality of the evaluations;
- collaboratively draw lessons to increase the quality of future evaluations;
- reflect on how the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan 2021-2027 can be most useful.

The EvaluationWORKS! 2019 events were attended by 492 participants. The primary participant groups were Managing Authorities (44%), followed by evaluators (19%) and Paying Agencies (9%).

Figure 1: Total participants by role

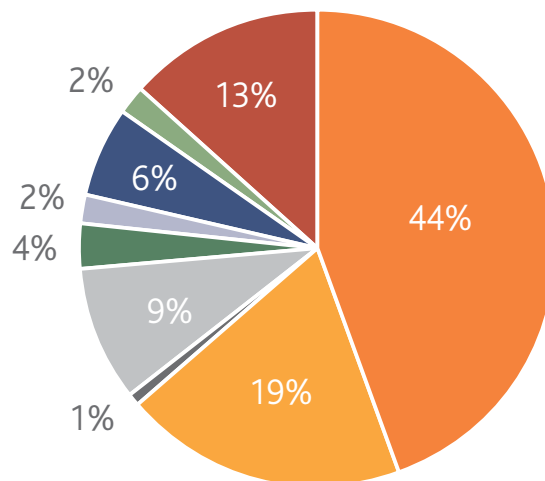


Figure 2: Participants by event and role

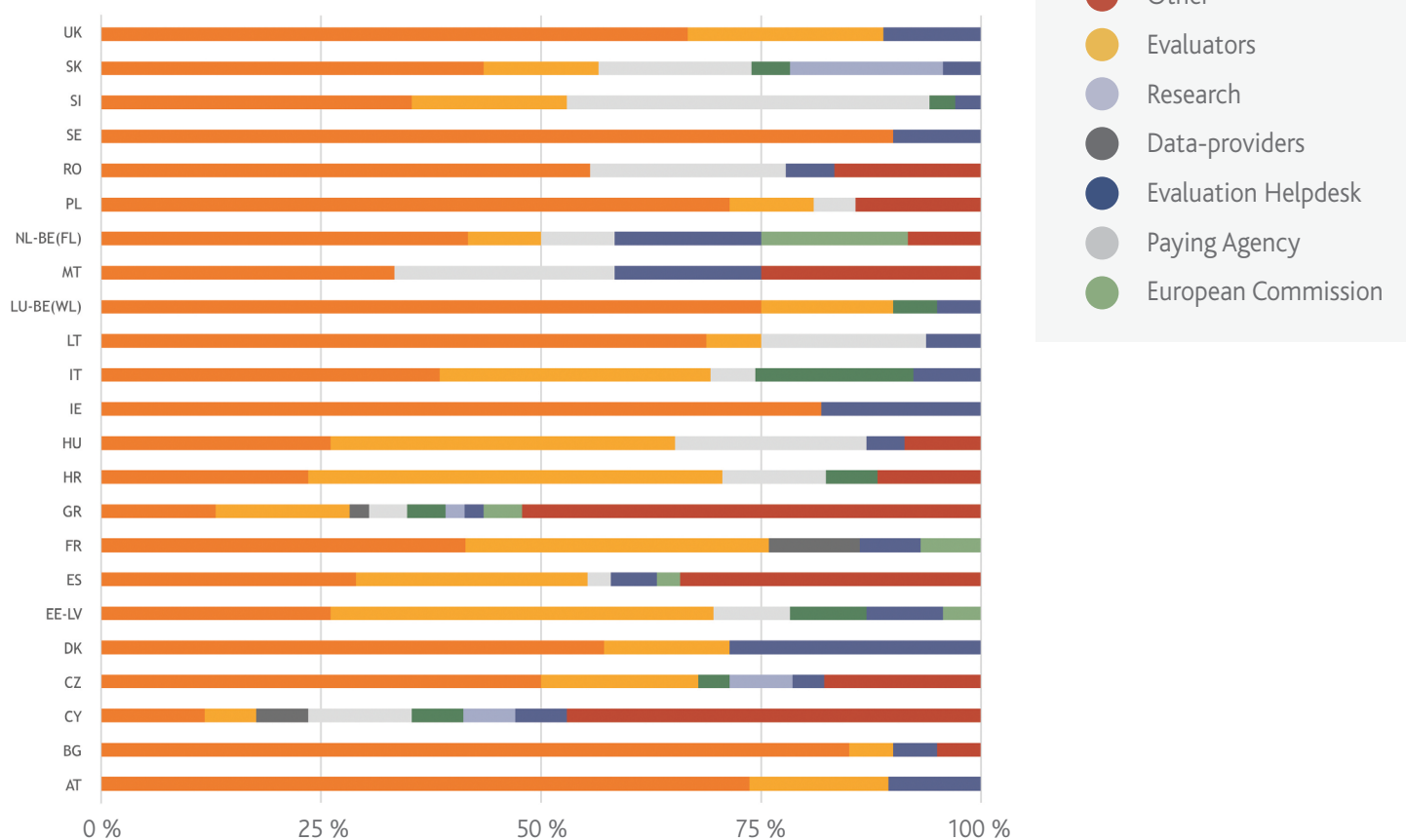


Table 1 provides a synthesis of the EvaluationWORKS! 2019 events and what was commonly discussed by all Member States. As Member States were given the flexibility to address the topics most relevant for them not all Member States addressed all topics (e.g. ex ante issues), but all of them did reflect on 'strengths' and 'weakness' of the evaluations for the AIR 2019 and this can be seen in the following table. ■



Send your questions to:

info@ruralevaluation.eu



Table 1. **What worked well and what remained challenging for Member States in their evaluations for the AIR 2019**

	What worked well for Member States in their evaluations for the AIR 2019	Challenges faced by Member States in their evaluations for the AIR 2019
TIME 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely contracting of professional and knowledgeable evaluators brought increased value to the reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the evaluations took place, not enough time had passed since the implementation of certain actions, so measurements did not reflect real impacts.
DATA QUALITY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAGs have been instrumental in mobilising beneficiaries and gathering data. Collaboration between different rural development stakeholders, especially data management bodies was usually considered a very positive element. The use of additional sources of information (e.g. surveys, case studies, contacting beneficiaries directly) was useful when there was a lack of data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of data or unreliable data. Samples are not always representative. Low response rates for surveys. Data was sometimes fragmented and scattered across different data systems. Rough estimations were sometimes used due to a lack of robust data.
METHODOLOGIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying qualitative methods has been used to overcome data gaps. Out-of-the-box thinking (adding extra judgement criteria when the original ones were insufficient or unsuitable) was helpful for overcoming weaknesses in the methodologies. Using analytical models and logic frameworks in order to reach conclusive results for areas where only quantitative indicators were considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application of more robust evaluation methods. Calculating RDP contributions to impact indicators given the context, specificities and size of the territories. Calculation of net impacts and interpretation of results.





Estonia and Latvia



'Having a joint event between two countries has allowed for the sharing of practical experiences and provided us with extra meaning and depth to the yearly capacity building event in 2019!'

- Iiri Raa, Helpdesk Geographic Expert from Estonia -

'Bilateral exchanges between participants fostered further building of evaluation capacities in Estonia and Latvia'

- Valdis Kudins, Helpdesk Geographic Expert from Latvia -

DATE OF WORKSHOP
21 November 2019



LOCATION
Valka, Latvia



STRENGTHS of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- The availability of results from various long-term field studies and surveys, specific data and access to data from FADN and the Paying Agency helped to achieve a more robust evaluation.
- Smooth cooperation among RDP actors was achieved.
- Professional and diverse teams of evaluators made evaluations more successful.
- A wide selection of additional indicators were used.
- Lessons learned from the AIR 2017 were useful and taken into consideration.



WEAKNESSES of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- A lack of time for the assessment of impacts.
- Calculating RDP net contributions.
- Data gaps were found regarding Priority 5.
- A lack of suitable methodologies for assessing innovation made it difficult to assess.
- FADN data was not always representative.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE EX ANTE EVALUATION

- The timing of the programming of the CAP Strategic Plan is uncertain considering that the EU regulation is not approved yet. Changes in the EU regulation might affect the content and process of the programming and the ex ante assessment of the CAP Strategic Plan.
- Uncertain coordination and timing of the ex ante assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment if it is organised as an iterative process (e.g. how to exclude overlap between the ex ante and Strategic Environmental Assessment).
- Setting targets at the right levels.
- Ensuring that recommendations from the ex ante assessment are taken into account in the CAP Strategic Plan.

NEEDS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

- Practical examples of quantitative evaluations of RDP synergies.
- Practical examples on the process of how to go from findings to conclusions.
- Practical examples of calculating RDP net effects.

'We found similar challenges when calculating some indicators and assessing the impact of the RDP. Similar joint discussions with the evaluators of the neighbouring countries (Lithuania, Sweden and Finland) would be desirable in the future as it helps to better evaluate our own work and solve issues encountered. We look forward to a similar meeting next year'.

- Elita Benga, Institute of Agri-Resources and Economics,
Head of Rural Development Evaluation Division -



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Croatia



'This workshop was a positive experience, "forcing" both the trainer and participants to think, brainstorm and exercise how to move from the evaluation presented in the AIR 2019 to the CAP Strategic Plan.'

- Darko Znaor, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

DATE OF WORKSHOP
28 November 2019



LOCATION
Zagreb, Croatia



STRENGTHS of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- The evaluation process and its findings provide a very useful tool for monitoring the RDP's progress, as well as, for programming RDP measures for the CAP 2021-2027.
- LAGs turned out to be essential agents in mobilising RDP beneficiaries and in assisting them with the applications for RDP measures. LAGs were also found to be instrumental in gathering data relevant for the evaluation.
- The data used for the Farmland Bird Index indicator was very robust due to the studies the Managing Authority commissioned on this subject.
- Students were engaged to process data collected for the purpose of the RDP evaluation.



WEAKNESSES of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- Monitoring of many indicators can still be improved, particularly environmental indicators.
- Data collection, storage and management can also be improved further. Most critical is the robustness, reliability and access to the data at the level of individual RDP operations. This is linked to difficulties in obtaining digital data and accessibility issues in regional environmental offices.
- The application procedures for most RDP measures are very complex, bureaucratic and demanding for most potential applicants.
- The Croatian regulation on public procurement is very complex.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE EX ANTE EVALUATION

Main challenges

- The relevant legislation is still not detailed and communicated by the European Commission.
- The new reporting and consultation requirements are still not known.
- Croatian legislation on the Strategic Environmental Assessment permits only licenced organisations to perform it, which narrows down the selection of potential evaluators.

Main solutions

- Managing Authorities should insist on clarifications and timely information regarding the relevant legislation.
- When tendering, licenced Strategic Environmental Assessment organisations could take on board experienced agri-environmental experts to strengthen their teams.

NEEDS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

- More workshops of this kind should be organised.
- Members of the Steering Committee and notably the Monitoring Committee should be provided capacity building on the evaluation of RDPs, especially on the upcoming tasks and requirements. This would help in building the evaluation culture in Croatia.
- A special workshop should be organised for stakeholders collecting and processing data in order to teach them how to do it and understand the importance of sound data. In addition, they should be able to see that there is appreciation for their work and that someone is really using the data they collect and/or process.
- Organise a workshop on the role of the National Rural Network in the evaluation process and how it can support the dissemination of evaluation findings.

'The topic of this workshop was highly relevant and organised at an important time. The workshop was very well-structured and implemented. It enabled me to better comprehend how complex the RDP evaluation is and how to approach the challenges ahead of us in preparing the CAP Strategic Plan.'

- Bojana Markoti Krstini, Secretary General LEADER Network Croatia -



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Hungary



'The Yearly Capacity Building Event 2019 on the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan attracted a high number of participants, indicating that the selected topic was highly relevant.'

- Géza Raskó, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

DATE OF WORKSHOP
12 November 2019



LOCATION
Kecskemét,
Hungary



STRENGTHS of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- The selected evaluation team was highly professional.
- Appropriate evaluation methods were applied to answer the evaluation questions.
- Quantitative findings of the evaluations were explained qualitatively as well.



WEAKNESSES of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- There was not enough time available for the evaluations.
- Due to the low uptake there was not enough data to answer some evaluation questions properly.
- Sometimes the results led to an ambiguous interpretation of the common evaluation questions.
- The methods for the definition and calculation of some basic indicators were not clear.
- It was not clear how horizontal innovations across the RDP should be evaluated.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE EX ANTE EVALUATION

Main challenges

- Due to the late selection of the evaluation team the time available for the ex ante evaluation will probably be short.
- The ex ante evaluation is viewed as a consulting activity rather than a real evaluation. Therefore, it is difficult to ensure complete independence of the ex ante evaluator. An iterative process is not always adequate and can be time consuming.
- There are many new areas where it will be difficult to ensure appropriate data on the present situation (e.g. digitalisation).

Main solutions

- The evaluation process should be sped up and the evaluation activities should be well organised by the evaluation team.
- The evaluation team members should participate in the work of different working groups. In this way, they can react immediately on the findings of the situation analysis, SWOT and assessment of needs.
- A wide range of stakeholders should be involved in the situation analysis, particularly the professional organisations of the agricultural sector.

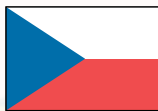
NEEDS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

- Evaluation experiences of other countries should be studied regularly in order to identify good practices and further good practices could be published in the electronic library of the Helpdesk.
- Evaluation-related questions from the Member States and the answers given could be published continuously on the webpage of the Helpdesk.
- Organising workshops with the participation of the Strategic Plan design team and the evaluation team is required.

'I have found the Yearly Capacity Building Event very useful since it has provided an opportunity for the evaluators and the designers of the CAP Strategic Plan to meet before the ex ante evaluation and to exchange views on critical issues.'

- Mr. Miklós Maác, Ministry of Agriculture, Support Policy Department -





Czech Republic



'The event has facilitated the in-depth discussion of issues that the Managing Authorities are facing now, such as, preparing for the new programming period and the evaluation of the current RDP. This event has encouraged the coordination of both processes.'

- Jela Tvrdonova, Helpdesk Geographic Expert -

DATE OF WORKSHOP
23 September 2019



LOCATION
Prague,
Czech Republic



STRENGTHS of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- The evaluator has been selected in the early stages (already for AIR 2017), therefore there was enough time to prepare the evaluation.
- The employees of the Managing Authority which have participated in previous evaluations have been involved also in the AIR 2019.
- There is good communication between the Managing Authority evaluation unit and the evaluators.
- All Helpdesk guidelines are immediately shared with evaluators.



WEAKNESSES of the evaluations in the AIR 2019

- There was very little time to conduct the evaluation.
- Since the RDP is implemented slowly, there was not enough data for a counterfactual assessment in 2019.
- There is a low awareness on the usefulness of evaluation from those Managing Authority employees who did not participate directly in the evaluation.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The results of the AIR 2019 shall be taken as indicative since many results are based on low RDP uptake.
- The AIR 2019 was useful for several aspects:
 - Improving data collection: the report has highlighted where data gaps lie, or where the data is of low quality. A suggestion is to automatise data collection to improve its quality.
 - Improving the intervention design based on a detailed knowledge of the implementation environment and conditions which might affect the achievement of policy objectives.
 - Learning how to set up milestones and targets.
 - Understanding the absorption capacity of interventions during the programming period and why some interventions did not work.
 - Learning how to speed up the administrative process for future implementation.
- The AIR 2019 was only useful for Pillar I interventions to a very limited extent.

NEEDS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

- It is necessary to ensure higher quality data in time series for the ex post evaluation (e.g. through monitoring tables via the creation of better data collection systems).
- More interesting formats could be conceived for the evaluation plan in order to attract people to evaluation and build awareness of its utility.
- Exchanging further experiences with other Member States would be useful.

'We greatly appreciate this type of event, which enables knowledge transfer between more experienced and less experienced colleagues and supports the development of human capacities. As always, the seminar was well moderated and will allow for better preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan.'

- Alena Kubu, Head of the Evaluation Unit at the RDP Managing Authority -





Ensuring spending meets objectives:

Linking result indicators and specific objectives

One of the key benefits of The Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP meetings is that they provide the opportunity for a group of people with a common interest, responsibilities, and daily experience of monitoring and evaluation to share their knowledge, learn from each other collectively and stimulate the emergence of fresh and richer perspectives. When these discussions are fed back into the policy cycle, it improves the outcome, and enhances policy implementation. This in turn drives positive change within the agricultural sector and rural areas and generates essential contributions to climate and environmental goals.

The Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP, which met for the 19th time in Brussels on 3 December 2019, was attended by representatives of the European Commission and the Member States. During this meeting Member States were invited to take part in a session where they could explore together the potential linkages between result indicators and specific objectives.

Establishing links

The result indicators and targets quantify what the CAP Strategic Plans are expected to deliver towards the general policy objectives of viable farm incomes and improved resilience, contributing to the EU's environmental and climate objectives and strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas. For each specific objective addressed in the CAP Strategic Plan, the intervention strategy



will include a target for all relevant common result indicators¹. The draft CAP Strategic Plans submitted by Member States will therefore need to identify appropriate result indicators for each specific objective and set appropriate targets. Annex I of the legal proposal does not establish preconceived linkages between the result indicators and the nine specific objectives of the CAP, so this is a task to be undertaken before submission of the CAP Strategic Plan.

Even though the legal framework is still under discussion, Member States have started work on the development of their CAP Strategic Plans, establishing SWOTs, assessing needs and considering their potential strategies and intervention logic. Member States are therefore already giving some thought to which indicators are relevant to which specific objective, and to how they will establish appropriate targets.

In a results-oriented policy design there is no place for expenditure that doesn't contribute to policy objectives!

Sharing experiences with others and hearing new perspectives

This exercise was conducted in random groups of around six people. Each group considered a different random selection of about a dozen of the proposed result indicators, covering economic, environmental and social aspects.

Indicator by indicator, the groups identified the most relevant specific objectives, and then, considering the types of interventions expected to contribute to each result indicator, assigned the type of linkage expected to one of three categories:

- Cases where all interventions/operations contributing to a particular result indicator would ALWAYS be connected to a particular specific objective;
- ◆ Cases where there MIGHT be a linkage between a result indicator and a specific objective, depending on the design of the contributing interventions/operations, but equally there might not;
- Cases where the result indicator is linked to AT LEAST ONE of a group of objectives, but the actual link(s) can only be established once contributing interventions are fully designed, or in some cases, when individual operations are selected.

Each group then transferred their conclusions onto a big poster so that the overall outcome of the exercise could be seen with each dot representing one group's view.

What did we learn?

• What is relevant?

Many activities have multiple objectives and capturing these is one of the ways in which the new proposal brings policy monitoring closer to reality. However, if we try to identify every single potential linkage, no matter how small or infrequent, we risk ending up with everything linked to everything, which makes setting up a strategic intervention logic very difficult. Therefore, the aim should be to identify substantial, significant and probable linkages.

• What is common?

Although each CAP Strategic Plan will be different, and the system is inherently flexible to accommodate this, some relationships are clearly expected to be common to all CAP Strategic Plans. Identifying a basic indicative set of linkages would be a useful support for the teams in each Member State, whilst not restricting the design of a territory-specific intervention logic with linkages determined in relation to the CAP Strategic Plan's content.

• Only two categories of links are needed!

It was difficult to decide whether some links fell into the second or third category. The conclusion was that there is no need to make a distinction between these two cases, because it is a given that everything implemented under each CAP Strategic Plan should contribute to AT LEAST one result indicator and AT LEAST one objective. In a results-oriented policy design there is no place for expenditure that doesn't contribute to policy objectives!


• When can links be identified?

It is not possible to identify all links in advance. Some linkages will be determined at the design stage of the CAP Strategic Plan, where a direct link exists from entire interventions, through a result indicator, to a specific objective. For example, direct payments are designed to contribute to supporting farm income, so result indicators capturing the contribution of direct payments would always be linked to the specific objective of supporting viable farm incomes. Others can be determined only at the point of project/operation approval. This is the case where the content of applications under a single intervention may be highly variable, which is typical for knowledge, cooperation and investment types of intervention. For example, investment projects contributing to R.15 'Green energy generation from agriculture and forestry' might or might not be linked to promoting rural employment, depending on the design and content of the individual project.

We hope that the sharing of experiences and perspectives during The Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP session was fruitful, and that deepening our common understanding will assist in the development of sound intervention logics for all the CAP Strategic Plans. ■

1. Article 97




 Result indicators to demonstrate achievements of the CAP Strategic Plans		Specific objectives								
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
		Support viable farm income and resilience across the Union to enhance food security	Enhance market orientation and increase competitiveness, including greater focus on research, technology and digitalisation	Improve the farmers' position in the value chain	Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as sustainable energy	Foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air	Contribute to the protection of biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes	Attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas	Promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry	Improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, including safe, nutritious and sustainable food, as well as animal welfare
R.1	Enhancing performance through knowledge and innovation: Share of farmers receiving support for advice, training, knowledge exchange or participation in operational groups to enhance economic, environmental, climate and resource efficiency performance	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●		◆◆◆●
R.2	Linking advice and knowledge systems: Number of advisors integrated within AKIS (compared to total number of farmers)	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●	◆◆◆●
R.3	Digitising agriculture: Share of farmers benefitting from support to precision farming technology through CAP	◆	■ ■	●	◆ ●	◆◆	◆◆	● ●	●	●
R.4	Linking income support to standards and good practices: Share of UAA covered by income support and subject to conditionality	■ ■ ■			◆◆◆	◆◆◆	◆◆◆	◆		■
R.5	Risk Management: Share of farms with CAP risk management tools	◆ ■ ■		■	◆◆			◆		
R.6	Redistribution to smaller farms: Percentage additional support per hectare for eligible farms below average farm size (compared to average)	■ ■ ■								
R.7	Enhancing support to farms in areas with specific needs: Percentage additional support per hectare in areas with higher needs (compared to average)	■ ■	◆			◆	◆◆			
R.8	Targeting farms in sectors in difficulties: Share of farmers benefitting from coupled support for improving competitiveness, sustainability or quality	■ ■	■ ■	◆◆	◆	◆	◆			
R.9	Farm modernisation: Share of farmers receiving investment support to restructure and modernise, including to improve resource efficiency	◆	■ ■	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆	◆◆	◆ ●	◆	◆ ●
R.10	Better supply chain organisation: Share of farmers participating in supported Producer Groups, Producer Organisations, local markets, short supply chain circuits and quality schemes	■		■ ■ ■						●
R.11	Concentration of supply: Share of value of marketed production by Producer Organisations with operational programmes	◆	◆ ■	■ ■		●				● ●
R.12	Adaptation to climate change: Share of agricultural land under commitments to improve climate adaptation				■ ■ ■	◆◆◆	◆◆◆			
R.13	Reducing emissions in the livestock sector: Share of livestock units under support to reduce GHG emissions and/or ammonia, including manure management+B22				■ ■ ■	■ ■ ◆				
R.14	Carbon storage in soils and biomass: Share of agricultural land under commitments to reducing emissions, maintaining and/or enhancing carbon storage (permanent grassland, agricultural land in peatland, forest, etc.)				■	◆◆	◆			
R.15	Green energy from agriculture and forestry: Investments in renewable energy production capacity, including bio-based (MW)		● ■	◆	◆◆◆◆				◆	
R.16	Enhance energy efficiency: Energy savings in agriculture	◆ ●	◆◆◆●	●	■ ■ ■	◆			◆	
R.17	Afforested land: Area supported for afforestation and creation of woodland, including agroforestry				■ ■ ◆	◆◆◆	◆◆◆		◆◆	
R.18	Improving soils: Share of agricultural land under management commitments beneficial for soil management		◆		◆ ■	■ ■	◆			
R.19	Improving air quality: Share of agricultural land under commitments to reduce ammonia emission				■ ■ ●	■ ■ ●	◆ ■			
R.20	Protecting water quality: Share of agricultural land under management commitments for water quality				◆	■ ■ ■	◆◆◆			

- Every operation/commitment contributing to this result indicator is expected to contribute in the same way
- ◆ Individual operations/commitments may contribute differently, requiring separate aggregations in order to identify the contribution to these objectives
- Each operation/commitment contributing to this result indicator must contribute to at least one of the objectives marked yellow - separate aggregations likely to be needed





 Result indicators to demonstrate achievements of the CAP Strategic Plans		Specific objectives								
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
		Support viable farm income and resilience across the Union to enhance food security	Enhance market orientation and increase competitiveness, including greater focus on research, technology and digitalisation	Improve the farmers' position in the value chain	Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as sustainable energy	Foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air	Contribute to the protection of biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes	Attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas	Promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry	Improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, including safe, nutritious and sustainable food, as well as animal welfare
R.21	Sustainable nutrient management: Share of agricultural land under commitments related to improved nutrient management				◆ ◆	■ ■	◆			◆
R.22	Sustainable water use: Share of irrigated land under commitments to improve water balance	◆				■ ■		●		
R.23	Environment-/climate-related performance through investment: Share of farmers with support in investments related to care for the environment or climate		● ■		■ ■ ●	◆ ● ■	◆ ◆ ●	◆		
R.24	Environmental/climate performance through knowledge: Share of farmers receiving support for advice/training related to environmental- climate performance				■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■			
R.25	Supporting sustainable forest management: Share of forest land under management commitments to support forest protection and management.				■		■ ■		■ ■	
R.26	Protecting forest ecosystems: Share of forest land under management commitments for supporting landscape, biodiversity and ecosystem services				◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆	■ ■ ■		◆ ◆ ■	
R.27	Preserving habitats and species: Share of agricultural land under management commitments supporting biodiversity conservation or restoration				◆ ●	◆ ◆	■ ■ ■			
R.28	Supporting Natura 2000: Area in Natura 2000 sites under commitments for protection, maintenance and restoration				◆ ◆ ●	◆ ●	■ ■ ■			
R.29	Preserving landscape features: Share of agriculture land under commitments for managing landscape features, including hedgerows				◆	◆	■			
R.30	Generational renewal: Number of young farmers setting up a farm with support from the CAP	◆ ◆	■ ■					■ ■ ■		
R.31	Growth and jobs in rural areas: New jobs in supported projects							◆ ■	● ■ ■	
R.32	Developing the rural bioeconomy: Number of bio-economy businesses developed with support	◆	◆ ◆ ◆		◆ ●	◆ ●	◆	◆	■ ■ ■ ■	
R.33	Digitising the rural economy: Rural population covered by a supported Smart Villages strategy		●					◆	■ ■	
R.34	Connecting rural Europe: Share of rural population benefitting from improved access to services and infrastructure through CAP support							◆	■ ■	
R.35	Promoting social inclusion: Number of people from minority and/or vulnerable groups benefitting from supported social inclusion projects	◆	◆	◆					■ ■ ■	
R.36	Limiting antibiotic use: Share of livestock units concerned by supported actions to limit the use of antibiotics (prevention/reduction)									■ ■ ■
R.37	Sustainable pesticide use: Share of agricultural land concerned by supported specific actions which lead to a sustainable use of pesticides in order to reduce risks and impacts of pesticides					■ ■	■			■ ■
R.38	Improving animal welfare: Share of livestock units covered by supported action to improve animal welfare		◆		◆			◆		

- Every operation/commitment contributing to this result indicator is expected to contribute in the same way
- ◆ Individual operations/commitments may contribute differently, requiring separate aggregations in order to identify the contribution to these objectives
- Each operation/commitment contributing to this result indicator must contribute to at least one of the objectives marked yellow - separate aggregations likely to be needed



Keeping up with the CAP: Updated Data for the CAP AGRI Dashboards

In 2018, in order to increase transparency and capitalise on the vast amount of information at its disposal the European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development launched a new 'CAP Indicator Dashboard' portal of selected CAP indicators, which are presented in a visual and interactive format.

The dashboards visualise the trends in the CAP indicators and are interactive on different levels (output, result, context and impact indicators). These dashboards consolidate data from different databases for both Pillar I and II of the CAP. Each dashboard is complemented by a fiche providing more information on the specific indicator.

New Updates!

The CAP Indicator Dashboards are updated in a continuous fashion as new data is made available. In July 2019 these dashboards have been updated with all 2018 data¹. At the end of February 2020, three new data points have been added to the dashboards:

These three new features allow stakeholders to have an even better overview of the CAP and the investments being made. The next update of these dashboards will come before the end of 2020. ■

Explore the [CAP Indicator Dashboards](#)

Learn more about the CAP Indicator Dashboards:
[Rural Evaluation NEWS # 12](#)



CAP Financing

Includes data from as far back as 1980 and includes information beyond the CMEF. The expenditures for agriculture and rural development that are present in this dashboard consists of financing from two funds The European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Adding Value

This dashboard aggregates data on the distribution of gross value added along the food chain and focuses on means to add value to agricultural products: EU quality schemes and producer organisations.

Productivity

This dashboard provides information on productivity in the agricultural and food sectors. It displays various measurements of productivity and EU support to productivity gains and innovation via the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) and investments for restructuring and modernisation in Rural Development.



1. 2018 Claim Year Data





An Evaluator's Eye:

How evaluators can help support the planned monitoring, data collection and implementation arrangements of the CAP Strategic Plan

The new **performance monitoring and evaluation framework (PMEF)** and the transition to a performance-based delivery model presents various practical challenges for the EU countries. Member States are currently concerned with understanding the new requirements, drawing the lessons from the period 2014-2020, but also to get prepared for the establishment of the new system to measure and assess the performance of the CAP.

Involving the evaluator in the set up and operation of the performance framework may lead to positive contributions in various ways (Figure 1):

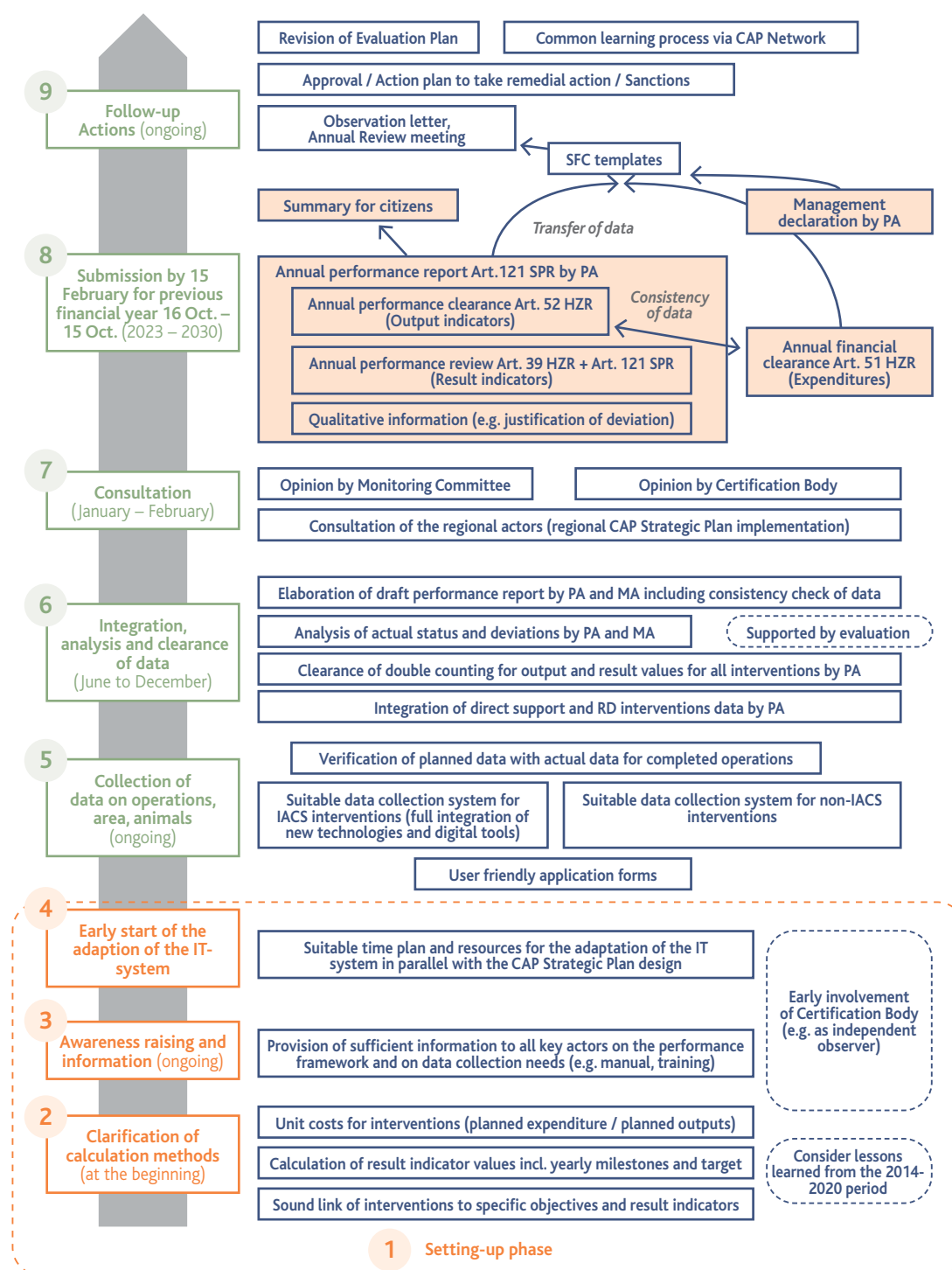
- In the **setting-up phase of the performance framework** the evaluator may check if there is an effective process in place which involves from an early stage relevant working groups to prepare and establish the performance framework at the national (and where applicable at regional) level.
- The **operationalisation of the conceptual elements of the performance framework** includes for example, that the relevant procedures to link operations with specific objectives and result indicators are appropriate and in line with the common indicator fiches. It is also recommended to involve the future certification body from an early stage as an independent observer.
- The evaluator may check if the **requirements of the performance framework are well understood by all key actors** that are involved in planning and operating the future system.
- The evaluator can serve to recognise if the planned **timing for the necessary adaptations to the IT system have started at an early enough stage** to allow for smooth operations right from the beginning of the implementation period.
- The **planned process for collecting data on operations, areas and animals** must be suitable for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the CAP. The evaluator can play an important role in making sure this is achieved. This concerns for example checking the data for IACS and non-IACS interventions, but also the whole system to collect data from beneficiaries and to verify planned data with actual data, where necessary.
- The evaluator can verify if there is a **suitable process for the preparation of the Draft Performance Report and make sure it is ready for consultation** with the relevant actors, in order to discuss and improve it before its submission to the European Commission.



- The evaluator can further check the provisions to ensure that all required reports can realistically be **delivered on time**.
- Lastly, the **planned follow-up procedures must be suitable to deal with monitoring and evaluation findings**. This is essential in order to close the cycle of policy learning and take the necessary remedial actions. In this respect, a revision of the evaluation plan may be necessary, and the evaluator can help to guide in this regard.

The following figure outlines the workflow to establish and operate within the PMEF. In the course of the ex ante evaluation the evaluator may check whether the relevant pre-conditions are met and the planned procedures for the performance framework are adequate. Later, during a possible 'ongoing' evaluation the evaluator may be asked to assess the actual functioning of the system in practice. ■

Figure 1: Workflow and elements of the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework



[Read more in TOOL 4.1](#)

'Appraisal of the planned monitoring, data collection and implementation arrangements of the CAP Strategic Plan'



Supporting Member States on Reporting on Achievements and Impacts for the Ex Post Evaluation

In 2019, for the first time during the 2014-2020 programming period Member States had to report on their RDP's contributions to the achievement of the EU's policy objectives by evaluating the policy's impacts.

The findings of these evaluations were reported¹ to the European Commission in the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) 2019. The Evaluation Helpdesk has analysed the AIRs 2019 to identify major challenges and draw lessons for future learning².

The main challenges identified through this assessment are related to:

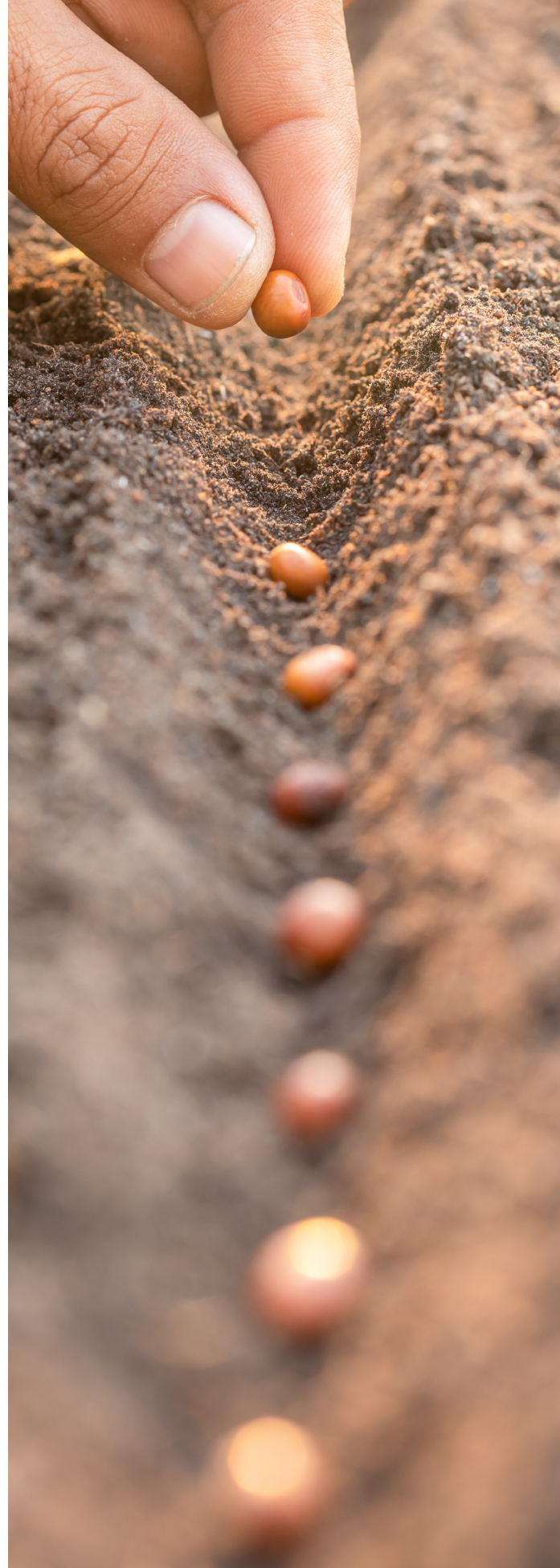
- The conceptual understanding of definitions of indicators and methodologies for the calculation of result and impact indicators;
- The use of robust evaluation approaches and methods;
- The collection and management of data for evaluations;
- The assessment of net contributions;
- The quantification of secondary contributions, synergies and LEADER contributions.

To address these challenges and to better prepare for the ex post evaluation in 2024 the Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with thematic experts and DG AGRI have launched the Thematic Working Group, 'Ex post evaluation of RDPs 2014-2020: Learning from practice' at the end of February 2020.

The objectives of the Thematic Working Group are to:

- Address weaknesses in the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts;
- Improve the calculation of result and impact indicators;
- Tackle emerging issues in the assessment of priority areas (e.g. environment, climate, social indicators).

This Thematic Working Group will further serve as an important input into the future development of the monitoring and evaluation systems for the post-2020 period.



The Thematic Working Group will consist of three working packages each one related to one of the three CAP general objectives.

Each working package will encompass an overview of identified emerging issues and proposed recommendations for addressing those issues. These working packages will also be enriched with practical examples to illustrate how the identified issues have been addressed in different Member States.

To ensure that the Thematic Working Group meets the practical needs of the evaluation community ongoing consultations will take place with evaluation stakeholders through periodic Sounding Boards and other means of written feedback. ■

WORKING PACKAGE 1:

Assessment of RDP effects on achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities

MAY 2020



OCT 2020

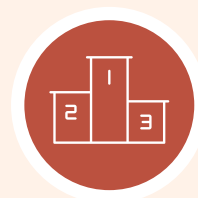
WORKING PACKAGE 2:

Assessment of RDP effects on ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action

WORKING PACKAGE 3:

Assessment of RDP effects on fostering the competitiveness of agriculture

NOV 2020



Send your questions to:

info@ruralevaluation.eu



Find more information on the Evaluation Helpdesk's [Thematic Working Groups](#) in the Evaluation Section of the ENRD Website.

1. Article 50 of the Regulation No 1303/2013, Article 75 of the Regulation 1305/2013, and Article 15 of the Commission Implementing Regulation No 808/2014
2. 'Synthesis of the Evaluation Components of the Enhanced AIRs 2019' and 'Assessment of the Progress in Implementing the Evaluation Plans of RDPs 2014-2020', Good Practice Workshop no 12 and Yearly Capacity Building Events in the Member States





Getting to know Sophie Helaine Head of Unit C.4 'Monitoring and Evaluation'

1. What was your previous focus in your work before becoming the Head of Unit for C.4 and what do you find most exciting about working in DG AGRI?

I started in 2005 in the Farm Accountancy Data Network Unit. I left DG AGRI during 2010-2012 and worked on modelling for 3 years in the Joint Research Centre in Seville.

Before becoming Head of Unit of C.4 I was deputy Head of Unit of C.2 ('Analysis and Outlook') dealing with the CAP and market analysis, particularly focusing on the meat and dairy sectors. In addition, I was (and still am) leading the work on the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF).

The most exciting aspect of DG AGRI is the people. There is a high concentration of talents and it's always very enriching to discuss with colleagues on the CAP, on markets and on farm practices. Working towards the common good is a great driver of AGRI people and that's good news for the Green Deal.



2. What is the most impactful experience you have had so far regarding monitoring and evaluation and what areas or topics are you most excited about working on in the future?

I drafted the analytical part of the CAP 2020 impact assessment, and I led the work for the publication of all the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework data, and the visualisation in the CAP dashboards.

Indicators! I'm a fan!

Collecting data is the first step of evidence gathering to evaluate how the policy performs. In addition, the most exciting is when an evaluation can help improve the policy.

3. What is your favourite indicator and why?

That's a difficult question... But if I have to choose, I would take the one comparing earnings in agriculture with the rest of the economy (C.26 - The Agricultural entrepreneurial income expressed as a share of the average wage in the whole economy). It is a complex one, from a methodological point of view (we developed 3 sub-indicators for the PMEFI), and its interpretation is also demanding. However, it says a lot about the attractiveness of farming in rural areas, the variability of farm income and many other things.

4. How do you see the role and importance of evaluation in the future programming period?

The New Delivery Model is about a strategic approach to improve policy delivery. We have a whole system of indicators to follow the progress of Member States towards achieving their hopefully ambitious targets. However, the performance of the CAP will be ultimately assessed thanks to evaluations, through the identification of the net impact of the CAP on the common objectives.

5. If you could give Member States one thing to help their evaluations, what would it be?

The Helpdesk! Although Member states have made a lot of progress, they need to continue improving their evaluations and most of all increase their use. We need collectively to raise awareness on the importance and usefulness of evaluations. Not only to improve agricultural and rural development policies, but also, to explain them to citizens. In an era of fake news, evaluation can help to improve knowledge and awareness of what both Member States and the EU are doing to improve people's lives.

BONUS QUESTION:

Tell us your favourite thing to do in Brussels and why?

I love eating fries, simply because in Brussels you find the best ones! ■

EXPLORE
the CAP Dashboards





The Twelfth Good Practice Workshop: How to demonstrate RDP achievements and impacts: lessons from the evaluations reported in the AIR 2019

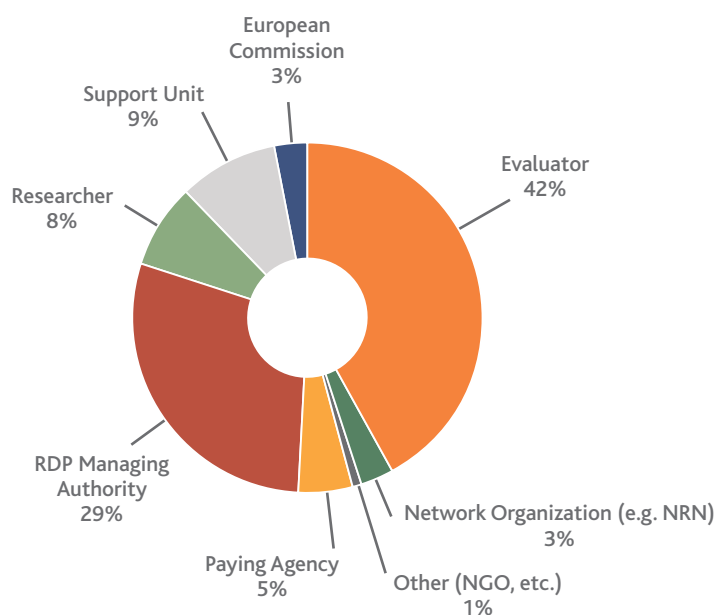
The Twelfth Good Practice Workshop took place on 11-12 December 2019 in Sevilla, Spain. The workshop was attended by 56 participants from 22 Member States, including RDP Managing Authorities, evaluators, EU level representatives (e.g. European Commission, ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk), researchers, National Rural Networks, and other evaluation related stakeholders.



This workshop had the overarching objective to reflect on the 2019 evaluation experience with a view towards preparing for the ex post evaluation of RDPs 2014-2020. More specifically it aimed to provide a forum to discuss and learn from the evaluations and reporting in the AIR 2019 and to exchange experiences and good practices on the practical approaches (methods, indicators, data) used to carry out the evaluations for the 2019 Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs).

The workshop offered insights into the approaches and methodologies used to assess indicators and answer the common evaluation questions from several Member States. Case studies were presented from Estonia, Slovenia, Sweden, Greece and the Czech Republic in the field of environment, from Latvia and Poland in the field of competitiveness, Finland in the field of balanced territorial development, accessibility and ICTs while Spain and Austria covered employment, poverty and GDP.





'If you spend public money in a good and wise manner, then also the cities will benefit, all regions will benefit because they are all linked through trade and employment'

Austrian Evaluator

Current evaluations have only focused on short and medium term effects

Evaluation approaches should adopt a longer-term perspective by considering upcoming and new needs emerging from the 2030 Sustainable Rural Development, Agriculture and Fisheries Strategy, while also considering the macro level multiplier effects, especially for investment measures.

There are difficulties in calculating some environmental indicators (e.g. biodiversity)

The overall approach in calculating some indicators (e.g. biodiversity) could include additional judgment criteria and simple or alternative indicators.

More robust methodologies such as DiD, counterfactual and statistical analysis have been applied successfully, however, they can still be fine-tuned and caution should be taken when interpreting the results bearing in mind that different indicators may also give different results while high values may not always imply positive results.

Relying more on beneficiary surveys for the collection of data, carrying out sample monitoring or environmental monitoring missions to analyse the effects of specific interventions or ad-hoc thematic evaluations could be useful.

Inconsistencies in FADN data have been identified including a lack of representativeness when it comes to the data on the number of farms and their size

The use of methods for extrapolating FADN data to the national level or the use of sectoral models, provided there are sufficient resources (time, funds, experts) can serve to overcome these inconsistencies.

There are difficulties in assessing the effects of broadband and ICTs, especially due to fragmented construction and poor coordination

The use of accurate spatial data and GIS analysis has proved useful in the assessment of accessibility and ICTs for showing local differences and for better coordination of interventions in the future.

Spatial data and GIS can be complemented with panel regression models and matching methods as well as scenario analysis to assess the impacts more concretely.

The use of such approaches can help shape and support telecommunication policies and their reach in rural areas.



Measuring causal effects is difficult, especially for measuring poverty and employment in the field of balanced territorial development

RDPs are generally not designed to make major contributions to these issues while often these effects are indirect, dependent on many factors and take time to become evident.

Therefore, it can be important to broaden the scope of the analytical tools applied and possibly use an array of other simple indicators.

Additionally, one can enhance the methodology with complementary approaches, taking advantage of the expertise from other past and current programmes, and combine quantitative models with empirical analysis to obtain a more complete picture.

The outcomes of the presentations, discussions and group work brought together the issues and challenges that Member States faced when conducting the evaluations of RDPs for reporting in the AIR 2019 and culminated in a rich set of practical suggestions for addressing these issues. ■

HOW TO IMPROVE DATA PROVISION AND COLLECTION

- Case studies or special thematic studies have proved to be a useful approach when data is missing or when it is difficult to calculate an existing common indicator.
- When additional data is required it could be obtained through larger samples, beneficiary surveys, involving other stakeholders such as advisory services or where relevant, through the use of geographic/spatial analysis. Data from non-beneficiaries can also be useful in specific situations (regions, types of areas (e.g. remote, mountain, sparsely populated), etc.).
- For the assessment of soil related indicators, the LUCAS survey has been confirmed to be the best source of data so far. However, its use can be further improved by combining it with FADN data.
- The harmonisation of all relevant data sources, including Eurostat, FADN, LUCAS (for soil) and other national and regional databases would contribute to the simplification and efficiency in data collection, processing and use.

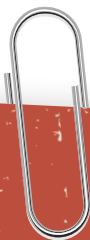
HOW TO OPTIMISE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

- Input-Output analysis, although not a panacea, has been useful in more than one sector, notably for water and also for socio-economic indicators.
- PSM-DiD have been agreed to be the most robust methods and most recommended, but they can further benefit from data provided through GIS for certain indicators (especially environmental ones) and can offer information on local characteristics and farms and facilitate the creation of control groups.
- Concerning control groups, it has been recognised that for the calculation of certain indicators, almost the whole population is a beneficiary. In such cases, thematic studies and alternative methods may be more relevant.

HOW TO ENHANCE METHODOLOGICAL GUIDANCE

- Guidance should be updated/revised based on the experiences from the evaluations for reporting in the AIR 2019. This may include the provision/revision of definitions for certain concepts such as biodiversity, HNV or innovation. Revised guidance may also include suggestions on how to combine different approaches of data collection and also more specific approaches for instance on standardised emission tables.
- A summary of evaluation methods from the evaluation plans across Europe could provide information that is currently unavailable as every evaluation plan is written in the national language. NRNs could also play a key role in sharing examples of evaluation models.
- More guidance is needed in the field of innovation which is a new area for all evaluators. This may include clarifications on terminologies and on the concept of innovation in different priority areas, the identification of more specific/detailed information needed to assess innovation and the identification of all the variables required to assess the contribution of RDPs to fostering innovation, including the delivery mechanism.
- Further specific guidance enriched with practical examples is needed on how to assess net effects, the impacts of external effects and how to quantify secondary contributions.





Back to Basics: Data Management for the Assessment of RDP Effects

What is RDP data management?

RDP data management concerns the rules, procedures, systems and people involved in recording, storing and transmitting data on RDP implementation and providing information for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

[Learn more about how different actors use RDP information >>>](#)

What tools are used for the management of RDP data?

The Evaluation Plan served as the primary starting point in the current period for the development of data management strategies in the Member State by capitalising on past experiences through the involvement of all relevant stakeholders to develop cost effective IT solutions. Furthermore, several Member States established ongoing working groups to ensure high quality data and to develop detailed monitoring manuals for the involved actors.

[Get to know examples on targeted data management >>>](#)

How can data management be tailored to the needs of the Member State?

While data management systems must be compliant with the legal requirements, it is also important to tailor them to the specific needs of the RDP. Designing an individual system, with their own indicators, has been particularly challenging in the case of monitoring the contributions of LEADER/CLLD to the RDP's objectives.

[Read factsheet on LAG operations database >>>](#)

How can the specific data needs for impact evaluations be anticipated?

Data for the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts is critical as it determines the evaluation methodologies that can be applied by the evaluators. Using modelling approaches or collecting data on non-beneficiaries necessary for netting out RDP impacts can be costly and therefore requires careful planning. Logic models are decision tools that can help Managing Authorities to anticipate the data needs for evaluations. Anticipating these needs in advance can facilitate early agreements with relevant data providers and ensuring access to the relevant information for the purpose of evaluation.

[Test the interactive decision tools >>>](#)

[Learn how evaluators can support the transition to a performance-based delivery model](#)



Figure 1: Data management as part of the evaluation cycle





UPCOMING AND PAST EVENTS CALENDAR

Please note, due to the current COVID-19 situation please be aware that many events are being cancelled or postponed. Therefore, this list is only indicative, and we encourage you to check on the respective websites of the events you are interested in attending to see the current status of the event.

- **ES - 11-12 December 2019 - How to demonstrate RDP achievements and impacts:** lessons learned from the evaluations reported in the AIR 2019: Organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Spanish NRN. This Good Practice Workshop aimed to examine the experiences from the evaluations reported in the AIR 2019 and draw lessons learned for the ex post: [Read more >>>](#)
- **BE - TBD - 20th Group of Experts for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP**
- **IE - 24-26 March 2020 - International Conference for Realist Research, Evaluation, and Synthesis:** Fostering Innovation in Practice: [Read more >>>](#)
- **Online - 13-14 May - 13th Good Practice Workshop: Data management for the assessment of RDP effects:** Organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk. This Good Practice Workshop has the overall objective to reflect on the 2019 experiences in relation to data management, with a view to preparing the ex post evaluation of RDPs 2014-2020 and help identifying necessary lessons relevant for future monitoring and evaluation. [Read more >>>](#)
- **BE - TBD - 13th Rural Networks Steering Group.**
- **BE - December 2020 - 7th Rural Networks Assembly.**

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.

European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

BE-1040 Brussels, Boulevard Saint Michel 77-79 (Métro Montgomery/Thieffry) • **E-mail:** info@ruralevaluation.eu

Website: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/> • Tel. +32 2 737 51 30

Newsletter Editorial Team: Myles O. Stiffler, Hannes Wimmer • **Graphic design:** Karott' SA

Contributors: Julia Gallardo Gómez, Sophie Helaine, Valdis Kudins, Eduardo Serrano Padial, Marili Parissaki, Zélie Peppiette, Iiri Raa, Géza Raskó, Myles O. Stiffler, Jela Tvrdonova, Hannes Wimmer, Darko Znaor

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