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MINUTES

Meeting of the Expert Group for monitoring and evaluating the CAP

17 September 2021

Chair: Ms Sophie Helaine

Delegations present: All Member States were present.

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Ms Sophie Helaine (Head of Unit, DG AGRI Unit C.4, Monitoring and Evaluation) welcomes the participants.

The minutes of the previous Expert Group meeting on 17 June and the Agenda of the meeting are approved.

2. NATURE OF THE MEETING

The Expert Group meeting is open to appointed representatives of the Member States. The meeting documents and presentations are available on <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/welcome>

3. LIST OF POINTS DISCUSSED

3.1. Budget code structure

Ms Zulema Olivan Tomas (Financial Officer, DG AGRI Unit R.4, Financial management EAGF and EAFRD) presents 'Budget code structure under the CAP SP for SFC 2021', supported by Ms Katarzyna Kisiel (Deputy Head of Unit, DG AGRI Unit R.4, Financial management EAGF and EAFRD).

After the presentation, delegates from Member States raised the following questions and comments:

France asks if it is necessary to harmonise the intervention codes with the budgetary codes.

Italy asks if the budget codes will also be recalled in SFC on ‘EC code’ in the intervention section.

Denmark asks if the document will also be presented in the Committee on the Agricultural Funds and asks to receive further information as early as possible, since corrections of the budget codes imply a reprogramming of IT-systems.

Denmark welcomes the new proposal, where a harmonisation of the declaration of expenditure across the two funds – EAGF and EAFRD (European agriculture guarantee fund and European agricultural fund for rural development) – and asks for confirmation that all the information needed by the Commission for the period 2021-2027 is now included in these new budget codes.

Denmark enquires if the new budget codes will also be introduced for interventions outside of the CAP Strategic Plan.

Spain asks if in the code ‘YY’ refers to natural year or to financial year.

Bulgaria asks if for the sectoral interventions there should not be a contribution rate code, like there is one for wine, since the EU Funds contribution is different for the different interventions, as with the rural development types of interventions.

The Commission clarifies that it intends to harmonise the codes for expenditure declared under the CAP Strategic Plans. This budgetary nomenclature will be used for the declarations of expenditure for EAGF and EAFRD under the CAP Strategic Plans. Member States may check how to adjust their internal systems. . The intention is to create an automatic coding system via the SFC 2021: when a Member State submits its CAP Strategic Plan in SFC and proposes a certain intervention, the system automatically gives a code to the intervention.

The Commission acknowledges the proposal to present the information in the Committee on the Agricultural Funds.

The Commission explains that in Pillar II, the current programmes 2014-2020 will continue to be declared following the current structure, and having separate quarterly declarations of expenditure and separate annual accounts. For the expenditures of Pillar I which are outside of the CAP Strategic Plan, the intention is to continue with the old structure of 15 codes. Member States are invited to provide feedback in this respect.

The aim is that the codes represent all the information breakdown of expenditure needed by the Commission. The final approval of the secondary legislation may still imply slight changes to the presented codes.

The Commission confirms that ‘YY’ refers to calendar year – IACS calendar year. It is a code that is used to control the respect of the payment deadlines to beneficiaries, and it concerns direct payments and rural development IACS interventions, where the payments need to be made between 1 December and 30 June of the following financial year with respect to the preceding calendar year.

3.2. Update of indicator fiches, remaining points

Ms Gaele Marion (Head of Unit, DG AGRI Unit F.1, Conception and consistency of rural development) presents ‘What is a green investment (article 68) funded by the

EAFRD'. Ms Marion and Mr Stefan Jensen (Economic and Policy Analyst, DG AGRI Unit F.1, Conception and consistency of rural development) present 'Clarification of indicator related questions'. Christophe Derzelle (Policy Officer, DG AGRI Unit D.1, Direct Payments) presents 'Methodology for Direct Payment area-based Result Indicators R.4, R.6 and R.7'.

After the presentations, delegates from Member States raised the following questions and comments:

3.2.1. Green investments

Greece asks if investments for reduction of pesticides and fertilisers could be considered as green investments. Slovakia asks if investments in better storage and precise application of manure could be considered as green investments.

Denmark asks for clarification on whether the higher support rate of 80% for productive investments with greening effects should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and if this would not result in different support rates from project to project under the same measure.

The Commission explains that the principle for an intervention to be considered as green investment is that the investment has clear benefits for the environment and climate or animal welfare. It is expected to trigger real changes and not only a marginal impact. In the example of pesticides and fertilisers, an investment which consists of a minor reduction of pesticide and fertilisers while being a large investment mostly for economic purposes, would not justify the 80% support rate and thus would not be classified as green investment. However, if the investment consists of a machinery that helps farmers to convert into a system using significantly less chemicals, then it could be justified as a green investment. The same applies to investments in better storage and precise application of manure.

The Commission clarifies that the mentioned case-by-case assessment relates to the assessment of the particular interventions in the CAP Strategic Plan. Once Member States have defined green investments and designed the related eligibility conditions, support rate(s) and selection criteria, applications which fit these criteria for these investments under that intervention would all be counted.

3.2.2. Cover note

Greece suggests that a reminder on '1 operation (one output) may contribute to several result indicators and is never split into parts in terms of its contribution to result indicators' should be included in the cover note.

The Commission acknowledges the proposal to include in the cover note this principle.

3.2.3. Indicator units

Estonia wonders whether for output indicators indicating 'other units' in the indicator name, Member States can use units different from those indicated in the output indicator fiche. For example, in fiche of O.19 'Number of operations or units supporting genetic resources', the units of measurement listed are: operations, livestock units or hectares.

Sweden and Slovakia ask whether the coupled income support to livestock is accounted for in the numerator for the indicator R.4 'Linking income support to standards and good practices'. In particular, they wonder how livestock units are translated into hectares. Slovakia points out that a similar requirement applies to R.6 'Redistribution to smaller farms', and R.7 'Enhancing support to farms in areas with specific needs', although in this case the indicators refer to the average amount paid per hectare.

France raises concerns on the change in the indicator fiche O.14 'Number of hectares (excluding forestry) or number of other units covered by environment/climate commitments going beyond mandatory requirements'. In the previous version of the fiche a reference was made to 'support granted per beehive'. In the new fiche this possibility is removed.

Slovakia asks if in the denominator of the indicator R.44 'Improving animal welfare' (i.e. total number of livestock units), should be broken down by types of animals. In addition, Slovakia wonders whether more details will be provided as regard the coefficients to be used for the purpose of converting animals to livestock units. Poland points out that the value of the cumulative indicator R.44 Improving animal welfare, could be higher than 100%, if the mean number of animals in a particular year is taken.

The Commission clarifies that for those output indicators indicating 'other units' in the label, if there are no restrictions in the SPR in that regard for the type of intervention in question, Member States may choose the best unit, providing that the unit selected is relevant and justified. Where this is not indicated, the Commission expects to see the units which are indicated in the fiches only. For R.6 and R.7, Member States can refer to the examples provided during the meeting and in the cover note.

Most of the beneficiaries of the animal coupled support will also have BISS (Basic income support for sustainability) area associated. In these cases, for the numerator of R.4, a proxy is taken, which is the BISS area before entitlements. In case Member States have beneficiaries of animal coupled support without BISS area, the numerator would take into account eligible hectares for the farms which are registered in the database, even if they do not receive payment. In case there are no hectares known for a given beneficiary of the animal coupled support, the numerator would be zero.

The Commission explains that the definition of O.14 derives from Art. 65, which provides that agri-environmental commitments must be paid per hectare. This clause remained unchanged since the beginning of the CAP reform although it was largely discussed during the technical trilogues. In duly justified cases, the support could be granted as a lump sum per beneficiary. This explains why 'other units' is retained in the indicator label.

Organic farming shall be reported under R.44 'Improving animal welfare' and into R.43 'Limiting antimicrobial use'. Member States shall collect the relevant livestock units, despite the intervention is paid per hectare. In addition, commitments in organic farming are annual payments, the data is reported in the cumulative indicators only once in the programming period. On the breakdown by type of animals, it is not necessary for the target value. The Eurostat livestock survey provides a picture in December (sometimes also in May) of the number of animals, and multiple production cycles are not counted. Similarly, in the numerator, it is proposed to look at the situation of the livestock at a given moment in time (at the time of the claim for organic farming and animal welfare, at the number of places in a building for an investment...). Thus the indicator will remain below 100%.

3.2.4. Performance clearance

Spain enquires whether in the CAP Strategic Plan commitments from the current Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), other than early retirement support, will be subject to performance clearance.

Spain asks if the top-up must be included in the unit amounts of the intervention fiches. France explains that in certain cases, supported operations can have parts of EAFRD funding with partly national funding, as well as a slight top-up and asks how to calculate in such a case the unit amount for the performance clearance.

The Commission clarifies that in the CAP Strategic Plans the former commitments related to the RDPs, other than early retirement support, will be part of the performance clearance as for all co-financed expenditure. The principle is that expenditures related to operations which are carried over from previous programming periods to be funded in the CAP Strategic Plan should be taken into account in the intervention strategy and for the target setting. Since there will be EU co-financing using the new co-financing rates, the commitments will be subject to clearance, but it will be done separately, so that it is known when the old commitments are being financed.

The top-up amounts should not be included in the unit amounts of the intervention fiches since the unit amounts are related to the EAFRD and public support is part of co-financing only (while top-ups are national funds beyond the required co-financing). Further specifications on how to include national top-ups in the CAP Strategic Plans will be given during the meeting on the SFC Technical Guideline on 21 September 2021.

3.2.5. Typographical errors in fiches

Poland points out at a potential mistake in row 15 in the presentation table for the example on the indicator R.6 Redistribution to smaller farms: it should be 270 DP/ha. Czechia points out a potential typo on slide 8, relating to the indicator R.7 Enhancing support to farms in areas with specific needs: in the numerator I think there should be 'income support' instead of 'DP'.

Germany asks if average farm size in the example of R.6 Redistribution to smaller farms, should rather be 61 ha instead of 45 ha, if the average farm size is calculated for each year.

The Commission acknowledges the typographical mistake in row 15 in the presentation table for the example on the indicator R.6 Redistribution to smaller farmers: it should be 270 DP/ha; as well as the error in R.7 Enhancing support to farms in areas with specific needs: it should be 'income support' instead of 'DP'.

The Commission clarifies that in the example of R.6 Redistribution to smaller farms, the national average farm size is not based on 16 farms, but the assumption is that there are more farms.

3.3. Cover note and calculation methods

Mr Ruggero Fornoni (Evaluation Officer, DG AGRI Unit C.4, Monitoring and Evaluation) and Ms Helaine present 'Update to the cover note and indicator fiches'. Mr Mariusz Migas (Head of Unit, DG AGRI Unit C.3, Farm economics) presents 'FADN data requests'.

After the presentations, delegates from Member States raised the following questions and comments:

3.3.1. Linking indicators to specific objectives

Poland asks if it is possible to assign a certain result indicator to two different interventions under two different specific objectives, even if the target values of result indicators cannot be split by specific objectives. Two interventions have been linked to the current R.39 ‘Developing the rural economy’, one of which is programmed under the specific objective 3, and the other under specific objective 8.

Austria asks, regarding target setting for result indicators, if a value for each specific objective needs to be specified or if the target is to be set for the entire programme.

Czechia asks for further clarification on the links between ringfencing of Pillar II, specific objectives and result indicators, in particular if it is necessary to link the political agreement with specific objectives, and then result indicators. For example, according to political agreement, ANC (Areas of Natural Constraints) contributes 50% to ringfencing. Czechia hence asks if it is necessary to link ANC with specific objectives 4, 5 or 6 and then add result indicators.

Czechia asks for a confirmation that the links between specific objectives and result indicators provided in Annex V of the cover note are not mandatory. France asks also for further details on this aspect.

Portugal asks for clarification on how to proceed with types of interventions which are not specified in the indicator fiches (e.g., investment risk mitigation support under Art. 68; or actions for prevention of disasters) of result indicators. The indicator R.5 ‘Risk management’, envisages only risk prevention interventions under Art. 70, which does not include risk mitigation. Given this, Portugal wonders what would be the most appropriate result indicator to account for risk mitigation interventions under Art. 68. Portugal also discards the use of R.9 ‘Farm modernisation’, or R.16 ‘Investments related to climate’, since not all adverse events that could lead to farm damage are linked to climate or environment.

Portugal intends to implement an intervention under Art. 28 to support ‘Improving food efficiency in livestock’, which is linked to aquaculture sector. The indicator R.13 ‘Reducing emissions in the livestock sector’ only envisages interventions under Art. 60 (sectoral interventions). However, Portugal faces a limitation, due to the lack of a sectoral programme for aquaculture. Therefore Portugal requests if it possible to include in the type of interventions concerned under R.13 also Art. 28 (eco-schemes).

Portugal enquires how linking result indicators in the case of interventions related to the conservation and improvement of biodiversity which admit payments which are not per area. On the basis of Art. 65, Portugal has two interventions with actions that relate to *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of genetic material, as well as species protection actions which include documentation and characterisation. The available result indicators R.25 ‘Environmental performance in the livestock sector’, or R.31 ‘Preserving habitats and species’, do not allow any other units besides livestock unit and hectares, respectively. However, for other indicators more flexibility is allowed. It would be helpful if this flexibility could be granted to the above-mentioned indicators.

Portugal asks which indicator should best be linked to organic farming (maintenance and conversion). The indicators R.29 'Development of organic agriculture' only refers to hectares, while Portugal would provide support per head of livestock. Portugal recalls that organic farming under Art. 28 allows payment per livestock unit.

Ireland notes that the reference to 'implementation of research programmes' related to apiculture has been deleted from the indicator R.28 'Environmental/climate performance through knowledge and innovation'. Ireland asks for advice on how to report on interventions relating to cooperation for the implementation of research programmes in the apiculture sector and what would be the most appropriate result indicator to use.

Denmark asks for confirmation that Member States will not be required to use R.35 'Preserving beehives' in the CAP Strategic Plan if planned interventions are excluded from the list of types of interventions under this indicator.

The Commission clarifies that targets for result indicators are to be set for the entire programme, without any split by specific objective.

The indicator R.39 'Developing the rural economy' can cover a wide range of activities and thus two interventions linked to two different specific objectives.

ANC payments compensate farmers for farming in areas with specific constraints and thus prevent land abandonment and provide positive environmental amenities. However, they do not entail any voluntary commitments going beyond mandatory requirements. Thus, Member States shall not link this intervention to any area-based result indicators linked to voluntary environmental practices going beyond mandatory commitments. According to the SPR, ANC payments will count for the 50% ring-fencing regardless of the links to the specific objectives and result indicators established in the CAP Strategic Plan. A specific provision on this issue was added to the cover note.

The links between result indicators and specific objectives provided in Annex V of the cover note are not mandatory, but rather considered as the most evident links. Member States are encouraged to inform the Commission in case there are links in the Annex V that Member States would not consider as such. A separation between the column of impact indicators and the column of result indicators has been introduced in the table of Annex I of the CAP SPR with a view to point out that the 'link' between result indicators and specific objectives in this table is no exclusive: more links are possible, as long as scientific evidence is provided.

The Commission explains that the idea for R.5 'Risk management', in rural development, is to only refer to the actual risk management tools, so as not to blur the difference between investments and risk management tools. In some cases, risk prevention actions could be included under sectoral programmes. If investments aiming at risk prevention are not relevant for climate adaptation, then they should be linked only to R.9 'Farm modernisation', which relates to any kind of productive investments that could increase the profitability or the value of the production.

The Commission acknowledges that R.13 'Reducing emissions in the livestock sector' can be linked to other interventions than sectoral programmes, provided they are granted by livestock unit (or animal head), which can be the case in duly justified cases for eco-schemes related to climate mitigation.

There might be a need to find a coefficient to transform fish in livestock units for the case of aquaculture. However, the Commission will check which kind of support can be granted to aquaculture.

The units of measurement indicated in the result indicator fiches express the need to have a target that can be conveyed in common units for all Member States, even if more units are possible for output indicators.

Support to organic farming can be paid per hectare only as specified under Article 28 (eco-scheme) and Article 65 (AECMC). In the cover note, organic farming is one of the interventions for which it is clearly stated to which result indicators it should contribute.

The Commission confirms that technical assistance or research in apiculture will not be linked to any result indicator.

3.3.2. Indicator definitions

France suggests for the denominator of the indicator R.35 ‘Preserving beehives’, to refer to eligible colonies of hives rather than to the general number of beehives.

Sweden asks how the reporting on gender in O.3 ‘Number of CAP support beneficiaries’ would work in case there are several people involved in a legal entity. There might be a risk that it would only increase the administrative burden without actually providing relevant information.

Poland asks if the gender split of beneficiaries needs to be programmed or only reported.

Sweden asks if, for the indicator O.33 ‘Number of supported training, advice and awareness-actions or units’, where ‘operations’ has been replaced by ‘actions’, ‘operations’ could still be used as a unit for reporting.

Belgium asks if, for the indicator R.17 ‘Afforested land’, the Commission will provide conversion factors for the calculation of the area of landscape features created, or if Member States have to indicate own conversion factors.

As regard the indicator O.34 ‘Number of hectares under environmental practices Czechia wonders whether the statement ‘Total number of hectares subject to conditionality and for which interventions listed above were paid [...]’ is not cumulative, and covers GAEC 1, 2, 9 and 10.

Sweden questions the reporting rule of unit amounts in relation to the two types of organic farming (maintenance and conversion).

The Commission explains that the whole population of beehives should be counted under R.35 ‘Preserving beehives’. This ensures to properly analyse the coverage of the policy, similar to indicators referring to the whole population of farmers or the whole arable land.

The Eurostat procedure to establish the gender in case of groups of several people involved in a legal entity provides to make a choice: asking the farmer answering the survey who is the manager. Further discussions with Eurostat will take place on the issue of 50:50 share, and other related situations, in order to find a pragmatic approach that sheds meaningful information about women in farming, while remaining proportionate.

The Commission confirms that the gender split of beneficiaries only concerns reporting, not programming, both for the result indicator on generational renewal and the output indicator on the number of CAP beneficiaries.

The Commission explains that it indicated 'action' in the indicator fiche when the corresponding article in the Basic Act mentioned 'action'. Typically, Art. 72 on knowledge exchange refers to 'actions', and sectoral programmes always refer to actions, whereas most other articles refer to operations. For reporting purposes, however, 'operations' can be used as an equivalent to 'actions'.

Member States will be able to use conversion factors for GAEC and R.17 'Afforested land', possibly the ones which are currently used for greening. A presentation on GAEC is envisaged for the next Expert Group meeting in October.

The indicator O.34 'Number of hectares under environmental practices' refers to the total area under GAEC and voluntary commitments, therefore referring to the whole area subject to conditionality and not specifically to GAEC. In the aggregate, this is very close to the eligible area to BISS area, minus the area of farms exempted from cross compliance.

The Commission clarifies that agro environmental commitments are meant to compensate beneficiaries for cost incurred and income foregone, therefore a Member State cannot justify the same cost for conversion to organic farming and maintenance of organic farming. As from the negotiation with the co-legislators, output indicators have to be reported separately as a breakdown under R.29 'Development of organic agriculture' shall be reported.

3.3.3. Data protection

Denmark asks how it will actually work to connect the different collected data, given that according to Art. 99(2) of the Horizontal regulation (HZR) the data should be submitted in an anonymised form for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

Bulgaria asks to what extent the move from FADN to more focus on the environment will influence data collection and dissemination.

The Commission clarifies that Art. 99 of the HZR refers mainly to the transparency provisions, namely to the obligations for Member States to publish information on the main beneficiaries of the CAP, and not to the data for monitoring and evaluation, for which Art. 136 applies. Whenever the Commission provides FADN data to contractors, beneficiary codes are modified and moreover a confidentiality agreement must be signed by the data users.

The Commission is currently working on enlarging FADN by including environmental and social variables. A first workshop in February and a second on 28-29 September 2021 will aim to develop the final proposal of the set of additional variables to collect. It will also take into consideration what is currently possible in the Member States. The final arrangements will make data collection more diversified in terms of the sources but also in terms of the systems, which could include a flexible and enlarged data collection platform used by public bodies and advisers, and ideally also by farmers. The intention is to promote communications and interactions with a broader public (e.g., including ONGs or specific universities).

3.3.4. *Timeline*

The Netherlands ask when an update of the cover note is foreseen.

Italy asks if and when there will be an update of the non-paper of the Annual Performance Report (APR), and if there will be a template recalling the SFC tables similar to the former 'indicator plan' template available to Member States. Further examples on performance clearance and review would also be appreciated.

Germany underlines that all information about APR is necessary for commitments in the CAP Strategic Plan, internal data preparation and programming of the IT systems, hence 2022 being already too late.

The Commission informs that no update of the non-paper of the APR is envisaged, as it is moving directly to the implementing act, which will be voted next year.

Member States are encouraged to send comments to the cover note by 1 October. The Commission stresses the importance of coming to an agreement about what has been discussed so far, in order to be able to finalise the Cover Note as fast as possible and share with Member States the tentative content of the implementing act, at least regarding the calculation method.

3.3.5. *Numbering of indicators*

France is concerned about the latest modifications in the numbering of the indicators, which poses considerable administrative burden for the preparation of the IT tools which was rather advanced. It wonders if the list could not remain the same as in the Basic Act discussed in July.

Sweden asks if all indicators' numbers are final, or only the output indicators numbers.

The Commission acknowledges the difficulties caused by the modifications in the numbering and explains that due to the legal re-drafting. It confirms that the numbering is now final for all the indicators in Annex I: impact, context, result and output indicators.

3.3.6. *Typographical errors*

Spain points out that, on page 8 of the cover note it is indicated that there are 38 result indicators (same number as in Annex I), while the actual number is 44.

The Commission takes note and will correct the cover note.

3.3.7. *Presentation from Greece*

Mr Costas Apostolopoulos (Head of Evaluation Unit, RDP Managing Authority, Greece) presents 'An interactive tool for the PMEF' and shares the [link](#) to the tool.

Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands and Portugal express their appreciation on the tool presented by the Greek colleagues.

3.4. Data needs for monitoring and evaluation

Ms Helaine gives a presentation with the title ‘Data needs for monitoring and evaluation (art. 129)’.

After the presentation delegates from Member States raised the following questions and remarks.

3.4.1. Timeline and submission of data

Denmark expresses its agreement with what is proposed on LAU units and codes, as well as the time plan for reporting. Denmark plans to design a data warehouse solution which will re-arrange the information contained in the payment system and facilitate the disaggregation of data to be submitted in parallel with the APR on 15 February. Denmark prefers if the data follows the financial year.

Germany agrees with the timeline proposed (reporting by financial year, for claim year N-1 only for IACS interventions), stressing the need to collect the data in due time and announcing that a formal approval will be sent later. Belgium and the Netherlands announce that they will send written comments on what has been proposed.

France also agrees with the timeline proposed, but has concerns with regard to 3 types of data which may be difficult to submit (i.e. data affected by technical shortcomings, data leading to additional burden for beneficiaries, data that need further definition). Hence, it is deemed necessary to clarify these issues before the entry into force of the new CAP.

Sweden agrees on the reporting timeline proposed. However, it is unclear what it is intended by the limits which apply to two typologies of organic farming, therefore examples of this will be helpful. Moreover, regarding specific data such as those on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ), the collection at Local Administrative Units (LAU) appears to be sufficient, while a clarification is needed with regards to the accuracy of data related to Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) and individual farmers.

Spain expresses its concern in relation to some technical issues related to the time plan for the delivery of data. In order to avoid an enormous amount of work at the time of submitting APR on 15 Feb of Year N and ensure the quality of the data, it is proposed to deliver the data in October/November of Year N-1. Lithuania shares these concerns due to the fact that two major reporting deadlines are set on the same date.

Italy asks clarification about the first APR that will have to be submitted.

The Commission clarifies that the discussion is aiming at collecting feedback from the Member States regarding the reporting system proposed to progress on the guidelines some Member States are requesting. To this end, the Commission invites the Member States to send written comments on the proposal presented by 1 October.

Although the definition of information needed is still in progress, the proposed note on data needs for monitoring and evaluation does not foresee information which are not already necessary to operate the new CAP and does not produce additional burden for the beneficiaries. However, in case this issue should arise, the Commission invites the

Member States to communicate it. Definitions will be further developed. Finally, the limits referred to with 'determined area after controls and before limits' might refer to entitlements or to maximum area supported applicable for an area under commitment or under organic farming.

With respect to the comments regarding the technical difficulty in GAEC reporting, the Commission invites the Member States to detect the elements which could be included in the data reporting system so as to guarantee an accurate monitoring of the conditionality. The issue concerning GAEC related data, will be addressed at a later stage in detail. However, it seems that some elements might be better off at aggregated level.

As far as NVZ are concerned, the Commission will verify if the use of LAU level data is sufficient.

Already in 2025 the Commission shall report to the Parliament and the Council on the progress of the CAP performance, in terms of protecting biodiversity, reducing emissions. This provide additional justification on why these data are needed. The date of 15 February was proposed following a request from France, but different requests could be taken into account in order to find an agreement that would be suitable for all Member States and at the same time helpful for the Commission to comply with its reporting obligations. In this sense the Commission welcomes the proposal to deliver before the 15 February.

The Commission confirms that the first APR shall be submitted in February 2024 as it can happen that for the EAFRD there could be claims at the beginning of 2023 paid from 1 October, thus in financial year 2023. Although this situation may occur in very few cases. Thus the first complete APR report will be submitted in February 2025.

3.4.2. Availability of guidelines

Denmark asks for detailed guidelines needed at the technical level in order to manage the adaptation of their system. Draft guidelines could therefore be shared already before the issuing of the secondary legislation.

The Commission clarifies that it will work on both in parallel.

3.4.3. SFC 2021

Germany requests a clarification on how the reporting and data transmission via SFC will work, especially in the case of regionalised Member States, and it suggests to address this topic during the next meeting of the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP.

The Netherlands ask when access to the SFC2021 test version could be possible, and if an example of the mentioned CSV file could be given.

The Commission explains that the submission of data for monitoring and evaluation via the SFC will be under the responsibility of the Paying Agency while the overall coordination will lie upon the Managing Authority. A CSV file will be defined in accordance with the Member States and sent via SFC. Regarding this file, the best

possible example is the current CATS information used for audit. Alternative ways could be explored in case Member States have encountered difficulties when currently transmitting the CATS data via SFC.

The structure of the code in SFC 2021 in case of a regional strategy will be discussed during the next meeting on SFC.

Access to the new version of the SFC could already be granted in October, however more detailed information may be delivered at the meeting on the 21 September. For any questions regarding the access to the test environment of SFC2021, Member States may contact the SFC SUPPORT at EC-SFC2021-INFO@ec.europa.eu.

3.4.4. Reporting on performance

France asks for a clarification on the procedures in relation to the performance review in 2025 and 2027. In order to better understand the procedure, it must be clarified whether, for the last APR in 2029-2030, in case a Member State has not been able to reach its targets, will a suspension or reduction of payments be envisaged. France also asks for a clarification about the exception in terms of performance regarding year 2026, when there is no suspension of payments, but the possible implementation of an action plan. Furthermore, France wants to understand the mechanism in place in order to ensure the fulfilment of targets by 2030 and the possible consequences in case this does not happen.

Belgium asks for a confirmation about whether from the Regulations an action plan is needed only in case the deviation from the milestones are larger than 35% for year 2025 and 25% for year 2027.

Denmark requests a clarification in relation to the procedure in place in case some data should be updated, renewed or further explained in the action plan. In particular, it would be important to understand whether such incorrect reporting of data will lead to a possibility of suspension of payments or there might be a reconciliation process as it happens for audit findings.

The Commission confirms that the performance review will take place in three years (2025, 2026 and 2027). However, the mechanism which could ultimately lead to suspension of payments might be triggered only in 2025 and 2027. This situation could occur if: 1) the deviation from the milestones are larger than 35% for year 2025 and 25% for year 2027, and 2) the Member State has not submitted an action plan or shows manifestly insufficient efforts. The suspension mechanism is not envisaged for year 2026.

The Commission underlines the importance of working hand in hand with the Member States from the very beginning to reach the targets. The suspension mechanism aims at enhancing such a collaboration through meetings and discussions about the Action Plan.

The Commission reminds that a performance based system cannot simply be reduced to the performance review, but aims also at analysing the progress towards the Green Deal targets and Impact indicators, and at performance reporting to the European Parliament, the Council and ultimately the citizens. In case, the targets reach is low (e.g. 20%) there might be a problem in defending the CAP, hence with much broader implications than financial suspensions. The Commission must demonstrate the good use

of money in implementing the CAP. Therefore, it is also important to set targets in the CAP Strategic Plan which should be ambitious enough, but at the same time realistic, and to demonstrate the CAP contribution to the three dimension of sustainability.

The Commission welcomes any correction of data which would improve the analysis and the quality of data to be published. A provision in the implementing act will be foreseen in order to enable the Member States to do corrections of technical mistakes. However, minor errors will not be corrected as they will not hamper the analysis at global level. An example of correction may be the records reported the first year for CATS combo, when small farmer payment in Poland had been recorded under the BISS.

By contrast, in the AIRs in EARDF the procedure for correcting mistakes was very long and not always smooth, regardless of the type of error or the willingness to correct of the Member State, hence the aim of this proposed mechanism is to have the best data quality possible. The data for monitoring and evaluation will not be linked to the suspension mechanism.

3.5. Concept and process for defining evaluation elements

Mr Eduardo Serrano-Padial (Project Manager - Evaluations Procurement SNE, DG AGRI Unit C.4, Monitoring and evaluation) gives a presentation with the title ‘Secondary legislation on monitoring and evaluation of the new CAP’.

After the presentation delegates from Member States raised the following questions and remarks.

3.5.1. Common Evaluation system

Denmark comments that the restraint of developing more data needs / indicators under WP2, should also apply for data needs under WP3. These should not be developed and extended on a nice to have bases either.

The Netherlands remark that it should be clarified in advance whether any additional data for answering the new Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) are necessary.

Greece highlights that given the very detailed level of data for monitoring and evaluation, also in terms of output and result indicators, it would be better if no mandatory questions would be foreseen and a Member State could conduct its own evaluations defining its own evaluation questions according to what they consider important for their CAP Strategic Plans. Finland shares this view.

Germany stresses that since the Commission is conducting own evaluations and not only a synthesis, common evaluation questions may not be needed. Germany finally asks whether the evaluation questions will be defined before the setting up of the evaluation plan.

The Commission reminds that in order the implementing act on the performance framework to be adopted it needs to receive a positive opinion of the AGRI Committee.

The Commission also clarifies that it intends to rely mainly (and most probably solely) on indicators in Annex I. For example, as far as climate change is concerned, the

indicator on greenhouse gas emissions in Annex I seems to be sufficient. Additional indicators will only be defined if necessary and agreed with the Member States.

In order to have a common understanding of the effects of the CAP it is also important to have good guidelines. In this sense an improvement as regards the ex post framework was experienced thanks to the work done last year with different workshops and an update of the guidelines. However, it is still very difficult to reconcile the diverse answers in Rural Developments programmes on effects of the policy and achievement of objectives given to the same evaluation questions by the different Member States. Therefore, it is necessary to have at least a common set of evaluation questions. Nevertheless, the working package aims at setting up a debate which will lead to the best evaluation system possible, adapted to the reality of all Member States, and will allow to have a snapshot and to understand the effects of the CAP across Europe. Such an objective is very difficult to achieve without having a common element around which it is possible to reconcile or harmonize all the evaluations received from the Member States.

The Commission further stresses on the need to work within a common framework to boost the exchange on methodology and to have a common learning process. It is in the interest of everybody to understand the CAP effects. Some Member States may be willing to deepen certain themes, but a minimum common ground must be shared.

The Commission explains that, in relation to the comments on the necessity or not of having common evaluation questions, the regulation foresees a synthesis of the ex-ante evaluations and several reports to the European Parliament and the Council for which a summary of the ex post evaluations of the CAP Strategic Plans of the Member States should be made. Moreover, Member States evaluations of CAP strategic plans have to be taken into account when the Commission carries out its own evaluations. However, this can be further discussed when preparing or developing this working package.

The Commission confirms that the evaluation questions will be developed before the drafting of the evaluation plan, since the discussions will take place before the end of this year, while the evaluation plan must be submitted only one year after the approval of the CAP Strategic plan.

3.5.2. Evaluation model for regionalised Member States

Spain asks whether, in working package 3, a minimum content/activities/communication plan model for regionalised Member States will be studied.

For the minimum content in case of regionalised Member States and whether the evaluation plan should be developed in accordance with the regional administrations, the Commission recalls that the evaluation plans should be based on the evaluation needs, the communication needs detected and based on the model of implementation of the Member State. In this sense, in case of regionalised Member States it could be useful to have the feedback of the regional administrations on the evaluation plan and the evaluation activities relevant to the regions.

4. AOB

Mr Hannes Wimmer (Team Leader of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Network) presents ‘Update on recent and upcoming Evaluation helpdesk activities’. After the presentation delegates from Member States raised the following questions.

The Netherlands ask whether the Evaluation Knowledge Bank will also deal with Impacts and Impact Indicators.

The European Evaluation Helpdesk confirms that the Evaluation Knowledge Bank (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/knowledge-bank_en) also addresses impact indicators, clarifying that there is even the option to filter the research outputs for CAP objectives, and also for some of the impacts.

5. NEXT STEPS

The Commission invites the Member States to share feedback on the Cover Note before 1 October 2021, as well as on the proposal for reporting the data need for monitoring and evaluation.

Regarding the time plan, Member States are invited to communicate who is able to submit the data before 15 February (only for data at individual level, not for sectoral interventions). In case this date is not feasible it could be postponed not further than 1 month after 15 February.

The next meeting of the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP will take place on 25 October and it will develop on data needs for monitoring and evaluation, presenting also the GAEC. A presentation on the EU pollinator monitoring scheme may also be on the agenda. The meeting on SFC will take place on 21 September. All meetings will continue to be online until the end of the year.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP is planned for 25 October 2021.

7. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

In Annex

e-signed

Tassos HANIOTIS

List of participants– Minutes
Meeting of the Expert Group for monitoring and evaluating the CAP
17 September 2021

BELGIQUE/BELGIË (Belgium)	Departement Landbouw & Visserij	2
BELGIQUE/BELGIË (Belgium)	SPW Agriculture Ressources naturelles et Environnement	1
БЪЛГАРИЯ (Bulgaria)	Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry	5
ČESKO (Czechia)	Ministry of Agriculture	3
DANMARK (Denmark)	The Danish Agricultural Agency	3
DEUTSCHLAND (Germany)	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture	4
DEUTSCHLAND (Germany)	MEND	1
DEUTSCHLAND (Germany)	Monitoring- und Evaluierungsnetzwerk Deutschland (MEN-D).	1
DEUTSCHLAND (Germany)	Thuenen-Institute	1
EESTI (Estonia)	Agricultural Registers and Information Board	1
EESTI (Estonia)	Ministry of Rural Affairs	3
ÉIRE/IRELAND (Ireland)	Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine,	7
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (Greece)	MANAGING AUTHORITY OF GREEK RDP, Evaluation Unit	1
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (Greece)	Ministry of Rural Development and Foods, CAP Unit	1
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (Greece)	RDP Managing Authority	2
ESPAÑA (Spain)	Fondo Español de Garantía Agraria (FEGA)	1
ESPAÑA (Spain)	Ministry of Agriculture	9
FRANCE (France)	ASP	1
FRANCE (France)	FranceAgriMer	1
FRANCE (France)	MCFA	1
FRANCE (France)	Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	3
HRVATSKA (Croatia)	Ministry of Agriculture	2
HRVATSKA (Croatia)	Paying Agency	2
HRVATSKA	Permanent Representation of the Republic of Croatia to the EU	1

(Croatia)		
ITALIA (Italy)	Ministry of Agriculture	3
ITALIA (Italy)	ISMEA	1
ITALIA (Italy)	CREA	2
ITALIA (Italy)	Paying Agency - National Coordination body	1
ΚΥΠΡΟΣ (Cyprus)	Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development	1
LATVIJA (Latvia)	AREI (Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics)	6
LATVIJA (Latvia)	INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMICS	1
LATVIJA (Latvia)	Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia	4
LATVIJA (Latvia)	Rural Support Service	4
LIETUVA (Lithuania)	Ministry of Agriculture	4
LIETUVA (Lithuania)	National Paying Agency	3
LUXEMBOURG (Luxembourg)	Ministry of Agriculture , Viticulture and Rural Development	1
LUXEMBOURG (Luxembourg)	Service d'Economie rurale	1
MAGYARORSZÁG (Hungary)	Hungarian State Treasury	1
MAGYARORSZÁG (Hungary)	Ministry of agriculture	4
MALTA (Malta)	Managing Authority, Funds and Programmes Div.	1
MALTA (Malta)	Office of the Prime Minister	1
NEDERLAND (Netherlands)	RVO - Paying Agency	4
ÖSTERREICH (Austria)	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regional Affairs and Tourism	3
POLSKA (Poland)	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	12
PORTUGAL (Portugal)	Gabinete de Planeamento, Políticas e Administração Geral	3
PORTUGAL (Portugal)	IFAP	3
ROMÂNIA (Romania)	Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture	1
ROMÂNIA (Romania)	Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Managing Authority for NRDP	3
SLOVENIJA (Slovenia)	Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development	5

SLOVENIJA (Slovenia)	Budget Supervision Office of the Republic of Slovenia (Certification body)	2
SLOVENIJA (Slovenia)	Ministry of agriculture, forestry and food	4
SLOVENSKO (Slovakia)	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	7
SUOMI/FINLAND (Finland)	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	2
SUOMI/FINLAND (Finland)	The Finnish Food Authority	2
SVERIGE (Sweden)	Statens Jordbruksverk	7
<i>COUNCIL of the EU</i>		0
<i>EU PARLIAMENT</i>		0