

# Support study to the Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on water

## Main findings and recommendations

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*The information and views set out in this support study to the evaluation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission*

**-Alliance Environnement-**

European Economic Interest Grouping

# Objective and scope of the study

## Objective

- To examine where and how the CAP instruments and measures have impacted water quality and quantity (programming period 2014-2020)

## Scope

- EU-27 + in-depth study in River Basin Districts of 10 MS
- “CAP measures addressing sustainable management of natural resources and climate actions” relevant for water protection
- Other CAP instruments and measures with potential side effects (e.g. direct payments, sector-specific measures)

# List of the relevant CAP measures to protect water

Increasing level  
of requirements  
for farmers



**Pillar II – RDP measures**  
*Voluntary with  
compensation for cost  
incurred and income  
foregone*

**Knowledge transfer and cooperation**

- M1 Knowledge transfer and information actions
- M2 Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services
- M16 Cooperation

**Land occupation and sustainable management practices**

- M4 Investment in physical assets
- M8 Investment in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests
- M10 Agri-environment-climate
- M11 Organic Farming
- M12 Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments
- M13 Payments for areas facing natural constraints
- M15 Forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation

**Territorial development (including investment in non-agricultural activities)**

- M19 LEADER

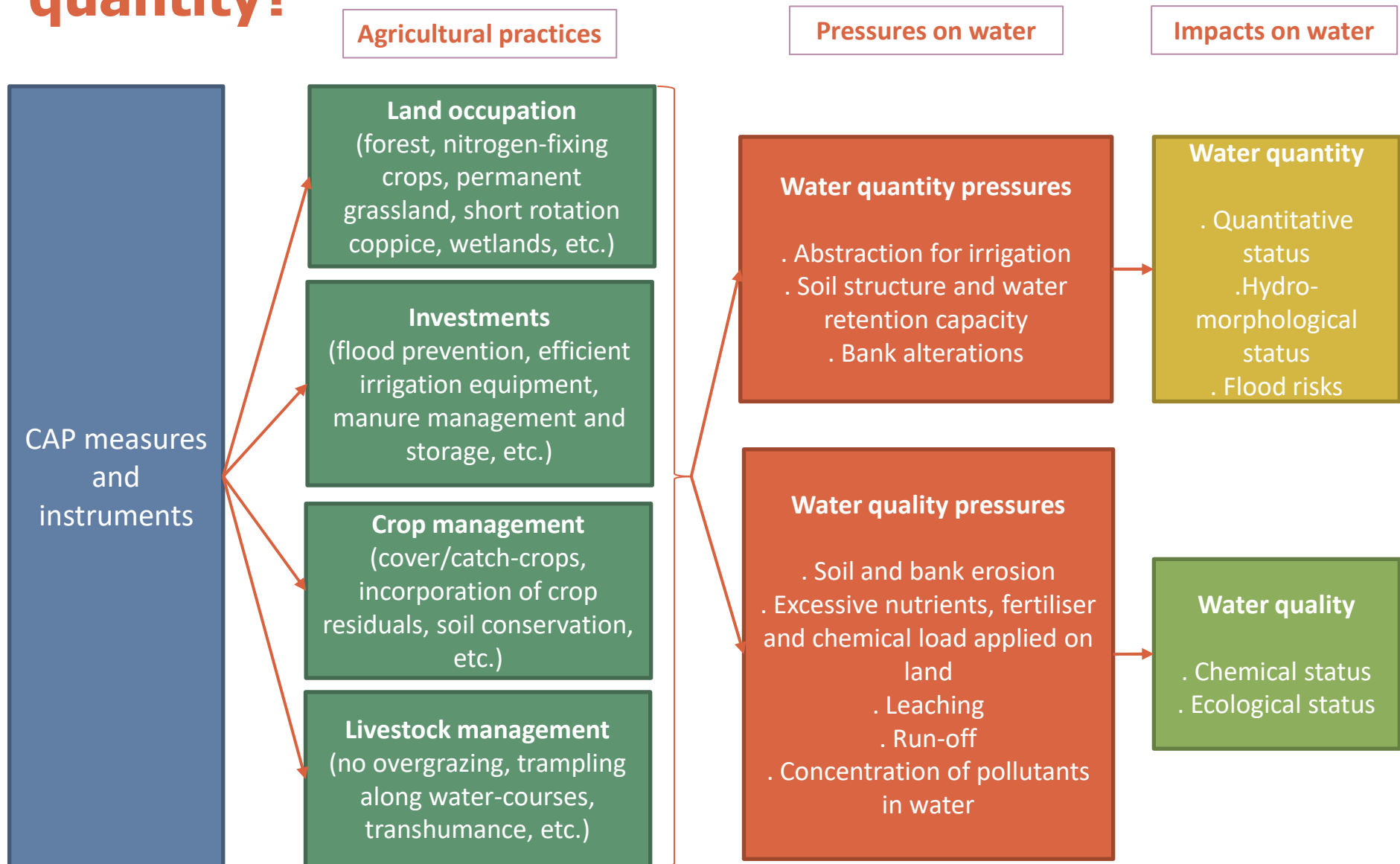
**Pillar I – Greening  
Payments**  
*Mandatory with support*

- Ecological Focus Areas
- Permanent Grassland and ESPG
- Crop diversification

**Cross-compliance**  
*Regulatory norms*

- GAEC 1 Buffer strips along water courses
- GAEC 2 Authorisation for abstraction
- GAEC 3 Groundwater protection
- GAEC 4 Minimum soil cover
- GAEC 5 Land management to limit erosion
- GAEC 6 Maintenance of soil organic matter
- GAEC 7 Retention of landscape features
- SMR 1 Against water pollution by nitrates
- SMR 10 Placing of Plant Protection Products on the market

# How can the CAP affect water quality and quantity?



# Effects of cross-compliance on water

## Implementation choices by Member States

- Member States usually settled for minimum standards
- Additional ones depend on Member States' choices (e.g. no prohibition in the application of pesticides under GAEC 1, requirement of appropriate means to measure the volumes of water abstracted under GAEC 2).

## Effects observed

- Large implementation – 83% of UAA concerned (CMEF 2017)
- Cross-compliance instruments strengthen the controls of requirements established outside the CAP (Standards for good agricultural and environmental conditions of land (SMR) – E.g. Nitrates Directive)
- They provide for minimum mandatory standards of good agricultural and environmental condition of land (GAEC), which Member States specify with concrete requirements

## Recommendations

- To further improve waterbodies' status, higher requirements should be set under these schemes in the EU regulation (e.g. ban of both fertilisers and pesticides on buffer strips).

# Effects of greening payments

## Implementation choices by Member States

- Greening payments do not directly address water issues and rely on three EU-wide practices aiming to protect soil quality (crop diversification), farm biodiversity (ecological focus area (EFA)) and carbon sequestration (permanent grassland)
- Implementation choices in case-study Member States not ambitious enough to result in significant changes in farming practices

## Effects observed

- Large uptake by farmers (because the penalties are significant in case of non-compliance)
- Greening measures, as implemented by Member States, are guaranteeing the maintenance of minimum beneficial practices by farmers

## Recommendations

- More stringent requirements should be set under these measures
- Exemptions should be avoided (e.g. equivalent practices for maize monocropping in Alsace FR)

# Effects of RDP measures

## Implementation choices by Member States

- Significant EU budget allocated to environmental priorities (P4/5A, 5D and 5E)
- Only few measures supporting operations directly targeting water quality and quantity issues (e.g. M10 AECM, M11 Organic farming, M4 Investments, M12 Natura 2000 and WFD).

## Effects observed

- Positive effects of the RDP measures on water quality (M10 AECM, M11 OF, M8/M15 Forest measures, M12 N2000 and WFD) – but results varied depending on the MS
- The percentage of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation systems was very limited at the EU level (CMEF indicators)
- M4 support investments to increase the irrigated areas when water savings achieved at the level of the holding

## Recommendations

- Greater attention granted to quantitative water issues, and notably to water savings
- Increase the attractiveness of the RDP measures
- Targeting of the RDP measures towards priority areas

# Are there CAP measures with adverse effects on water ?

- Other CAP instruments and measures can have indirect impact on water quality and quantity depending on the distribution of the support granted and types of farming supported.
  - Delivery of **direct payments** to agricultural holdings with mixed effects on water complying with minimum standards set under the GAECs and SMRs (cross-compliance)
  - Water-demanding sectors such as maize, vegetables, fruits and flowers significantly rely on CAP Pillar I, which represent a significant share of their income
  - **Direct payments (BPS, VCS)** are significant income support for small diversified holdings mostly in grass-fed animal sectors
  - **Sector-specific support** granted under the CMO regulation can be used to support investment in irrigation under less stringent rules than M4 Investments

## Recommendations

- Direct payments, as income support, should be better oriented toward less profitable holdings implementing practices beneficial for the environment.
- Additional eligibility criteria should also be considered under Voluntary Coupled Support to ensure that sufficient pasture area is available by livestock unit, and avoid any increase of the nutrient pressure on water under livestock VCS.



# Coherence with the WFD

Overall coherence of the CAP with the WFD

- Involvement of water authorities in the design process of the RDP
- CAP instruments and measures contribute to the objectives of the WFD
- But improvements are needed as regards :
  - Better linkage ensured by concomitant elaboration of RDPs and RBMPs
  - Higher use of M12 to compensate farmers implementing legal requirements set under the WFD
  - Availability of support to increase irrigated areas where waterbodies are in less than good quantitative status
  - Delivery of direct payments to specific sectors with mixed effects on water depending on their agricultural practices

Are RDP measures implemented in RBDs to address agricultural pressures ?

- Needs addressed in case-study RDPs are overall coherent with the orientations of the RBMPs, even though some needs can be underestimated in RDPs (e.g. improvement of the state of aquatic ecosystems)
- Relevance can be increased when the measures are targeted toward areas with specific water issues (e.g. with eligibility/selection criteria)
- High administrative burden associated to the implementation of RDP measures sometimes prevents larger use by water agencies

# EU Added value of the CAP

- EU framework brought added value by :
  - Raising awareness on water issues and putting the topic of water higher on the agenda of the MS
  - Favouring exchanges between Member States (e.g. European Network for Rural Development)
  - Stimulating the implementation of a higher level of requirements and budget for water and environmental issues than it would have been done nationally
  - Creating a level playing field for all Member States

# Conclusion

- ✓ Variety of situations in the RBDs studied : different water issues and implementation choices → difficult to measure the effects achieved by the CAP framework at EU level
- ✓ Overall positive contribution of the CAP to maintain/foster agricultural practices with positive effects on water : introduction of buffer strips, implementation of the Nitrates Directive, extensive grass-fed livestock, etc.
- ✓ But the CAP could be :
  - more ambitious - with an even higher priority granted to environmental issues and greater linkage with WFD
  - more stringent (e.g. cross-compliance or greening) and better oriented toward beneficial farm systems (direct payments, eligibility criteria)
  - more incentive - to favour the voluntary implementation of sustainable management practices by farmers

# Thank you for your attention

