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# Assessing results-based interventions: lessons learned and challenges ahead



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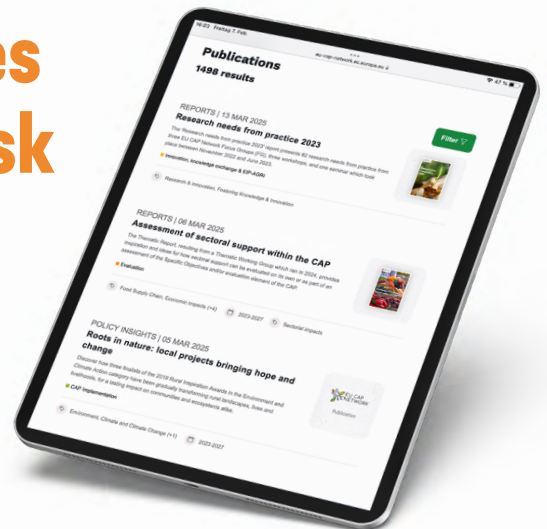




## NEWSROOM

## Discover the latest activities from the Evaluation Helpdesk

Each year, the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP organises three **Thematic Working Groups** to find practical solutions for specific issues related to the evaluation of the CAP. From March to December 2025, experts and representatives from Member States and the European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) will develop tools for strategic topics related to the evaluation of the CAP. The outcomes will be available in the [EU CAP Network publications database](#).



### Assessing digitalisation under CAP Strategic Plans

The aim of this Thematic Working Group is to create a shared understanding of how to monitor and assess the contribution of the CAP to the digitalisation of agriculture and rural areas. Although a few indicators in the [Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework \(PMEF\)](#) can provide information about digitalisation, they are insufficient to give a complete overview of the contribution of the CAP to digitalisation. During this Thematic Working Group, which will run from March to July 2025, participants will explore possible tools on how digitalisation under CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) can be better tracked and assessed. The discussions and potential solutions will be summarised in a thematic report.





## Evaluation of the environment and climate architecture in CAP Strategic Plans

This Thematic Working Group aims to provide guidance for Managing Authorities and evaluators on assessing green architecture's performance at Member State level. The work will focus on horizontal aspects of the architecture, including how to assess the interplay between the instruments forming part of the green architecture, the green architecture instruments with the rest of the CSP and the green architecture instruments with instruments external to the CSP. This will explore whether there are synergies or contradictions in the design influencing its performance.

Other aspects to be considered include how to assess the overall contribution of the environmental and climate architecture for 2023 to 2027 compared to the contribution from the implementation of the CAP for the previous programming period, as well as how to assess the potential simplifications of the green architecture design.

This Thematic Working Group will run between March and December 2025, with the final outcomes presented in guidelines to be published in early 2026.



## Assessing the CAP's contribution to farmers' position in the food supply chain

The overall objective of this Thematic Working Group is to develop practical guidelines allowing Managing Authorities and/or evaluators to assess whether the position of farmers in the food supply chain has been improved as a result of CAP support (Specific Objective 3).

This Thematic Working Group will run from March to November and recommend a range of quantitative and qualitative tools that can be combined by Managing Authorities when assessing the effectiveness of their CSP as regards to Specific Objective 3. It will clarify how [PMEF indicators](#) can be used and whether additional indicators are needed to better reflect the progress achieved with CSPs and to analyse the benefits for farmers involved in forms of cooperation, short supply chains and quality schemes.





## SPOTLIGHT

# How evaluation can help to shape results-based interventions and address open questions

**In a 2024 Thematic Working Group, experts analysed examples of result-based interventions in EU countries and outside of the EU. They highlighted the role of evaluation in all the key phases of these interventions to protect the environment.**

Result-based interventions (RBI) are increasingly discussed and used to give farmers and beneficiaries more flexibility in implementing agricultural policy. RBIs allow farmers to choose the best approaches to their specific context for achieving the desired environmental outcomes, which are carefully measured and rewarded.

What constitutes an RBI and what does not? Experts who participated in the Thematic Working Group '[Assessment of results-based interventions](#)', organised by the EU CAP Network with the support of the Evaluation Helpdesk, agreed on the following definition:

**"Result-based interventions provide beneficiaries with a payment that is, at least partly, dependent on achieving defined and verifiable outcomes that can be measured in the field or estimated by scientific models."**

In the 2023-2027 CAP programming period, nine Member States have included sixteen RBIs in their approved CSPs: Austria, Finland, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

Moreover, the Thematic Working Group analysed examples of RBIs for EU-funded LIFE projects and payment schemes in the USA, Australia and Switzerland.

"Evaluation plays a significant role in all stages of result-based interventions and should take into account certain specificities arising from the differences between action and result-based interventions," highlighted Costas Apostolopoulos, Evaluation Manager of the Evaluation Helpdesk and coordinator of the Thematic Working Group.

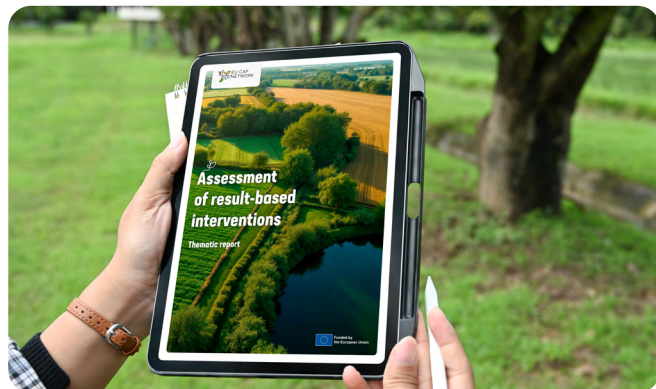
The key characteristics of RBIs, which distinguish them from action-based ones and may impact the evaluation process, are the following:

- > **The payment for results** and the sensitivity of the payments to the different levels of results achieved to incentivise better performance and more significant environmental benefits.
- > **The flexibility** beneficiaries enjoy in determining the most appropriate practices to achieve the expected results.
- > **The requirement for a robust system of measurable, identifiable indicators** responsive to agricultural practice changes as these indicators are central for calculating the payments to beneficiaries but also for assessing the contribution of each beneficiary towards the objectives.



In an RBI, the definition of the results and the corresponding indicators is primarily shaped by the needs the intervention aims to address. This also establishes a direct link to the corresponding objectives of the CSP.

An ex ante evaluation that accompanies the design of RBIs can therefore help to ensure that the selected results are well-defined and the indicators are reliable, practical and aligned with the intervention's objectives.



Evaluators can help managing authorities to ensure that the indicators are:

- > **measurable, quantifiable and verifiable** in a cost-effective and practical way through field inspections, remote sensing or other appropriate methods within the constraints of the available resources;
- > **sensitive and responsive to farmers' specific actions** as regards management practices and changes in management practices;
- > **clear, simple and understandable** by all stakeholders, including farmers, administration, policymakers and evaluators;
- > **aligned with the environmental, climate and other policy objectives** the RBI contributes to; and
- > **consistent and reliable** in providing data across different contexts and over time, allowing for environmental, climatic and socioeconomic variations.

#### Main common themes identified in evaluations of RBIs and the stage they can be mostly evaluated at

Theme	Evaluation stage		
	Ex ante	Process or formative	Summative
Farmer behaviour and incentives			
Policy design and integration			
Spatial and subject targeting			
Implementation complexity Equity and fairness			
Monitoring, reporting and verification challenges			
Additionality			
Permanence of results			
Displacement			

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2024)

How the results and the indicators are formulated is central to the design of RBIs as it directly affects how beneficiaries and administrations perceive the risk of choosing and implementing RBIs.

Therefore, ex ante evaluations of RBIs must consider the behavioural characteristics of the intended beneficiaries (e.g. their reluctance to change) as well as the level of change of management that is required for the administration of RBIs compared to the administration of action-based interventions.

When potential beneficiaries show a high-risk aversion and the administrations are not sufficiently prepared for the change

required to administer an RBI, evaluators may recommend the adoption of a hybrid RBI with an action-based component, familiar to both beneficiaries and administrators.

Moreover, the result-based component should have indicators that have the characteristics listed above and are integrated, as much as possible, to existing data collection processes, such as the [Integrated Administration and Control System \(IACS\)](#).

"In the following step, during the implementation," added Costas Apostolopoulos. "Evaluations can help to ensure that the RBIs remain relevant, effective and aligned with their intended outcomes."



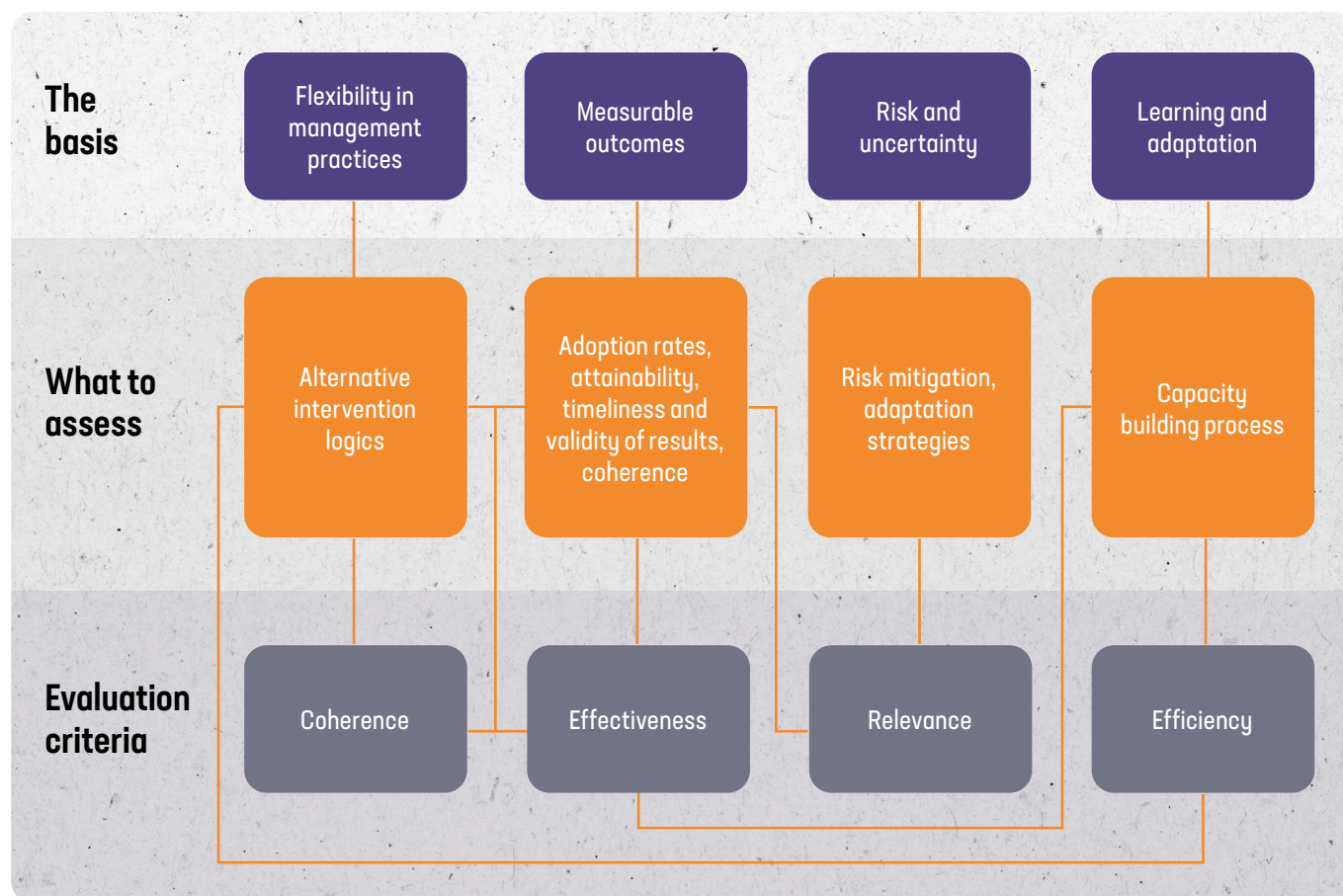
At the centre of evaluations during the implementation is the progress towards expected results. Farmer adoption rates can contribute to assessing the relevance of the intervention design to the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries.

Low adoption rates among beneficiaries may be related to result definitions and payment structures not aligned with the beneficiaries' risk perception. On the other hand, very high adoption rates may reflect easily attainable results in combination with high payment rates.

Other aspects that can be assessed during the implementation are the extent to which the expected results are achieved and if they are realised in a timely manner.

The flexibility of beneficiaries to follow the most appropriate management practices to achieve results is another important aspect to consider. Evaluation during implementation can analyse alternative intervention logics for RBI to identify potential efficiency gains and formulate recommendations that may be used to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the analysed interventions.

### Conceptual framework of summative evaluations of result-based interventions



Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2024)

Finally, while doing summative evaluations of RBIs, evaluators may analyse the heterogeneity among the beneficiaries, checking whether the design and implementation decisions have led to any potential bias. Evaluators may also analyse the overall costs in relation to the measured outcomes and, most importantly, the additionality of the RBI and the permanence of the measured outcomes.

Summative evaluations can also give recommendations on how to better measure outcomes in the future, complement the PMEF indicators, and demonstrate the net contribution of RBIs to the corresponding objective(s) better.

For example, the PMEF indicators 0.18 (number of livestock units (LU) benefitting from support for animal welfare, health or increased biosecurity measures) and R.44 (share of LU covered by supported actions to improve animal welfare) for animal welfare can be complimented by indicators like the one used in the intervention EHK-12 (improved conditions for fattening pigs) of the Finnish CSP which relates to the absence of injuries (number of carcasses with intact tails processed in the slaughterhouse). Such animal-based indicators can reflect the overall improvement in animal welfare and can be used as impact indicators to better demonstrate the effect of CAP support towards animal welfare.

Download the report '[Assessment of results-based interventions](#)' from the EU CAP Network website.





## SHOWCASE

## A result-based scheme helps save an oak agroforest in Portugal

**The Montado, an agro-silvopastoral system in Portugal's Alentejo region, features an open tree cover primarily composed of cork oak (*Quercus suber*), holm oak (*Quercus rotundifolia*) and Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*). These trees provide wood for charcoal, cork and acorns while offering shelter for livestock grazing and a bundle of ecosystem services. To counteract the decline due to tree density loss and the lack of tree regeneration, the Portuguese CAP Strategic Plan has introduced the 'Montado management by results', a fully result-based intervention scheme.**

João Marques, from the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Teresa Pinto-Correia and Isabel Ferraz-de-Oliveira, from the University of Évora explained the challenges and the solution of this intervention. The D.2.2 'Montado management by results' is an environment, climate-related type of intervention that rewards farmers who improve the environmental condition of their Montados by delivering targeted results. It aims to contribute to carbon storage in soils and biomass, preserving habitats and biodiversity and improving NATURA 2000 management.

### How are the results measured?

Results are measured using four groups of indicators corresponding to four environmental dimensions: healthy and functional soil; improvement of oak tree regeneration; conservation of Mediterranean biodiverse pastures; and of key elements (e.g. ponds, rocky outcrops) that promote biodiversity.

The indicators were first developed by the University of Évora MED (Mediterranean Institute for Agriculture, Environment and Development) based on [scientific research](#) and then tested in the field. They reflect all the objectives and promote their improvement by applying a holistic assessment of each parcel.





## Objectives and indicators of D.2.2 'Montado management by results'



### Result A

#### Healthy and functional soil

- › Indicator A1 – Degree of coverage with negative herbaceous species
- › Indicator A2 – Extension of bare soil



### Result B

#### Quercus Regeneration

- › Indicator B1 – Regeneration density at the shrub stage
- › Indicator B2 – Conservation status of regeneration



### Result C

#### Biodiverse Mediterranean pastures

- › Indicator C1 – Herbaceous balance level of the grassland
- › Indicator C2 – Degree of thistle coverage
- › Indicator C3 – Degree of bush cover



### Result D

#### Singular elements (remnant habitats) that promote biodiversity

- › Indicator D1 – Level of diversity of singular items
- › Indicator D2 – Representativeness of singular items
- › Indicator D3 – Retention status of singular items

### How are the baseline and the achieved results monitored, reported and verified?

Each parcel is scored using all the indicators and can get an overall score between 0 and 10. Payments to farmers depend entirely on the achievement of the expected results and are based on the calculated score of each field as measured by previously trained technical staff of local associations.

The ministry set up two 'local follow-up offices' for the implementation and monitoring of the RBI scheme 'Montado management

by results'. These offices, coordinated by the University of Évora, integrate three producers' associations and one local development association. The different local associations provide technical staff for the evaluation of indicators and advice on management practices.

Farmers are paid according to the score of the parcels, calculated at the time of the inspection, only if the total score is five or higher.



### How can the evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans benefit from the data collected?

The University of Evora is currently evaluating the effectiveness of the scheme. The team is collecting information on beneficiary and non-beneficiary parcels to apply a counterfactual approach that will assess the robustness of the scheme and improve its design.

The university team is currently monitoring a set of sample plots, located within the scheme and outside as control plots, with soil samples and biodiversity counting, to test the impact of the scheme and the quality and suitability of the indicators.

Moreover, the university team is developing an application that will facilitate field inspections to assess the indicators and for the farmer's self-assessment. The application will be of great support. The parcel will be geolocated and the evaluations will take place exactly on the same spot on the parcel every year.



### Will the results have a long-term impact?

After the design and implementation of the scheme, a certain level of proximity and trust between farmers and the university has been developed. Farmers are more aware of their practices and what certain results might mean for their business but also for the protection of the environment. Despite this increased awareness and ownership of the intervention by the beneficiaries, if the RBI stops being delivered after the end of the programming period, there is the risk that farmers may give up in carrying out certain practices in order to maintain the results achieved.

It is true that the more challenging it is for farmers to achieve ambitious results, the easier it is to revert these results if they stop implementing the appropriate management practices. Therefore, the economic incentives of the RBI are certainly key to maintaining certain results and supporting the farmers.







## NETWORKING

# FSDN opens new frontiers for the evaluation of the CAP

**This year, the Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN) is set to replace the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN). During a workshop organised by the EU CAP Network on the FSDN in February 2025, evaluation stakeholders were invited to show how they have been using FADN data in combination with other datasets for evaluation and how the transition to FSDN may allow better assessment of the CAP's contribution towards EU sustainability objectives.**

At the event '[EU CAP Network Workshop on Farm Sustainability Data Network \(FSDN\)](#)', a specific session was dedicated to the use of FADN during evaluation and moderated by Costas Apostolopoulos, Evaluation Manager of the Evaluation Helpdesk. While FADN data had initially been used for economic analysis, its potential for assessing the CAP's environmental impacts has been increasingly explored to develop the FADN dataset further and check it against other data sources.

The [Farm Sustainability Data Network \(FSDN\)](#) is an EU survey that gathers yearly data about farms. It builds on the long-standing Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN), which has collected farm economics data from an annual sample of around 80 000 farms across the EU for over 60 years, representing 3.7 million farms and 90% of the agricultural production.

*Source: European Commission*





Gordana Manevska-Tasevska, Associate Professor at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science explained the [Swedish experience](#) where variables that are already present in the FADN, such as expenditures for fertilisers or total working hours, have been used as proxies for environmental and social dimensions to analyse the sustainability effects of the uptake of more grass-based feeding practices.



Linn Dumez, from the Flemish Agency of Agriculture and Fisheries in [Flanders](#), Belgium, illustrated how the FADN dataset can be combined with other datasets to assess the CAP economic impact on investments. She showed how a common beneficiary identifier has been used to join the FADN dataset with the beneficiaries in an investment database. This allowed to economic variables to be cross-checked with data of farms with and without investment support.

Both speakers highlighted the benefits of the transition of FADN and FSDN for CAP evaluations. Firstly, the new variables collected under the FSDN will enrich the existing farm-level economic variables and supplement them with environmental and social ones. In addition, the transition will facilitate the combination of the FSDN dataset with the [data for monitoring and evaluation \(DME\)](#) and the [Integrated Administration and Control System \(IACS\)](#).

Costas Apostolopoulos concluded that the FSDN is expected to play a crucial role in assessing the progress of the CAP towards sustainability goals. At the Member State level, the FSDN can contribute to improve the quality of the evaluations of the CAP Strategic Plans and promote transparency, accountability and continuous improvement of the response of the CAP to the specific needs and sustainability challenges of each Member State's farming sector.

#### Evaluation reading corner

- › [EU CAP Network \(2025\) - Assessment of sectoral support within the CAP](#)
- › [European Commission, Joint Research Centre \(2025\) - Delivering the EU Green Deal - Progress towards targets](#)
- › [European Commission, Joint Research Centre \(2025\) - Short-term warming supports mineral-associated carbon accrual in abandoned croplands](#)
- › [OECD \(2025\) - Harnessing trade and environmental policies to accelerate the green transition](#)





**GET INVOLVED**

## Do you know any interesting evaluation projects, events, publications or other initiatives?

CAP Evaluation News welcomes any contribution from its readers – get in touch by emailing [evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu](mailto:evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu)

## Events calendar

Below is a pick of the latest and upcoming events that can help evaluation stakeholders improve the quality and effectiveness of CAP assessments across the EU.

-  14-16 April 2025 – Bordeaux, France – AES – [99th Annual Conference of the Agricultural Economics Society](#)
-  24 April 2025 – Warsaw, Poland – EU Presidency – [Conference: Possibilities of using insect protein in animal nutrition in the light of current legislation](#)
-  5-7 May 2025 – Warsaw, Poland – EU Presidency – [57th Conference of EU Paying Agency Directors](#)
-  26-29 August 2025 – Bonn, Germany – European Association of Agricultural Economists (EAAE) – [XVIII EAAE Congress 2025: Food system transformation in challenging times](#)

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