




# FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

-  **Member State:** Italy
-  **Date:** 17 October 2013
-  **Host:** Ministry of Agriculture through National Rural Network
-  **Attendance:** 40 participants (19 evaluators, 10 from MAs, 10 from NRN and Research Institutes, 1 from Evaluation Helpdesk)
-  **Evaluation Plan status:** Not yet prepared
-  **Focus group method:** Plenary dialogue with metaplan tools



## OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSES OF EVALUATION

### MAIN LESSONS LEARNT 2007-2013

- ⦿ Often objectives and scope of evaluation are not adequately clarified.
- ⦿ Evaluation has not adequately covered Programme management and delivery.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EP 2014 - 2020

- ⦿ Clarify the specificities of the adopted evaluation approach: multi-funds evaluations; integration with evaluation of the first pillar; themes of regional interest, etc.
- ⦿ Clarify the needs for evaluation of management and delivery system.

## GOVERNANCE, COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

### MAIN LESSONS LEARNT 2007-2013

- ⦿ Problems in accessing data from Paying Agencies and Regional Databases.
- ⦿ Difficulties in integrating evaluation needs in application forms, payment requests and monitoring.
- ⦿ Poor or ineffective involvement of stakeholders.
- ⦿ Difficulties to share evaluation results with internal (MA) and external stakeholders.
- ⦿ Difficulties to reach local rural development actors and other target groups.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EP 2014 - 2020

- ⦿ Establish interactions between MA and others bodies, for a more constant transfer of data. Agree on "periodic data collection and transmission" between MA and Paying Agency.
- ⦿ Involve evaluator in the design of monitoring and implementation procedures.
- ⦿ Establish mechanisms to improve stakeholders involvement (eg. steering groups with "variable geometry").
- ⦿ Define systems to cooperate, to evaluate the joint contribution of different Funds to Union Priorities.
- ⦿ Differentiate communication actions according to the needs of different targets.

## EVALUATION TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES, DATA COLLECTION

### MAIN LESSONS LEARNT 2007-2013

- ⦿ MA's awareness of evaluation needs has been evolving during the implementation of the Programme.
- ⦿ Too much focus on performance indicators and expenditure progress leads to underestimation of management and implementation system; horizontal issues.
- ⦿ Evaluation needs of the LEADER approach have been underestimated.
- ⦿ Data required for monitoring is often proved to not be useful for evaluation.
- ⦿ Difficulties in accessing and using data from databases not specifically "designed" for evaluation.
- ⦿ Lack of information about not supported beneficiaries.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EP 2014 - 2020

- ⦿ Plan periodical activities for reviewing or updating evaluation questions and themes.
- ⦿ Analyze the conditions of evaluability to improve the evaluation design of different issues of rural development. Provide an early evaluation of management and delivery systems and early primary surveys on direct effects of investments.
- ⦿ Programme and coordinate three different levels to evaluate LEADER effects: RDP; local strategy; self-evaluation and promote technical support to LAGs.
- ⦿ Schedule a preliminary assessment to clarify needed data and methodologies and to discuss the use of existing information and databases.
- ⦿ Promote the use of data collected through the management of first pillar payments.

## TIMELINE AND RESOURCES

### MAIN LESSONS LEARNT 2007-2013

- ⦿ Delays in contracting evaluators created problems.
- ⦿ Timing was not consistent with information generation.
- ⦿ Underestimation of internal staff needed to run the evaluation system.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EP 2014 - 2020

- ⦿ Early contracting of the evaluator.
- ⦿ Pay attention in making the evaluation timing consistent with the process of implementation of the programme.
- ⦿ Create a team to run the evaluation empowering internal skills: statistical and information systems; "mediator" (somebody who connects the functions of RDP implementation with the evaluation); communication.