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Rural Evaluation NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Evaluator Insights for the Ex Ante Evaluation of CAP Strategic Plans

The ex ante evaluation can be seen as the roadmap to guide and support the development of a programme through reflecting on past experiences and trying to manage any potential future risks the programme might encounter along the way. It is the starting point when planning a new programme in every policy.

The role of the ex ante evaluation in agricultural policy is to improve the quality and design of CAP Strategic Plans. It also establishes the starting point of the evaluation during the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan. The key steps in the ex ante evaluation process are:

- The assessment of the SWOT analysis and needs for each Specific Objective and the prioritisation of needs.
- The assessment of the intervention strategy for each Specific Objective.
- The assessment of the quantitative targets and milestones for Specific Objectives and at the programme level.

Careful preparation and planning of each of these steps requires a team of experts and stakeholders all working together and making use of each one's individual expertise.

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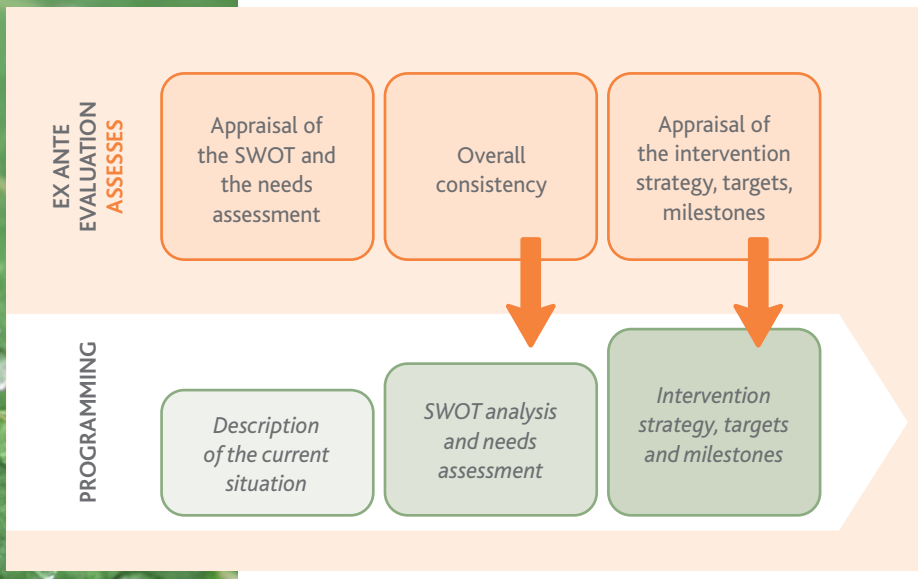
The Evaluation Helpdesk has spoken to evaluators from a variety of Member States to better understand the current challenges related to each of these steps and find out more about the novel solutions they are using to make the most out of the ex ante evaluations.



The importance of the ex ante process

The Spanish evaluators' experience highlights that the process of the ex ante assessment is equally important as the results of the work, which is reflected in the ex ante evaluation report. It is highly encouraged to conduct the ex ante evaluation following the stages of the CAP Strategic Plan design (e.g. to conduct an ex ante of the SWOT and assessment of needs before starting to design the interventions, to conduct the ex ante assessment of the mix of selected interventions before deciding on indicators and other things). This will help improve the quality of the policy intervention design and implementation.

What evaluators are learning from each other and how to make it a participatory process

To implement the ex ante steps, evaluators in the Member States have been following roughly similar approaches, which include conducting discussions, thematic workshops, sectoral events and developing internal tools for the assessment. An innovative approach in this regard can be found in Austria, where a peer-to-peer exchange was conducted with Denmark for drafting the intervention strategy which allowed these Member States to exchange experiences on the assessment of the intervention

logic, including a check of the coherence and suitability of the result indicators.

An important part of the ex ante evaluation process is the interaction between the Managing Authority and the evaluators, as well as, the active involvement of various partners. Experiences from Spain for the programming period 2014-2020, show how the close interaction and constructive dialogue between the Managing Authority and evaluators, working as one team and following a common approach has contributed to useful recommendations that can realistically be adopted by the Managing Authority in order to improve the design and implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan.

In Germany, constant communication between the Managing Authority and the evaluators ensures timely and useful feedback during the design of the CAP strategic plan. At the same time, the evaluation team, which brings together experts from different entities, uses an internal peer review process to produce high-quality reports. It is based on common understandings and procedures laid down in an evaluation handbook.

Experiences from Finland indicate that the timing of the CAP Strategic Plan preparations can be significant and that it is vital to involve many actors and organisations at different stages in order to ensure stakeholders have ample opportunity to contribute. The active involvement of partners is especially important in order to achieve balanced representation in the workshops and working groups. Finland has been successful at including representatives from all over the country and actors from different social backgrounds into their working groups for programming, while in parallel conducting a wide stakeholder survey and expert interviews - document and indicator analysis in the context of the ex ante. This year, due to the circumstances of the pandemic, meetings have been conducted online which actually further facilitated regional representatives' participation in Finland. Digitalisation has therefore improved the possibilities for participation in the Finish context.

The European Commission (EC) is also a key stakeholder in ex ante evaluations. Discussions with EC desk officers and geo-hubs may also contribute to the improvement of the design. Spanish evaluators have experienced that communication between the EC and the team of the Managing Authority and evaluators helps to understand their mutual needs and clarify the content of EC recommendations, so that they can be more easily considered in the design of the CAP Strategic Plans.

Adding pillars and regions

One of the main challenges that ex ante evaluators are facing is the broader scope of the CAP Strategic Plan which includes both Pillar I and Pillar II type interventions. This can be challenging for evaluators who may not have much ex ante evaluation experience of Pillar I interventions, where income support is still the main element of such interventions. Austrian evaluators are trying to address this challenge through an analysis to understand

the interrelationships between the building blocks of the CAP Strategic Plan. Therefore, the link from the SWOT analysis and prioritisation of needs for each Specific Objective has helped to establish the evidence upon which the interventions are then selected, irrespective of if they are derived from Pillar I or Pillar II. In the case of Austria, the technical working groups for programming are trying to determine the most appropriate mix of interventions that can address the identified needs, based on the evidence provided, without thinking specifically in terms of Pillar I or Pillar II and the evaluators provide feedback to the technical working groups to help them better understand the new composition principles and building blocks. This way the Managing Authority can draft a robust intervention strategy.

Another challenge, relevant specifically for regionalised Member States, is the integration of the regional RDPs of the past into one national level plan. Spanish evaluators have been working closely with the Managing Authority to take into consideration regional specificities and analyse them in working groups with

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representatives from the regional authorities. This process has allowed outcomes from these workshops to be incorporated into the national level analysis. For the current programming period the ex ante evaluator in Spain played a key role in assessing whether all relevant regional specificities have been taken into account in the SWOT and needs assessment, before embarking on the selection of interventions.

Understanding all those needs

The ex ante assessment of the extent to which the CAP Strategic Plan complies with the increased ambitions on environmental aspects is also a real challenge. The analysis should make an explicit reference to national plans or environmental and climate legislative instruments and the prioritisation of needs is critical in this respect. Evaluators in Germany have proposed to distinguish between the overall importance of a need and its relevance for the CAP Strategic Plan. Their reasoning is that some important needs may not necessarily be that relevant for the CAP Strategic Plan, as they may be addressed, first and foremost, by other instruments and regulations. To ensure a robust prioritisation of needs in terms of overall importance, German evaluators have proposed the following set of criteria:

- Scale of the underlying problem.
- Urgency (irreversible consequences looming).
- Legal or political obligations.
- Relevance for the provision of public goods.
- Interactions with other needs (positive or negative).

Evaluators in Austria have also indicated the importance of how the prioritisation of needs shows if the Member State took into account the EU's policies (e.g. Green Deal targets). The ex ante evaluators in Austria used the following three main criteria for assessing the prioritisation of needs in a systematic way:

- The need for action (e.g. how important or urgent is the need).
- The suitability of the CAP Strategic Plan for solving the need (e.g. the extent to which the CAP Strategic Plan contributes to addressing the need and the relevance of other instruments for addressing the same need).
- The political relevance of the need (e.g. the level of compliance with EU or national strategies or with the government programme).

So many indicators, so little time, and setting realistic targets

The next step in the process after the prioritisation of needs is the design of the intervention strategy and the setting of targets. The intervention strategy is a crucial step in the design of the CAP Strategic Plan, in which Member States make their strategic choices about what they want to achieve with their Strategic Plans and how. The intervention strategy is a logical response to the needs and relative importance of the different needs in the Member State's specific national/regional context. This step is not exempt from challenges, the first and most critical one being how to assess that target values for result indicators are realistic.

The Austrian ex ante evaluation experience indicates some specific challenges they are addressing in relation to assessing the indicators and their target values. The first challenge was the definition or selection of result indicators, which were selected by technical working groups. The ex ante evaluators provided feedback on the suitability of the result indicators and discussed the character of these indicators, while at the same time trying to build awareness of the suitability of each indicator. The second challenge evaluators in Austria have faced is how to assess the multiple links between needs and interventions and interventions and indicators. For example, some specific objectives in Austria have 20 to 30 interventions attached to each of them. Illustrating these links can be very complex, but it is possible with the use of tools like matrices. Additionally, one intervention may be linked to several needs, specific objectives and result indicators which can

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make future monitoring very complex. In Austria, the evaluation team is trying to build awareness by means of technical working groups, emphasising that they should allocate interventions to specific objectives where they can make a direct[1] and significant contribution, thus avoiding broad approaches where interventions contribute to many specific objectives. Lastly, each target value needs to be defined for each result indicator taking into account that there may be different target values for the indicator under each specific objective. Austria is currently developing a method whereby the aggregate target value of a result indicator is a composite of the partial target values of all contributing interventions (from different specific objectives).

In Finland, evaluators are assessing whether target values are realistic to meet the objectives by taking stock of lessons learned from past implementation periods. For example, evaluators are working to decode the implementation profile of similar interventions from the past period, so that they know how a measure works and how it could drive farmers' behaviour (speed of absorption, identified bottlenecks and external conditions) in the next programming period.

While learning from past experiences can help programme similar interventions, a greater challenge evaluators are facing is when assessing targets for new interventions. In this case, evaluators may want to check studies or other research in order to better estimate the 'unit cost' of such a novel intervention. In regionalised Member States this can become all the more complex, which is why German evaluators have developed a tool to check the plausibility of regional numbers along with the national aggregate.

A final message brought to you by communication

Last but not least, communication of the ex ante evaluation outcomes need to be clearly communicated to the Managing Authority not upon completion of the ex ante, but throughout the process. The delivery of the ex ante report is not the main goal of the evaluation. For it to be truly useful, comments and recommendations should be provided by evaluators to the Managing Authority during all steps of the programming process. Only with this in mind can a truly robust quality CAP Strategic Plan be achieved and optimally designed to address the most pressing needs of the territories and populations it covers. ■

Breaking News!

Political agreement on new Common Agricultural Policy: fairer, greener, more flexible

1. Direct contribution means that the intervention is explicitly planned to contribute to the objective.

New fiches for farming practices based on a meta-analysis literature review of farming practices

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre is currently conducting an extensive systematic review of more than 50 farming practices in order to better understand the impacts of these farming practices on the environment and climate. This initiative will support Member States to better program their interventions, quantify their results and link them to the CAP objectives for the future.

Collaboration to facilitate a better tomorrow through iMAP4Agri

iMAP4Agri is an administrative arrangement between DG AGRI and the JRC. It serves to complement traditional activities which have taken place in previous years (e.g. modelling, outlook estimations/conferences, studies).

The objectives of this activity are to:

- Gather available scientific evidence on environmental and climate issues.
- Clarify the intervention logic, expected impacts, causal links and quantification between environmental and climate farming practices (FP) and CAP objectives.
- Improve or develop indicators, methodologies for modelling, impact assessments, monitoring and evaluations.

Some of the major activities being conducted related to these objectives are:

- Systematic scientific literature review:
  - Matrix with impacts FP - objectives.
  - Fiches resuming the results available in published meta-analysis.
  - Typologies of FP.
  - Result and impact indicator methodologies.
- Building an inventory of data, indicators, and legislation.
- Development of new indicators (e.g. I.20 Landscape features and I.9 Resilience) and methodologies (avoid double counting of areas for output and result indicators).

The primary users of this activity are:

- DG AGRI and other DGs units/colleagues working on environmental issues.
- Desk officers - geo hubs which will assess CAP plans.
- Member States colleagues working on CAP plans.
- External users such as evaluators, researchers, etc.

Challenges and steps for better classification of farming practice typologies

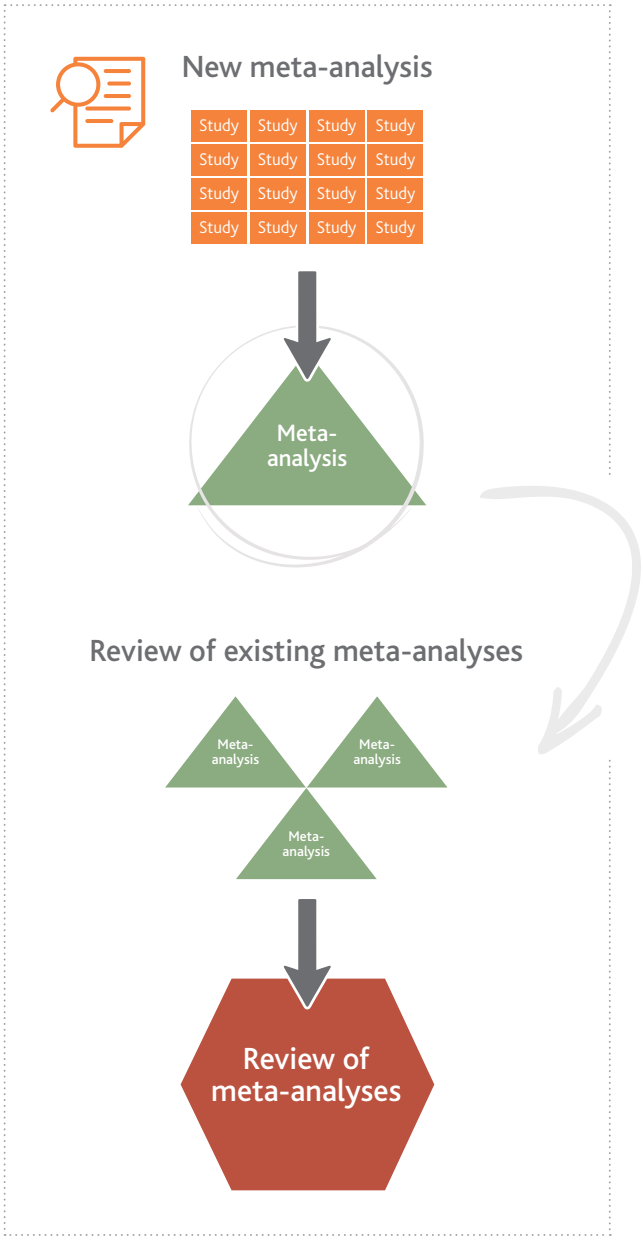
Currently there are limited possibilities to identify and report on targeted information on farming practices financed in the CAP (e.g. not enough disaggregation). Additionally, there is an absence of a standardised system for the classification of practices and their links to the CAP objectives.

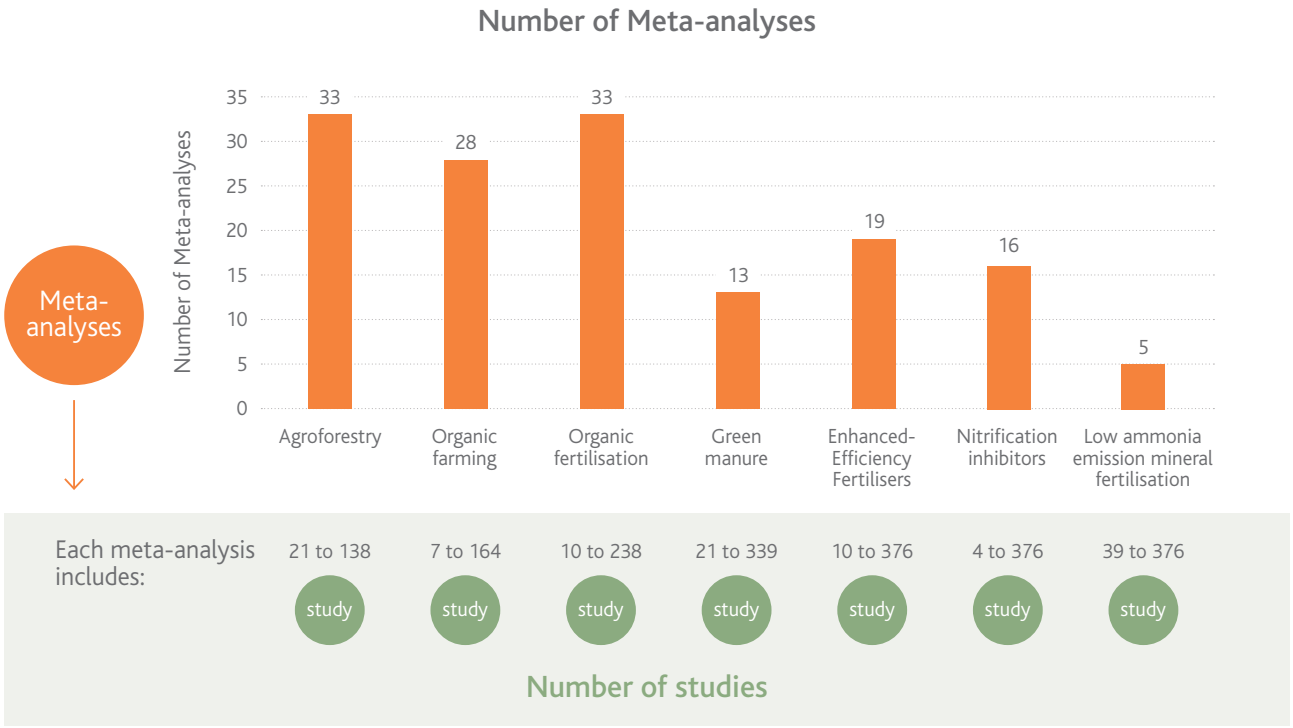
The work of the JRC will help to improve this situation for the next programming period, through their systematic review of the available scientific evidence on all current farming practices, which looks to provide common definitions and define a clear list of practices suitable for the whole CAP (conditionality, eco schemes, management commitments, non-productive investments, etc.). Once the CAP strategic plans are approved, DG AGRI will be able to apply the standardised classification system and also use the information in evaluations and models to report on the following issues:

- In how many CAP strategic plans a practice has been applied.
- Uptake in terms of areas and possibly estimate likely impacts.

A detailed meta-analysis to better understand the impacts of farm practices

In order to understand the implications of different farming practices in a scientifically robust manner, the JRC has been reviewing available scientific evidence in published meta-analyses to make a robust and unbiased evaluation of the effects



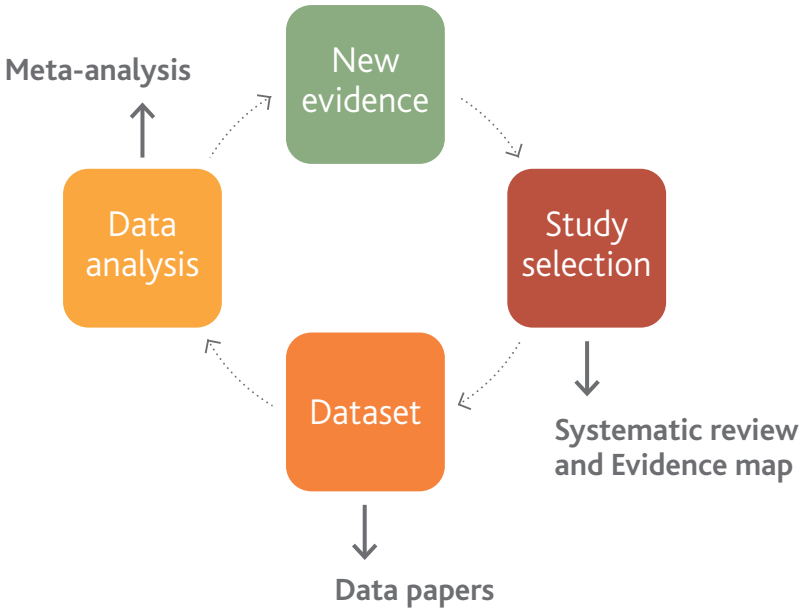


of farming practices on climate and environmental impacts. One meta-analysis reports a statistical analysis of the results of a large number of field-experiments reported in individual scientific papers. A systematic review of meta-analyses resumes the results of several published meta-analyses, therefore including nearly all available knowledge on a given topic.

In the review of the meta-analyses, the quality of each meta-analysis is also checked based on a strict list of criteria. In the figure below, for example, the environmental/climate impacts of Agroforestry are assessed using 33 meta-analyses; each one of them quantitatively resumes the results of several (in the range 21 – 138) individual scientific studies.

This type of unbiased knowledge synthesis is vital, as experiments, observations and studies provide sometimes diverging evidence on the effects of farming practices and there is a need to synthesize their results in order to make better policy decisions. While an individual study can be telling, doing a meta-analysis of many studies can help to provide more robust conclusions. Furthermore, expert opinion-based approaches can often be hampered by a high risk of bias, with no formal analysis of what is known and no reliable identification of knowledge gaps. This is why systematic reviews of all available experiments and a global synthesis of all their results is vital for evidence-based decision making based on science.

Virtuous cycle of meta-analysis



Farming practices fiches

These fiches are the culmination of an extensive body of evidence from numerous experiments across the Member States on farming practices and the extensive meta-analysis described above. This evidence is reported into different fiches, that contain the following information:

1. Description of the farming practice.
2. Description of the impacts.
3. Description of the key influencing factors.
4. Implementation in 2014-2020.
5. Pictures.
6. Links to other complementary information.
7. List of meta-analyses used.

Each fiche can be broken into three levels:

1. General (all impacts).
2. Specific environmental or climate topics (single impact).
3. Summaries of the reviewed meta-analyses.

The fiches will significantly help to better programme the CAP Strategic Plans by helping:

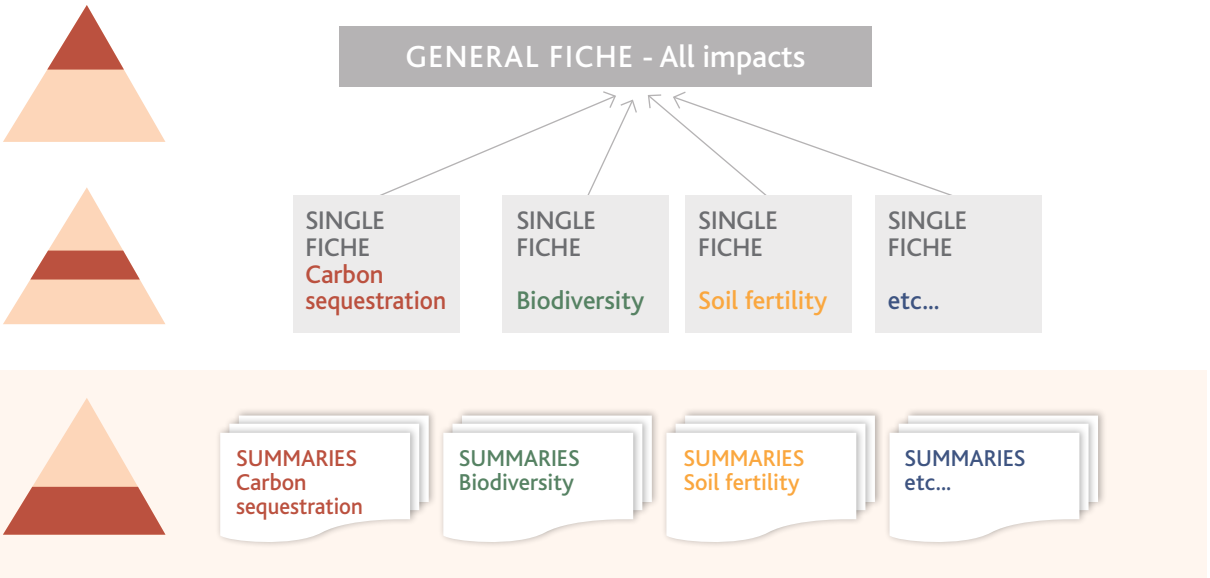
- To identify the most suitable farming practices to achieve specific climate and environmental objectives (identified in the SWOT analysis and need assessment).
- To provide a benchmark for comparison between Member States and geohubs.
- To gather information on biogeographical, climatic and management factors that influence the environmental, climate and crop yield effects.

These fiches are available to Member States Managing Authorities and other stakeholders through an online wiki[1].

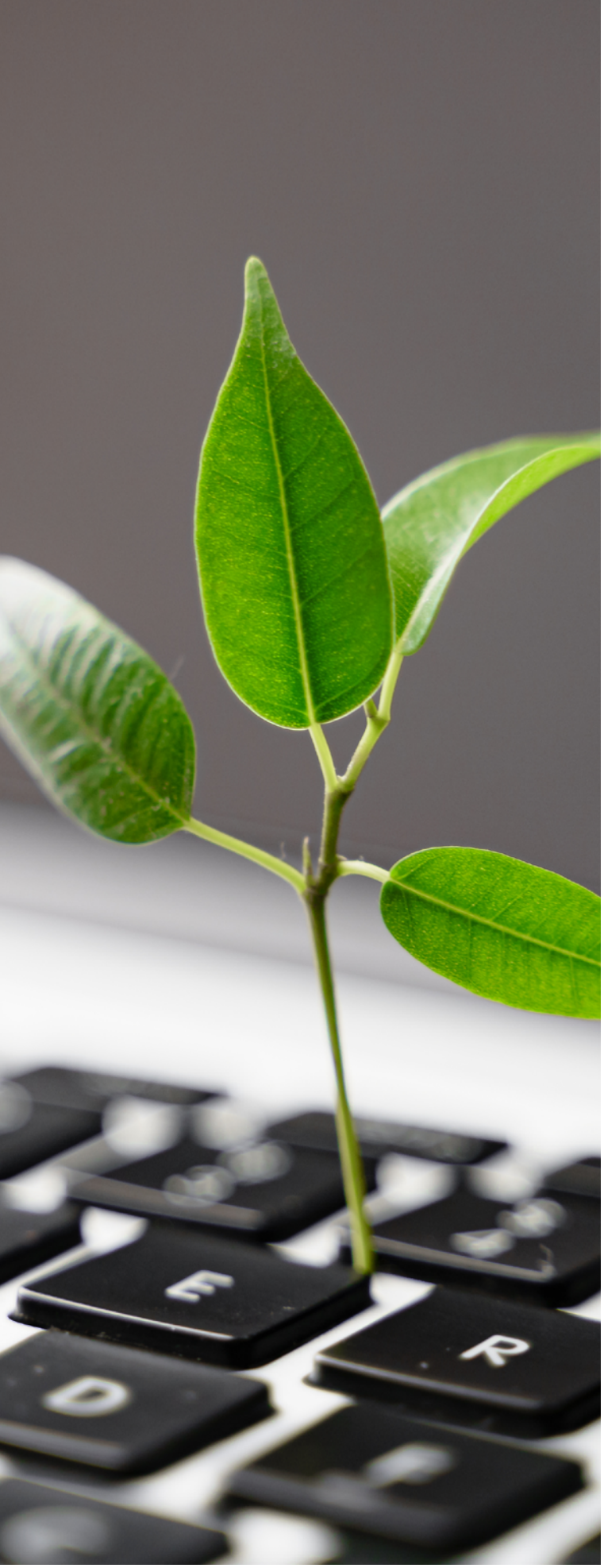
Take away messages for evaluations of RDP measures at Member State or regional levels

- The calculation of indicators (e.g. of emissions) should be based on evidence, instead of on expert-based or single project's data.
- Knowledge gaps should be identified based on the available evidence. Regional/national research and monitoring actions should be aimed at filling those gaps, while not repeating efforts where evidence is already available.
- Regional/national research and monitoring agencies should report data under standardised forms in databases.
- Data can be used in meta-analysis to obtain evidence.
- Local databases of experimental evidence from studies should be created. ■

To learn more about the meta-analysis of farming practices and see examples, explore the presentation, 'The effects of agricultural practices on the environment' from the Helpdesk's Good Practice Workshop 14.



1. Access to the wiki can be requested sending an email to JRC-WIKI-CAP-SP@ec.europa.eu as long as you already have an EU login. For users who do not they first need to create and EU login through https://ecas.ec.europa.eu/cas/manuals/EU_Login_Tutorial.pdf. The link to the wiki, available when authorized, is https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/IMAP/Home.



Launch of the **Evaluation Knowledge Bank**

In the scope of its 9th Thematic Working Group 'Research projects to support better data for evaluating the CAP' the Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with DG AGRI has launched an interactive tool 'The Evaluation Knowledge Bank'.

The purpose of the Knowledge Bank is to provide insights into various outputs developed in initiatives and projects at the EU and Member States levels concerning data infrastructures and data use. Furthermore, it proposes a quick guide on potential use, showing how these outputs could be used for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP.

Bringing you new and innovative data for your evaluations!

High quality, precise and up-to-date data are essential for the robust assessment of policies. Data availability for evaluations are also determined by how the data is collected, stored and managed. The Evaluation Knowledge Bank provides snapshots of a number of efforts completed or ongoing by researchers, data providers, high tech experts and innovators in collaboration with data users to improve data-infrastructure by introducing innovative data collection methods, modernising data management and improving data interoperability.

The Evaluation Knowledge Bank offers:

- Tools supporting data collection and monitoring and ensuring data interoperability.
- Maps and detection apparatuses that use earth observation data.
- Spatial econometric models.
- Methodological solutions and instruments that can be used to assess farm performance and social innovation.
- Indicators that can be used to measure various sustainability aspects in agriculture and rural development.
- And many more.

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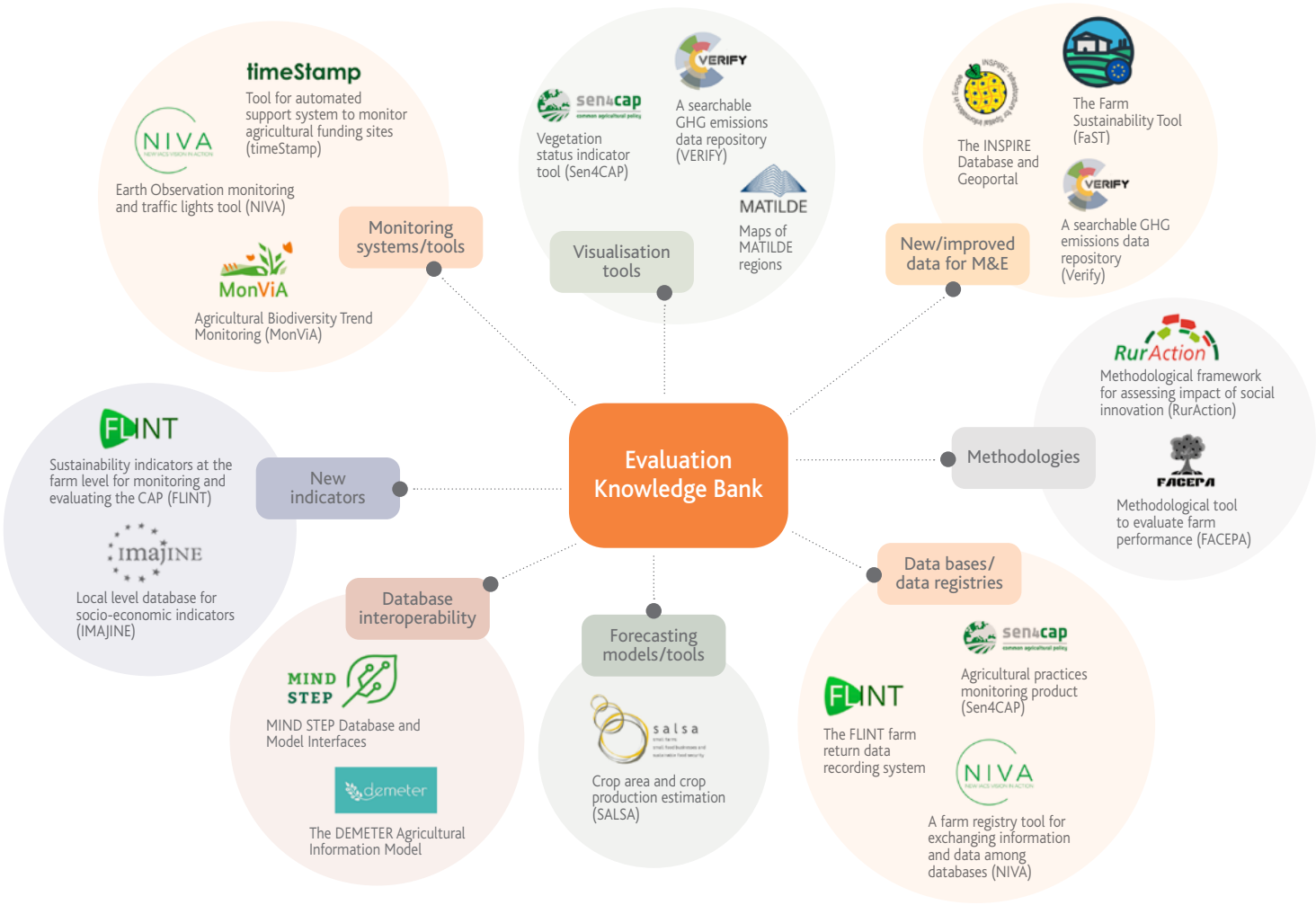
Figure 1: **Examples of project outputs in the Evaluation Knowledge Bank**



These innovative tools have been created, explored, tested, prototyped, and offered for wider use by various EU and Member State level projects and initiatives, such as: Sen4CAP, FLINT, NIVA, MonVia, RurAction, INSPIRE, SIMRA and many more. While not specifically designed with an evaluation focus, these projects provide significant knowledge and useful outputs that have the potential to support monitoring and evaluation of the CAP.

Tailor made for monitoring and evaluating the CAP

The Thematic Working Group experts have performed a thorough analysis of the selected projects' outputs available in the 'Evaluation Knowledge Bank' and developed a short guide for each one to identify and highlight its potential relevance and use for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP.

Some of these innovative solutions include how available data can be used for estimations and macro level evaluations (e.g. water consumption) or which data could be used to complement the contextual background, for example, in terms of the territorial and socio-demographic context including baseline data (pertinent to balanced territorial development). For other project outputs experts highlight various transferability aspects that need to be considered like access to data and user friendliness of the outputs.

At this time, the Evaluation Knowledge Bank contains more than 40 outputs from a variety of projects and more will be included in the future as the Evaluation Helpdesk continues to explore and analyse various ongoing projects and initiatives. To facilitate more targeted and needs-based selection of the information collected in the Evaluation Knowledge Bank, all outputs can be filtered by various pre-established categories which allow them to be linked to the CAP evaluation context and related data needs. Outputs and projects can be filtered by:

- Project.
- Relevant CAP Objective.
- Data Collection System Used.
- Associated Evaluation Approaches.
- Type of Output.
- Territorial Coverage.
- Spatial Scale.

For example, a user can select projects or specific outputs that can support the assessment of a specific CAP objective. Other filters allow the user to easily select outputs by the data

collection systems used (e.g. IACS/LPIS, FADN, Copernicus, national statistics, ad hoc data collection). If users filter by data collection systems, FADN, they will find at least nine different outputs from different projects which use FADN as a data source (A farm registry tool for exchanging information and data among databases (NIVA), the DEMETER Agricultural Information Model and complementary data using FADN standards from FLINT's farm return data recording system, etc.). Another way users can categorise projects or outputs is the evaluation approach (e.g. scenario analysis, cost and benefit analysis, ex ante, ongoing or ex post evaluation of impacts). In this case, users will find more than ten outputs which can be used for the ongoing impact assessment as they can facilitate speedy collection and timely access to data.

A bright and innovative future

The thematic working group will continue its work with experts and other stakeholders to further explore how the knowledge accumulated in the Evaluation Knowledge Bank can be further transferred for better use of data for evaluating the CAP. Guidance on the potential use of various project outputs for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP will be further developed and complemented with more practical recommendations, examples and useful tips for use.

What is the Evaluation Knowledge Bank in short?

- ✔ A comprehensive and searchable collection of outputs from existing EU/MS data-related projects which are consolidated in one place.
- ✔ Descriptions of selected project outputs and a quick guide on their potential use for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP

Experts have performed a thorough analysis of the selected project outputs available in the 'Evaluation Knowledge Bank' and developed a short guide for each one to identify and highlight its potential relevance and use for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP.

The Evaluation Helpdesk encourages you to visit the Evaluation Knowledge Bank online and to explore further:

- Which projects' outputs you find most essential and relevant for the evaluation of the CAP in your Member State?
- How could these outputs support the evaluation of the CAP in your Member State?

As the Evaluation Knowledge Bank will be constantly updated, the Evaluation Helpdesk also encourages you to share:

- What are possible challenges in applying selected project's outputs in your Member State?
- What kind of information is still missing in the Evaluation Knowledge Bank?

We are happy to receive your feedback on the Evaluation Knowledge Bank at info@ruralevaluation.eu ■

Explore the Evaluation Knowledge Bank NOW!

European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

New topics and formats for the **yearly capacity building events EvaluationWORKS! 2021**

The ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk provides yearly capacity building events, EvaluationWORKS! in each Member State to strengthen evaluation capacity. These events provide valuable opportunities for evaluation stakeholders in each Member State to identify and discuss the challenges they have faced and come up with potential solutions in order to improve their evaluation capacity for the future. These workshops are conducted in the local language of each Member State.

Member States' capacity building needs before the end of the programming period are diverse, therefore the Evaluation Helpdesk has created a flexible format to allow Member States to tailor events to their needs. Member States can enrich their evaluation capacity by picking and choosing topics in relation to:

- **Evaluation plans - experiences and outlook for the future:**
  Events focused on this topic will deal with the use of evaluation plans as a tool to structure, manage and steer evaluations, including a reflection on how to better plan data management systems for improving the evaluation of the CAP for the future.

- **Better data for evaluating the CAP:**
  Finding data for evaluation of sufficient quality is one of the main concerns of Member States. When choosing this topic, the participants of EvaluationWORKS! events will jointly explore questions such as, 'How to make a better use of FADN for future evaluations?' And 'What knowledge exists from EU-level research projects that may inspire innovative data management for evaluation purposes?' The background material for these events will be linked to other Evaluation Helpdesk's activities, in particular, the most recent Thematic Working Group.

- **How to deal with contextual changes related to monitoring and evaluation:**
  Member States may also use EvaluationWORKS! events as a forum to discuss how contextual changes such as COVID-19, the EURI funds and the transition period influence the evaluation architecture and the methodologies which will be used for evaluation.

Overall, the objective of the workshops is to bolster Member States' evaluation capacities by taking stock of their experiences from the current programming period in order to better serve and prepare them for the next one.

Besides the regular yearly capacity building events, Member States can opt for a new innovative peer-learning workshop focused on one of the suggested topics. These peer-learning seminars will provide a platform for two or more Member States to exchange, allowing them to share their valuable experiences and challenges in order to better help each other grow for the future. In addition to this collective capacity building approach, some of these transnational workshops will benefit from the presence of a thematic expert, who will support Member States in identifying possible solutions for their specific concerns.

The target audience of the yearly capacity building events includes RDP Managing Authorities, Evaluation Units at the ministries responsible for the RDP, data providers for evaluation, Paying Agencies, National Rural Networks, stakeholders dealing with Pilar I of the CAP, evaluators, as well as Desk Officers from the European Commission. ■

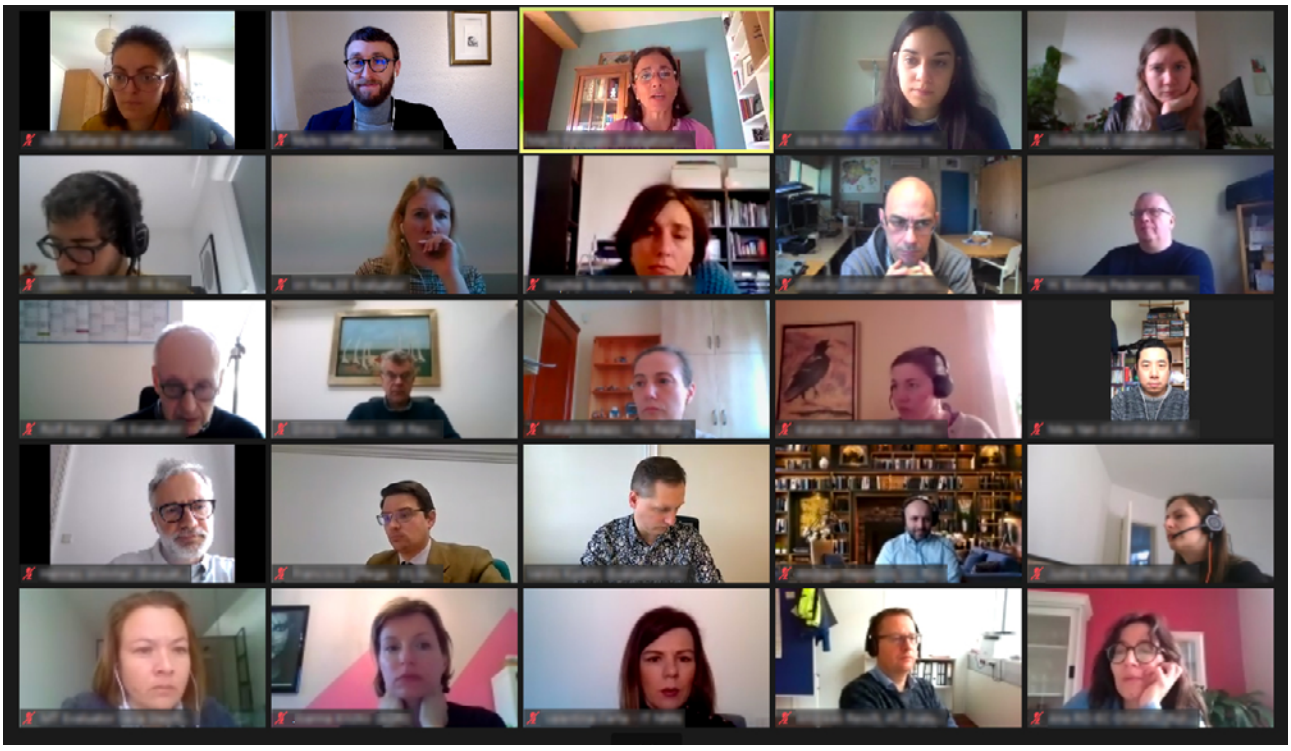
Learn More about
EvaluationWORKS! 2021 Events

European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

The 16th Good Practice Workshop:

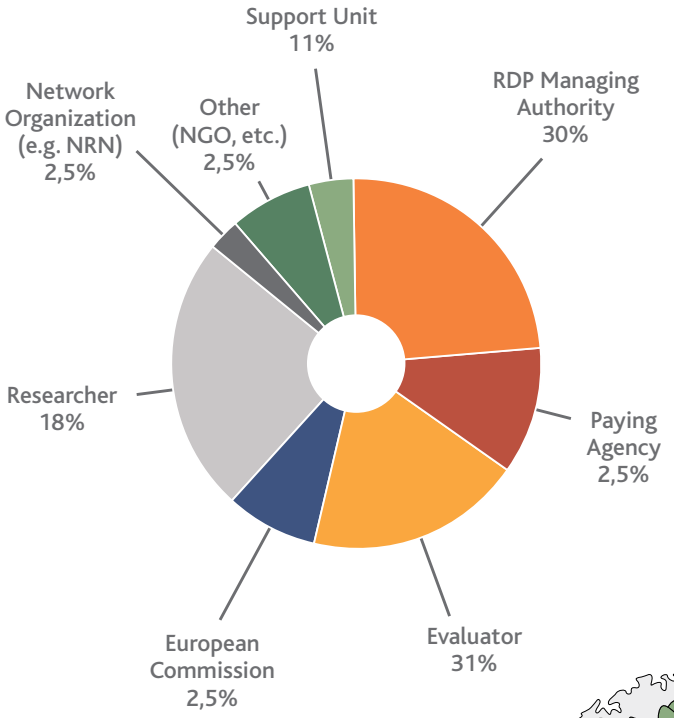
'Improving data management and information systems for the purpose of CAP evaluations'

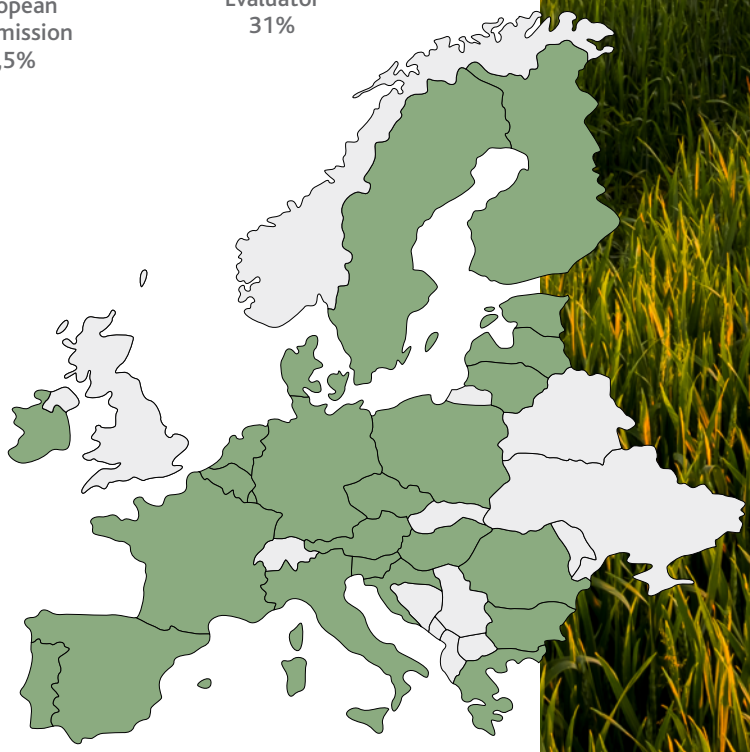
The 16th Good Practice Workshop of the Evaluation Helpdesk on 'Improving data-management and information systems for the purpose of evaluation', took place online on 16-17 March 2021. It brought together 119 participants from 26 different EU Member States, including RDP Managing Authorities, evaluators, European Commission representatives, researchers, National Rural Networks, and other evaluation stakeholders. The overall objective of the workshop was to reflect on innovative experiences in relation to data management and information systems for the purpose of evaluation in the context of the CAP. The workshop explored EU level projects that deal with data infrastructure, collection, and monitoring with the goal to identify their relevance and usefulness for evaluation.



The first day of the workshop focused on experiences from EU level projects bringing innovation into data management systems. This included IACS, notably through the Sentinels for Common Agriculture Policy (Sen4CAP) and New IACS Vision in Action (NIVA) projects. Examples from the practical application of the projects were presented from Castilla y León (Spain) and Denmark concerning the use of Sen4CAP products and from France concerning their work on agri-environmental indicators in the context of the NIVA project. The second day brought together experiences from EU-level projects aiming to improve the scope and quality of indicators for evaluating the CAP. This included Farm-level Indicators for New Topics (FLINT) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for the Common Agricultural Policy (MEF4CAP) projects as well as practical experiences from Ireland and Hungary.

Figure 1: **Participants by role and Member State**





IACS and FADN databases are commonly used for evaluation.

Sen4CAP provides Sentinel data derived information to build larger data sets, while NIVA introduces further digital innovations in IACS systems, relevant for monitoring and evaluation. FLINT on the other hand collects additional data to modernise the FADN and MEF4CAP will bring further digitalisation that may be relevant for the future Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN).

Enriching and expanding existing data sources/ databases

Indicators are a key tool for CAP evaluations.

In addition to bringing new data for existing indicators (e.g. satellite and sensor data from MEF4CAP, or Sentinel derived data from Sen4CAP) these projects also develop new indicators that may be relevant for future evaluations of the CAP (e.g. sustainability indicators created by FLINT or agri-environmental indicators from NIVA).

Providing new and/or better data for indicators and development of new indicators

Linking databases is vital for Managing Authorities and evaluators.

The prime focus of MIND STEP for instance is the development of an integrated data framework bringing together FADN and other farm economic databases. Similarly, MEF4CAP also looks to link national datasets for a broader use in policy evaluations. In the case of NIVA, this project strives to create products that focus on the interoperability between IACS and farm management information systems.

Creating interfaces between databases that were not previously linked

EU level projects demonstrate cooperation between stakeholders to improve the governance of data.

Farmers, data providers, researchers, Paying Agencies, as well as evaluators and Managing Authorities (the latter being the core stakeholders for designing and managing evaluations) can all work together to facilitate better data management. In addition to the strong links between researchers and Paying Agencies, NIVA offers further evidence of a multi-actor approach employed for the development of indicators.

Improving governance of data management

Other considerations for the use of EU level projects' outputs

The outcomes of the discussions on the EU level projects presented at the workshop, their practical application and expert input, together with group discussions, provided further considerations concerning the use of the projects' outputs.

Adaptation of systems and tools

Adaptations of existing data collection and monitoring systems can facilitate the use of EU level projects' outputs in different contexts. Adapations may help with the identification of additional or different data points for the measurement and inclusion of additional or different collection frequencies or for the broadening of the sample type or size.

Involvement of Managing Authorities and evaluators

The EU level projects presented at the workshop involved primarily Paying Agencies. However, a closer collaboration with Managing Authorities and evaluators who are key evaluation stakeholders and researchers who are both users of data (Sentinel data, farmer data, etc.) and tool developers, may facilitate further use of EU level projects' outputs at the Member State level for the purpose of evaluations.

Managing the burden for farmers

Practical implementation of these EU level projects at the Member State level stresses the need to strike a balance between how much information can be asked from farmers (often sensitive personal information) and how much is already available through other sources. Data collection 'for' the farmer and not only 'from' the farmer has been at the core of these projects, ensuring that where possible any potential 'burden' serves the wider purpose to use data for developing/improving the policy and ultimately benefitting the farmer. ■

Development of methodologies and indicators

Some EU level projects offer a standardised methodology for data collection or indicator development, for instance, the creation of data registers for the collection of specific data or standardised collection of spatial and micro data. Evaluation methodologies may also consider the use of the indicators developed by these projects, for instance, the sustainability indicators proposed by FLINT or the agri-environmental indicators from NIVA.

Training and transfer of knowledge

Trainings on the use of this new data, new systems or new indicators developed, may be useful, due to the high level of technical expertise required (e.g. for spatial statistical modelling, farm level modelling or for designing highly complex environmental indicators). The transfer of this knowledge can even be achieved through events already organised in the context of these EU level projects or other events or meetings tailor-made to the needs of Managing Authorities and/or evaluators.

Explore the Presentations and Workshop Report

New Report: Impact of the CAP measures on the general objective 'viable food production'

Back to BASICS:
LUCAS 2022 Supporting Better Environmental Evaluations

Land cover and land use are of high importance in the definition and evaluation of common agricultural and environmental policies.

The Land Use and Coverage Area frame Survey (LUCAS) is a European field survey programme, launched in 2001 and implemented by Eurostat. If follows a standardised survey methodology and provides harmonised statistics on land use and land cover in the European Union (EU). In addition, it provides information on agriculture, the environment, landscapes, sustainable development, ground evidence for calibration of satellite images, a register of points for specific surveys (such as soil, biodiversity, etc.) and for the core European *in situ* data collection network.

LUCAS data are primarily gathered through direct observations made by surveyors on the ground (in situ) or by photo interpretation if direct observation is too costly or difficult. It extends over the whole of the EU's territory and is based on a standardised survey methodology in terms of a sampling plan, classifications, data collection processes and statistical estimators that are used to obtain harmonised and unbiased estimates of land use and land cover.

For 2022, a specific LUCAS Land Features (LFs) module will be implemented to further complement the Copernicus small woody features data. The module is planned for 93,000 LUCAS points and seeks spatial representativeness at the Member State level and potentially also at NUTS 2 level. This new module provides a consistent quantification of LFs for the EU and Member State level with information of different types of LFs.

The module is planned for 93,000 LUCAS points and seeks spatial representativeness at the Member State level and potentially also at NUTS 2 level.

Send your questions to:
info@ruralevaluation.eu

W (Woody LF)

G (Perm. Grass)

T (Temp. Grass)

D (Ditches)

P (Ponds)

S (Stones)

C (Cultural LF)

In this context, landscape features are defined as small fragments of natural or semi-natural vegetation in agricultural landscape which provide ecosystem services and support for biodiversity. The feature distinguishes different land feature types: woody vegetation, permanent grass/herbaceous LF, temporary herbaceous LF, ditches and streams, small ponds and wetlands, stones walls, cairns, terraces and cultural features.

LUCAS data on non-woody LFs can be combined with Copernicus small woody features data. The simple, harmonised, science-based approach for the LF definition and typology are essential to assess LFs for the CAP context-layer.

The simplified definitions and survey protocols will be made available to the Member States for their own LF surveying and monitoring activities. ■

Learn More about LUCAS

Commission publishes results of new evaluation of EU State aid rules for agriculture, forestry and rural areas

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.

- **Online - TBD** - 16th Rural Networks Steering Group
  Read more >>>
- **Denmark -10 September 2021 -14th EES Biennial Conference**: Evaluation in an Uncertain World: Complexity, Legitimacy and Ethics
  Read more >>>
- **Online - 17 September 2021** - 26th Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP
  Read more >>>
- **Online - October 2021** - 18th Good Practice Workshop
  Read more >>>
- **Online - TBD** - 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.

European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

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