



WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION-RELATED QUERIES

UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2016

Copyright notice

© European Communities, 2016

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Recommended citation: EUROPEAN COMMISSION – Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Unit E.4 (2016): Evaluation related queries. Working Document. Update September 2016. Brussels

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Commission.



The Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for the evaluation function within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) by providing guidance on the evaluation of RDPs and policies falling under the remit and guidance of DG AGRI's Unit E.4 'Evaluation and studies' of the European Commission (EC). In order to improve the evaluation of EU rural development policy the Evaluation Helpdesk supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, RDP managing authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building, and communicating with network members on evaluation related topics.

Additional information about the activities of European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development is available on the Internet through the Europa server (<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).



WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION-RELATED QUERIES

UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2016

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. EX POST EVALUATION OF RDPs 2007-2013.....	1
2.1 How to report the ex post evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013?	1
2.2 Are there any changes in the Result or Impact Indicator fiches for the ex post evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013? <i>NEW</i>	2
2.3 In case macro-level models are not available, how to extrapolate the impact Indicators at micro-level for assessing the RDP impacts at macro-level (e.g regional or national level)? <i>NEW</i>	2
3. EVALUATION PLAN.....	4
3.1 How to prepare the Evaluation Plan of area-based measures of RDP 2014-2020?	4
3.2 How should the Evaluation Plan address the evaluation questions? How to report the progress in implementing the Evaluation Plan? <i>NEW</i>	6
4. GOVERNANCE OF EVALUATION	6
4.1 In the case of regionalized RDPs 2014-2020, who is responsible for assessing the Impact Indicators which coincide with the Common Context Indicators (CCI)? <i>NEW</i>	6
4.2 How to use operation database for the evaluation of the Pillar II? <i>NEW</i>	6
5. ASSESSMENT OF RDP EFFECTS	7
5.1 How to consider the contributions of Nature Conservation Measures to Focus Area 4A, when they are programmed under Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?	7
5.2 How to monitor, quantify, and assess the additional contributions to Focus Areas?	7
5.3 How to assess the RDP effects in cases of low uptake? <i>NEW</i>	9
6. EVALUATION QUESTIONS.....	9
6.1 When and how often should the CEQs be answered? <i>NEW</i>	9
6.2 How to answer to the Focus Area-related common evaluation questions (No 1 – 18)? <i>NEW</i>	9
6.3 How to answer to the horizontal evaluation questions (No 19, 20, and 21)? <i>NEW</i>	10
6.4 When shall “additional information” be collected for answering Focus Area-related evaluation questions? <i>NEW</i>	10
6.5 Who defines the judgement criteria? <i>NEW</i>	11

7. COMMON INDICATORS	11
7.1 How to calculate the Complementary Result Indicators? <i>NEW</i>	11
7.2 How to calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R2: “ <i>Change in Agriculture Output on supported farms/AWU</i> ”?	12
7.3 Which type of operations shall be taken into account when calculating the Complementary Result Indicators? <i>NEW</i>	12
7.4 Is it mandatory to calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R18 for the Focus Area 5D if the RDP has not programmed any contribution to it? <i>NEW</i>	13
7.5 What to measure under the Target Indicator T20: “ <i>Jobs created in supported projects</i> ”?	13
7.6 Can a Common Indicator be replaced by an Additional Indicator? <i>NEW</i>	14
7.7 How to access to the Common Context Indicators? <i>NEW</i>	14
7.8 When shall the Common Context Indicators be updated in the RDP? <i>NEW</i>	15
8. EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD	15
8.1 In which way should the LAGs be involved for the Annual Implementation Report submitted in 2017? <i>NEW</i>	15
8.2 What are the requirements for the Local Action Groups for the evaluationof LEADER? <i>NEW</i>	16
8.3 How to link the contribution of LEADER to the RDP - Priority 5 when projects are not related to the agricultural, food, and forestry sectors? <i>NEW</i>	17
9. EVALUATION OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORKS	18
9.1 Should the NRN-related evaluation questions be answered solely at the national level or also at the regional level in the case of regionalized RDPs? <i>NEW</i>	18
9.2 How can the National Rural Network support the evaluation of RDPs? <i>NEW</i>	18
10. ANNUAL IMPLMENTATION REPORT.....	20
10.1 Will the European Commission provide a further guidance document on the AIR for RDP 2014-2020? <i>NEW</i>	20

ACRONYM LIST

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
AWU	Annual Work Units
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCI	Common Context Indicators
CEQ	Common Evaluation Questions
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CMES	Common Monitoring and Evaluation System
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
EARDF	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation Question
EP	Evaluation Plan
EU	European Union
FA	Focus Area
JC	Judgement Criteria
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
MA	Managing Authority
MS	Member State
NRN	National Rural Network
NRNP	National Rural Network Programme
PA	Paying Agency
PSEQ	Programme Specific Evaluation Question
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SFC	Shared Fund Management Common System
WD	Working Document

1. INTRODUCTION

This working document compiles a selection of evaluation-related queries raised by the Member States in the period from January 2015 to September 2016. The topics cover:

1. *Ex post* evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013;
2. Evaluation Plan;
3. Governance of evaluation;
4. Assessment of RDP effects;
5. Evaluation Questions;
6. Indicators;
7. Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD;
8. Evaluation of National Rural Networks;
9. Annual Implementation Report.

While topic no. 1 refers to the last programming period, all other topics relate to the programming period 2014-2020. Answers were prepared by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development in collaboration with the responsible Commission services.

For further information please send your evaluation-related queries to info@ruralevaluation.eu

2. EX POST EVALUATION OF RDPs 2007-2013

2.1 How to report the ex post evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013?

Q. With regard to the ex post evaluation report of RDP 2007-2013:

1. Where should the description of the evaluation approach of the RDP programme and measures be reported (e.g. description of input and output indicators, implementation process, impact assessment methods used, etc.)?
2. Where should the description of the measures selected to reach the RDP objectives, the intervention logic of each single measure, and the criteria used to measure their success be reported? How extensive should these descriptions be?

A. Annex 1(B) to the Handbook on the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework ([Guidance note B – Evaluation guidelines](#)) displays an indicative outline of the evaluation report. Although the outline and its annexes are not legally binding for the Member States, it is useful to apply them also in the case of reporting the *ex post* evaluation of the RDP 2007-2013. Following this outline,

1. the description of the evaluation approach used for the RDP programme and measures shall be placed in chapter 4 of the ex post evaluation report;
2. the description of the RDP programme composition and measures shall be placed in chapter 5 of the ex post evaluation report;

In terms of content for the description of the RDP programme composition, the overall and specific RDP objectives, as well as the priorities (axes) and measures allocation to achieve these objectives shall be described. Although not specifically proposed by the indicative outline in the Guidance note B, it is useful to present also the expected results and impacts, especially if relevant indicators have been

equipped with target values at the beginning of the programming period or at the stage of the Mid Term Evaluation. For this purpose, the actual net values of result and impact indicators at the end of the programming period (accompanied with a robust explanation) could be provided in the section of Chapter 5 as well. With regard to the RDP measures, Annex 2(E) to the Handbook on the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework¹ ([Guidance note E – Measure Fiches](#)) can be used as a format to provide the description of the measures, the visualisation of the measure's intervention logic, and the links made with the evaluation questions, and both common and programme specific indicators. For the evaluation questions, the updated list published in the [Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDPs](#) (June, 2014) can be applied as well. These sections can be further completed with the input/output information (budget planned/spent and achieved outputs) and result/impacts of the measure, especially when the measure could have significantly influenced the programme result and impacts (e.g. investment measures, LFA etc.).

Finally, if the evaluator wishes to provide more information than what it is proposed in the indicative outline of Guidance note B, new sections within the above-mentioned chapters can be developed, or a new chapter can also be introduced, as long as these additions are in compliance with the legal requirements established in the Article 84 and 86 of the Regulation (EU) No 1698/2005.

2.2 Are there any changes in the Result or Impact Indicator fiches for the ex post evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013? *NEW*

Q. Are there any changes in the indicators fiches? Where is it possible to find the most updated version of the Indicator fiches for the RDP 2007-2013?

A. There are updates in the Result and Impact Indicator Fiches. These are indicated in [DG AGRI's website](#)² (Annex 3 – Indicator guidance). The updates are related mostly to the methodology for measuring the Gross Value Added of the supported holdings/enterprises. Specifically, the Gross Value Added now needs to be compared over different time in order to see its evolution.

For further information, it is recommended to take into account the [Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDPs](#) (June 2014) which address the calculation of Gross Value Added at micro- and macro-level.

2.3 In case macro-level models are not available, how to extrapolate the impact Indicators at micro-level for assessing the RDP impacts at macro-level (e.g regional or national level)? *NEW*

Q. This question regards specifically three Impact Indicators of the RDP, namely: (1) Economic growth; (2) Employment creation; and (3) Labour productivity. The Impact Indicators are defined by the European Commission, and notably in the Working Paper on *"Approaches for assessing the impacts of the RDP in the context of multiple intervening factors"*, March 2010. On the basis of the on-going evaluation in our regional RDP, the setting up of a methodology for assessing these three impact indicators at macro-level is deemed to be a difficult task. Some of the challenges arise when identifying and following over time a sample of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In terms of data, the FADN source for 2008 should be used to provide the data for the counterfactual analysis of the RDP impacts, however, in our RDP, a model allowing the evaluators to extrapolate this data at regional level is missing (e.g. General Equilibrium Model or other). Research institutes, as well as the National Bank are also not able to provide such model applied to the regional context of our RDP. In this situation, the implementation of the examples provided in the [Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013](#)

¹ European Commission (2010) Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Retrieved on 19/08/2016 from http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/index_en.htm

² European Commission – DG AGRI (2010) Common monitoring and evaluation framework. Retrieved on August 9, 2016 from http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/index_en.htm.

RDPs” (June 2014) are not feasible because they are based on existing models applied in other contexts (e.g. in Austria for the assessment of EFRD intervention between 1995 and 2007). Moreover, the resources available for the ongoing evaluation do not allow the development of such a model.

Therefore, when these macro-models are not available, would you suggest to use other quantitative approaches with other adjustments as it is recommended in the Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDPs (June 2014)?

A. In this inquiry, the main problems stressed out regard the collection of impact indicators, and the establishment of macro-models for assessing them at regional or country level. Macro-models seem to be generally not available, or cannot be properly constructed because of resource constraints. Furthermore, the inquiry is proposed within the framework of the on-going evaluation of RDP 2007-2013.

The Evaluation Helpdesk considers these problems described above to be partly linked with the framework of the on-going evaluation, but primarily associated with the RDP ex-post evaluation, as well as with the selection of an appropriate approach enabling the assessment of programme impacts through the use of the indicators mentioned above.

In regards to the selection of the appropriate approach, some of them do not necessary require the use of macro-models. In fact, as it is stated in the “Capturing the success of your RDP: Guidelines for the Ex Post Evaluation of 2007-2013 RDP”, the impact is typically assessed for the whole RDP at axes level. However, in some cases, the assessment of the programme impacts can be also focused on a group of measures or on a single measure, if these contribute significantly to particular Community priorities, RDP policy objectives, or if they generate substantial impacts.

The guidelines propose three different methodological approaches to assess the impacts of the RDP programme at the programming area- or country levels:

1. Calculation of the direct and indirect effects of the programme at a micro-level and extrapolation and aggregation of these results at a regional- or macro-level;
2. Calculation of direct and indirect effects of the programme at a lowest possible administrative level (e.g. NUTS-5 or NUTS-4), and thereafter, aggregation of these effects to a regional- or macro-level; or
3. Calculation of programme effects directly at regional- or macro- levels using some structural regional- or macro-models (e.g. partial – or general equilibrium type)

In the text shown below, these three methodological approaches are explained using the Impact Indicator: *Economic Growth*. By using the updated Indicator Fiches of the Indicator Guidance, Economic Growth should be analysed in terms of *“The change in the gross value added created directly in supported projects, and indirectly in programme area, that can be attributed to the intervention once double counting, deadweight, displacement and multiplier effects have been netted out”*.

Methodological Approach 1: When applying this micro-macro (or bottom-up) approach, the first step is to net out the programme effects at micro-level (net change of GVA). The relevant impact indicators which are available from FADN, surveys, etc. at a micro-level (i.e. gross value added=GVA at a farm level, or GVA at a food processing level, etc.) must be used to assess the direct and indirect effects of the programme at the level of programme beneficiaries. In step 2, the results obtained from a micro-level must be aggregated into regional- or macro- level by multiplying average treatment effects from micro- level by a number of supported farms (at regional- or macro-level). Of course, a net effect of a given programme (or measures which belong to a certain Axis, e.g. Axis 1), can only be computed if a counterfactual approach is applied (e.g. matching or others). While this approach can be used to analyse programme direct effects as well as some indirect effects (e.g. deadweight, substitution,

leverage, etc.) at micro-, regional- and macro-levels, it does not allow assessing programme multiplier effects (understood as in the framework of a general equilibrium analysis).

Methodological Approach 2: This approach can be applied if there is enough detailed statistical data available at NUTS-5, or lower levels. In case of an indicator “economic growth”, the approach requires inter alia data on the <aggregated> agricultural Gross Value Added for each NUTS-5 or NUTS-4 region. Such a general data on various regional characteristics is available in many EU countries from Statistical Offices or can be estimated on the basis of agricultural census, FADN, etc. Furthermore, application of this approach requires also availability of data on many other important characteristics, e.g. employment, population, infrastructure, etc. for each of the region (administrative level, e.g. NUTS-5), which can be used to answer questions, such as: *why have only specific regions (e.g. NUTS-5) obtained programme support? Why has the intensity of a programme support been higher in certain regions (NUTS-5) in comparison to other regions (NUTS-5)?* This methodology should also be based on a counterfactual analysis (e.g. matching or others). By computing average programme effects, e.g. in terms of agricultural GVA, at this administrative level, this approach allows to analyse both direct and all indirect programme effects at NUTS-5 level, which later can be easily aggregated to NUTS-2 or programme area- or country-level.

Methodological Approach 3: This approach assumes that a relevant regional- or macro-economic model is available and can be utilized for example to assess the impact of the RDP on the aggregated agricultural GVA (at programming or country-levels). While such model does not exist in some context, evaluators have to be aware that the use of such models without using a micro- information about certain programme indirect effects (e.g. deadweight loss effects) could lead to biased results. For example, in case of deadweight loss effects calculated at a micro-level with values close to 100%, the structural model which does not include this information would have erroneously (!!) shown high (positive or negative) effects of the programme. Therefore, the use of macro models in evaluations should be always combined with the calculations of micro- effects as described under the methodological approach 1.

Referring to the case of your RDP, instead of using the Methodological approach 3, it is recommended to design and implement the Methodological approach 1 or 2, for which it is not necessary to have any formal structural macro-type of model. Yet, when applying the Methodological approach 2, additional and plausible justifications should be provided to show also the direct- and indirect effects of the programme at micro-level (=> see: part 1 of the Methodological approach 1).

These three options can be applicable also for the other two Impact Indicators mentioned in the question. Further information and approaches for the impact evaluation are illustrated in the guidelines: “Capturing the success of your RDP: Guidelines for the Ex Post Evaluation of 2007-2013”.

3. EVALUATION PLAN

3.1 How to prepare the Evaluation Plan of area-based measures of RDP 2014-2020?

Q. Concerning the design and preparation of the Evaluation Plan for RDP 2014-2020, our Managing Authority consulted various stakeholders to define the approach to evaluate the RDP Effectiveness - Efficiency – Economy (3E), as well as the Relevance and Utility (5U). Some problems emerged for the evaluation of these dimensions in area-based measures. Could be possible to receive recommendations for the evaluation of area-based measures? Moreover, the sustainability of area-based measure also requires a specific approach. Sustainability seems to be directly related to the mandatory duration of the beneficiary's commitment on the specific parcels/land blocks receiving the intervention. Could be possible to clarify this issue or recommend some examples of good practice?

A. The Evaluation plan is a compulsory part of the RDP³. The purpose of the EP is to ensure that sufficient and appropriate evaluation activities are undertaken, and that sufficient and appropriate resources are available, in particular: 1.) to provide the information needed for programme steering and to feed the enhanced AIR in 2017; 2.) to provide the information needed to demonstrate interim progress to objectives and to feed the enhanced AIR in 2019;

The minimum requirements for the Evaluation Plan of the RDP 2014-2020 does not require the descriptions of methodologies, including those assessing effectiveness, efficiency, result and impacts of RDP. It only requires an indicative description of the evaluation topics and activities anticipated for the programming period to support effective implementation and achievement of objectives, and to report on programme achievements, including (but not limited to) fulfillment of EU requirements. This includes the assessment of result and impact indicator values and analysis of net effects, thematic issues (including sub-programmes) and cross-cutting issues. area-based measures, such as agri-environment-climate measures or Natura 2000 and WFD payments represent very important instruments of the Rural Development Policy, therefore, it is very important to assess their impacts on rural areas and effectiveness in achieving the objectives⁴ linked to the Rural Development Priorities and Focus Areas⁵ and the cross cutting priorities⁶ on innovation, environment and climate change.

Experiences from the past evaluations show that this is not an easy task given the specific character of area based measures. Therefore, although the Evaluation Plan does not require to describe details in this respect, it is vital to start thinking about the evaluation approach and methods already during the programming stage, in order to be able to collect relevant data from early stages of the programme implementation. With respect to the assessment of efficiency, the Evaluation Helpdesk agrees that in case of area based measures, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess them at output level (whatever payment is decided to be distributed, the number of hectares remains the same). However the assessment of efficiency at result and impact level is very important to understand on which expenses the observed programme results and impact have been achieved. As in case of effectiveness, the Evaluation Helpdesk advises to prepare such an evaluation at early stages of programme implementation, including development of evaluation questions, defining indicators, proposing relevant methods, and ensuring proper data collection.

Regarding possible examples of good practice, some cases are published in the Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDP or on scientific articles, among which:

- O. Oenemaa, H.P. Witzkeb, Z. Klimontc, J.P. Lesschena, G.L. Velthofa (2009). *Integrated assessment of promising measures to decrease nitrogen losses from agriculture in EU-27*
- Rainer Marggraf (2003) *Comparative assessment of agri-environment programmes in federal states of Germany.*
- Nick Hanley, Martin Whitby, Ian Simpson (1999) *Assessing the success of agri-environmental policy in the UK.*

³ Article 8, point 1(g) of the Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013.

⁴ Article 4 of the Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013

⁵ Article 5 of the Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013

⁶ Article 8, point 1(c)(v) of the Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013

3.2 How should the Evaluation Plan address the evaluation questions? How to report the progress in implementing the Evaluation Plan? **NEW**

Q. What does the EC expect in terms of progress of the evaluation plan following the approval of the RDP? How is the evaluation plan linked to the 30 evaluation questions? What is the expected level of detail in the modifications of the evaluation plan?

A. According to the Annex VII, point 2(a) of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 808/2014, all the sections of the Evaluation Plan can be modified, and the Managing Authority shall report and justify these modifications in the AIRs. This is not linked to the 30 common evaluation questions, which have to be answered in the enhanced AIRs to be submitted in 2017 and 2019⁷. The Evaluation Plan has no influence on the common evaluation questions.

4. GOVERNANCE OF EVALUATION

4.1 In the case of regionalized RDPs 2014-2020, who is responsible for assessing the Impact Indicators which coincide with the Common Context Indicators (CCI)? **NEW**

Q. Considering the need to clarify the division of responsibilities between different level of governance (EU, National, Regional) in regard to the assessment of the Impact Indicators and the calculation of the overall impacts of the CAP, the following questions are raised:

1. Among the 16 CAP Impact Indicators, 13 coincide with the CCI. In these 13 particular cases, should the Managing Authority of the RDP (national/regional) assess how these values have evolved over time, and then try to assess which part of this evolution is due to the RDP?
2. In the case of Impact Indicators requested at national level, should their calculation be done only once for the whole Member State even in the case of regionalized RDPs?
3. Is it correct to assume that the European Commission is responsible for calculating the other three Impact Indicators that do not coincide with the CCI because these are closer to the 1st pillar of the CAP?

A. The answer is organized as follow:

1. Impact indicators which coincide with CCI are related to Pillar II operations and should be assessed for the enhanced AIR 2019 and the RDP 2014-2020 ex post evaluation⁸. The Pillar II-related impact indicators should be calculated in net values in order to attribute the changes of the indicator's value to the RDP interventions.
2. When the regional values for the impact indicator do not exist or are not collected, the evaluator may also use the regional estimation of national values (e.g. using coefficients), or apply a proxy indicator (see the [Working Document: Defining proxy indicators for Rural Development Programmes](#)).
3. It is correct that the calculation of the other three impact indicators related to pillar I is under the responsibility of the European Commission.

4.2 How to use operation database for the evaluation of the Pillar II? **NEW**

A. Operation databases are recommended for the collection of information useful for the evaluation of Pillar II. In particular, when data can be primarily collected from the beneficiaries, the data missing in

⁷ Annex VII, point 7 to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 808/2014

⁸ Article 54(1), 56(3) of the Regulation (EU) no 1303/2013; Article 68(a) of Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013; and Annex VII, point 7, to Commission Implementing Regulation 808/2014

the secondary statistics (national statistics, FADN, FSS, etc.) should be collected through the operation database. Data should be collected from both the application forms and the payment requests of beneficiaries, but also from other additional sources. Moreover, if this is necessary for the observation of RDP effects, data should be collected also after the project realization.

5. ASSESSMENT OF RDP EFFECTS

5.1 How to consider the contributions of Nature Conservation Measures to Focus Area 4A, when they are programmed under Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?

Q. In the case of our RDP, Nature Conservation Measures are supported under the Article 20 of the Regulation No 1305/2013, and they are planned to contribute to the Focus Area 4A⁹. However, by reading the Annex I to Working Document: "Draft target indicator fiches for Pillar II (priority 1 – 6)", it seems that Nature Conservation Measures planned under Article 20 are **not incorporated** into the Target Indicator for assessing the RDP contributions to Focus Area 4A.

Could it be possible to confirm that Nature Conservation Measures programmed under Article 20 are not incorporated in the calculation of the Target Indicator for FA 4A?

A. We confirm that Article 20 is not incorporated in the calculation of Target Indicator for assessing the Focus Area 4A. Although the DG AGRI - Working Document: "Draft target indicator fiches for Pillar II (priority 1 – 6)" proposes that measures under Articles 28, 29, 30 and partly 21 of the Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013 contribute to the FA 4A, Member States can programme also measures under other Articles, if this is relevant to address the area needs and contribute to the achievement of the respective FA objectives. DG AGRI's Working Document: "Rural development programming and target setting (2014-2020)" explains how targets shall be set up for each of the RDP FAs, and provides indicator tables for planning outputs and the calculation of targets.

Table A2 of Annex I (Draft Indicator Plan) to Draft target indicator fiches for Pillar II explains that the Target Indicator T9: *"% of agriculture land under management contracts contributing to biodiversity"* for assessing the FA 4A is calculated as a physical total area (hectares). As seen from the table, Article 20 is not counted for the calculation of the target as also the output indicator is expressed in *"No of projects"* or in *"Total public expenditure (€)"*. Therefore, this reconfirms that Article 20 is not incorporated in the calculation of target indicator for FA 4A.

With respect to the CEQ, we confirm that the Target Indicator *"% of agriculture land under management contracts contributing to biodiversity"* is proposed as one of two Common RD indicators to answer the CEQ no 8¹⁰: *"To what extent has the RDP intervention supported the restoration, preservation, and enhancement of biodiversity including in Natura 2000 areas, areas facing natural or other specific constraints and HNV farming, and the state of European landscape?"*.

If these two common indicators are considered insufficient to answer the respective CEQ, as well as to assess the effects of Nature Conservation Measures programmed under the Article 20 to address the FA 4A, additional indicators and/or a set of programme specific result indicators can be collected to complement the Common Result Indicators.

5.2 How to monitor, quantify, and assess the additional contributions to Focus Areas?

Q. This question is organized in three parts:

⁹ Focus Area 4A: "Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes"

¹⁰ Working Paper: "Common Evaluation Question for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020", June 2015

1. Annex I, Part 1(11) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 lays down the rules for the Indicator Plan in the Rural Development Programmes. In particular, point 11 (c) foresees the definition of an Indicator Plan, which comprises separate structured tables setting out, qualitatively, the additional contribution of measures to other Focus Areas. However, it is not entirely clear how will the evaluators of the RDPs monitor, quantify, or assess these additional contributions. Can the European Commission confirm that additional contributions will be assessed by the evaluators through the use of Complementary Result Indicators in the enhanced AIRs of the 2017 & 2019, as well as in the ex post evaluation of RDP 2014-2020?
2. According to Annex IV to Commission Implementing Regulation 808/2014, Complementary Result Indicators are related only to FAs 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D. However, the SFC2014 allows to flag additional contributions for all the FAs. What will happen if there are additional contributions to FA for which there are no Complementary Result Indicators available? Does this mean that those additional contributions will not be measured?
3. Is it necessary to justify and explain the additional contribution of a measure to a FA or is it sufficient to fill in the SFC table without providing any further explanation?

A. The answer is organized as follow:

1. For point 1 & 2 of this question, the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 in its Annex I, Part I, point 11 (c) requires that, at the stage of the RDP design, the likely additional contributions (secondary effects) of each RDP measure to any focus areas other than those under which they have been programmed should be identified and "flagged". This indication has to be reported in a separate structured table (Table 3 "Contributions to other focus areas" in the Annex 2 to the Working Document "Rural Development Programming and target setting (2014-2020)"). At the stage of the RDP implementation, in the operations database, and for each individual operation approved, it is necessary to identify the other focus areas to which an operation is expected to make an additional contribution. Please note that in the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) - Table B4 "Total public expenditure of the operations which have additional contributions to other focus areas" of the Working Document "Rural Development Monitoring (2014-2020)-Implementation Report Tables" (August 2015) - the total public expenditure of all the operations having additional contributions to other focus areas needs to be reported.

Identified additional contributions of operations to focus areas 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D and 6A, flagged at the stage of RDP implementation will later be the subject of evaluation (in the enhanced AIRs 2017 and 2019, as well as the *ex post* evaluation).

For those focus areas for which 'common' complementary result indicators are not developed but still significant additional contributions of operations can be expected, the Managing Authorities are encouraged to develop programme-specific result indicators to assess those additional contributions.

2. For point 3 of this question, the Member States have to fill-in the SFC table with the additional contributions of measures to other Focus Areas¹¹, and also provide an explanation of those additional contributions in the description of measures.

¹¹ Annex I, Part I, point 11(c) to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 808/2014

5.3 How to assess the RDP effects in cases of low uptake? **NEW**

Q. Considering the proposed methodology for assessing and reporting the effects of the RDP, how shall the Managing Authority deal with missing data for 2017 (completed operations)?

A. In case of LOW uptake, the whole population of beneficiaries should be taken into consideration for calculation of result indicators.

In case of NO uptake at the end of 2016 under a specific focus area, there is no obligation to evaluate that focus area, nor calculate the value of indicator and answer CEQ. Alternatively, if that is the wish of the MA, the evaluator should proceed as in the ex ante evaluation, and use the theory of change to assess the results. Also qualitative assessment (e.g. interviews with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries) can be applied in this case.

In both cases, the proper justification of the situation should be provided with recommendations for improving the up take within the priorities, focus areas or measures.

6. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

6.1 When and how often should the CEQs be answered? **NEW**

Q. Each priority objective is assessed through the 18 Focus Area-related evaluation questions. To answer these questions, it is necessary to plan different studies in the evaluation plan. Planning could be achieved in two different ways. Article 56 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 states that “*at least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the ESI Funds have contributed to the objectives for each priority*”. Does this mean that one must answer the evaluation questions at least once during the whole programming period? For instance, can one assess priorities 1 to 3 in the first enhanced AIR (submitted in 2017), and then priorities 4 to 6 in the enhanced AIR (2019)? In Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, it is specified that “*for each focus area included in the RDP, the related question shall be answered in the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports submitted in 2017 and 2019, and in the ex-post evaluation report*”. Does this mean that Managing Authorities have to launch evaluations for priorities 1 to 6 already for the first enhanced AIR (2017), and then renew these evaluations for the second enhanced AIR in 2019? What is the preferred option?

A. The second option is preferred. Start evaluating the priorities 1 to 6 for the first enhanced AIR (2017) and renew the evaluations for all priorities for the second enhanced AIR (2019).

6.2 How to answer to the Focus Area-related common evaluation questions (No 1 – 18)? **NEW**

A. Focus area-related common evaluation questions are specified with judgment criteria (not binding!) and should be answered with the means of common indicators, preferably results indicators (target and complementary result indicators)¹². When the CEQ cannot be answered with common result indicators (e.g. because common indicators do not reflect the success of intervention specified with judgment criteria and therefore are not enough to answer CEQ), the common indicators (context indicators and output indicators), and additional indicators can be used for this purpose. Additional indicators are developed by programme authorities in their respective Member States. Examples of additional information to be collected for answering the CEQ are provided by the [Working Paper Common Evaluation Question for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020](#)

¹² Annex IV to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 808/2014

6.3 How to answer to the horizontal evaluation questions (No 19, 20, and 21)? **NEW**

A. This answer is organized in three parts:

1. In the AIR 2017, it is proposed to answer the CEQ 19 “To what extent have synergies between priorities and focus areas enhanced the effectiveness of the RDP?” in qualitative way. For the qualitative assessment it is proposed to apply two tables published in the Guidelines on Assessment of RDP results, PART III (published prior the 9th meeting on the M&E of CAP, 19 April 2016). One table will allow to flag primary and secondary contributions of operations under RD measures and sub-measures towards focus areas. Primary contributions are vertical contributions of measures/sub-measures directly programmed under the respective focus areas. Secondary contributions are diagonal contributions of measures/sub-measures programmed under one focus area to another focus area. Programme authorities will mark in the table those secondary contributions which are significant in terms of scope of operations and financial allocations. The second table (also published in PART III of the guidelines) will show horizontal linkages between focus areas and priorities, both positive and negative). Using both tables would allow to see synergies between focus areas and priorities in qualitative way and also negative transverse effects between them. To triangulate the findings from both tables, it is proposed to use panel of experts;
2. The CEQ 20: “To what extent has technical assistance contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in Art. 59(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Art. 51(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?” should be also answered using qualitative approaches. The CMES does not provide common indicators to answer this evaluation question, only the WD: CEQ for 2014-2020 RDP is proposing additional information to be collected for answering the CEQ on technical assistance (TA), which reflect proposed judgment criteria. MA can develop more and different judgment criteria and additional indicators, if they want to assess programme specific effects of TA. With respect to methods interviews with various actors involved in programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation, surveys, collection of information from evaluation/attendance sheets of events, observation of the IT system’s efficiency and effectiveness, information from reports and audits etc., observations of the delivery mechanism are suitable to develop evidence for answering this CEQ;
3. The CEQ 21: “To what extent has the national rural network contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in Art. 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?” should be answered preferably using the qualitative but also quantitative methods. There are three common output indicators to answer CEQ on NRN, which however are not sufficient to assess the NRN results (and impacts). NRN stakeholders should therefore establish the NRN intervention logic including NRN results and impact and define result and impact indicators. Guidelines on NRN evaluation, which will be published by the Evaluation Helpdesk, provide detail guidance for the evaluation of the NRN, and also for answering the CEQ 21

For answering of all three above CEQ, more details will be provided in the document attached to the Guidelines on the assessment of RDP results which will be published after the 9th meeting of Expert group on M&E of CAP.

6.4 When shall “additional information” be collected for answering Focus Area-related evaluation questions? **NEW**

Q. The Working Paper: “Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020”, June 2015, proposes additional quantitative and qualitative information to the common RD indicators for answering the FA-related evaluation questions. The purpose of the additional informations is to collect complementary elements that are not covered by the common indicators. Does the

European Commission wish to systematically receive this additional information, or is it up to the Managing Authority to collect and report these indicators?

A. In order to answer the common evaluation questions, the Member State may need additional elements, such as additional indicators. However, these additional elements are not compulsory, as the Member State may be able to answer the common evaluation questions without any additional information.

6.5 Who defines the judgement criteria? *NEW*

Q. According to the approach described in the Working Paper: Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020, June 2015:

- Evaluation questions assess the achievements in terms of programme objectives;
- Judgement criteria specify the evaluation questions and define the success criteria of an intervention; and
- Indicators measure the approach for the success criteria of an intervention.

Following this logic, who defines the judgement criteria?

A. Common evaluation questions are defined at EU level and ask for achievements of the EU Rural Development Policy objectives. Programme specific evaluation questions are developed by Member States and ask for the achievements of national/regional rural development objectives. Evaluation questions are further specified with judgment criteria. Judgment criteria express the success of interventions. The Working Paper: “Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020” suggests the judgment criteria for each of Common Evaluation Questions. These judgment criteria are however not binding and should be reviewed/completed by the RDPs in accordance with the specific RDP intervention logic. For example, FA 2A is evaluated based on the farms that have been restructured and modernised with the operations programmed under the FA 2A. However if the Member States want to achieve more with the FA 2A operations, this should be evaluated with more judgment criteria. In some cases, the judgment criteria are not relevant for the specific RDP, therefore, they should not be used to answer the CEQ. Judgment criteria must be fully consistent with indicators. In case the common indicators are not fully consistent with judgment criteria, additional indicators should be developed by the Managing Authorities to answer the CEQ. The same logic applies for programmes specific evaluation questions: question is further specified with judgment criteria, which are mutually consistent with programme specific indicators.

7. COMMON INDICATORS

7.1 How to calculate the Complementary Result Indicators? *NEW*

A. According to the European Commission’s Working Document: Target Indicator fiches for Pillar II (Priority 1 to 6), Complementary Result Indicators are used to answer the Focus-area related evaluation questions No 4,11,12,13 and 14 laid down in the Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014. Complementary Result Indicators are used for the quantification and assessment of Rural Development Programme achievements, and are calculated for the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports 2017 and 2019¹³.

The Complementary Result Indicator R2: “*Change in Agriculture Output on supported farms/AWU (Annual Work Unit)*” shall be net out by using the counterfactual analysis. The Guidelines for the ex post

¹³ Evaluation Helpdesk (2015, p. 81). Guidelines – “Establishing and implementing the evaluation plan of 2014-2020 RDPs”.

evaluation of 2007-2013 RDPs produced by the Evaluation Helpdesk (2014) recommend some techniques (e.g. Quasi experimental with control groups), data sources (FADN), and standards for undertaking the netting out of these values. Control groups shall be representative and allow later extrapolation of the findings to the entire population. If using regional data for netting out the indicators' values, evaluators should contact the National Agencies for getting FADN at NUTS II, III, IV, V level.

The netting out of the other Complementary Result Indicators is only recommended. If counterfactual analysis is chosen, the control groups should be representative and big enough in order to allow to attribute change to interventions. In absence of non-beneficiaries, the "Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDP" suggest to use generalised PSM (Propensity Score Matching).

More detailed information on the methodology/formula to transform data from the operations database into value for the Complementary Result Indicators will be published in the Guidelines on the "Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017" or can be available on the Complementary Result Indicator fiches for Rural Development (Pillar II).

7.2 How to calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R2: "Change in Agriculture Output on supported farms/AWU"?

Q. The Working Paper: "Common Evaluation Question for Rural Development Programmes 2014-202", published in June 2015 by the Evaluation Helpdesk reports the Complementary Result Indicator for assessing the contribution of RDP to the FA 2A: *"Change in agricultural output on supported farms/AWU"*. What are the precise definitions of "Agricultural Output" and "AWU" for calculating the Complementary Result Indicator R2? Moreover, for the calculation of the indicator in AIR 2017, the most updated version of FADN data will be from 2015. How to deal with the data gap from 2015 to 2017?

A. In order to calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R2 reported in Annex IV, point 2 to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, the Evaluation Helpdesk, in consultation with DG AGRI Unit E.4, proposes to use the ratio between:

1. Numerator: FADN definition of Total Output (SE 131), calculated as the sum of SE 135 (total output crops and products) + SE 206 (Total Livestock and Products) + SE 256 (other outputs).
2. Denominator: FADN definition of AWU (SE 010)

For more details, please consult the FADN publication "Definition of variable used in FADN standard results" and its Figure 1: Output, Balance of subsidies and taxes, Income (Revision 9.2, December 2014).

Regarding the data gap, when the national or regional statistics do not provide more updated inputs to calculate the indicators, the only way to overcome this gap is to conduct a survey with beneficiaries, which should be able to provide more actual data from the annual accounts. Ideally, the sample of surveyed beneficiaries should be identical with those presented in FADN survey. Finally, when calculating the indicator, please do not forget that the calculation should cover the primary and secondary effects of RDP operations.

7.3 Which type of operations shall be taken into account when calculating the Complementary Result Indicators? *NEW*

Q. Shall the evaluators take into account only investment-type of operations for the calculation of Complementary Results Indicators?

A. The European Commission's Working Document: Complementary Result Indicator fiches for Pillar II describes the methodology for the assessment of Complementary Result Indicators, as well as their

definition, unit of measurement, data required and sources, the point of data collection, and the frequency and means for the data transmission to the European Commission.

The fiches do not specify that the operations shall be related only to investment-type of operations¹⁴, but to all those which are programmed under the specific Focus Area of a given RDP, including area-based¹⁵ and so called "soft" operations¹⁶. Although it might be possible to have low significant effects from area-based or "soft" operations, they should also be taken into account when assessing the Complementary Result Indicators. In addition, when it is considered to be relevant, the secondary effects of the operations contributing to other FAs than those which are programmed in the Rural Development Programme should be assessed.

7.4 Is it mandatory to calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R18 for the Focus Area 5D if the RDP has not programmed any contribution to it? *NEW*

Q. Please confirm that the Complementary Result Indicator R18 must be calculated for interventions programmed directly for the reductions of emissions of methane and nitrous oxide (Focus Area 5D), but also for operations that indirectly affect FA 5D (or with potential side effects). Moreover, if the RDP has not programmed any direct and secondary contributions to this FA, is it still mandatory to calculate this Complementary Result Indicator?

A. Two stages must be distinguished in the RDP: programming and implementation. In the programming stage, Managing Authorities decide which operations are to be programmed under each Focus Area. Furthermore, in this stage, Managing Authorities can plan which operations can indirectly contribute to other secondary Focus Areas. In the implementation stage, the manager of the operations may decide, depending on the characteristics of the project, to make other links between the operations and other FAs, if these operations present side effects or secondary contributions. This can be done regardless if the operations have been programmed under other FAs in the RDP. For example, MAs can decide that the manager of each intervention should identify the secondary contribution of each projects, e.g. there may be training actions or cooperation projects that affect secondarily the reduction of greenhouse gases and ammonium in Agriculture. In that case, the operations database would "flag" the existence of secondary contributions of the projects/operations to the Focus Area 5D, and evaluators have information to calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R18. However, if secondary contributions are not identified in any stage of the RDP (programming and implementing), the evaluators should not calculate this indicator.

7.5 What to measure under the Target Indicator T20: "*Jobs created in supported projects*"?

Q. The question concerns the Target Indicator T20¹⁷ "*jobs created in supported projects*" and asks more clarifications about the following issues:

- The definition of the Target Indicator does not include the "jobs maintained" from those created;
- The definition of the indicator does not specify if the "jobs created" in supported projects are those included *during* the realization of the project, or only those *after* the realization of the projects;

¹⁴ Investment-type of operations refer to the Articles 17,18,19,20 and 21 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

¹⁵ Area-based operations refer to the Articles 28,29 and 30 of the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

¹⁶ Soft measures refer to the Articles 14, 15, and 16 of the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

¹⁷ Annex IV(4) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

- Does the Target Indicator T20 have a link with the Common Evaluation Question related to the Union level objectives¹⁸: *“To what extent has the RDP contributed to the CAP objective of achieving a balanced territorial development of Rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment”*?
- How do other ESI Funds (e.g. ERDF, ESF, etc.) measure the jobs-related indicators? Do they measure the jobs created *during* the programming period or those *maintained* after the funding period? How are the *“maintained”* jobs defined or measured?

A. The European Commission's [Working Document: “Target indicator fiches for Pillar II”](#) presents the indicator “Jobs created in supported projects” as target indicator (T20), and as result indicator (R21) to measure the achievements of focus area 6A *“Facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises as well as job creation”*. This indicator has also the purpose of answering the Common Evaluation Question no 16 *“To what extent have RDP interventions supported the diversification, creation and development of small enterprises and job creation”* as reported in Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014..

The above indicator “Jobs created in supported projects” is a result indicator, not an output indicator, and therefore *it does not relate to the employment when the project is running*. This means that it does not indicate the jobs created during the implementation of RDP operations as the direct effect of supported projects, but rather job generated *“through supported projects”*. For example if the project is about the creation of a farm shop, it does not include employment generated during the design/construction building phase – consultant/architect/builders - but the employment which is created when the shop is running (manager, sales assistants, etc.). This corresponds to the definition provided in the section: *“Data required for the individual operation”* of the [Working Document: “Target indicator fiches for Pillar II”](#). On the other hand, the indicator does not include “maintained jobs” because of the difficulty to assess them.

In the assessment of ERDF interventions, the common indicator *“Employment increase in supported enterprises”* is used. This indicator represents the gross new working positions in supported enterprises in full time equivalents (FTE), as foreseen in the Annex I to Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013. Essentially, this is a “before-after” indicator which captures the part of the employment increase due to the direct consequence of project completion (i.e. the staff employed to realize the project is not counted). The positions need to be filled (vacant posts are not counted), and increase the total number of jobs in the enterprise. If total employment in the enterprise does not increase – the value is zero – it is regarded as realignment.

7.6 Can a Common Indicator be replaced by an Additional Indicator? **NEW**

Q. Does the set-up of a proxy indicator replacing a common indicator for rural development prevent one from calculating the replaced common indicator?

A. It is not possible to replace a common indicator.

7.7 How to access to the Common Context Indicators? **NEW**

Q. How and when will it be possible to have access to the Common Context indicators? How often are these indicators updated and how are they disseminated?

A. DG AGRI provides an update of the Context indicators every year in December, to the extent that data are available. The context indicators update is published on Europa website at the following page: [CAP context indicators](#). The latest updates (2015) are available on [this website](#).

¹⁸ Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

7.8 When shall the Common Context Indicators be updated in the RDP? **NEW**

Q. If during the modification of the RDP it is detected that the European Commission has updated the CCI, the new CCI values need to be updated in the modified version of the RDP?

A. As preliminary clarifications, the CCI are updated at Member States level, and subsequently published by the [European Commission](#). Therefore, for all the CCI (except for the High Nature Value Farming indicator), there is a common requirement for the Member States to supply the information to Eurostat or FADN. DG AGRI has a system to calculate the values on the basis of the information supplied by Member States to Eurostat (e.g. Total Factor Productivity). For the HNV indicators, it is up to the Managing Authority to establish a method using appropriate and available data, which will enable to estimate the HNV area that matches with the commonly agreed definition (as set out in the indicator fiche).

Regional data is required for regionalized RDPs. For some regions, CCI are collected on the regional basis by Eurostat. When the Eurostat does not provide CCI at regional level, it is the responsibility of the Managing Authority to collect and provide such data, and finally transfer it to the European Commission through the SFC.

Several options are available to collect this data: 1.) National sources, which should provide exactly the same data as presented by Eurostat. Often National sources go beyond the Eurostat requirements. Differently, when data at national/regional level are missing, or any other statistics matching the Eurostat definition are absent, it is recommended to use: 2.) Proxy Indicators. For further information about the Proxy Indicators, see the Working Document: [“Defining Proxy Indicators for Rural Development Programmes”](#).

As regards the timing, the values of the CCI are needed at specific points along the programming cycle, namely:

- the latest available information is needed to prepare the SWOT analysis;
- 2013 data will be required to provide the baseline for the assessing the impact of the RDP 2007-2013;
- latest available data are needed for the enhanced AIRs in 2017 and 2019;
- finally, data from 2020 onwards (up to 2023) will be needed for the ex post evaluation of the RDP 2014-2020.

In situations where statistics are not collected annually, or they are not in line with the above reported timeline, data from the best available year should be used. Alternatively, a proxy indicator (e.g. by interpolating data between two available years) could be considered.

To conclude, currently the RDPs have the latest available data used to prepare the SWOT analysis. The next occasion where Managing Authorities should update the CCI in the RDP is when 2013 data will be available to provide the baseline for assessing the impact of the RDP 2007-2013.

8. EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD

8.1 In which way should the LAGs be involved for the Annual Implementation Report submitted in 2017? **NEW**

Q. LEADER-supported projects can contribute to several Focus Areas. For the Annual Implementation Report submitted in 2017, do LAGs need to be involved for answering to all the Focus area-related evaluation questions to which LEADER-supported projects have contributed to, or do they have to be involved only for answering to Focus Area 6B-related question?

A. The enhanced AIR submitted in 2017 has to provide information resulting from evaluation activities with respect to the quantification of programme achievements, in particular, through the assessment of Complementary Result Indicators, and by answering the common and programme-specific evaluation questions.

The evaluation and reporting tasks of the Managing Authority has to take into consideration all RDP operations, including those conducted through Local Development Strategy supported by LEADER. Local Development Strategies are often programmed under the FA 6B. However, it should be stressed out that the operations implemented through the Local Development Strategies can also contribute primarily to other different FAs, and also secondarily to any other FAs. Therefore, these primary and secondary/additional contributions will have to be taken into consideration when answering the FA-related common evaluation questions, as well as when calculating the Common Results Indicators.

8.2 What are the requirements for the Local Action Groups for the evaluation of LEADER? **NEW**

Q. What are the requirements for the Local Action Groups with regard to:

1. The Local Action Groups' self-evaluation;
2. The ex post evaluation;
3. The use of external and independent evaluators, and the extent to which the Local Action Groups' self-evaluation can be used to fulfill the evaluation requirements from the European Commission.

A. The answer is organized in three points:

1. Minimum requirements for the Local Action Groups to carry out self-assessment

The self-assessment of Local Action Groups (sometimes called self-evaluation) is understood as an evaluation activity, which is voluntarily conducted by the Local Action Group in its own capacity. In the self-assessment, the Local Action Groups decide on the content and the process of the assessment with the ultimate aim to improve the steering of the LEADER activities at local level. By contrast, the evaluation at LAG-level is conducted by external bodies, for example by the evaluators, by NRNs, or by other Local Action Groups, etc., which are independent from the Local Action Groups and its institutions (Local Action Group office, steering groups, selection committees, etc.).

The legal and implementing acts do not require the Local Action Groups to undertake self-assessment, therefore, it does not specify any minimum requirements in this respect. However, the Local Action Groups have to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities as stipulated in the Article 33 and 35 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, namely:

- The CLLD strategy should set up the hierarchy of objectives and measurable targets for outputs and results (in relation to the latter, targets may be expressed in quantitative or qualitative terms);
- The monitoring arrangements and specific arrangements for evaluation should be described in the CLLD strategy;
- The monitoring of CLLD strategy's implementation shall be ensured by the operation database;
- The running costs of the LAG should also include the costs linked to the monitoring and evaluation of the CLLD strategy.

Annex I, Part 1(9) to Commission implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 lays down the minimum requirements for the Evaluation Plan to include in the RDP. The Evaluation Plan should contain in the section about "Evaluation topics and activities" also some activities for evaluating the contributions of CLLD strategies to the Rural Policy Objectives, as well as the description of the support for the

evaluation at Local Action Group level. Given the above legal and implementing framework, it is expected that Local Action Groups carry out activities, namely:

- With regard to monitoring, data collection via the Local Action Groups' operation database, and linked with the regional or national RDP operation database.
- With regard to evaluation, the legal and implementing acts do not provide further details. The legal framework only requires Member States to provide the support for evaluation at Local Action Groups level. Member States could also involve the NRN for providing this support for the evaluation at Local Action Group level (e.g. through training).

2. Minimum requirements for the Local Action Groups to carry out ex post evaluation

The legal framework does not specify if the Local Action Groups have to carry out the ex post evaluation. However, it is considered to be a good practice if the Local Action Groups decide to carry out an independent evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency, results, and impacts of their CLLD strategy, once it has been completed (ex post evaluation of the CLLD strategy). In any case, Article 70 and 71 of the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 foresee that the Local Action Groups should participate in the ex post evaluation of the RDP, either by submitting information as any other RDP stakeholders, or by offering the findings resulting from their own evaluations.

3. Minimum requirements for the Local Action Groups to use the external or independent evaluator, and to use the self-assessment for fulfilling the evaluation requirements from the European Commission.

Local Action Groups may conduct self-assessment activities on a voluntary basis if they consider it is useful for steering the strategy implementation and for the betterment of the local governance. The results from such self-assessment activities may also feed into the independent evaluation at LAG level. For this reason, it is wise to link any Local Action Groups' self-assessment to the independent evaluation, e.g. using data collected via self-assessment also in the independent evaluation, and vice versa. Finally, the Local Action Groups shall undertake an evaluation, for example by involving the NRN, other Local Action Groups, or by contracting an external evaluator¹⁹.

8.3 How to link the contribution of LEADER to the RDP - Priority 5 when projects are not related to the agricultural, food, and forestry sectors? *NEW*

Q. When identifying the contribution of LEADER-supported operations to specific Focus Areas, there is a problem when linking the projects about energy efficiency and climate change to the RDP - Priority 5. In fact, some projects are not part of the agriculture, food, and forestry sectors as it is foreseen in the Priority 5²⁰.

If there are some LEADER-supported projects aiming at "*promoting savings and energy efficiency among SMEs, local authorities and households*", but their actions are not targeted to the agriculture, food, and forestry companies, should these projects be linked to other Focus Areas? For example, shall these kind of projects be linked:

- to Focus Area 6A, when targeted to the general Small Medium Enterprise,
- to Focus Area 6B, when targeted to the local governmental entities, and
- to Priority 5, when they are targeted specifically to SMEs operating in the forestry and agribusiness sector?

¹⁹ Article 33 and 35 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

²⁰ RDP Priority 5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors.

A. The overarching principle for evaluating the contribution of LEADER to the RDP Priorities is that the Local Action Groups themselves should identify the main objectives of each LEADER-supported project, and additionally link each project to the most appropriate RDP Focus Area(s).

In the specific example mentioned in the question, the most relevant aspect to consider is the identification of the main objective pursued by the projects, which seems to be strongly linked to Focus Area 5B (i.e. increasing efficiency in energy use). The fact that Focus Area 5B refers to “agriculture and food processing” should not be seen as limiting factor. What is more important is the fact that the projects aim to contribute to increasing energy efficiency or reducing the emissions of Green House Gases. The fact that the field of the projects is outside the agriculture and food processing sectors should not be seen as a limitation. Indeed, the LEADER approach itself envisages area-based projects crossing over multiple sectors. Therefore, it is recommended for the evaluation of these projects to develop programme-specific evaluation questions related to the FA 5B, e.g. *"To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to increasing efficiency in energy use in rural areas?"*. The Helpdesk suggests that the following programme-specific indicators can be used to answer this evaluation question:

- For SMEs (other than in agri-food): Tonnes of Oil Equivalent (T.O.E.)/standard output of production (in accordance with production or service provided). This indicator would be similar to the Complementary Result Indicator R14;
- For public buildings: T.O.E./m² since in this case projects would mainly relate to surface area.

With this kind of approach, the contribution of the LEADER-supported projects to the climate change objectives can be captured and included in the results of the RDP.

9. EVALUATION OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORKS

9.1 Should the NRN-related evaluation questions be answered solely at the national level or also at the regional level in the case of regionalized RDPs? *NEW*

Q. NRN-related evaluation questions are part of the section on evaluation question related to other RDP aspects. Thus, should the evaluation questions be treated at the national level or should they concern the regional Rural Network, and therefore be answered at the regional level?

A. The NRN is the crossroad of the regions, and ensures the link with the National Rural Networks, European Network for Rural Development, and the National Rural Networks in other Member States. It therefore only steers, finances, and supports actions with a national scope. However, the regional rural networks relate more specifically to the RDP. It is the responsibility of the Managing Authority of the NRN to answer the question No 21 of Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 for actions with a national scope, and it is up to the regional authorities to answer questions related to actions linked to regional programmes.

9.2 How can the National Rural Network support the evaluation of RDPs? *NEW*

Q. How can the National Rural Network support the evaluation of RDPs? Should the National Rural Network also include some specific activities/indicators in their Multi-annual Action Plan?

A. According to Article 54(3), point b(IV) of the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, the EAFRD support under Article 51(3) shall be used [by the National Rural network] for the preparation and implementation of an Action Plan. The Action Plan can cover – among other tasks – the setting up of activities regarding the sharing and dissemination of RDP monitoring and evaluation findings. Example of these activities are:

- informing stakeholders about monitoring and evaluation findings during general NRN events or organizing specific, *ad hoc* events and working sessions in order to disseminate the RDP monitoring and evaluation;
- organizing working groups based on the information resulting from monitoring and evaluation;
- publishing the RDP monitoring and evaluation reports on the NRN website;
- disseminating monitoring and evaluation findings via various NRN publications, for example:
 - Factsheets and statistics based on latest monitoring data;
 - Descriptions of Good Practices based on evaluation case studies;
 - News-alerts about the achievement of the evaluation milestones (e.g. in AIR2017, AIR2019, ex post);
 - Articles on RDP stories of successes and failures based on evidence stemming from evaluation;
 - Yearly newsletter articles summarizing the main information reported in Annual Implementation Reports;
 - Publication of links, studies, and references where evaluation findings can be downloaded;
 - Articles based on interviews with evaluators.

However, experience also shows that the support from the NRNs to the evaluation goes beyond the dissemination and sharing of evaluation findings. Some NRNs take also a more proactive approach in promoting and supporting monitoring and evaluation activities in the RDP, for instance:

- developing trainings and other evaluation capacity building activities for various RDP stakeholders (e.g. LAGs);
- disseminating guidance documents and other materials of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development;
- participating in and publicizing ENRD - Evaluation Helpdesk's activities/events (e.g. Good Practice Workshops, Yearly Capacity Building events);
- establishing specific working groups/task forces on evaluation;
- developing guidelines/manuals on monitoring and evaluation (in accordance with Managing Authority of the RDPs);
- participate in the Rural Network's Steering Groups for the evaluation of RDPs;
- assist the Managing Authority along the collection of data and information related to specific RDP indicators via NRN members - support the collection of surveys in relation to monitoring and evaluation (e.g. of ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk);
- contribute to the collection of Good Practices in relation to monitoring and evaluation (e.g. through ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk);

The [ENRD - Evaluation Helpdesk](#) has a Brussels-based team as well as Geographic Evaluation Experts in each Member State. The Evaluation Helpdesk provides support to the respective National Rural Networks for:

- answering any evaluation-related queries of National Rural Networks and their members;
- identifying evaluation-related trainings and events that may be relevant for the NRN and its members, such as: the Evaluation Helpdesk's Yearly Capacity Building (evaluationWORKS!), Good Practice Workshops, and specific NRN events and working sessions offered by the Evaluation Helpdesk on evaluation-related topics;

- sharing guidance and dissemination material concerning the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes; and finally
- providing good practice descriptions on evaluation processes and methods.

10. ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

10.1 Will the European Commission provide a further guidance document on the AIR for RDP 2014-2020? *NEW*

Q. Does the European Commission intend to develop more detailed guidelines for facilitating the Member States in compiling the Annual Implementation Reports of Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020?

A. The European Commission - DG AGRI has prepared the Working Document “SFC2014 EAFRD AIR technical guidance” in this respect. The purpose of this document is to provide detailed technical guidance on the structure and content of an AIR for the RDPs 2014-2020. It can be used by the Member States to prepare their AIR before submitting it to the European Commission through the SFC2014 System. This Working Document will include detailed guidance about all points of Annex VII to Regulation 808/2014. Moreover, please note that more detailed guidance regarding point 7 of Annex VII to Regulation 808/2014 will be provided in the Guidelines “Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017”.

European Evaluation Helpdesk

Boulevard Saint-Michel 77-79

B - 1040 BRUSSELS

T: +32 2 737 51 30

Email: info@ruralevaluation.eu

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

