



Evaluation Support Study on the Information Policy on the Common Agricultural Policy

Final report

Written by Donatas Pocius, Arnas Aleksandravičius, Gerda Burneikaitė,
Milda Venckutė, Lea Juzdzewski and Rimantas Dumčius
January – 2021

PPMi

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
Direction C – Strategy, simplification and policy analysis

Unit B1 – External communication and promotion policy

Contact content: agri-B1@ec.europa.eu

Unit C.4 – Monitoring and Evaluation

Contact dissemination: AGRI-EVALUATION@ec.europa.eu

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

Evaluation Support Study on the Information Policy on the Common Agricultural Policy

Final report

***Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union.***

Freephone number (*):

00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission however it reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

PDF ISBN 978-92-76-23142-4

doi: 10.2762/9812

KF-01-20-607-EN-N

© European Union, 2021

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The United Kingdom withdrew from the European Union as of 1 February 2020. During the transition period, which ends on 31 December 2020, Union law, with a few limited exceptions, continues to be applicable to and in the United Kingdom and any reference to Member States in Union law shall be understood as including the United Kingdom.

Abstract

To raise awareness of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and explain it to citizens and stakeholders, the European Commission implements the information policy on the CAP. Measures employed for this purpose in 2016-2020 were the subject of the evaluation support study on the information policy on the CAP. As part of this exercise, comprehensive desk research, semi-structured interviews, stakeholder surveys, participant observation and case studies were conducted. All of these aimed to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and added value of the information policy on the CAP. This report provides the final results of the research, including conclusions and recommendations concerning the way forward. The combined results of the study suggest that the objectives of the information policy have, to a great extent, been achieved. The information policy on the CAP has been successful in improving the understanding and perception of the CAP. Given the changing realities of communication in the light of the Sibiu meeting and CAP reform, as well as the context of COVID-19, it will however be important for the policy to re-focus its activities in collaboration with Member States to make them smarter and more targeted, and to reach wider groups of stakeholders and citizens.

La Commission européenne met en œuvre la politique d'information relative à la politique agricole commune (PAC) avec pour objectifs de mieux faire connaître la PAC, et de l'expliquer aux citoyens et parties prenantes. Les actions menées dans ce but sur la période 2016-2020 ont fait l'objet d'une étude de soutien à l'évaluation de la politique d'information relative à la PAC. Dans le cadre de cette étude, des études documentaires approfondies, des entretiens semi-structurés, une enquête auprès des parties prenantes, une observation des participants et des études de cas ont été organisés, dans le but d'évaluer la pertinence, la cohérence, l'efficacité, l'efficience et la valeur ajoutée européenne de la politique de communication relative à la PAC. Le présent rapport présente les résultats finaux des recherches, et inclut notamment des conclusions et des recommandations pour l'avenir. Les résultats combinés de l'étude suggèrent que les objectifs de la politique d'information ont été atteints dans une large mesure. La politique d'information relative à la PAC a réussi à améliorer la compréhension de la PAC et la perception qu'en ont les citoyens et parties prenantes, et l'ensemble des actions d'information utilisées par la DG AGRI ont répondu aux besoins de leurs publics cibles. Comparée à d'autres acteurs de la communication (principalement les autorités nationales), la politique d'information a généré de la valeur ajoutée européenne en termes de volume, de champ, de rôle et de procédés, et les activités sont restées cohérentes en interne.

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	13
1.1.	Objectives and scope of the study	13
1.2.	Structure of the report	13
2.	INFORMATION MEASURES ON THE CAP.....	14
2.1.	Legal background	14
2.2.	Policy and communication contexts.....	14
2.2.1.	The CAP	14
2.2.2.	Corporate communication and key political changes	15
2.3.	Objectives, target audiences and content	16
2.3.1.	Communication objectives.....	16
2.3.2.	Target audiences.....	17
2.3.3.	Content.....	18
3.	INTERVENTION LOGIC.....	20
4.	EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONS.....	32
5.	METHODOLOGY	34
5.1.	Case studies.....	34
5.1.1.	Country case studies.....	34
5.1.2.	Grants case studies	36
5.1.3.	Commission's own initiative case studies and corporate communication case study.....	38
5.2.	Desk research	39
5.3.	Interviews.....	39
5.4.	Stakeholder surveys.....	40
5.5.	Usability testing (part of the case study on the website)	42
5.6.	Usability testing (part of the case study on the Teachers' Resource Pack)	44
5.7.	Qualitative data analysis.....	44
5.7.1.	General approach to qualitative data analysis	44
5.7.2.	Qualitative content analysis (Ag-Press articles).....	44
5.8.	Quantitative data analysis.....	47
5.9.	Conclusions and recommendations	48
5.10.	Limitations of the methodology	48
6.	EVALUATION RESULTS: ASSESSMENT OF DIFFERENT INFORMATION MEASURES.....	50
6.1.	Media networking	50
6.1.1.	Effectiveness of the Ag-Press network: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)	50
6.1.2.	Efficiency of the Ag-Press network: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6).....	63
6.1.3.	Relevance of the Ag-Press network: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8).....	68
6.2.	Social media	72
6.2.1.	Effectiveness of social media: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)	73
6.2.2.	Efficiency of social media: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6).....	86

6.2.3.	Relevance of social media: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8).....	92
6.3.	Website	93
6.3.1.	Effectiveness of the website: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)	93
6.3.2.	Efficiency of the website: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6).....	104
6.3.3.	Relevance of the website: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8).....	110
6.4.	Events.....	112
6.4.1.	Effectiveness: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1).....	112
6.4.2.	Efficiency of events: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6).....	122
6.4.3.	Relevance: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)	128
6.5.	Grants.....	131
6.5.1.	Effectiveness of grants: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1).....	131
6.5.2.	Effectiveness of grants: grant application procedure (ESQ 5)	145
6.5.3.	Efficiency of grants: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6).....	148
6.5.4.	Efficiency of grants: evaluating grant applications (ESQ 7).....	155
6.5.5.	Relevance of grants: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8).....	158
7.	EVALUATION RESULTS: ASSESSMENT OF CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES.....	163
7.1.	Achievement of the policy's general and specific objectives	163
7.1.1.	Effectiveness: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1).....	163
7.1.2.	Effectiveness: reinstating consumer confidence (ESQ 2)	166
7.1.3.	Effectiveness: promoting the European model of agriculture (ESQ 3)	166
7.2.	Factors hindering effectiveness and coherence.....	169
7.2.1.	Effectiveness: intervening factors (ESQ 4).....	169
7.3.	Relevance.....	171
7.3.1.	Relevance: information policy meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8).....	171
7.3.2.	Relevance: activities of the information policy meeting the needs of European citizens (ESQ 9).....	174
7.4.	Coherence	177
7.4.1.	Coherence: information policy on the CAP and corporate communication of the European Commission (ESQ 10).....	177
7.4.2.	Coherence: information policy on the CAP and information policies on related EU policies (ESQ 11).....	181
7.4.3.	Coherence: information policy on the CAP and other information actions on the CAP (ESQ 12).....	185
7.4.4.	Coherence: information policy on the CAP and communication by the Member States (ESQ 12).....	188
7.4.5.	Coherence: the components of the information policy on the CAP and the activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative, including co-financed measures (ESQ 13)	202
7.5.	EU added value	205

7.5.1.	EU added value provided by the information policy on the CAP (ESQ 14)	205
8.	CONCLUSIONS	209
8.1.	ESQ1 Effectiveness: improving understanding and perception of the CAP.....	209
8.2.	ESQ2 Effectiveness: reinstating consumer confidence.....	211
8.3.	ESQ3 Effectiveness: promoting the European model of agriculture	211
8.4.	ESQ4 Effectiveness: intervening factors	211
8.5.	ESQ5 Effectiveness: grant application procedure.....	212
8.6.	ESQ6 Efficiency: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives	212
8.7.	ESQ7 Efficiency: evaluating applications for grants.....	214
8.8.	ESQ8 Relevance: information policy meeting the needs of the target audiences	214
8.9.	ESQ9 Relevance: activities of the information policy meeting the needs of the European citizens.....	215
8.10.	ESQ10 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and corporate communication of the European Commission	215
8.11.	ESQ11 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and the information policies on related EU policies.....	216
8.12.	ESQ12 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and other information actions on the CAP.....	216
8.13.	ESQ12 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and the communication by the Member States	216
8.14.	ESQ13 Coherence: the components of the information policy on the CAP and the activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative, including co-financed measures.....	217
8.15.	ESQ14 Added value provided by the information policy on the CAP	217
9.	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	218
	ANNEX 1. EVALUATION GRID.....	229

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Objectives of the information measures on the CAP	14
Figure 2. Understanding of specific and general objectives.....	21
Figure 3. Links between specific objectives of the policy	23
Figure 4. Links between policy objectives.....	24
Figure 5. Intervention logic of the information policy on the CAP	25
Figure 6. Indicator levels to measure the achievement of objectives	26
Figure 7. Tailored CN indicators	27
Figure 8. Simplified intervention logic for media networking.....	28
Figure 9. Simplified intervention logic of website activities	29
Figure 10. Simplified intervention logic for social media activities.....	29
Figure 11. Simplified intervention logic for conferences.....	30
Figure 12. Simplified intervention logic for fairs	30
Figure 13. Simplified intervention logic for grants.....	31
Figure 14. Simplified intervention logics for information sessions and outreach exercises	31
Figure 15. NVivo 10 coding framework.....	47
Figure 16. Ag-Press membership evolution (as of 29 June 2020)	51
Figure 17. Average number of participants at different types of Ag-Press event.....	52
Figure 18. Ag-Press platform page views and users.....	53
Figure 19. Statistics on Ag-Press newsletter opens.....	54
Figure 20. Increased awareness and understanding (Ag-Press journalists).....	55
Figure 21. Participating in the press trip/seminar helped me to produce high-quality output for my work (e.g. article, report).....	55
Figure 22. Average number of articles published after different Ag-Press events.....	56
Figure 23. Covering CAP topics more often.....	57
Figure 24. Willingness to take part in future Ag-Press events	57
Figure 25. Ag-Press journalists on the Ag-Press.eu platform.....	58
Figure 26. How often have you used information from Ag-Press.eu to develop your stories? (n=127)	58
Figure 27. "I intend to visit the Ag-Press.eu platform in the future" (n=125).....	59
Figure 28. Viewing CAP more positively after Ag-Press activities	59

Figure 29. Words most frequently found in articles produced by Ag-Press journalists	60
Figure 30. Affiliations of the participants attending Ag-Press events	61
Figure 31. Cost per Ag-Press member	65
Figure 32. Cost comparison of Ag-Press events	66
Figure 33. Opinions of Ag-Press journalists regarding the efficiency of the network's events	67
Figure 34. Relevance for journalists of Ag-Press activities	69
Figure 35. Journalists making new contacts at Ag-Press events	69
Figure 36. Likelihood of contacting DG AGRI media team and the SPP	70
Figure 37. Coverage of the CAP in specialised and general media	71
Figure 38. Media coverage of the CAP: comparison of the two evaluation periods	72
Figure 39. Hashtags most frequently used by the DG AGRI Twitter account (5 June 2020 – 20 May 2018)	73
Figure 40. Lifetime total Likes (Facebook)	74
Figure 41. Number of posts/tweets/videos published (2016-2019)	75
Figure 42. Daily impressions on DG AGRI social media channels (2019)	75
Figure 43. Facebook reach of videos watched up to 95%/completion	76
Figure 44. Increased awareness and understanding among DG AGRI social media followers	77
Figure 45. To what extent do you agree that the following DG AGRI activities have been useful to you? Answers of social media users (n=84)	77
Figure 46. Channels via which different stakeholder groups received DG AGRI communications	78
Figure 47. "I intend to follow social media content from DG AGRI in the future" (n=99)	78
Figure 48. Average engaged users per post (2018-2019)	79
Figure 49. Facebook consumption trends	80
Figure 50. DG AGRI Facebook post with the greatest user engagement	81
Figure 51. Top 5 most-retweeted tweets	81
Figure 52. Types of Twitter engagement (2016-2019)	82
Figure 53. Accounts DG AGRI has retweeted most often (20 May 2018 - 5 June 2020)	82
Figure 54. Example of one of the most engaging posts on DG AGRI's Instagram	83
Figure 55. Most popular video in terms of views	84
Figure 56. "I view the CAP more positively because of information from DG AGRI on social media" (n=101)	85

Figure 57. Growth of social media budget and number of posts	88
Figure 58. Relationship between money spent and unique link clicks in the context of promoting the Teachers' Resource Pack.....	89
Figure 59. Amount spent on ads and cost per result: Teachers' Resource Pack and GI campaigns	90
Figure 60. "The information from DG AGRI on social media was interesting" (n=84)	92
Figure 61. Negative feedback on DG AGRI Facebook posts (January 2018-December 2019)	92
Figure 62. Number of visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (combined)	94
Figure 63. Number of visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (separate)	94
Figure 64. Number of page views per visit on the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (separate)	95
Figure 65. Percentage of returning visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (separate)	96
Figure 66. Percentage of website survey respondents who agree with the statements about the contents of the website	97
Figure 67. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who agree with the statements about the website	97
Figure 68. Percentage of the website survey respondents who selected each of the pages or sections as the most useful.....	98
Figure 69. Percentage of website survey respondents who agree with the statements about the organisation of the website.....	99
Figure 70. Ratings given by usability testing participants for each page on how easy it was to find it (sample size varies from 2 to 7).....	100
Figure 71. Examples of search queries indicating the need for search engine optimisation	101
Figure 72. Comparison of total visits to the DG AGRI website (old and new versions combined) in millions, and the average cost per visit (2017 to 2019)	105
Figure 73. Comparison of cost per visit and cost per download on the DG AGRI website (old and new versions combined) from 2017 to 2019	106
Figure 74. Comparison of visits per FTE and downloads per FTE in DG AGRI website (old and new version combined) from 2017 to 2019	107
Figure 75. Website cost per visit incurred by DG AGRI and DG SANTE.....	108
Figure 76. Website cost per download incurred by DG AGRI and DG SANTE	109
Figure 77. Percentage of respondents who agreed that the information on the DG AGRI website was interesting.....	110
Figure 78. How often respondents visit the website's 'Common agricultural policy' section and its pages (n=593).....	111
Figure 79. Satisfaction with a conference hosted by DG AGRI.....	114

Figure 80. Satisfaction with DG AGRI's stand at a fair.....	114
Figure 81. Sharing experiences with others and willingness to participate in future events hosted and/or attended by DG AGRI.....	115
Figure 82. The usefulness for work of events hosted or attended by DG AGRI	115
Figure 83. Change in understanding of the CAP and awareness of the relevance of EU support after participating in events hosted and/or attended by DG AGRI.....	116
Figure 84. Change in views towards the CAP after participating in events hosted and/or attended by DG AGRI.....	117
Figure 85. Trends in total participants and cost per participant in conferences organised by DG AGRI, 2016 to 2019.....	123
Figure 86. Trends in total participants and cost per participant at conferences organised by DG AGRI during previous and current evaluation periods s.....	124
Figure 87. Percentage of respondents from previous evaluation (survey conducted in 2015) who agreed that DG AGRI conferences increased their knowledge of the CAP (n=153)	124
Figure 88. Comparison of cost per participant at EU Agricultural Outlook conferences and other DG AGRI conferences.....	125
Figure 89. Trends in cost per participant and cost per conference for EU Agricultural Outlook conferences, 2016 to 2019	126
Figure 90. Comparison of total cost and average cost per event for DG AGRI conferences and fair attendance	126
Figure 91. Average cost per fair between 2016 and 2019.....	127
Figure 92. Percentage of respondents who agreed that DG AGRI conferences are interesting and relevant for their work	128
Figure 93. Percentage of respondents who agreed that they gained important or new information at DG AGRI conferences.....	129
Figure 94. Percentage of respondents who agree that DG AGRI fair stands are relevant for their work	130
Figure 95. Percentage of respondents who agree that information at the DG AGRI fair stand is important, sufficient and new.....	130
Figure 96. Main target groups of the grants assessed in the case studies (n=25).....	133
Figure 97. Number of grant recipients involved in different numbers of events during the implementation of their project (n=47)	133
Figure 98. Number of grant recipients involved in events according to audience size, 2016 to 2018 (n=38)	134
Figure 99. Number of grant recipients using different numbers of social media channels, 2016 to 2018 (n=46)	134
Figure 100. Use of different social media channels by grant recipients, 2016 to 2018 (n=44)	135
Figure 101. Number of website visitors between 2016 and 2018.....	136

Figure 102. Number of grant recipients using various audio and audio-visual elements, 2016 to 2018 (n=47)	137
Figure 103. Grant recipients who agreed guidance provided by DG AGRI staff during the implementation of the project was sufficient and helpful (n=28)	138
Figure 104. Percentage of grant recipients agreeing with statements on the clarity and appropriateness of reporting requirements?	139
Figure 105. "Do you agree with the following statements regarding the increased knowledge of your organisation following the project?"	139
Figure 106. "Do you agree with the fact that your organisation has benefitted from cooperation with partner organisations?" (n=27)	140
Figure 107. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the involvement of your organisation with the CAP following the project?	141
Figure 108. "Do you agree with the following statements regarding these means to keep informing your target groups about the CAP?"	141
Figure 109. "To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the funding limits of the grant scheme?"	142
Figure 110. "To what extent do you agree with the level of co-funding provided by the grant scheme being sufficient?" (n=10)	142
Figure 111. Overall satisfaction of grant recipients regarding their participation in the grant scheme (n=40)	146
Figure 112. The satisfaction of grant applicants with various aspects of the grant evaluation procedure.....	147
Figure 113. Trends in the grants budget and average grants awarded	149
Figure 114. "Which metrics did you collect?" (n=26)	155
Figure 115. All procedures for the grant scheme ran efficiently (n=28)	156
Figure 116. Distribution of grants of different sizes	156
Figure 117. Average and median sizes of grants (by organisations receiving different numbers of grants)	157
Figure 118. "Opportunities to receive funding from this grant scheme are fairly well known among potential applicants in my country" (n=40)	158
Figure 119. "Would your organisation have chosen to implement all or part of this project without DG AGRI funding?" (n=28)	159
Figure 120. "To what extent do you agree that the following factors had an influence on your organisation's decision to apply for a grant?"	160
Figure 121. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who stated that they were informed at least to a moderate extent about various aspects of the CAP.....	163
Figure 122. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who rated various aspects of the CAP very positively or moderately positively	164

Figure 123. Percentage of respondents to the main survey selecting various reasons for their organisation being interested in information on the CAP and related topics	165
Figure 124. Extent to which stakeholders surveyed agreed that the CAP has fulfilled its different roles since 2016	168
Figure 125. Sentiment of articles mentioning the CAP in EU Member States (n=914)	170
Figure 126. Percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree with statements regarding media coverage of the CAP and related topics in their country	176
Figure 127. "Since 2016, have you noticed the CAP and related topics being mentioned/referred to in corporate communication campaigns launched by the EU (InvestEU, EUandME, or EUProtects)?" (n=473)	179
Figure 128. Complementarity of DG AGRI communication and corporate communication campaigns	180
Figure 129. Most frequently mentioned words in the communication objectives for the CAP...	182
Figure 130. Experience of grant beneficiaries in communicating about the CAP and related topics	199

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Audience segmentation in the DG AGRI external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020	17
Table 2. Countries analysed in the case studies	35
Table 3. Summary of grant case studies	37
Table 4. Summary of Commission's own initiative and corporate communication case studies..	38
Table 5. Summary of interviews conducted	40
Table 6. Qualitative content analysis framework	45
Table 7. Summary of Ag-Press events organised during the evaluation period.....	51
Table 8. Average potential audience for different Ag-Press journalist articles (internal DG AGRI evaluation)	62
Table 9. Total costs of the Ag-Press network	64
Table 10. Number of users, page views and cost of the Ag-Press.eu platform.....	67
Table 11. Average impressions per video (YouTube).....	76
Table 12. DG AGRI YouTube video views and impressions CTR	83
Table 13. Total social media costs	87
Table 14. Comparison of DG AGRI and DG SANTE Twitter accounts.....	91
Table 15. Summary of DG AGRI website costs from 2016 to 2019	104
Table 16. Total website costs incurred by DG AGRI, DG SANTE and DG MARE between 2016 and 2019	107

Table 17. The allocation of full-time equivalents (FTEs) for websites at DG AGRI, DG SANTE and DG MARE between 2016 and 2019	109
Table 18. Performance of the selected events hosted or attended by DG AGRI	113
Table 19. Achievement of targets set for the conferences, fairs, and other events	118
Table 20. Total event costs incurred by DG AGRI, DG SANTE and DG MARE, 2016 to 2019	127
Table 21. Countries in which grants were implemented.....	132
Table 22. Number of publications, views, interactions, followers and people reached by grant recipients on social media, 2016 to 2018	135
Table 23. Summary of spending on grants	149
Table 24. Grants implementing events for school children and teachers, and young people ...	150
Table 25. Grants implementing information campaigns that had a strong focus on events	151
Table 26. Grant projects implementing web/TV-based campaigns only	152
Table 27. Grant projects implementing actions with a strong focus on audio-visual production	153
Table 28. Number of grants received by grant recipients during the period 2016-2019.....	157
Table 29. Extent to which people agree that the CAP fulfils its different roles	167
Table 30. Perception of the importance of the priorities of the CAP.....	167
Table 31. Communication objectives for the CAP.....	172
Table 32. Comparison of aims stated in Article 45 with communication objectives stated in the external communication strategy for the period 2016-2020.....	172
Table 33. DG AGRI's contribution to the Commission's corporate communication campaigns .	178
Table 34. Examples of messages promoted by DG AGRI external communication strategy and communicated by national public authorities	193
Table 35. Examples of grant projects complementing national communication measures on the CAP by responding to national informational needs	197
Table 36. Examples of grant projects benefitting from the support and cooperation of national actors	199
Table 37. Target audiences: strategy and selected activities.....	202
Table 38. Messages: strategy and selected activities	203

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1. Project-specific examples of measuring increased awareness	143
Box 2. Example of a national activity communicating EAFRD (identified through mapping of national communication measures)	190
Box 3. Example of a national information activity addressed to a specific target audience (identified through mapping of national communication measures)	191
Box 4. Examples of communication messages critical of the CAP at national level	196

ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
CAP	Common agricultural policy
CDGs	Civil dialogue groups
CEJA	European Council of Young Farmers
CELCAA	European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade
CHAFEA	Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency
CN	Communication network
COPA-	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations-General
COGECA	Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives in the European Union
CoR	European Committee of the Regions
CTR	Click-through rate
DG	Directorate-General
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG COMM	Directorate-General for Communication
DG ENV	Directorate-General for the Environment
DG MARE	Directorate-General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
DG TRADE	Directorate-General for Trade
EC	European Commission
ECVC	European Coordination Via Campesina
EEB	European Environmental Bureau
EFFAT	European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions
ELO	European Landowners' Organization
EMB	European Milk Board
EP	European Parliament
ESQ	Evaluation study question
EU	European Union
EURAF	European Agroforestry Federation
GI	Geographical indication
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KPI	Key performance indicator
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PAN Europe	Pesticide Action Network Europe
RDP	Rural development programme
SACAR	Joint Secretariat of Agricultural Trade Associations
SPP	Spokesperson service
US	United States

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Objectives and scope of the study*

The aim of this evaluation is to examine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and EU added value of the information policy on the common agricultural policy (CAP), implemented by the European Commission on the basis of Article 6 and Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP.

The evaluation covers the actions adopted from 2016 to 2020, although the analysis of activities implemented in 2020 is less intensive, due to the limited availability of data. The results of the previous evaluation (an assessment of the period 2013-2015) have been taken into account as a reference¹.

The geographical coverage of the study is the EU28, although as of 2020, the United Kingdom has now officially left the EU.

The study was carried out (and the data collected) in 2020.

1.2. *Structure of the report*

This report encompasses five key parts:

- Chapter 2 presents the information policy on the CAP, including its legal background, policy and communication contexts, objectives, target audiences and content.
- Chapter 3 outlines the intervention logic of the information policy on the CAP, including needs and objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, results, and impacts.
- Chapter 4 presents evaluation study questions (ESQ).
- Chapter 5 details the evaluation's methodology, including case studies, desk research, interviews, stakeholder surveys, usability testing, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, as well as making conclusions and recommendations.
- Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 present the results of the evaluation, including findings on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU added value of the information policy on the CAP; in total, answers are provided to 14 evaluation study questions (clustered according to the evaluation criteria listed above)
- Chapter 8 outlines the evaluation's key conclusions by question
- Chapter 9 provides recommendations to further improve the implementation of the information policy on the CAP

Throughout the text, activities carried out by DG AGRI to implement the information policy on the CAP are referred to as "information measures" or "communication tools". These include third-party initiatives co-financed through grants, as well as the Commission's own tools, which include media networking, social media, a website, and events. On a few occasions, these are referred to as communication activities too. In the chapters on evaluation study results, each is addressed separately and by question.

¹ See European Commission, *Evaluation of the information policy on the CAP: Final Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

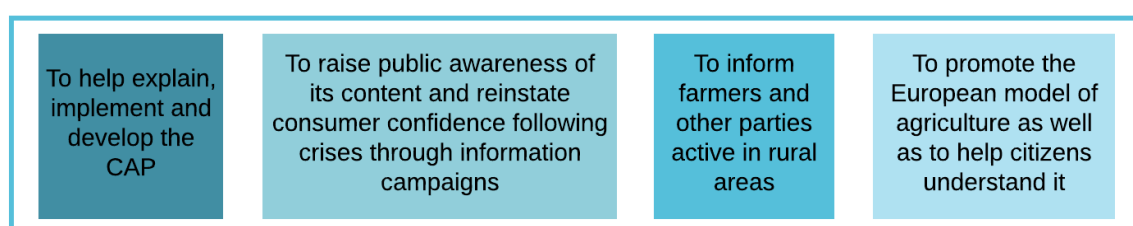
2. **INFORMATION MEASURES ON THE CAP**

2.1. ***Legal background***

The legal basis for carrying out information measures on the CAP is provided by Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013. Article 6 of this Regulation identifies information measures as one of the activities that may be financed from CAP funds, while Article 45 specifies the objectives of such information measures and outlines the details as to how they may be carried out. Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 repealed the previous Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 of 17 April 2000 on information measures relating to the CAP.

The specific objectives of the information measures are listed in the Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, and provided in the figure below.

Figure 1. Objectives of the information measures on the CAP



Source: Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy.

2.2. ***Policy and communication contexts***

2.2.1. *The CAP*

Although this evaluation covers communications about the CAP rather than the contents of the CAP itself, we provide a brief overview of the policy below.

The CAP is one of the oldest policies of the European Union (EU), dating back to the 1960s. It has shaped the EU in many ways, particularly due to its significant financial scale. (At one point the CAP accounted for 85% of the total EU budget; as of 2020, it comprises around 35%). The design and structure of the CAP have been at the centre of political debates at European level for decades. Numerous reforms have been made to the CAP over time, led by financial considerations expressed by the Member States (MS), but also by growing interest and concern on the part of societal groups, stakeholder organisations and politicians, as well as the need to address new challenges.

Since 1992, the core topics of the gradual reform process have been the better targeting of funding by shifting from production to income support; the introduction of the second pillar of the CAP ('rural development'); the growing importance of environmental considerations; and the move towards a more market-oriented agricultural production. The legislative process for the most recent (2013) reform of the CAP began in 2010, when the European Parliament became involved for the first time as a co-legislator with the Council.

During the latest CAP reform process, the involvement of stakeholders as well as the general public was considered to be an essential element; hence, considerable efforts were undertaken to consult citizens and organisations at the start of the policy

development process. The public consultation² revealed a high degree of interest in the CAP among the general public – over 5 500 contributions were received in just four weeks – a considerably higher number than was received in response to similar consultation exercises for other policies implemented at the time. However, wider stakeholder and public engagement also revealed that interest and knowledge in CAP activities was somewhat uneven across the EU, with Austria and Latvia, for example, submitting a high number of responses compared to their size – three to four as many as Italy or the United Kingdom.³

On 1 June 2018, the European Commission presented legislative proposals on the CAP beyond 2020. The aim of these proposals was to make the CAP more responsive to current and future challenges such as climate change and generational renewal, while continuing to support European farmers to ensure a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector. To ensure access to high-quality food and strong support for the unique European farming model, nine objectives were set:⁴

- ensuring a fair income for farmers;
- increasing competitiveness;
- rebalancing the power within the food chain;
- action on climate change;
- caring for the environment;
- preserving landscapes and biodiversity;
- supporting generational renewal;
- ensuring the vibrancy of rural areas;
- protect food quality and health.

As the policy has changed, the communication surrounding has also evolved. A number of factors have had an important/major effect on the way in which the CAP is communicated in 2020. These include the growing interest and engagement of societal groups; the implementation of the EU Better Regulation Guidelines, reinforcing the requirement for consultation with the general public and policy stakeholders; and the shift in the EU from sectoral to cross-cutting policy goals promoted by the Juncker Commission. The overall importance of information measures to the reform and implementation of the CAP has grown significantly. At the same time, DG AGRI, the Directorate-General that implements the CAP and information measures relating to it, began to contribute to the Commission's corporate communication campaigns, supporting the strategic priorities of the Commission and the implementation of the cross-sectoral policy goals launched under the Juncker Commission.

2.2.2. Corporate communication and key political changes

Between 2016 and 2020, two main developments affected the information policy on the CAP from a corporate perspective. First, it was decided that communication campaigns

² A summary of results and key highlights is available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/modernising-and-simplifying-common-agricultural-policy>.

³ DG AGRI: The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en

would no longer be implemented at the level of DG AGRI, and that most of the Commission's communication would be centralised, coordinated by DG COMM and supported by other DGs. This meant changes to the allocation of communication budgets and human resources within DG AGRI. The external communication strategy for the period 2016-2020 reflected these changes. Since the introduction of corporate communication campaigns, DG AGRI has allocated important financial resources to support the activities implemented by DG COMM. While these were typically allocated on top of the annual budget for information measures on the CAP, in 2016 DG AGRI's contribution to DG COMM was deducted from its CAP information policy budget. In addition to financing, DG AGRI has been also involved in providing input and bringing relevant thematic knowledge to corporate communication campaigns.

The other critical development during the evaluation period was the appointment of the Juncker Commission and the creation of its 10 political priorities to be pursued. DG AGRI subsequently needed to develop its communication activities so that they contributed to these 10 priorities. DG AGRI contributes in particular to five of the Commission's priorities: jobs, growth, and investment; the Digital Single Market; the Energy Union and climate; the internal market; and EU-US free trade. DG AGRI's annual activity report 2018 further stresses the contribution of the CAP to the first four of the priorities listed above⁵. In addition, DG AGRI's communication planning reflects the specific tasks elaborated by the President in his Mission Letter to the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development for the mandate of the Juncker Commission.

The latter part of the period 2016-2020 (the years covered by the DG AGRI external communication strategy) has been shaped by the appointment of the new von der Leyen Commission. In the political guidelines for the European Commission 2019-2024, President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen stressed the importance of the work carried out by European farmers. The President also introduced plans to implement a 'Farm to Fork Strategy' as a way to support farmers in producing sustainable food. In addition, efforts to combat climate change are high on the agenda of the new Commission, with the European Green Deal being one of the key priorities for the von der Leyen Commission⁶. Action on climate change, care for the environment and the preservation of landscapes and biodiversity are already included in the proposed objectives for the CAP beyond 2020⁷. DG AGRI will therefore need to significant communication efforts towards these priorities of the new Commission, all within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which itself poses challenges for the agri-food sector.

2.3. Objectives, target audiences and content

2.3.1. Communication objectives

Every five years, DG AGRI develops an external communication strategy for the CAP, defining its specific communication objectives, target groups, main messages and communication tools. In this section, we review the main elements of this strategy for 2016-2020. Where relevant, we consider some elements of the 2010-2015 period, which was covered by the previous evaluation. We focus mainly on the target audiences, main

⁵ European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2018*, 2018.

⁶ Von der Leyen, U., *A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe*. Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en

messages and communication tools employed.

2.3.2. Target audiences

Eurobarometer surveys indicate that while the majority of respondents are aware of the CAP, a large number still do not know about the support that the EU provides to farmers. Influenced by these figures, the external communication strategy for 2016-2020 focuses on raising public awareness of the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development via the CAP.

In 2014 and 2015, the period immediately after the reform of the CAP, the primary target audience for communications was the general public – in particular, persons under 40 and those living in countries where the CAP is less well known. DG AGRI tailored the main messages of its communication around two key topics: the reformed CAP and the Europe 2020 strategy. In this way, DG AGRI sought to inform the general public about the fundamental principles of the new CAP, and to show how it contributes to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy⁸.

Building on the recommendations made in the previous evaluation of the information policy on the CAP, the DG AGRI communication strategy for 2016-2020 clearly distinguishes between two audiences: stakeholders and the general public. The strategy outlines further audience segmentation, with tailored messages and tools being used to engage different groups. Five priority audience segments are identified: school children and teachers; citizens visiting fairs/specific events; young people as part of the general public; beneficiaries of the CAP; and multipliers as part of stakeholders. The table below provides a list of key messages and tools by audience segment.

Table 1. Audience segmentation in the DG AGRI external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020

Audience	Messages	Audience segmentation	Key tools
General public	<p>Messages should attract the interest of the general public (especially young urban dwellers) in relation to food quality and specificity, and healthy eating</p> <p>The message should be promoted that the EU consistently ensures access by 500 million consumers across the EU to safe and high-quality food, produced sustainably and reflecting consumer expectations with regard to animal welfare, environmental and other standards, which are among strictest in the world</p> <p>Messages should focus on addressing the existing (mis)perceptions about</p>	School children and teachers	Edutainment pack
		Families	Corporate communication campaigns, fairs and events, web (including A/V), publications
		Young people	(Social) media, corporate communication campaigns, web (including A/V)

⁸ European Commission, *Evaluation of the information policy on the CAP: Final Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

Audience	Messages	Audience segmentation	Key tools
	European agriculture and farming, rather than policy content		
Stakeholders	Messages should promote greater awareness of the contribution that the CAP makes to supporting economic growth in rural areas, especially that of SMEs	Beneficiaries of the CAP	Civil dialogue groups, web, green team ambassadors, Ag-Press, visitors, (social) media
	Messages should promote the contribution that is made by the CAP to RDPs	Multipliers	Civil dialogue groups, conferences, web, green team ambassadors, Ag-Press, visitors, (social) media
	Messages should emphasise the support provided for sustainable production practices and other measures that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change		

Source: Adapted by the authors from the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, *External Communication Strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020*.

2.3.3. Content

DG AGRI employs a two-fold approach to reach its target audiences. In line with Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, the two types of information measures used are: 1) measures by third parties co-financed through grants; and 2) measures implemented on the initiative of the Commission.

Actions by third parties include specific measures and annual programmes, which are co-financed via grants under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF). As indicated by DG AGRI officials during interviews, the co-financing rate was set at 60% of eligible costs. The third parties applying for grants include organisations at both EU and national levels, ranging from public to private bodies as well as various NGOs/associations. A range of activities are financed by these grants, notably information campaigns, audio-visual production, events (e.g. conferences, seminars, workshops) and others.

Measures implemented at the initiative of the Commission are also financed under the EAGF. These include measures such as media networking, social media, a website, and events, and aim at promoting stakeholder networking, and engaging the general public⁹.

Both types of measures are carried out in accordance with annual action plans, and are followed by annual reports on the implementation of annual DG AGRI external communication action plans. The annual reports provide comprehensive information on the implementation of information measures and budget allocation. Each year between 2016 and 2019, DG AGRI received the same budget of EUR 8 000 000 to implement its

⁹ European Commission, *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020*, Brussels, 2016.

external communication according to Articles 6 and 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy:

- in 2016, the sum of EUR 1 580 900.72 was earmarked for the Commission's actions. EUR 2 419 099.28 was provided for the co-financing of third-party efforts via grants from the EAGF, and EUR 4 000 000 was co-delegated to DG COMM for corporate communication campaigns¹⁰;
- in 2017, EUR 4 322 000 was assigned to the initiatives of the Commission and EUR 3 678 000 for grants; EUR 8 480 000 was co-delegated to DG COMM for corporate communication campaigns¹¹;
- in 2018 the budget was allocated in the same manner as in 2019, by equally assigning EUR 4 000 000 to each type of measure; EUR 6 560 000 and EUR 4 275 000 were co-delegated to DG COMM for corporate communication actions in 2018 and 2019, respectively¹².

In implementing this evaluation, where relevant, we have considered information policy on the CAP since the entering into force of the Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 in 2014, and the findings of the previous evaluation have been taken into account.

¹⁰ European Commission, *Annual Report on Implementation of DG AGRI's 2016 External Communication Action Plan*, pp. 19-21.

¹¹ European Commission, *Annual Report on Implementation of DG AGRI's 2017 External Communication Action Plan*, p. 23.

¹² European Commission, *Annual Report on Implementation of DG AGRI's 2018 External Communication Action Plan*, pp. 23-26; European Commission, *Annual Report on Implementation of DG AGRI's 2019 External Communication Action Plan*, pp. 16-19.

3. **INTERVENTION LOGIC**

In this section, we present the intervention logic for the information policy on the CAP. The intervention logic has been developed in line with the framework of Communication Network (CN) indicators¹³, and includes the following levels: needs, objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts.

Needs

'Needs' refers to the definition of the problem that is addressed by a given intervention. The need to implement information actions on the CAP stems not only from the legal background defined in Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, but also from existing **misperceptions surrounding the CAP**. Notably, as defined in the External Communication Strategy 2016-2020, the information measures on the CAP aim to address misperceptions concerning:

- European agriculture and the role of farming in society instead of the policy context
- The contribution that the EU agri-food sector makes to the wider EU economy
- The CAP within developing countries¹⁴

DG AGRI seeks to address these misperceptions by targeting the general public directly and by engaging stakeholders who could potentially act as multipliers in disseminating the information about the CAP more widely, in line with overall policy objectives.

Objectives

Drawing on the key documents governing the implementation of the information policy, we distinguish two levels of policy objectives, in line with the Better Regulation Guidelines¹⁵: **general and specific**.

The general objectives are at the highest hierarchical level of objectives for an intervention¹⁶. Because Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 provides the legal basis for the implementation of the information policy, we consider the objectives defined in the Regulation to be the policy's **general objectives**. The general objectives of the information policy defined in the Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 (Article 45) state that the information measures implemented should:

- help to explain, implement and develop the CAP;
- raise public awareness, through information campaigns, of the CAP's content and objectives, to reinstate consumer confidence following crises;
- inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas;
- promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to helping to improve

¹³ Available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/informing/webinar/ec_common_set_indicators.pdf

¹⁴ European Commission, *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020*, Brussels, 2016.

¹⁵ European Commission, 'Tool #16, How to set objectives', *Better Regulation "Toolbox"*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁶ Ibid.

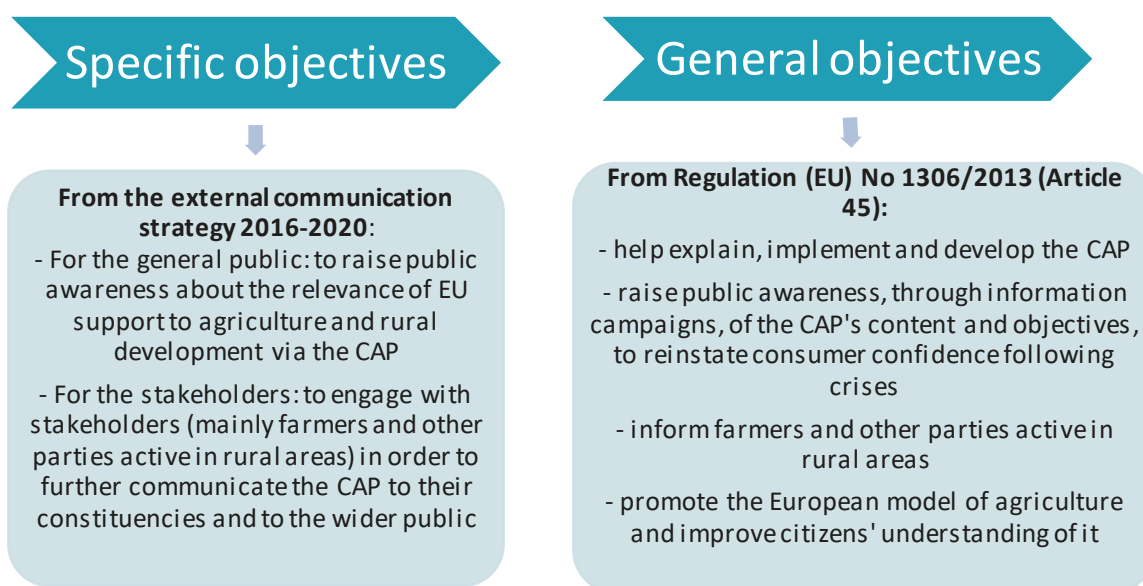
citizens' understanding of it¹⁷

Specific objectives, meanwhile, define what a policy intervention sets out to achieve¹⁸. In the context of the information policy, the external communication strategy governs the way in which the policy is implemented over the five-year periods covered by each strategy. In other words, it sets out what the policy must achieve within a given period. We therefore consider the specific objectives of the information policy during our evaluation period to be the objectives outlined in the External Communication Strategy 2016-2020.

DG AGRI's external communication strategy for 2016-2020 further specifies the objectives of the policy, defining key aims for its two target groups:

- For the general public: to raise public awareness about the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development via the CAP
- For the stakeholders: to engage with stakeholders (mainly farmers and other parties active in rural areas) in order to further communicate the CAP to their constituencies and to the wider public¹⁹

Figure 2. Understanding of specific and general objectives



Source: Developed by the authors, based on European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, External Communication Strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020 and Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy.

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 352/78, (EC) No 165/94, (EC) No 2799/98, (EC) No 814/2000, (EC) No 1290/2005 and (EC) No 485/2008.

¹⁸ European Commission, 'Tool #16, How to set objectives', *Better Regulation "Toolbox"*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁹ European Commission, *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020*, Brussels, 2016.

Inputs

According to the Communication Network Indicators framework, certain inputs are required to achieve the objectives of a policy. These include budgeting, planning and ex-ante evaluation (evaluation before the start of the activity to determine need and best approach). The level of inputs also includes **funding mechanisms** to finance the various activities of the information policy. These consist of funds awarded from the EAFG through grants and public procurement, as well as any additional financial and human resources from the DG AGRI that are needed to implement activities within a given year.

Activities

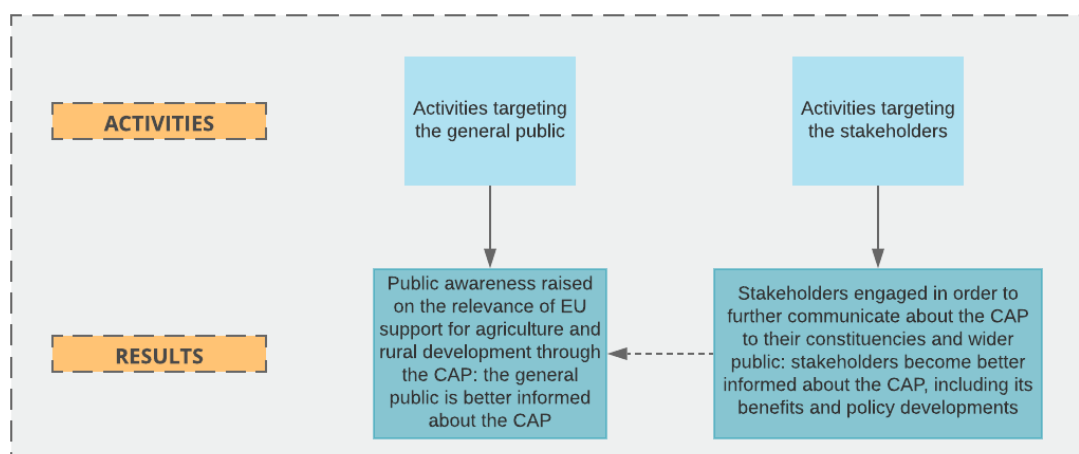
'Activities' refers to what is done to produce and implement communications. Specific activities implemented by DG AGRI each year are described in its annual action plans (planned activities) and annual reports. In addition, reports are presented by the Commission every two years to the European Parliament and the Council, on the implementation of the information policy (implemented activities). Activities encompass both **measures implemented by third parties** (grants) and **measures implemented at the initiative of the Commission** (including media networking, social media, website, events). Thus, the activities in the intervention logic include organising and participating in events, social media and website presence, media networking, horizontal activities, and other activities implemented at the initiative of the Commission, as well as activities carried out by third parties under co-financed information measures on the CAP.

Outputs, results and impacts

The three remaining levels of the intervention logic – **outputs, results, and impacts** – refer to the achievements of the policy.

The **output level** involves questions concerning who and how many are **reached by the activities**. Different communication activities are associated with different output level indicators. These include the number of grants awarded, the number of social media posts and the number of users reached through those posts, as well as views/downloads of the audio-visual production/publications, media mentions, visitors or participants at events, etc. (see operationalisation of EQ1 for a full list of indicators).

'Results' refers to **what the target audience takes away from the communication**. This includes their initial response and sustainable effects. According to the intervention logic of our evaluation, this level mirrors the specific objectives of the intervention logic, i.e. it measures the achievement of the objectives from the external communication strategy (2016-2020). This means that we focus on **measuring whether the audiences became better informed about the CAP** (its key elements, benefits and policy developments). In the case of stakeholders, we also assess the extent to which this information has been further shared. Thus, the two specific objectives may also be interrelated: namely, if stakeholders not only become better aware of the CAP themselves, but also publicly disseminate this information, they indirectly contribute to the first specific objective of raising public awareness (see figure on the next page for an illustration of this).

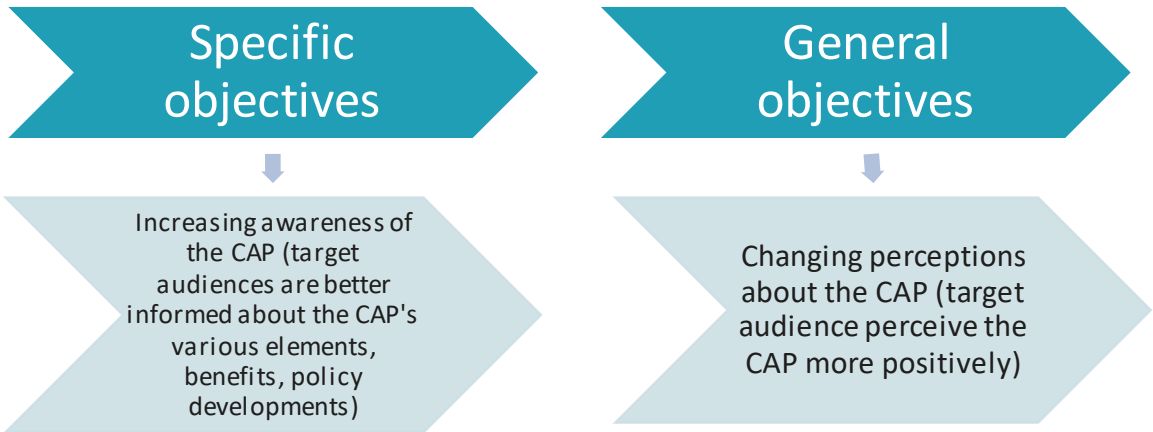
Figure 3. Links between specific objectives of the policy

Finally, at the level of impacts, we focus on whether the information measures implemented have succeeded in **changing opinions towards the CAP**. Although the impacts listed in the CN framework focus on improved perceptions of the EU, in this evaluation we are focusing on changes in perceptions towards the CAP. We limit the focus to the CAP rather than the EU as a whole, due to the overall focus of the information policy on the CAP and the existing difficulties in measuring changes in perception. We acknowledge that changes in perceptions towards the CAP may have led to changes in overall perceptions towards the EU, but we believe that valid measurement of this change is not possible within the scope of this evaluation.

To summarise, we consider **changing the perceptions of the general public towards the CAP** to be the **main impact of the policy**, stemming from the achievement of the general objectives of the policy. Meanwhile, we believe the two **specific objectives** defined in the external communication strategy 2016-2020 will result in **increased awareness of the CAP** among both the general public and stakeholders (e.g. by informing them about key elements of the CAP, its key benefits, policy developments). We must also note that although the Regulation mentions the raising of awareness about the CAP as a general objective, awareness-raising is also repeated under the specific objectives of the External Communication Strategy 2016-2020. After consultation with DG AGRI, and in line with the CN framework, we consider this to be more of a specific objective, the achievement of which should be measured at the level of results.

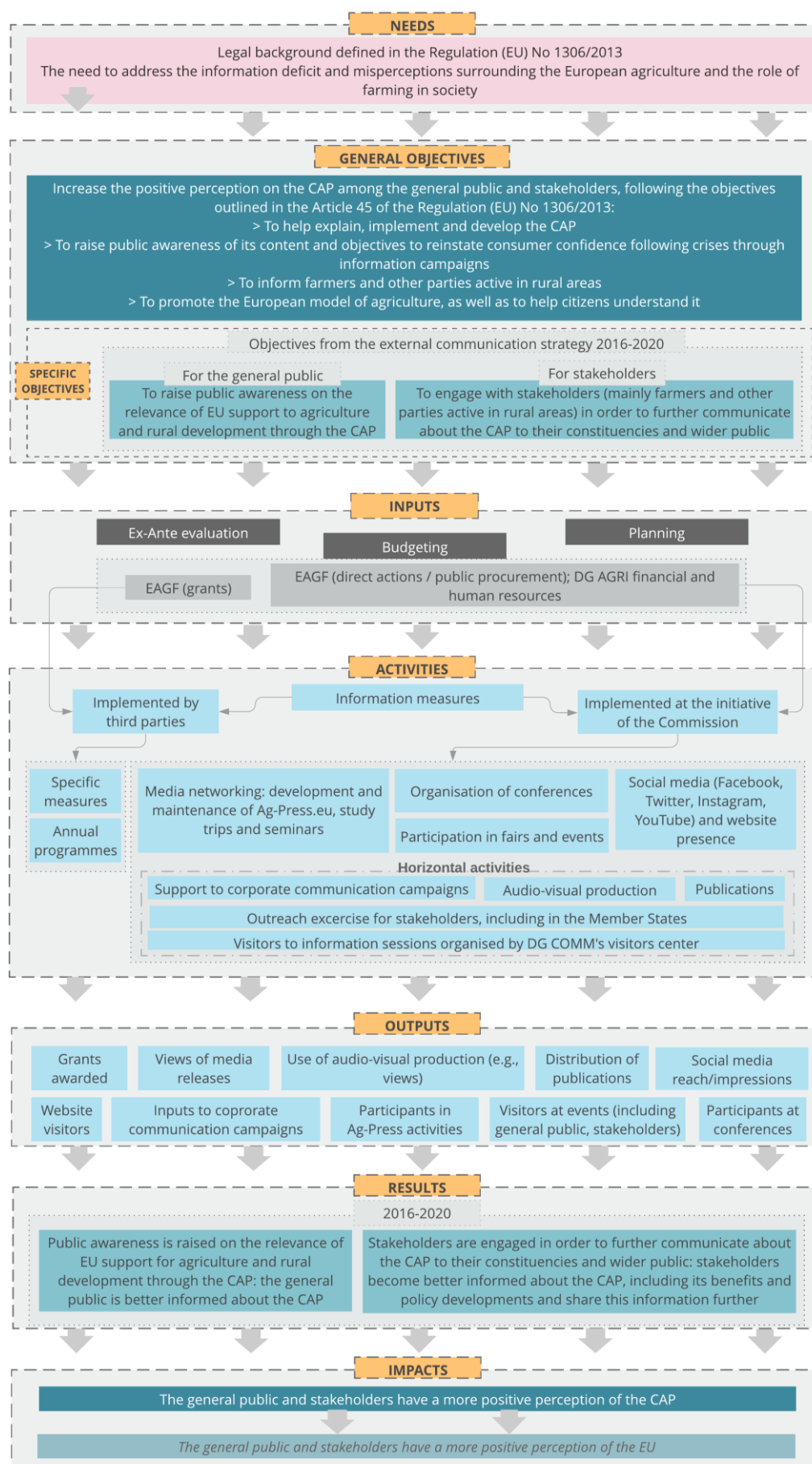
The framework outlining the way we understand the links between general and specific objectives and policy results and impacts is summarised in the figure on the next page.

Figure 4. Links between policy objectives



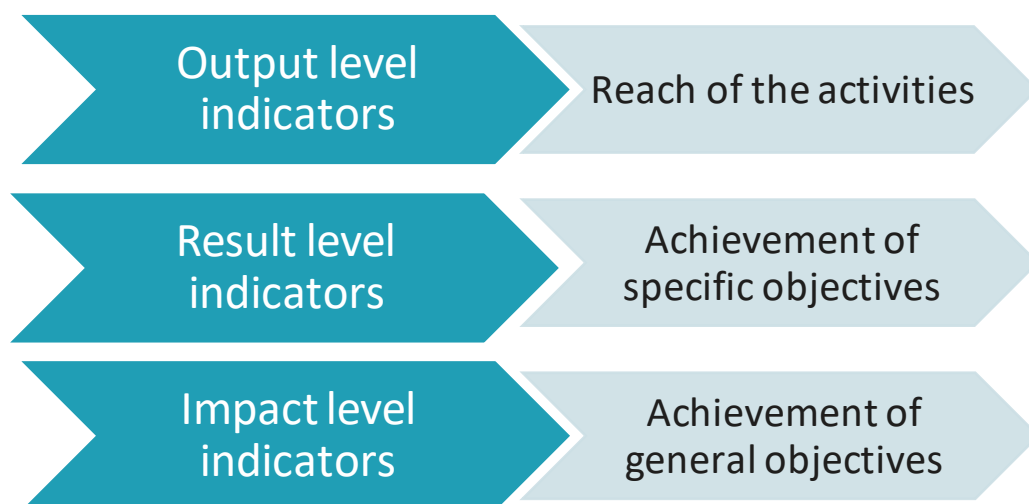
The intervention logic, visualising all of the levels discussed in the section above, is presented in the figure on the next page.

Figure 5. Intervention logic of the information policy on the CAP



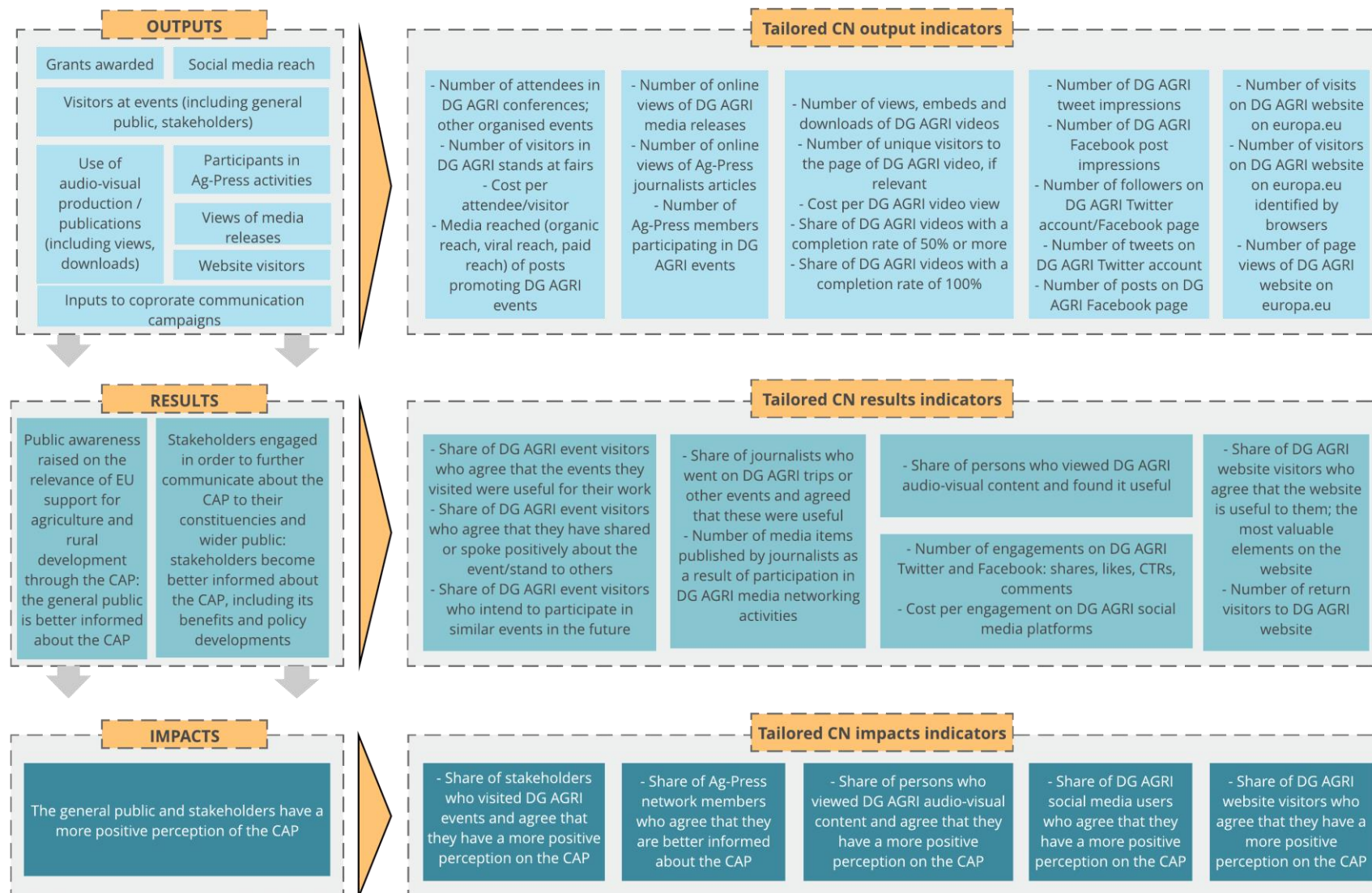
In line with using the logic of the CN indicators to develop the intervention logic for the evaluation, we also use the indicators suggested by the CN. In general, we use the CN indicators to structure the assessment of effectiveness in relation to the achievement of the objectives of the information policy based on three levels: outputs, results and impacts.

Figure 6. Indicator levels to measure the achievement of objectives



We draw on the CN indicators, adapting them to complement our own indicators, structured at the same levels of outputs, results and impacts. It was necessary to add some indicators of our own because those suggested by the CN do not fully cover the scope of the evaluation. The figure on the next page includes the CN indicators tailored for this evaluation.

Figure 7. Tailored CN indicators



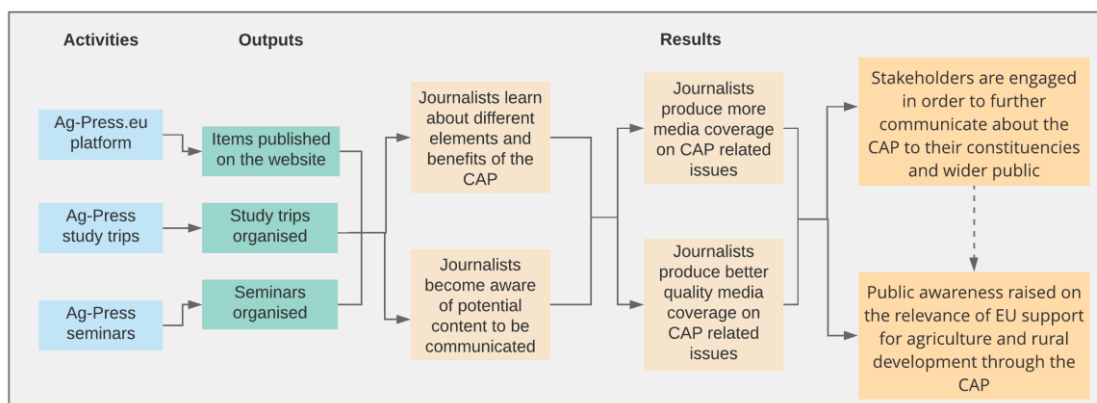
In addition to the general intervention logic, simplified logics were created for the different types of information measures, which form the core structure of our approach to this evaluation. We illustrate the mechanisms by which various activities and outputs are manifested in the results achieved by the information policy. Accordingly, for each of the intervention logics listed below, we demonstrate how the objectives of engaging stakeholders to further communicate about the CAP, and of raising public awareness about the CAP, are achieved.

Each intervention logic comprises three main levels of activities (blue boxes) and outputs (green boxes), as well as results (darker yellow boxes). The pale yellow boxes are included to indicate the mechanisms by which the ultimate result is achieved through the application of a specific information measure.

Media networking

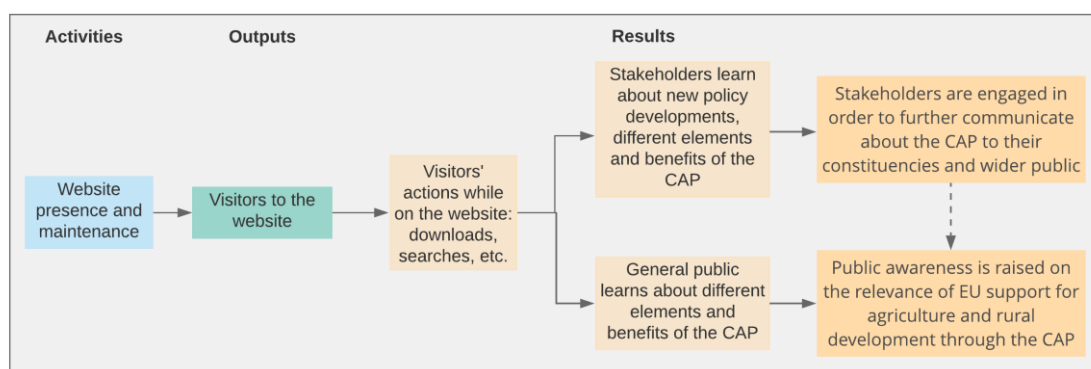
The Ag-Press network is the main tool used by DG AGRI for media networking. Consisting of journalists and professional communicators from across the Member States, the Ag-Press network allows DG AGRI to keep contact with journalists across the continent who specialise in covering agricultural issues. Three main activities feed into the media networking carried out through this network: the Ag-Press.eu platform, Ag-Press study trips and Ag-Press seminars (which have taken place online during the COVID-19 crisis). All of these activities are tailored to inform Ag-Press members about the various elements of the CAP and the benefits it brings. This, in turn, should expand the capacity of network members to communicate about the CAP to the wider public through their affiliated media outlets. Consequently, media networking activities should contribute to the achievement of the information policy's specific objectives of engaging stakeholders to further communicate about the CAP, and of raising public awareness of the CAP.

Figure 8. Simplified intervention logic for media networking

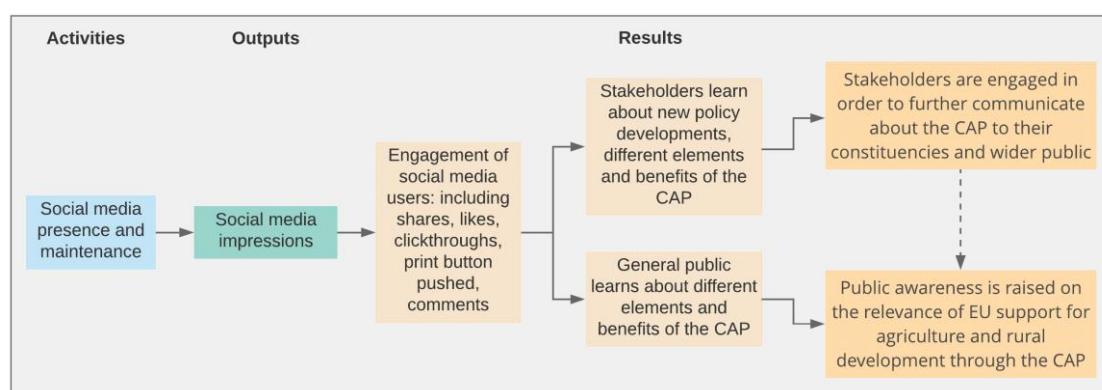


Web-based communication

DG AGRI maintains a strong online presence to communicate about the CAP. The main tools for DG AGRI's web-based communication are the europa.eu website and the DG's social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube). Web-based communication activities allow DG AGRI to reach a wide audience, including both the general public and stakeholders active in the field of the CAP. The content shared on the website should inform the audiences about key elements of the CAP and the benefits it brings, as well as recent policy developments. Through different activities on the website, visitors can learn about the CAP and related topics.

Figure 9. Simplified intervention logic of website activities

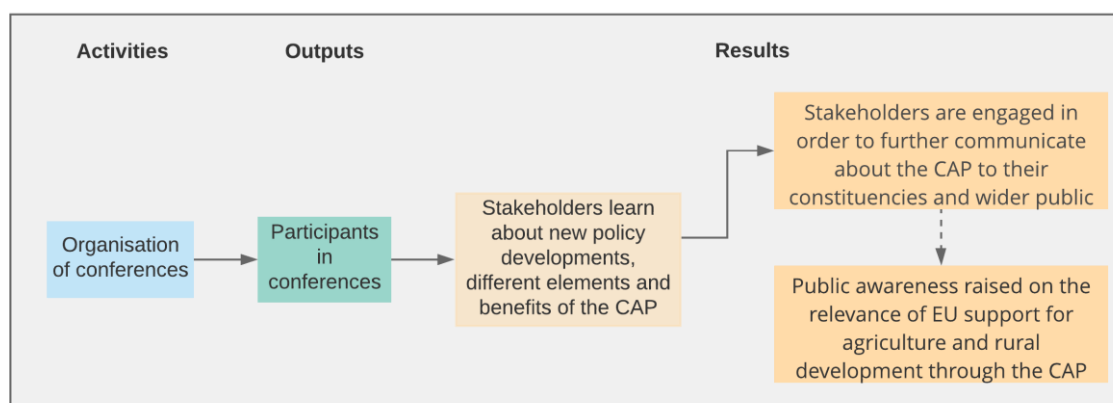
Different channels are used to engage audiences with different types of web-based communication: more detailed information on the CAP is presented via the website, while shorter and engaging posts are promoted on social media, which also includes the sharing of various audio-visual productions. Social media users who view DG AGRI content (social media impressions) and further engage with it also become aware of the CAP and its various elements and benefits.

Figure 10. Simplified intervention logic for social media activities

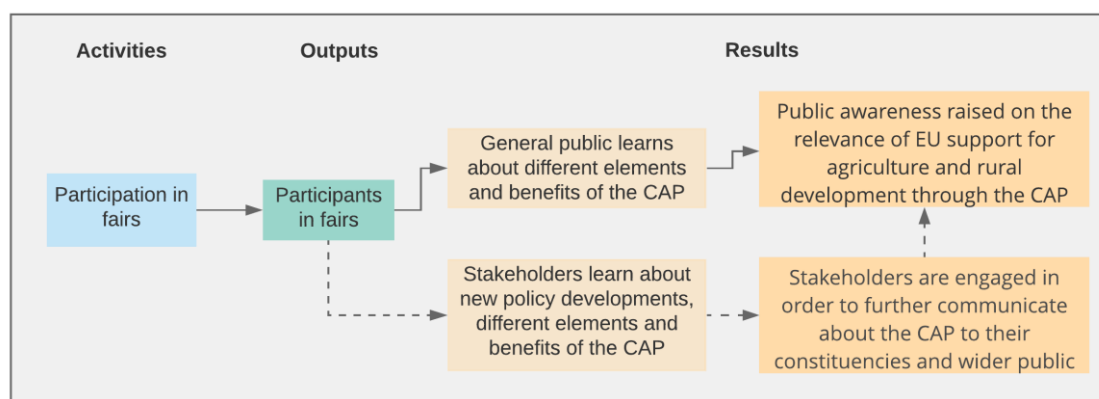
Overall, web-based communication has the potential to reach the general public and raise its awareness of the CAP. The information shared online is also easily accessible to the stakeholders active in the field of agriculture, who can also readily multiply it by sharing it online with their audiences.

Events

The approach taken by the information policy towards events is two-fold. First, DG AGRI organises conferences, including the annual Agricultural Outlook Conference. These conferences mainly target stakeholders and focus on thematic areas in accordance with the political priorities of the European Commission, and in particular on the main priorities of DG AGRI. Thus, through conferences, stakeholders can learn about new policy developments, take part in discussions surrounding the various policy priorities relating to the CAP, as well as engaging with and contributing to policy debates. Later on, stakeholders can share this information with others within their professional circle, or even with the general public – thereby becoming multipliers of information disseminated via DG AGRI conferences.

Figure 11. Simplified intervention logic for conferences

Second, DG AGRI participates in fairs organised by other organisations, operating an information stand that is branded as a European Commission stand and is often organised in cooperation with other DGs. While conferences are principally tailored towards stakeholders active in their relevant field, fairs very frequently also attract the general public, including a key target group of DG AGRI's information policy – young persons (school children, families). Visitors to these fairs can learn about the CAP and related topics through information and activities offered at the stand.

Figure 12. Simplified intervention logic for fairs

Thus, as with other types of communication, overall events contribute both towards increasing awareness about the CAP among the general public, and towards a better understanding of the specific elements of the CAP among stakeholders.

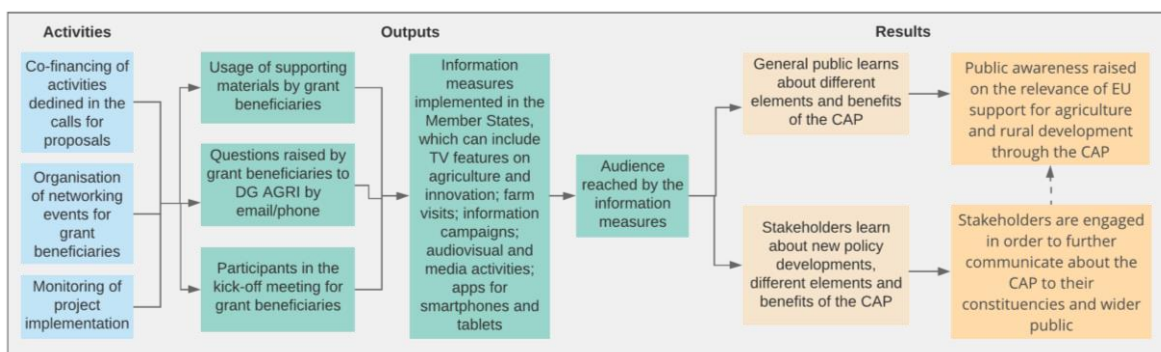
Grants

Funding for grants (information measures about the CAP implemented by third parties) constitutes a significant part of the information policy budget. These measures encompass various types of communication activities and may include TV features about agriculture and innovation; farm visits; information campaigns; audio-visual and media activities; as well as apps for smartphones and tablets²⁰. DG AGRI undertakes a

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds/grants-information_en

supporting and monitoring role in relation to the implementation of grant projects. Overall, a variety of projects are implemented. These target different audiences: mainly the general public, but also stakeholders in various member states. As with the case of measures implemented by the Commission, grant projects should also contribute towards the achievement of overall policy objectives.

Figure 13. Simplified intervention logic for grants

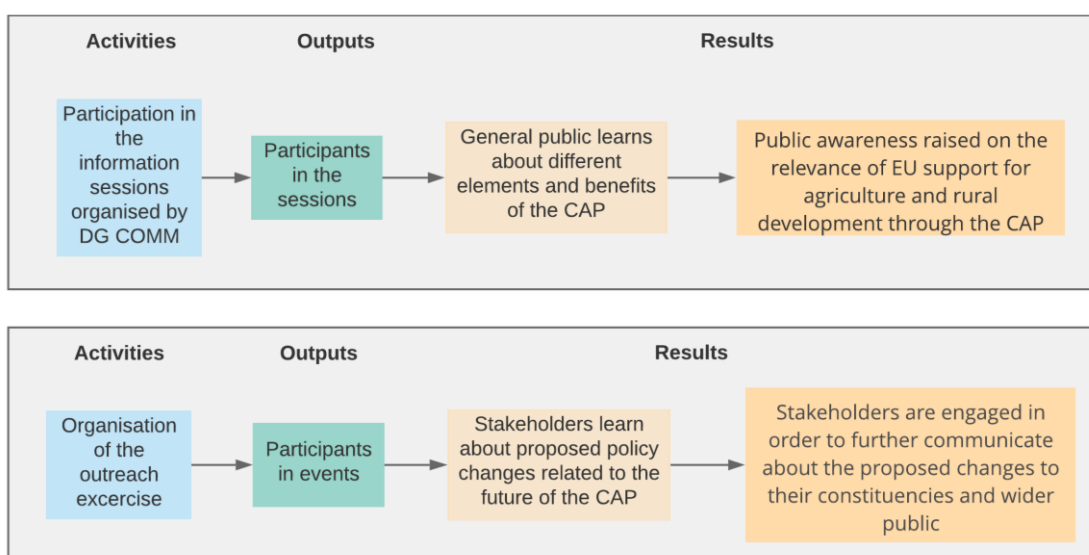


Horizontal activities

Initially, we suggested including a separate chapter on horizontal activities. However, after discussions with DG AGRI and a review of the available documents, we assessed individual horizontal activities by:

- Including a separate chapter on corporate communication
- Assessing audio-visual materials/publications in the chapters on social media/website/events (where relevant, depending on where these have been used)
- Including a section on “other events” in the chapter on events, covering visitors to information sessions and outreach exercises, following their respective intervention logics (see below)

Figure 14. Simplified intervention logics for information sessions and outreach exercises



4. **EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONS**

The evaluation answered a total of 14 evaluation study questions (ESQ), covering the evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines, the effectiveness analysis focuses on assessing how successful the information policy was in achieving progress towards its objectives;²¹ the efficiency analysis looks at the costs and benefits of the information policy;²² and the analysis of relevance investigates the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of the information policy.²³ Coherence encompasses the internal coherence of the information policy, as well as external coherence – the synergies and duplications between the information policy and similar activities implemented by other entities.²⁴ Finally, EU added value assesses the changes (impacts) that can reasonably be attributed to the information policy, rather than to any other factors.²⁵

EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONS

Effectiveness

ESQ 1 To what extent has the information policy on the CAP been effective in improving the understanding and perception of the CAP for the different target audiences, both inside and outside the Union, in particular in informing citizens, farmers and other stakeholders active in rural areas on the CAP?

ESQ 2 To what extent has the policy been effective in reinstating consumer confidence when needed? In answering this question, the contractor should pay attention to the implementation of the policy.

ESQ 3 To what extent has the policy been effective in promoting the European model of agriculture?

ESQ 4 To what extent have external intervening factors such as information provided by other parties on their own initiatives and means limited the effectiveness of the policy? Empirical evidence on this issue should be gathered by the case studies, surveys or interviews.

ESQ 5 To what extent has the implementation of the procedure of evaluation of the applications for grants for information actions been effective?

Efficiency

ESQ 6 To what extent are the different tools of the information policy on the CAP efficient in order to convey the messages and achieve the expected objectives?

²¹ European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Brussels, 2017, p. 59.

²² European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Brussels, 2017, p. 62.

²³ European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Brussels, 2017, p. 62.

²⁴ European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Brussels, 2017, p. 62.

²⁵ European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Brussels, 2017, p. 63.

EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONS

ESQ 7 To what extent has the implementation of the procedure of evaluation of the applications for grants for information actions been efficient?

Relevance

ESQ 8 To what extent does the information policy on the CAP respond to the information needs of the target audiences as defined in Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013?

ESQ 9 To what extent do the activities of the information policy on the CAP meet the needs of the European citizens?

Coherence

ESQ 10 To what extent is the information policy on the CAP coherent with the communication policy of the European Commission as a whole?

ESQ 11 To what extent is the policy coherent with the information policy on related EU policies such as regional, health, trade and environmental policies?

ESQ 12 To what extent is the policy coherent with other information actions on the CAP like those of Rural Development policy (e.g. European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI)), and the agricultural markets (EU Market Observatories), including at the level of Member States?

ESQ 13 To what extent are the components of the information policy, notably the communication strategy, the annual action plans and their operational objectives, the co-financed measures and the activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative consistent with each other?

EU added value

ESQ 14 To what extent has the information policy on the CAP, both through co-financed measures and through activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative, provided EU added value?

5. **METHODOLOGY**

To answer the evaluation study questions and ensure the reliability of the research results, a mixed-method approach was adopted, featuring such data collection methods as case studies, desk research, interviews, stakeholder surveys, and usability testing. Data gathered were triangulated, analysed, and used to formulate recommendations.

5.1. ***Case studies***

17 case studies were implemented:

- **Five country-level case studies** to explore how national-level actions complement or contradict the information policy on the CAP (henceforth referred to as 'country case studies')
- **Six case studies** to assess **information measures** implemented by third parties **under grant agreements** (henceforth, 'grants case studies')
- **Five case studies** to assess **information measures** implemented at the **initiative of the Commission** (henceforth, 'Commission's own initiative case studies')
- **One case study** to examine DG AGRI's involvement in **corporate communication campaigns** (henceforth, 'corporate communication case study')

5.1.1. *Country case studies*

Selection

The countries selected for the country case studies are Czechia, Germany, Sweden, Portugal and Ireland. The following four key selection criteria were applied:

1. **Agriculture:** as a share of GDP in each EU Member State in 2018 (based on World Bank data²⁶)
2. **Grants:** number of grants awarded between 2015 and 2018²⁷ (based on the information published on the DG AGRI website²⁸)
3. **Awareness:** share of population who are aware of the CAP²⁹ (based on data from Eurobarometer³⁰)

²⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS>

²⁷ Some grants awarded to Belgium in 2015 and 2016 were implemented in cooperation with some other Member States. In such cases, we count the grant for all countries involved.

²⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/controls-and-transparency/beneficiaries#grantsforinformation>

²⁹ QC2 Have you ever heard of the support that the EU gives farmers through its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)?

³⁰ European Commission, *Europeans, Agriculture and the CAP. Special Eurobarometer 473*, 2018.

4. **Perception:** share of population who believe the financial support given to farmers is too high³¹ (based on the data of Eurobarometer (2017-2018)); this indicator was used as a proxy to measure negative perceptions of the CAP

The countries selected represent varying contexts:

- Below average, average and above average share of agriculture as a % of GDP
- Number of grants implemented: none, greatest number, below average, average, above average
- Below average, average and above average awareness of the CAP
- Below average, average and above average negative perception of the CAP

In addition to the selection criteria listed above, geographical coverage was considered to include countries from four main regions – Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Europe.

The table below presents the countries selected and their characteristics according to the selection criteria described above.

Table 2. Countries analysed in the case studies

Country	Characteristics	Region
Czechia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Below average number of grants implemented - Average share of agriculture as a % of GDP - Below average awareness of the CAP - Above average negative perception of the CAP 	Eastern Europe
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Above average number of grants implemented - Below average share of agriculture as a % of GDP - Average awareness of the CAP - Above average negative perception of the CAP 	Western Europe
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No grants implemented - Below average share of agriculture as a % of GDP - Above average awareness of the CAP - Above average negative perception of the CAP 	Northern Europe

³¹ QC9 The EU provides financial support to farmers to help stabilise their incomes. The aid represents around 1% of the combined public expenditure of the 28 Member States of the EU, and almost 40% of the total EU budget. Do you think that this support is too low, about right or too high?

Country	Characteristics	Region
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Average number of grants implemented - Average share of agriculture as a % of GDP - Above average awareness of the CAP - Average negative perception of the CAP 	Southern Europe
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Above average number of grants implemented - Below average share of agriculture as a % of GDP - Below average awareness of the CAP - Below average negative perception of the CAP 	Western Europe

Approach

The country case studies aimed to assess in detail the **complementarity of the information policy with the actions implemented in the Member States**. The context of communication about the CAP in the Member States was reviewed, with the aim of identifying whether:

- the measures implemented in the Member States are in line with the objectives of the information policy on the CAP;
- any contradictory actions exist, and in what ways they make communication about the CAP more difficult;
- the projects implemented via grants address existing problems, create value and do not duplicate other efforts at national level.

The country case studies were implemented by national experts who are familiar with different aspects of agricultural policy in their countries. The main data collection tools used were desk research and interviews (12 for Czechia, nine for Germany, four for Ireland, five for Sweden, and nine for Portugal). The lower number of interviews for Ireland resulted from difficulties in reaching grant recipients there, as well as the new working arrangements of some stakeholder organisations due to COVID-19. In Sweden, a smaller number of interviews were carried out because no grants had implemented there (meaning one less group to target), as well as new working arrangements of some stakeholder organisations due to COVID-19. Overall, while difficulties were encountered in reaching some of the interviewees, experts drew on available online sources and managed to collect all of the information necessary to provide a comprehensive assessment of complementarities between the information policy on the CAP and the actions adopted in the Member States.

5.1.2. Grants case studies

Four key principles guided the selection of grant projects for in-depth review:

- **Recently completed projects** were selected to ensure that valuable feedback could be gained from stakeholders; the selection focused on projects between 2017 and 2018
- **Variety was ensured in terms of scope**, both financial and geographical; the selection included projects included with various budgets, implemented within a single country or across multiple countries
- **Duplications with country case studies were avoided**
- The selection reflects the fact that **many of the projects implemented were information campaigns** that included a combination of communication tools to achieve their objectives

The summary of the grant case studies is presented in the table below.

Table 3. Summary of grant case studies

Type	Focus	Projects selected
Events	Events for one of the key target audiences – school children and teachers, and young people	<p>'Discovering tomorrow's farm leaders' (2018), implemented in Bulgaria by STRATEGMA Agency Ltd</p> <p>'CAP works for us!' (2018), implemented in Bulgaria by AgriGate Media Ltd</p>
Audio-visual production	Projects focused on producing and promoting audio-visual materials	<p>'The Young Farmers Engine for CAP 2020' (2017), implemented by RTV Slovenija in three countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Finland)</p> <p>'ALOE: Agriculture Link Occitani-Europe' (2017), implemented in France by Groupe La Dépêche du Midi</p>
Information campaigns	An organisation that implemented information measures on multiple occasions (continuity of actions)	<p>'GAIA CAP' (2016), implemented in Greece by GAIA</p> <p>'Support for information measures relating to the CAP for 2017', implemented in Greece by GAIA</p> <p>'CAP forward' (2019), implemented in Greece by GAIA (covered to the extent allowed by the data on this project that is already available)</p>
Information campaigns	Projects with a wide variety of activities (internal coherence)	<p>'AHEAD FOR CAP - awareness raising campaign for CAP' (2017), implemented in Bulgaria by Economedia</p> <p>'#ReConnect Farmers and Nature' (2018), implemented in Belgium by Natuurpunt vzw</p>
Information campaigns	Web/TV-based campaigns only	<p>'More than farming' (2018), implemented in Spain by La Vanguardia Ediciones S.L.U.</p> <p>'La PAC pour tous les citoyens' (2017), implemented by France Médias Monde in</p>

Type	Focus	Projects selected
Information campaigns	Information campaigns with a strong focus on events	France, Romania and the France24 international network. 'CAP it ALL off!' (2017), implemented in Cyprus by Opinion and Action 'Parlez-vous PAC?' (2018), implemented in France by Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe

To carry out six grant case studies, desk research and a total of 31 interviews were conducted. Difficulties were encountered in reaching some potential interviewees and gaining access to the relevant documentation. However, the key stakeholders were interviewed, and the main documents needed for the analysis were received.

5.1.3. Commission's own initiative case studies and corporate communication case study

Five case studies were conducted to examine information measures implemented at the initiative of the Commission. The summary of these case studies is presented in the table below.

Table 4. Summary of Commission's own initiative and corporate communication case studies

Type	Focus	Projects selected / scope	Methods
Social media	DG AGRI social media campaigns	Little Patch / Teachers pack (2018) EU Quality scheme (2018) Future of CAP (2018) Future of CAP (2017) The CAP in one word (2017)	Desk research Social media analysis Interviews
Website	DG AGRI website at europa.eu (content, design, navigation)	DG AGRI website: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy_en	Desk research Interviews (usability testing) Website survey
Events	Conferences organised by DG AGRI Fairs visited by DG AGRI	EU Agricultural Outlook Conference Salon International de l'Agriculture (SIA) fair	Desk research Interviews

Type	Focus	Projects selected / scope	Methods
		AU EU Ministerial Conference on 21 June 2019	Participant observation
Aq-Press network	Journalists' study trips	Study trips and seminars implemented during the evaluation period	Desk research Interviews Qualitative content analysis
Teachers' resource pack	Teachers' resource pack prepared by DG AGRI (usability)	Teachers' resource pack: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/teachers-pack/index_en	Desk research Interviews (usability testing)
Corporate communication	Corporate communication campaigns	Invest EU, rural campaign, EU and Me	Desk research Interviews

5.2. Desk research

The evaluation began with desk research. Key administrative documents relating to the implementation of grant projects and the Commission's own initiatives were reviewed. Relevant external documents were also explored and included in the analysis (e.g. Eurobarometer surveys).

The mapping exercise was conducted in collaboration with the national experts. The experts identified national communication actions relating to the CAP in the Member States, and carried out the following activities:

- Collecting data through desk research
- Interviews with officials working in national institutions
- Monitoring of national media

5.3. Interviews

Eight scoping interviews were conducted with various DG AGRI staff members involved with the information policy on the CAP.

In addition, the main interview programme was carried out, targeting key stakeholders of the information policy on the CAP. The table on the next page shows the number of interviews conducted by stakeholder group.

Table 5. Summary of interviews conducted

Stakeholder group		Target set	Interviews conducted	
European Commission	DG AGRI	10	11 (Units A1, C1, E2, G1, D2, B2, D1, B4, and F1)	19
	DG COMM		2 (Units B1 and B3)	
	Other DGs		5 (CLIMA, REGIO, SANTE, and TRADE)	
	SPP		1	
	Representations	5	3 (ES, FR, and PL)	
European Parliament		2	2	
Representative associations, socio-economic interest groups, civil society organisations and trade unions represented in the CDGs		25	27 (CEJA, COPA-COGECA, IFOAM EU, FoodDrinkEurope, BeeLife, AREPO, EPHA, EFNCP, OriGIn, ELO, WWF, ENAJ, EURAF, SMEUnited, EEB, PAN Europe, CEETTAR, PREPARE, CONCORD, FESASS, CEMA, RED, Eurocommerce, UEF, EFBA, ELARD, AmChamEU)	
Other associations		3	3 (EIP-AGRI and ENRD external contractors, and Euractive)	
Research institutes/centres		5 (target reduced to 2-3 in a progress call)	2	
National rural networks (from countries where no grants were implemented)		5 (target reduced to 2-3 in a progress call)	2	
Total		55	58	

5.4. Stakeholder surveys

To collect quantifiable data, four web-based stakeholder surveys were designed and conducted. These brought added value, as they helped to gather the opinions of more substantial and more representative samples within the selected groups. The results of these surveys also enabled the triangulation of findings and the quantitative analysis of key evaluation study questions.

Each web-based stakeholder survey was carried out according to the following steps:

- Defining target groups
- Developing questionnaires
- Conducting surveys

Defining target groups

To ensure the surveys complemented the other data collection methods and yielded the missing data required to answer key questions, they targeted different groups:

- **Main survey:** targeted at stakeholders active in the field of the CAP. This includes audiences defined in DG AGRI action plans: beneficiaries of the CAP (farmers and other actors in the food chain and rural areas), as well as members of various farming and other NGOs, and members of public authorities.
- **Grant applicant survey:** targeted at grant applicants (successful and unsuccessful).
- **Ag-Press network survey:** targeted at members of the Ag-Press network.
- **Website survey:** targeted at users of the 'Common agricultural policy' section of the European Commission's website, as well as relevant pages within the class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' (carried out as part of a case study on the website).

Developing survey questionnaires

Survey questionnaires were based on the indicators provided in the evaluation grid. They were developed in consultation with officials at the European Commission.

Conducting surveys

Survey data was collected using the tool SurveyGizmo. This boasts numerous useful features, including estimation of survey duration and respondent fatigue, and has been continuously improved to combine research functionality and respondent satisfaction.

Various methods were used to disseminate the surveys, depending on the target audience:

- The main survey was disseminated via e-mail (stakeholders were contacted by both DG AGRI and PPMI) and via targeted posts on social media.
- The grant applicant survey was disseminated via email to 2016-2019 grant applicants, both successful and unsuccessful.
- The Ag-Press network survey was disseminated via DG AGRI channels – the Ag-Press platform and newsletter.
- The website survey was disseminated via e-mail (contacted by DG AGRI). Links to the survey were also placed on various CAP-related sections and pages on the website.

For the main survey, the Ag-Press network survey, and the website survey, a target confidence level was set of 95%, considered an industry standard. For the grant applicant survey, a lower confidence level target of 85% was decided upon. The reason for this was that the population of grant applicants is small; therefore, a more significant proportion of respondents is needed to achieve the same level of confidence as in other surveys.

In addition, a minimum, an intermediate and an ideal target were set for the margin of error in each survey. The targets³² were as follows:

- **Minimum target** – 10% margin of error (main survey – 97 responses; Ag-Press network survey – 88 responses; grant applicant survey – 38 responses; website survey – 97 responses).
- **Intermediate target** – 7% margin of error (main survey – 196 responses; Ag-Press network survey – 165 responses; grant applicant survey – 60 responses; website survey – 196 responses).
- **Ideal target** – 5% margin of error (main survey – 385 responses; Ag-Press network survey – 280 responses; grant applicant survey – 83 responses; website survey – 385 responses).

Two of the surveys achieved the minimum target, while two of the surveys achieved the ideal target. The results are as follows:

- Main survey – **388** responses received (ideal target reached).
- Ag-Press network survey – **131** responses received (minimum target reached).
- Grant applicant survey – **45** responses received (minimum target reached)
- Website survey – **611** responses received (ideal target reached)

The description of how the surveys were analysed is presented in the sections of this report on quantitative and qualitative analysis.

5.5. Usability testing (part of the case study on the website)

The purpose of this exercise was to understand how users interact with the CAP-related sections and pages within the class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' on the European Commission's website. By achieving this, we aimed to identify potential problems and solutions.

Our testing focused mainly on two sections within the class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' on the European Commission's website:

- The section 'Common agricultural policy' and its children pages
- The section 'Farming' and its sections and pages

In addition, we included the website's 'Quality labels' section because web analytics data shows that it is highly popular among website visitors.

We invited respondents who left their e-mail address in the main survey to participate in the test. Nine remote usability testing sessions were conducted with website users,

³² Calculated using the following audience sizes: *unlimited* (for the main survey and the website survey); *1024* (for the Ag-Press network survey); *138* (for the grant applicant survey – number of organisations reached).

each taking between 36 and 62 minutes. A pilot test was conducted before the real sessions took place.

The application GoToMeeting was used to conduct the tests because it allows screen sharing, calling and recording. Tests were recorded and then uploaded to PPMI's server. Participants used their own home or workplace equipment and preferred browser software. With the participants' permission, we recorded their computer screen and voice for the duration of the session.

The sessions took place in three stages:

- **Stage 1 – introduction.** Each participant was introduced to the purpose and the process of the test. They were encouraged to be critical and straightforward, and it was emphasised that the participant was evaluating the web page, rather than the moderator evaluating the participant. The moderator instructed participants to provide comments during the session, so that a verbal record exists of their interactions with the web page. The participants were assured that they would remain anonymous. Participants were asked several contextual questions.
- **Stage 2 – scenarios and tasks.** Each participant received several tasks, integrated into everyday scenarios and related to information about the CAP. The tasks focused on the sections 'Common agricultural policy', 'Farming' and 'Quality labels'.
- **Stage 3 – questions.** Participants were not asked any questions while they performed the tasks, to avoid interfering with the process. Several questions were asked after the completion of each task. These questions related to the completion of each specific task, and how easy or hard the participant found it. To sum up the experience, we asked each participant several questions at the end of each exercise, after they had completed all of the tasks. The final questions focused on their overall experience with the web page.

5.6. Usability testing (part of the case study on the Teachers' Resource Pack)

The purpose of this exercise was to understand how teachers interact with the Teachers' Resource Pack, to receive their feedback on various elements of the pack, and to identify successful aspects, as well as potential problems and solutions.

We invited 41 expert teachers from various EU countries – ambassadors for the Scientix network – to participate. Five usability tests were completed with teachers who responded to the invitation. The teachers who participated were based in Austria, Ireland, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands. As described in a study by usability expert Jakob Nielsen, testing products with five users is effective, and more elaborate testing is only needed when a product is aimed at very diverse target groups³³. In this case study, the target group was fairly narrow – teachers. We therefore regard five tests as a sufficient number for the purpose of this case study, even though a limitation of the sample was identified (all participants came from Western European countries).

During the tests, we focused on the electronic version of the Teachers' Resource Pack. The pack was sent in advance to the teachers who agreed to participate. Each test took between 58 and 90 minutes.

The application GoToMeeting was used to conduct the tests. Participants used their own home or workplace equipment and preferred browser software. With the participants' permission, we recorded their computer screen and voice for the duration of the session.

The sessions took place in three stages, similar to the usability testing on the website.

5.7. Qualitative data analysis

5.7.1. General approach to qualitative data analysis

A qualitative approach was applied to analyse the data collected via desk research (policy and other documents as well as literature and reports), interviews, case studies and open survey questions. This helped to answer some of the evaluation study questions, particularly those concerning the effectiveness, efficiency, policy relevance and coherence of the information policy on the CAP.

To ensure the analysis remained structured, we employed the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 10. As the first step, we compiled the coding framework. This mirrored the structure of the evaluation grid and focused on the evaluation study questions. All materials were then uploaded to the software and carefully examined. This process helped us to classify, sort and arrange information as well as to examine the relationships between the data collected.

5.7.2. Qualitative content analysis (Ag-Press articles)

To assess the articles published by people who had participated in Ag-Press events, the principles of qualitative content analysis were applied. Key steps included the following:

- **Sampling:** the sample consisted of a total of 226 articles issued after the following Ag-Press events and shared by DG AGRI: 2016 press trips to Czechia

³³ Nielsen, J., 'Why You Only Need to Test with 5 Users', Nielsen Norman Group, 2000, available at: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/why-you-only-need-to-test-with-5-users/>.

and Spain; 2017 press trips to Belgium and the Netherlands; a 2017 seminar in Belgium; 2018 press trips to Austria, Belgium and Bulgaria; 2018 seminars in Brussels (June and December); 2019 press trips to Finland and Romania.

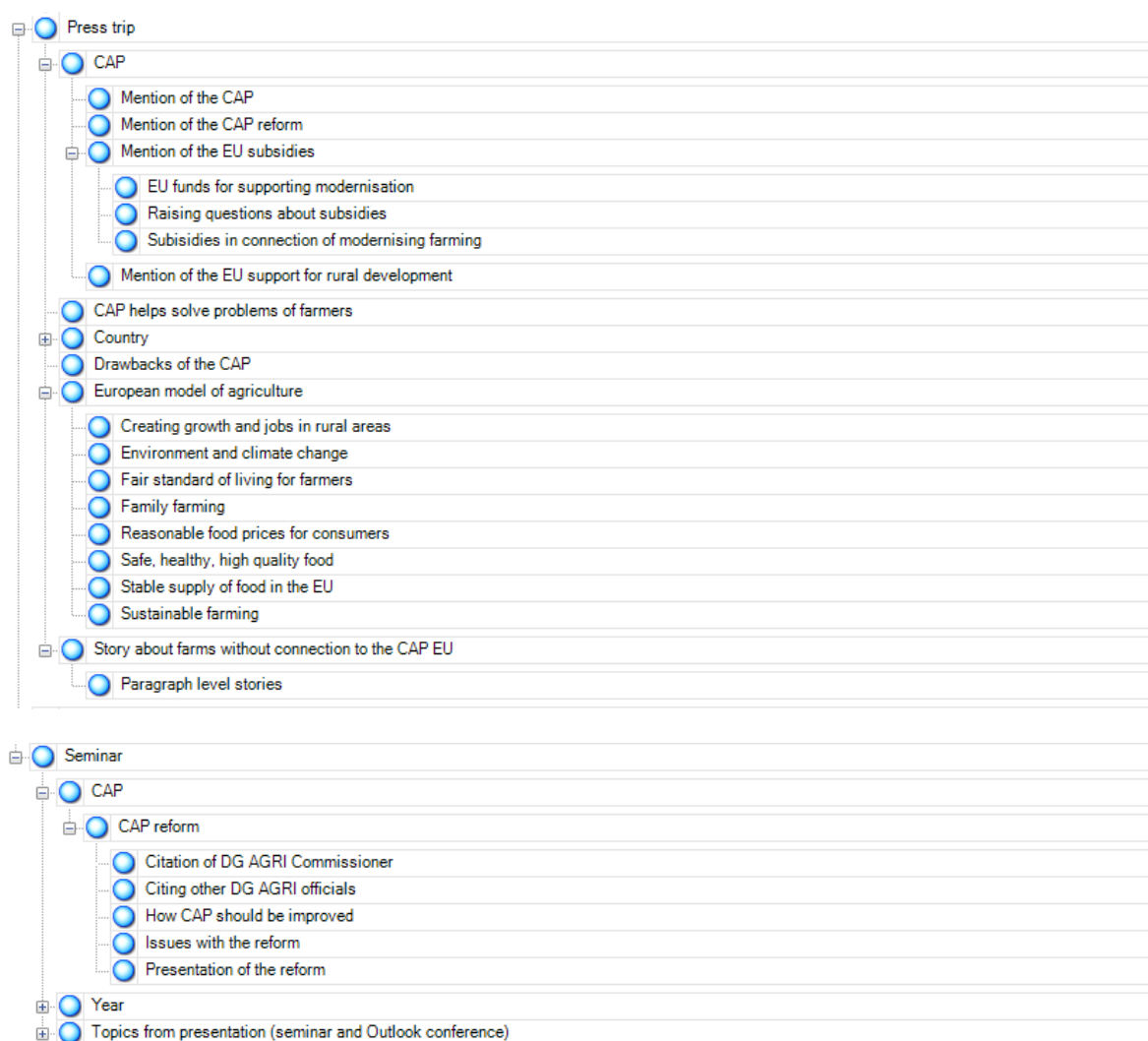
- **Conceptualisation and operationalisation:** we defined the main variables we searched for in the articles, and defined their measurement (including the unit of analysis – sentence, part of the sentence, paragraph).

Table 6. Qualitative content analysis framework

Variable	What is measured (level of measurement: content)
Press trips	
Mention of the CAP	Article: direct mention of the common agricultural policy (or its abbreviation)
Mention of the CAP reform	Sentence or part of a sentence: mention of the CAP reform
Mention of EU subsidies:	Part of a sentence: direct mention of subsidies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU funds supporting modernisation • Raising questions about subsidies • Subsidies in connection with the modernisation of farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence/paragraph: description of how EU funds supported the modernisation of farming • Sentence/paragraph: description of how subsidies are questioned • Sentence/paragraph: description of how subsidies supported the modernisation of farms
Mention of EU support for rural development	Sentence or part of a sentence: mention of EU support for rural development (or various synonyms)
CAP helping to solve farmers' problems	Sentence/paragraph: description of how the CAP has helped to solve the problems faced by farmers
Drawbacks of the CAP	Sentence/paragraph: description of issues with the CAP
European model of agriculture:	Sentence/paragraph: description of how the CAP contributes to different elements of the European model of agriculture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating growth and jobs in rural areas • Environment and climate change • Fair standard of living for farmers • Reasonable food prices for consumers • Safe, healthy, high-quality food in the EU • Sustainable farming 	

Variable	What is measured (level of measurement: content)
Story about farms without connection to the CAP/EU	Article: article that describes farms without directly mentioning the CAP/EU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paragraph-level stories 	Paragraph(s): paragraph(s) in the article that describe farms without directly mentioning the CAP/EU (only in those articles where CAP/EU support was mentioned elsewhere)
Seminars	
CAP reform	Article: article focuses on presenting the CAP reform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citation of DG AGRI Commissioner 	Sentence(s): direct quotation or paraphrasing of the DG AGRI Commissioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citing other DG AGRI officials 	Sentence(s): direct quotation or paraphrasing of DG AGRI officials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the CAP will be improved 	Sentence(s)/paragraph: description of how the proposed elements of the reform will contribute to an improved CAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues with the reform 	Sentence(s)/paragraph: description of problems relating to the proposed reform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the reform 	Sentence(s)/paragraph: description of the elements of the reform proposed
Topic from presentation (seminar and Outlook conference)	Article: article describes a topic that was discussed in the seminar/Outlook conference (which is not related to the CAP reform)

- **Tools for analysis:** we uploaded the coding framework and articles to NVivo 10 (pictured in the figure on the next page).

Figure 15. NVivo 10 coding framework

- **Testing and coding:** to test the framework, two researchers tried coding articles together, then separately. Because a good level of reliability was achieved between coders, no revisions were made to the coding framework. We then applied the framework to code all articles in NVivo. We also ran a query to find the most commonly used words in the articles.
- **Reporting:** results are reported in the section on Ag-Press impacts.

5.8. Quantitative data analysis

To analyse data collected via desk research and surveys, a quantitative approach was adopted. This helped to increase the rigour of findings and the reliability of research results – especially those concerning the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the information policy on the CAP.

Analysis of monitoring and evaluation data helped us to answer several questions concerning the effectiveness and efficiency (including the unit costs and cost-benefit ranking) of the information policy on the CAP. Analysing other statistical data was central to assessing the performance of social media and the website, including such indicators as reach and engagement. Analysis of the survey data shed light on external attitudes towards the policy. It also allowed conclusions to be reached with regard to

stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and added value of the information policy on the CAP. In all cases, descriptive statistics were used.

5.9. Conclusions and recommendations

The methodology was designed and implemented to ensure the validity, reliability and robustness of the research results. Additional effort was put into ensuring that:

- all sources of primary data (collected via interviews, surveys, usability tests) and secondary data (based on the review of existing documents) were checked for quality and robustness;
- data collection and analysis **avoid any biases**, and represent conflicting views objectively;
- the process of data analysis has been **documented and reported transparently**, providing all sources of information used to ensure the replicability of results;
- all the **assumptions** on which the analysis is based are well-grounded and made explicit;
- all the conclusions are **triangulated** using alternative or complementary sources of evidence;
- we **do not duplicate** the research work carried out by other researchers or the Commission, but instead use it instrumentally to answer the evaluation study questions of this study.

While developing the recommendations, a utilisation-focused study approach was followed. This approach is based on the idea that studies should be judged by their utility and actual use³⁴. To develop useful and practical recommendations, we applied the 10 principles defined by M. Q. Patton.³⁵

5.10. Limitations of the methodology

Some drawbacks are inherent in the methods employed and the type of the evaluation conducted. For this reason, various measures have been applied to ensure the reliability of the research results.

First, data collected via interviews and surveys relies on the perceptions of respondents. In the case of surveys, this issue is counter-balanced to some extent by the use of a larger sample of respondents, which allowed us to grasp the dominant opinions among the stakeholders. Meanwhile, in the case of the interviews, it is essential to acknowledge that this method is inherently not representative, and that some opinions may not be reflected, or may not be reflected proportionately. To address this limitation, the principle of saturation was applied. This is the gold standard for interview-based research, and dictates that the process of carrying out interviews may be discontinued when no new information is being received from the new respondents. Furthermore, the

³⁴ Patton, M. Q., *Utilization-focused evaluation: the new century text*, SAGE Publications, 3rd edition, 1997.

³⁵ Patton, M. Q., *Utilization-focused evaluation: the new century text*, SAGE Publications, 3rd edition, 1997. We think that principles of making good recommendation in an evaluation also apply to studies.

principle of triangulation was applied to critically reflect upon findings that are based on perceptions, seeking to confirm them with available quantitative data.

Second, the impacts of communication in terms of changing perceptions are difficult to measure. Controlled experiments may be needed to achieve a truly valid scientific measurement of this type of impact resulting from communication activities (e.g. measuring perceptions before and after the activities, which is not possible in the case of this evaluation). We therefore had to rely on the opinions of stakeholders as to whether their perceptions of the CAP had changed. In addition, we sought to use secondary data (particularly that from Eurobarometer) that includes changes over time, in order to gauge the impact achieved in terms of improving perceptions about the CAP. Moreover, we collected data on this impact using various methods which also ensured the possibility of triangulating research results.

Lastly, data collection for this evaluation took place during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This negatively affected the collection of data from stakeholders, particularly in relation to the case studies, as national authorities and other organisations in the EU-28 were not easily approachable, and sometimes could not be approached at all. To counterbalance this, we relied more heavily on desk research sources, ensuring good coverage of the topic under assessment. At all times, we ensured that sufficient information was collected (from multiple sources), and that no information gaps remained. COVID-19 also affected our plans to visit a fair in Croatia, which was cancelled, as well as cutting short by one day our visit to a fair in Paris. Nevertheless, while these visits (or longer visit, in case of Paris) would have allowed us to collect more nuanced information about the events, we were again able to rely on extensive desk research to provide an overview of past events from existing sources.

Timewise, the assessment of results and impacts of activities implemented in 2020 was challenging. The assessment of the activities in 2020 is, therefore, less detailed due to the limited data that was available.

6. EVALUATION RESULTS: ASSESSMENT OF DIFFERENT INFORMATION MEASURES

In this chapter, we analyse the individual information measures of the information policy on the CAP, on the basis of the evaluation study questions defined in Chapter 4. We focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of media networking, social media, the website, events and grants.

6.1. *Media networking*

Media networking is one of DG AGRI's five information measures. Since 2011, it has been implemented through DG AGRI's management of the Ag-Press network of European agricultural journalists and professional communicators. DG AGRI organises press trips to Member States and seminars in Brussels for network members. The activities DG AGRI holds for journalists include:

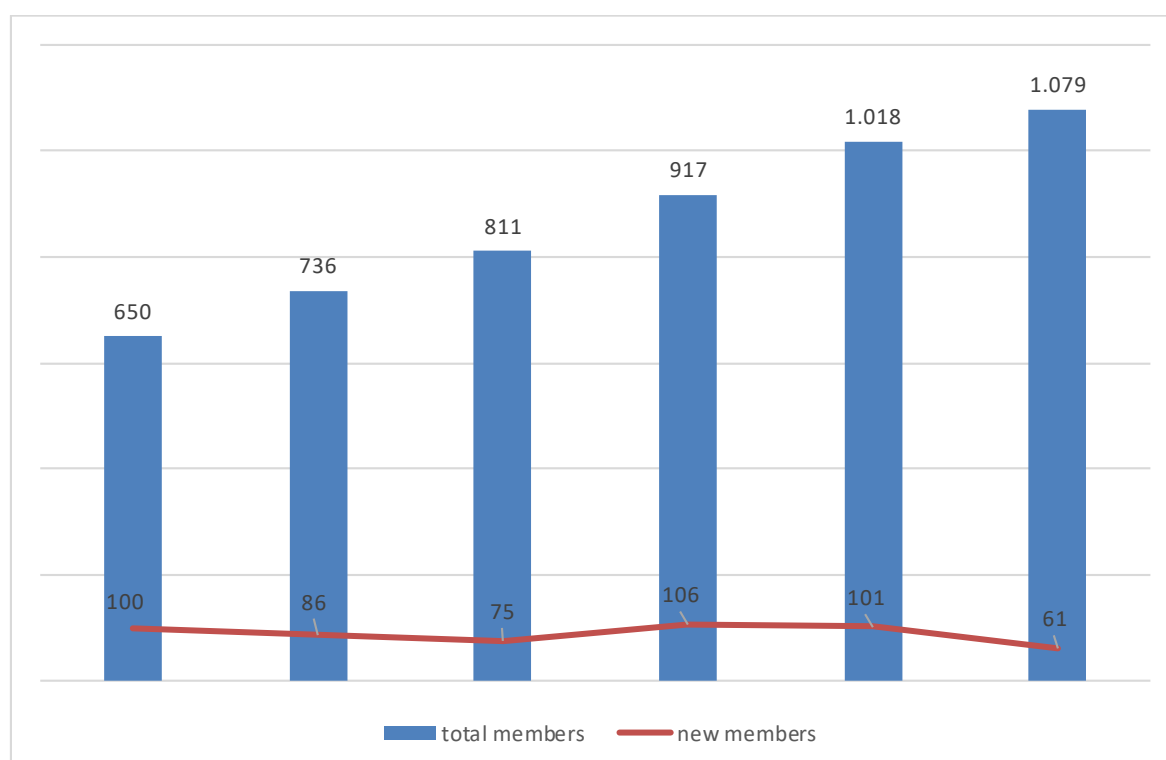
- Press trips to Member States, during which network members visit farmers and their farms to familiarise themselves with farming realities in other European countries.
- Seminars at EU Headquarters in Brussels (henceforth, 'seminars' or 'seminars in Brussels'), during which the network members visit European institutions, receive presentations about the CAP and related topics, and can ask questions on relevant policy developments. More recently, DG AGRI also began organising webinars for journalists on CAP-related topics.
- Press trips-seminars to Belgium (and sometimes the Netherlands) including elements from both seminars (presentations at European institutions) and press trips (visits to farms). Henceforth, these are referred to as 'press trips-seminars'.
- The online platform Ag-Press.eu for members.

In this section, we assess the effectiveness of DG AGRI's media networking via the Ag-Press network at the levels of outputs, results and impacts. Where relevant, we also discuss the achievement of the key performance indicators (KPIs) set for the activities of Ag-Press.

6.1.1. Effectiveness of the Ag-Press network: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)

6.1.1.1. Outputs of the Ag-Press network

The outputs of the Ag-Press network are its members, the events organised for the network's members by DG AGRI, the participants at these events, and statistics relating to the Ag-Press platform (users, views, newsletter opens). The Ag-Press network grew by 372 members (equivalent to 57% growth) during the evaluation period. As of June 2020, it comprised 1 079 agricultural journalists and professional communicators (see figure on the next page).

Figure 16. Ag-Press membership evolution (as of 29 June 2020)

Source: Developed by the authors, based on DG AGRI monitoring data.

Between 2016 and the end of 2019, DG AGRI organised 20 events for Ag-Press members (see the summary in the table below): eight press trips to Member States, six press trips-seminars to Belgium (or Belgium and the Netherlands), and six seminars in Brussels (EU institutions).

Table 7. Summary of Ag-Press events organised during the evaluation period

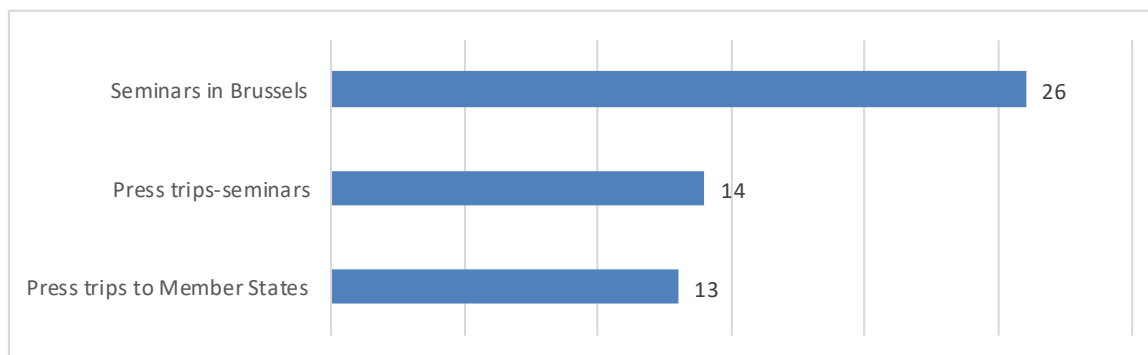
Year	Type	Name	Number of participating journalists
2016	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Germany	12
2016	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Czechia	12
2016	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Slovenia	12
2016	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Spain	11
2016	Press trip-seminar	Press trip-seminar in Belgium/Netherlands	14
2016	Press trip-seminar	Press trip-seminar in Belgium	14
2017	Seminar at EU headquarters	Seminar in Brussels	17
2017	Press trip-seminar	Press trip-seminar in Belgium/Netherlands	15
2017	Seminar at EU headquarters	Seminar in Brussels	17
2017	Press trip-seminar	Press trip-seminar in Belgium	13
2017	Seminar at EU headquarters	Seminar in Brussels	20
2018	Press trip-seminar	Press trip-seminar in Belgium	15

Year	Type	Name	Number of participating journalists
2018	Press trip-seminar	Press trip-seminar in Belgium	15
2018	Seminar at EU headquarters	Seminar in Brussels	24
2018	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Bulgaria	12
2018	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Austria	12
2018	Seminar at EU headquarters	Seminar in Brussels	62
2019	Seminar at EU headquarters	Seminar in Brussels	17
2019	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Romania	15
2019	Press trips to Member States	Press trip to Finland	15

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

In total, the events attracted 344 participations from network members³⁶, with an average of 17 participants per event. Seminars attracted the highest average number of participants, more than press trips-seminars organised in Belgium (and sometimes also in the Netherlands) and press trips to Member States (see the figure below). The format of a seminar allows for a more significant number of network members to be included, due to the easier logistics of it being organised in a single geographic location (EU institutions in Brussels).

Figure 17. Average number of participants at different types of Ag-Press event



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

In addition to the events organised for the network, DG AGRI also maintains an online platform for Ag-Press members³⁷, which has on average been visited by 4 803 users per year between 2016 and 2019, accumulating a total of 116 541 page views over four years. The platform's traffic statistics compare well with industry benchmarks. Notably, the average duration of a session is over 3 minutes and the average bounce rate³⁸ is

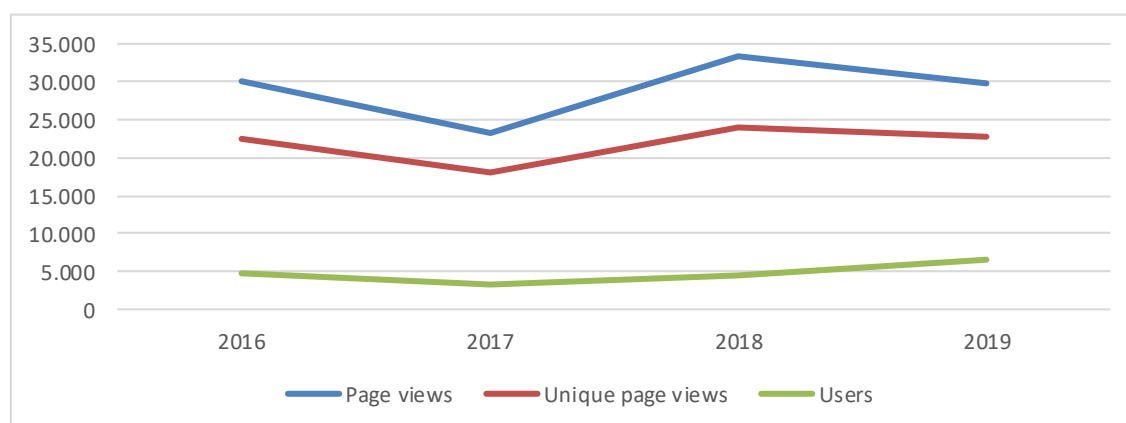
³⁶ These are not necessarily unique journalists as there were some overlaps between participants in different trips.

³⁷ Available at: <https://www.ag-press.eu/>

³⁸ Bounce rate refers to the percentage of visitors who enter the site and then leave without continuing on to view other pages within the same site.

below 50%³⁹, indicating that the platform works effectively and meets the needs of its users. Moreover, DG AGRI has been mostly successful in attracting journalists and professional communicators to sign up for events using the platform. The KPIs set for the number of sign-ups were achieved for press trips to the Member States in 2016 and 2017, seminars in Belgium in 2017 and 2018, and press trips to Belgium in 2017 and 2018. The only time a KPI was not achieved was for press trips to Belgium in 2016⁴⁰.

Figure 18. Ag-Press platform page views and users



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

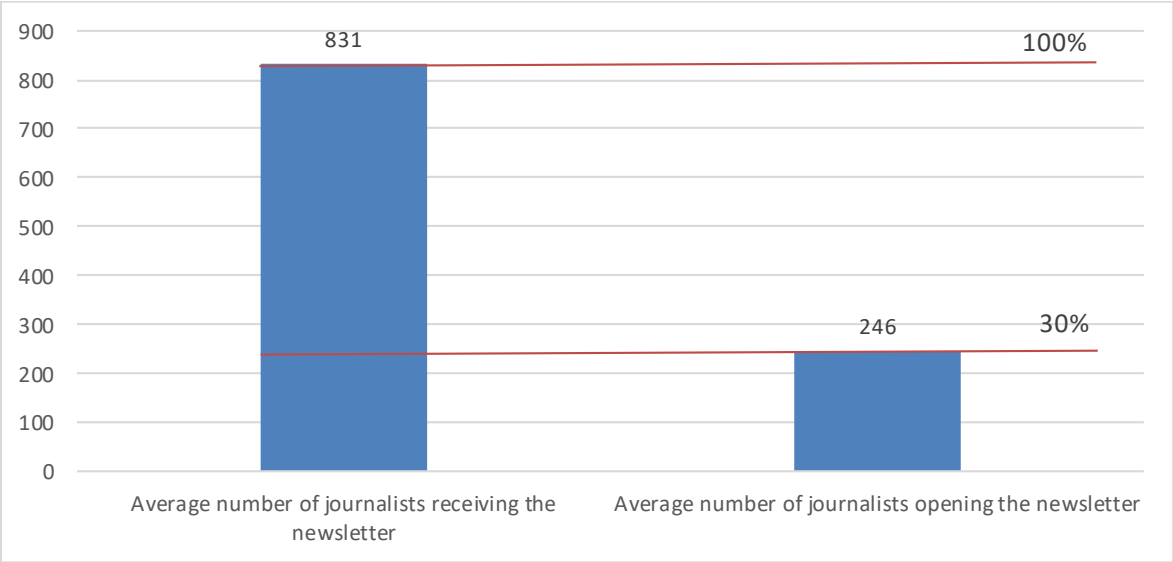
Another crucial part of the Ag-Press online activities is its newsletter, which is distributed every Thursday to a mailing list of the network's members. On average, 30% of those receiving the newsletter open it, which is higher than the average of 21.33% across all industries⁴¹.

³⁹ For example, <https://databox.com/average-session-duration-benchmark#:~:text=According%20to%20our%20research%2C%20a,be%20anything%20above%20th,ree%20minutes.> and <https://www.gorocketfuel.com/the-rocket-blog/whats-the-average-bounce-rate-in-google-analytics/#:~:text=As%20a%20rule%20of%20thumb,%2C%20news%2C%20events%2C%20etc.>

⁴⁰ Data for individual trips and seminars was not always available, thus we present aggregate KPI achievement per type of event in different years, which is how it is usually presented in DG AGRI annual reports.

⁴¹ <https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/>

Figure 19. Statistics on Ag-Press newsletter opens

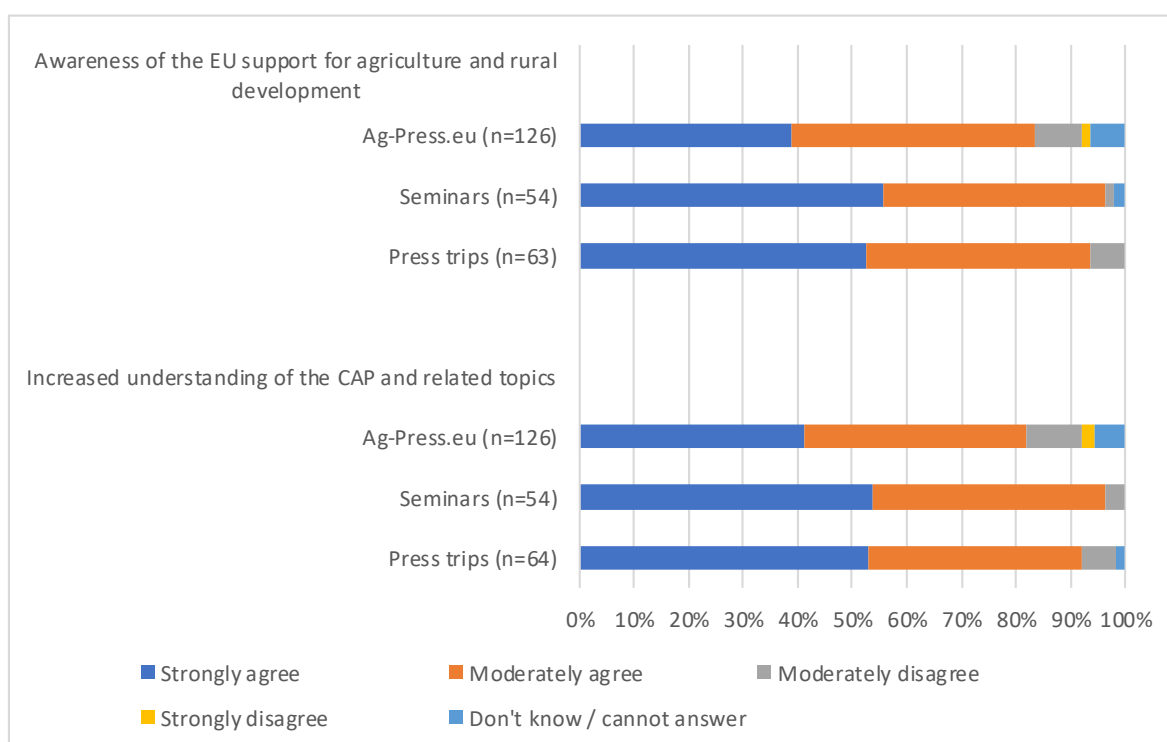


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

6.1.1.2. Results of the Ag-Press network

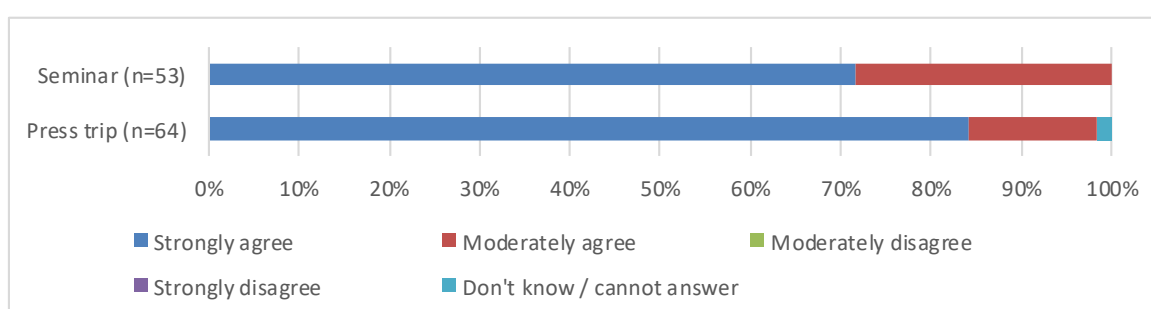
Seminars and press trips

Participation in Ag-Press events has allowed network members to gain greater knowledge about EU support for agriculture and rural development and the CAP. The Ag-Press members surveyed mostly agreed with statements concerning their increased awareness of EU support for agriculture and rural development, as well as their increased understanding of the CAP and related topics. The network members who were interviewed also noted that they had learnt something new about the CAP during the trips and seminars. This was also the case among network members who routinely cover CAP in their work.

Figure 20. Increased awareness and understanding (Ag-Press journalists)

Source: Developed by the authors, based on Ag-Press network survey.

Network members also agreed that participation in Ag-Press events was useful for their work. All of those surveyed who had participated in seminars, and the majority of those who had taken part in press trips, agreed that the events had helped them produce high-quality output for their work (see figure below). The Ag-Press members interviewed for the case study particularly appreciated the opportunity to talk to farmers (press trips) and political officials (seminars). Most of the network members interviewed agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to ask questions and talk to farmers (press trips), which was not only crucial to increasing their understanding about the CAP, but was also helpful in preparing articles or other outputs published in their media. Eighty-four per cent of those surveyed, and as well as the network members interviewed, also agreed that the photo service provided during the press trip was useful for their work. The network members interviewed said that the sharing of photos by DG AGRI ensured that they had high-quality audio-visual materials to publish with their articles.

Figure 21. Participating in the press trip/seminar helped me to produce high-quality output for my work (e.g. article, report)

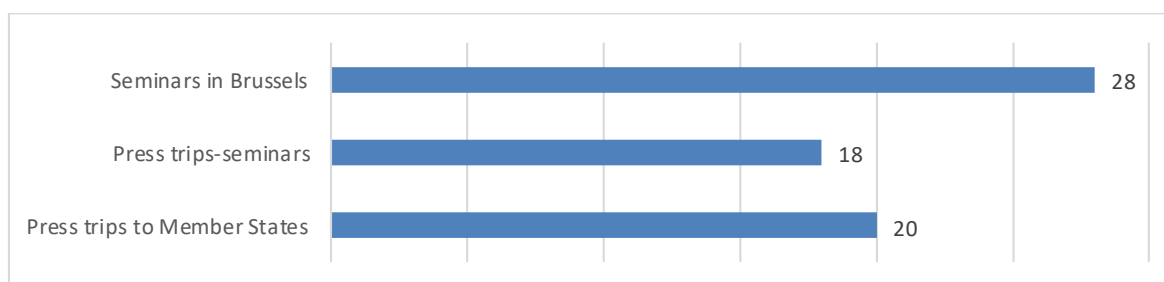
Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

While majority of the participating journalists and professional communicators prepared outputs after taking part in a press trip or seminar, not all of them did. Each year, DG

AGRI set a KPI target for the share of participants that should publish different media outputs after events. These targets ranged between 50% and 80% each year. The targets were met for 11 out of the 20 events organised during the evaluation period⁴². All the events at which the targets were not reached took place in either 2016 or 2017, indicating an improvement in the achievement of this KPI as of 2018. Targets were not achieved for two out of the six seminars in Brussels, three out of the eight press trips to Member States, and four out of the six press trips to Brussels. However, it must be noted that the overall number of participants issuing articles or having articles published may be higher than reported. Network members may not necessarily use the information to prepare a piece immediately after the event, but may issue an article at a later stage.

Moreover, it is likely that not all participants report to DG AGRI and share their outputs. Although on average, the percentage of participants publishing articles is the lowest (51%)⁴³ after Ag-Press seminars, compared with trips to Member States (69%) and to Belgium (57%), the total number of articles released is the highest (see figure below). The likely reason for this is that the seminars attract a higher total number of participants than the press trips. The number of persons who actually read the articles produced by the journalists or professional communicators is difficult to assess. Using the overall readership of the media outlets as a proxy, we can estimate the potential reach for the press trips organised in 2019. On average, 139 968 persons could have read articles produced after the press trip to Romania (although the readership of individual outlets ranged between 5 000 to two million). Similarly, an average of 138 674 could have read the articles produced after the press trip to Finland (although the readerships of individual media outlets was smaller, ranging between 14 250 and 300 000).

Figure 22. Average number of articles published after different Ag-Press events

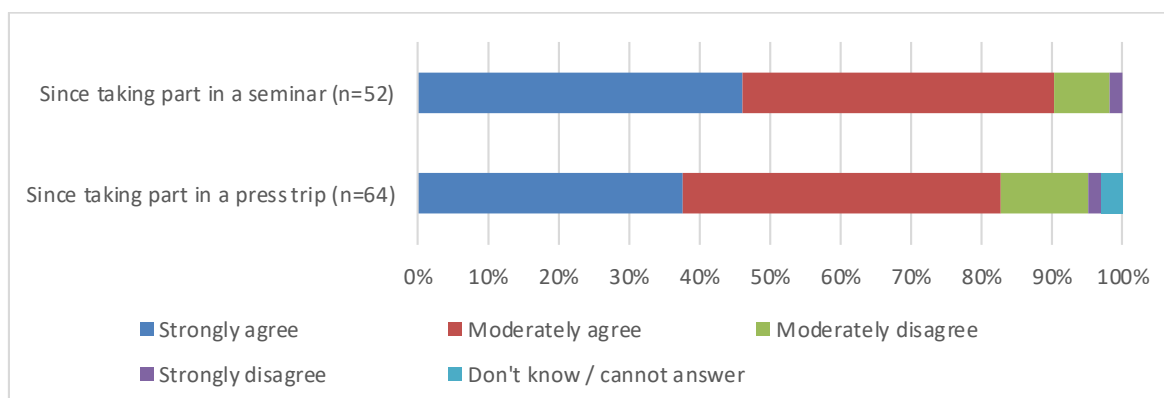


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI monitoring data.

Ag-Press members also report that they have covered CAP topics more often since taking part in a seminar or press trip (see figure on the next page). Those who disagreed with this statement are likely to be members who already regularly covered CAP as part of their work, as some of the Ag-Press members interviewed noted that they cover EU-related issues regularly for their media outlets.

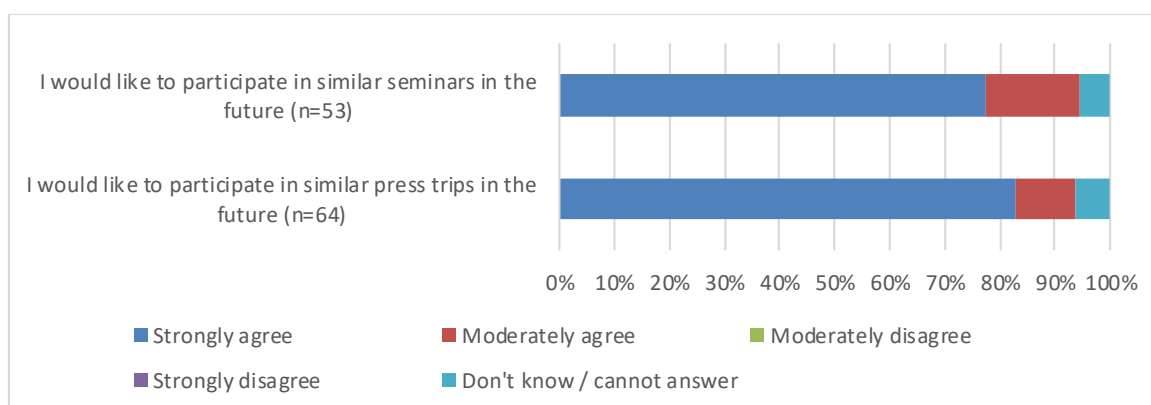
⁴² In DG AGRI final reports, where two events are combined, assume the same figure for both.

⁴³ DG AGRI monitoring data.

Figure 23. Covering CAP topics more often

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

Lastly, network members were highly satisfied with the quality of the events, as evidenced by post-event satisfaction surveys and interviews with the participating journalists. The KPI for participants' satisfaction with an event (80%) was exceeded for all of the events organised during the evaluation period. The satisfaction of the participants is further reflected in their willingness to participate in these events again in the future (see figure below). The Ag-Press members interviewed also said that they would participate in similar events if such an opportunity arose.

Figure 24. Willingness to take part in future Ag-Press events

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

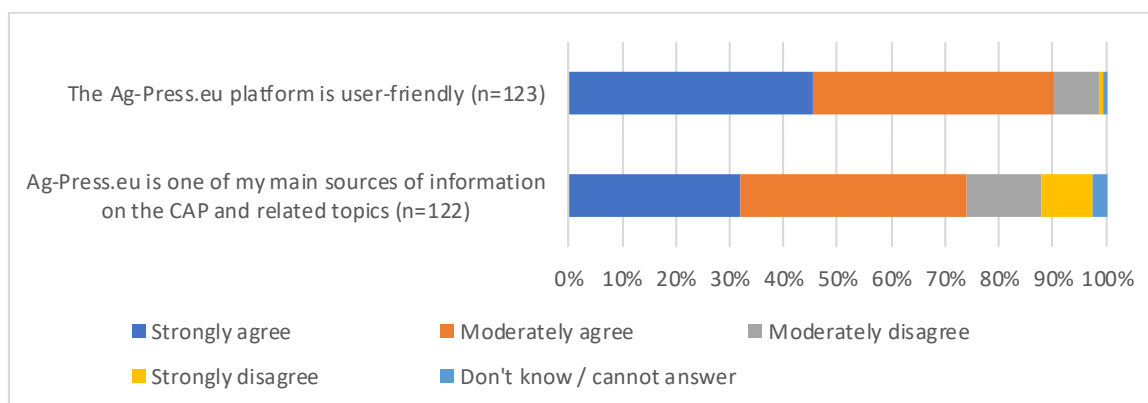
Ag-Press.eu platform

The Ag-Press.eu platform also contributed to the increased awareness and knowledge of the Ag-Press members, although to a slightly lesser extent than did the seminars and the press trips. Both the surveyed and the interviewed network members agreed that the platform is easy to use and that they can find information on it quickly. Some of the network members interviewed noted that they rarely use the platform, relying mainly on the information from newsletters. Some gaps may exist in the activity levels of platform members, as the KPIs set for 2016-2018 with regard to maintaining levels of active members were not achieved⁴⁴. Nevertheless, the majority of the journalists or professional communicators surveyed and interviewed also claimed that the platform is one of the primary sources from which they find information on the CAP and related

⁴⁴ DG AGRI annual reports.

topics.

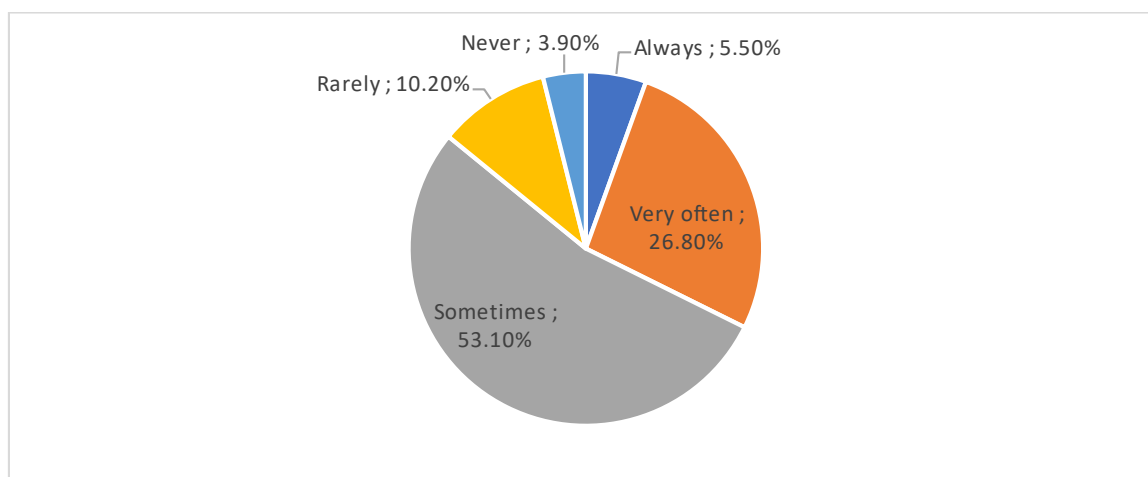
Figure 25. Ag-Press journalists on the Ag-Press.eu platform



Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

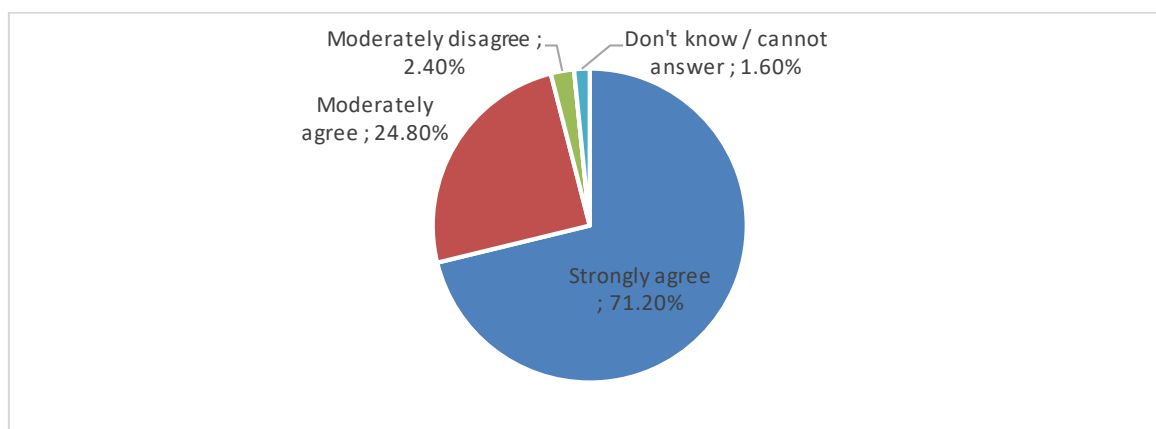
Network members not only use the platform to learn more about the CAP themselves, but also to inform the stories they publish in the media. Of the Ag-Press members surveyed, the majority reported that they sometimes use the Ag-Press.eu platform to develop their stories. Around a quarter of respondents use the information from Ag-Press.eu “very often”.

Figure 26. How often have you used information from Ag-Press.eu to develop your stories? (n=127)



Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

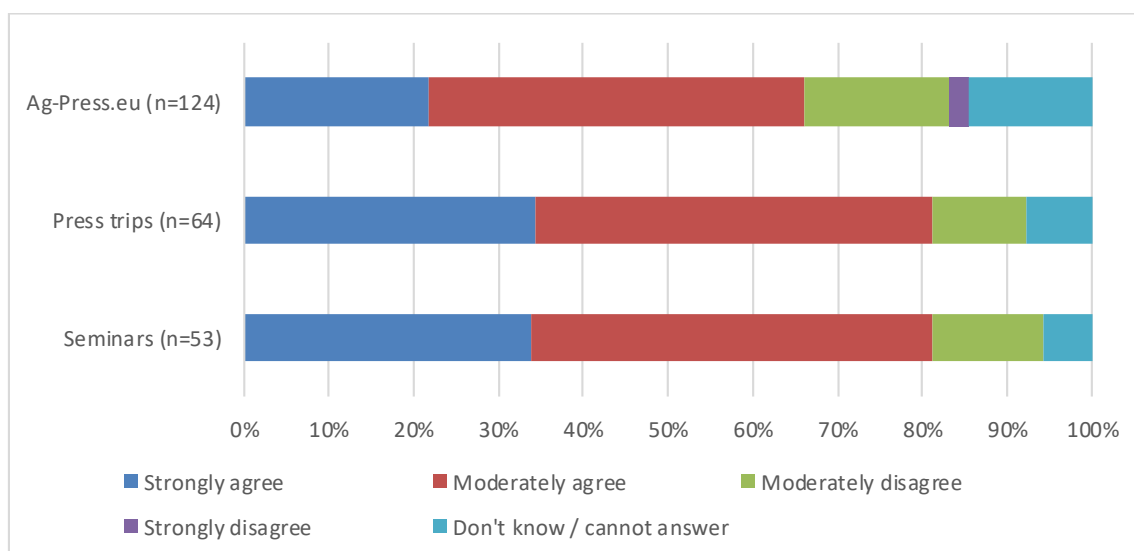
The overall usefulness and satisfaction with the platform are further reflected by the plans of network members to visit Ag-Press.eu in the future (see the figure on the following page).

Figure 27. "I intend to visit the Ag-Press.eu platform in the future" (n=125)

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

6.1.1.3. Impacts of the Ag-Press network

Seminars and press trips made the most substantial contribution to improving the perceptions of Ag-Press network members with regard to the CAP. More than 80% of those journalists surveyed who had participated in these events agreed that they view the CAP more positively as a result of their participation. Meanwhile, less than 70% of Ag-Press.eu users agreed that the platform produced the same effect. Even so, the proportion of those who reported an improved perception of the CAP was still above 60%.

Figure 28. Viewing CAP more positively after Ag-Press activities

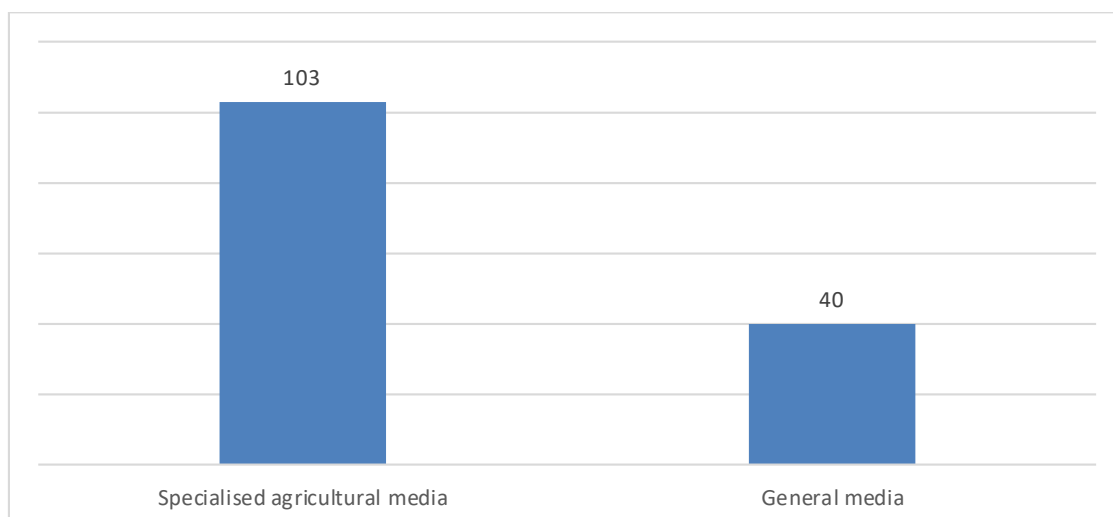
Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

To further assess the impact of Ag-Press, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of articles published after the events selected for the case study. The figure on the next page illustrates that 'European' is the word most frequently found (n=830) in the articles produced by Ag-Press journalists, followed by 'farmers' (n=810), 'agricultural' (n=762), 'farm' (n=689) and 'agriculture' (n=604). These closely related words are then followed by 'production' (n=599) and 'Commission' (n=534). This demonstrates that the European dimension is well covered in articles produced by journalists or professional communicators after attending Ag-Press seminars and press trips.

Articles produced after the seminars in Brussels were highly focused on the reform of the CAP, which had often been the subject of the seminars that had been organised. While most of these articles (49 articles) included a presentation of different elements of the reform proposals, others also highlighted specific issues with the reform (24 articles); issues with the proposed capping; overall difficulties with the reform process; and remaining disparities between the Member States. However, the articles produced also reflected aspects of the way which the CAP should and/or could be improved by the reform. When presenting the reform, the journalists and professional communicators also prominently quoted then Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan (38 articles) and other DG AGRI officials. This indicates that these articles reflected the position of DG AGRI. Some of the journalists interviewed also highlighted the importance of being able to ask questions of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. The prominent quoting of Phil Hogan and other DG AGRI officials across these articles also illustrates the way in which high-level officials can contribute to conveying messages about the CAP through active involvement with the media. Moreover, 29 articles produced after the seminars were based on the topics of presentations the journalists had received at the seminars and the Outlook conference (which was aligned with the Ag-Press seminar in 2018).

Based on the interviews and desk research, it appears that the main readers of these articles issued by the Ag-Press members are farmers and other persons working in the field of agriculture. As illustrated by the figure below, the majority of participants at these events are affiliated with specialised agricultural media outlets rather than the general media.

Figure 30. Affiliations of the participants attending Ag-Press events



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Note: these numbers cover nine Ag-Press events

The internal evaluation of the articles carried out by DG AGRI shows that the relative sizes of the potential audiences of articles portraying the CAP in a more positive or more negative way differ between events (see the table on the next page). Articles issued after a seminar in Brussels (March 2019) that were either positive or neutral could potentially have reached a far larger audience than those offering a negative or mixed view. A similar trend can be seen after the press trip to Romania. Meanwhile, after the press trip to Finland the average potential audience were more likely to be exposed to negative aspects of the CAP, mainly in relation to the dairy market (which was one of the topics covered during the visit).

Table 8. Average potential audience for different Ag-Press journalist articles (internal DG AGRI evaluation)

	Seminar in Brussels (March 2019)		Press trip to Romania (May 2019)		Press trip to Finland (October 2019)	
	Global evaluation	Topic evaluation	Global evaluation	Topic evaluation	Global evaluation	Topic evaluation
Positive	126 633	114 970	222 400	128 464	183 333	136 625
Neutral	121 975	121 975	130 000	107 273	Na	Na
Mixed	10 000	Na	99 769	Na	115 680	140 000
Negative	Na	10 000	Na	108 333	278 563	148 683

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI monitoring data.

Effectiveness of the Ag-Press network: Summary

- The membership of the Ag-Press network grew steadily during the evaluation period, achieving **growth of 57%** between 2016 and early 2020.
- The Ag-Press.eu platform **performs well in terms of key website traffic statistics** (average session duration and bounce rate).
- Ag-Press events and the online **platform contributed to a large extent** towards increased awareness of EU support for agriculture and rural development, as well as increased understanding of the CAP and related topics, as evidenced by the survey of Ag-Press members and interviews carried out for the case study.
- The various activities of the Ag-Press network were also **useful to a large extent** in the network members' **work**. Notably, participation in seminars and trips allowed network members to prepare high-quality outputs, as reported by the network members surveyed and interviewed. Nevertheless, not all participants seem not produce an article or other type of output (e.g. video, podcast, radio show) immediately after participating in an event. On average, the largest number of articles is prepared after seminars in Belgium (28), and the largest share of participants issuing articles comes after press trips to Member States (69%). Meanwhile, the majority of the Ag-Press.eu users surveyed also report that they use the platform to develop stories.
- Among the network members surveyed and interviewed, there are also **high levels of willingness** to participate in press trips and seminars, as well as visiting the Ag-Press.eu platform in the future.
- KPIs were **achieved to a varying extent**. Based on the monitoring data available, a high level of satisfaction among attendees was seen after each of the events, and network members mostly signed up for the Ag-Press.eu platform after participating in events (except for press trips to Belgium in 2016).; The target for the share of participants issuing articles was achieved for 11 out of 20 events; meanwhile, the KPI set for maintaining the numbers of active members on the Ag-Press.eu site were not met.
- Based on the survey of the Ag-Press members, press trips and seminars contributed to a large extent to an **improved perception of the CAP among network members. Less than 70%** of Ag-Press.eu users reported the same effect Nevertheless, the majority (66.2%) still reported a more positive perception of the CAP.
- Qualitative content analysis reveals that articles produced after the press trips **reflected well the European dimension** of farming; however, they **did not always make the connection** between the stories about farms or farmers, and **the CAP or European support**. The articles produced after the seminars mostly presented the various elements of reform proposals (which were often the topic of the seminar), including quoted

6.1.2. Efficiency of the Ag-Press network: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6)

The costs of maintaining the Ag-Press network fluctuated over the course of the evaluation, peaking in 2018 and then dropping to their lowest point in 2019, both in

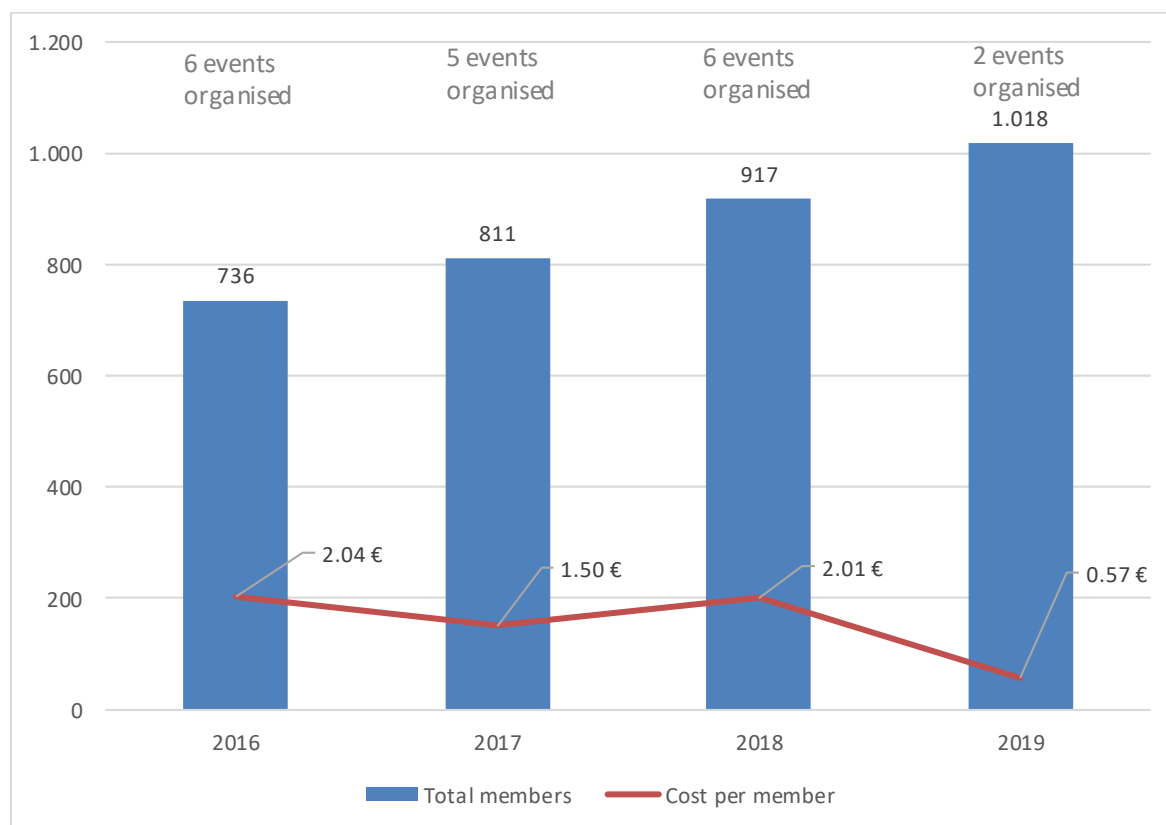
terms of budget and human resources. A summary of Ag-Press network costs is presented in the table below.

Table 9. Total costs of the Ag-Press network

Year	FTEs	Events	Platform	Total cost
2016	0.4 Team Leader 1.6 Assistant (0.8 Assistant; 0.8 Assistant)	EUR 134 817	EUR 15 000	149 817
2017	0.4 Team Leader 2.1 Assistant (0.5 Assistant; 0.8 Assistant; 0.8 Assistant)	EUR 106 955	EUR 15 000	121 955
2018	0.4 Team Leader 2.1 Assistant (0.5 Assistant; 0.6 Assistant; 1 Assistant)	EUR 169 023	EUR 15 000	184 023
2019	0.4 Team Leader 1.1 Assistant (0.5 Assistant; 0.6 Assistant)	EUR 43 520	EUR 15 000	58 520

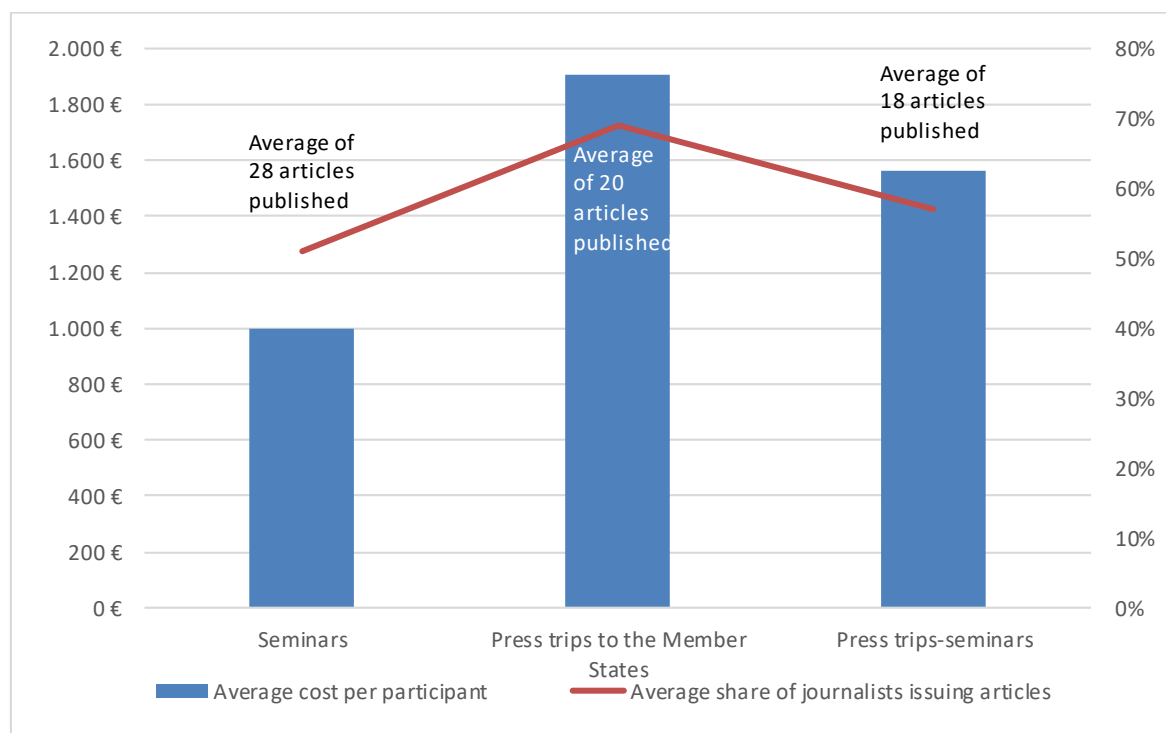
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

The drop in costs in 2019 also resulted in the lowest spending per Ag-Press member. However, this came at the expense of the number of events (press trips, seminars, press trip-seminars) organised, not just the natural growth of the network membership. Compared with five to six events being organised each year between 2016 and 2019, only two were carried out in 2019 (see figure on the following page). Thus, this substantial drop in the cost per member cannot be seen as a gain in efficiency, but rather the result of the reduced scope of the network's activities. This occurred due to the lower overall budget allocated to network activities.

Figure 31. Cost per Ag-Press member

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

When considering the cost per participant, seminars were the cheapest among the various types of network events organised, averaging EUR 997, compared with EUR 1 903 for press trips and EUR 1 560 for press trip-seminars. Seminars at EU headquarters in Brussels could be considered the most cost-effective of the events. Despite having the lowest proportion of journalists issuing articles after the event, these seminars have the lowest cost per participant and the largest number of articles issued in total. Furthermore, the smaller share of journalists issuing articles after these events could be considered unexploited potential – the realisation of which could boost the cost-effectiveness of this type of event still further.

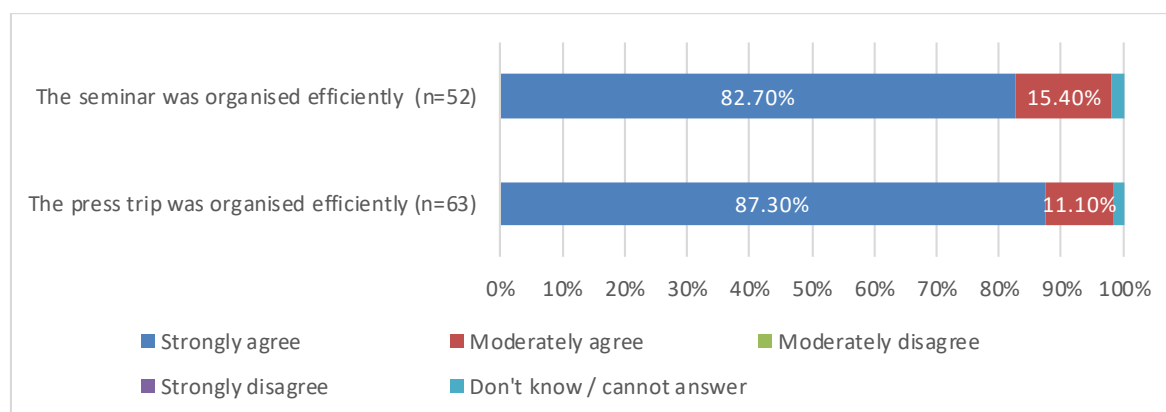
Figure 32. Cost comparison of Ag-Press events

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Increases have been achieved in the efficiency of the network's events compared with the previous evaluation period. Between 2016 and 2019, the average cost of a participant at an event was EUR 1 358 (ranging between EUR 844 and EUR 2 041). This represents an improvement on average, compared with the previous evaluation, where the approximate cost for having one journalist take part in an event was between EUR 1 500 and EUR 2 000⁴⁷. This can be viewed as a positive development, as costs shrank even when taking into account inflation and rising prices. Moreover, participants in the Ag-Press seminars and press trips did not notice any inefficiencies, as evidence both by the survey results (more than 80% of respondents⁴⁸) and the interviews carried out for the case study.

⁴⁷ European Commission, *Evaluation of the Information Policy on the CAP: Final Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

⁴⁸ Those respondents who did not agree that the press trip or seminar were organised efficiently, did not provide any comments in the space for an open answer as to what they considered inefficient.

Figure 33. Opinions of Ag-Press journalists regarding the efficiency of the network's events

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

Finally, the cost of the Ag-Press.eu platform remained the same throughout the evaluation period (EUR 15 000 per year). Various cost indicators relating to the platform remained stable, with the only notable decrease being in the cost per user. This was due to the growing number of platform users. As evidenced by the survey and the interviews, Users are satisfied with the platform. Thus, the current level of cost is appropriate to meet their needs, and no apparent gap exists that requires new investments.

Table 10. Number of users, page views and cost of the Ag-Press.eu platform

Year	Page views	Unique page views	Users	Cost	Cost per user	Cost per unique page view	Cost per page view
2016	30 128	22 457	4 824	EUR 15 000	EUR 3.11	EUR 0.67	EUR 0.50
2017	23 246	18 048	3 274	EUR 15 000	EUR 4.58	EUR 0.83	EUR 0.65
2018	33 366	23 986	4 563	EUR 15 000	EUR 3.29	EUR 0.63	EUR 0.45
2019	29 801	22 771	6 549	EUR 15 000	EUR 2.29	EUR 0.66	EUR 0.50
Total	116 541	87 262	19 210	EUR 60 000	EUR 3.12	EUR 0.69	EUR 0.51

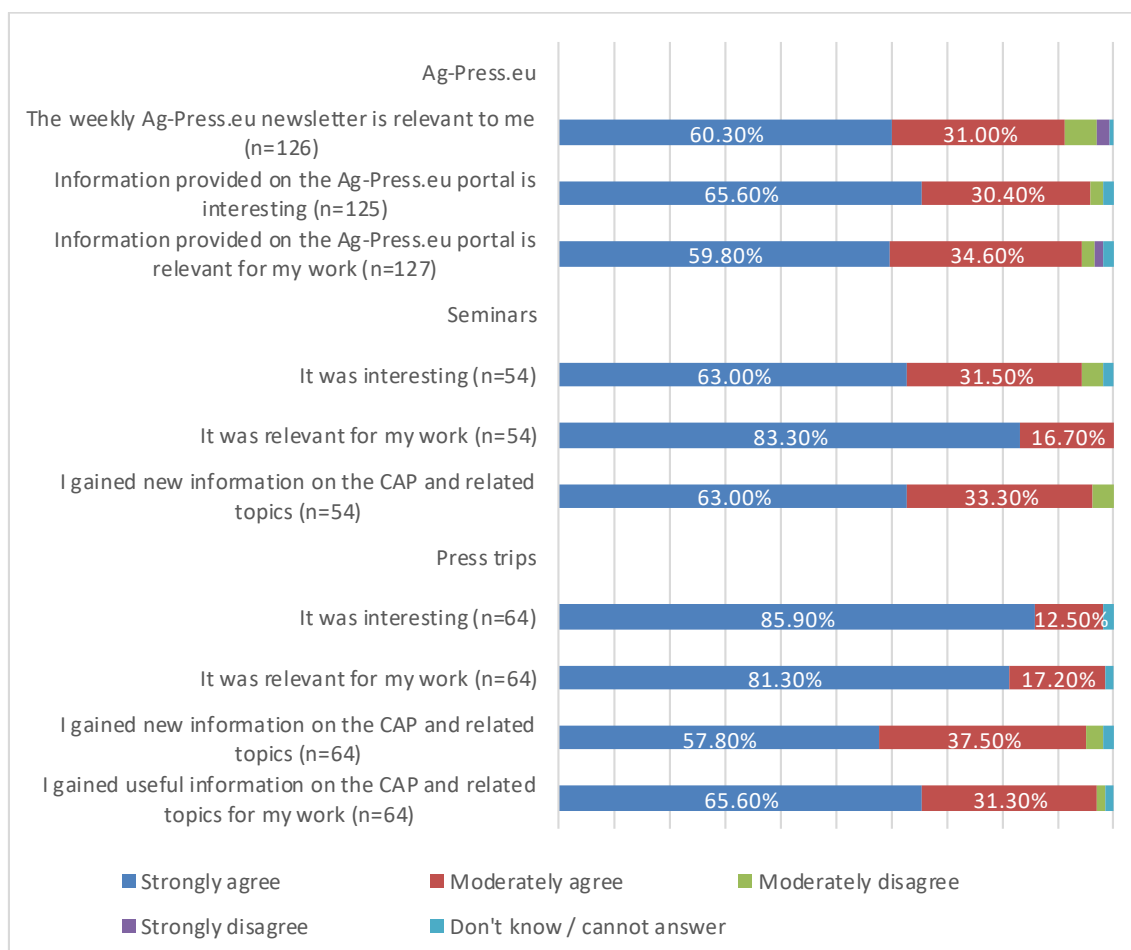
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Efficiency of the Ag-Press network: Summary

- The costs of the Ag-Press network were highest in 2018, and lowest in 2019. The lowest costs of the network in 2019 also meant the lowest cost per network member. However, this happened mainly due to **reduced scope of the network activities** rather than because of the growth in the number of network members. Only two events were implemented in 2019, compared with five to six in previous years.
- Seminars had the lowest cost per participant (EUR 997) of all types of event organised, followed by press trip-seminars (EUR 1, 560) and press trips (EUR 1, 903). **Seminars** can be considered the **most cost-effective** of the three types of event, given that they have the lowest cost per attendee and the largest number of articles produced.
- An **increase in the efficiency** of the event costs can be observed, compared with the previous evaluation. Between the two evaluation periods, the cost of having one journalist attend an event decreased from between EUR 1, 500 and 2, 000, to EUR 1, 358.
- Almost all of the participants surveyed who had attended seminars or press trips observe no inefficiencies during events.
- The costs of the Ag-Press.eu platform remained stable throughout the evaluation period. The **cost per user decreased** due to the increasing number of platform users.

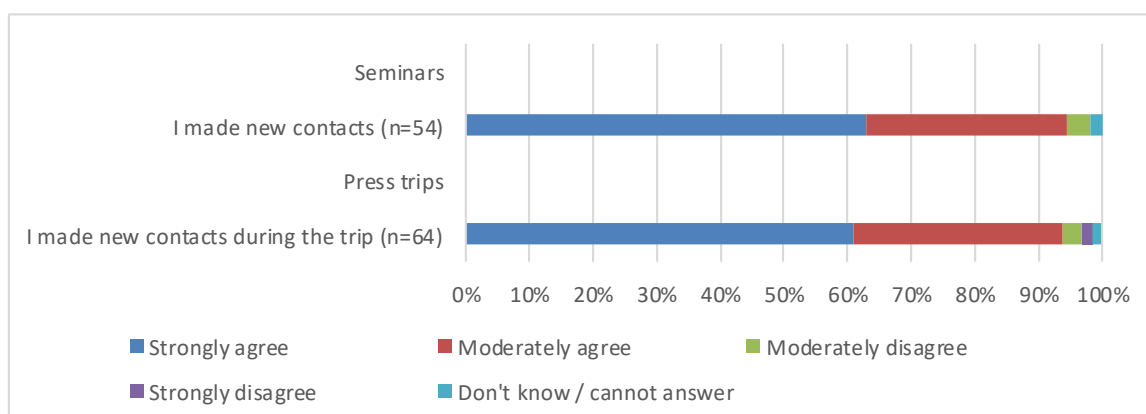
6.1.3. Relevance of the Ag-Press network: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)

The various activities of the Ag-Press network were relevant for its members. Participants in the seminars and press trips found the experience to be interesting and relevant to their work (see the figure on the following page). The journalists interviewed also noted that the experience was interesting for them. They listed the most interesting and useful elements as: the opportunity to learn about agriculture in other countries; visit specific farms; hear particular presentations; and meet DG AGRI officials, as well as then-Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan. The surveyed journalists also predominantly agreed that they had gained new information about the CAP and related topics at Ag-Press events that was useful their work (see figure on the following page).

Figure 34. Relevance for journalists of Ag-Press activities

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

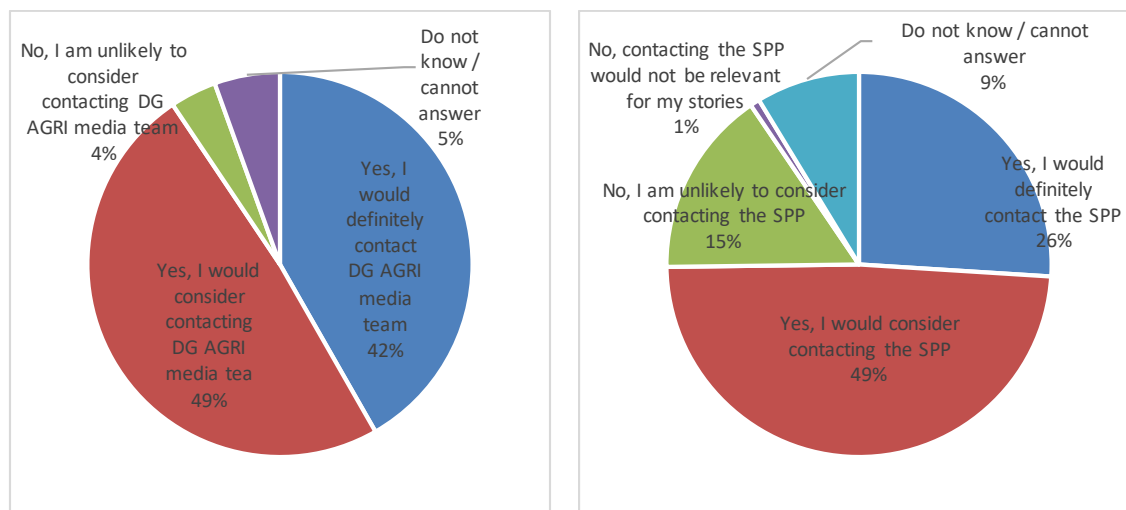
Although, according to the DG AGRI officials interviewed, establishing contacts with journalists is not the network's main objective, this occurred as an unintended benefit. Most of the journalists surveyed said that they had made new contacts during the press trips and the seminars (see figure below). Interviews with the participants also suggest that these contacts were maintained even after the events, revealing the sustainability of these networking activities. Journalists contacted each other to request information for their articles, and to exchange views on recent developments.

Figure 35. Journalists making new contacts at Ag-Press events

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

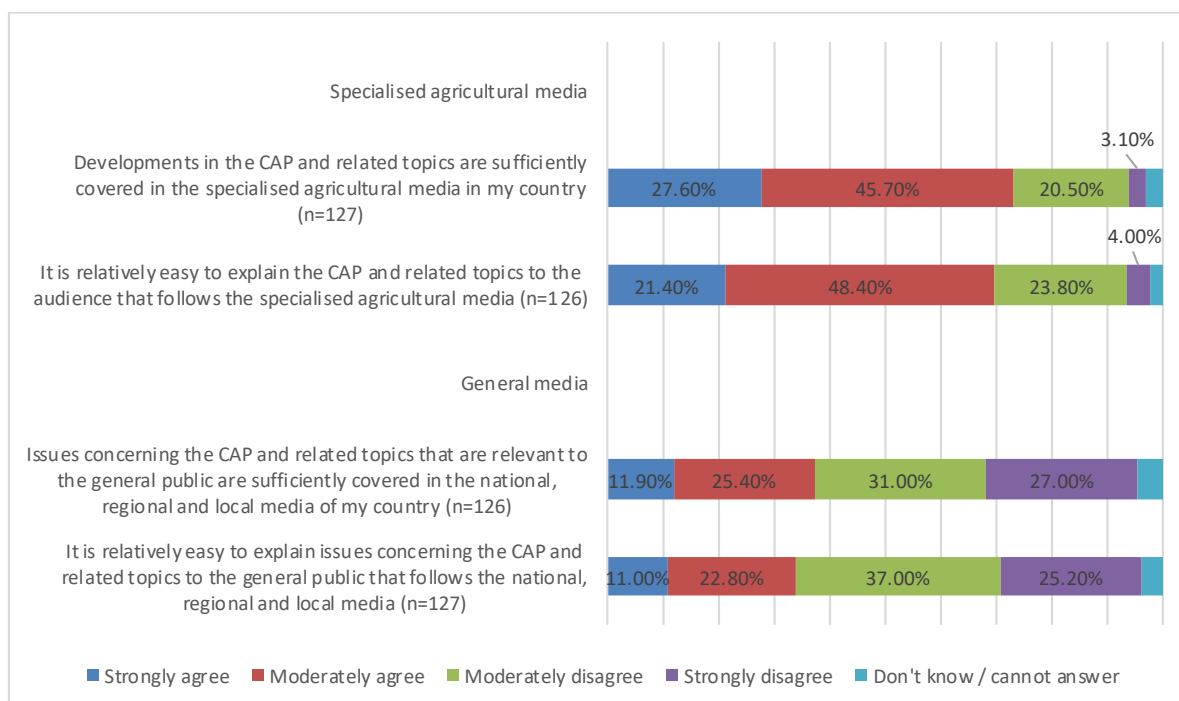
Participation in the Ag-Press network also allowed the journalists to establish relevant contacts with information sources at European level. The majority of the journalists surveyed stated that they would contact (or consider contacting) the DG AGRI media team or the Commission Spokesperson's Service (SPP) if there was a need. Direct relationships with journalists allow the Commission to relay its position regarding issues concerning the CAP that are covered in the media. This potentially brings multiple benefits, including an accurate depiction of the CAP or related topics, or the provision of an opinion to counter journalists seeking to present negative issues relating to the CAP.

Figure 36. Likelihood of contacting DG AGRI media team and the SPP



Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

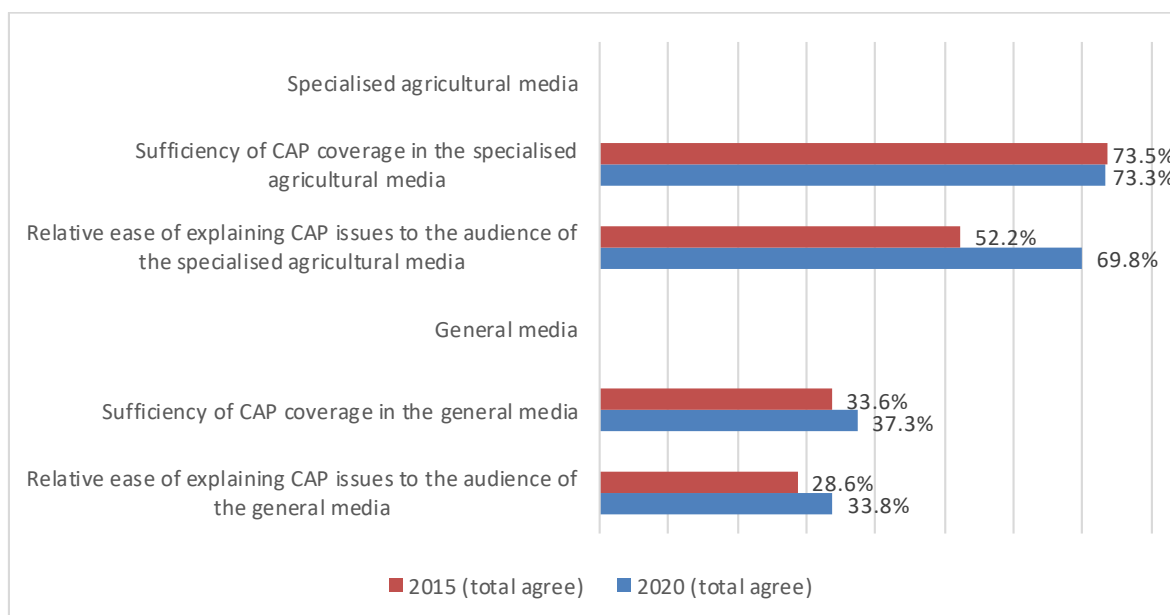
The relevance of the Ag-Press network should also be viewed in the context of CAP coverage in the national media. More than half of the journalists surveyed agreed, however, that the CAP and related topics are insufficiently covered in the general media. Furthermore, more than half of the journalists also considered it difficult to cover issues concerning the CAP and related topics. Even though the situation was better with regard to the specialised agricultural media, more than 20 per cent of the journalists surveyed still believed that the CAP and related topics were insufficiently covered, and that it was not easy to cover these topics.

Figure 37. Coverage of the CAP in specialised and general media

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

Opinions regarding the sufficiency of CAP coverage and the ease of covering the CAP and related topics have changed little between the two evaluation periods, except for a marked improvement in the proportion of journalists who believe it is easy to cover the CAP for the audience of the specialised agricultural media. Nevertheless, some of the network members interviewed also noted difficulties in communicating to farmers, who are usually the main target audience of the specialised agricultural media. These include a lack of interest among farmers, especially if developments concerning the CAP do not directly affect them.

While an improvement is also seen in journalists' perceptions regarding coverage of the CAP in the general media, a prominent gap in coverage remains, as also noted by some of the network members interviewed. As some journalists claimed during the interviews, difficulties in covering the CAP also arise from the fact that it is a fairly technical topic and a complex policy. Thus, the opportunity to explain the CAP through personal stories makes it more understandable to both journalists and farmers. The Ag-Press network therefore presents journalists with an opportunity to develop stories that are more accessible to the general public – in particular, stories about the farms visited during press trips.

Figure 38. Media coverage of the CAP: comparison of the two evaluation periods

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey carried out for this evaluation, and the survey of network members carried out for the evaluation of the information policy on the CAP published in 2015.

Relevance of Ag-Press network: Summary

- Ag-Press activities **were highly relevant** for the network members. The majority of the network members surveyed and interviewed found the press trips, seminars, Ag-Press.eu and the newsletter to be relevant and interesting.
- Participation in network activities enabled the **establishment of contacts** between network members. Some of the journalists interviewed presented examples of contacting other participants even after the events, illustrating the **sustainability of the activities**.
- The Ag-Press network activities also allowed journalists to establish **relevant contacts with information sources at European level**. The majority of the network members surveyed would (or would consider) contacting the DG AGRI media team or the SPP if necessary for their stories.
- Based on the views of the Ag-Press network members surveyed and interviewed, there are **difficulties in covering the CAP** and related issues, both **in the specialised agricultural media**, but mainly **in the general media**. Journalists identified the **complexity and technical nature of the policy** as one of the reasons why it is difficult to communicate about the CAP.

6.2. Social media

Four main channels are used by DG AGRI to promote the CAP and related topics on social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were used throughout the whole evaluation period, while DG AGRI's Instagram account was launched in September 2018. The DG AGRI accounts share the common name of 'EU Food & Farming', except for on Twitter, where the account is titled 'EU Agriculture'. As indicated by DG AGRI during the scoping interviews, social media is used to inform, engage and enthuse citizens. Social media is used to tell stories about farmers, promote DG AGRI events and inform about policy developments among other

topics – as illustrated by the hashtags most frequently used by the DG AGRI Twitter account over the last two years. It must be noted, however, that each of the channels has a slightly different focus in terms of its communication approach and target groups. As explained by DG AGRI during the scoping interviews, Facebook is mainly used to tell stories about farmers and farming in Europe, and is more targeted at the general public. Instagram is used as a photo album to highlight good-quality, affordable European food for citizens. Twitter, meanwhile, is more news-oriented, targeting stakeholders and journalists. Lastly, YouTube, the longest-running account, acts mainly as a video repository and is not used on a daily basis. In this section, we assess the effectiveness of social media in terms of outputs, results and impacts, as well as where relevant, reflect on the achievement of KPIs.

Figure 39. Hashtags most frequently used by the DG AGRI Twitter account (5 June 2020 – 20 May 2018)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on data harvested from Twitter using R.

6.2.1. Effectiveness of social media: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)

6.2.1.1. Outputs of social media

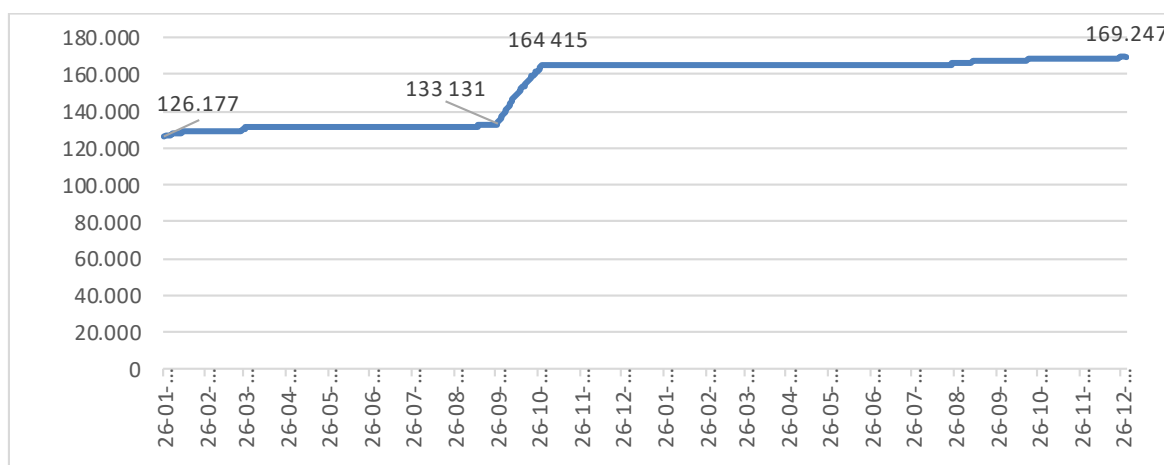
Followers

The number of followers on DG AGRI's social media channels grew steadily over the evaluation period. DG AGRI's Facebook account surpassed the KPIs that were set for follower growth in 2016 and 2017⁴⁹. More detailed data on Facebook engagement shows that between the beginning of 2018 and the end of 2019, the account's 'Likes' grew by approximately 33% (see figure on the next page). The rapid growth in followers during

⁴⁹ DG AGRI annual reports.

September and October 2018 coincides with a spike in paid impressions received by DG AGRI's account, which helped in gaining new followers. The KPIs set for Twitter follower growth were also achieved in 2016 and 2017⁵⁰. As of 12 June 2020, DG AGRI's social media accounts respectively have acquired approximately 11 900 (Instagram) and 73 100 (Twitter) followers; 170 695 likes (Facebook); and 580 subscribers (YouTube).

Figure 40. Lifetime total Likes (Facebook)



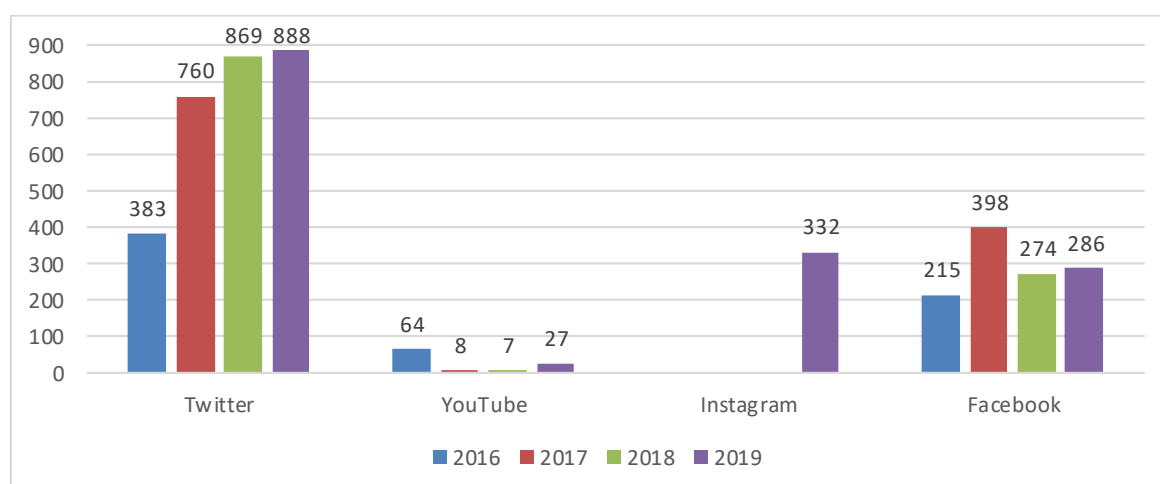
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on Facebook monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Posts

Although opinions differ with regard to the optimal number of posts on the social media, it is generally agreed⁵¹ that on Facebook, no more than two posts should be made each day, and no fewer than around five posts a week. On average, DG AGRI complies with this. Opinions as to the preferred frequency of Twitter posts are more varied: from no more than three tweets a day, to no maximum limit. The number of tweets published on DG AGRI's Twitter account continued to grow each year, peaking at 888 in 2019. Meanwhile, on Instagram, one post per day is usually suggested. On average, DG AGRI posted slightly less often than this during 2019. Finally, the number of YouTube videos posted was comparatively high in 2016. This is probably due to the series of videos being produced and uploaded in EU national languages on 'Farming: at the heart of our life', which boosted the overall number. Subsequently, the number of videos published dropped in 2017 and 2018, then grew again in 2019.

⁵⁰ DG AGRI annual reports.

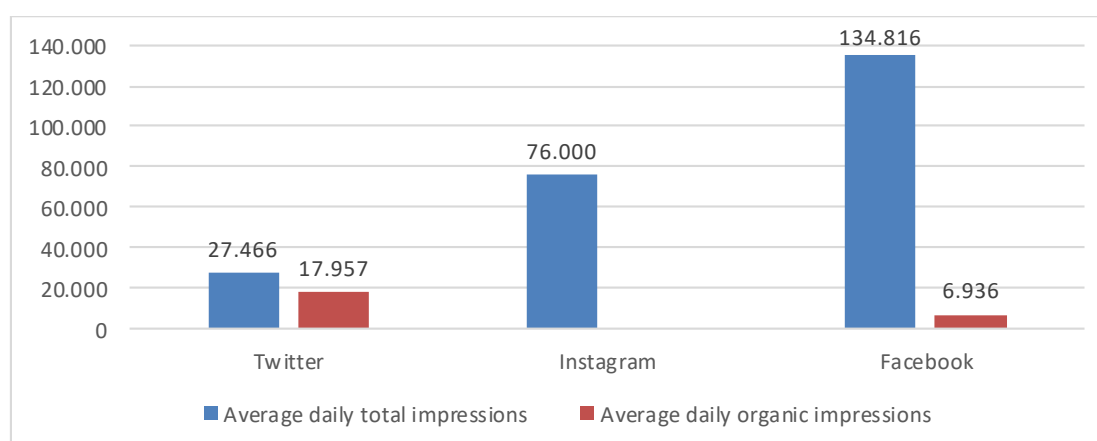
⁵¹ Based on the existing industry standards.

Figure 41. Number of posts/tweets/videos published (2016-2019)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on social media monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Impressions

'Impressions' refers to the number of times published content appeared in front of social media users. As opposed to reach, impressions does not count the number of unique users who saw the content, but instead counts the total number of times the content was viewed. Comparing the number of impressions for DG AGRI's social media accounts in 2019 (the only year for which data on all accounts was available), Facebook emerges as the account with the largest average daily total impressions, while Twitter has a more significant number of organic impressions⁵². The daily average organic impressions on Facebook grew between 2018 and 2019 (due to several peaks of organic daily impressions in 2019), yet a decline in the number of paid impressions led to a decline in total impressions. Meanwhile, on Twitter, both organic and total impressions have grown steadily since 2017⁵³.

Figure 42. Daily impressions on DG AGRI social media channels (2019)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on social media monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

⁵² Organic impressions refers to the number of times content published appeared for social media users without paid advertising.

⁵³ Social media monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

The total number of impressions also mainly grew for videos published on YouTube. In particular, videos published in 2017 continued to be accessed in 2018 and 2019, demonstrating their sustainability. On average, videos published in 2019 were seen the most times, compared with videos published in other years.

Table 11. Average impressions per video (YouTube)

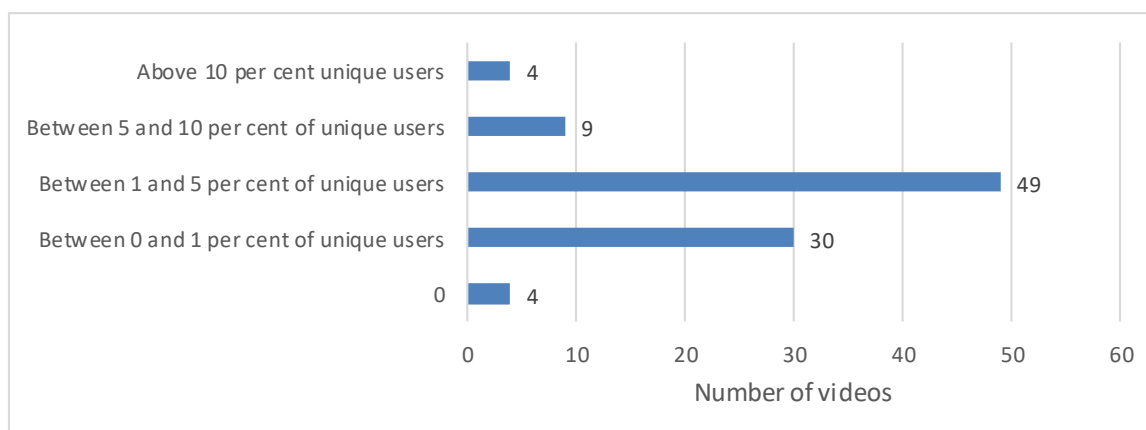
	2018	2019
Videos published in 2016	693	665
Videos published in 2017	1 057	1 229
Videos published in 2018	891	910
Videos published in 2019		3 269

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on social media monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Video completion

Around half of the videos posted on DG AGRI Facebook were viewed for 95% or more of their running time by between 1% and 5% of unique users who saw the videos on their timeline. Only four videos were viewed up to that point or to completion by more than 10% of those unique users who saw the videos appear. On average, DG AGRI's videos on Facebook were viewed for 30 seconds or longer (up to completion) 969 times each day during 2018 and 2019.

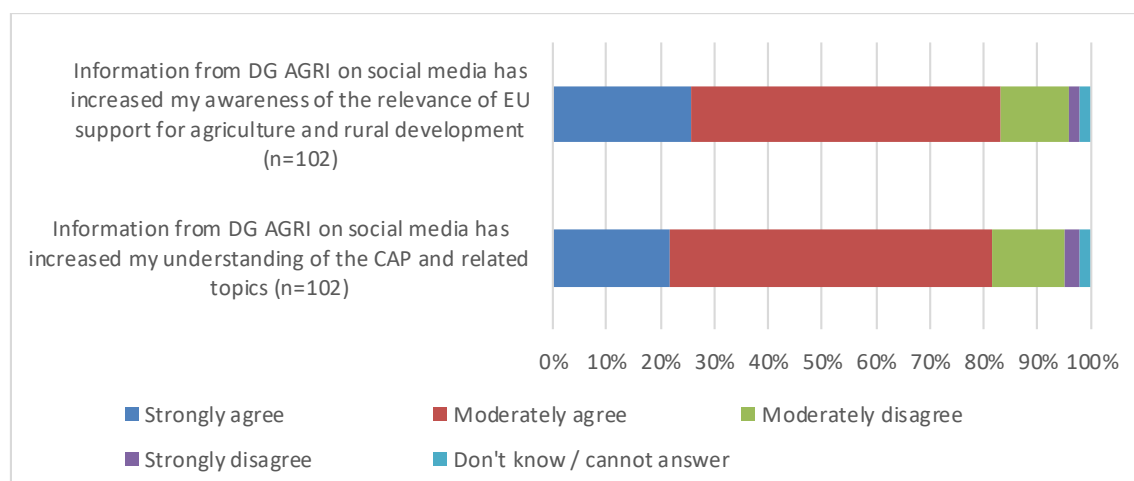
Figure 43. Facebook reach of videos watched up to 95%/completion



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on Facebook monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

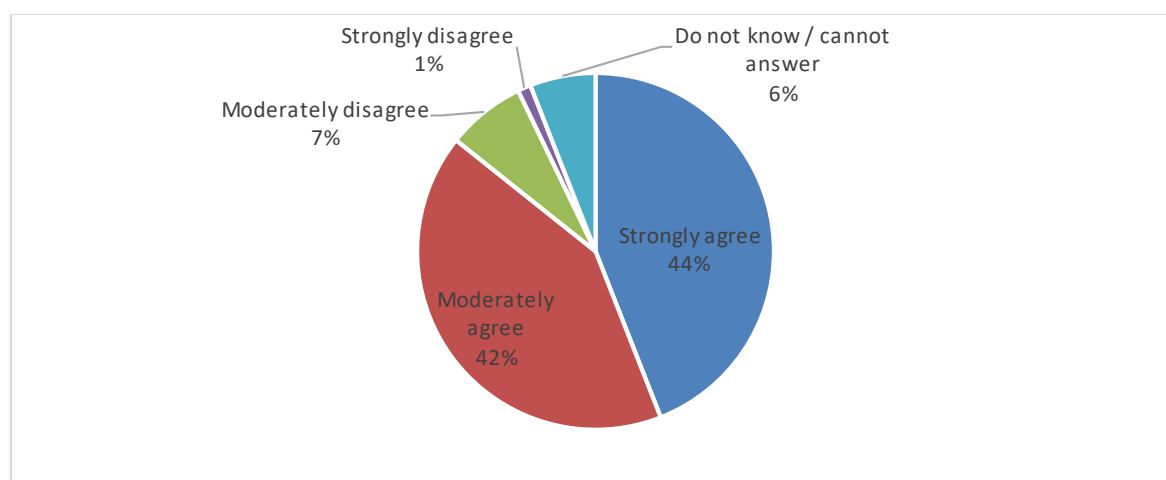
6.2.1.2. Results for social media

Based on the main survey, followers of DG AGRI social media gained knowledge about EU support for agriculture and rural development and the CAP. Most of the stakeholders surveyed agreed that the information they encountered on DG AGRI social media increased their awareness of EU support for agriculture and rural development, as well as increasing their understanding of the CAP and related topics (see figure on the following page).

Figure 44. Increased awareness and understanding among DG AGRI social media followers

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the main survey.

Satisfaction with DG AGRI's social media varied between respondents. Those who followed DG AGRI mostly found it useful. Aspects that the interviewees mentioned as being useful include communication on geographical indications (GIs), updates on developing news (quick access to new information), and examples from other countries. Improvements to DG AGRI's social media suggested by stakeholders included a greater focus on farmers' stories and more extensive use of figures. It must be noted, however, that only a minority of interviewed stakeholders offered detailed comments on the contents of DG AGRI's social media communication, both in terms what they appreciated and what could be improved.

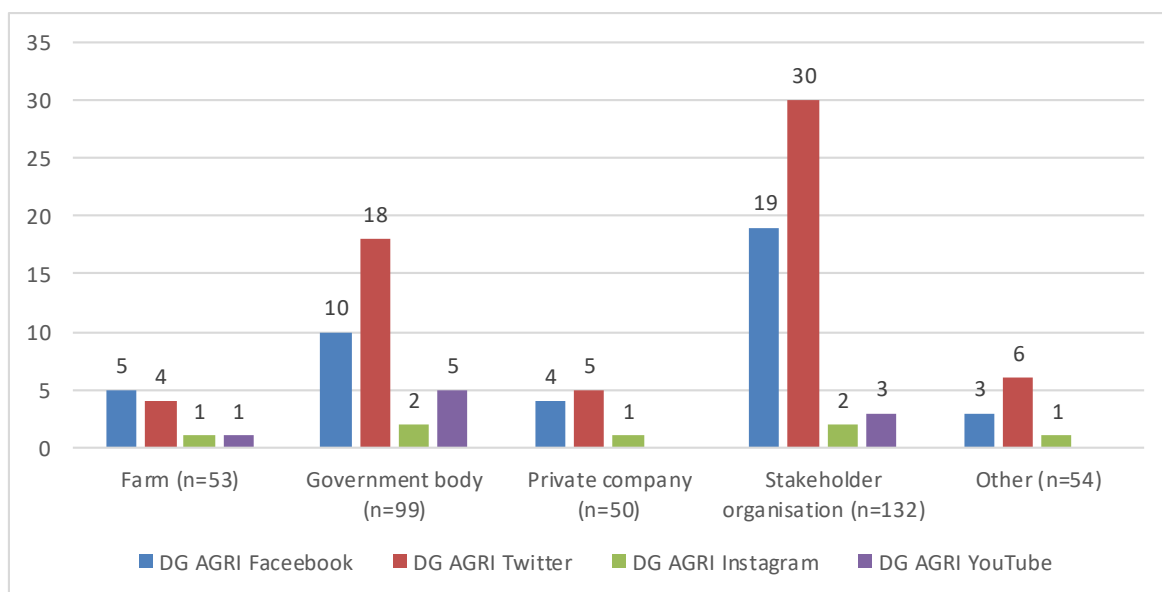
Figure 45. To what extent do you agree that the following DG AGRI activities have been useful to you? Answers of social media users (n=84)

Source: Developed by the authors, based on the main survey.

Differences exist between target groups in their choice of which channels to follow. As shown in the figure on the following page, the stakeholders and government officials surveyed mainly received DG AGRI information via Twitter, followed by Facebook. Many of the NGOs interviewed claimed that they did not follow DG AGRI on social media. Some, however, when directed to DG AGRI's Facebook account, realised that they did actually follow the DG (yet did not receive its content in their news feed). Reported reasons for not following DG AGRI included a lack of time, not using social media at all, or receiving all the information they needed via other channels (e.g. CDGs). Some of

the stakeholders interviewed (NGOs, other DGs) said that they also follow the individual accounts of DG AGRI officials on LinkedIn or Twitter. There was also a noticeable lack of social media following among the DG AGRI officials interviewed, including a lack of activity on social media at a personal level (especially among senior management).

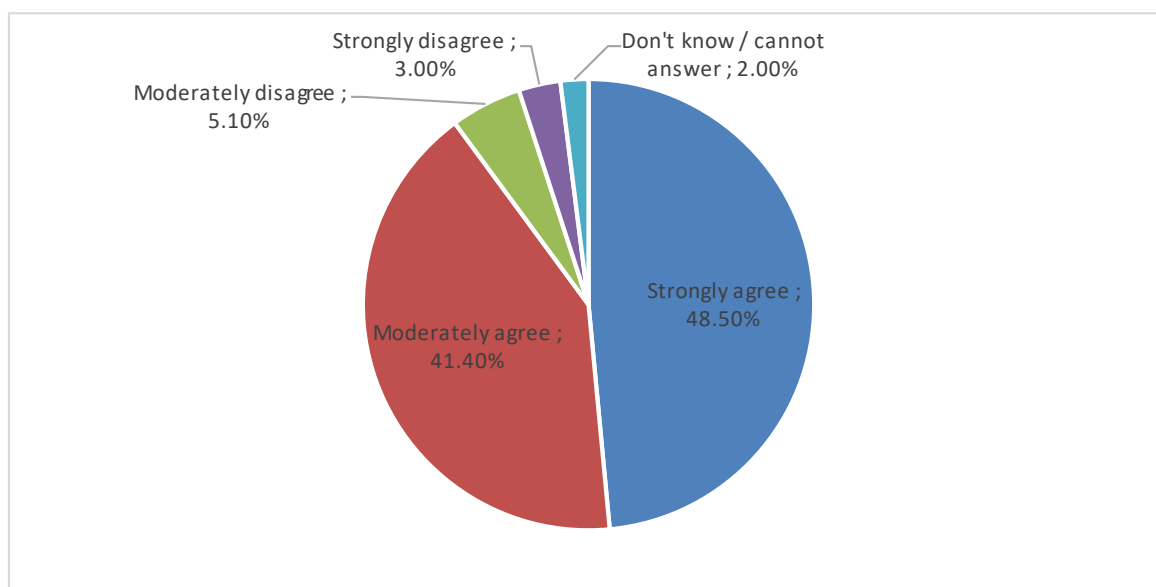
Figure 46. Channels via which different stakeholder groups received DG AGRI communications



Source: Developed by the authors, based on the main survey.

Overall satisfaction among stakeholders with DG AGRI's social media output is also reflected in their intention to continue following DG AGRI on social media. As shown in the figure below, 89.9% of stakeholders surveyed who had seen DG AGRI information on social media, agreed that they would continue to follow its accounts in the future.

Figure 47. "I intend to follow social media content from DG AGRI in the future" (n=99)

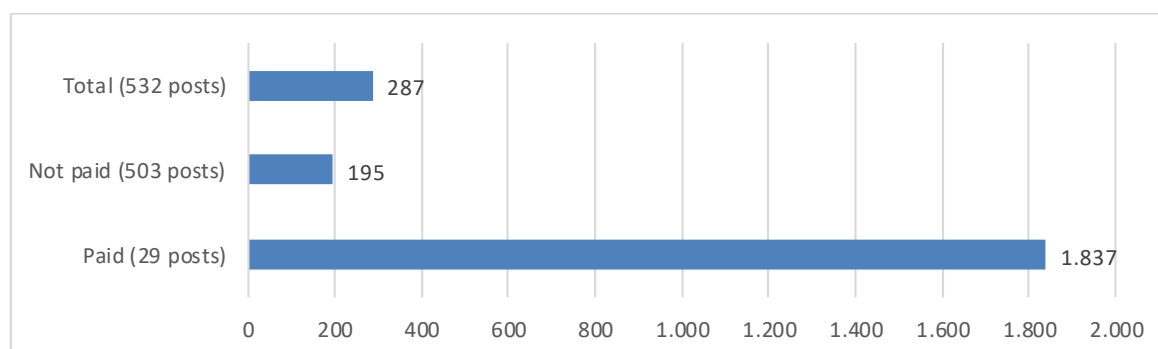


Source: Developed by the authors, based on the main survey.

Facebook

User engagement with DG AGRI on Facebook grew during the evaluation period. Daily engaged users increased from an average of 714 in 2018, to an average of 959 in 2019, although the KPI for the engagement rate set in 2016 was not met. Comparing the posts that used paid advertising to boost their impressions with those posts that did not, there is a notable difference in the number of engaged users per post (see figure below). This highlights the likely importance of paid advertising in reaching the DG AGRI's target audience on Facebook.

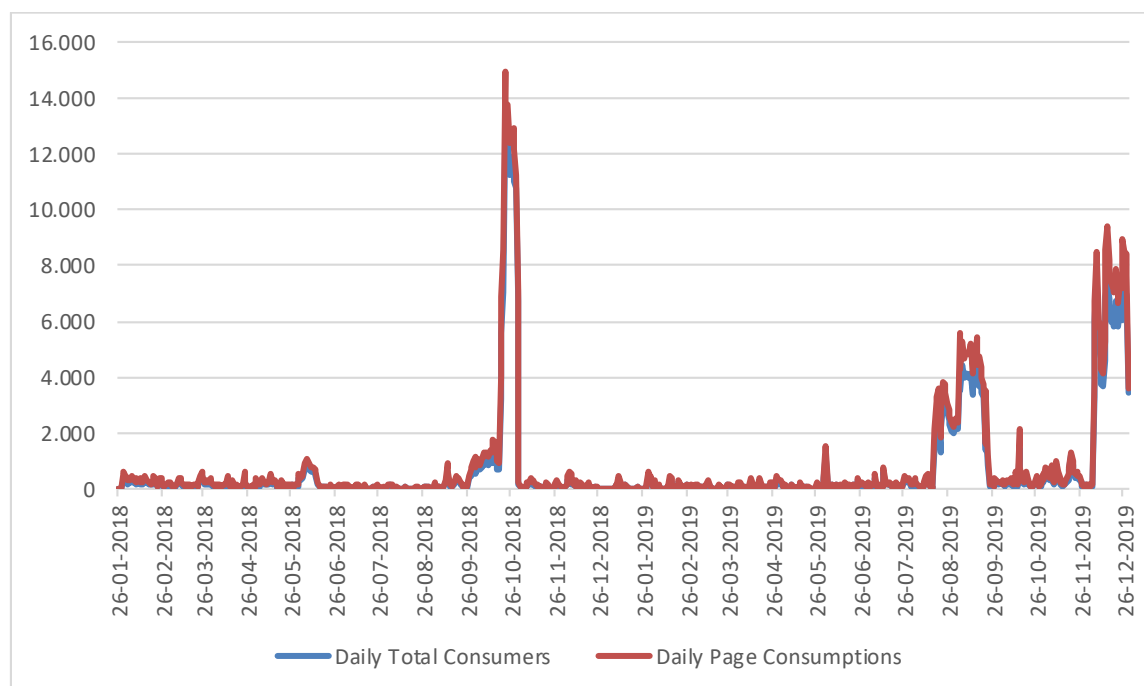
Figure 48. Average engaged users per post (2018-2019)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on Facebook monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

The same trend can be seen in relation to the number of daily page consumers. Spikes in consumption occurred during September-October 2018 and 2019, as well as in December 2019. The first two spikes probably relate to the Teachers' Pack campaign, which ran at approximately the same time. The campaign gained a total of 741 894 impressions and a total of 8 866 engagements with posts in 2018. In 2019, the campaign gained more than 6 million impressions, as well as around 68 000 clicks on links and 138 500 estimated ad recall lifts⁵⁴, as evidenced by data made available for the social media case study. Meanwhile, the third spike in daily consumers and page consumptions may relate to the extensive promotion of the EU Agricultural Outlook conference in December 2019 (unpaid posts), as well as to a series of promoted stories focusing on farmers and telling their stories.

⁵⁴ An estimate of the number of additional people who may remember seeing your ads, if asked, within 2 days.

Figure 49. Facebook consumption trends

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on Facebook monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Of the ten posts with the highest engagement, seven were videos, while three were photos. It is interesting to note that the top five most engaging posts share the topic of technology use in farming, and all were boosted with paid impressions. Only two out of the top 10 most engaging posts were not promoted using paid impressions⁵⁵.

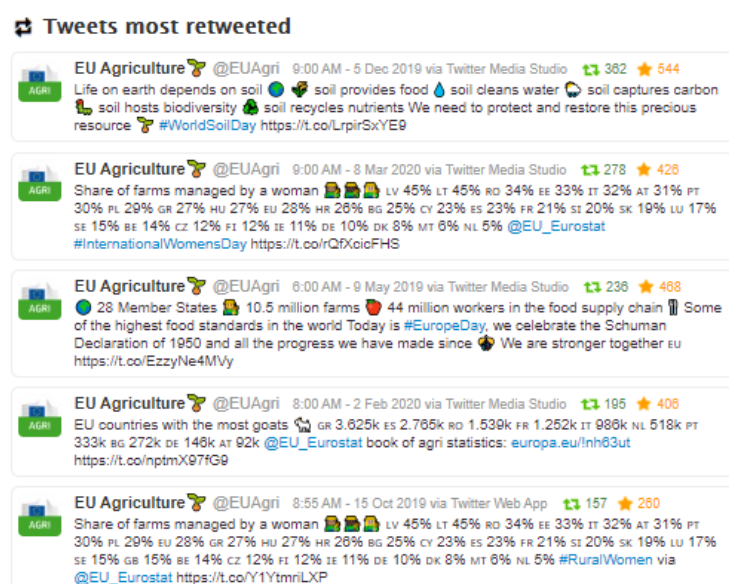
⁵⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/EUAagri/posts/2751236724933246> and <https://www.facebook.com/EUAagri/posts/2628880383835548>

Figure 50. DG AGRI Facebook post with the greatest user engagement

Source: DG AGRI Facebook.

Twitter

Average engagement on Twitter grew throughout the evaluation period. Although the KPI for increased engagement was not met in 2016 (the only year for which it was set), notable growth has been achieved since then, from an average of 69 daily engagements to 339 in 2019 (increase of almost five times). The tweets with the greatest number of retweets between May 2018 and June 2020 are presented in the figure below. Three of the top five most retweeted tweets provide statistics relating to farming and agriculture in the EU.

Figure 51. Top 5 most-retweeted tweets

Source: Twitonomy (tweets from May 23, 2018 to June 12, 2020).

comments) in 2019, an average of 99 per post. The most engaging type of Instagram content was carousel posts, followed by images and finally videos⁵⁶.

Figure 54. Example of one of the most engaging posts on DG AGRI's Instagram



Source: DG AGRI Instagram.

YouTube

The increasing number of videos on DG AGRI's YouTube channel led to a growing total number of views. Moreover, consistent impressions click-through rate (CTR)⁵⁷ was achieved for videos published in different years. According to statistics from Google, half of channels/videos on YouTube have an impressions CTR of between 2% and 10%⁵⁸. This level was achieved for all videos, with the exception of videos published in 2017 (as viewed in 2019).

Table 12. DG AGRI YouTube video views and impressions CTR

	2016		2017		2018		2019	
	Total views	CTR	Total views	CTR	Total views	CTR	Total views	CTR
Videos published in 2016	5 345	Na	8 081	Na	9 090	3.02%	7 607	2.45%
Videos published in 2017			1 240	Na	601	2.32%	295	1.74%
Videos published in 2018					1 088	4.21%	748	3%
Videos published in 2019							69 200	3.22%

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on YouTube monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Among the top five most popular videos in terms of total views, four come from the

⁵⁶ Instagram monitoring data shared by DG AGRI.

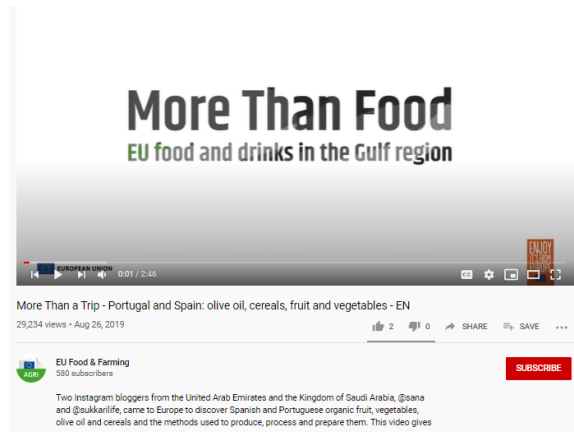
⁵⁷ Impressions click-through rate shows what percentage of impressions are turned into views.

⁵⁸ <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/7628154?hl=en>

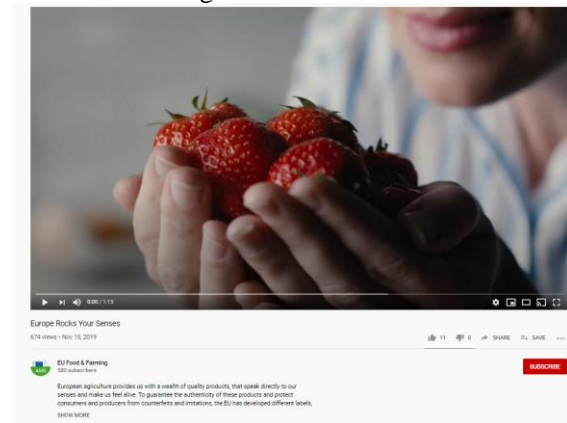
'More Than Food' series. These videos were created as part of a campaign targeted at the Gulf Cooperation Council region under the EU promotion policy⁵⁹. Also, among the top 10 most-viewed DG AGRI videos, two are in national languages. Meanwhile, the video that had the highest impressions CTR was the 'Europe Rocks Your Senses One'. It is interesting to note that this video was also the post with the most user engagement on Facebook that did not take advantage of paid impressions. It thus stands as an example of a video that succeeds in engaging DG AGRI social media followers.

Figure 55. Most popular video in terms of views

Video with most views



Video with the highest CTR



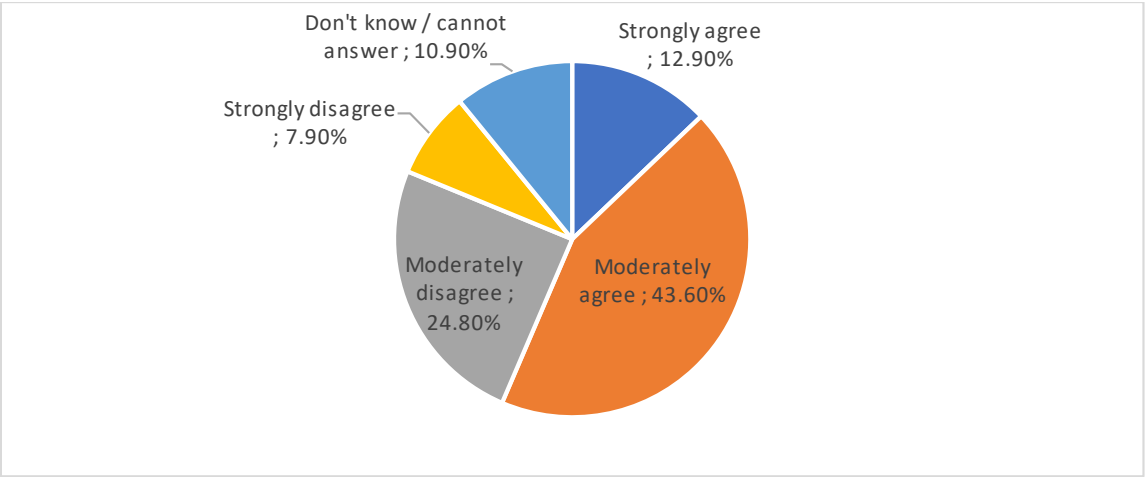
Source: DG AGRI YouTube.

6.2.1.3. Impacts of social media

Information provided by DG AGRI on social media contributed to some extent towards a more positive view of the CAP. Although it did not reach the benchmark of 70% agreement, more than half of survey respondents agreed that information from DG AGRI social media improved their perception of the CAP (see on the next page). A relatively large number of respondents chose the 'do not know' option, illustrating the difficulties in assessing this perception change. Meanwhile, 70% of those who received information on the CAP from various DG AGRI channels, agreed that audio-visual content on DG AGRI social media made them view the CAP more positively.

⁵⁹ The EU promotion policy helps producers to sell their EU farm products in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, at the same time as delivering jobs and growth at home. Promotion campaigns about EU farm products are designed to open up new market opportunities for EU farmers and the wider food industry, as well as helping them build their existing business.

Figure 56. “I view the CAP more positively because of information from DG AGRI on social media” (n=101)



Source: Developed by the authors, based on the main survey.

Effectiveness of social media: summary

- Number of DG AGRI Facebook and Twitter **followers grew** during the evaluation period, also achieving the KPIs set for 2016 and 2017.
- The **number of average posts** on DG AGRI social media channels is **within the accepted standards**.
- On average, DG AGRI's Facebook page receives the **most total daily impressions**, followed by its Instagram and Twitter, while Twitter leads in terms of **daily organic impressions**. There was also a **trend of growth** in average impressions per YouTube video published.
- **Most of the videos** published on DG AGRI's Facebook are viewed up to 95% of their duration (or longer, up to completion) **only by a minority** of users who see them on their newsfeeds.
- Information published on DG AGRI's social media **contributed to a large extent** towards increased awareness of EU support for agriculture and rural development, as well as increased understanding of the CAP and related topics, as evidenced by the replies of respondents to the main survey.
- DG AGRI social media users who responded to the main survey found the **audio-visual products useful to a large extent**.
- Different stakeholders choose to follow different channels. **Twitter and Facebook** are mostly used **by stakeholder organisations and government bodies** (based on replies to the main survey). However, many of the stakeholder organisations interviewed claimed that they **do not follow DG AGRI on social media at all**.
- A **high percentage (89.9%)** of stakeholders surveyed intended to **continue following DG AGRI on social media in the future**.
- Although the KPI that was set in 2016 for the engagement rate on Facebook and Twitter was not achieved, since then engagement trends on both networks have been positive.
- **Paid impressions** on DG AGRI's Facebook are important in boosting the levels of engagement and consumption. On average, the number of engaged users per post grew between 2018 and 2019 on Facebook.
- Average daily engagements on Twitter **grew by almost five times** during the evaluation period (from 69 in 2016 to 339 in 2019). The dominant type of engagement was media engagements, followed by likes, URL clicks, detail expands and retweets.
- The **number of views on YouTube grew** during the evaluation period, and a **consistent impressions CTR** was achieved.
- Information provided on DG AGRI's social media contributed **to some extent** to a more positive view of the CAP, with 68.4% of respondents to the main survey agreeing with this statement. Although this is below the benchmark of 70%, it still reflects a **majority of DG AGRI social media users**.

6.2.2. Efficiency of social media: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6)

Trends in social media costs

DG AGRI social media costs grew substantially (by approximately three times) between 2016 and 2017, and then again between 2017 and 2018 (by almost two times). While

the budget for digital communication services remained the same between 2017 and 2018, the overall growth of the social media budget resulted from the appointment of an online community manager. In 2019, social media costs shrank again slightly, notably due to a reduced budget for the promotion of social media posts. The cost of human resources also grew as of 2018, in line with budget growth. Compared with DG MARE (which ranged between 0.3 FTE in 2016 and 1 FTE in 2019) and DG SANTE (0.5 FTE), DG AGRI accrues higher costs for social media (even when discounting the FTEs required for graphic design). This can be explained by the fact that DG AGRI maintains a presence on a larger number of social media platforms than DG SANTE (Twitter only) and DG MARE (Twitter and Facebook).

Table 13. Total social media costs

Year	FTEs	Online community manager	Graphic designers	Digital communication services	Total costs
2019	0.6 team leader (the other 0.2 are for graphic design, AV, press relations) 3 intramuros, of which 1.6 FTE for graphic design (occasionally helping other teams) and 1 for press relations	EUR 77 000	EUR 102 000 ⁶⁰	EUR 50 000, EUR 46 550 of which went to promoted posts	EUR 229 000
2018	0.6 team leader (the other 0.2 are for graphic design, AV, press relations) 3 intramuros, of which 1.6 FTE for graphic design (occasionally helping other teams) and 1 for press relations	EUR 90 000	EUR 84 000 ⁶¹	EUR 120 000, EUR 46 550 of which went to promoted posts	EUR 294 000
2017	0.5 team leader 1 assistant 0.4 intramuros	-	EUR 70 000	EUR 120 000, EUR 20 000 of which went to promoted posts	EUR 190 000
2016	0.5 team leader 0.2 assistant 0.6 intramuros	-	EUR 60 000	EUR 2 500	EUR 62 500

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports.

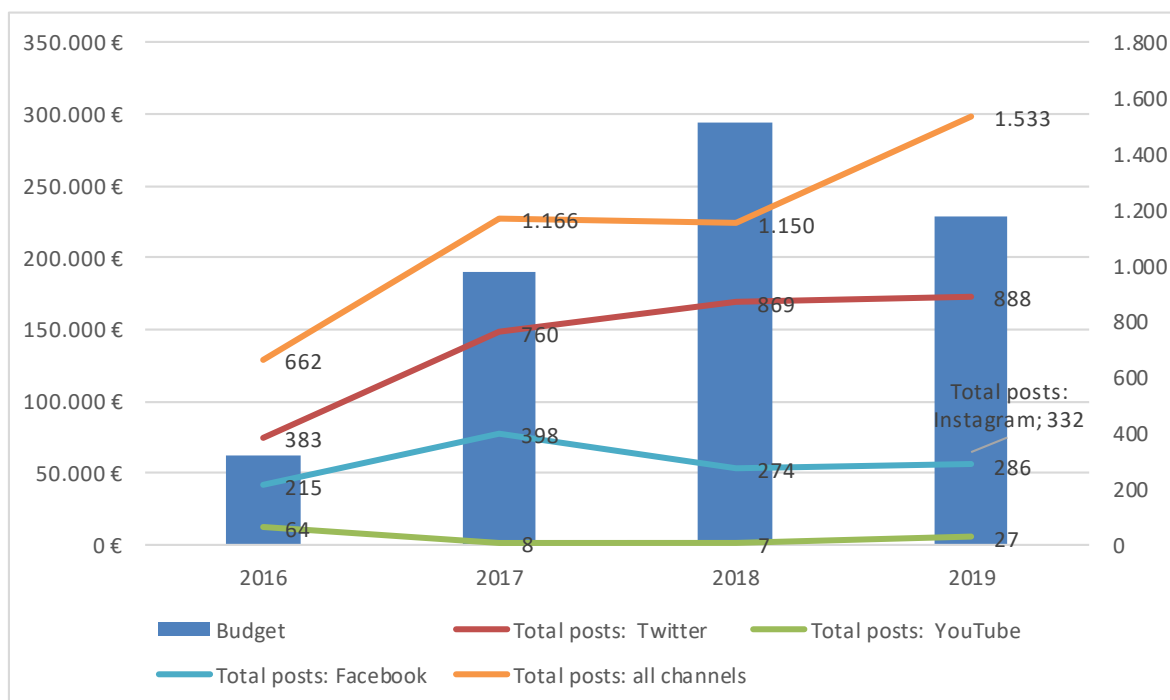
The number of posts published on DG AGRI social media also grew alongside the budget allocated for social media. It must also be noted that the launch of a new DG AGRI Instagram account in 2019 did not increase social media costs. Thus, alongside the

⁶⁰ This constitutes 60% of total graphic design costs (which stood at EUR 170, 000), the share that DG AGRI estimates was spent on social media activities.

⁶¹ This constitutes 60% of total graphic design costs (which stood at EUR 140, 000), the share that DG AGRI estimates was spent on social media activities.

growing budget, the presence of DG AGRI on social media has also expanded. At the same time, similar levels of reach and engagement were maintained on existing social media platforms between 2018 and 2019, despite a reduction in the budget allocated for the promotion of social media posts.

Figure 57. Growth of social media budget and number of posts

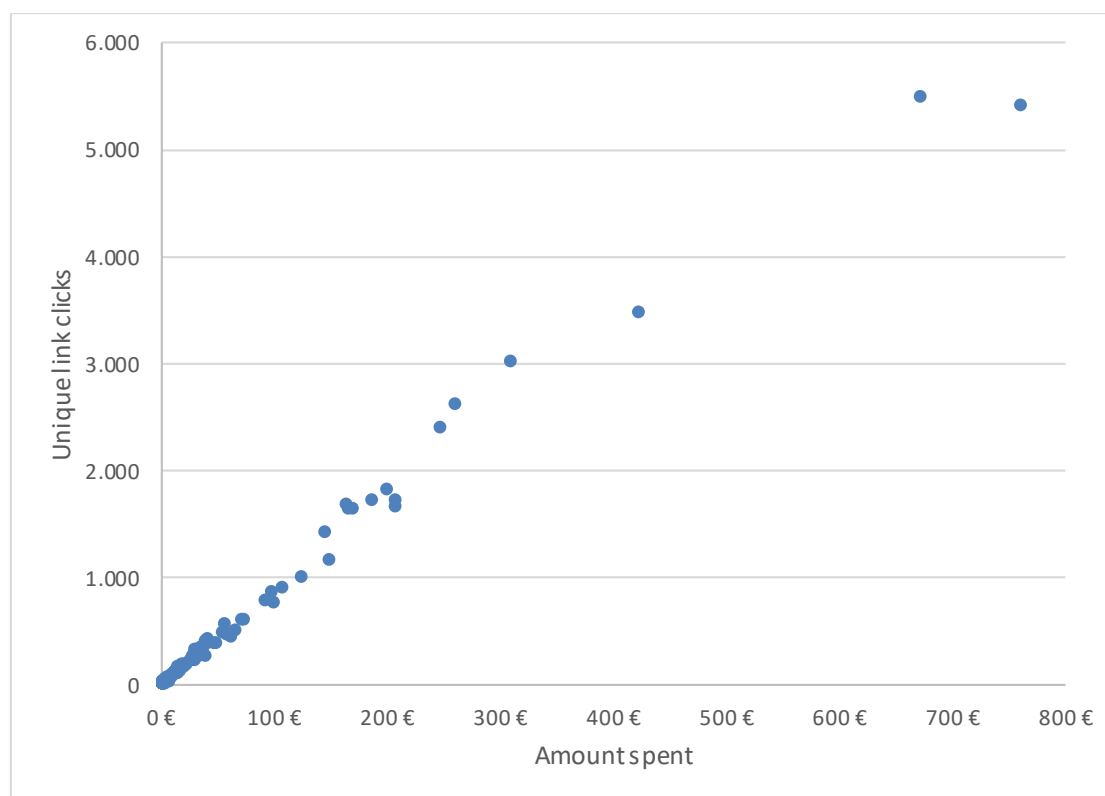


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI and DG AGRI annual reports.

Efficiency of social media campaigns

The two campaigns assessed for the case study on social media – the Teachers' Resource Pack and the campaign on GIs – demonstrate efficient use of paid advertising. The Teachers' Resource Pack campaign was implemented on Facebook and comprised ads targeted at teachers across Europe (and, to some extent, outside Europe). The GI campaign, meanwhile, ran on both Facebook and Twitter, and aimed to inform the general public about products with GI labels. The campaign focused heavily on the use of audio-visual products, notably videos presenting the GIs. As illustrated on the following page, the more money that was spent on a particular ad, the greater the results that were achieved (in this case, unique link clicks).

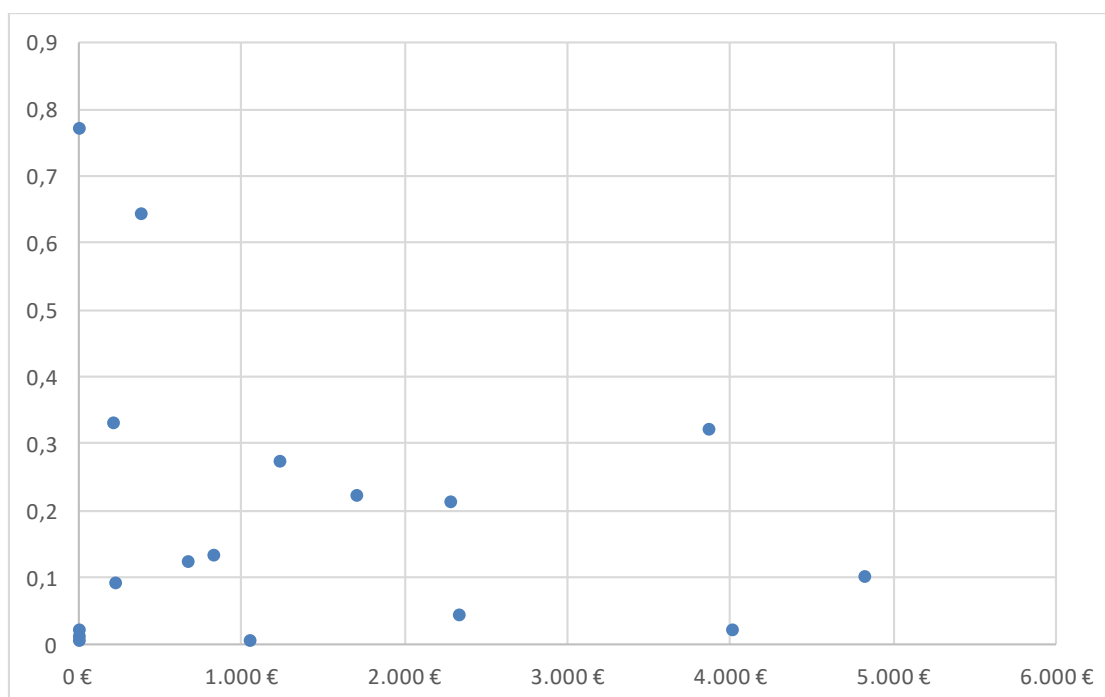
Figure 58. Relationship between money spent and unique link clicks in the context of promoting the Teachers' Resource Pack



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

There is no relationship between the amount spent and the cost per result (see figure on the next page), meaning that ads with different budgets performed similarly well. All cost-per-result indicators are below the cost-per-click average across all industries, which stands at EUR 1.45⁶². Nevertheless, ads that promoted videos tended to perform better, especially in the context of the GI campaign. Overall, the Teachers' Resource Pack campaign had a narrower range of cost per result (between EUR 0.09 and EUR 0.22) when compared with the GI campaign (between EUR 0.002 and EUR 0.77). This can be explained by the fact that the Teacher's Resource Pack had a very clear target audience, which makes the ad targeting and ensuring their relevance easier.

⁶² <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/02/28/facebook-advertising-benchmarks>

Figure 59. Amount spent on ads and cost per result: Teachers' Resource Pack and GI campaigns

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Comparison of the efficiency of DG AGRI and DG SANTE Twitter accounts

To assess the efficiency of DG AGRI social media, we also sought comparisons with other DGs of the Commission. We received data suitable for making limited comparisons from DG SANTE, which shared its figures for spending on social media advertising and impressions received. DG SANTE only maintains a social media presence on Twitter, via two separate accounts. The first account, @EU_Health (with almost 72 000 followers) focuses on matters relating to health protection, disease prevention and the strengthening of health systems. The second account, @Food_EU (almost 29 000 followers) focuses on issues relating to food, especially from the perspective of food safety. We compared spending and performance (in terms of total impressions) on these two accounts against DG AGRI's Twitter account (@EUAgri, around 74 000 followers)

A comparison of DG AGRI's spending on social media and the total impressions gained with those of DG SANTE shows room for improvement for DG AGRI. DG AGRI spent EUR 46 550 and EUR 20 000 for ads on Twitter and Facebook in 2018 and 2017, respectively, while DG SANTE spent EUR 60 000 (2018) and EUR 20 000 (2017) on ads on its two Twitter accounts. The combined impression count for both DG SANTE's accounts (and even the @EU_Health account on its own) is larger than that of DG AGRI. However, DG AGRI's Twitter performs better than DG SANTE's @Food_EU account, whose thematic scope is more comparable with the topics presented on DG AGRI's Twitter. The comparatively better performance of the @EU_Health account in 2017 and 2018 may be partly explained by the underlying importance to Europeans of health issues. According to the most recent Eurobarometer, health and social security ranked

as the second most important issue faced by Europeans at the time the survey was conducted in 2019⁶³, making targeting easier due to the relevance of the subject.

Table 14. Comparison of DG AGRI and DG SANTE Twitter accounts

	@EUAgri		@EU_Health	@Food_EU	DG SANTE accounts combined	
	Impressions	Spending on social media advertising (Twitter and Facebook combined)	Impressions			Spending on social media advertising (Twitter only)
2018	10 103 889	EUR 46 550	16 042 800	3 540 400	19 583 200	EUR 60 000
2017	4 791 750	EUR 20 000	10 900 000	1 735 800	12 635 800	EUR 20 000
	74.2K followers (12 August 2020)		71.8K followers (12 August 2020)	28.7K followers (12 August 2020)		

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI and DG SANTE.

Efficiency of DG AGRI social media: summary

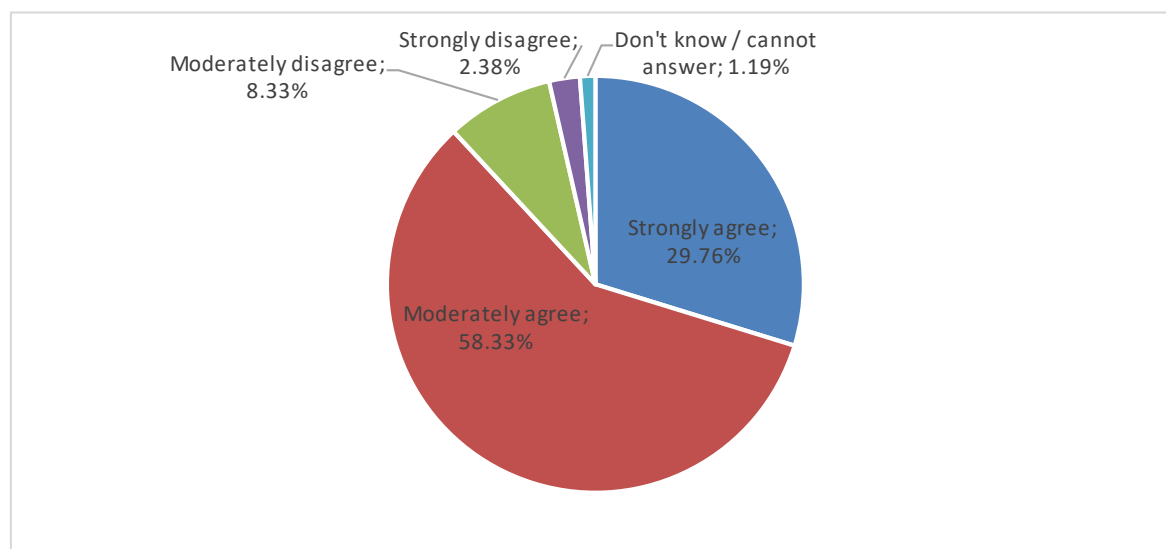
- There were **fluctuations in the social media budget** of DG AGRI during the evaluation period. Between 2016 and 2017, the budget grew mainly due to a substantial increase in the sum allocated to the promotion of social media costs. Between 2017 and 2018, this increase occurred due to the addition of an online community manager. Overall costs shrank again slightly in 2019, notably due to a reduction in the budget for social media promotion.
- In line with budget growth, DG AGRI's **social media presence expanded** (in terms of the number of posts).
- The campaigns analysed for the case studies (the Teachers' Resource Pack and GI campaign) **performed efficiently**, with the cost per result remaining below the average across all industries.
- A comparison of DG AGRI's Twitter and Facebook accounts with the two Twitter accounts of DG SANTE shows scope for improving the cost-effectiveness of DG AGRI's Twitter. While it performs better than the DG SANTE Twitter account that focuses on food safety, DG AGRI's Twitter receives fewer impressions than the DG SANTE account focusing on health.

⁶³ European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 92, Public Opinion in the European Union*, 2019, p.18.

6.2.3. Relevance of social media: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)

DG AGRI's social media was deemed relevant by most of those who follow it, based on the results of the main survey and the interviews. The majority of the stakeholders surveyed (88.09%) agreed that the information provided by DG AGRI on social media was interesting. Those interviewed echoed this sentiment, noting that the posts they saw were interesting. Some interviewees, however, believed that more personal stories about farmers could make the content of social media even more interesting, and in particular more relevant to the general public.

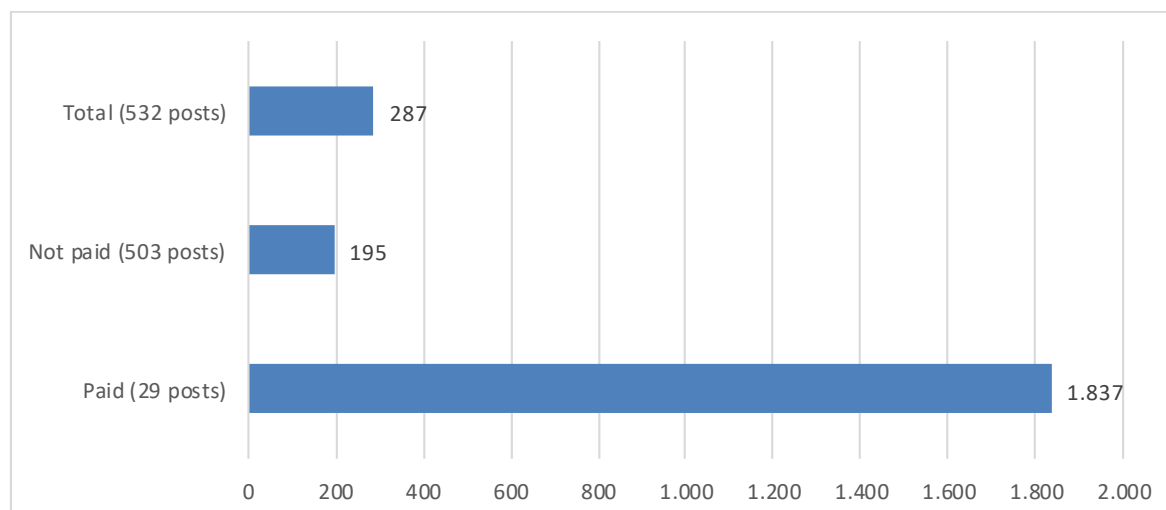
Figure 60. "The information from DG AGRI on social media was interesting" (n=84)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

The relevance of DG AGRI's social media content can also be judged from the amount of negative feedback received. Data from DG AGRI's Facebook shows that the share of users who saw the DG's posts on screen and gave negative feedback is extremely small (below 0.01%).

Figure 61. Negative feedback on DG AGRI Facebook posts (January 2018-December 2019)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Relevance of DG AGRI social media: summary

- **DG AGRI social media was regarded as relevant by those who follow it.** Around 88% of stakeholders surveyed found the information on social media interesting; most of the interviewees who follow DG AGRI social media also agreed.
- Some of the stakeholders interviewed believed that **more personal stories from farmers** could increase the relevance of the social media content, especially for the general public.
- The **limited amount of negative feedback** about DG AGRI's Facebook posts also shows relative relevance of the social media content to its audiences.

6.3. Website

6.3.1. Effectiveness of the website: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)

DG AGRI's web presence of has undergone significant changes during the period 2016-2020. These changes were a part of an extensive digital transformation within the Commission. In 2018, DG AGRI began transferring the content from its old website to a new class, 'Food, Farming, Fisheries', on the Commission's website. Under this class, material mainly from two other DGs – DG SANTE and DG MARE – is published together with the content from DG AGRI.

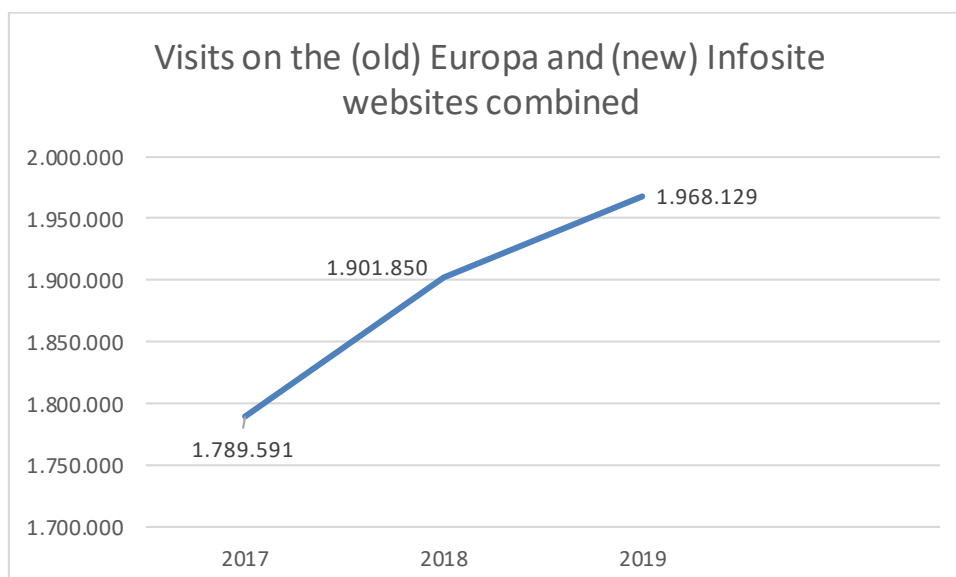
The digital transformation from the old DG AGRI website to the 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' class on the Commission's website was finalised at the end of 2019.⁶⁴ The old DG AGRI website was taken offline at the beginning of 2020, and only the new pages on the Commission's website now remain. The purpose of this digital transformation was to make the website more citizen-friendly and focused on serving the user.

6.3.1.1. Outputs of the website

The outputs relating to the DG AGRI website are the numbers of visits, visitors and page views. This information is taken from the Piwik Analytics⁶⁵ (Matomo) reports that were made available for the evaluator. No data are available for 2016 because a new tool to collect statistics was introduced in 2017 and no valuable comparison is possible. The previous tool, SAS, bases its data collection on server logs, and thus also takes into account visits by robots. In contrast, the new tool, Piwik Analytics, records only visits and page views by human users.

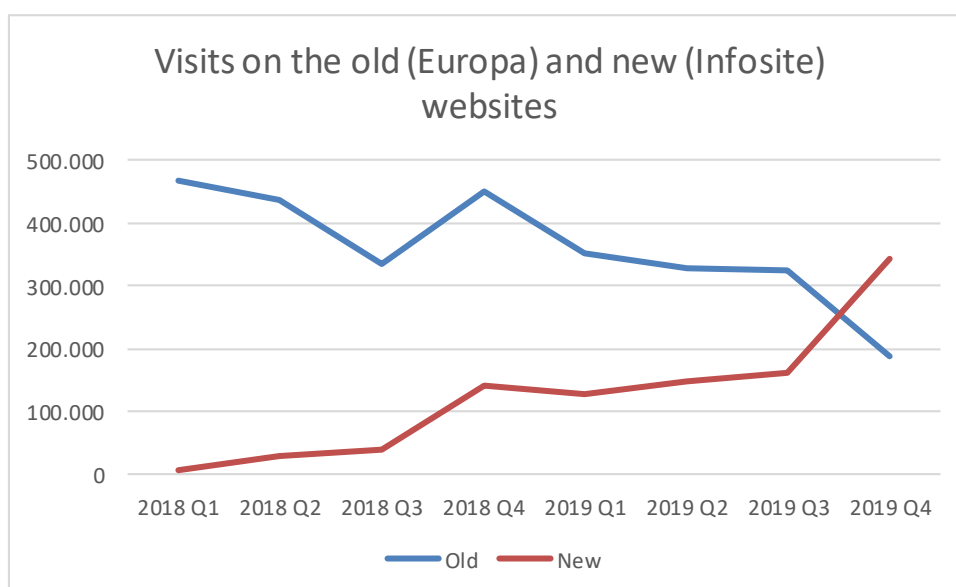
⁶⁴ European Commission, *DG AGRI 2020 External Communication Action Plan*, p. 9.

⁶⁵ The tool used at a corporate level to monitor the Commission's website traffic.

Figure 62. Number of visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (combined)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on website analytics data provided by DG AGRI.

Analytics data show a slow but steady increase in *visits* from 2017 to 2019, as can be seen in the figure above. The overall rise in visits over the two years to both websites combined was 178 538. This increase occurred during the process of replacing the old website with the new one, with visits to the old site decreasing and those to the new pages increasing. While in 2019 the old website was still visited more often (1.19 million visits vs 0.78 million), it is clear that the new website rapidly gained popularity and even surpassing the old website during the final quarter of 2019. In the first month of 2020, the new website again was visited more often than the old one. Bearing in mind that the old website has now been taken offline, it is to be expected that the new website will gain even more popularity in 2020. The graph below demonstrates the change in overall traffic to both websites.

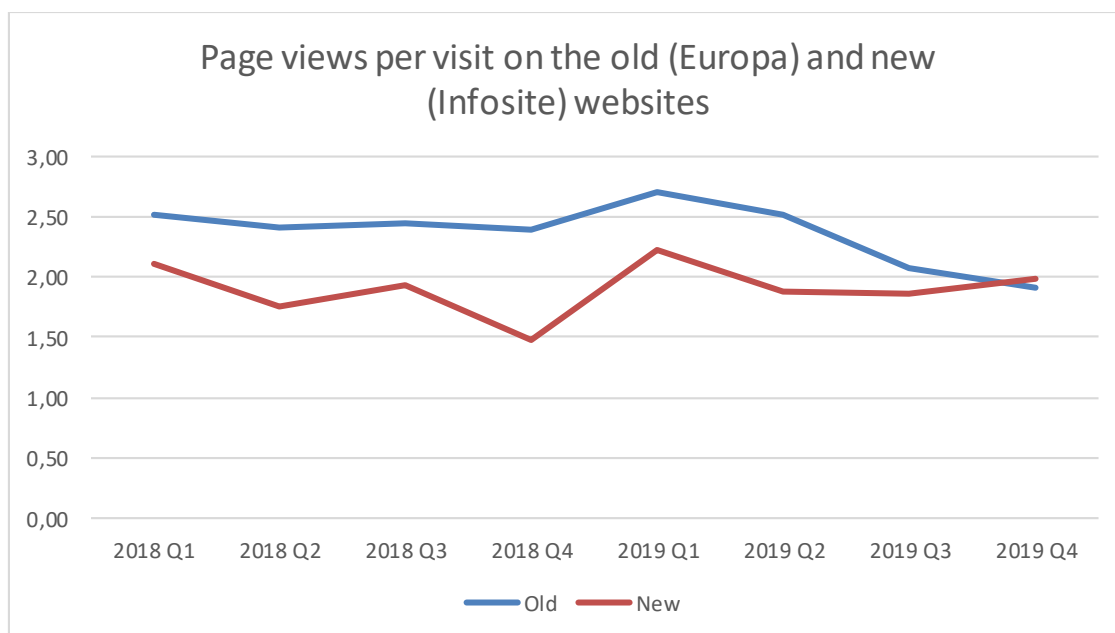
Figure 63. Number of visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (separate)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on website analytics data provided by DG AGRI.

The change-over in the popularity of the two websites can also be seen in other metrics.

The graphs for unique visitors and pageviews look almost identical to the graph above. The number of *unique visitors* to the old website decreased from 322 056 in Q4 2018, to 146 683 in Q4 2019 – while unique visitors to the new website increased from 111 821 in Q4 2018 to 268 567 in Q4 2019. Similarly, the number of *page views* on the old website decreased from 1.08 million in Q4 2018 to 358 195 in Q4 2019, while page views on the new website increased from 207 050 in Q4 2018 to 679 241 in Q4 2019.

Figure 64. Number of page views per visit on the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (separate)

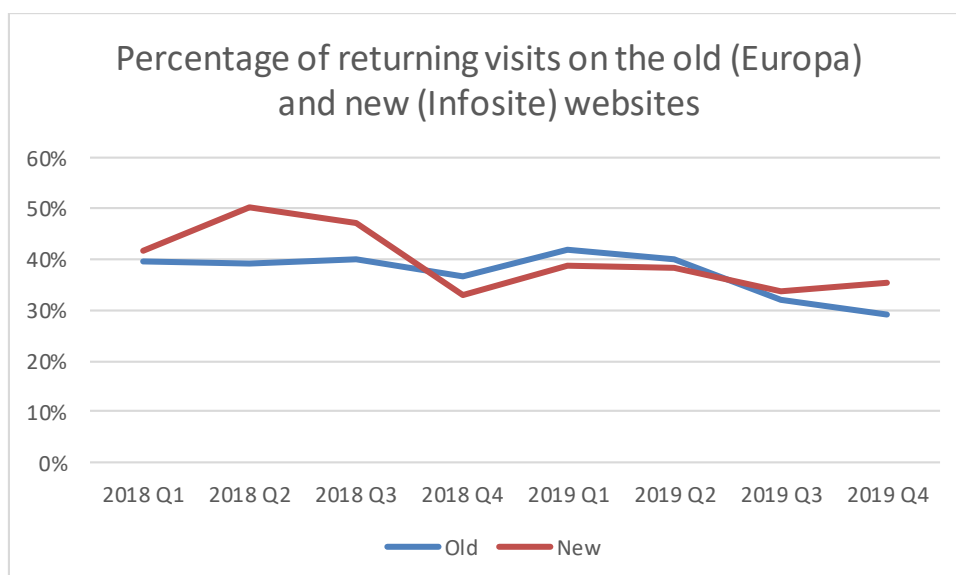


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on website analytics data provided by DG AGRI.

As can be seen from the figure above, the number of page views per visit on the old website was always higher than for the new website. However, it steadily decreased in 2019, and in the last quarter of the year, for the first time, the new website received more page views per visit. This trend can be attributed to the fact that, over time, users became acquainted with the old website and did not need to navigate the website for long before finding what they were looking for. It may also be because the new web presence contains fewer pages. Interviews with stakeholders support the former explanation, with many expressing a preference for the old website. In addition, some respondents to the website survey left comments specifically saying that they found the old website more comfortable to access. While this may indicate a problem, it should also be noted that the old website might appear more user-friendly to stakeholders and DG AGRI staff only because they got used to it over time.

6.3.1.2. Results for the website

Web analytics reports also show that both old and new website had similar percentages of *returning visits* in 2019, only achieving a more notable difference in the last quarter of the year, when this figure dropped to 29.1% for the old website (a steady decrease throughout the year) while remaining at 35.4% for the new website (an increase from the previous quarter).

Figure 65. Percentage of returning visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (separate)

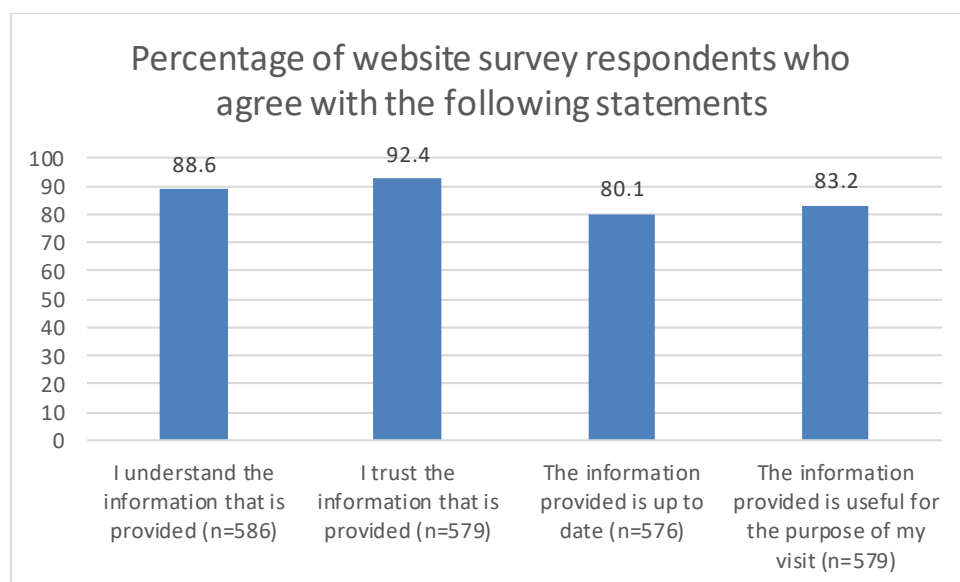
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on website analytics data provided by DG AGRI.

While the desired percentage of returning visitors depends on the purpose of a website, a number higher than 30% is generally perceived as a positive result, indicating that the website is “publishing engaging content”⁶⁶. An increase in returning visits to the new website in the last quarter of 2019 also shows that the users are at least trying to familiarise themselves with the new website, rather than abandoning it.

Most users of the Commission’s new website are satisfied with its **content**. As depicted in the figure on the next page, 83.2% of respondents to the website survey agreed that the information provided is *useful* for the purpose of their visit⁶⁷, 88.6% agreed that they *understand* the information that is provided, and 92.4% agreed that they *trust* the information that is provided. A slightly lower – but still very high – number of website survey respondents (80.1%) agreed that the information provided is up to date. Many stakeholders participating in interviews and usability tests also mentioned that the website is comprehensive and contains a lot of useful information.

⁶⁶ Cheng, R., ‘How Loyal Are Your Customers? This Metric Has the Answer’, Contently, 2015, available at: <https://contently.com/2015/08/18/how-loyal-are-your-customers-this-metric-has-the-answer/>

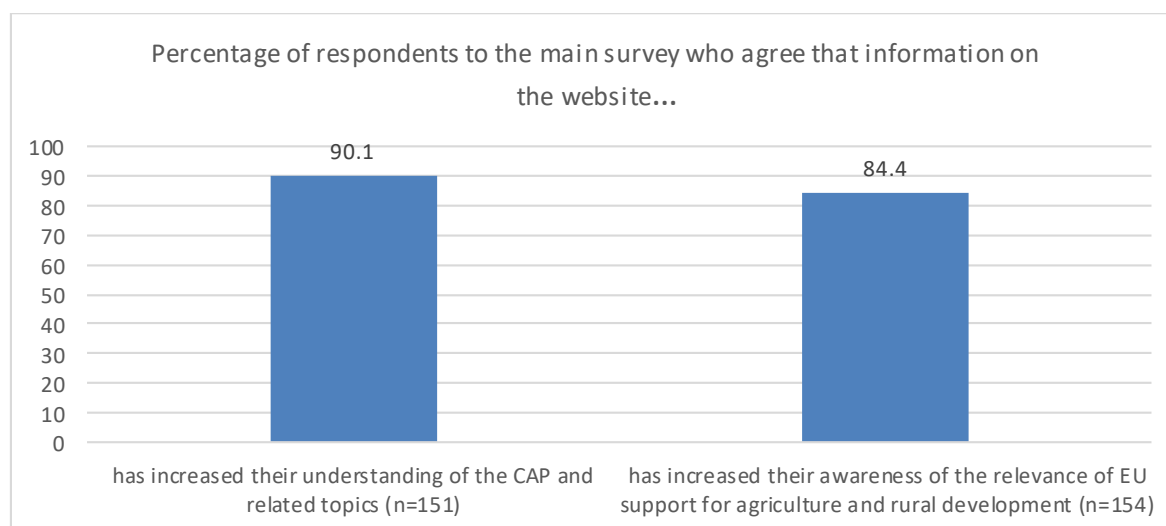
⁶⁷ Interestingly, respondents to the website survey who came via a pop-up (instead of e-mail campaign) were slightly less satisfied with its content: only 78.2% of them selected the option that the information provided is useful for the purpose of their visit.

Figure 66. Percentage of website survey respondents who agree with the statements about the contents of the website

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the website survey.

The fact that such a high percentage of users find the information provided on the website understandable corresponds with the Commission's objective of making the website more citizen-friendly. However, making the content attractive to citizens could make it unattractive to more knowledgeable stakeholders who require more specific information. Some of the stakeholders interviewed mentioned that the new website is too generic for them.

Respondents to the main survey who had used the website were asked several questions about it. Of these, 90.1% agreed that it had increased their understanding of the CAP and related topics, and 84.4% agreed that it had increased their awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development. These results are presented in the figure below.

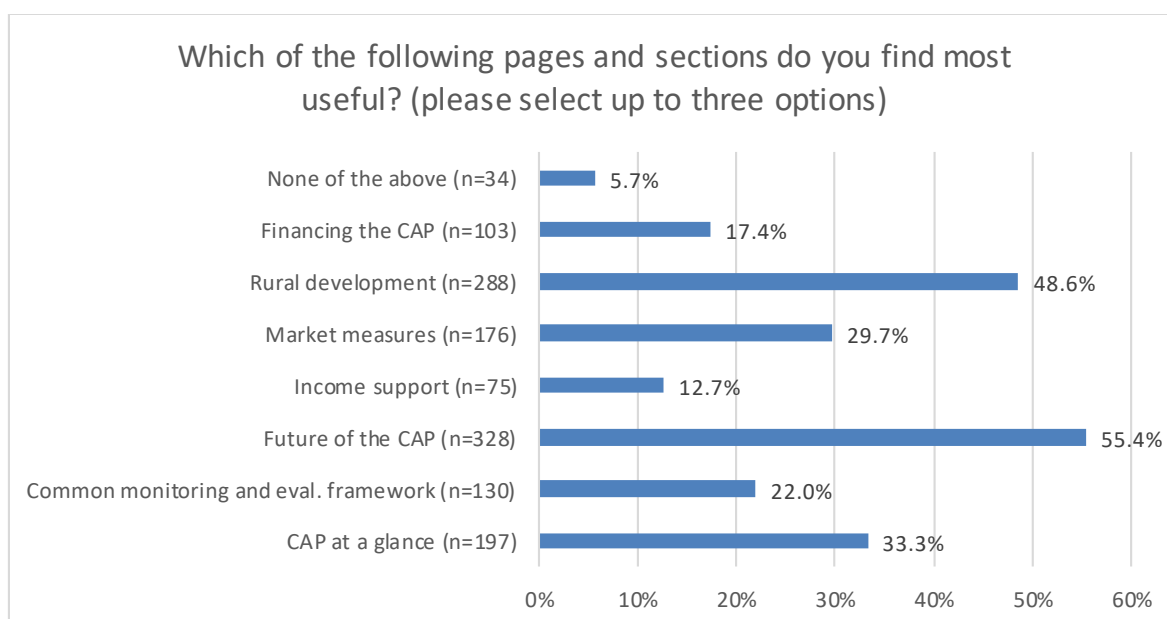
Figure 67. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who agree with the statements about the website

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

In addition, 93.4% of respondents from the main survey who had used the website agreed that they *intend to use the website in the future*. This intention shows the importance of the content that is provided on the website, and corresponds with the fact that most users trust this information. As indicated by interviewees, the information on the website is “trustworthy” when compared with other sources. However, some still thought that it was biased (did not provide information on more critical aspects of the CAP).

Respondents to the website survey indicated that out of all the sections and pages published under the ‘Common agricultural policy’ section, the pages they perceived as the most *useful* were the ‘Future of the CAP’ page (chosen by 55.4% of respondents); the ‘Rural development’ page (selected by 48.6% of respondents); and the ‘CAP at a glance’ page (chosen by 33.3% of respondents). Of the pages related to the CAP pillars, the ‘Rural development’ page was much more popular (48.6%) than the others: ‘Market measures’ page was selected by 29.7% of respondents, while ‘Income support’ was selected by 12.7%.

Figure 68. Percentage of the website survey respondents who selected each of the pages or sections as the most useful



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

The results above indicate that the content of the website is perceived positively by its users. All content-related questions (results indicators) from both the website survey and the main survey received rates of positive responses above the 70% benchmark. While most stakeholders were satisfied with the content, some participants in the main survey, interviews and usability testing suggested several ways to improve it. The most often mentioned request was to include more specific information about each Member State on various topics. Another request voiced by some participants was to make the content more engaging – including more pictures, infographics and videos. The content was described as “cold” and “bureaucratic” by some of these respondents. Also, some usability testing participants indicated that they would like to see more news under each section of the website instead of static “Wikipedia-style information”. Similar opinions were voiced by some website survey respondents who said they wanted more up-to-date data and information.

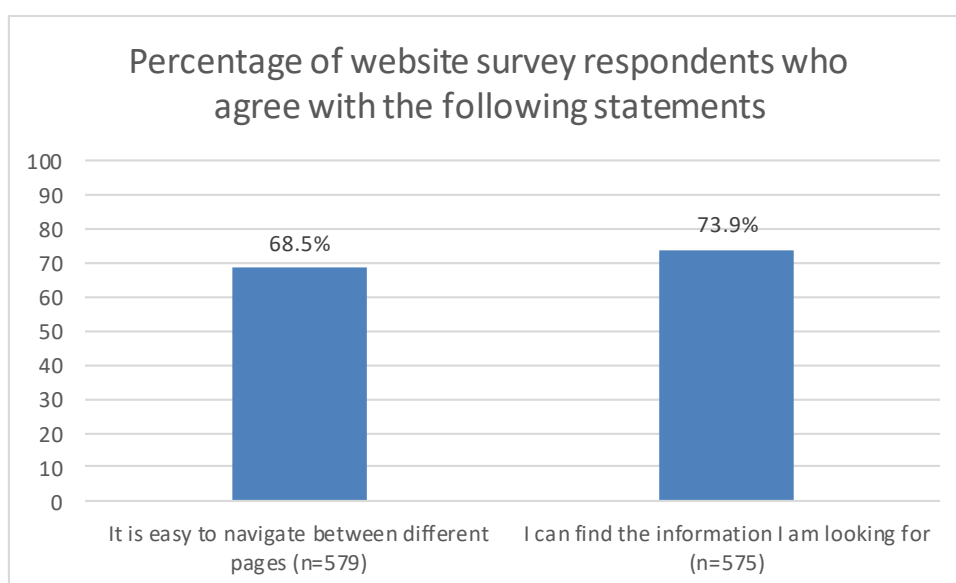
While the content of the website is perceived positively, users of the website identified

several problems with its **usability**. These problems can be distinguished into three types: navigation problems (the information architecture of the website), language problems (the translation of the website), and search problems (the search function on the website and optimisation for external search engines).

Website survey respondents identified navigation problems. Only 68.5% of them indicated that they found it easy to navigate between pages – a number that is below the 70% benchmark. Also, only 73.9% of them reported that they could find the information they were looking for⁶⁸. While this number exceeds the 70% benchmark, it still indicates a problem, given that more than one out of every four visitors must leave the website without finding what they wanted. These results are presented in the figure below.

When asked “what is the one thing we can improve?”, many respondents to the website survey indicated navigation-related aspects such as making the website more intuitive, more straightforward, clearer, and simply easier to navigate.

Figure 69. Percentage of website survey respondents who agree with the statements about the organisation of the website

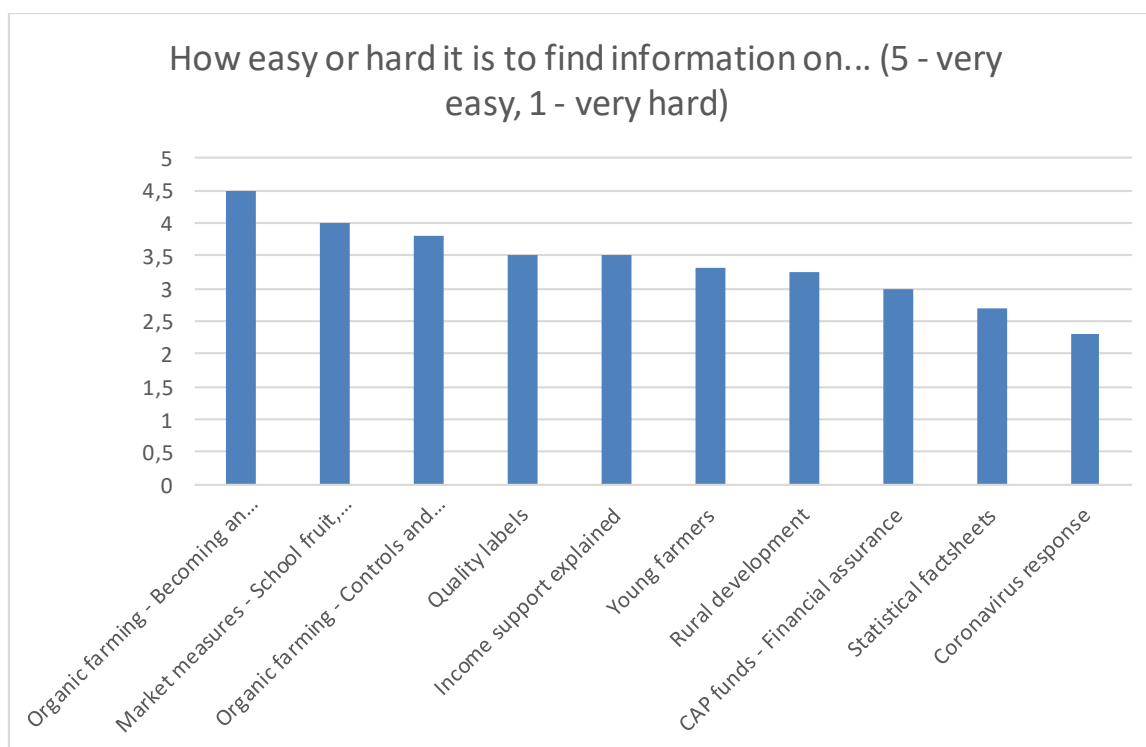


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the website survey.

Problems relating to navigation were most visible during the usability testing exercise. When describing their overall experience of using the website, most participants in these tests stated that some information is hard to find. To solve this problem, the users suggested that the website needs a visible sitemap showing all links to all the pages, or that the site might even benefit from changes to the information architecture. Some respondents to the website survey also made both of these suggestions. After completing each task, participants in the usability testing were asked to rate the task on a scale from one to five, referring to how easy or hard it was. The results of these ratings are presented in the figure on the next page.

⁶⁸ Respondents to the website survey who came via a pop-up (instead of e-mail campaign) were slightly less satisfied with its navigation: 67.7% indicated that it was easy to navigate between pages, while only 70.2% indicated that they could find the information they were looking for.

Figure 70. Ratings given by usability testing participants for each page on how easy it was to find it (sample size varies from 2 to 7)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the usability testing exercise.

Most respondents were positive about the ability to find pages in the 'Organic farming' section: both 'Becoming an organic farmer' and 'Controls and enforcement' were not deemed hard to find. While most respondents rated positively their experience finding the 'School fruit, vegetables and milk scheme' section, many of them felt that this section belongs more to the topic of food than to the topic of market measures.

The 'Quality labels' section was also rated more positively than negatively rated by participants. However, many of them indicated that it was not clear under which of the interactive sections it could be found: 'Origin and traceability', 'Certification', 'Labelling and standards' – all three were thought to be similar and therefore easy to confuse, especially the latter two. Some respondents suggested merging the 'Certification' and 'Labelling and standards' pages because the latter contains similar wording to quality labels (both includes word 'label').

'Income support explained', 'Young farmers', 'Rural development programmes', and 'Financial assurance' were also rated moderately – between 3 and 3.5. Three out of these four pages and sections belong to the 'Common agricultural policy' section of the website. When navigating the website (without using an internal or external search engine), it was not always clear to users that the 'Common agricultural policy' link under 'Key policies' section contained as much information as it actually does. This indicates that some users are probably missing the information that can be found there.

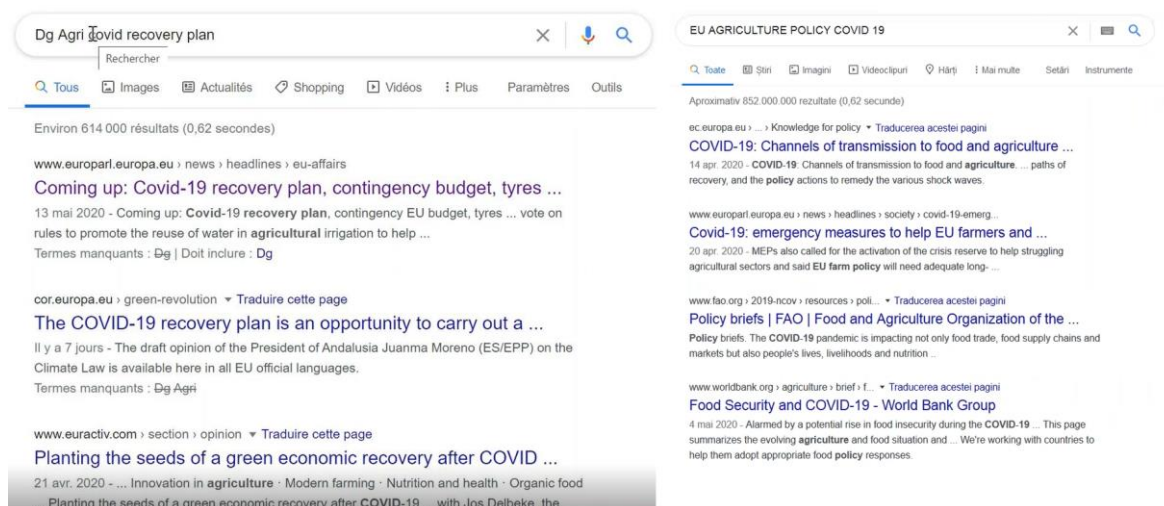
Participants were least satisfied with their experience of trying to find statistical factsheets and the 'Coronavirus response' page. Many of them suggested creating more links to the statistical factsheets on the website, particularly on the 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' main page, the 'Facts and figures' section, and the 'Agri-food Data Portal'. Some also suggested changing the name, regarding 'factsheets' as an ambiguous word. For instance, one participant suggested using the term 'data' somewhere in the title;

another suggested including words 'by country'. Regarding the 'Coronavirus response' page, the participants proposed removing it from the topic of 'Farming' and making this information more visible.

Search was another aspect of the website's usability that was criticised by stakeholders. One major issue voiced by many usability testing participants was that the website's search engine produced a large number of results, making it difficult to choose the right pages. Also, the top results were not always the most relevant ones, e.g. displaying information dating from the 2000s when the users searched for information on organic farming. Similar problems with the internal search engine were expressed in interviews and by respondents to the website survey. Another drawback of the internal search engine is its dependence on the language in which the website is being viewed. This meant that in some cases, users searched for CAP-related keywords in their native languages, but ended up receiving zero results because the website was set to English on their device.

Many interviewees also reported trying to access content from the website via external search engines. Some first tried to navigate the website but found it hard and so turned to Google instead. Some started with Google and then went on to browsing the website directly. It is clear that search engine optimisation is essential to ensure that users find what they are looking for. Improvements are still needed – some respondents mentioned that the website needs to be better optimised for external search engines, as they did not always end up on the right pages. This problem was also witnessed during usability tests: e.g. participants looking for the 'Coronavirus response' page searched for "Dg Agri covid recovery plan" and "EU AGRICULTURE POLICY COVID 19" using Google, but were still unable to find the relevant page (see figure below).

Figure 71. Examples of search queries indicating the need for search engine optimisation



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the usability testing exercise.

Another website usability issue relates to language accessibility. Many usability testing participants noted that the website has not been fully translated, and indicated this as a problem. However, the respondents agreed that in those cases where pages have been translated, the quality of the translation is excellent. Despite this, language-related limitations make it impossible for some national stakeholders to access, read and understand certain information on the website.

6.3.1.3. Impacts of the website

The website and the information on it have a positive impact on the way that stakeholders view the CAP. This claim is supported by both the main survey and the website survey: 66% of respondents to the main survey who have used the website, and 63.1% of the website survey respondents agreed that they *view the CAP more positively* because of the information on the DG AGRI website. 65.8% of respondents to the website survey agreed that they *view the European Union more positively* after visiting the website.

While none of the aforementioned impact-related indicators exceeds the 70% benchmark, they still demonstrate a relationship between visiting the website and viewing the CAP, and the European Union, more positively. Although this impact is not strong (the benchmark was not met), it still means that more than six out of ten users who took part in this evaluation report that the information on the website positively affected their perceptions.

Teachers' Resource Pack: feedback from usability tests with teachers

One of the case studies conducted for this evaluation focused on the electronic version of the Teachers' Resource Pack. The Pack was a popular item on the website – it was downloaded by 8 193 users in 2018, and by 7 486 users during the first eight months of 2019.

All five teachers who took part in the usability testing agreed that the Pack could help students to better understand food and farming in the European Union. When asked about their overall experience of using the pack, the teachers used expressions such as “nice”, “user-friendly”, “colourful”, “attractive”, “great”, “interesting”, and “good inspiration”. However, some teachers did not agree that the students would view farming and agriculture more positively because of the Pack. Their opinions indicated similar reasons: that the Pack needs to develop a greater connection to the children, and to provide more ways to connect children with farmers. Also, one teacher did not agree that the students would view the European Union more positively after using the Pack. However, this teacher felt that the students might feel a “more positive connotation with something which is very abstract to them and has not very much meaning”. He added that this would be a positive aspect, and could become one of ways in which students begin to understand the European Union. Aside from these comments, the majority of the teachers agreed that the pack would help students to view both farming and the European Union more positively.

While the teachers were also satisfied with the various elements of the Pack, they suggested some ideas for improvement. To make the Pack more appealing, the teachers suggested working on the name of the Pack to ensure that it is relevant to a greater number of teachers by focusing on food, society or the environment instead of farming. In addition, some teachers suggested listing teaching disciplines somewhere at the beginning of the Pack or even on its cover to ensure that teachers did not dismiss the Pack as irrelevant because of its focus on farming.

To improve the Pack itself, some teachers suggested making its structure clearer by adding page numbers to the contents page and documents, or by creating “something like a sitemap” – a more graphical overview of all the materials and modules included. They also suggested improving the ‘Overview for teachers’ document by moving the lessons plans closer to the top of the document and minimising the information in the ‘CAP facts’ section. Some teachers expressed the

view that the current arrangement felt more like promotional material instead of what teachers want to see. It was suggested that the 'CAP facts' section could be shortened to a footnote and an item in the glossary section.

All of the teachers were satisfied with the quality of the animated clip and the slideshow about farming. Some teachers said that the video is too long and that it could be chopped into smaller clips, each focusing on a different topic. A similar suggestion was voiced about the slideshow: to divide it into three slideshows, one for each topic: food, environment, countryside. Also, some teachers thought that too much time in the video was spent focusing on generational renewal, as children are not interested in the fact that there are not enough young farmers. Also, some teachers noticed several words that seemed too difficult for the children, both in the video and the slideshow: e.g. venture, lambing.

The map was also evaluated positively by the teachers. Some teachers had only one suggestion: that some additional information about the contents of the map (e.g. the main export partners for each product) would be useful, because it would allow teachers to better explain what the map shows. It was suggested that this information could be printed on the back of the map or included as a separate document. It was also noted that it is unclear whether the area quoted on the map refers to the area of agricultural land, or to the total land area for each Member State.

All of the teachers were very positive about the modules included in the Pack. They emphasised the importance of the practical aspects of teaching. The main suggestion offered by teachers in relation to the modules was to introduce differentiation. While tasks in the worksheets or projects vary in terms of difficulty, the teachers would prefer them to be marked according to age group (e.g. 11-12, 14-15, etc.) or school type (e.g. vocational, pre-academia, etc.) for which they are most suitable.

Language-related issues were also noted throughout the Pack. One teacher noticed translation errors in the Dutch version of the Pack (e.g. "science" was translated to "natuurkunde", which means "physics"). Also, some teachers noticed links in the Pack, including the modules, that led to the English version of the website instead of the language the Pack was being used in.

Some teachers referred to equality and equal representation when commenting on the Pack. While, in the context of gender bias, one teacher was positive about the fact that "the boy was interested in fashion design" in the animated clip, another teacher noted that the crowd seen at the beginning of the clip consisted only of white people, and perceived it negatively.

Some teachers referred to the use of technology as a potential improvement to the Pack. One suggestion was to create an electronic version of the worksheets that enabled students to type into the document if they have it on their device in the classroom or at home.

Despite the suggestions mentioned above, all the teachers who participated in the study viewed the Pack positively and agreed that they would consider showing various elements of the Pack to their students. One teacher said that reading the Pack while participating in the study had inspired him.

Effectiveness of the website: summary

- Most users were **satisfied with the quality** of the website and **agreed that it makes a positive impact** on their understanding and perception of the CAP. The majority of users agreed that they view the CAP and the European Union more positively after visiting the website.
- Users were **more satisfied with the content of the website than with its usability**. Improving the usability of the website could increase the positive perception of stakeholders still further, as they would be more likely to find the information they require.
- The main usability problems identified were **difficult navigation between pages, faulty search function on the website**, and **limited accessibility in various EU languages**.

6.3.2. Efficiency of the website: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6)

To evaluate the efficiency of DG AGRI website, we analysed the costs and benefits of this information measure. We focus our analysis on the years 2017-2019, as it is impossible to compare web analytics data from 2016, when different analytics software was used. We include both the old and new versions of DG AGRI's web pages in the analysis, because it is impossible to separate their costs during the period of digital transformation. Besides, it is easier to compare the costs of the full web presence of DG AGRI to the full web presence of other DGs. We present a summary of the data on DG AGRI website costs in the table below.

Table 15. Summary of DG AGRI website costs from 2016 to 2019

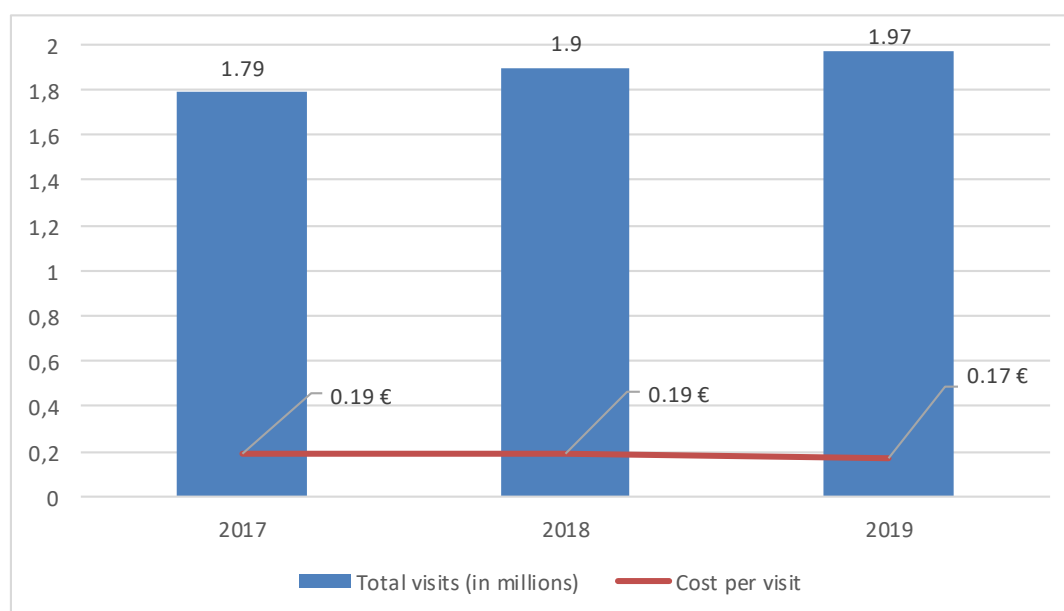
	Full-time equivalents (FTEs)	Sub-contracting costs	Other costs	Total costs
2019	0.4 team leader 4 Intramuros	Project manager, EUR 88 000 Online web editor, EUR 88 000 Webmasters/web developers (2), EUR 160 000	None	EUR 336 000
2018	0.4 team leader 3 intramuros	Senior online writers/web editors (2), EUR 200 000 Webmasters/web developers (2), EUR 160 000	None	EUR 360 000

	Full-time equivalents (FTEs)	Sub-contracting costs	Other costs	Total costs
2017	0.4 team leader 3 intramuros	Online writer/web editor, EUR 110 000 Web editor, EUR 64 000 Webmasters/web developers (2), EUR 160 000	None	334 000
2016	0.4 team leader 3 intramuros	Online writer/web editor, EUR 90 000 Webmasters/web developers (2), EUR 140 000	None	230 000

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI data, including annual reports on external communication action plans.

The analysis shows that the total number of visits to DG AGRI's website increased over time from 1.79 million in 2017 to 1.97 million in 2019, while the average cost per visit decreased from EUR 0.19 in 2017-2018 to EUR 0.17 in 2019. This suggests a slight increase in efficiency: reaching more people for a lower average cost. This trend can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 72. Comparison of total visits to the DG AGRI website (old and new versions combined) in millions, and the average cost per visit (2017 to 2019)



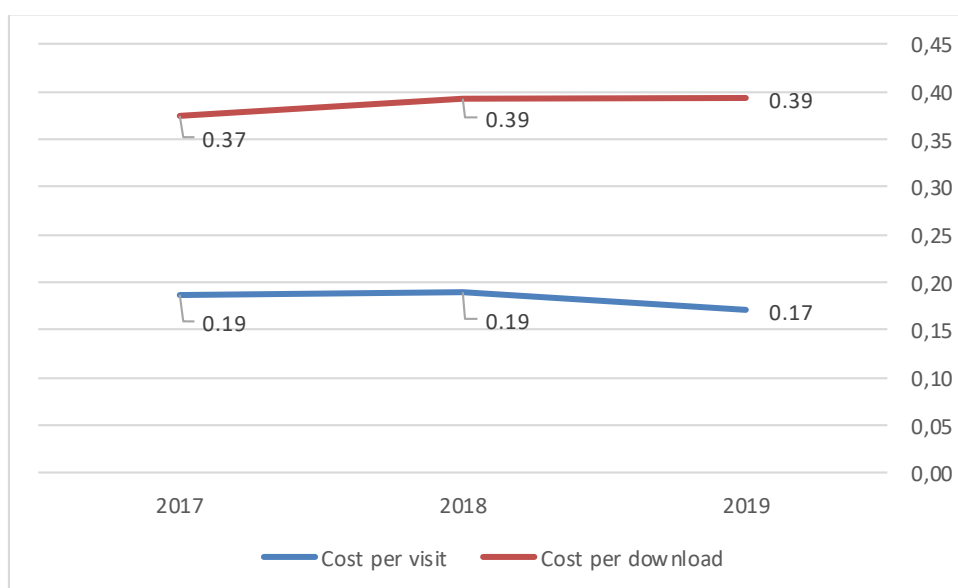
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on web analytics data and DG AGRI annual reports on

external communication action plans.

When analysing the changes in cost per visit and cost per download, we discovered that the overall results remained very steady throughout the years. The average cost per visit decreased slightly between 2017 and 2019, but the average cost per download increased by the same amount during the period. The figure below illustrates these trends.

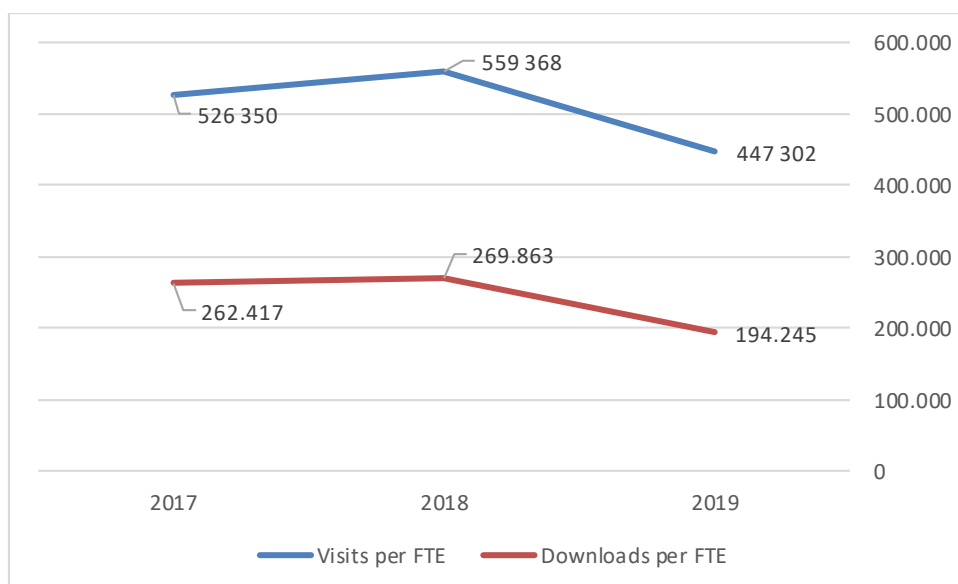
The increased cost per download comes from a change in the total number of downloads: these numbers reached a peak in 2018, but then declined in 2019. This fluctuation can be explained by the process of digital transformation, as well as the transferring of users to the new website, which has fewer pages and files. Despite this, the monthly number of downloads from the new website increased rapidly in the second half of 2019. Therefore, despite increasing cost during the evaluation period, it is very likely that the cost per download will decrease in the future as users become more familiar with the new website.

Figure 73. Comparison of cost per visit and cost per download on the DG AGRI website (old and new versions combined) from 2017 to 2019



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on web analytics data and DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

A different situation can be observed when analysing the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) allocated to work on the website in comparison to the total number of visits and downloads. While the number of visits per FTE and downloads per FTE slightly increased from 2017 to 2018, they dropped significantly in 2019. This decline is explained by the fact that between 2016 and 2018 three 'intramuros' worked on the website besides the team leader, then in 2019 this number increased to four. The figure that follows shows how this increase in personnel affected visits per FTE and downloads per FTE.

Figure 74. Comparison of visits per FTE and downloads per FTE in DG AGRI website (old and new version combined) from 2017 to 2019

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on web analytics data and DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

We also compared the efficiency of the DG AGRI website those maintained by similar DGs. For comparison, we chose DG MARE and DG SANTE – two other DGs which belong to the website class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries'. The table below presents the costs available to this evaluation.

Table 16. Total website costs incurred by DG AGRI, DG SANTE and DG MARE between 2016 and 2019

	DG AGRI	DG SANTE	DG MARE (estimated)
2019	EUR 336 000	EUR 700 000	EUR 200 000-220 000
2018	EUR 360 000	EUR 700 000	EUR 100 000-150 000
2017	EUR 334 000	EUR 700 000	EUR 350 000-400 000
2016	EUR 230 000	EUR 600 000	EUR 450 000-500 000

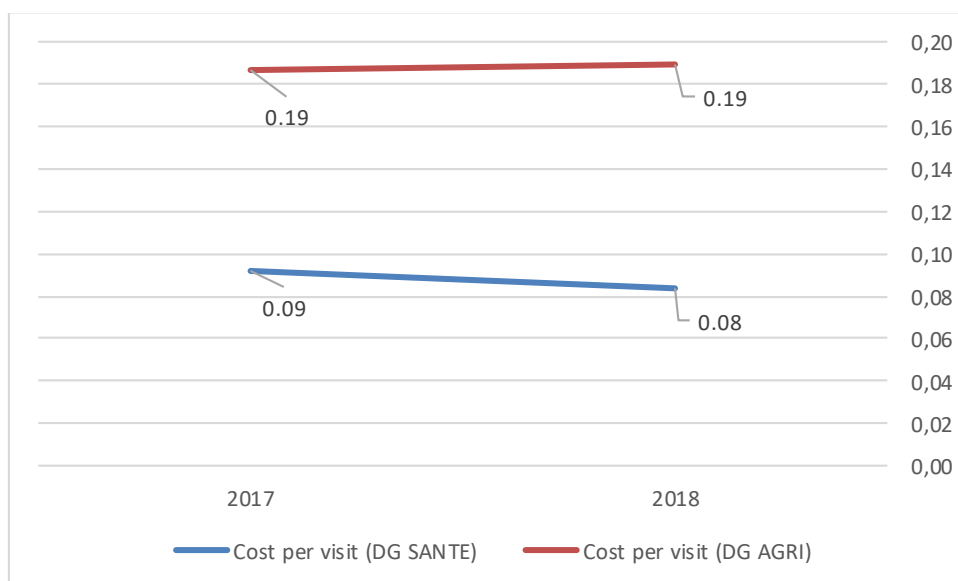
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on data provided by the European Commission.

A comparison of costs between DG AGRI and DG MARE shows that the two DGs incurred similar costs in relation to their websites. DG MARE incurred greater costs in 2016-2017, while DG AGRI did so in 2018-2019. This difference can be explained by the amount of work required for digital transformation: the content managed by DG AGRI contributes to a much larger part of the website class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' than the content managed by DG MARE. DG AGRI therefore required greater resources to complete the digital transformation in the latter period.

A comparison of costs between DG AGRI and DG SANTE shows that between 2016 and 2019, DG SANTE incurred much greater costs in relation to its web presence than did DG AGRI. This difference may be explained by the number of websites managed by DG SANTE: apart from providing input into the class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries', DG SANTE also manages two separate websites: 'Food Safety' and 'Public Health'. Also, DG SANTE counts two graphic designers as a cost relating to its website, while DG AGRI graphic designers are counted here as a cost relating to social media. Even when graphic designers are excluded (resulting in a total yearly cost of EUR 500 000 instead of EUR 700 000 in 2017-2019), the cost of DG SANTE's web presence is still higher than that of DG AGRI's web presence.

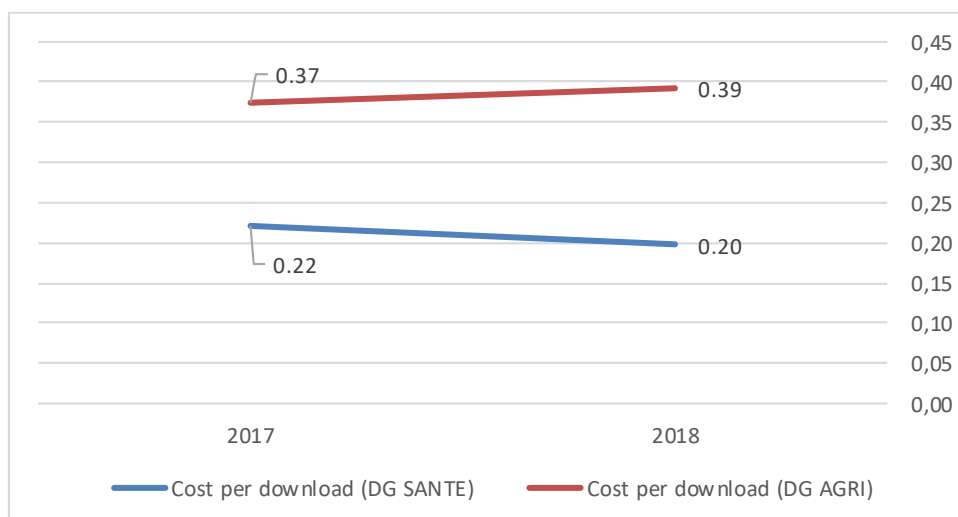
Two-year web analytics data received from DG SANTE allowed us to compare the cost per visit and cost per download between the two DGs: SANTE and AGRI. We excluded graphic designers from costs incurred on websites by both DGs because in both cases graphic designers were also working on other activities (e.g. social media). The comparison of cost per visit shows that DG SANTE managed to maintain a lower cost per visit (EUR 0.09 in 2017 and EUR 0.08 in 2018) than DG AGRI (EUR 0.19 in 2017-2018). These results are presented in the figure below.

Figure 75. Website cost per visit incurred by DG AGRI and DG SANTE



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on data provided by the European Commission.

Similarly, DG SANTE's cost per download was lower (EUR 0.22 in 2017 and EUR 0.20 in 2018) than that for DG AGRI (EUR 0.37 in 2017 and EUR 0.39 in 2018). These results are presented in the figure on the next page.

Figure 76. Website cost per download incurred by DG AGRI and DG SANTE

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on data provided by the European Commission.

These differences in cost per visit and cost per download DG AGRI and DG SANTE's websites may have occurred for various reasons: costs can occur elsewhere (e.g. social media campaigns driving traffic to the website), or visits and downloads can be increased by a particular topic that is very important or very interesting to citizens (e.g. health, in the case of DG SANTE). While the first explanation only partly applies in the case of the two DGs analysed (DG AGRI spends more on social media; however, DG SANTE attracts more impressions), the second appears more feasible: health is among the most pressing personal issues about which people look for information.

The analysis of full-time equivalents shows that DG SANTE spends more time than DG AGRI working on its web presence. The table below provides full data made available to the research team by both DG AGRI and DG SANTE. While DG AGRI allocated 3.4 FTEs to its website in 2016-2018 and 4.4 FTEs in 2019, DG SANTE allocated 7 FTEs from 2016 to 2019. This latter number includes two graphic designers who are excluded from the calculation of FTEs for the DG AGRI web presence. Even excluding its graphic designers, however, DG SANTE uses more human resources for its web presence (5 FTEs) than DG AGRI (3.4-4.4 FTEs).

Table 17. The allocation of full-time equivalents (FTEs) for websites at DG AGRI, DG SANTE and DG MARE between 2016 and 2019

	DG AGRI (FTEs)	DG SANTE (FTEs)	DG MARE (FTEs)
2019	4.4 (0.4 team leader, 4 intramuros)	5 (1 web writer/team manager, 3 web managers, 1 web writer)	0.6
2018	3.4 (0.4 team leader, 3 intramuros)	5 (1 web writer/team manager, 3 web managers, 1 web writer)	0.6
2017	3.4 (0.4 team leader, 3 intramuros)	5 (1 web writer/team manager,	0.6

	DG AGRI (FTEs)	DG SANTE (FTEs)	DG MARE (FTEs)
		3 web managers, 1 web writer)	
2016	3.4 (0.4 team leader, 3 intramuros)	5 (1 web writer/team manager, 3 web managers, 1 web writer)	0.6

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on data provided by the European Commission.

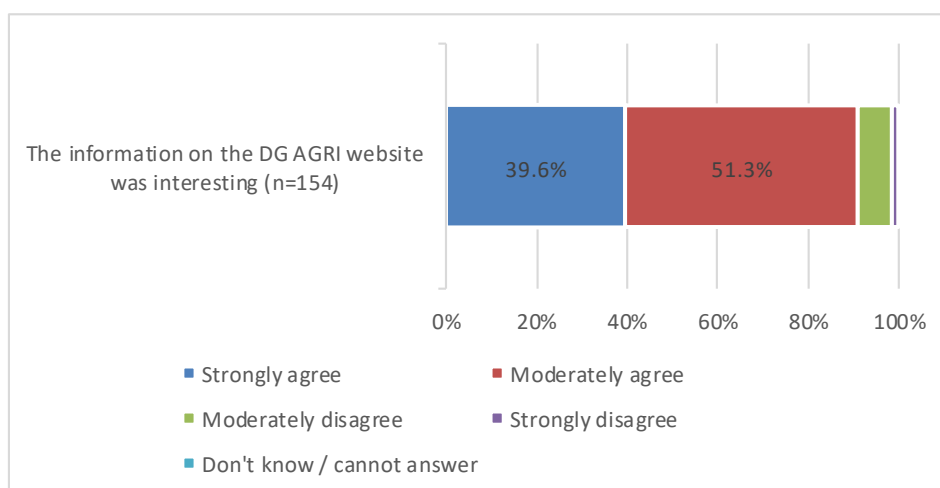
Summary

- The average cost per visit to the DG AGRI website is decreasing, indicating a positive trend towards efficiency.
- The average cost per download from the DG AGRI website is increasing, but this trend has been influenced by the process of digital transformation. Therefore, it should not be assessed negatively.
- DG AGRI allocates a similar amount of funds to its website as DG MARE, and less funds than DG SANTE. When compared in terms of cost per visit and cost per download, DG SANTE performs better than DG AGRI.

6.3.3. Relevance of the website: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)

Stakeholder consultations revealed that the website meets their needs to a great extent. As can be seen in the figure below, 90.9% of respondents to the main survey agreed that the information provided on the website was interesting (39.6% of them strongly agreed). This result is far above the 70% benchmark used for relevance indicators.

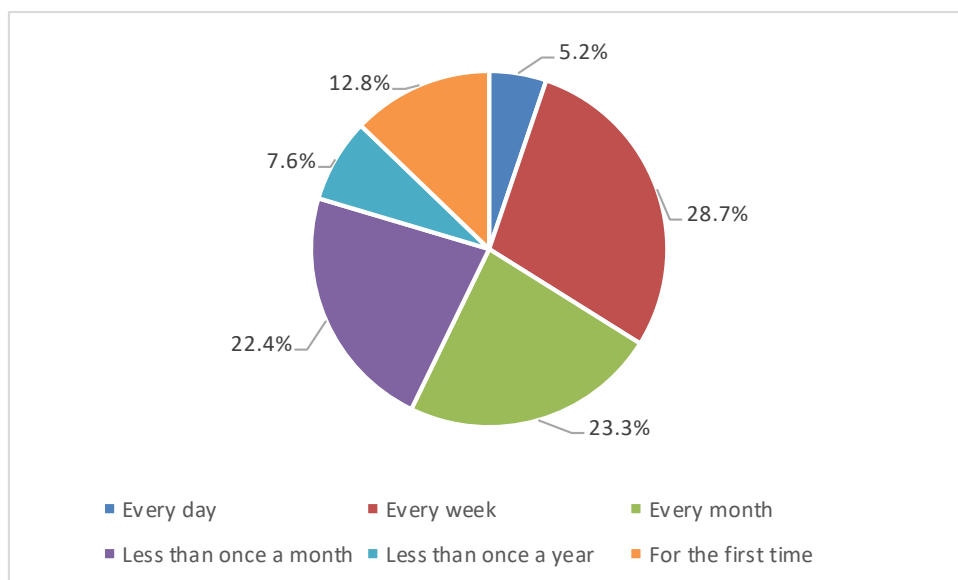
Figure 77. Percentage of respondents who agreed that the information on the DG AGRI website was interesting



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

Interviews with stakeholders also indicated the website's relevance: it is visited often, and respondents agreed that it contains a lot of information that is useful. The quantity of information provided is perceived positively by respondents, with the website being described as "exhaustive and complete". As with the effectiveness-related questions, respondents indicated that despite being relevant, the information is not always easy to find. Understandably, the vast amount of information provided by the website is among the reasons why it is not always easy to find something specific. In this case, the reason for the website being relevant is also the reason for it not being user-friendly. However, this shortcoming does not prevent users from visiting the website.

Figure 78. How often respondents visit the website's 'Common agricultural policy' section and its pages (n=593)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the website survey.

The website survey revealed that the majority of respondents visit the website's 'Common agricultural policy' section and its pages at least once a month. More than a quarter of respondents visited it at least every week. Detail on the frequency of visits is presented in the figure above. Most of the users surveyed reported visiting the section for work-related purposes (78.2% of respondents), as well as study-related purposes (17%). Only 4.7% of respondents selected 'Other' as an option, and many specified that they use the website for 'personal interest' or 'general knowledge'.

While most stakeholders are satisfied with the information provided on the website, one suggestion to make the site more relevant stands out: respondents would like to see more country-specific information, tailored to each Member State.

Summary:

- Stakeholder consultation revealed that most respondents find the information presented on the website relevant: both survey respondents and interviewees agreed that it was interesting and extensive. The information therefore meets the needs of target audiences.
- Most respondents visit the website at least once a month, and most of them visit for work-related purposes.

6.4. Events

6.4.1. Effectiveness: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)

In line with the external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020, DG AGRI hosts conferences and attends agri-food fairs as well as other large-scale events. Outputs, results and impacts from implementing this measure are presented in the sections below. These include a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the measure and the achievement of the KPIs.

6.4.1.1. Outputs of events

Each year, DG AGRI holds a number of major conferences – the 'EU Agricultural Outlook Conference' and one or two others, such as the 'Cork 2.0: European Conference on Rural Development' in 2016; 'The CAP, have your say!' in 2017; 'The Development of Plant Proteins in the European Union – Opportunities and Challenges' in 2018; and 'Forestry Conference' and 'African Union – EU Agricultural Ministers Conference' in 2019. These events were attended by more than 4 000 people. In addition, most of these events were streamed over the web, and hence reached an even wider audience. The 'EU Agricultural Outlook Conference' has become a key annual gathering of European stakeholders, providing an annual forum for consultation and discussion on the future of agriculture in Europe. The number of participants has increased gradually over the last five years, which the event's growing prominence and its establishment as a significant event for the agri-food sector (see the table on the following page).

DG AGRI also participates in the agri-food fairs. Each year between 2016 and 2019, DG AGRI attended 'Internationale Grüne Woche' in Berlin and 'Salon International de l'Agriculture' in Paris. In addition to these, the DG AGRI stand was present at a handful of other large-scale agri-food fairs, e.g. including 'Agrobalt', 'Welser Messe', 'Salone del Gusto', 'Agraria', 'Maamess fair', 'Santarem Agricultural fair', 'OKRA fair', 'Libramont fair' and 'Agro Show'. Due to the nature of these events, it is extremely challenging to assess how many people DG AGRI has reached through them in total. Estimates for the two fairs that DG AGRI attends every year are provided in the table on the next page.

While conferences and agri-food fairs are the main types of events held or attended by DG AGRI each year, it also organises or contributes to other events such as 'EU Open Days', kick-off meetings with grant beneficiaries, *ad hoc* workshops and seminars.

Three events have remained constant from 2016 to 2019, for which we provide a detailed overview in terms of the number of attendees and the reach of posts promoting them, in the table on the next page. To the extent that the existing data allows, a complete list of events held or attended by DG AGRI in the last five years, as well as a detailed breakdown of the participants by event, is provided on the next page.

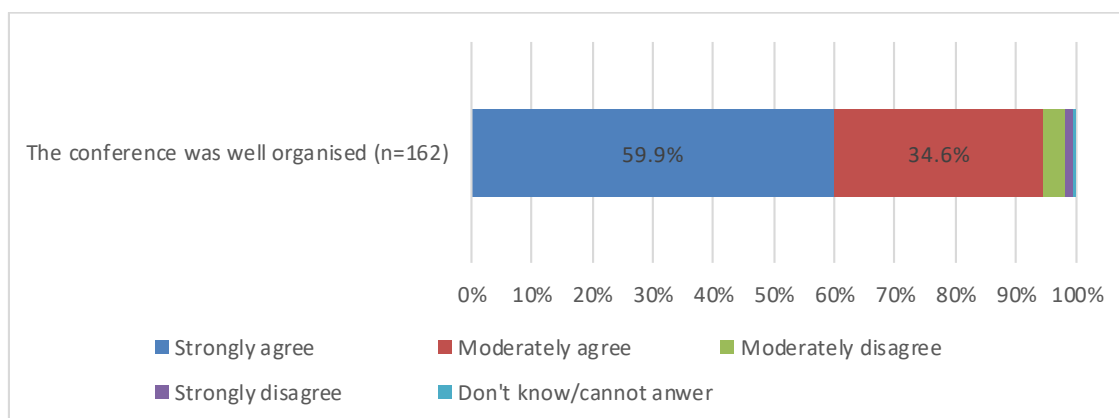
Table 18. Performance of the selected events hosted or attended by DG AGRI

	2016	2017	2018	2019
EU Agricultural Outlook Conference	495 participants (1 290 web streaming attendees on the first day; 809 on the second) Potential reach on Twitter: 340 600 people	635 participants (3 057 web streaming attendees on the first day; on 2 505 the second) 26 tweets and 179 100 impressions on Twitter	717 participants (n.d.) 13 tweets and 171 300 impressions on Twitter	755 participants (2 996 web streaming attendees on the first day; 1 273 the second) 295 098 organic impressions on Twitter; 3 974 people watched the conference live on Facebook; 11 093 saw the Facebook post on the Outlook report
Internationale Grüne Woche	214 416 visitors passed by the stand; 10 744 engaged with animations inside n.d.	+/- 500 visitors per day In total, 37 551 impressions for the top seven posts on Twitter; 34 539 people reached via the top five posts on Facebook	Between 3 000 and 10 000 visitors per day One tweet and 6 681 impressions on Twitter	2 400 visitors per day on average n.d.
Salon de l'Agriculture	+/- 400 visitors per day n.d.	+/- 1 000 visitors per day 13 161 impressions for the top four posts on Twitter; 10 911 people reached via the top five posts on Facebook	An average of 4 500 visitors per day 11 tweets and 60 315 impressions on Twitter	An average of 4 500 visitors per day 6 tweets and 36 873 impressions on Twitter

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on internal documentation on the events provided by DG AGRI.

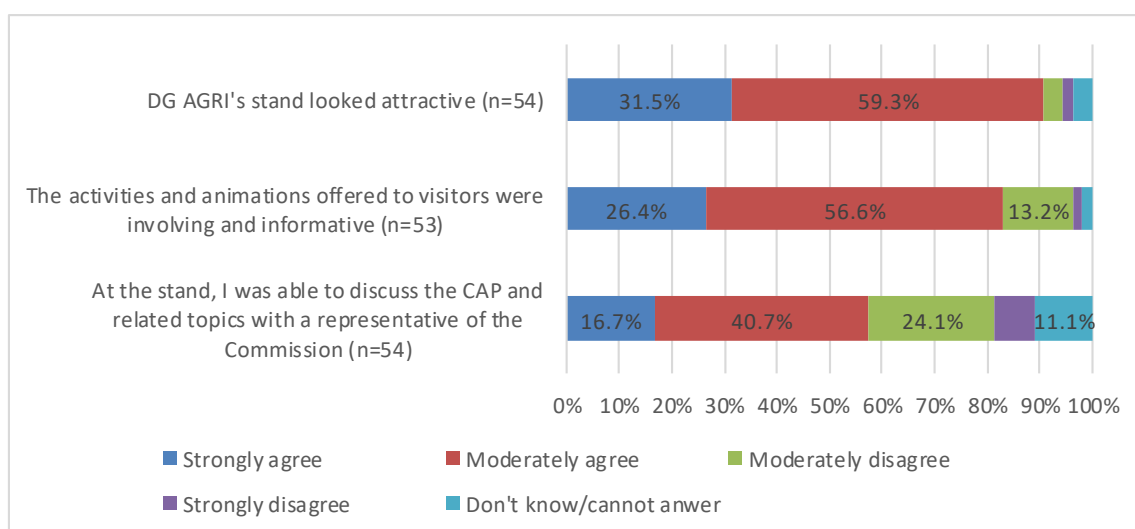
6.4.1.2. Results of events

The immediate results of events are overwhelmingly positive. As many as 92% of the main survey respondents agreed that the conference they attended was well organised (see the figure on the next page).

Figure 79. Satisfaction with a conference hosted by DG AGRI

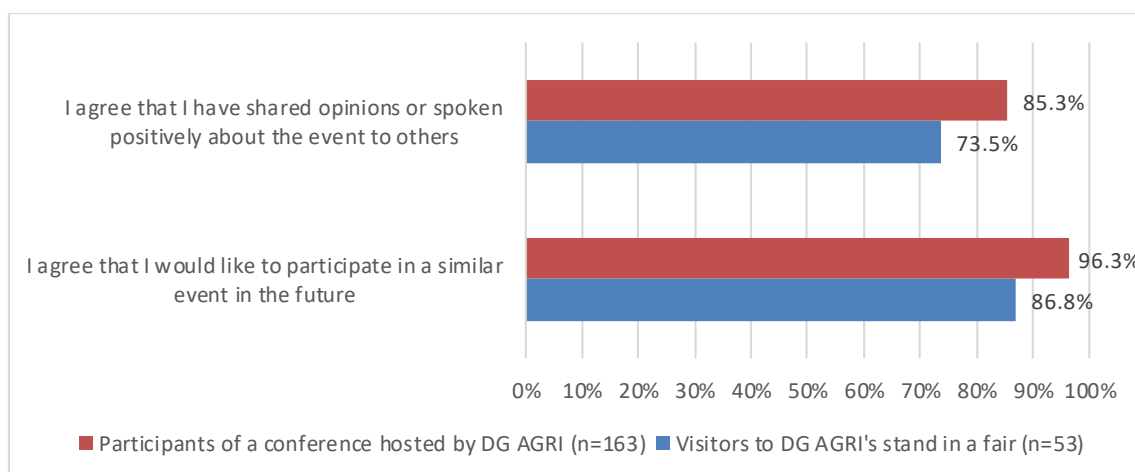
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of the main survey.

Likewise, most are satisfied with DG AGRI's participation at fairs. They indicate that the stand looked attractive (90.8%) and that the activities and animations offered to visitors were involving and informative (83%). However, not all respondents to the main survey had the opportunity to discuss the CAP and related topics with a representative of the Commission – almost a third (31.5%) disagreed with that statement (see the figure below).

Figure 80. Satisfaction with DG AGRI's stand at a fair

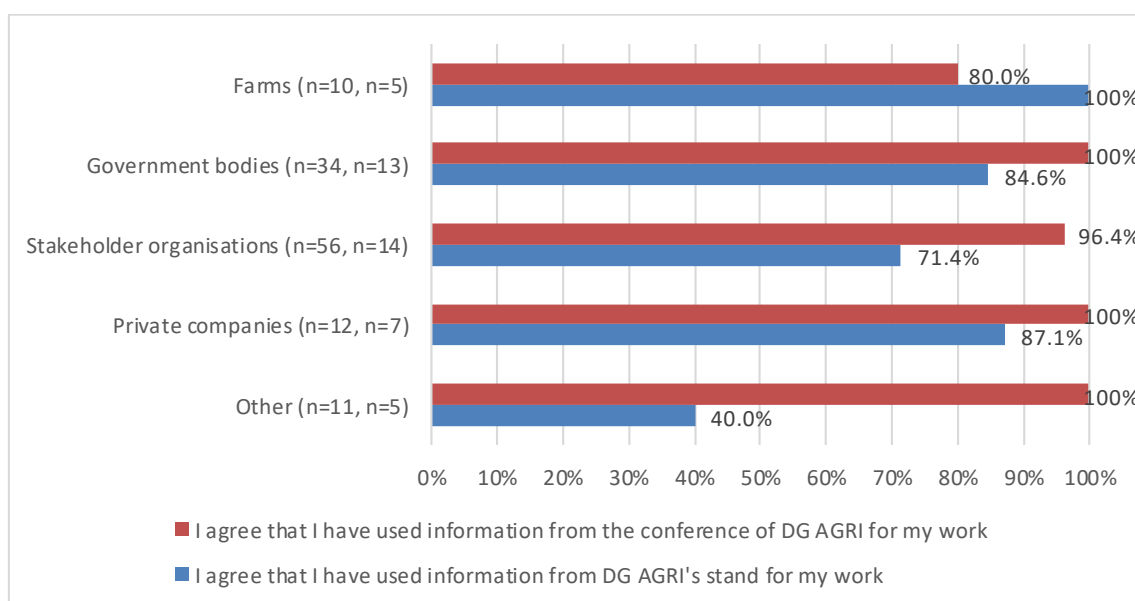
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of the main survey.

Given the high satisfaction with these events, it is not surprising that most respondents to the main survey have shared opinions or spoken positively about them with others, and agree they would like to participate in similar events in the future (see the figure on the next page). Conference attendees are up to 11.8 percentage points more enthusiastic compared to their counterparts at fairs. This is natural, since the experience at DG AGRI's stand is often shorter than that at a conference, and is only one of many activities one may get involved with at a fair. These slight differences do not devalue the importance of DG AGRI's participation at fairs. The interviewees firmly acknowledge that fairs offer unique opportunities for DG AGRI to reach EU citizens and interact with them face to face, bringing the CAP and EU closer to their beneficiaries.

Figure 81. Sharing experiences with others and willingness to participate in future events hosted and/or attended by DG AGRI

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of the main survey.

According to the results of the main survey, most of those who attended DG AGRI's events used the information they gained from them for their work. Certain variations exist across the stakeholder groups: fewer farmers find the conferences hosted by DG AGRI useful compared with fairs, while among government bodies, stakeholder organisations and private companies, the opposite is true (see the figure below).

Figure 82. The usefulness for work of events hosted or attended by DG AGRI

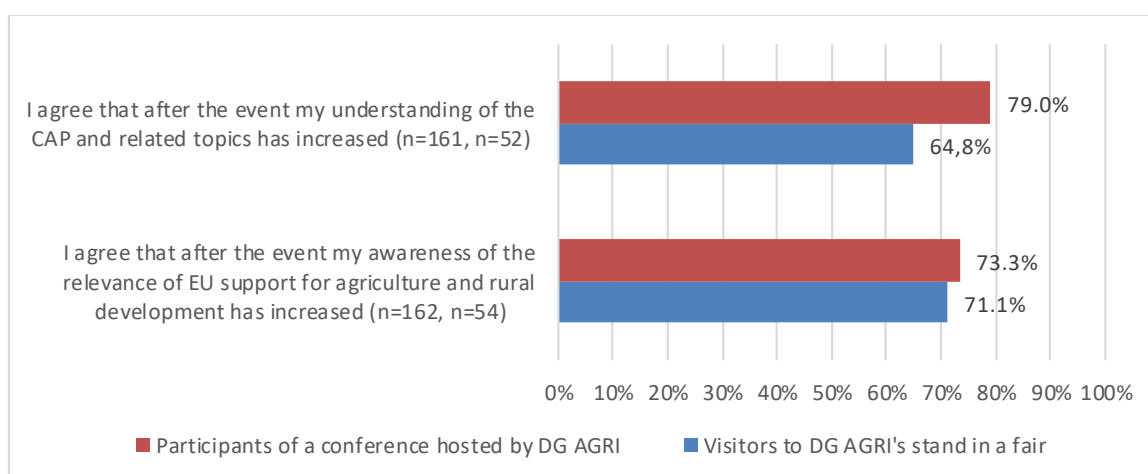
Source: Compiled by the authors based on the results of the main survey.

While most respondents to the main survey agree that they gained new (87.8%) and important (82.4%) information on the CAP and related topics during the conference they attended (n=164), fewer respondents who attended fairs report doing so. Around a third (35.8%) of respondents claim they learned nothing new at DG AGRI's stand when they visited it (n=53). Moreover, while 72.2% of respondents to the main survey agreed that they received sufficient information on the CAP and related topics at the stand, 27.8% disagreed (n=54). These findings suggest that conferences are typically more informative than the activities organised at DG AGRI's stands at fairs.

Nevertheless, according to the interviewees, gaining new information is not the primary reason they attend conferences hosted by DG AGRI. What they appreciate most is the platform for networking. As many as 84.1% of respondents to the main survey agreed that they made new contacts during the conference hosted by DG AGRI that they attended, only 12.8% disagreed (n=164).

Overall, based on the results of the main survey, participation in DG AGRI's events helps to improve one's understanding of the CAP and related topics, and increases one's awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development. While conferences and fairs are similarly effective in raising awareness, a greater disparity exists between when it comes to improving understanding of the CAP. Here, the performance of fairs even falls below the 70% benchmark, reaching just 64.8%.

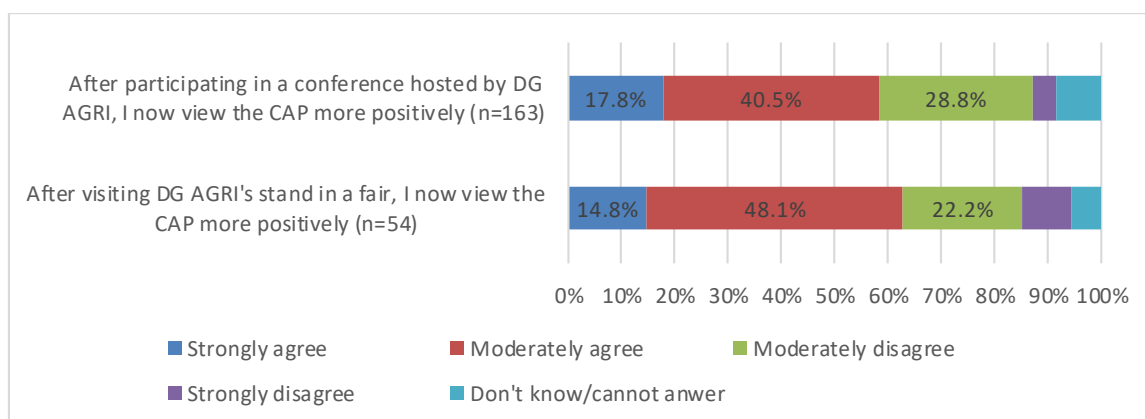
Figure 83. Change in understanding of the CAP and awareness of the relevance of EU support after participating in events hosted and/or attended by DG AGRI



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on results of the main survey.

6.4.1.3. Impacts of events

As demonstrated by the figures above, events have made an impact, but it has been limited. On average, 60.8% of respondents agreed that, having participated in a DG AGRI event, they now view the CAP more positively. Moreover, 50% of the main survey respondents who visited DG AGRI's stand at a fair agree that the information they received there challenged their previous opinions about the CAP, whereas 48.1% disagreed (n=54). These findings are in line with the view stated by many of the interviewees – that their primary goal in participating in events is not to receive information (which could alter their views), but instead to meet people, discuss relevant topics with them, make contacts, etc.

Figure 84. Change in views towards the CAP after participating in events hosted and/or attended by DG AGRI

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on results of the main survey.

Overall, DG AGRI's events perform extremely well at the level of outputs. They perform less well, but still well enough, at the level of results – but finally fall below the benchmark at the level of impacts. Such decreasing performance by level is typical, since it takes more time to change people's perceptions than to trigger their interest for a short period or even to inform them. Hence, DG AGRI's events have been fairly effective, but are not without weaknesses.

Success factors or aspects that were appreciated most by interviewees include the following:

- High-level speakers
- Sharing the presentations right after events
- Increased attention on environmental aspects
- Attractive materials and interesting activities for kids
- Excellent promotional material
- Parity of the people participating in panels
- Web streaming of the 'Outlook Conference'

Interviewees identified the following as showing room for improvement:

- Covering more diverse views, e.g. bringing unorthodox yet credible voices on to the stage
- Better preparing DG AGRI's representatives at fairs, or even training them before travel

As regards KPIs, most of these have been achieved – although certain data are missing, and this may slightly distort the overall picture. A detailed breakdown of the targets set and achieved by events is provided in the table over the next few pages.

Table 19. Achievement of targets set for the conferences, fairs, and other events

Event			Ex ante indicators	Ex post indicators
2016				
Conferences	Cork 2.0: European Conference on Rural Development		Minimum 250 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	312 participants 95% completely or partially satisfied
	EU Agricultural Outlook Conference		Minimum 300 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	495 participants 1 290 web streaming attendees on the first day; 809 on the second 98.15% of survey respondents confirmed that the event either completely or partially met their expectations 85% satisfied with the quality of the sessions
	4th workshop of the sheep meat forum		Minimum 55 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	60 participants n.d.
Fairs	Internationale Grüne Woche		Minimum 200 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	+/- 200 visitors per day 75% satisfaction
	Salon de l'Agriculture			+/- 400 visitors per day 75% satisfaction
Other events	EU Open Days		Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	9 423 visitors in total At least 2 400 participants engaged with animations per day
	Kick-off meeting with grant beneficiaries		Minimum 80% of grant beneficiaries present	100% of grant beneficiaries present
2017				
Conferences	The CAP, have your say!		Minimum 400 participants 75% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	504 participants 90% satisfaction
	EU Agricultural Outlook Conference		Minimum 400 participants 75% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content Minimum 200 web streaming attendees	635 participants 96.75% of survey respondents confirmed that the event either completely or partially met their expectations 86% satisfied with the quality of the sessions

Event		Ex ante indicators	Ex post indicators
			3 057 web streaming attendees on the first day; , 505 on the second day
Fairs	Internationale Grüne Woche	Minimum 200 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	+/- 500 visitors per day 75% satisfaction
	Salon de l'Agriculture		+/- 1 000 visitors per day 75% satisfaction
	Maamess fair	Minimum 300 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction A number of promotional items distributed	+/- 450 visitors per day 75% satisfaction 3 000 promotional items distributed
	Agro Show		+/- 4 500 visitors over 3 days 85% satisfaction 4 500 promotional items distributed over 3 days
Other events	EU Open Days	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand	12 000 visitors in total At least 1 200 participants engaged with animations at DG AGRI's stand per day
	Kick-off meeting with grant beneficiaries	Minimum 80% of grant beneficiaries present	100% of grant beneficiaries present
2018			
Conferences	The Development of Plant Proteins in the European Union – Opportunities and Challenges	Minimum 150 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	190 participants 90% satisfaction
	EU Agricultural Outlook Conference	Minimum 300 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	717 participants 98% satisfaction
Fairs	Internationale Grüne Woche	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	Between 3 000 and 10 000 visitors per day, depending on the fair and day 90% satisfaction
	Salon International de l'Agriculture		
	Agrobalt	Minimum 1 000 visitors per day 70% satisfaction	1 000 visitors per day >80% satisfaction

Event		Ex ante indicators	Ex post indicators
	Welser Messe	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction	+/- 1 300 visitors per day 90% satisfaction
	Terra Madre/Salone del Gusto	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction	+/- 1 800 visitors per day 90% satisfaction
	Agraria	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand per day 70% satisfaction	n.d. 96% satisfaction
	P.O. Conference	75% satisfaction	69% satisfaction
Other events	Two round tables on the greening architecture of the CAP	60 participants 80% satisfaction	60 participants No written survey was conducted; based on verbal feedback, 80% satisfaction
	EU Open Days	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	15 000 visitors in total At least 1 000 visitors to the stand and at least 700 taking part in the activities per day n.d.
	Kick-off meeting with grant beneficiaries	Minimum 80% of grant beneficiaries present	100% of grant beneficiaries present
	2019		
Conferences	Forestry Conference	Minimum 300 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	316 96% survey respondents indicated that their expectations were either completely or partially met; 98% expressed positive opinions about the overall organisation of the event
	African Union – EU Agricultural Ministers Conference		530 participants n.d.
	EU Agricultural Outlook Conference	Minimum 400 participants 80% satisfaction with the conference organisation and content	755 participants 2 996 web streaming attendees on the first day; 1 273 on the second day 92% satisfaction
Fairs	Internationale Grüne Woche	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand	2 400 visitors per day, on average

Event		Ex ante indicators	Ex post indicators
		70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	97% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	Salon International de l'Agriculture		4 500 visitors per day on average 99.3% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	Maamess fair		1 104 visitors per day. 99.9% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	Santarem Agricultural fair		5 175 visitors per day 100% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	OKRA fair		n.d. 99.4% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	Libramont fair		3 500 visitors per day 99.5% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	Agro Show	Minimum 300 visitors per day to the stand 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	1 464 visitors per day
Other events	EU Open Days	Minimum 1 000 visitors to the stand 70% satisfaction with the activities proposed	Over 10 000 visitors in total, n.d. on the number of visitors to DG AGRI's stand 100% of survey respondents stated that they enjoyed their visit to DG AGRI's stand
	Kick-off meeting with grant beneficiaries	Minimum 80% of grant beneficiaries present 80% positive evaluation	n.d.

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on data extracted from the reports on the implementation of DG AGRI's external communication action plans for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data on the last year's events has been also extracted from a number of internal reports on individual events.

Summary

- Each year, DG AGRI hosts several conferences, participates in at least two large-scale agri-food fairs, and organises or supports other events.
- Satisfaction with these events is overwhelmingly positive, although less so with regard to opportunities to discuss the CAP and related topics with a representative of the Commission at DG AGRI's stand.
- Most respondents to the main survey have shared opinions or spoken positively about the events to others, and agree that they would like to participate in similar events in the future.
- Farmers find the conferences hosted by DG AGRI less useful than fairs, while the opposite is true of government bodies, stakeholder organisations and private companies; the overall level of usefulness for work remains high across stakeholder groups and types of events.
- Participation in DG AGRI events helps to improve one's understanding of the CAP and related topics, and increase one's awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development.
- The events have had some impact, but this has been limited.

6.4.2. Efficiency of events: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6)

Events organised or attended by DG AGRI have become a key type of communication activity for the DG. As can be seen from the annual reports on the implementation of DG AGRI's external communication action plan, an increasing amount of funding has been allocated to this activity each year. During the evaluation period, the starting total budget (excluding the grant beneficiary meeting) was EUR 1 095 900 (2016). In 2019, the total budget for events (again, excluding the grant beneficiary meeting) was EUR 2 876 100.

The efficiency analysis of events focuses on the average **cost per participant** (conferences) and the average **cost per event** (fairs). Comparisons are made between different events, years, and against the previous evaluation, as well with events organised/attended by other DGs.

Analysis of the data on conferences organised by DG AGRI shows that their efficiency fluctuated during the evaluation period:

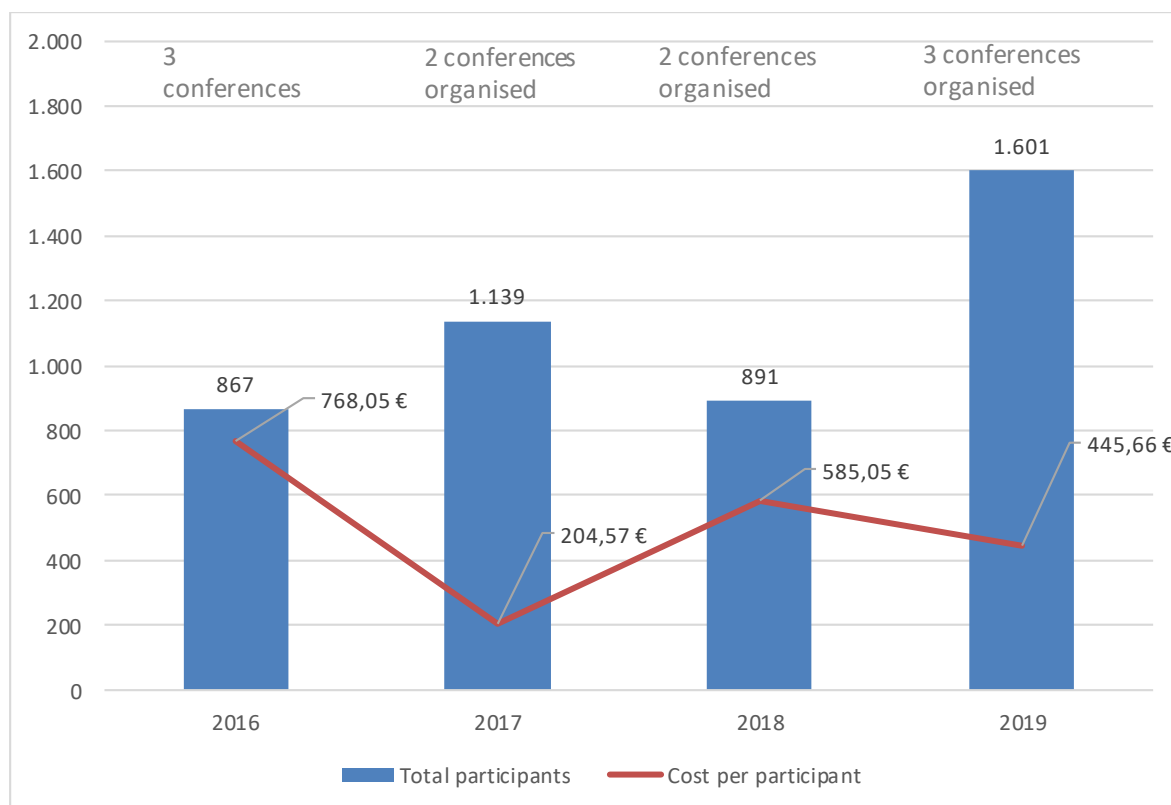
- The lowest average cost per participant was EUR 205 (in 2017);
- The highest average cost per participant was EUR 768 (in 2016).

This difference of more than three times shows that the conferences are organised flexibly, with different events being organised each year instead of having only similar events with the same participants attending. Nevertheless, this flexibility – while a positive aspect – brings with it the challenge of unexpectedness. In terms of efficiency, this means that unexpected costs may occur when organising events. An example of such a decrease in efficiency is the Plant Protein Conference, which had a planned budget of EUR 150 000, but whose amended budget rose to EUR 260 000.

No clear relationship exists between the number of conferences organised in a year and the cost per participant during that year. However, it was discovered that the cost per

participant was calculated as being lower in years during which more people participated in conferences organised by DG AGRI (2017 and 2019). These results are presented in the figure below.

Figure 85. Trends in total participants and cost per participant in conferences organised by DG AGRI, 2016 to 2019

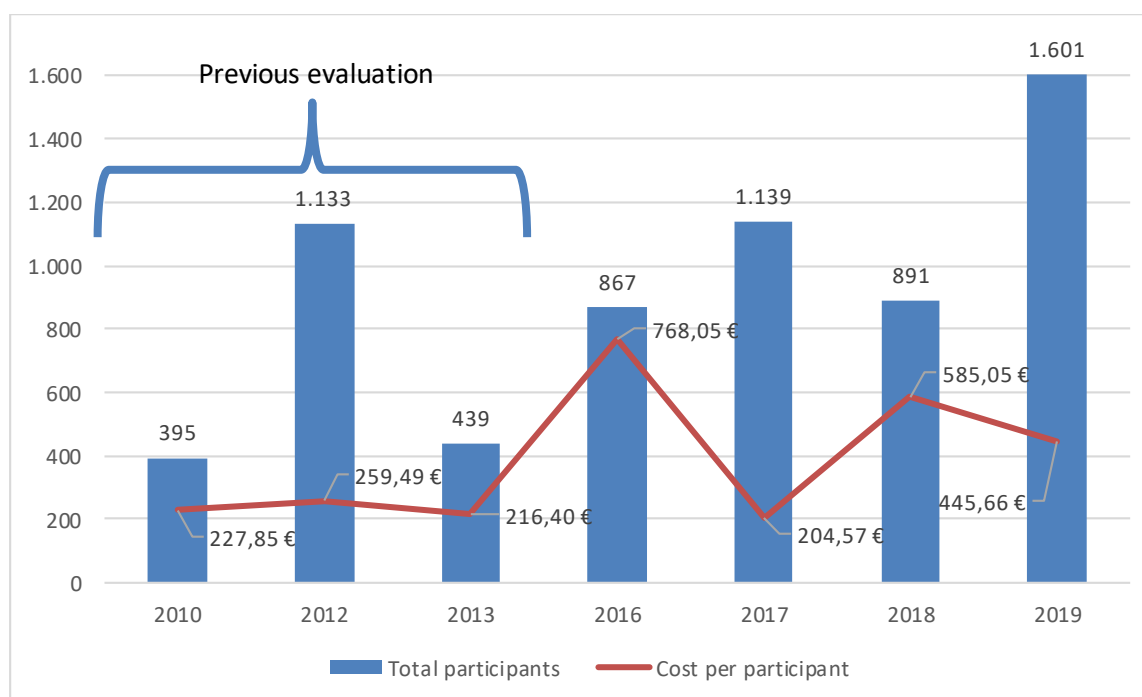


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

With regard to the cost per participant at conferences, the results of the previous evaluation revealed that the average cost per participant remained steady⁶⁹. This result comes even though the number of people participating in conferences organised by DG AGRI changed dramatically each year during the previous evaluation period (from 395 attendees in 2010 to 1 133 attendees in 2012).

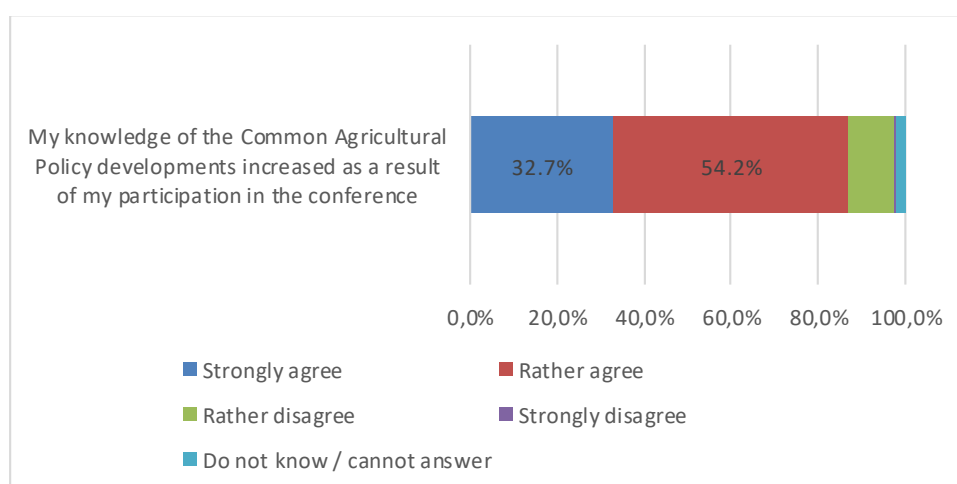
When comparing the results of the previous evaluation with the results of the current evaluation, we see that the cost per participant was much lower from 2010 to 2013 than between 2016 and 2019 (see figure on the following page). While the numbers alone would suggest a reduction in efficiency, it should be noted that the increased costs can be explained by the fact that the latter conferences had more participants in total, and that they were organised not only in Belgium (Brussels) but also in other countries such as Austria and Ireland (thus increasing the costs).

⁶⁹ The analysis only included conferences for which data were made available to the evaluation team.

Figure 86. Trends in total participants and cost per participant at conferences organised by DG AGRI during previous and current evaluation periods

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

The comparison with the previous evaluation also includes data on the extent to which communication objectives were achieved during the conferences. In the survey conducted during the previous evaluation, the respondents (n=153) were asked if their knowledge of the CAP developments increased as a result of their participation in the conference. 86.9% of them agreed with the statement (see figure below).

Figure 87. Percentage of respondents from previous evaluation (survey conducted in 2015) who agreed that DG AGRI conferences increased their knowledge of the CAP (n=153)

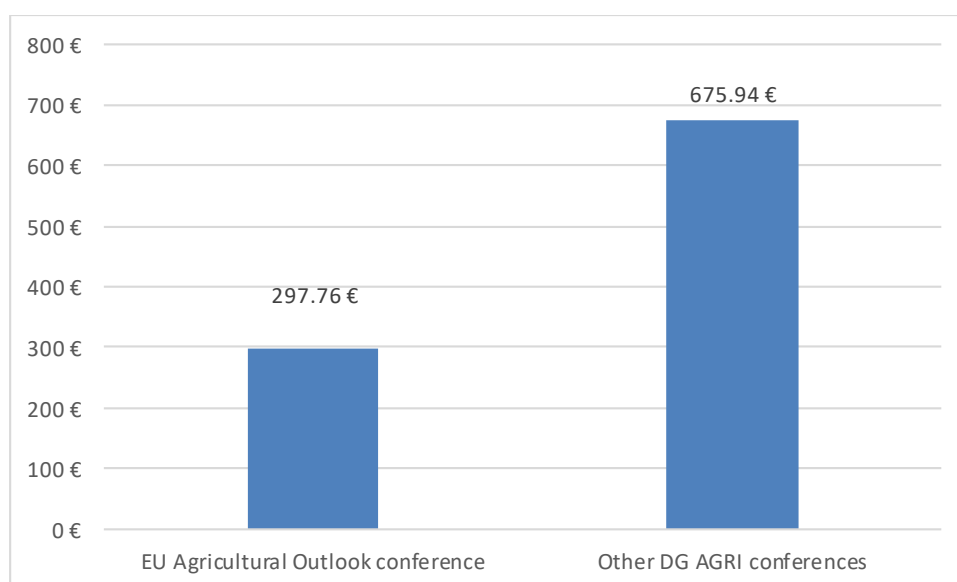
Source: PPMI. (2015). *Evaluation of the information policy on the CAP: Final Report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

The current survey, conducted in 2020, asked respondents if the conference had increased their understanding of the CAP and related topics (n=161). 79% agreed with this statement, while 73.3% agreed with the statement that their awareness of the relevance

of EU support for agriculture and rural development had increased (n=162). Both results are above the 70% benchmark, but indicate a slight decrease in the achievement of objectives regarding conferences when compared with the previous evaluation.

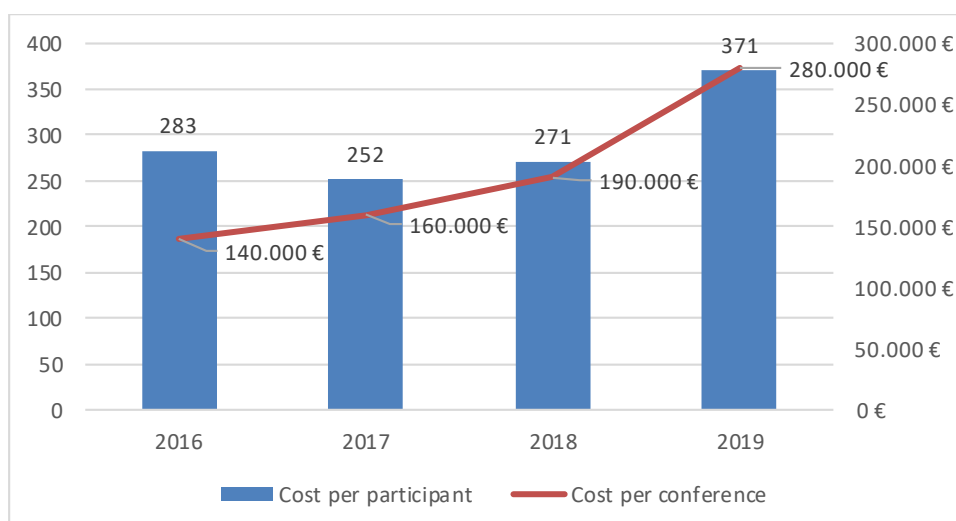
Analysis reveals that the yearly EU Agricultural Outlook conferences had a lower cost per participant than the average for DG AGRI conferences. While the average cost per participant at the EU Agricultural Outlook conferences was EUR 298, the average cost per participant at other conferences organised by DG AGRI was EUR 676. This difference indicates that the EU Agricultural Outlook conference is a good example of efficiency: it was not only organised with lower costs, but is also most often mentioned and positively evaluated in interviews with stakeholders.

Figure 88. Comparison of cost per participant at EU Agricultural Outlook conferences and other DG AGRI conferences



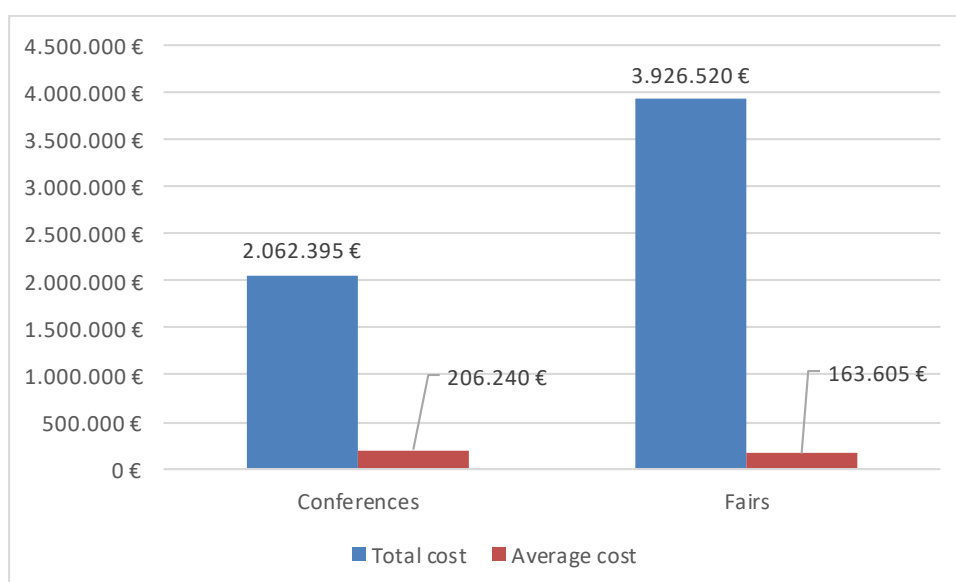
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

Further analysis of the EU Agricultural Outlook conference reveals that its overall costs have increased every year. Indeed, the rise in overall costs in 2019 was accompanied by a corresponding rise in cost per participant when compared with the period 2016-2018. These trends are presented in the figure on the next page. Nevertheless, the increased costs come with the steadily growing number of participants, increasing networking opportunities and wider distribution of information every year.

Figure 89. Trends in cost per participant and cost per conference for EU Agricultural Outlook conferences, 2016 to 2019

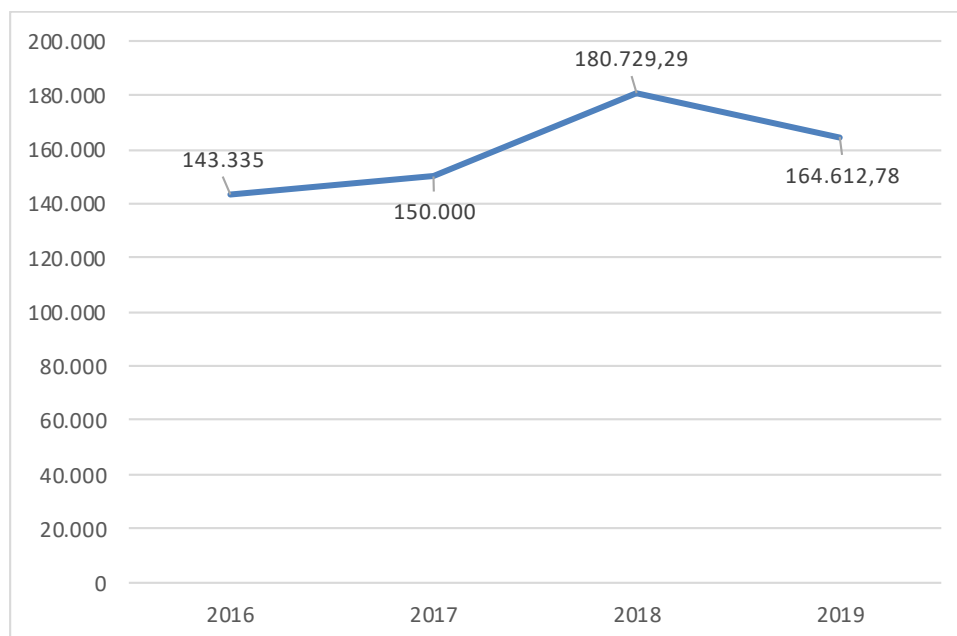
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

Comparison of the costs of different types of events shows that throughout the evaluation period, nearly EUR 4 million was dedicated to fairs – almost twice as the figure devoted to conferences. At the same time, DG AGRI attended more fairs than the number of conferences it organised, making the average cost per event lower for fairs (EUR 163 605) than for conferences (EUR 206 240). These results are presented in the figure below.

Figure 90. Comparison of total cost and average cost per event for DG AGRI conferences and fair attendance

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

The average cost per fair remained relatively steady between 2016 and 2019, reaching a high of EUR 180 714 in 2018, but decreasing again in 2019. This trend is presented in the figure on the next page.

Figure 91. Average cost per fair between 2016 and 2019

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

The information received from the three DGs involved in the analysis shows that DG AGRI invests greatest amount of resources in events. The cost of events for DG SANTE was very low, and most of this relates to a direct contribution to DG AGRI for the cost of a joint stand at several fairs. DG MARE spent more funds on events than DG SANTE, especially in 2017. As presented on the DG MARE website, this DG had 18 events in 2017, but only six events during the two years that followed (2018-2019). This situation explains the difference in total cost for events incurred by DG MARE. Detailed information on costs is presented in the table below.

Table 20. Total event costs incurred by DG AGRI, DG SANTE and DG MARE, 2016 to 2019

	DG AGRI	DG SANTE	DG MARE (estimated)
2019	EUR 2 876 100	EUR 210 000	EUR 400 000-490 000
2018	EUR 2 391 000	EUR 335 000	EUR 125 000-150 000
2017	EUR 2 096 000	EUR 250 000	EUR 1 500 000-1 790 000
2016	EUR 1 095 900	EUR 150 000	EUR 750 000-800 000

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the data provided by the European Commission.

Only limited comparison can be made with the number of full-time equivalents used by other DGs for events, due to data being unavailable for DG MARE and of very limited scope for DG SANTE. The data gathered from DG AGRI corresponds with the information described previously at the beginning of this subchapter: DG AGRI is making increasing use of events as a tool – indicated not only by increased budget and increased participation, but also by an increase in the number of full-time equivalents.

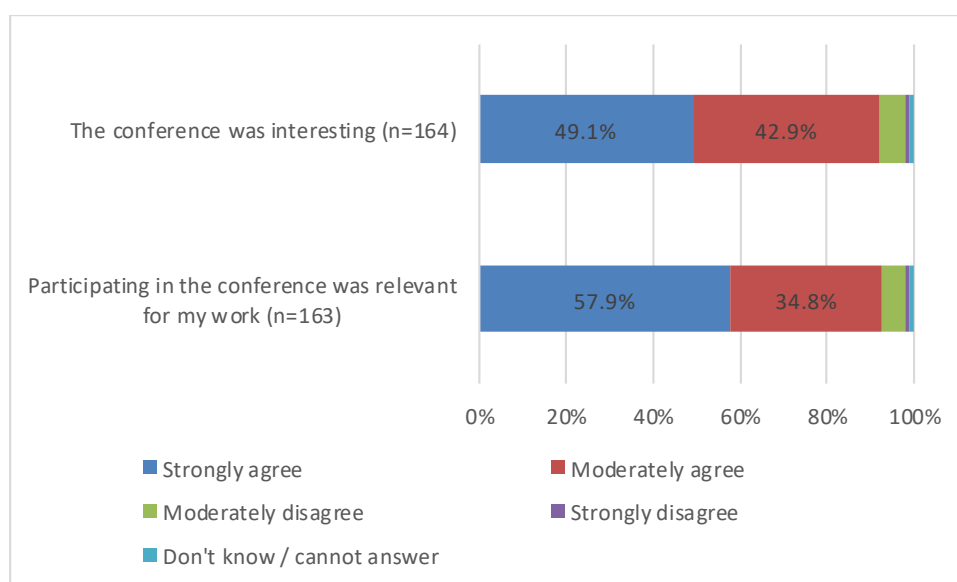
Efficiency of events: Summary

- The cost per participant at conferences organised by DG AGRI fluctuated during the evaluation period. Cost per participant was lower during the previous evaluation period. This can be explained by the increased number of conferences organised in various EU countries (not in Brussels, Belgium).
- When compared with other conferences, the EU Agricultural Outlook conference – despite becoming more expensive every year – was very efficiently organised.
- Almost twice as much funding was allocated to conferences compared with fairs, but the average cost of one fair was lower than that of one conference. In addition, the average cost of one fair remained relatively steady throughout the evaluation period.

6.4.3. Relevance: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)

Stakeholder consultation revealed that conferences organised by DG AGRI are perceived as relevant and interesting. 92% of respondents to the main survey who had attended at least one DG AGRI conference agreed that it was interesting, while 92.7% agreed that participating in the conference was relevant for their work. Both results are above the 70% benchmark. Among those who “agreed strongly”, a greater share agreed that the conference was relevant for their work (57.9%) than agreed that it was interesting (49.1%). Detailed results of these two statements are presented in the figure below.

Figure 92. Percentage of respondents who agreed that DG AGRI conferences are interesting and relevant for their work

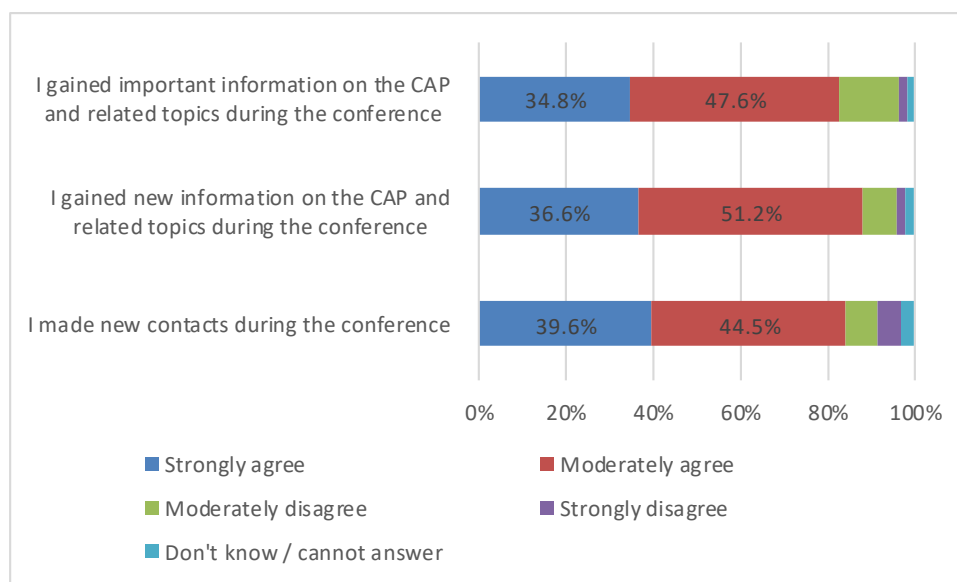


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

The stakeholders surveyed also expressed positive perceptions towards other aspects

relating to the relevance of the conferences organised by DG AGRI. 87.8% of respondents to the main survey who had attended at least one conference agreed that they had gained new information on the CAP and related topics during the conference, while 82.4% agreed that they had gained important information. In addition, 84.1% of respondents agreed that they made new contacts during the conference. All these results are above the 70% benchmark. They are presented in the figure below.

Figure 93. Percentage of respondents who agreed that they gained important or new information at DG AGRI conferences

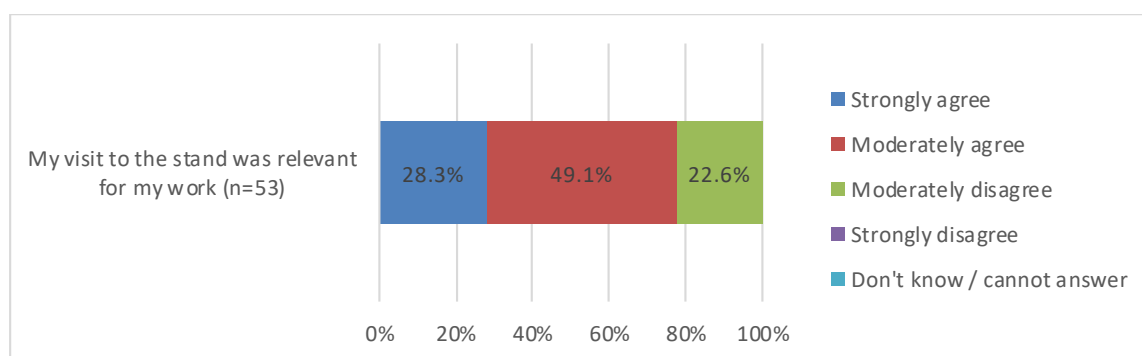


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that they regarded gaining information and contacts as the top reasons for visiting conferences. The aforementioned results therefore strengthen the evidence concerning the relevance of conferences organised by DG AGRI.

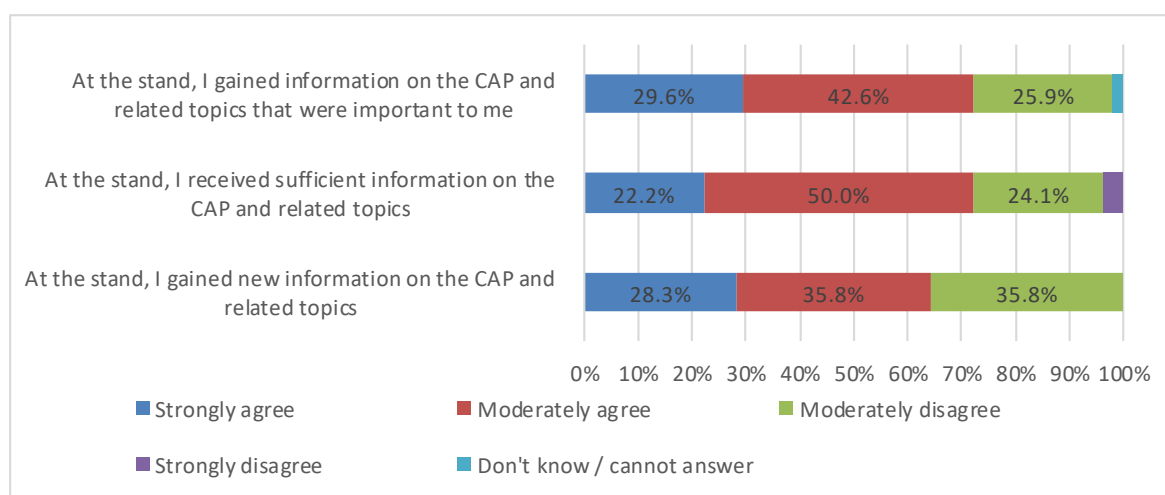
Many of the stakeholders interviewed who had participated in DG AGRI conferences also said that they found the conferences relevant, interesting, or useful. The conference mentioned most often was the EU Agricultural Outlook conference, which was regarded an important networking opportunity and a way to receive information on general strategy and political direction. Despite this positive feedback, some areas for improvement in the relevance DG AGRI conferences were mentioned by interviewees. They said that they would like to see more non-agricultural activities and different opinions represented, and for the audience to be broader. It was also suggested that more women could be represented on panels.

The stakeholders surveyed were also positive about the relevance of DG AGRI's stands at fairs. 77.4% of respondents to the main survey agreed that visiting the stand was relevant for their work. The distribution of answers can be seen in the figure on the next page.

Figure 94. Percentage of respondents who agree that DG AGRI fair stands are relevant for their work

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

The majority of respondents to the main survey positively perceive the information on the CAP and related topics that they gained at the DG AGRI fair stand. 72.2% of them agreed that the information they gained was important to them and that it was sufficient, while 64.1% of them agreed that it was new. Despite this last percentage being the only relevance indicator falling below the 70% benchmark, the relevance of the DG AGRI fair stands can still be assessed positively. The reason for this is that the stand primarily targets the general public; therefore, it is feasible that the information might not appear new to some stakeholders, who have a very good understanding of the CAP and follow the topic closely. The aforementioned survey results are presented in the figure below.

Figure 95. Percentage of respondents who agree that information at the DG AGRI fair stand is important, sufficient and new

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

Interviewees also reflected positively on the relevance of DG AGRI's stands at fairs. Among the suggestions offered on how to improve DG AGRI's presence at fairs, interviewees mentioned that DG AGRI should try to show how the CAP helps to address people's concerns, e.g. regarding pesticides in food or the decline in biodiversity. They also suggested DG AGRI should try to provide more information on the reality of farming and the process of getting food to consumers. A similar suggestion was to involve more real farmers in appearances at DG AGRI fairs stands and in communication materials.

A participant observation exercise was used to supplement the data from other sources. This also demonstrated the relevance of DG AGRI fair stand. Visitors of all age groups participated eagerly in the activities offered at the stand. The visitors were often attracted

by the interactive quiz (a microphone was used to attract attention of visitors passing by). Once attracted to the stand, adults often proceeded to the tasting, while children were engaged in various interactive games. A group of hosts working at the stand actively engaged all visitors, suggesting different activities according to their age. Most of the citizens interviewed who had visited the stand said that they learned something new there, from complex topics such as sustainable development to simple information about fruit, vegetables and herbs.

The audiences that visited DG AGRI fair stand most often included members of the general public, e.g. families with children and senior citizens. In this context, the participant observation also proves the relevance of the stand, as most activities of the stand were focused on children. As a result, the stand attracted many families with children. In addition, a special bus service was organised, offering tours of the fair for visitors from different regions of France. Most tour participants were senior citizens, which resulted in large number of this audience visiting the fair as a whole, and the DG AGRI stand in particular.

Summary

- Interviewees and survey respondents felt that conferences organised by DG AGRI meet their needs: most of them agreed that the conferences are interesting and relevant for their work. They also agreed that they gained new and important information about the CAP, and that they made new contacts during these events.
- Interviews with stakeholders revealed that EU Agricultural Outlook conference is very well known among the target audiences, and is assessed positively by them.
- As with conferences, most respondents who visited the DG AGRI stand at fairs agreed that it was relevant for their work and that they gained important and sufficient information there. A smaller number (below the benchmark) of respondents agreed that they gained new information at the stand. This can be explained by the fact that the stand is targeted at the general public, and therefore consists of basic information.

6.5. Grants

6.5.1. Effectiveness of grants: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)

6.5.1.1. Outputs of grants

During the evaluation period, **72 grants** were awarded by the European Commission to various organisations to communicate about the CAP. There were 18 grant beneficiaries in 2016, 16 in 2017, 20 in 2018, and 18 in 2019. During these last four years, grant beneficiaries came from **22 countries**. Italy stands out in particular, with a total of 20 grants being implemented in the country (see the summary in the table on the next page). France, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Spain can also be considered as countries that have benefitted from a high number of grants, with each receiving between 7 and 10 grants. In contrast, nine countries have implemented activities using just one or two grants. In some countries, none were implemented.

Several grants had a strong EU cross-border or international dimension. These were implemented by EU networks and membership organisations that acted as multipliers, ensuring that the information and communication actions implemented reached an audience across different countries within and even outside the EU (e.g. dissemination through the France24 international network).

Table 21. Countries in which grants were implemented

Countries	Number of grants in 2016 (n=18)	Number of grants in 2017 (n=16)	Number of grants in 2018 (n=20)	Number of grants in 2019 (n=18)	Total number of grants (n=72)
Italy	6	5	5	4	20
France	2	3	4	5	10
Germany	3	3	2	2	10
Bulgaria	2	1	3	3	9
Romania	3	3	2	0	8
Spain	2	2	2	1	7
Belgium	1	0	2	1	4
Greece	1	2	0	1	4
Netherlands	1	0	1	2	4
UK	1	1	1	1	4
Croatia	1	1	1	0	3
Czechia	0	1	2	0	3
Ireland	1	1	1	0	3
Cyprus	0	1	0	1	2
Denmark	0	0	1	1	2
Hungary	1	0	1	0	2
Portugal	1	1	0	0	2
Slovakia	0	1	0	1	2
Finland	0	1	0	0	1
Malta	0	0	1	0	1
Poland	0	1	0	0	1
Slovenia	0	1	0	0	1

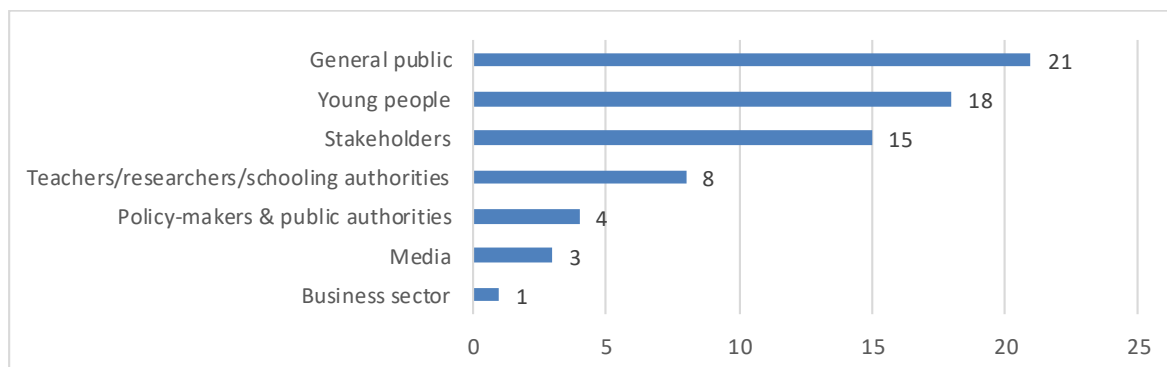
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on DG AGRI summary documents about successful grant applicants and grant reports.

According to the analysis conducted for the case studies⁷⁰, the grant beneficiaries mainly targeted the **general public, young people and stakeholders**, with respectively 21, 18 and 15 out of 25 organisations focusing on these target audiences (see figure on the next page). The next most popular groups to be focused on were teachers/researchers/schooling authorities, all of whom represent convenient multipliers to better reach pupils and students. Overall, the main objectives of the projects targeting the general public were to raise awareness about the functioning and content of the CAP, to underline the benefits and challenges relating to rural development and agriculture, and to show that the CAP has an impact on many areas (e.g., environment, food safety, etc.). With regard to youth, there were projects that had the special intention of creating new pedagogical approaches to address the CAP in educational settings. Here, the principal idea

⁷⁰ Concerning target groups, we chose to focus on the case studies as the data regarding this aspect coming from the technical grant reports was too often unclear or missing.

was to make pupils and students realise that their lives are affected daily by the CAP, which is not just a technical policy concerning farmers. When it comes to projects focusing on stakeholders, the general goal was to enable the exchange of good practices to foster innovative and sustainable farming models, or to attempt to reduce the polarisation between farmers and environmentalists.

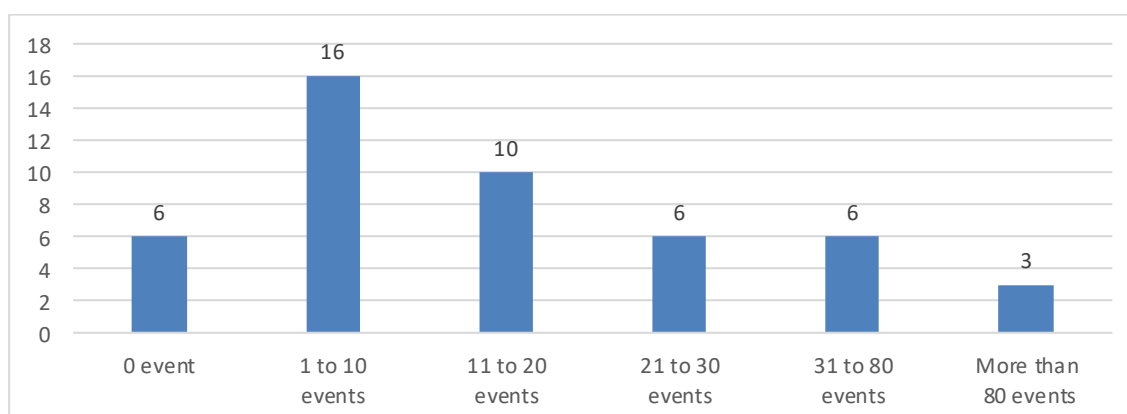
Figure 96. Main target groups of the grants assessed in the case studies (n=25)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on grant and country case studies.

Between 2016 and 2018⁷¹, the grant recipients organised (or participated in) a total of **1 354 events**: 337 in 2016, 233 in 2017 and 784 in 2018. The particularly high number reported in 2018 can be explained by the fact that in this year, the organisation Friends of the Earth Europe organised (or participated in) around 460 events by itself, thus substantially boosting the total number of events. Events are popular activities among the grant recipients: only six out of 47 recipients decided not to implement any events (see figure below). Overall, grant recipients favoured organising (or participating in) a relatively small number of events, with over half of recipients being involved in implementing between one and 20 events. With only three grant beneficiaries organising or participating in more than 80 events, it seems that multiplying involvement through different events throughout the project was not the dominant strategy, probably for financial and organisational reasons.

Figure 97. Number of grant recipients involved in different numbers of events during the implementation of their project (n=47)

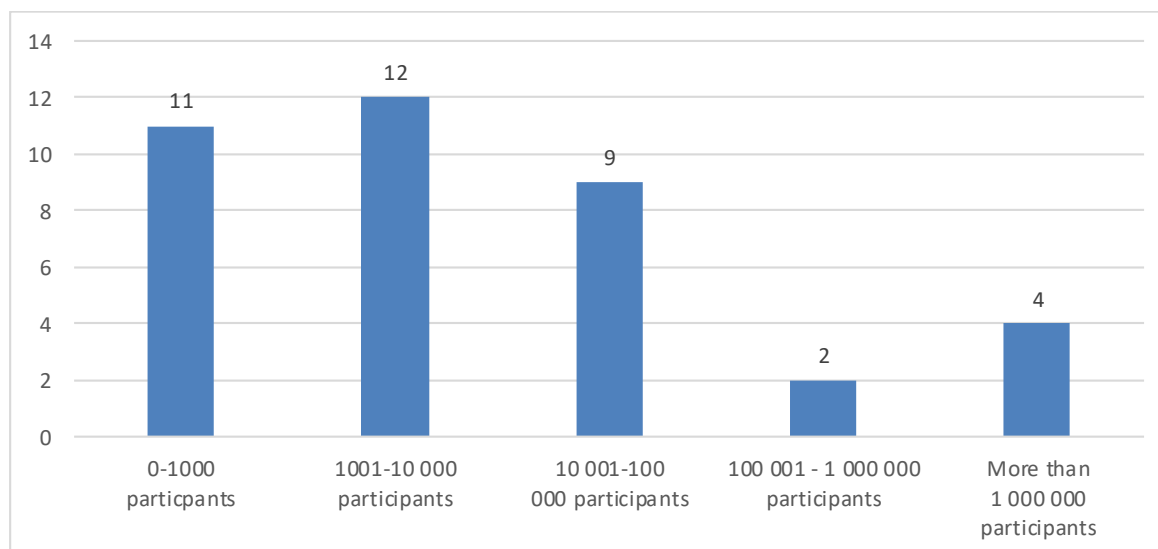


⁷¹ Throughout the rest of this section, we only take into account the years 2016, 2017 and 2018, as the data for 2019 were not available. In addition, due to a lack of availability in reporting for some projects, this overview was drafted from the results of 47 grants (instead of 54).

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

These events managed to reach around **6 655 107 participants**⁷², with an average of around 5 000 attendees per event. In general, the grant beneficiaries were mainly involved in small-scale events of up to 10 000 participants (see figure below). Only 6 organisations out of 38 implemented (or took part in) events attracting more than 100 000 participants.

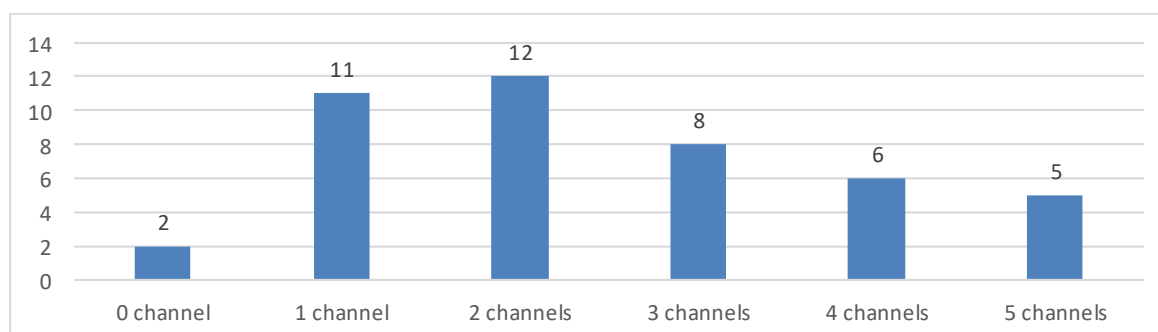
Figure 98. Number of grant recipients involved in events according to audience size, 2016 to 2018 (n=38)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

Use of social media was also widespread among the grant recipients as an effective way to multiply the number of people reached by the information produced. Only two recipients did not invest in this area (see figure below). **The majority focused on managing between one and three social media channels** – although nearly 25% of them published grant-related content on four or five channels.

Figure 99. Number of grant recipients using different numbers of social media channels, 2016 to 2018 (n=46)

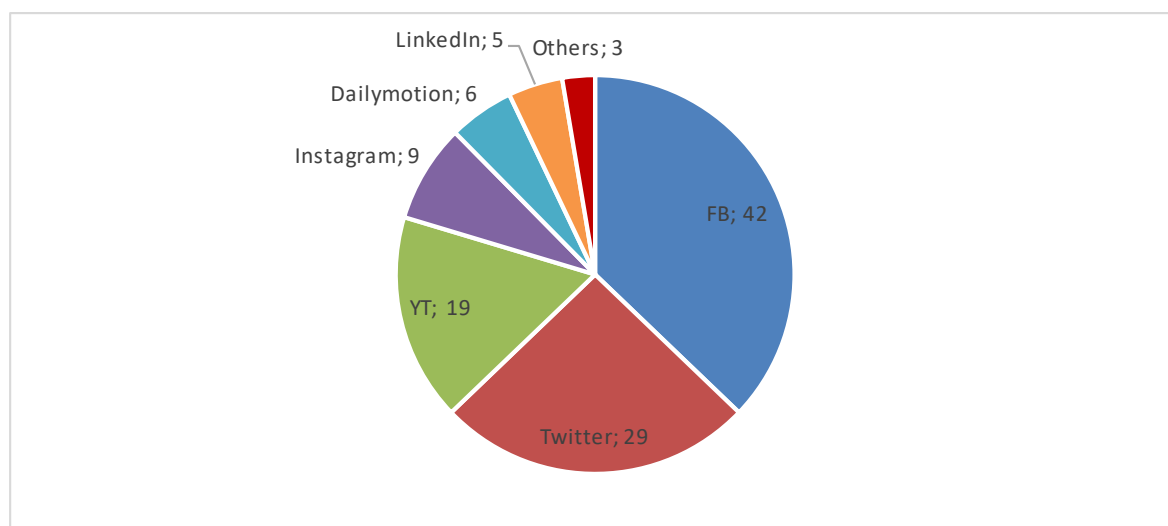


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

⁷² This number only represents a rough estimate, with the aim of providing a general overview. The actual number may be higher as with the available data, we were only able to register the number of participants at 1,139 events involving 38 grant recipients. At the same time, considering the fact that the same people might attend different events, the number of unique participants is likely lower, even though the geographical diversity of the events might limit this phenomenon.

In total, 113 social media channels were used as part of projects by the grant beneficiaries. Facebook emerges as a key communication tool, used by 42 organisations out of 44 (see figure below). While relatively less popular choices, Twitter and YouTube were also among the most used social media channels, selected by 29 and 19 grant recipients, respectively. By contrast, Instagram, Dailymotion and LinkedIn were only used by a small proportion of grant recipients.

Figure 100. Use of different social media channels by grant recipients, 2016 to 2018 (n=44)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

Over three years, **15 688 673 people were reached** by 18 social media channels out of 113⁷³ (see table below). This number nevertheless hides a massive disparity in terms of the level of reach, depending on the organisation managing the channel. For example, whereas the Facebook activities of one grant recipient reached 195 persons, another organisation reached up to 6 722 132 with its Facebook posts. The same goes for the number of social media followers: **6 973 777 people subscribed** to 63 channels, but while some of these channels have fewer than 200 followers/subscribers, others have over 2 000 000.

The number of posts (including videos) on these channels varies between beneficiaries, from just 11 posts by one beneficiary, up to 37 160 by another. In total, **43 339 publications on social media** were reported across 29 channels. These publications generated **1 209 617 interactions** (likes/shares/comments) on 23 different channels, and social media pages gathered a total of **953 875 views** across 24 channels. Among these elements too, the difference between organisations is substantial.

Table 22. Number of publications, views, interactions, followers and people reached by grant recipients on social media, 2016 to 2018

	Number of publications (29 channels)	Number of views (24 channels)	Number of interactions (23 channels)	Number of followers (63 channels)	Reach of social media (18 channels)
Total (2016-	43 339	953 875	1 209 617	6 973 777	15 688 673

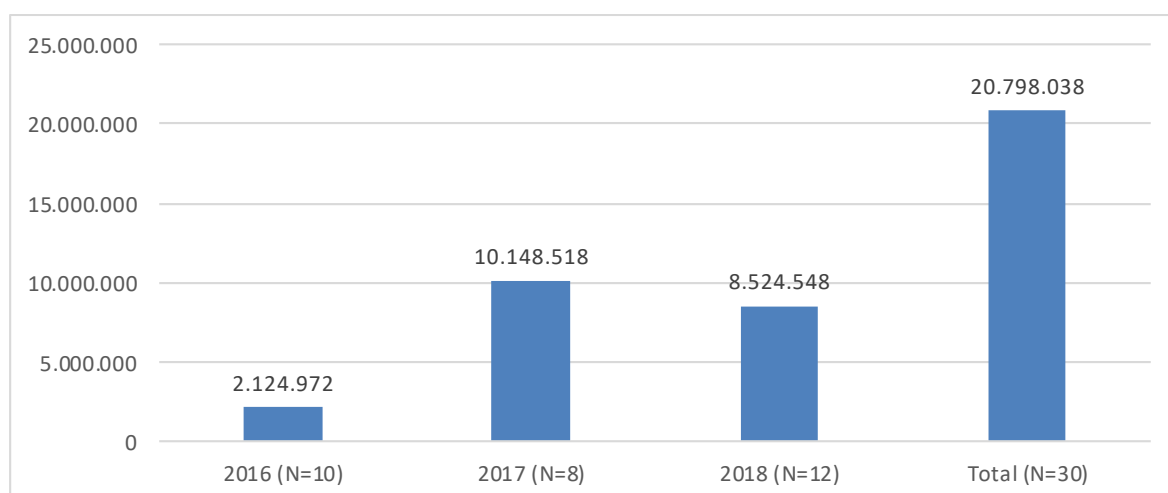
⁷³ The information was not available for the other social media channels.

	Number of publications (29 channels)	Number of views (24 channels)	Number of interactions (23 channels)	Number of followers (63 channels)	Reach of social media (18 channels)
2018)					
Lowest number	11	119	159	193	195
Greatest number	37 160	226 870	742 447	2 429 400	6 722 132
Average per channel	1 494	39 745	52 592	110 695	871 593

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

As regards websites, each project was promoted by between **one and 50 websites** (the websites of the grant recipients themselves, or other websites relaying articles or giving visibility to the grant projects), with an average of around five websites per project. Between 2016 and 2018, **29 new websites were created** specifically for grant projects, and at least **12 new dedicated sections** were created on grant beneficiaries' websites⁷⁴. **20 798 038 website visitors** were reported for 30 projects (see figure below) between 2016 and 2018. For 15 of these projects, the websites accumulated a total of **10 820 220 views**, individually ranging from around 2 000 to over 4 000 000 views⁷⁵.

Figure 101. Number of website visitors between 2016 and 2018



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

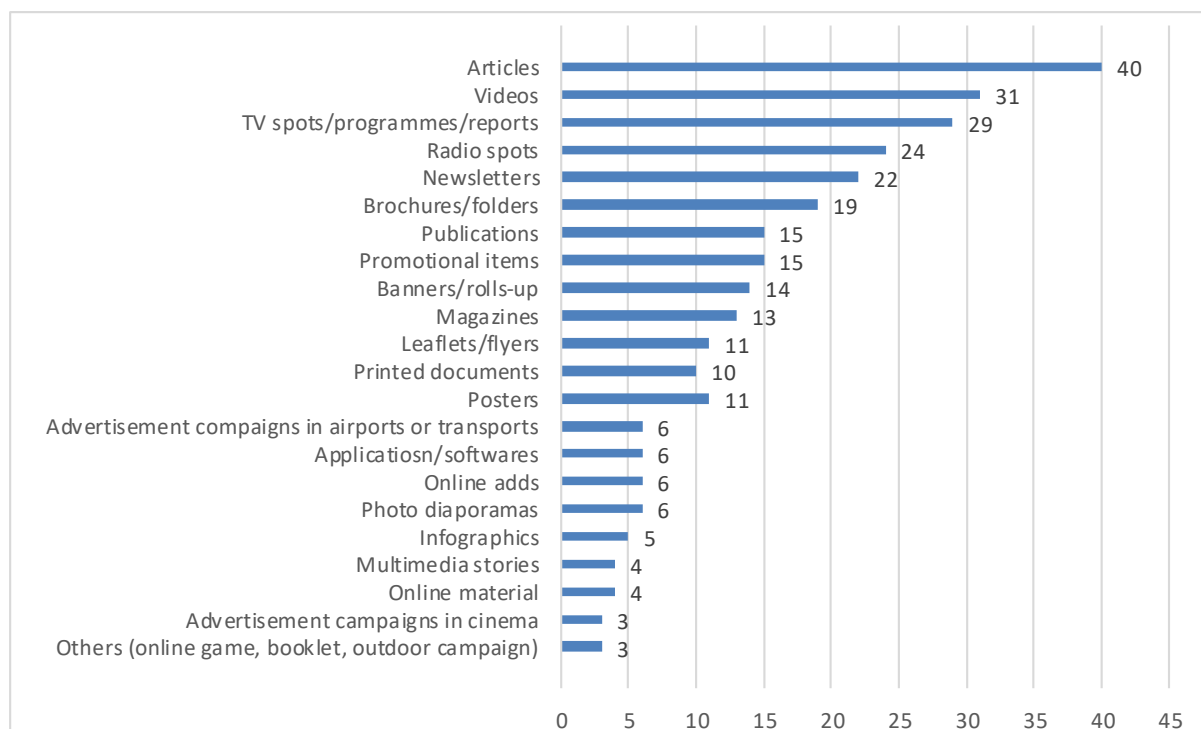
Lastly, multiple audio, visual and audio-visual elements, both online and offline, were produced by grant recipients as part of their projects. **Articles, videos, TV productions and radio spots** were the most popular, produced by respectively 40, 31, 29, 24 and 22

⁷⁴ The actual number is probably higher than 12, as we have only taken into account those cases in which grant reports specifically mentioned the creation of a new section. It is likely that other organisations have created new sections on their websites without mentioning it in their reports.

⁷⁵ The number of visitors and views directly relating to the grant projects considered here may be lower, as they do not represent the numbers of unique visitors and views, and we cannot be certain that these visitors to the websites are paying attention to the parts specifically about the grant projects.

out of 47 grant beneficiaries (see figure below). In contrast, multimedia stories, online material (e.g. pedagogical documents), advertisement campaigns in cinemas, online games, booklets and outdoor campaigns were among those less frequently used, with only four or fewer grant recipients developing them.

Figure 102. Number of grant recipients using various audio and audio-visual elements, 2016 to 2018 (n=47)



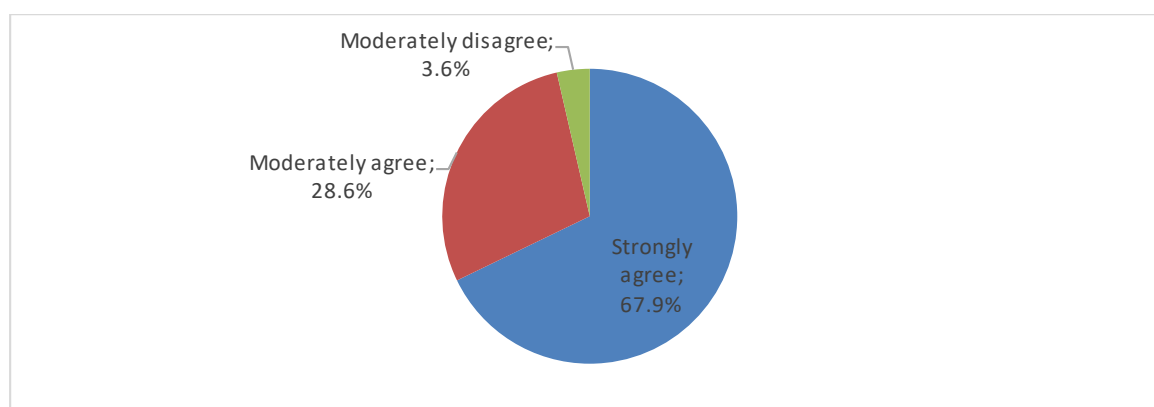
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on technical grant reports.

4.5.1.2. Results of grants

Project management and implementation

Grant beneficiaries held highly positive opinions regarding project management and implementation. The **guidance provided by DG AGRI staff** emerges as a key resource throughout the implementation of projects. This element is met with almost unanimously positive opinions, with 97% of the respondents being satisfied with the guidance received (see figure on the next page). The same sentiment was echoed by the grant recipients consulted for the case studies, who underlined the fact that DG AGRI was very responsive and eager to help, providing responses to questions, relevant information and even visits. A few interviewees reported gaps in communication with DG AGRI contact persons, who in their view were not always easily reachable or did not answer their queries, but these represent a small minority.

Figure 103. Grant recipients who agreed guidance provided by DG AGRI staff during the implementation of the project was sufficient and helpful (n=28)

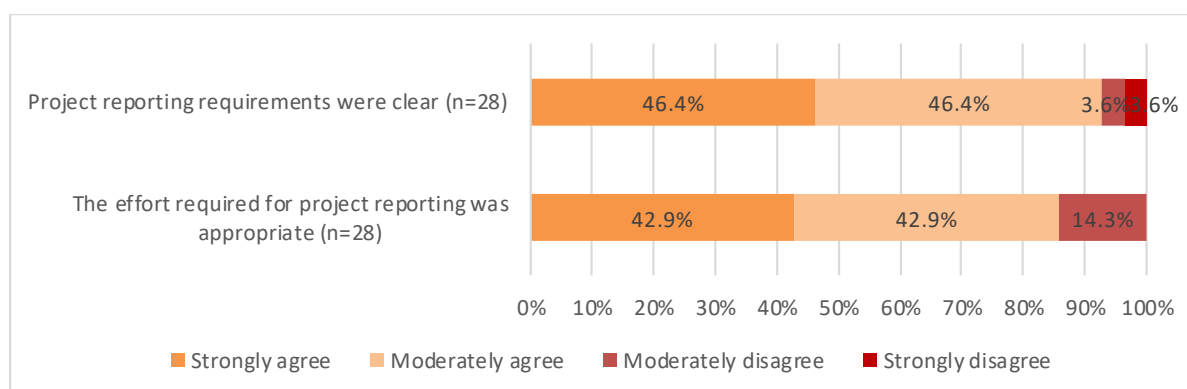


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

The grant recipients interviewed expressed deep appreciation for the smooth and well-established grant procedures. In particular, one of the steps in the grant process, the **kick-off meeting** that takes place in Brussels, was met with a **high level of appreciation**. Financially managed by DG AGRI, the meeting helped grant recipients to build relationships and enabled the exchange of useful information, and was seen as an essential to the successful start and further implementation of their projects. Although the implementation of the grant procedures is recognised as being efficient by most interviewees, some indicated that it could still be improved. Suggestions included less rigidity in terms of editorial content, as the proposed changes currently often cause delays and uncertainty. Also suggested were longer-term projects (e.g. two years) in order to fully implement activities, optimise the use of resources, and consequently achieve a longer-term impact. Another suggestion was providing recipients with more information about other grant beneficiaries and encouraging communication and synergies across borders – the first step towards increased the transnationality of projects advocated by some interviewees. It should be noted, however, that some grant projects are already transnational, and thus the opportunity to implement projects in multiple countries already exists.

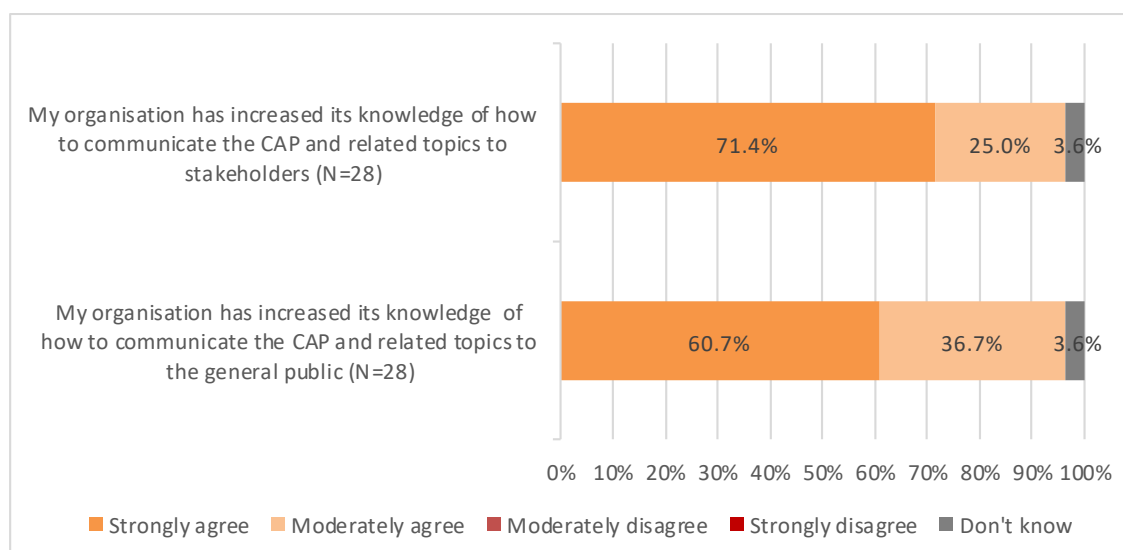
The **clarity of the project reporting requirements** was also evaluated very positively by grant recipients. Indeed, 93% of survey respondents agreed that these requirements were well described (see figure on the next page). Moreover, all information required for the application is available at the DG AGRI website, and can be easily accessed by any organisation wishing to apply. Grant applicants also positively assessed the **efforts required for project reporting, with 86% of respondents agreeing** that such efforts were appropriate (see figure on the next page). Some grant recipients involved in the case studies provided potential explanations for the level of moderate dissatisfaction that remained. A few grant beneficiaries felt overwhelmed by the extensive amount of reporting required, which was often seen as too time-consuming and not always necessary. For example, one of the interviewees stressed the fact that the monthly reports were regarded as extra work, since weekly reports were already being sent. The procedure in the event of planning changes was also perceived as cumbersome. To address this issue, one grant recipient proposed changing the reporting approach from administrative (i.e. strictly following deadlines and the project timeline) to one that was more results-oriented (i.e. allowing delays if the results are achieved).

However, the predominantly positive responses of grant recipients concerning project reporting should be viewed with caution, as **significant reporting gaps** exist in the documents submitted by grant beneficiaries. The level of detail in the reports varies widely, with some beneficiaries providing a comprehensive outline of project results, while others present only minimal information.

Figure 104. Percentage of grant recipients agreeing with statements on the clarity and appropriateness of reporting requirements?

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

The projects contributed various **positive influences on their organisations** in relation to the CAP. Almost all of the grant beneficiaries surveyed agreed that the grant projects implemented had improved their organisations' knowledge of how to communicate about the CAP and related topics. This increased their expertise with regard to communication with both stakeholders and the general public. In relation to both of these target groups, 96% of respondents declared that the grants had resulted in a higher level of know-how regarding CAP communication (see figure below). The grant recipients interviewed for the case studies also held very enthusiastic views on that topic. As a result of organising various CAP-related activities, as well as the emergence of new issues and the development of innovative approaches along the way, the grant beneficiaries were convinced that the projects had improved the communication strategies and methods of their organisations, and therefore their ability to reach their target audiences. For example, one grant beneficiary that had already participated in several DG AGRI grant projects, explained that their organisation had learnt over the years that it is best to adopt a narrower approach to communication activities, rather than trying to communicate about everything. Another organisation took advantage of the European funding to implement new communication tools that aimed to make the CAP appear less technical to its audiences.

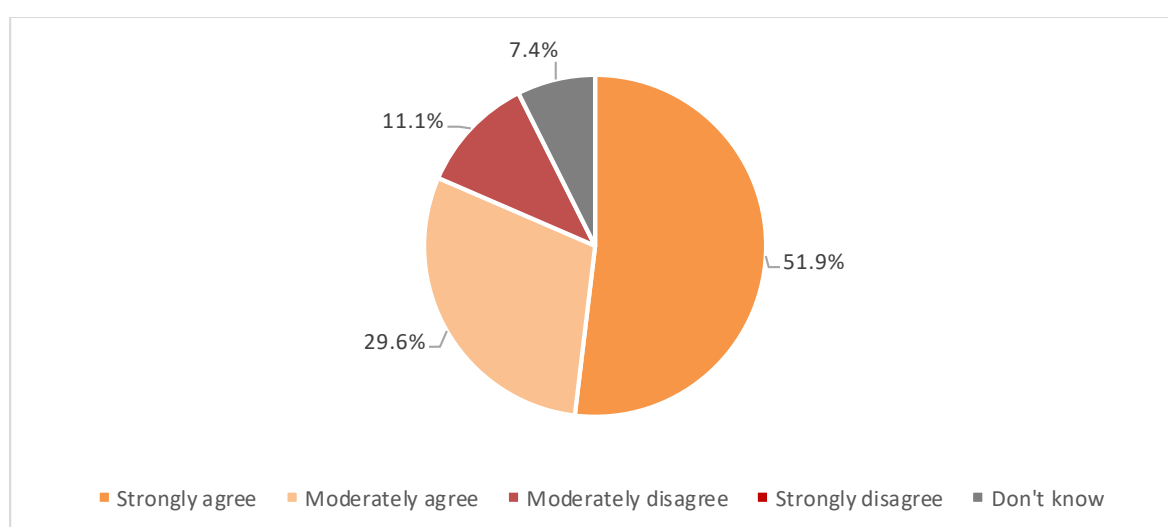
Figure 105. "Do you agree with the following statements regarding the increased knowledge of your organisation following the project?"

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

This increased effectiveness in terms of communication is not the only advantage arising

from the grant projects. In addition, 82% of survey respondents agreed that their organisations had also benefitted from **cooperation with partner organisations** (see figure below). Such partnerships were reported quite frequently in the case studies, particularly in the case of multi-country projects. These collaborations are often described as being smooth, enabling the organisations to have a more significant outreach and to plan communication activities that are relevant to the different national contexts. Cooperation also provided an opportunity for grant recipients to discover how other organisations in Europe operate, how they differ, and how effective they are. Apart from cooperation between organisations that were directly involved in the projects, several interviewees also highlighted the importance of good partnerships with farmers and agricultural cooperatives to ensure the attention of other stakeholders. Cooperation with news agencies was also judged as being of interest, as journalists could cover events or relay the articles by the organisations on media portals. For the grant recipients' kick-off meeting, DG AGRI also included a presentation of the Ag-Press network⁷⁶, which could further help to strengthen links between agricultural journalists in the Member States and the grant projects implemented. More rarely, recipients mentioned collaboration with institutions (e.g. the ministry of agriculture) during grant projects, mostly in terms of financial support or content dissemination.

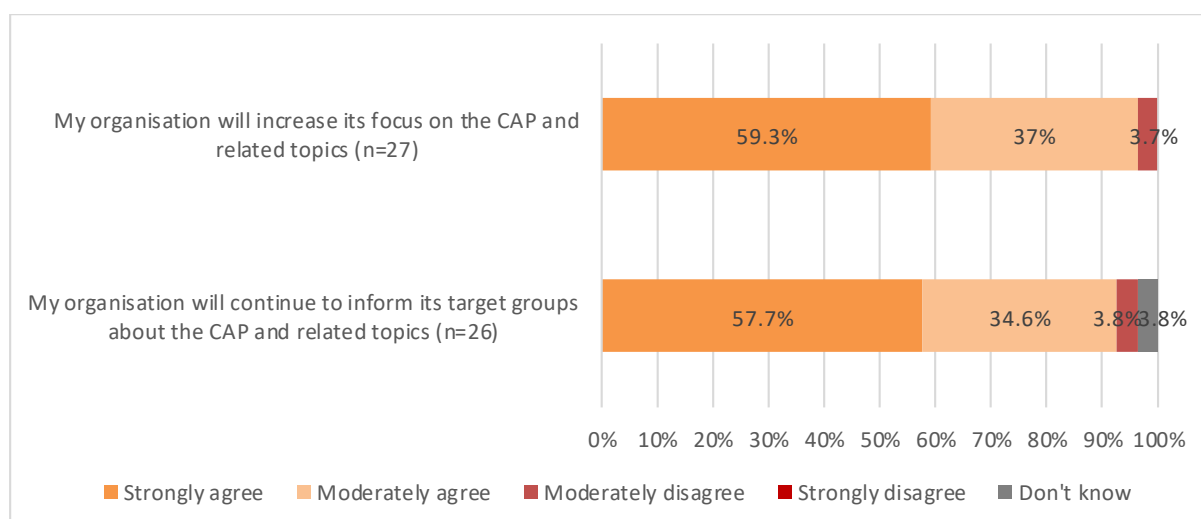
Figure 106. "Do you agree with the fact that your organisation has benefitted from cooperation with partner organisations?" (n=27)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

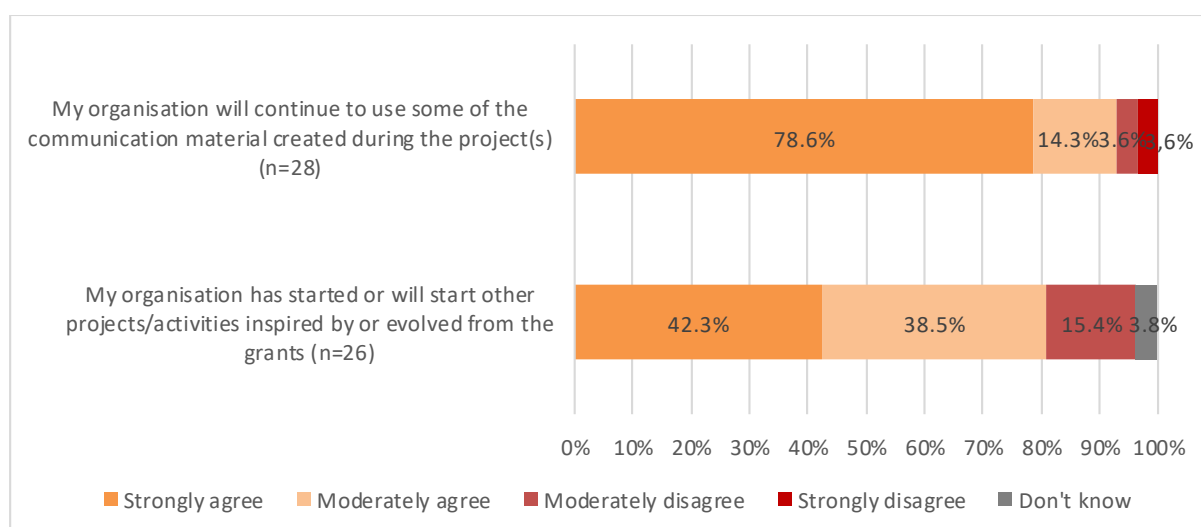
Furthermore, as a result of the grants awarded, the CAP will continue to be an essential subject of communication by the grant recipients. 96% of survey respondents who have received grants claim that their organisations will now **increase its focus on the CAP** and related topics (see figure on the next page). Moreover, no less than 92% of respondents who had received grants stated that they would **keep informing their target groups about the CAP** and related topics (figure on the next page). As underlined by the interviewees, it seems that the experience acquired through the conceptualisation and implementation of projects reinforced the enthusiasm of the organisations, now better equipped, to continue working on this topic. According to some grant recipients, the success of their projects has also motivated other members of their organisations to start communicating about the CAP.

⁷⁶ Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/grants-kick-off-2020-ag-press-access-food-farming-media_en.pdf

Figure 107. Do you agree with the following statements regarding the involvement of your organisation with the CAP following the project?

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

One way for the organisations to maintain their level of involvement when it comes to communicating about the CAP would be to **continue to use some of the communication material created during the projects**. This idea appears to be popular among the grant recipients surveyed, with 93% of them considering making use of existing material in the future (see figure below). Online information content, platforms and applications created for the projects are the most likely elements to be used beyond the lifespan of the projects. Another means to continue communication about the CAP, or to increase the focus on this topic, would be to **start other projects inspired by the grants**. 81% of survey respondents said they had already started or would start to do this (see figure below). Many interviewees declared that they had already applied for another DG AGRI grant, or expressed a desire to carry on with similar projects in the future. These endeavours are often seen as an opportunity to implement the next stages of grant projects and to further achieve their initial goals through new activities.

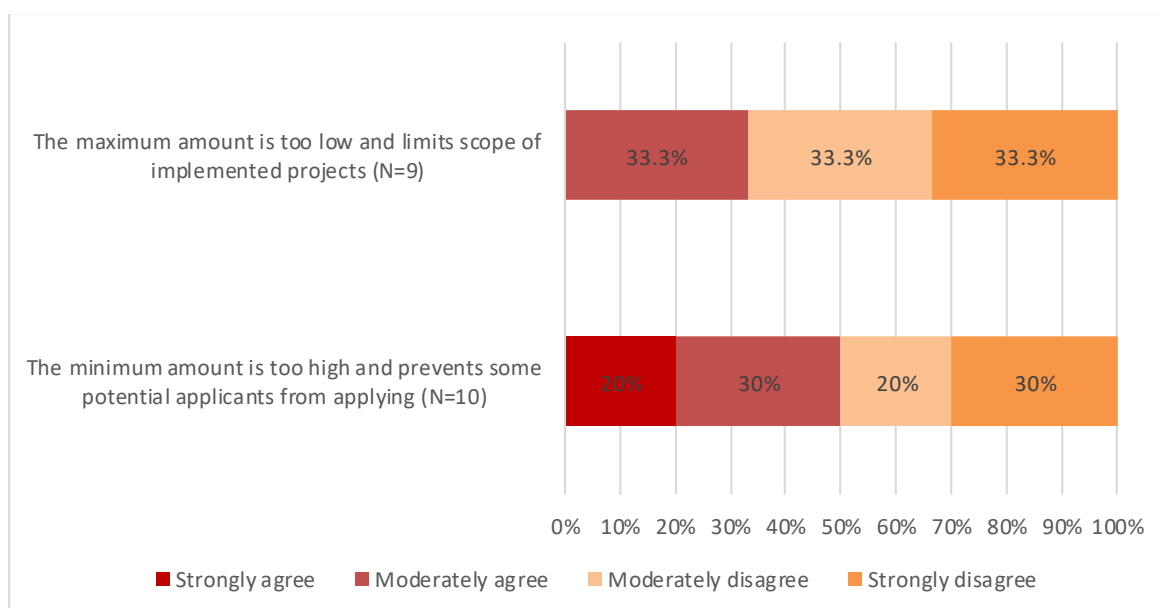
Figure 108. "Do you agree with the following statements regarding these means to keep informing your target groups about the CAP?"

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

The funding limits and co-funding rate of the grant scheme are less well appreciated by grant recipients. Although only a small number of grant recipients expressed an opinion on these questions, of these a majority (67%) disagreed with the statement that the

maximum amount of the funding of the grant scheme is too low and limits the scope of implemented projects (see figure below).

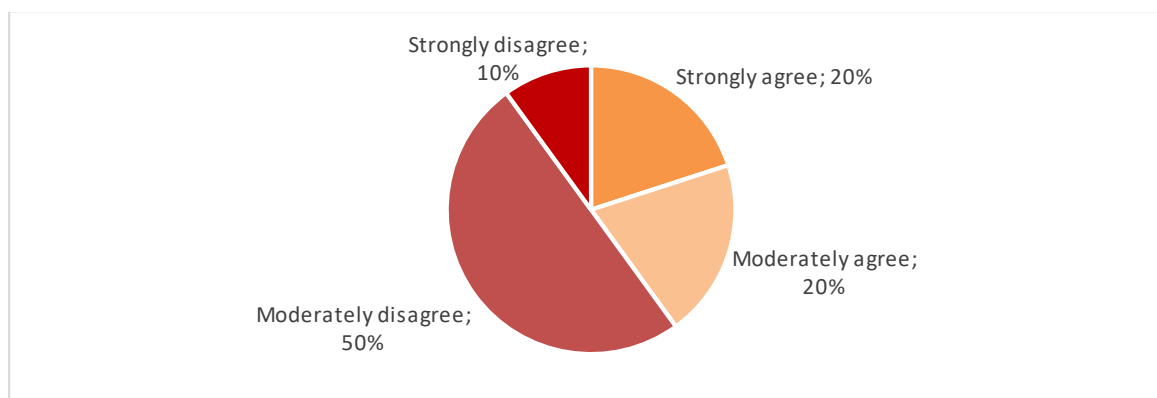
Figure 109. "To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the funding limits of the grant scheme?"



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

The **co-funding rate** itself does not seem to meet the expectations of most grant recipients: 60% of them consider it insufficient (see figure below). The grant recipients interviewed noted that the level of co-funding could be higher, ideally around 75-80%, which would alleviate their financial constraints and make it possible for more organisations to participate in the grant scheme.

Figure 110. "To what extent do you agree with the level of co-funding provided by the grant scheme being sufficient?" (n=10)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

An increased awareness and knowledge regarding the CAP

Overall, grant recipients consider their projects successful in terms of **improving public knowledge** about the CAP. In most cases, grant beneficiaries cited the number of views, shares, visits, comments and participants in their numerous communication activities as a clear indicator of the effectiveness of their projects. Other popular evidence included positive conversations and evidence of the further dissemination of CAP information

through multipliers (teachers, news agencies, farmer cooperatives and so on), suggesting a more significant reach and therefore a potential increase in awareness of the CAP. However, **few project evaluations** have been conducted to support this perception. Some grant beneficiaries explained that it was still too early to measure the impact of their projects, while others may have been discouraged by the difficulty of the exercise.

Some grant recipients nevertheless provided statistics in their grant reports which go beyond their own personal impact assessments. Based on surveys completed by participants after events, 14 organisations were able to indicate the percentage of respondents who were more aware of the content and objectives of the CAP after their activities. Between 2016 and 2018, the reported shares of people with an increased awareness of the CAP ranged from 62% to 100% across those projects that reported this statistic. In addition, according to the data available for 12 grant beneficiaries, an average of **82% of individuals stated that their knowledge of the CAP and related issues had improved** as a result of their involvement in grant-funded activities. Among these, the lowest proportion reported was 46%; the highest, 100%.

Box 1. Project-specific examples of measuring increased awareness

Other evaluation measures used by some organisations are worth mentioning as they provide useful information about the effectiveness of individual projects. One example is the external evaluation commissioned by Economedia for its 2017 project 'Ahead for CAP' which revealed that between 70% and 90% of participants in the two conferences and contest considered the project as having increased their interest in searching for additional information about the CAP and Bulgarian agriculture. 84% of users of the project's platform and participants in the two conferences and webinar thought that their participation was beneficial for their professional development and the development of their organisations.

Agri Aware is another organisation that has produced personal indicators, using survey responses by participants in three different events. Because this grant recipient has benefitted from several DG AGRI grants over the years, it was able to compare the most recent survey results with data collected from similar events in the past. Thus, for the project 'Many hats, one CAP' (2018), whereas 46% of participants at the 2014 Tullamore Show thought that the CAP was good for everyone, this proportion increased to 57% at the 2018 Tullamore Show, showing an increased understanding of the benefits of the CAP. In addition, for this same event, the proportion of respondents knowing what the CAP stands for increased by four percentage points between 2014 (75%) and 2018 (79%). The evolution is less positive for the Ploughing Championship Show, at which the proportion of respondents who knew what 'CAP' stood for dropped by three percentage points to stand at 69% in 2018. According to the grant beneficiary, this decrease is due to a growth in urban audiences in 2018 as compared to 2014.

However, all of these results should be approached with caution. As mentioned above, they mostly represent the opinion of participants at events, who may have a specific profile and may be more interested from the outset in learning more about the CAP than the general population.

4.5.1.3. Impacts of grants

Specific, quantitative evidence to measure **changes in opinions about the CAP** as a result of grant projects was non-existent. Nevertheless, information from case studies offers some interesting subjective insights. While some grant beneficiaries admitted that **their own opinion about the CAP had improved** after carrying out intensive work on the topic, they also tried to estimate the impact of their activities on public opinion. As

previously mentioned in relation to assessing increased knowledge about the CAP, one way to roughly evaluate changes in opinions is to look at the project outputs. Given that many projects, such as '#FutureLabEU on Food and Farming in Europe' (implemented by Eurosoc#Digital in 2018) or 'Discovering tomorrow's farm leaders' (implemented in 2018 by Strategma) aimed to improve perceptions of the CAP – for example, by making it appear less like an outdated and unattractive policy area – these metrics could thus represent a sign of more positive opinions regarding the CAP. It can be assumed that at least some of the audience visiting events or websites were influenced by messages drafted precisely to achieve that objective. Other projects did not seek to boost the image of the CAP, but to offer a realistic picture of the policy. Even so, according to interviewees, these projects also reduced criticism of the CAP by developing **a greater sense of transparency** and certainty surrounding it.

The case of the project 'Parlez-vous CAP?' (2018), carried out by Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe, provides a concrete qualitative example in which opinion changes have been observed among farmers and teachers. Regarding the first target group, most of the farmers previously denouncing the red tape appeared more inclined to view this administrative process as necessary following the events. Teachers who did not previously understand the link between the CAP and their academic programme before the project ran its video contest in schools, subsequently realised that the CAP was a good example to use when talking about EU institutions and the impact of the EU on everyday life.

However, as underlined by some of the grant recipients interviewed, changes in opinions cannot be observed among people who had no or little knowledge of the CAP before the projects, as these did not hold any opinions whatsoever. In the case of projects that focus on target groups that are particularly uninformed about the CAP, these activities were more likely to be effective at increasing awareness rather than improving opinions about the CAP. Some of the grant recipients consulted also noted that it was easier to achieve positive opinion changes about agriculture in general, rather than about the specific topic of the CAP.

Effectiveness of grants: summary

- **Assistance with project management and implementation** were highly appreciated by the grant beneficiaries. None of the relevant questions in the grant applicant survey yielded a satisfaction rate of less than 85%. To further improve these aspects, the grant recipients interviewed would like to have greater flexibility in terms of reporting frequency, planning and editorial changes, transnational exchanges and project length (e.g. the opportunity to implement two-year projects).
- **Projects experienced various positive influences on their organisations in relation to the CAP**, based on the results of the grant applicant survey. 96% of grant recipients reported improving their communication strategies to inform stakeholders and the general public about the CAP. 82% also reported benefitting from cooperation with partner organisations (agricultural cooperatives, news agencies, governmental institutions etc.). As a result of the grants, 96% said they would strengthen their focus on the CAP, and would continue to inform their target audiences about it (92%). To do so, many of them said they would keep using material created as part of grant projects (93%) and/or will implement projects inspired by the grants (81%).
- **Opinions on the funding limits of the grant scheme and the co-funding rates are less favourable.** While the upper funding limit does not appear to be an issue, half of grant beneficiaries surveyed stated that the minimum amount of funding is too high and may deter some potential applicants. As for the co-funding rate, 60% consider it insufficient. Interviewees would also like it to increase, ideally towards 75-80%.
- The data available in the grant reports shows that between 62% and 100% of **persons across different projects declared an increased awareness of the CAP** following project activities between 2016 and 2018. In addition, an average of **82% of individuals stated that they had improved their knowledge of the CAP and related issues** as a result of their involvement in grant activities. However, these results mostly represent the opinions of participants in events. A more complete analysis has yet to confirm this level of effectiveness.
- No quantitative attempts have been made to assess **changes in opinions about the CAP** as a result of grant projects. Several interviewees therefore looked at the outputs of their activities to conclude that these have improved opinions about the

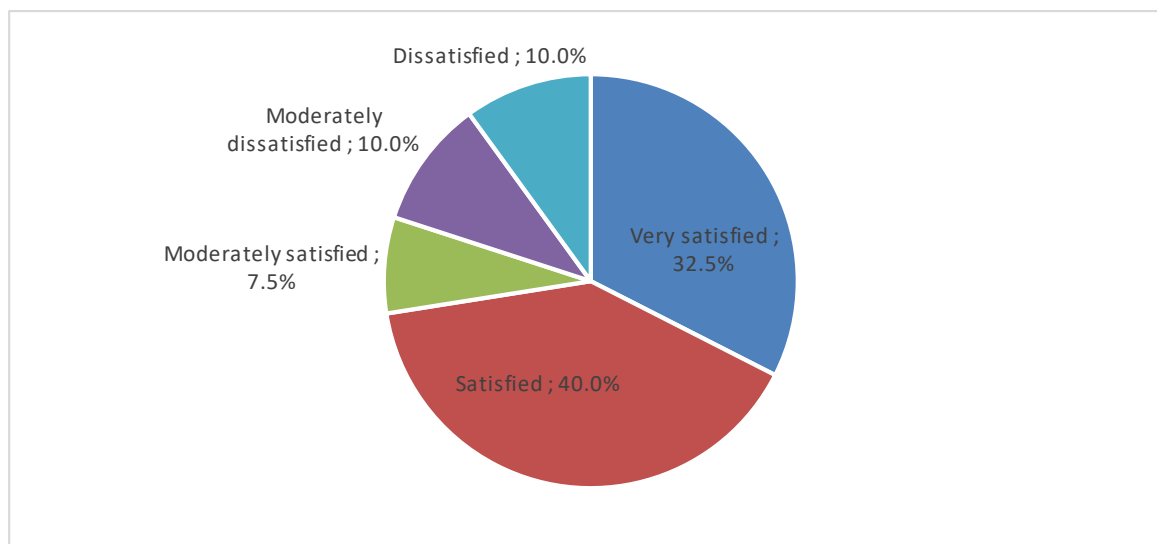
6.5.2. Effectiveness of grants: grant application procedure (ESQ 5)

In this sub-section, we assess the effectiveness of the grant evaluation procedure. From the level of satisfaction of surveyed and interviewed grant applicants regarding various elements of the application process (information, transparency, timing etc.), we identify whether the procedure is perceived as clear, easily understandable and appropriate by the stakeholders applying to the grants.

The level of overall satisfaction among grant recipients is high, yet it has declined in comparison with the previous evaluation. Globally, **participation in the grant scheme** met with the expectations of the grant recipients: a large majority of survey respondents (80%) declared themselves satisfied overall with their experience (see figure on the next page). This generally positive opinion is also shared by the grant recipients interviewed. The interviewees repeatedly pointed out their pleasant and constructive collaboration with DG AGRI, as well as the clarity of the application process. Even so, the level of overall satisfaction expressed does not compare with that reported in the previous evaluation, which reached 95% among survey respondents. However, this change seems at odds with

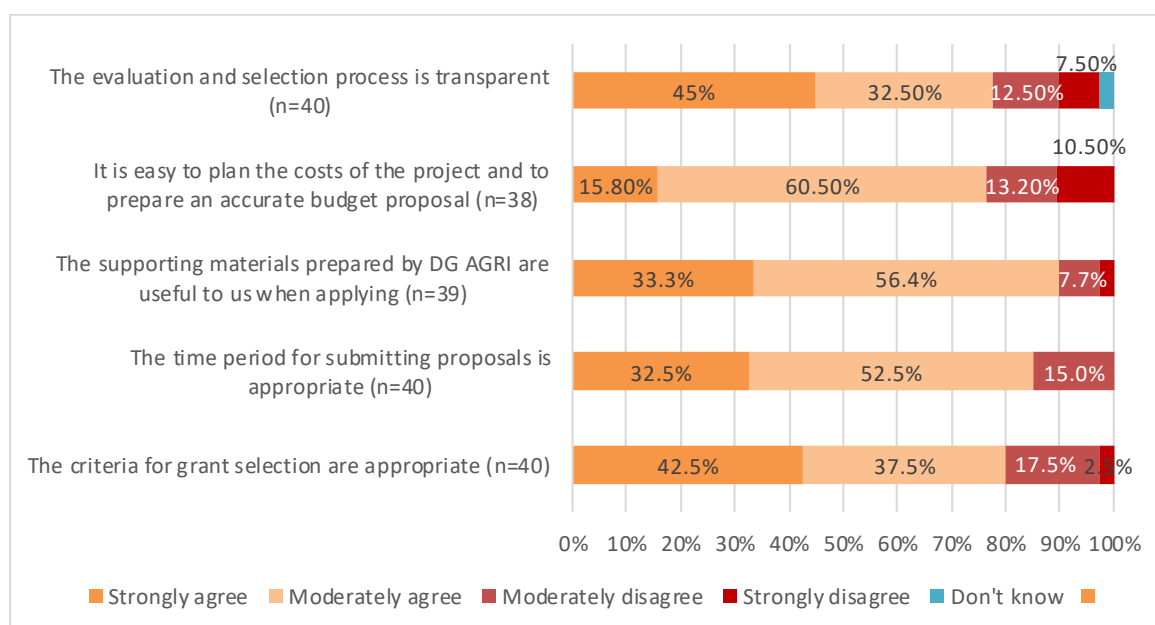
the survey results in relation to several aspects of the grant evaluation procedure: for this evaluation period, all but one of these indicators was higher than in the previous evaluation. Indeed, at least 70% of respondents currently hold a positive opinion concerning all of these elements, which was not the case in the previous survey. Therefore, it appears that this decline in the overall level of satisfaction does not substantially impact applicants' perceptions of the grant evaluation procedure, which remain mostly favourable.

Figure 111. Overall satisfaction of grant recipients regarding their participation in the grant scheme (n=40)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

Among the elements most widely appreciated by grant applicants, the survey results indicate that the **supporting materials provided by DG AGRI**, which relate to the application process, already satisfy 90% of respondents (see figure on the next page). To further improve the usefulness of DG AGRI documents, interviewees consulted for the case studies suggested disseminating examples of successful applications, which could then help future grant applicants – especially those new to the process – to improve the quality of their applications. However, because applications are confidential documents, this option is not feasible (an alternative could be to provide a more extensive presentation on successful projects).

Figure 112. The satisfaction of grant applicants with various aspects of the grant evaluation procedure

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

Satisfaction with the **time period for submitting proposals** has improved between the two evaluation periods. Indeed, while 68% of respondents to the previous survey agreed that the time period was appropriate, this figure has risen to 85% in the current survey (see figure above). When mentioned in the interviews, this aspect was always commented upon positively, thus reinforcing the overall positive sentiment surrounding the timeframe for preparing a proposal. This is probably due to internal learning within the organisations applying, who tend to participate in the grant application process each or every alternate year.

The criteria for grant selection also receive a fair share of positive opinion, with 80% of respondents stating that the **criteria are appropriate** (see figure above). This satisfaction was reflected in most of the interviews for the case studies, with many grant beneficiaries emphasising the fact that the application criteria are well established, fair and formulated in a reliable way, even more so than in the case of other European funding bodies. On the other hand, the few negative comments concern the lack of flexibility in the criteria, encouraging certain types of activities at the expense of others (e.g. online activities, which are yet less costly and have a wider reach). Similarly, grant applicants positively assess the **level of transparency in the evaluation and selection process**, with around 78% of survey respondents declaring themselves satisfied with it (see figure above). Some interviewees still expressed having had some misunderstandings regarding the negative outcome of their application, not fully grasping the reasons behind this rejection. In parallel, the responses to an open question given by four survey respondents revealed a specific concern about a general lack of transparency.

While the share of survey respondents agreeing that it **is easy to plan the costs of the project and to prepare an accurate budget proposal** has increased between the two evaluations periods (67% before versus 76% now), the majority of these are grant applicants who are *moderately* satisfied with this element; few respondents (just 16%) *strongly* agree with this proposition (see figure above). When we consider those respondents who do not show a high appreciation of the financial aspects of the grant process, we notice that the proportion of grant applicants who are *strongly* dissatisfied has

risen compared with the last survey, from 3% to 11%. From the interviewees' perspective, the main concerns regarding the financial planning of projects are the fact that there is no possibility of receiving interim or advance financing, which makes it difficult for applicants to plan their activities, having to first figure out how to finance them. The process of cost justification was also considered cumbersome by a few interviewees, who would like to see it simplified.

Finally, with a satisfaction level of 73%, the **clarity and adequacy of the application form and related requirements** is the element of the grant evaluation procedure that gathered the lowest proportion of positive feedback, albeit still above the threshold of 70% (see figure on previous page). This is also the only aspect whose share of satisfied respondents fell between the two evaluation periods, although the difference is slight (three percentage points). A rise in strong opinions can be observed with regard to this aspect: both the level of people who were *strongly* satisfied (19% before, versus 28% now) and the level of people *strongly* dissatisfied (0% before, versus 10 % now). Interviewees' opinions appear similarly divided, with the online system appearing as a controversial topic. On the one hand, some grant recipients highlighted the fact that the **application process is straightforward, simple and manageable**, especially with more frequent use of the online portal, which allows the convenient transmission of documents online.

On the other hand, this online **tool was sometimes judged too complicated**, malfunctioning, and leading to some repetition, as some answers had already been provided on the form. Moreover, the level of detail asked in the application process was also a subject of complaint. Indeed, this was not only perceived as being excessive and limiting the flexibility of applicants; it was also deemed to be challenging to deliver in practice, since it requires a long-term planning perspective. Overall, some interviews revealed that practice seems to play a role in making up one's mind about the application requirements: those with previous experience of the grants tended to find the application process more comfortable.

Effectiveness of grants: summary

- Overall, the grant evaluation **procedure is clearly defined, easy to follow and works effectively**, with only minor suggestions from grant applicants as to how it could be improved.
- There are **high overall levels of satisfaction** with participation in the grant scheme. The **supporting materials provided by DG AGRI** are particularly appreciated when applying.
- Grant applicants mentioned that the possibility of interim and/or advanced payment would be welcome, so that the focus would be more on elaborating relevant and tailor-made activities rather than on financial constraints.
- Concerning the **clarity and adequacy of the application form and related requirements**, some users reported difficulties in using the online system, and the level of detail required is sometimes assessed as not being sufficiently flexible. This is especially relevant for organisations applying for the first time.

6.5.3. Efficiency of grants: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives (ESQ 6)

To assess the efficiency of the grants, we first present the trends in the grant budget during the evaluation period. We then draw on evidence from specific grant projects that were selected for cases studies, where efficiency was assessed. These include two grant projects for each of the following types of case study: events for school children, teachers and

young people; information campaigns that had a strong focus on events; web/TV-based campaigns only; and audio-visual productions.

Trends in the grant budget

The budget allocated for grants to implement information measures concerning the CAP grew throughout the evaluation period. The total and average costs of the grants budget are summarised in the table below. In addition to the costs directly allocated to grant beneficiaries, DG AGRI also accrued human resources-related costs for running the grant scheme. Notably, these included 0.4 FTE for the team leader, plus 3 AST FTEs in 2018-2019/2.8 AST FTEs in 2016-2017.

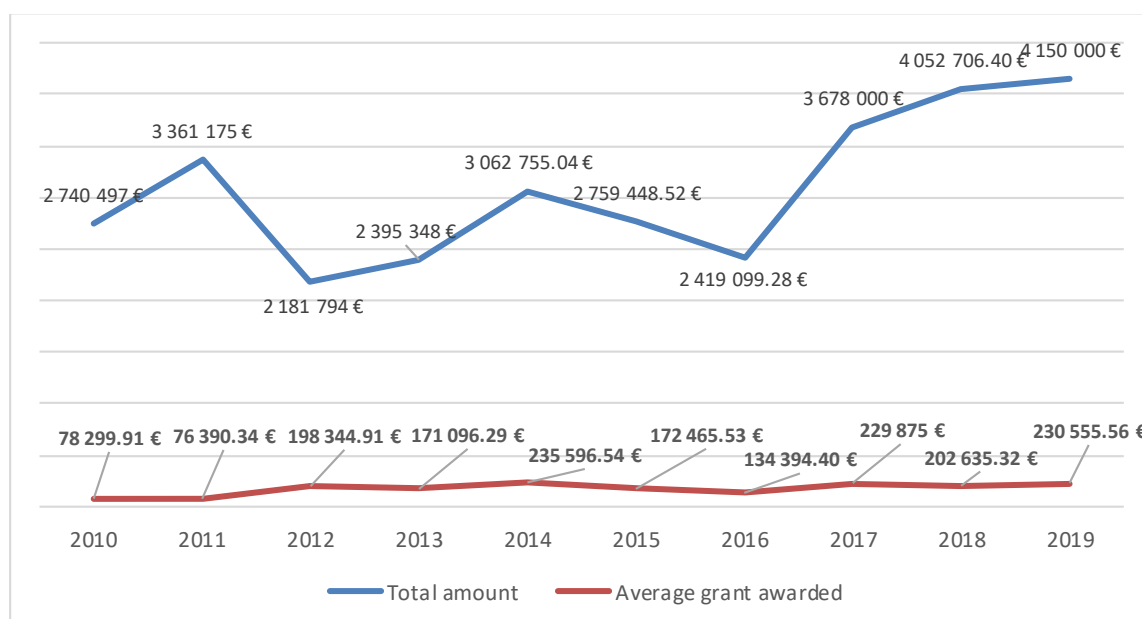
Table 23. Summary of spending on grants

Year	Number of grants	Total budget	Budget growth (%)	Average cost
2016	18	EUR 2 419 099.28	-12%	EUR 134 394.40
2017	16	EUR 3 678 000.00	+52%	EUR 229 875.00
2018	20	EUR 4 052 706.40	+10%	EUR 202 635.32
2019	18	EUR 4 150 000.00	+2%	EUR 230 555.56
Total	72	EUR 14 299 805.68		EUR 198 608.41

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Compared with the previous evaluation period, the budget allocated for grants has increased each year since 2017. Both total and average grant costs reached their highest in 2019. The drop in 2016 resulted from the need to allocate a significant share of the DG AGRI communication budget to corporate communication. Since then, there has been steady growth in the grants budget, following the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the information policy.

Figure 113. Trends in the grants budget and average grants awarded



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Judging the efficiency of individual grant projects is highly dependent on the quality of the monitoring data available. While the overall costs of the project are usually available, information on exactly what amounts were spent was not available at a similar level of detail across the different projects selected for the case studies. If better collection of monitoring data were enforced, this could ensure better comparability and evaluation. A more detailed definition of indicators, including the methods used to count, summarise and choose the timeframe, would significantly boost the ex-post assessment of projects' success.

Evidence from the case studies

Events for school children, teachers and young people

Table 24. Grants implementing events for school children and teachers, and young people

Project	Project focus	Project budget	Event attendees	Persons reached (website visitors)	Persons reached (social media)	Persons reached (print, audio and video content on digital media)
Discovering tomorrow's farm leaders (Strategma Agency Ltd.)	Events for school children, teachers and young people	EUR 81 649.86	325	20 154	-	-
CAP works for us! (AgriGate Media)	Events for school children, teachers and young people	EUR 111 272.62	2 715	2 106 378	-	-

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on grant project reports.

Different approaches were taken by grant recipients to allocate the project budget and ensure good reach with efficiency. For example, in the context of the projects presented in the table above implemented by Strategma and AgriGate Media, the organisations differed in their use of online instruments and social media, as well as in the approaches and objectives of their events. AgriGate Media's experience and resources for reaching the target audiences provided a very good basis for reaching large audiences, especially online. Furthermore, AgriGate Media has identified some strong partners and has chosen to participate in highly popular events with almost no budget spending. On the other hand, Strategma focused its orientation on events, products and information materials (requiring resources for development) for long-term use, which are still provided online.

Information campaigns that had a strong focus on events**Table 25. Grants implementing information campaigns that had a strong focus on events**

Project	Project focus	Project budget	Event attendees	Persons reached (website visitors)	Persons reached (social media)	Persons reached (print, audio and video content on digital media)
CAP it ALL off! (Opinion and Action)	Information campaigns that had a strong focus on events	EUR 186 512.70	3 944	-	-	353 409
Parlez-vous PAC? (Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe)	Information campaigns that had a strong focus on events	EUR 109 788.33	1 231	1 737 919	91 014 (likes on Facebook) 204 014 (followers on social media)	27 901

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on grant project reports.

Even though the grant given to the project 'CAP it ALL off!' was twice as large as that for 'Parlez-vous PAC', the latter appears to have reached a similarly sized audience in some respects. Both projects reached similar numbers of stakeholders. The reach with the help of print and digital media and audio-visuals was also comparable, yet higher in the project with the larger budget. Some aspects of the two grant projects cannot be directly compared, such as the number of Facebook likes on the respective Facebook pages, mainly because the data have not been reported.

According to the interviewees, the pedagogical games that were created as part of the grant scheme for the 'Parlez-vous PAC?' project, have still been used recently. Requests have also been made to use other project outputs. It was also planned to use the project's outputs in further exhibitions about agriculture, but this has not yet taken place due to the ongoing health crisis. This continued use shows the existing and potential sustainability of the costs invested in project activities.

Web/TV-based campaigns only**Table 26. Grant projects implementing web/TV-based campaigns only**

Project	Project focus	Project budget	Event attendees	Persons reached (website visitors)	Persons reached (social media)	Persons reached (print, audio and video content on digital media)
La PAC pour tous les citoyens (France Médias Monde)	Web/TV-based campaigns only	EUR 576 095.32	-	-	52 589 fans on Facebook (RFI)	-
					6 091 fans and 6 102 followers on Facebook; 183 823 page-views on Facebook; 6 397 interactions on Facebook; 49 562 Facebook fans who followed Facebook Live; (RFI Romania)	
					24 805 Facebook fans (France24)	
More than farming (La Vanguardia Ediciones)	Web/TV-based campaigns only	EUR 251 963.73	-	-	5 324 000 persons reached on Facebook	-

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on grant project reports.

'La PAC pour tous les citoyens' received more than 2.5 times the amount of grant funds allocated to the project 'More than farming'. However, the benefits of the two projects are much harder to compare. The final report for the grant project 'La PAC pour tous les citoyens' contained a very detailed breakdown of its results. However, for the project 'More than Farming', the results are presented in more a limited format. The stakeholders interviewed from both projects offered additional documents containing a more detailed overview of the results, some with time intervals of viewer counts and other metrics.

The organisations implementing these two projects undertook two different approaches to social media promotion activities. Within the 'More than farming' project, paid advertising was used to help spread its content to the news feeds of more users, whereas the 'La PAC pour tous les citoyens' project used only organic viewership (the content only appeared on the newsfeeds of users who had already liked or followed the page that was posting it). La Vanguardia, who implemented the 'More than farming' project, has an entire social media team, which proved effective in creating online articles and promoting them on social media. That is the reason why they used paid promotions for some of the content.

RFI Romania, one of the organisations involved in the implementation of the 'La PAC pour tous les citoyens' project, had partnerships that were based on mutual benefit. One example of this kind of partnership is with the agricultural fair Intagra, which the grant beneficiary RFI Romania attended in order to record a radio programme there. In exchange for promoting the fair on its radio channel, the participation fee for RFI Romania was reduced, which in turn lowered the cost. The grant beneficiary also noted that due to the higher production budget available thanks to the grant, the shows are regarded as being some of its best. They were broadcast at peak hours during weekends, and since their initial showing have been re-broadcast multiple times. This is an improvement on the alternative scenario due to the higher production quality, and also because the shows were not shot in the studio but "out in the field".

Audio-visual production

Table 27. Grant projects implementing actions with a strong focus on audio-visual production

Project	Project focus	Project budget	Event attendees	Persons reached (website visitors)	Persons reached (social media)	Persons reached (print, audio and video content on digital media)
The Young Farmers Engine for CAP 2020 (RTV Slovenija)	AV production	EUR 156 954.26		541 760 Monthly (RTV SLO)	428 (SI) Facebook likes	189 330
				35 753 (HR)	7 830 (HR) Facebook likes	
				340 904 (FIN)	8 894 (FI) Facebook likes	
ALOE: Agriculture Link Occitani-Europe (Groupe La Dépêche du Midi)	AV production Events	EUR 432 990.20	In two events: 6 850 1 653	-	-	-

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on grant project reports.

The budget of the ALOE project in the table above was almost three times higher than that of the Young Village Folk project. The number of 'active project beneficiaries' (i.e. people physically attending or participating in the project's activities) is consequently much higher for the ALOE project (under which many gastronomy events and prize ceremonies were organised) than for the Young Village Folk project (which organised relatively small-scale workshops and garden events). On the other hand, Young Village Folk seems to have made significantly greater use of TV media and social networks, therefore significantly increasing the number of viewers and readers ('inactive project beneficiaries') at a very low cost, comparatively speaking. Both methods were seen as efficient: the balance is, therefore, difficult to strike between actively engaging stakeholders on-site at higher costs, and more passively engaging stakeholders at lower costs.

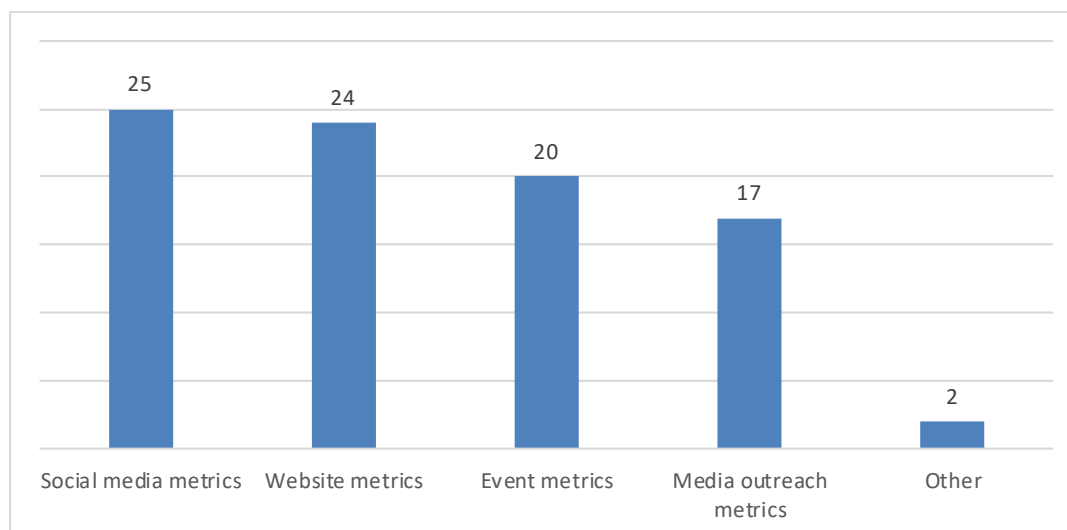
Stakeholders from each project who were interviewed stated that their project's cost-effectiveness was good, if not excellent. In the Young Village Folk project, the young farmers' stories were broadcast on different national and regional TV channels, as well as translated into Italian, English, Croatian and Finnish, widely increasing their audience reach. The multiplication of broadcasting opportunities across borders for each young farmer story raises the cost-benefit ratio and efficiency of the project. In addition, the project was considered to have produced very valuable long-lasting content, as the TV format enables the stories to remain available online as well as being broadcast again. Project stakeholders can also re-use the project's outputs to inform other farming-focused programmes.

Key elements to ensure cost-effectiveness within grant projects

Based on the analysis carried out on the selected grant projects, a few observations can be made regarding the elements that help to ensure a good balance between project costs and benefits:

- A strong pre-existing online presence of the grant beneficiaries guaranteed readily available access to the audience on social media and websites. In such cases, fewer efforts are needed to mobilise a new audience.
- The ability to build partnerships with other stakeholders and join events organised by others can contribute to reduced costs while ensuring the benefits of audience engagement.
- Investing in the production of various print or digital audio-visual materials helps to ensure the sustainability of the projects through their re-use even after the end of the grant. In this way, the costs incurred during the project continue to bring benefits even after its end, subsequently further improving the cost-benefit ratio.

However, to appropriately assess the cost-effectiveness of grant projects, significant improvements to monitoring data need to be made. While the majority of grant recipients do collect monitoring data (see the on the next page), these are presented in an inconsistent manner, and often lack an appropriate level of detail.

Figure 114. "Which metrics did you collect?" (n=26)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

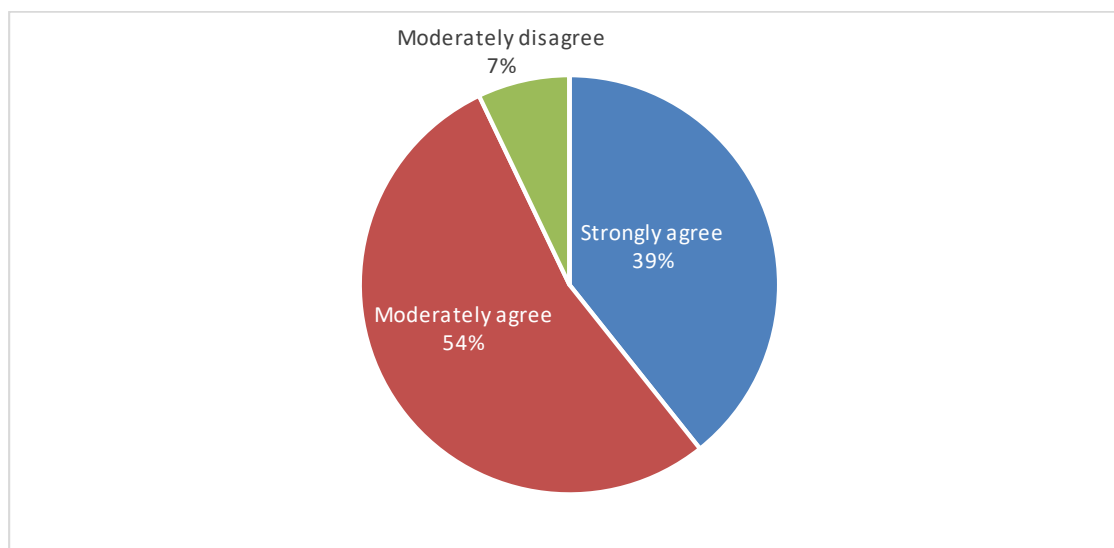
Note: these are responses from the 26 grant applicants (out of the 27 who responded to the questions relating to monitoring) who stated that they measured their project's success by monitoring communication-related metrics.

Efficiency of grants: summary

- The **overall budget allocated for grants grew** from EUR 2 419 099.28 in 2016 to EUR 4 150 000.00 in 2019. At the same time, the average sum allocated in a single grant also increased to EUR 230 555.56 in 2019.
- Judging the efficiency of a grant project is substantially undermined by a **lack of available, high-quality monitoring data**. Although almost all of the grant recipients surveyed claimed to have collected various types of monitoring information, these data were usually limited or unavailable. Various approaches are adopted by grant beneficiaries to collect this data (e.g. using different timeframes, applying different counting methodologies), making comparisons between projects especially difficult, and in some cases not feasible.
- Key elements that helped to ensure the cost-effectiveness of grant projects included the grant beneficiaries having an **established online presence**. Other factors include **partnerships** with other stakeholders, and **investment in re-usable products**.

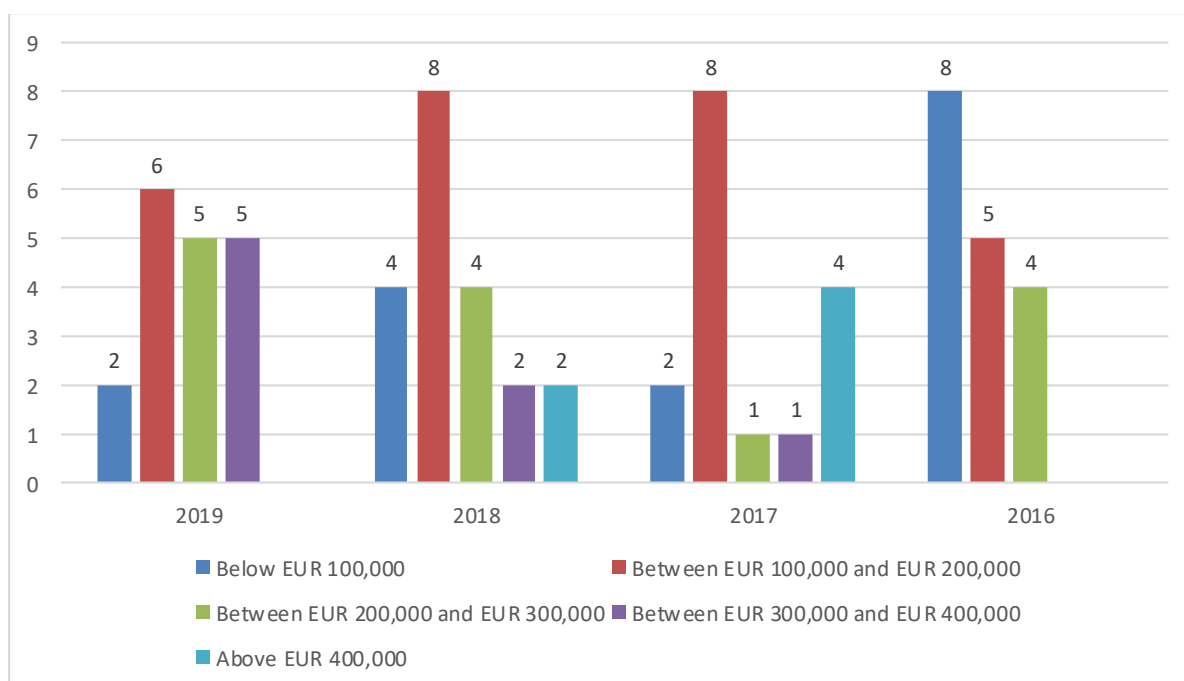
6.5.4. Efficiency of grants: evaluating grant applications (ESQ 7)

The majority of grant recipients believe that all of procedures for the grant scheme ran efficiently (see figure on the next page).

Figure 115. All procedures for the grant scheme ran efficiently (n=28)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

Most of the grants awarded were between EUR 100 000 and EUR 200 000, with the next largest group being those under EUR 100 000. This shows that the grant scheme is accessible to organisations of different capacities, including those able to commit both larger and smaller sums of their own funding.

Figure 116. Distribution of grants of different sizes

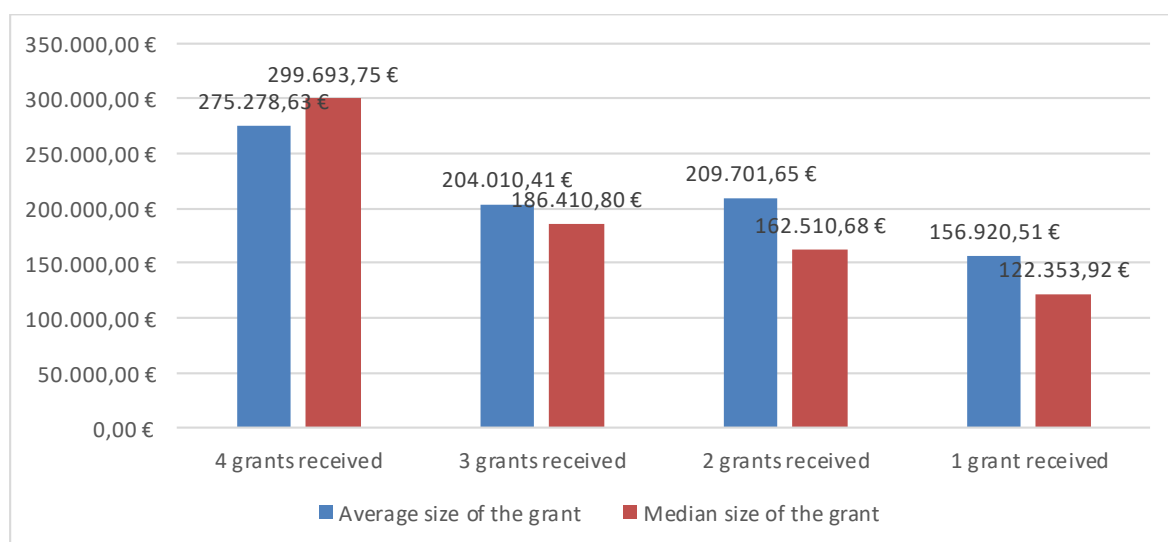
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data.

In total, 45 individual organisations received co-financing from DG AGRI to implement their projects. The majority of these organisations (29) received a grant only once during the evaluation period, while a further nine received two grants, four received three grants, and three organisations received grants in each of the four years under evaluation.

Table 28. Number of grants received by grant recipients during the period 2016-2019

Number of grants	Organisations
4	EURACTIV; Initiative Editoriali SRL; France Médias Monde
3	ANSA; Coldiretti; EUROSOC DIGITAL gGmbH; GAIA
2	ACTIVIDADES DIGITAL MEDIA, S.L.; Agri Aware; CITYNEWS; Economedia AD; Friends of the Earth Europe; Harghita County Council; Hoferichter & Jacobs; Pentalpha; AgriGate Media Ltd
1	Agro Bio; AGRO TV; AIA; Associazione Nazionale delle Bonifiche delle Irrigazioni e dei miglioramenti fondiari detta anche associazione nazionale consorzi gestione e tutela del territorio e acque irrigue; Bulgarian Association of Agricultural Producers; Circolo Festambiente; Confédération Paysanne Nationale; DABS; Doc Servizi; Economia a.s.; Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe; FGN; Groupe La Dépêche du Midi; HPA (Croatian Agricultural Agency); Hrvatska poljoprivredna korona; I-Europa; Kyoto Club; L-Mediehus A/S; Natuurpunt vzw; Opinion and Action; Radio Italia Puglia; RTV Slovenija; Sigma Live Ltd ; STRATEGMA Agency Ltd; Studio Twelve; The Agricultural Awareness Trust; Unións Agrarias – UPA; Vereniging tot de Bescherming van Vogels; Vogelbescherming NL

Those organisations which received more grants, on average, also received larger grant sizes (see figure below). At the same time, the average grant size was smallest among those organisations that received co-financing only once. It is likely that larger and more established organisation are able to commit larger sums of their own, and thus receive larger co-financing from DG AGRI. This can be regarded as a positive aspect, as projects implemented by well-established and known organisations can help to bring credibility to the actions. At the same time, because such organisations only constitute a small share of all organisations, the grant scheme remains open to various organisations, some of them smaller, who can help to ensure broader geographic and thematic coverage.

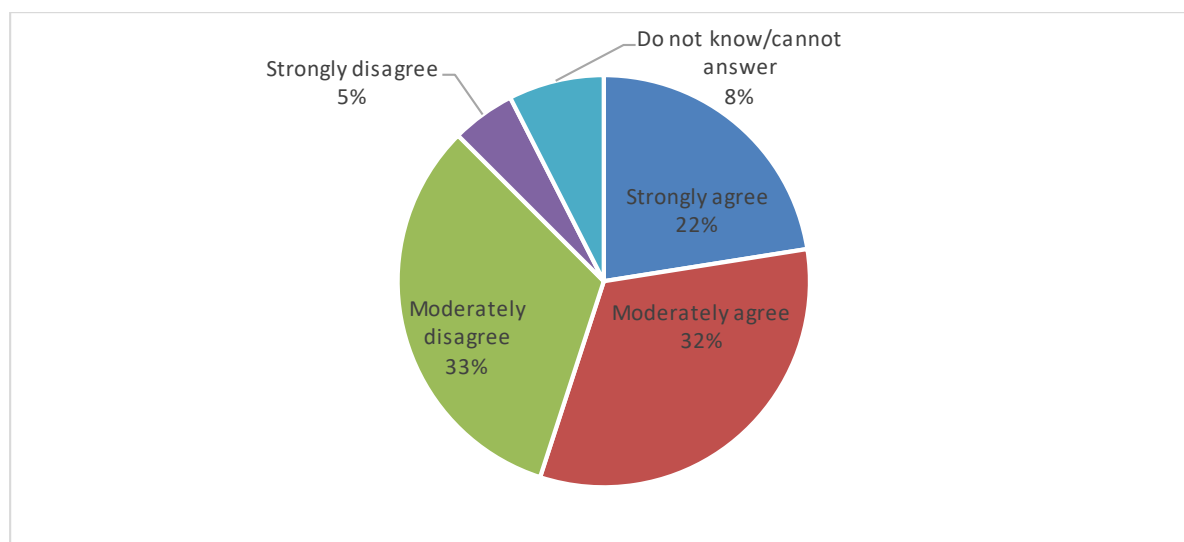
Figure 117. Average and median sizes of grants (by organisations receiving different numbers of grants)

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

The fact that the same organisations often apply for and receive grants more than once shows some path-dependency in terms of where and by whom information measures on the CAP are implemented. Applying for a grant repeatedly allows an organisation to draw on its previous experience, including during the application procedure. Moreover, evidence from the grant applicant survey reveals a significant proportion of respondents (38%) who believe that opportunities to receive funding from the grant scheme are not well known in

their country. While this represents an improvement since the previous evaluation, in which 46% of respondents agreed with this statement⁷⁷, it still indicates room for improvement in disseminating the message about the call to a wider range of organisations.

Figure 118. "Opportunities to receive funding from this grant scheme are fairly well known among potential applicants in my country" (n=40)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

Efficiency of grants: summary

- 93% of grant applicants agree that all processes of the **grant scheme ran efficiently**.
- The grant scheme is **accessible to organisations with both larger and smaller capacities** for co-financing, as evidenced by the range of co-financing sums allocated to beneficiaries.
- Those organisations that received **a greater number of grants** tended to have **larger sums** of co-financing allocated.
- There is room to **increase the popularity of the grant scheme** among the potential applicants in the Member States, based on the opinions of grant recipients (both survey and interviews) and the fact that the same organisations apply for and receive the grants repeatedly (around 36% of all organisations have received co-financing more than once).

6.5.5. Relevance of grants: meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)

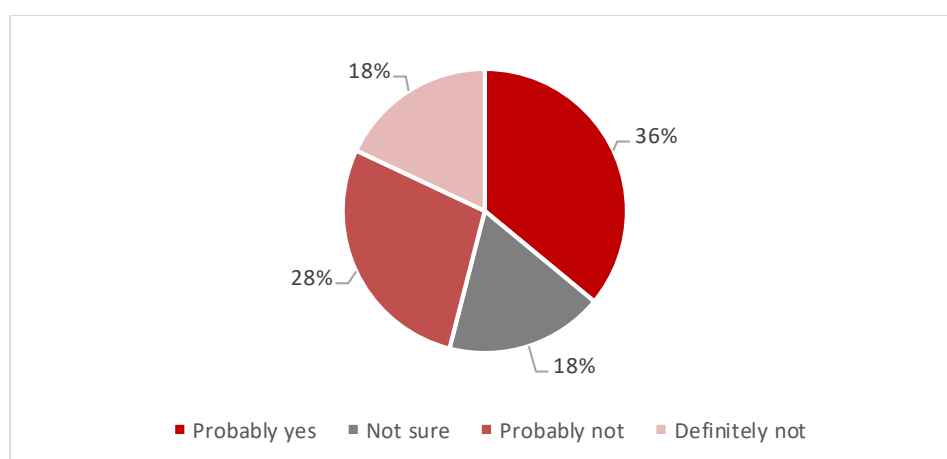
Overall, the grant applicants surveyed are convinced of the value of the grant scheme to their organisations. As many as 98% of surveyed respondents stated that **the opportunity**

⁷⁷ European Commission, *Evaluation of the information policy on the CAP: Final Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

to participate in this call for proposals is important to them, suggesting a high level of relevance in general, no matter what the outcome of the application.

This dominant perception is easy to explain when looking at additional survey results: about half of all grant beneficiaries (46%) report that their organisations would **not have chosen to implement the projects or its parts without funding from DG AGRI** (see figure below). Furthermore, even if they had still carried out the projects, the scale of the projects would have been affected: 80% of the small number of grant beneficiaries that have addressed this question consider that without the grants, they would have been forced to **reduce the scope of their activities**. Such views were often expressed by the grant beneficiaries consulted for the case studies: while none of the projects was totally dependent on support from DG AGRI, the interviewees agreed that the grant scheme represented an essential asset when it comes to planning and implementing projects on a wider scale, such as the entire national territory.

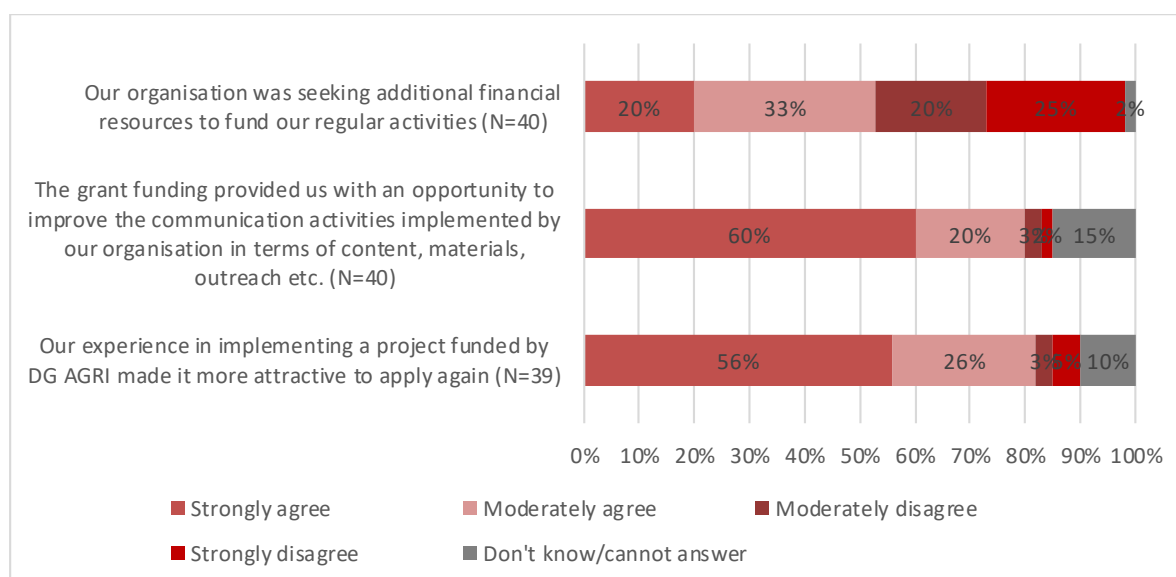
Figure 119. “Would your organisation have chosen to implement all or part of this project without DG AGRI funding?” (n=28)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

In particular, the budget allocated by DG AGRI was frequently mentioned in the interviews as a key component in developing a variety of activities within widespread communication campaigns, not only for organisations with limited funds but also for more established ones. Surprisingly, these qualitative insights seem at odds with the survey results, with only just over half of the respondents (53%) admitting that their application to the grant scheme is related to their **need for additional resources to fund their regular activities** (see the figure on the next page). However, this does not necessarily undermine the importance of the financial dimension for grant recipients; instead, it might simply result from the wording of this statement. Indeed, as outlined by several interviewees, the extra money stemming from grants often represents a chance to undertake innovative communication activities, going beyond the classical (“regular”) ones. In such cases, recipients who applied to the grant scheme because they required money to produce new materials – but who had sufficient resources to pursue their usual activities – are not part of the aforementioned 53%, but grants are still relevant to them from a financial perspective.

In general, monetary assistance from DG AGRI was indeed invested in enhancing the communication performance of the organisations that received it: 80% of the survey respondents who had received grants reported that the grant funding provided them with **an opportunity to improve the communication activities their organisations implemented, with regard to content, materials, outreach** etc. (see figure on next page).

Figure 120. "To what extent do you agree that the following factors had an influence on your organisation's decision to apply for a grant?"

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

In terms of content, many interviewees declared that the grants resulted in a more farming-focused communication approach, a risk they would not have taken without DG AGRI support, given that agriculture is not perceived as an attractive topic. The grants also offered an opportunity to venture beyond the local level, and to take more account of the European dimension and policy level. Among those organisations that would have communicated about the CAP in any case, the added value of the grants relates more to the opportunity to develop expensive, innovative and high-quality materials from the perspective of long-term impact.

Moreover, the fact that many case studies report output indicators that outperform the target values suggests that the reach of the organisations' activities was amplified by the grants, as the initial estimates were probably based on the results of monitoring carried out before the projects were implemented. This positive evolution finds some expression in the case studies: for example, DG AGRI grants enabled recipients to broadcast radio and TV productions at peak hours, thus guaranteeing the largest possible audience. By following this strategy, the show 'Ici l'Europe', developed by France 24 as part of its project 'La PAC pour tous les citoyens' has become very popular. In addition, as underlined by the case studies, the grants helped to ensure beneficiaries had sufficient funds to offer activities targeted to their intended audiences. For instance, a theatre play was created to inform children about agriculture; boot camps were organised to reach young farmers; and university contests have been run to develop and sustain the interest of students. Such an individual approach to communication was, for many interviewees, the key to better reaching their target audiences and increasing their focus on those who might otherwise have been overlooked (e.g. young people, who usually have minimal exposure to agriculture-related information). Furthermore, interviewees considered the possibility of spending more money on networking activities and partnership building as additional ways to boost their level of outputs – another perk that derives from DG AGRI resources.

In addition to these motivations, the close alignment of the grant objectives with the working orientations of the organisations themselves represents another reason why they choose to apply for a grant. This was made particularly clear by the results of the survey, as overall, the grant applicants asserted that their choice had been influenced by the fact that **the objectives of the specific call for proposals were in line with the work profile of their organisations**. This statement is closely supported by the case studies:

for instance, the grant requirement that focuses on the impact of the CAP for society as a whole provided the impetus for GAIA ('2CAP – CAPitalizing the CAP') to pursue its vision of better coordination between the agricultural world and the rest of society. In the case of Natuurpunt, an organisation that aims to protect nature, the grant project 'Reconnect Farmers and Nature', which focused on reducing the polarisation between farmers and environmentalists to encourage sustainable agriculture models, was directly fed by the organisation's convictions. Lastly, DG AGRI grants are also particularly relevant for organisations that are already familiar with promoting the CAP and agriculture within their countries, such as Economedia and Agri Aware. The objectives of the call for proposals therefore align completely with the communication priorities of these organisations.

In addition, previous positive experience(s) with DG AGRI grants also motivate the decision to apply. Indeed, 82% of the survey respondents said that they had **already participated in the grant scheme in the past** – and thus had first-hand experience of the associated benefits. This **made it more attractive to apply again** (see figure on previous page). It is therefore unsurprising to see that a large number of grant applicants have received several DG AGRI grants over the years. This popular trend indicates that the grants are particularly relevant for the grant beneficiaries, echoing their own objectives, meeting their financial needs, and supporting their communication ambitions, which makes them eager to repeat the experience. As noted in the sub-section focusing on the grant evaluation procedure, it may also be more appealing to apply after the first participation because the costs associated with the requirements of the application procedure are lower, following the internal learning process that occurred the first time round.

Assessing the relevance of DG AGRI grants also requires us to examine how well they responded to the informational needs of the projects' target audiences with regard to the topic of agriculture. However, it proved particularly difficult to find adequate indicators to evaluate the relevance of the grants for the target audiences. Indeed, the level of output was not seen as an explicit sign of relevance: if individuals take part in grant-funded communication activities driven by their need for additional information on the CAP, farming and agriculture, one could argue that interest, curiosity, coincidence, obligation (e.g. children attending events with their parents) or even boredom could also provide reasonable explanations as to why people come into contact with grant project content.

Associating a project that reaches a large number of people with a high degree of relevance for the grants is therefore contestable. Direct feedback from target audiences, gathered via surveys after events organised within the grant framework, focuses mainly on the effectiveness of the grants. This does not in itself indicate of their relevance: having an increased knowledge of the CAP after participating in grant-funded activities does not necessarily mean that there was a pre-existing need for this information. Ultimately, without the opportunity to address the question directly to the target groups, we chose to analyse the need for DG AGRI grants within specific national contexts by taking into account the messages about the CAP that were missing, and the overall perception of the policy at national level. While this is still an imperfect approach to assessing the nature of the real informational needs of the target groups, it at least reveals what may be the latent societal needs in terms of agricultural information.

Despite a great diversity of national characteristics, the case studies reveal a common denominator in their respective countries: the controversial aspects of the CAP. No matter what the national opinions on the CAP are like – mainly positive as in Germany, or somewhat negative as in Belgium – the policy is often criticised in connection with similar aspects; namely, the idea that subsidies support wealthy landowners and intensive farming; that its benefits are distributed unequally among the Member States; that it is an overly bureaucratic system; and that it provides a lack of appropriate actions to address climate change. Given such a negative picture, particularly widespread within national media, most of the grant beneficiaries interviewed claimed that their grant projects were

particularly relevant for communicating the **positive elements of the CAP and to clarify misunderstandings about the policy**, thus filling in communication gaps at national level. For example, with regard to environmental issues, the communication actions carried out within the project 'Reconnect Farmers and Nature' by Naturpuunt revolved around the agri-environmental measures financed under the CAP. The actions aimed to show that collaboration between farmers and environmentalists was not only possible, but highly beneficial for both sides. Other projects placed emphasis on the role of the CAP in promoting organic farming ('BIO+' by Agrobio), and securing high-quality and affordable food ('Many hats, one CAP' by Agri Aware) to shed light on the benefits of the policy and thereby improve its national reputation.

Several grant recipients also linked the need for their projects to a **lack of information targeting the general public**. Indeed, it was frequently reported in the case studies that national communication efforts on the CAP (e.g. from the ministries, the National Rural Networks, farmers' associations) mainly inform the agricultural sector and the beneficiaries of the CAP, together with rural dwellers. Less attention is given to other potential target groups. In addition, the case studies identified a need for clear and simple messages that complement the often-technical information that characterises national communications (e.g. on the websites of agriculture ministries). For this reason, the grant projects were deemed essential by the interviewees: through individual messages and tools reflecting the interests of the different target groups, many of the projects examined within the case studies primarily aimed to inform average citizens about the CAP and its impact on their everyday lives.

Relevance of grants: summary

- Overall, the grant scheme is particularly relevant when considering the needs of the grant applicants and gaps in national communication, based on a review of national communication measures. This view is also supported by the opinions of the Ag-Press journalists about CAP communication in the national context.
- **DG AGRI grants respond to the needs of the grant applicants** for additional resources to implement large-scale communication campaigns and produce high-quality content in line with their working priorities. Without the grants, the scope of the projects would have been more limited, if they had happened at all.
- **The grant projects themselves are needed in their respective national contexts**, given that communication on the CAP at national level sometimes focuses on negative aspects (based on the media monitoring carried out), or mainly targets the agricultural sector (based on mapping of the national measures and case studies). The projects are therefore relevant to fill these gaps, presenting the CAP in a positive light and addressing the general public with tailor-made messages.

7. EVALUATION RESULTS: ASSESSMENT OF CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

In this chapter, we analyse the information policy on the CAP based on the evaluation study questions defined in Chapter 4. Unlike the previous chapter, in which each information measure was analysed separately, here we analyse the information policy on the CAP as a whole: the achievement of its objectives, its relevance, coherence, and EU added value.

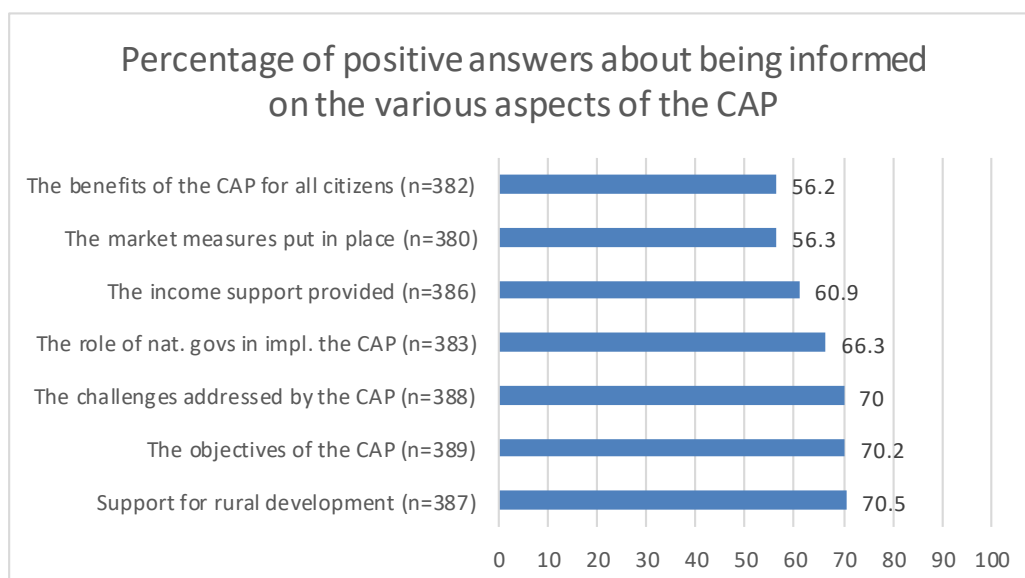
7.1. Achievement of the policy's general and specific objectives

7.1.1. Effectiveness: improving understanding and perception of the CAP (ESQ 1)

Achievement of the policy's general objectives

Respondents who participated in the main survey were asked *to what extent they are informed about various aspects of the CAP*. While the answers respondents could choose from have changed since the previous evaluation, the six-point Likert scale remained. The top three answers on the scale (fully, to a great extent, to a moderate extent) were assessed as being positive results. Most of the respondents surveyed indicated that they were well informed about the CAP, with the percentage of positive responses surpassing 50% for every single aspect of the CAP. In addition, the 70% benchmark was exceeded for three aspects of the CAP: support for rural development (70.5% of respondents said that they were at least moderately informed about it); the objectives of the CAP (70.2%); and the challenges (economic, social, environmental) addressed by the CAP (70%). Respondents indicated that they were least well informed about the benefits of the CAP for all citizens (56.2%) and the market measures put in place (56.3%). The figure below shows the results for all aspects of the CAP included in the survey.

Figure 121. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who stated that they were informed at least to a moderate extent about various aspects of the CAP

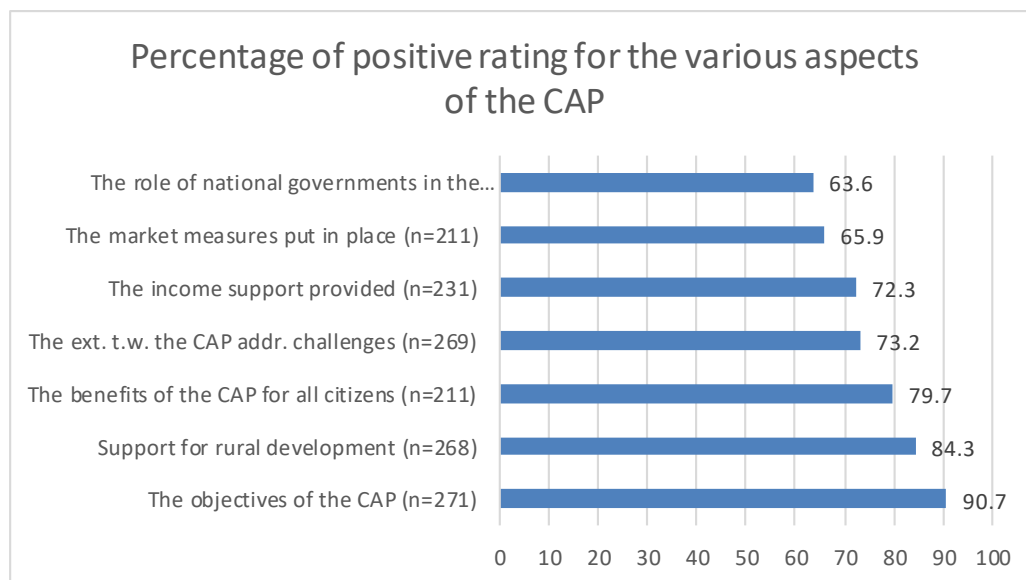


Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

The respondents to the main survey who indicated that they were informed at least to some extent about various aspects of the CAP, were asked to *rate them*. The results show that the respondents rated all the aspects positively (either very positively or moderately positively), with all of them surpassing the 50% mark. Five out of seven aspects of the CAP surpassed the 70% benchmark. The most positively rated aspects of the CAP were the

objectives of the CAP (90.7% rated them positively) and the support for rural development (84.3%). Other positively rated aspects were the benefits of the CAP for all citizens (79.7%); the extent to which the CAP addresses current (economic, social, environmental) challenges (73.2%); and the income support provided (72.3%). The least positively rated aspects of the CAP were the market measures put in place (65.9%) and the role of national governments in the implementation of the CAP (63.6%).

Figure 122. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who rated various aspects of the CAP very positively or moderately positively



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

Comparison with the previous evaluation shows a drop in the percentage of respondents to the main survey who rated themselves as being informed about various aspects of the CAP. Because of the difference in scales, we do not include this comparison in the evaluation. The results do not show drastic changes in the proportion of respondents who rated themselves as being informed about various aspects of the CAP. The respondents surveyed during the previous evaluation said they were best informed about the objectives of the CAP and the challenges it addresses, somewhat less informed about the role of national governments in the implementation of the CAP, and least informed about the benefits of the CAP for all citizens. These proportions remained the same: in the main survey of the current evaluation, the respondents also selected the objectives of the CAP and the challenges it addresses as being among the aspects of the CAP about which they are best informed, and the benefits of the CAP for all citizens as the aspect of the CAP about which they are least informed.

Interestingly, while in the previous evaluation the benefits of the CAP was the least positively rated aspect, in the current evaluation it became the second most positively rated aspect of the CAP. In both evaluations, only those respondents who had stated that they were at least to some extent aware of the aspects of the CAP were asked to rate them. Thus, the results show that the benefits of the CAP can be easily understood and accepted once the person is well informed about them. No other major changes were observed between evaluations in the proportion of respondents who rated themselves as being informed about various aspects of the CAP, or in the ratings that respondents applied to these aspects (or these changes cannot be measured due to the differences in scales and respondent profiles).

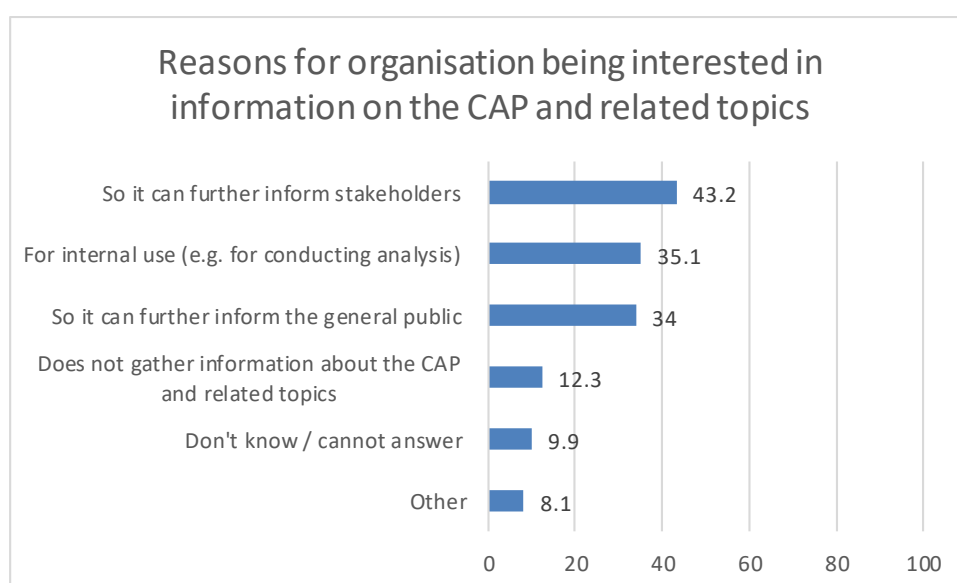
Surveys of citizens indicate *increasing levels of awareness of the CAP*. Eurobarometer surveys show that in 2013, 64% of citizens were aware of the CAP; 69% were aware of it

in 2015; 67% in 2017; and 73% in 2020. Most of the citizens surveyed agree that the CAP contributes to the EU's top priorities: securing a stable supply of food in the EU (80%); providing safe, healthy food of high quality (72%); ensuring a sustainable way to produce food (68%); ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers (65%); protecting the environment and tackling climate change (63%); ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers (62%); and creating growth and jobs in rural areas (58%). All of these results have increased by between five and eight percentage points since 2017, indicating a very positive trend.

Achievement of the policy's specific objectives

When asked why their organisation is interested in information on the CAP and related topics, 43.2% of respondents to the main survey said that it was so the organisation can further inform stakeholders; 35.1% said that they do it for internal use (e.g. conducting analysis); and 34% said it was so they can further inform the general public. These results are presented in the figure below.

Figure 123. Percentage of respondents to the main survey selecting various reasons for their organisation being interested in information on the CAP and related topics



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

These results show that the organisations were less interested in further informing stakeholders or general public, when compared with the previous evaluation (in which 69.6% of respondents said their organisation collected information about the policy so that it could further inform stakeholders, compared with 43.2% in the current survey). Likewise, in the previous evaluation, 60.8% claimed that their organisation gathered information about the policy so that it could further inform the general public, compared with 34% in the current survey. The results of the current survey improve when they are filtered to show only the results from those respondents who selected 'Stakeholder organisation (e.g. representative association, socio-economic interest group, civil society organisation, trade union, etc.)' as their primary employment. Among these respondents, 62.2% said that their organisation collected information about the policy so that it could further inform stakeholders, and 36.2% claimed that their organisation gathered information about the policy to further inform the general public. While this stratification improves the results, they still fall below the results seen in the previous evaluation, particularly with regard to informing the general public. This decrease indicates that organisations may begin to specialise in communicating only to a single audience (either stakeholders or the general public).

Those stakeholders interviewed who identified their organisation as a multiplier were most likely to report communicating about the CAP to other stakeholders. The most frequently used tools for such communication were e-mail newsletters and websites. Stakeholders who mentioned communicating the CAP to the citizens used their media channels (mostly websites) and social media accounts to reach the general public.

According to figures from Eurobarometer, there has been an increase in the proportion of citizens who think that the EU's financial support to farmers is too low: in 2013 26% of citizens said it was too low; 29% in 2015; and 26% in 2017. In 2020, this result increased to 39%, an increase of 13 percentage points over 2017. Also, 76% of citizens surveyed in 2020 agreed that the CAP benefits all European citizens and not only farmers. This result almost reaches the level seen in 2013, when 77% of citizens surveyed agreed that the CAP benefits all European citizens. This figure had decreased to 62% in 2015, and to 61% in 2017, before going up again in 2020.

7.1.2. Effectiveness: reinstating consumer confidence (ESQ 2)

The Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 includes provision for taking action in the event of "serious market disturbances directly attributed to a loss in consumer confidence due to public, animal or plant health and disease risks"⁷⁸. This action focuses on market measures; however, once the market measures are triggered, complementary measures focusing on information measures can be introduced.

Scoping interviews with DG AGRI officials revealed that the mechanism and financing are in place to carry out information measures aimed at reinstating consumer confidence. During this evaluation period, we *did not identify* any severe market disturbances that would invoke measures to restore consumer confidence through communication. Therefore, it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the information policy in reinstating consumer confidence when necessary.

7.1.3. Effectiveness: promoting the European model of agriculture (ESQ 3)

While promoting the European model of agriculture is an explicit objective of the information policy on the CAP, it is little featured in DG AGRI's internal documentation. It is important to note that such a model is not formally described, therefore its main two pillars as they are understood in this evaluation (support for family farming, and multifunctional agriculture) were established during the scoping interviews. To make an assessment, we draw on the Eurobarometer survey and the different roles of the CAP, which reflect the elements of the European model of agriculture, particularly with regard to multifunctional agriculture:

- Ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers;
- Creating growth and jobs in rural areas;
- Ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers;
- Securing a stable supply of food in the EU;
- Ensuring a sustainable way to produce food;
- Protecting the environment and tackling climate change;

⁷⁸ Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007.

- Providing safe, healthy food of high quality.

The Commission is very active in raising awareness and improving understanding of the CAP, and the promotion of this policy may be seen as a natural by-product of these activities. Moreover, while the core ideas and principles underpinning the CAP may be easy to grasp, its multi-dimensional nature and the complexity of its rules make it more difficult for an unfamiliar audience to appreciate the policy. Lack of awareness and understanding renders any promotion less effective than it might otherwise be, hence the approach adopted by DG AGRI appears reasonable.

Based on figures from Eurobarometer, in 2015, 59% of people on average agreed that the CAP fulfils its different roles. While this increased negligibly in 2017 (by 1.4 percentage points), by 2020, the percentage of people who agreed that the CAP fulfils its different roles had risen to 66.9% – a marked improvement of 7.9 percentage points compared with five years earlier (see the table below).

Table 29. Extent to which people agree that the CAP fulfils its different roles

	2015	2017	2020
Totally agree or tend to agree	59%	60.4%	66.9%
Totally disagree or tend to disagree	27.8%	26.4%	26.9%
Don't know	13.2%	13.1%	6.3%

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on Special Eurobarometer 473, Special Eurobarometer 440 and Special Eurobarometer 504.

Perceptions have improved with regard to the importance of the priorities of the CAP, but the change has been smaller than that seen in relation to attitudes towards the fulfilment of roles. From 2015 to 2017, the share of those who regarded the CAP's priorities as important increased by a mere 0.5 percentage point. In 2020, the share was just 2.45 percentage points higher than it had been five years earlier (see table below). While this change has been for the better, it remains fairly small.

Table 30. Perception of the importance of the priorities of the CAP

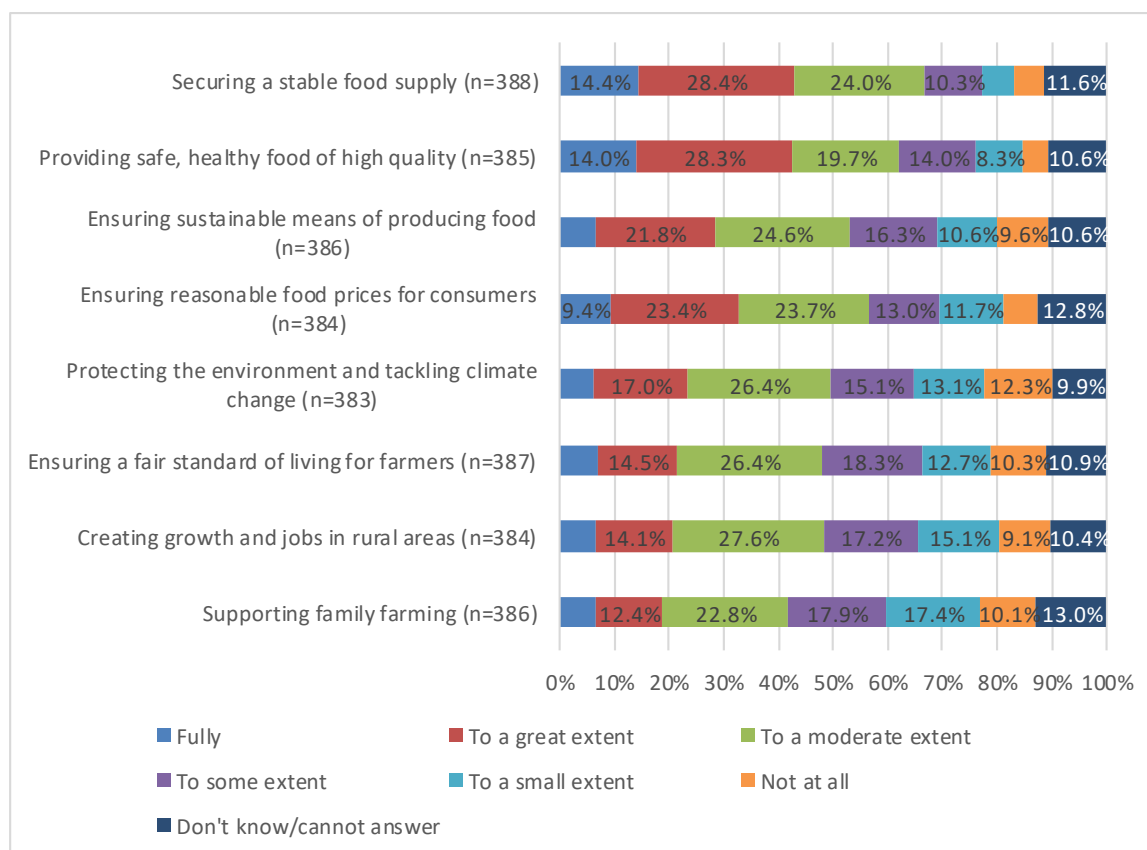
	2015	2017	2020
Very important or fairly important	84.8%	85.3%	87.25%
Not very important or not at all important	9.8%	8.3%	9.6%
Don't know	5.4%	6.3%	3.1%

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on Special Eurobarometer 473 and Special Eurobarometer 440.

The stakeholder consultation conducted as part of this evaluation offers more modest findings. On average, only 28.8% of respondents to the main survey agreed that since 2016, the CAP had either fully or to a great extent fulfilled its different roles; 24.4% stated

that it had done so to a moderate extent; and 35.5% stated that the CAP had fulfilled its different roles to some extent, to a small extent, or not at all; the rest did not know/could not answer (see figure below). Similarly, according to the results of the previous evaluation, 49.1% of survey respondents stated that, between 2009 and 2013, the CAP had performed its various roles rather well; 30.5% disagreed, claiming it had done so rather badly; the rest did not know/could not answer. Because the measurement used in the current evaluation differs from that adopted in the previous one, it is difficult to accurately assess the direction of change. Nevertheless, it is clear that the scope of any such change is minor, and that the situation remains similar.

Figure 124. Extent to which stakeholders surveyed agreed that the CAP has fulfilled its different roles since 2016



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

Effectiveness (achievement of objectives): summary

- The combined results of the study suggest that the objectives of the information policy have been **achieved to a great extent**.
- While the stakeholders surveyed are **well informed** about some aspects of the CAP, other aspects remain **less than moderately familiar** to almost half of the stakeholders surveyed. It should be noted that those stakeholders surveyed who are familiar with various aspects of the CAP evaluate them positively or very positively, suggesting that when stakeholders become better informed about the CAP, they are more likely to view it positively. This shows that informing stakeholders about the CAP has the potential to positively improve their perceptions of the policy.
- Eurobarometer surveys show **increased levels of awareness** of the CAP among European citizens. The results show that a large majority of Europeans think that the CAP contributes to EU society in a number of ways including on the economy and climate change.
- The main evaluation survey reveals that stakeholder organisations are **less often interested in communicating about the CAP** to other stakeholders and citizens than they were in the previous evaluation. This shows that organisations focus more on communicating to a single audience (either stakeholders or the general public) instead of trying to communicate to both audiences.
- Eurobarometer surveys suggest that an increasing share of citizens think that **EU support for farmers is too low**. Nearly three out of four Europeans are aware of the CAP and consider that the CAP benefits all citizens, not just farmers.
- While the mechanism and financing are in place to enable information measures to reinstating consumer confidence, it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the information policy in reinstating consumer confidence during this evaluation period.
- Based on Eurobarometer and the results of the main survey, **positive perceptions of the performance and priorities of the CAP are more common** than five years ago.

7.2. Factors hindering effectiveness and coherence

7.2.1. Effectiveness: intervening factors (ESQ 4)

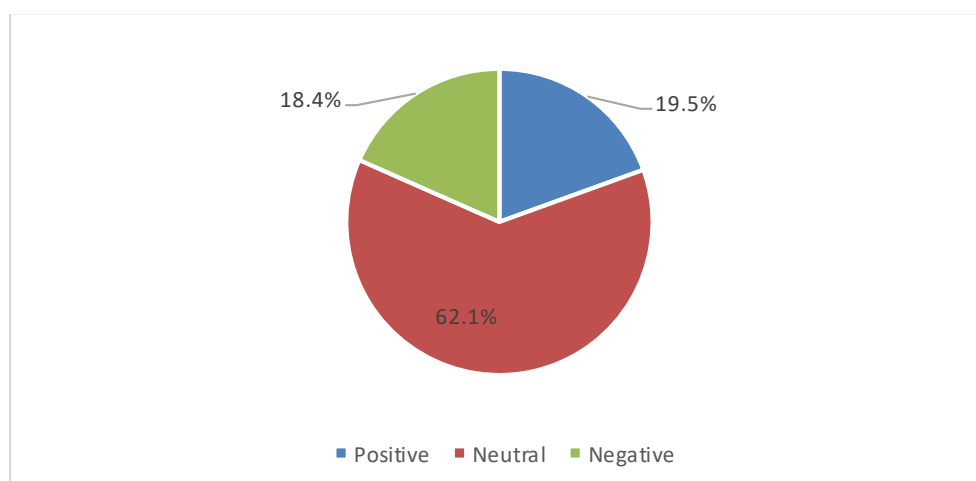
To assess intervening factors, stakeholders were asked if they could recall negative communication about the CAP or communication campaigns that contradicted DG AGRI campaigns. 43.4% of respondents to the main survey who had visited the DG AGRI stand at the fairs said they sometimes also saw stands from other organisations communicating about the CAP. The majority (65.2%) of these respondents said that these organisations communicated positively about the CAP, 30.4% said the communication from these organisations contained both positive and negative elements. No respondents reported seeing organisations communicating only negatively about the CAP at fairs. The participant observation exercise also revealed no negative communication about the CAP during the Salon International de l'Agriculture 2020.

Respondents to the main survey were asked if they have noticed any information on the CAP and related topics that was provided not by the European Commission anywhere since 2016. 51.7% of them remembered seeing information from other sources. Among these respondents, 45.2% said this information from other sources complemented the information provided by DG AGRI, while only 4.2% said that this information conflicted with information provided by DG AGRI. 37.2% said that this information contained elements that both complemented and conflicted with information from DG AGRI. The respondents who saw either conflicting information, or information containing both complementary and conflicting elements, were asked which information was more relevant to them: the information coming from DG AGRI, or from other sources. 42.8% of them said that the information from DG AGRI was more relevant, while 39.6% said the information from other sources was more relevant. All of these results are far below the 70% benchmark, and are therefore assessed as a positive result for DG AGRI.

Desk research also revealed that publicly available information about the CAP is divided fairly equally into positive and negative messages. Our 30-day monitoring report (15 May–14 June 2020) from Brand24 software focused on the keyword “Common agricultural policy”. It revealed 453 mentions of the keyword online. Most of these mentions were found in news articles (141), blogs (122) and tweets (96). Among those messages that included sentiments, 84 were classified by the software as positive and 99 were classified as negative. We also scraped Twitter data for one week (30 May–5 June 2020) for the hashtag “#FutureofCAP”. 757 original tweets (retweets were excluded) were published during this period, 37 of which were identified as popular (have been liked by at least 10 accounts). Among those tweets, nine (24.3%) were classified as negative⁷⁹.

Media monitoring conducted in the EU Member States by our national experts also revealed that the majority of articles mentioning the CAP do so either positively or neutrally: 19.5% of such articles were classified as positive, 62.1% as neutral, and 18.4% as negative (see figure below).

Figure 125. Sentiment of articles mentioning the CAP in EU Member States (n=914)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on media monitoring.

Interviews with stakeholders also show that while many of them sometimes see negative or conflicting communication about the CAP, this communication is generally considered

⁷⁹ Negative tweets included messages that either criticised the CAP or criticised European agriculture, as well as calls for CAP reform. Tweets that called for improvement of the CAP without criticism were not classified as negative.

inevitable and not seen as very problematic in the context of the policy. However, some stakeholders noted aggressive communication against the CAP (one stakeholder called it “social media bombs”), and even messages calling for the CAP to be abolished. Stakeholders said that these messages were sometimes provocative, misleading and fake. They considered that there is a need for communication against these messages.

Overall, negative communication about the CAP can be distinguished into two types: first, negative communication that is biased because of the interest or economic dependency of the communicating actor; second, negative communication that is genuine and comes from actors that are interested in improving the CAP on specific issues. While the first type of communication cannot be influenced or avoided (and is less frequent), the second type of communication is viewed positively by the stakeholders because they see it as a normal part of discussions on improving the CAP. Some stakeholders also mentioned that their own communication on the CAP may be considered negative, but that their criticism is genuine and not intended to weaken the Commission or the CAP. Some stakeholders indicated something they see as another problem in discussions about the CAP. According to them, the Commission is too defensive and unwilling to accept the negative perceptions of the CAP or the European agriculture, even withholding evaluation reports that are important for discussions.

When asked about specific actors communicating negatively about the CAP, respondents

Effectiveness (intervening factors): summary

- External factors limited the effectiveness of the information policy **only to a small extent**. While negative information about the CAP exists, it does not dominate discourse on the policy.
- While some of the negative communication is called biased and inevitable, most of this communication is **crucial for improving the policy debate** and is not viewed very negatively by stakeholders.

most often mentioned environmental organisations (e.g. Greenpeace and other members of the Green 10). Other types of actors also mentioned by stakeholders include food or health organisations (e.g. European Public Health Alliance), farmers’ organisations (e.g. IPES-Food), and economists and members of academia (e.g. Alan Matthews’s blog ‘CAP Reform’).

7.3. Relevance

7.3.1. Relevance: information policy meeting the needs of the target audiences (ESQ 8)

The external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020 declares that communication objectives should be in line with the provisions of Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁸⁰. Three types of objectives are presented in the strategy: one long-term objective, and two objectives based on target audiences, namely the general public and stakeholders. These objectives are presented in the table on the next page.

⁸⁰ European Commission, *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020*, Brussels, 2016.

Table 31. Communication objectives for the CAP

	Communication objectives
Long-term	To build trust within the EU and among all citizens, farmers and non-farmers alike.
For the general public	To raise public awareness of the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development through the common agricultural policy.
For stakeholders	To engage with stakeholders (mainly farmers and other parties active in rural areas) in order to further communicate about the CAP to their constituencies, and to the wider public.

Source: European Commission (2016). *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020*.

Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council states that the information measures for the CAP “shall aim, in particular, to help explain, implement and develop the CAP and to raise public awareness of its content and objectives to reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns, to inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas and to promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it”⁸¹. The statement distinguishes five aims of the information measures for the CAP, which can be contrasted with various statements made when describing the communication objectives in the external communication strategy. Such a comparison is made in the table below.

Table 32. Comparison of aims stated in Article 45 with communication objectives stated in the external communication strategy for the period 2016–2020

Aims stated in Article 45	Communication objectives
1. “Help explain, implement and develop the CAP”	<p>“The common agricultural policy ('CAP') is a policy for all the people of the EU and the benefits that it provides to those citizens must be clearly demonstrated”</p> <p>“A particular aspect of this objective is to reach out to and raise awareness of the CAP among urban audiences and other non-beneficiaries”</p>
2. “Raise public awareness of its content and objectives”	<p>“Raise public awareness on the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development through the common agricultural policy”</p> <p>“When communicating to the general public, the focus of information on the CAP should put greater emphasis on addressing the (mis-) perceptions of European agriculture and the role of farming in society instead of the policy</p>

⁸¹ Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 352/78, (EC) No 165/94, (EC) No 2799/98, (EC) No 814/2000, (EC) No 1290/2005 and (EC) No 485/2008.

Aims stated in Article 45	Communication objectives
	<p>content.”</p> <p>“There needs to be a greater understanding of the enormous contribution the EU agri-food sector provides to the wider EU economy, through 44 million jobs which generate 7 per cent of European GDP.”</p>
3. “Reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns”	<p>“[the] EU is consistently ensuring safe and high-quality food to 500 million EU consumers which is produced in a sustainable way”</p> <p>“Build trust within the EU and among all citizens, farmers and non-farmers”</p>
4. “Inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas”	<p>“Engage with stakeholders (mainly farmers and other parties active in rural areas)”</p> <p>“It should be ensured that there is greater awareness of the contribution that the CAP makes to the support of economic growth of rural areas, especially SMEs”</p> <p>“The focus on informing about policy developments would be maintained when communicating to stakeholders”</p>
5. “Promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it”	<p>“The key issues of food security, climate change and environmental protection as well as the maintenance of sustainable rural areas must all be consistent features of the messaging.”</p> <p>“[the] EU is consistently ensuring safe and high-quality food to 500 million EU consumers which is produced in a sustainable way”</p> <p>“Reflecting consumer expectations on animal welfare, environmental and other standards, which are among the strictest in the world”</p> <p>“[the] EU is investing almost €100 billion in the period 2014-2020 for the development of European rural areas”</p> <p>“It will also be emphasised [that] the support provided for sustainable production practices and other measures will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change”</p>

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020 and Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

Based on the analysis, the communication objectives described in the external communication strategy are fully in line with four out of five major aims stated in the Article. They also align to some extent with the other remaining aim (the promotion of the European model of agriculture), as several roles of the CAP were mentioned when

describing the objectives: creating growth and jobs in rural areas; securing a stable supply of food in the EU; ensuring a sustainable way to produce food; protecting the environment and tackling climate change; and providing safe, healthy food of high quality. However, the roles of ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers and ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers are not mentioned directly in the external communication strategy. Also, no mention is made of support for family farming. Bearing in mind that there is no formally accepted description of the European model of agriculture, we will not include a comparison of the fifth aim in this assessment of relevance.

The European Commission's communication 'The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future' raised three broad objectives of the CAP⁸²:

- Viable food production;
- Sustainable management of natural resources and climate action;
- Balanced territorial development.

These objectives also correspond with the communication objectives for the CAP, which mention in their description the aspects of "food security, climate change and environmental protection as well as the maintenance of sustainable rural areas".

Stakeholder consultations also revealed positive assessments in relation to meeting the needs of target audiences. Most stakeholders positively evaluated the relevance of information presented by various DG AGRI information measures, including the Ag-Press network and the website, as well as social media, conferences and fairs. The majority of respondents in all of the surveys agreed that the information measures are both relevant for their work, and interesting. Interview respondents also agreed with the relevance of the information provided by DG AGRI. It can therefore be stated that the information measures employed by DG AGRI meet the needs of their target audiences to a great extent. In the following subchapter, we analyse how these measures meet the needs of European citizens.

7.3.2. Relevance: activities of the information policy meeting the needs of European citizens (ESQ 9)

European citizens are aware of the relevance of agriculture and rural areas to the future of the European Union. Eurobarometer data from 2020 shows that 95% of citizens perceive these aspects as being important to the future (an increase from 92% in 2017). Eurobarometer data from 2015 suggests similar results: 94% said that agriculture and rural areas were important for our future.⁸³ Also, 75% of citizens surveyed in 2020 agreed that the CAP benefits all European citizens. These results demonstrate that a very large majority of Europeans understand the importance of agriculture and rural development, making it relevant to meet the need for information about these topics.

The Eurobarometer results described in the previous subchapters on the achievement of

⁸² Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future*, 2010.

⁸³ European Commission, *Europeans, Agriculture and the CAP. Special Eurobarometer 473*, 2018; European Commission, *Europeans, Agriculture and the CAP. Special Eurobarometer 504*, 2020.

the information policy's general and specific objectives, support the notion that the information measures relating to the CAP meet the needs of European citizens: the majority of them tend to be aware of the CAP, most of them also agree that the CAP contributes positively to various aspects of society.⁸⁴ Room still exists for improvement: some of the stakeholders interviewed mentioned a need to communicate about the CAP more actively to the general public. Citizens, especially those living in rural areas, were the most often mentioned as target audiences by interviewees who were asked to describe what audiences should be targeted more frequently by DG AGRI communication.

Respondents suggested that this communication to the general public should focus on demonstrating the importance of farming to everyday lives, as well as discussing topics that are important to citizens. Examples of such topics provided by respondents included the environment, food safety and health. Respondents also suggested a greater focus on human elements in communication, by presenting real people (farmers) and their stories. Some stakeholders also noted that the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy might present good opportunities to communicate about topics that are interesting to European citizens.

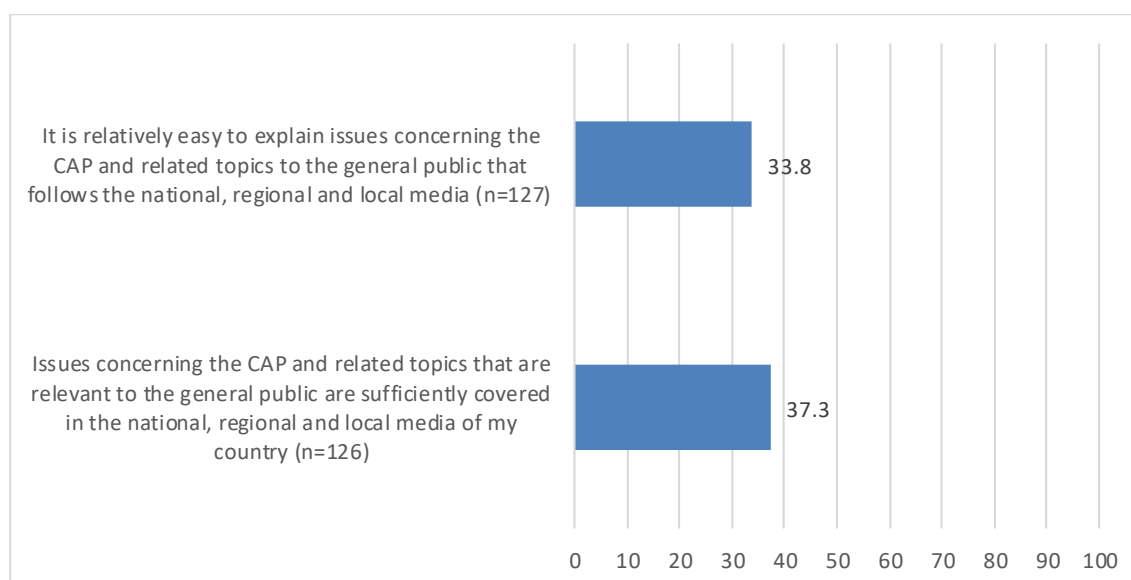
Eurobarometer results also revealed that providing safe, healthy food of high quality was most often selected as the main objective of farmers in the European Union, as well as the main objective in terms of agricultural and rural policy.⁸⁵ This opinion corresponds with the activities of DG AGRI: food is an important topic, mentioned in the communication objectives and often observed in various information measures used. In addition, the scoping interviews revealed that special attention is given to content about food when planning DG AGRI's social media activities. It can therefore be stated that this aspect of the relevance of communication to citizens is met to a great extent.

While the aforementioned results reflect positively on the relevance of information measures in relation to the CAP, one area that requires improvement can be found at country level. As discussed earlier, the Ag-Press network survey revealed that the journalists and communicators surveyed see a lack of coverage of the CAP and related topics within their country's media. Only 37.8% of them agreed that issues concerning the CAP and related topics that are relevant to the general public are sufficiently covered in the national, regional and local media of their country. In addition, only 33.8% of them agreed that it is relatively easy to explain issues concerning the CAP and related topics to members of the general public who follow national, regional and local media. These results can be seen in the figure on the next page.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Figure 126. Percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree with statements regarding media coverage of the CAP and related topics in their country



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the Ag-Press network survey.

Both data points mentioned above fall well below the 70% benchmark. This partly corresponds with the opinion of the stakeholders interviewed, some of whom mentioned the need for more communication at national, regional, and local levels. In addition, they underlined the importance of communicating with citizens “in their language”. This means that the messages created by the European Commission should be translated into national languages, made understandable (simple), and communicated locally:

- Through economic and social actors – intermediary organisations. Respondents suggested that national, regional and local networks or small and medium-sized enterprises based in rural areas could be used to reach citizens.
- Through regional and local news media, e.g. newspapers.

Interviewees also commented that the organisations used as multipliers should not be seen as tools of the European Commission; instead, they should be independent, helping to discuss and implement the policy. It was also suggested that these intermediary organisations would need capacity-building and technical assistance to improve their understanding of the CAP, agriculture and rural development. This suggestion corresponds with the results of the Ag-Press survey: the CAP and related topics are not very easy to understand and communicate, so it is important not only to find multipliers to communicate about the topic, but also to help them fully understand and communicate about it.

Relevance: summary

- A comparison of the contents of Article 45 and the communication 'The CAP towards 2020' with DG AGRI's communication objectives reveals the relevance of these objectives. Stakeholder consultations also confirmed that the information policy on the CAP meets the needs of the target audiences. The information measures used by DG AGRI therefore meet the needs of their target audiences to a great extent.
- The activities of the information policy on the CAP are also revealed as meeting the needs of the European citizens. Eurobarometer data reveal that European citizens are aware of the relevance of agriculture and rural areas to the future of the European Union. They also indicate that citizens care greatly about the provision of safe, healthy food of high quality, a topic about which DG AGRI often communicates.
- The survey of the Ag-Press network indicated a lack of coverage of the CAP and related topics in national, regional and local media, as well as indicating a potential reason for this: only a third of respondents agreed that it is relatively easy to explain issues concerning the CAP and related topics to the general public. This result indicates that there is scope for synergies between EU institutions and national, regional, and local media in communicating about the CAP.

7.4. Coherence

7.4.1. Coherence: information policy on the CAP and corporate communication of the European Commission (ESQ 10)

The corporate communication approach has been developed since 2013, particularly since the Juncker Commission began its work. Unlike earlier communication approaches, the idea behind corporate communication is to pool resources from different MFF programmes to fund communication priorities based on the general objectives of the European Union. This is intended to ensure that the European Commission is able to communicate its overarching priorities to a wide audience in a clear, coherent and cost-effective way. DG AGRI is a major contributor to the corporate communication budget (~40% of the total corporate communication budget is provided by DG AGRI during the period up to end 2020). The Commission's corporate communication is organised via specific communication campaigns focusing on diverse topics and targeted at different audiences.

In addition to its sizeable financial contribution, during the 2016-2020 evaluation period, DG AGRI contributed to the corporate communication campaigns via its thematic work. The table on the next page summarises the general features of the Commission's main corporate campaigns and AGRI's contribution to them.

Table 33. DG AGRI's contribution to the Commission's corporate communication campaigns

Campaign	Key focus and features	DG AGRI's contribution
EU Delivers (#InvestEU)	The campaign focused initially on how the EU promotes growth and job creation; later, the focus expanded to include success stories on EU funding in general. The campaign targeted the neutral general public and showcased specific investment stories.	DG AGRI provided exemplary stories on investment, including support to farmers and the food sector.
EU Protects	Targeting 35-55-year-olds, this campaign focused on EU actions in the fields of safety and security.	Less relevant to DG AGRI thematically; a limited-scope contribution on food safety.
EU Empowers (#EUandME)	Targeted at Europeans aged 17 to 35, the campaign showcased what the EU allows Europeans (particularly youth) to experience, gain or enjoy at all stages of life.	Limited contribution by DG AGRI, on the topic of healthy food.
Rural campaign	A pilot campaign focusing on raising awareness at grassroots level about the EU's impact on people living in rural areas. Significant focus on face-to-face communication via roadshows, and presentation of local success stories. The pilot was actually cut short due to COVID-19, and was fully implemented in only two of the seven selected Member States	The most thematically relevant campaign for DG AGRI, which took part from the planning stages. AGRI helped to prepare and took part in the kick-off events, and provided access to its networks. AGRI staff also participated as speakers, talking about the CAP and EU policies in general.
European Green Deal (upcoming)	A future campaign planned to assist communication about the European Green Deal. At the time at which data was collected for this evaluation, no details were yet available on its scope and approach.	Participation in formal planning structures of the campaign; potential for significant contribution in the future.

This information, gathered from the DG AGRI and DG COMM staff responsible for corporate communication campaigns, shows that in comparison with DG AGRI's significant financial contribution, the reflection of CAP-related topics in the content of the campaigns was fairly limited during the evaluation period. The most significant focus on CAP topics was in the pilot Rural campaign. However, this campaign was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as it was based around local events and face-to-face communication with communities.

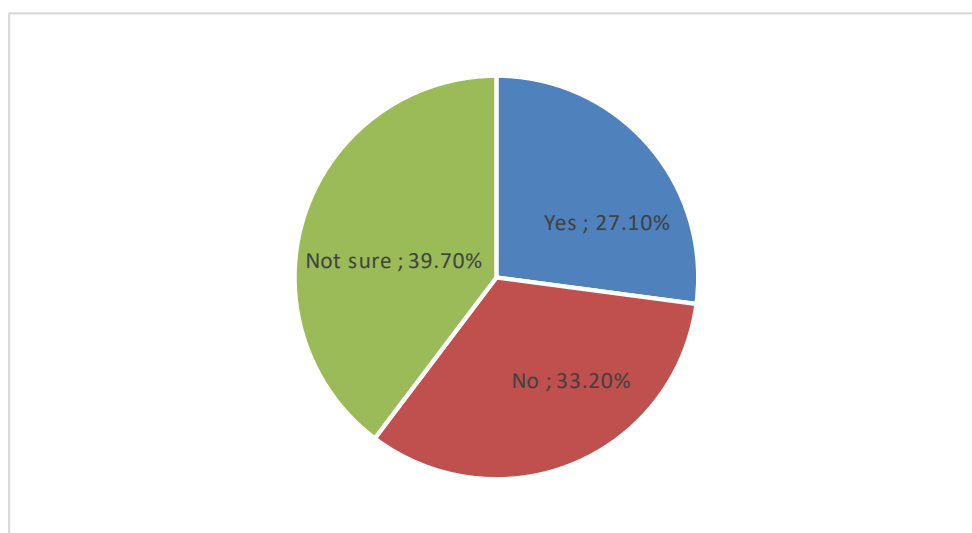
The discrepancy between DG AGRI's contribution to the corporate communication budget and the (relative lack of) prominence given to CAP-related topics in corporate campaigns was acknowledged by DG COMM. However, the lower prominence of these topics is

explained by the overall approach of corporate communication and its focus on the bottom-up elaboration of communication messages (focusing on the issues that are most frequently requested by citizens).

According to DG COMM, DG AGRI's thematic contribution to corporate communication is likely to grow once the planned large-scale corporate communication campaign on the European Green Deal is launched. Currently, a number of the cross-cutting challenges facing the Union relate to the CAP. These include the preservation of biodiversity, sustainable food production and innovation to mitigate the impact of climate change, including on farming and food production. Mechanisms have therefore been put in place to further step up cooperation between DGs to ensure the coherence and synergy of efforts to communicate Commission priorities on the Green Deal and related issues.

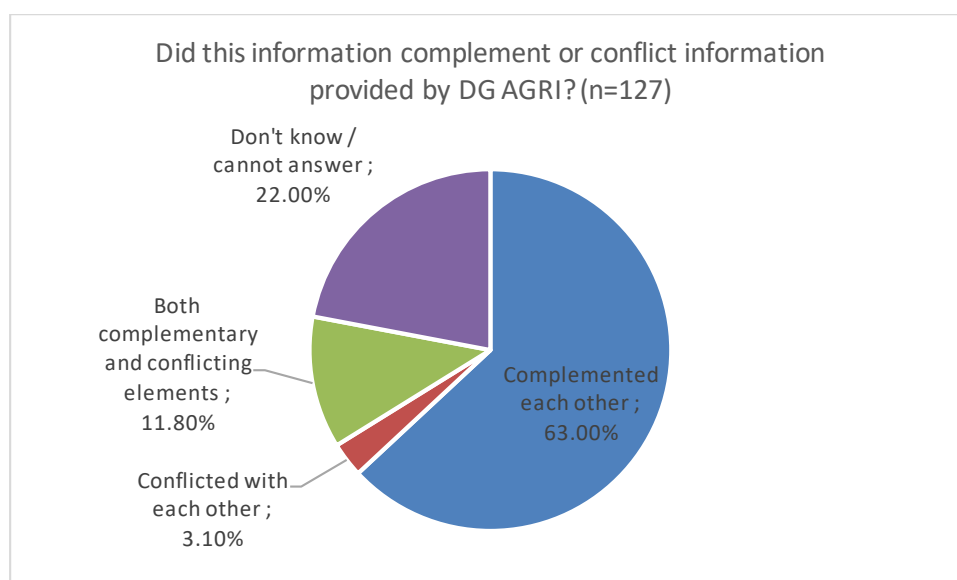
While CAP topics were directly reflected only to a moderate extent in two of three largest corporate communication campaigns during the evaluation period, coverage of these topics within corporate communication enjoyed some significant visibility among stakeholders. Over 27% of respondents to the main survey said that they had noticed such topics in the three main corporate communication campaigns. Another 40% said they were not sure, which means that the reach may have been even higher. Furthermore, when asked about the most important information sources on the CAP, 10.2% of respondents to the main survey selected the Commission's corporate communication campaigns. While this is a significantly lower percentage than that for DG AGRI information (42.8%) and other sources (39.6%), it still represents an important information source for AGRI target audiences.

Figure 127. "Since 2016, have you noticed the CAP and related topics being mentioned/referred to in corporate communication campaigns launched by the EU (InvestEU, EUandME, or EUProtects)?" (n=473)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

The information provided on CAP-related issues by DG AGRI itself and by the corporate campaigns was complementary. Of respondents to the main survey, 63% said that these communication efforts complemented each other and only 3.1% said that they were conflicting (11.8% said there were elements of both).

Figure 128. Complementarity of DG AGRI communication and corporate communication campaigns

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the main survey.

This high level of complementarity and absence of conflicts or contradictions was also noted by the DG COMM officials responsible for the campaigns. In their opinion, the collaboration with DG AGRI was particularly constructive and valuable, also in the context of collaboration with the other DGs of the European Commission. Among the positive aspects of collaboration mentioned were:

- Respect for the guidelines provided by DG COMM and quick reaction (e.g. on communicating the priorities of the European Green Deal), relaying relevant messages on the latest policy developments at major events, relaying the main messages to direct target audiences;
- Active engagement in planning activities, via working groups and steering committees; contribution to the development of objectives, messages and audiences;
- Proactivity in providing support; mobilising staff; being present at events, sharing research, evidence, administrative documents;
- DG AGRI's 'on-the-ground' approach, including more face-to-face contact, engaging with citizens directly and in their own languages, is highly appreciated by the target audiences and unusual in the context of other DGs;
- A professional outlook that contributes to the achievement of a coherent approach even in the cases where different policy perspectives and opinions exist among different DGs.

All of these elements ensure that CAP-related messages are already considered at the planning stage of corporate campaigns, and further aligned during their implementation. All of the DG COMM officials interviewed evaluated their collaboration with DG AGRI very positively in this regard.

Coherence with corporate communication: summary

- Compared with DG AGRI's **sizeable financial contribution** to the Commission's corporate communication budget, **topics related to the CAP** were reflected in the corporate communication campaigns to a **moderate extent**. This is the result of a bottom-up approach in selecting topics for corporate communication. InvestEU and the Rural campaign (which was only a pilot campaign, and was cut short by COVID-19) were the campaigns that featured the most prominent contributions by DG AGRI.
- Despite this lower prominence, **CAP-related topics were noticed in corporate communication campaigns** by the relevant stakeholders, and these campaigns sometimes provided their main information source on CAP.
- The **role of DG AGRI** in supporting corporate communication is likely to **significantly increase with the new campaign on the European Green Deal**. Given the cross-cutting nature of the communication challenges involved – which include sustainability, biodiversity, innovation, climate – reinforced cooperation between the Commission services is foreseen **in developing relevant communication messages**.
- The **CAP and corporate communication were fully complementary** during the evaluation period, with no notable contradictions identified. This was the result of particularly **strong and professional collaboration between DG AGRI and DG COMM** on the campaigns.

7.4.2. Coherence: information policy on the CAP and information policies on related EU policies (ESQ 11)

While information policies on various EU policies are implemented in coherence with the over-arching corporate communication campaigns (described in the previous subchapters), it is also important to analyse the coherence between separate information policies. In this subchapter, we assess the coherence of the information policy on the CAP with the information policies on related EU policies such as regional, health, trade and environmental policies. We build on desk research and content analysis by comparing the texts of the strategic documents from either side. The comparison includes screening documents for four CAP-related keywords: "food*", "farm*", "agri*", "rural*" ⁸⁶. These keywords were selected to include major CAP-related topics like food, farming, agriculture and rural development. The most frequently mentioned words in the communication objectives stated in the external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020 are shown in the word cloud on the next page.

⁸⁶ The * symbol indicates that the keywords also cover extended versions of each term: e.g. "food*" includes "foodstuffs", "farm*" includes "farming", "agri*" includes "agriculture".

Figure 129. Most frequently mentioned words in the communication objectives for the CAP



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on information from the European Commission.

The assessment also includes the results of interviews with European Commission officials. The DGs selected for comparison with DG AGRI included DG REGIO, DG SANTE, DG TRADE and DG ENV. However, DG ENV officials did not participate in the interview programme. Consequently, we conducted two interviews with officials from DG CLIMA (arguably, the most similar DG) instead. For this exercise, we interviewed one official from DG REGIO, one from DG SANTE, one from DG TRADE, and two from DG CLIMA.

It should also be noted that the aspect of coherence was discussed only with officials from four similar DGs (REGIO, SANTE, TRADE, CLIMA), but was not discussed with officials from the DG under evaluation (AGRI).

Comparison with EU regional policy

The comparison to assess the coherence of the information policy on the CAP with the information policy on the EU regional policy includes the following documents:

- External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020 (focus on communication objectives and messages).
- DG REGIO's communication strategy for the period 2017-2020.

The analysis revealed that DG REGIO's communication strategy does not mention keywords relating to food, farming, agriculture and rural development. Despite this, synergies were visible because both documents mentioned cooperating with other DGs, either seeking "to cooperate more with other DGs for content input" (DG AGRI) or mentioning that "other Directorates-General, especially from the ESI Funds family, should also be associated to DG REGIO's communication activities, where relevant, to align messages and achieve complementarities" (DG REGIO). Also, no contradictions were identified between the two strategies.

The interview conducted with an official from DG REGIO revealed that communication from both DGs is coherent, and that this coherence is ensured in the context of the Green Deal. The official interviewed also said that there is a potential for synergies in communicating about EU funds. The respondent also said that they were satisfied and inspired by their collaboration with DG AGRI, and hoped to further improve this collaboration in the future.

Comparison with EU health policy

The comparison to assess the coherence of the information policy on the CAP with the information policy on the EU health policy includes the following documents:

- External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020 (focus on communication objectives and messages).

- DG SANTE Communication Work Plan for 2016.
- DG SANTE Communication Work Plan for 2017.
- DG SANTE Communication Work Plan for 2018.
- DG SANTE Communication Work Plan for 2019.
- DG SANTE Communication Strategy for 2020.

The analysis of documents from both DGs shows that both DGs give a lot of attention to the topic of food. The overarching message indicated in the communication policy on the CAP states that the policy “is crucial to long-term food security”. Similarly, the communication objectives for the CAP directly mention food security, healthy eating and high-quality food among its key messages.

The DG SANTE Communication Work Plans for 2016-2019 mention topics like food safety, food information and food waste among its key priorities. In addition, keywords relating to food, farming and agriculture are mentioned more and more frequently in DG SANTE’s communication plans every year: in the 2016 plan, the combined number of mentions for keywords “food*”, “farm*”, and “agri*” was 12; in the 2017 plan, the number was 36; in the 2018 plan, the number was 49; and in the 2019 plan, the number was 56. Meanwhile, the length of these documents remained similar.

The DG SANTE Communication Strategy for 2020 focuses on the topic of farming more than earlier documents. The reason for this increased focus is the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy, which is a major focus of the communication strategy. The context of the European Green Deal and its ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy shows an exceptional opportunity to create synergies. Both DGs understand this potential: the DG SANTE Communication Strategy for 2020 mentions that the “communication strategy will be coordinated with other DGs like AGRI”, while the communication strategy for the CAP states the need “to continue working with other DGs such as SANTE <...> in attending fairs with joint stands”.

The DG SANTE official who was interviewed indicated that there was potential to further create synergies between the two DGs in relation to the Commission’s priorities on food safety. Overall, the official viewed collaboration with DG AGRI very positively and agreed that DG AGRI and DG SANTE shared a good understanding of how and what should be communicated. Examples of such collaboration can be seen publicly in activities such as events (e.g. the Farm to Fork 2020 conference), social media (e.g. both DGs retweet each other’s messages) or the website (sharing the same class ‘Food, Farming, Fisheries’). This shows that the information policies of both DGs are, to a great extent, coherent and complementary.

Comparison with the trade policy

Due to DG TRADE being unable to provide communication strategies or plans for the period of 2016-2020, several policy documents and management plans were included in the coherence analysis. While this arrangement allowed us to continue the research, we recognise that this lack of communication documents in the analysis is a limitation. The comparison to assess the coherence of the information policy on the CAP with the information policy on the EU trade policy relies on the following documents:

- External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020 (focus on communication objectives and messages).
- The EU Trade and Investment Strategy 2015 (the ‘Trade for All’ strategy)
- The publication ‘EU trade policy at work’

- DG TRADE managements plans for 2016, 2018, and 2019

DG TRADE policy and management documents scarcely mention any keywords relating to food and agriculture. We could identify neither any synergies nor any contradictions with the communication strategy for the CAP. The interview with an official from DG TRADE indicated positive collaboration with DG AGRI, with the interviewee expressing satisfaction with their regular contacts, information sharing, consultation and exchanging ideas. Positive collaboration is also publicly visible: one example is the fact that both DGs regularly retweet each other's messages on Twitter.

Comparison with the environmental policy

The comparison to assess the coherence of the information policy on the CAP with the information policy on the EU environmental policy includes the following documents:

- External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016-2020 (focus on communication objectives and messages).
- DG ENV Communication Strategy 2016-2020 (focus on objectives and focus areas).

No keywords relating to food, farming, agriculture, or rural development are mentioned in the DG ENV Communication Strategy 2016-2020. DG ENV mentions five other DGs in the context of seeking synergies with them. DG AGRI is not among these five DGs. Overall, neither synergies nor contradictions were found in the strategy. However, the topics of the environment and climate change, as well as the overarching principle of sustainability, are prominent in the external communication strategy for the CAP. The communication objectives for the CAP mention "climate change and environmental protection" and "sustainable rural areas" among the "key issues" to be included in messaging. DG AGRI's communication objectives mention the importance of ensuring food that is "produced in a sustainable way, while reflecting consumer expectations on animal welfare, environmental and other standards". In addition, the importance of communicating on the "support provided for sustainable production practices and other measures that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change" and the amount of funds "spent on climate relevant measures" are emphasised in the communication objectives. Overall, the communication objectives for the CAP often mention keywords such as "sustain*" (three times), "climate" (three times), and "environment*" (two times). Such examples indicate that DG AGRI regards sustainability, the environment and climate change as being highly significant in the eyes of the target audiences, especially the general public. Therefore, communicating about such topics is seen as an important part of the overall strategy. These findings suggest that DG AGRI and DG ENV are coherent in their communication, and that there is potential for even more synergies in the future.

The DG CLIMA officials who were interviewed indicated that they had a good working relationship with DG AGRI on communicating the CAP. Where policy or communication positions were initially different, they were resolved internally within the Commission; therefore, external communication was said to be coherent. Examples of such coherence can be observed publicly: for example, both DGs retweet each other's messages on Twitter.

Coherence with information policies on related EU policies: summary

- The information policy on the CAP is coherent with information policies on related EU regional, health and environmental policies, as found through desk research and interviews. While the data available on the information policy on the EU trade policy was limited, we could identify some level of coherence and an absence of conflicting messages.

7.4.3. Coherence: information policy on the CAP and other information actions on the CAP (ESQ 12)

While the information policy on the CAP constitutes a significant part of communications about food and farming in Europe, DG AGRI possesses other mechanisms and policy tools that it uses to include information actions on the CAP and rural development in its activities. Examples of these are the European Network for Rural Development, the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, and EU Market Observatories. In the sections below, we provide brief descriptions of these, and compare the communication by each with the information policy on the CAP. We do so to assess their coherence – identifying contradictions, duplications, complementarities and synergies in terms of communication approaches, objectives, thematic focus, tools and target groups.

European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)

The ENRD serves as a hub for transnational and cross-border learning and information exchange. Key stakeholders include the National Rural Networks, RDP Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies, Local Action Groups, European organisations, agricultural advisory services, agricultural and rural researchers, and other interested rural development organisations and individuals. The key objectives of the ENRD in 2014-2020 are:

- Increasing the involvement of stakeholders in rural development;
- Improving the quality of rural development programmes (RDPs);
- Better informing about the benefits of the Rural Development policy;
- Supporting the evaluation of the RDPs.

Communication is a very important cross-cutting activity of the ENRD. The primary focus is on the sharing of knowledge, experience and good practice. These take place via thematic groups, training workshops, seminars, meetings, etc. This allows not only the dissemination of information, but also (and more importantly) inviting discussion, and in turn supporting the implementation of the rural development programmes in the Member States.

The objectives of ENRD communication are set out in the communications strategy, and achieved through the activities of the Contact Point of the ENRD. In 2014-2020, the priority aims are:

- Developing and disseminating clear messages about the improvement of RDP design and implementation, including the sharing of interesting practice, lessons learned, possible solutions, trends and emerging issues;
- Supporting the identification and dissemination of good EAFRD project practice;
- Facilitating peer exchange and networking between as wide a range of rural development stakeholders as possible;
- Providing clear and understandable information on aspects of Rural Development policy;
- Providing access through signposting to relevant information at local, regional and national levels (such as Managing Authority contacts, LAG information etc.);
- Increasing understanding and awareness of rural development news and developments in and across Europe;
- Using stories and platforms that bring the Rural Development policy to life, to reach out to as wide an audience as is practically possible.

These aims are in line with the objectives of the information policy on the CAP, but have a narrower focus – they only address the second pillar of the CAP, i.e. rural development as implemented through the EAFRD.

Key communication tools include the ENRD website, ENRD Twitter account, ENRD Facebook page, ENRD LinkedIn profile, monthly newsletter, publications (such as the EU Rural Review, Rural Connections, the Projects Brochure, and ENRD Presentation booklet), good practice summaries, fiches, factsheets, EURural YouTube channel and video material. Although similar to the measures of the information policy on the CAP, ENRD measures typically offer more tailored content to those who have an interest in the Rural Development policy of the EU. Key target groups are programming and policy-level stakeholders (including Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, Local Action Groups, and National Rural Networks), the socio-professional sector (socio-economic partners, civil society groups, research institutes, and advisory service providers), and individuals who have a personal interest in rural development and EAFRD projects.

Overall, in terms of design, the communication activities of the ENRD are in line with and complement the information policy on the CAP. Evidence also points to regular and established cooperation between the ENRD and the DG AGRI Unit dealing with communication (B1). DG AGRI Unit E2, which is responsible for the ENRD, is systematically consulted on the annual communication plan prepared by B1, while the latter reviews the ENRD Contact Point's Annual Work Plan.

More specific examples of complementarity include close cooperation on social media, as well as the ENRD contributing to events organised by DG AGRI, and B1 disseminating ENRD seminars and events, and sharing good practice projects promoted by the ENRD. The ENRD Contact Point also provides material and projects in the context of the Commission's corporate communication campaigns, and regularly identifies suitable representatives for events at local level. This cooperation creates synergies between the communication actions of the ENRD and the information policy on the CAP. This is reflected, for example, in the context of DG AGRI's planning for the Commission's recovery (NextGenerationEU) corporate communication campaign⁸⁷.

European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI)

The EIP-AGRI was set up by the EC to promote innovation in the agri-food sector. In this way, it aims to help the agricultural and forestry sectors become more productive and sustainable, by harnessing innovation and technological developments to tackle current challenges such as the need to increase competitiveness, address climate change, and protect biodiversity. The EIP-AGRI brings together innovation actors in agriculture and forestry, research, business and others to co-create innovative solutions that can be applied quickly on the ground. The scope of the EIP-AGRI covers the following:

- Promoting a resource-efficient, economically viable, productive, competitive, low-emission, climate-friendly and resilient agricultural and forestry sector, working towards agro-ecological production systems and in harmony with the essential natural resources on which farming and forestry depend;

⁸⁷ NextGenerationEU is a EUR 750 billion temporary recovery instrument that will allow the Commission to raise funds on the capital market. It will help to repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. The instrument is accompanied by a corporate communication campaign, to which DG AGRI contributes.

- Helping to deliver a steady and sustainable supply of food, feed and biomaterials, both existing and new;
- Improving processes to preserve the environment, adapting to and mitigating climate change;
- Building bridges between cutting-edge research knowledge/technology and farmers, forest managers, rural communities, businesses, NGOs and advisory services.

Communication is not the core business of the EIP-AGRI, which functions as part of EU-level networking activities. It helps to promote innovation and to achieve the objectives listed above. The EIP-AGRI features, among other, the work of the Operational Groups, multi-actor projects and thematic networks. These are the key building blocks of the EIP-AGRI.

The objectives of EIP-AGRI communication are set out in its communications strategy, and achieved through activities of the Service Point. Its key goal is to reach all stakeholders and guide them through several phases:

- **Awareness:** stakeholders are aware of the opportunities offered under the EIP-AGRI framework – in particular those offered under the Rural Development policy and Horizon 2020, but also other EU policies, as well as national and private opportunities, to a certain extent.
- **Engagement:** stakeholders make use of the opportunities specified under the previous point, and succeed in finding other stakeholders within a particular field of innovation.
- **Commitment:** stakeholders share and resolve their ideas, research needs, knowledge and issues through networking and collaboration (using EIP-AGRI tools). A community of innovation actors and practitioners is formed.
- **Ownership:** stakeholders become ambassadors for the EIP-AGRI, and encourage others to participate. They should share and communicate through the network without being prompted, thus helping the network to grow and connect people effectively, and to catalyse innovation.

These objectives are complementary to the objectives of the information policy on the CAP, as they address innovation in agriculture and forestry – a key component of the Commission's modernisation drive for the sector. In fact, innovation is central to the agricultural and forestry sectors becoming more productive, sustainable, and capable of tackling current challenges⁸⁸. Also, the EIP-AGRI focuses heavily on engaging stakeholders and encouraging changes in their behaviour, whereas the information policy of the CAP prioritises information to raise awareness and address negative views.

The EIP-AGRI uses a number of tools in its communication. These include Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, webcasts and movie clips on YouTube, the EIP-AGRI website, newsletter, press articles, brochures, the EIP-AGRI magazine, and events. These are similar to the measures carried out under the information policy of the CAP, but serve a different purpose as they aim not only to inform and engage, but also to facilitate cooperation between key stakeholder groups such as farmers, foresters, researchers and advisors.

⁸⁸ EIP-AGRI, *EIP-AGRI Network*, 2015, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/eip-agri_brochure_network_2015_en_web.pdf

Overall, in terms of design, EIP-AGRI communication complements the information measures on the CAP. More so, evidence points to synergies between the communication by the EIP-AGRI and that carried out by DG AGRI Unit B1. The two not only cooperate on an *ad hoc* basis, but also coordinate more systematically. First, DG AGRI Unit B1 consults all other units while drafting each annual communication plan. DG AGRI Unit B2, which is responsible for the EIP-AGRI, makes use of this opportunity to request support and plan how the EIP-AGRI activities could feed into communication activities carried out by DG AGRI Unit B1. Second, DG AGRI Unit B2 has a contact person to keep in touch with DG AGRI Unit B1 and communicate about expectations on both sides. Third, an established arrangement exists between the EIP-AGRI and DG AGRI Unit B1 for providing articles for the press.

Market observatories

EU market observatories were established by the EC to help market players cope better with market volatility and to read market signals. Six market observatories exist. These are:

- Milk
- Meat
- Sugar
- Crops
- Fruit and vegetables
- Wine

Communication via the market observatories aims to disseminate market data such as prices and production, as well as trade figures and short-term analysis, in a timely manner. Such information is relevant and relates to the CAP, but is more thematically focused and tailored towards specialised audiences when compared with the information policy on the CAP.

Information on the observatories is provided at DG AGRI's website – the tool used for the information policy on the CAP, and which constitutes one of its measures. Nevertheless, the content of the market observatories is different from that found on other web pages under 'Food, farming, fisheries', or in a typical publication produced as part of the implementation of the information policy on the CAP. All of this points to coherence between the EU market observatories and the information policy on the CAP.

Coherence with information actions on the CAP: summary

- The communication activities of the ENRD are in line with the information policy on the CAP. Evidence points to regular and established cooperation between the ENRD and DG AGRI Unit B1.
- Communication by the EIP-AGRI complements information measures on the CAP. Evidence points to synergies between the communication by the EIP-AGRI and by DG AGRI Unit B1.
- Coherence exists between the EU market observatories and the information policy on the CAP.

7.4.4. Coherence: information policy on the CAP and communication by the Member States (ESQ 12)

Efforts to communicate on the CAP and related issues are also implemented directly by national actors. These include public authorities (e.g. ministries, administrations, paying

agencies, National Rural Networks⁸⁹) as well as various other types of organisations in the socio-professional sector (e.g. farmer and environmentalist associations, confederations, business organisations, research centres, media). Given the limited resources of DG AGRI to undertake communication actions that are adapted to each national context and language, and considering the fact that the CAP is a particularly complex subject to communicate, involving the dissemination of information aimed at different groups, it is important to analyse whether DG AGRI's communication strategy and messages are coherent with information on the CAP delivered by the Member States.

Coherence with communication actions on the CAP by national public authorities

The Commission's contribution to the informal EU-27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu (Romania) on 9 May 2019 states that EU communication is a shared responsibility, meaning that in communicating about the EU, synergies should be enhanced between the EU institutions and the Member States⁹⁰. The CAP is a policy implemented under shared management by the Member States and the Commission, which also implies shared responsibility in communicating about the policy. National public authorities engage in CAP communication using public funds (as well as resources from the EAFRD, for those communicating in the framework of the RDPs). The communication roles of some of these national actors are laid down by law. For example, Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 defines the obligations of Managing Authorities when it comes to providing information on the RDP (co-financed by the EAFRD), its funding opportunities, rules, contributions and results, to both stakeholders and the general public⁹¹. Under their shared responsibility for implementing the CAP, public authorities establish mechanisms for the administration of the CAP at national level. This includes related information such as that concerning income support and market measures and the various CAP funding schemes.

Available data from the case studies and the mapping exercise of national measures, as well as information from DG AGRI staff, suggests that communication efforts by national public authorities are characterised by the following trends:

- Like DG AGRI, national public authorities commonly use a variety of communication channels, organising or attending events (workshops, seminars, fairs, debates etc.) and producing online and printed content (social media publications, webpages, newsletters, press releases, brochures, leaflets, videos etc.) to inform their target audiences about the CAP.

⁸⁹ The composition of National Rural Networks is diverse (see the different profiles at https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles_en): besides ministries, administrations, paying agencies and municipalities, representatives from organisations active in rural areas (i.e. agricultural associations, farmers, LAGs, scientific institutions, enterprises etc.) may also be included. Even though NRNs gather together actors that are not necessarily public authorities, the evaluation team has considered it relevant to classify NRNs within the group of "public authorities" for the purposes of this evaluation study question, as the involvement of national public authorities with regard to NRNs is usually quite strong: ministries of agriculture often coordinate and pilot the activities of the NRNs, approve the yearly actions plans, are part of (or appoint the members of) the Management Boards of the NRNs and/or are in charge of their Network Support Unit. Sometimes, NRNs are even an integral part of the ministries of agriculture. In addition, NRNs use public money to carry out their activities, and their duties are specified by public law.

⁹⁰ European Commission, *Europe in May 2019: Preparing for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in an increasingly uncertain world. The European Commission's contribution to the informal EU27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu (Romania) on 9 May 2019.*

⁹¹ Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy, Articles 54 and 66.

- Despite this wide array of communication tools, most interviewees consulted for the case studies were under the impression that national communication actions by public authorities primarily address the informational needs of stakeholders, but do not focus with the same intensity on proactive communication towards the general public. This is probably due to the nature of the messages: a fair share of these revolve around the presentation of the various funding opportunities under the CAP, eligibility conditions and duties of beneficiaries as well as the deadlines and instructions for application to the schemes. This information is particularly relevant for individuals directly affected by the policy, but less so for average citizens. Communication regarding the operationalisation of CAP measures (rules, management, calendars etc.) is particularly dominant in the case of paying institutions and public advisory services, providing technical assistance about the funding schemes and electronic applications for rural stakeholders. Additionally, Managing Authorities and National Rural Networks (in line with the legal requirements) promote EU financial assistance for rural development, presenting the funding possibilities, targets and upcoming calls under the second pillar of the CAP, as well as evaluating its impact.
- Nevertheless, besides this technical information, national communication by public authorities (notably ministries of agriculture) also focuses on general information about the CAP (history, objectives, measures, legislation) and on the benefits of the CAP to society as a whole, in terms of high-quality food, economic growth and environmental sustainability. Moreover, the subject of CAP reform is covered extensively, and farmers' success stories (supported, for example, by the EAFRD) are also frequently disseminated (see example in box below).

Box 2. Example of a national activity communicating EAFRD (identified through mapping of national communication measures)

'Europe is engaging in France'

'Europe is engaging in France' is a project run by the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, the public authority responsible for the coordination of European funds, which is in charge of elaborating the communication strategy for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020 in France, as required by Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013⁹². The website 'Europe in France' is the main communication platform used for this initiative. It addresses the general public and public authorities, as well as beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of EU funds.

Like other ESI funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is explained in detailed comprehensive infographics, educational videos, dedicated webpages and a pedagogical kit providing guidance to public authorities about the allocation of funds. Via these measures, key information about the EAFRD is disseminated: its objective in relation to the competitiveness of rural communities and nature preservation, the legal basis of the Fund, its management, the amount of funding and the number of programmes in France that it finances. The website also provides an interactive map of France that offers tailored information on the ESIF for each region. This is particularly convenient for stakeholders interested in applying for funds.

⁹² Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Articles 115 to 117.

Moreover, an entire section of the website is dedicated to presenting various projects that benefit from ESIF funding. Success stories of farmers who have modernised and developed their farming infrastructure (equipment, new buildings), notably to engage in more environmentally friendly farming methods, are reported by the EAFRD. Besides the website, 'Europe is engaging in France' is also present on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube), where it disseminates content about news relating to the ESIF and to the European Union more broadly.

The main strengths of this communication action are:

- An effort to make technical information about EU funds accessible through appealing, simple and usually short visual and audio-visual formats (e.g. infographics, videos, interactive map)
- A 'projects' section that offers an overview of the support provided by ESI funds through concrete, personalised and 'in-the-field' examples, making it easy for the different target audiences, and especially the general public, to grasp the different contributions made by the funds.

These communication orientations underline the efforts made by public authorities to reach *inter alia* the general public with regard to the CAP and the ESIF, and are of relevance to both EU level and national bodies.

- While communication activities to develop specific messages for the general public are not the primary consideration, they have still been pursued by national public authorities. A good example, supported by the ministry of agriculture in Estonia, is presented in the box below.

Box 3. Example of a national information activity addressed to a specific target audience (identified through mapping of national communication measures)

Open Farm Day ("Avatud Talude Päev"), in Estonia (2015-2020)

Open Farm Days in Estonia have been organised since 2015 by the Ministry of Rural Affairs, the Agricultural Research Centre, the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, the Central Union of Estonian Farmers, local LEADER action groups and the 'Kodukant' Village Movement of Estonia. The project is co-funded by the EAFRD and the national authority under the RDP 2014-2020. Each year, farmers who registered for the event opened their doors to visitors for one or two days to present their profession, equipment and working environment, as well as to promote their local products. The overall objective of the Open Farm Days is to introduce guests to the life of the countryside and the food production process, as well as to highlight the contributions and importance of agriculture for all citizens. According to Estonia's Ministry of Rural Affairs, "Open Farm Day has become the biggest shaper of a positive rural image".

The events are promoted through the website of the project, social media (Facebook and Instagram), media platforms, radio, information banners, posters, promotional items, a user-friendly application presenting the participating farms, as well as photos, videos and publications (notably on the website of the Ministry of Rural Affairs). The project reaches thousands of families: in 2020, almost 300 Estonian farms participated, welcoming over 213 000 visitors (compared with 45 000 visitors to 147 farms in 2015). The events are directed towards people with a limited knowledge of agriculture and farming, and target the general public – particularly children. Indeed, specific attention was indeed given to this segment of the population during the 2019 edition of the event, with the Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Estonian Farmers' Union organising bus trips enabling children including orphans to travel to the farms.

The Open Farm Days communication activity combines several strong points:

- A large number of participating farms, enabling good geographical coverage (and therefore a potentially large number of visitors)

- Conducted on a regular, annual basis with effective publicity via conventional media and social media, ensuring the increased popularity of the event over time
- Excellent organisation (information days for farmers, an inaugural event, a comprehensive app featuring the farms' programmes and providing an interactive map, free bus trips for the citizens to go to the farms, etc.)
- Active, face-to-face interaction between farmers and the general public, leading to better connection between citizens and all elements of rural life. By creating a positive image of agriculture, the event can even encourage children to pursue agricultural vocations.
- The opportunity to carry out the 2020 edition, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, by respecting clear health-related measures (e.g. 2-metre social distancing between participants and a maximum number of visitors inside and outside).

The Estonian project represents a very successful example of an Open Farm Day event. Indeed, the DG AGRI scheme of co-financed grants has already supported similar events, and consideration could be given in the future to enlarging the scope of such events, aimed at families and the general public. The regularity of Open Farm Days is an essential element in building the popularity of the event. Thus, events like Open Farm days could achieve an even broader impact in the case of organisations that benefit from DG AGRI grants regularly, or to enable organisations to keep organising events even without DG AGRI funding. The grant beneficiary Agri Aware, which organised national Open Farm Days in 2018 and 2019 and plans to continue doing so, is a good example in this respect, indicating that this type of event is considered sufficiently effective, efficient and/or relevant to be repeated year on year. This approach could therefore become more widespread among grant projects. Furthermore, such national events could represent an opportunity for DG AGRI officials to directly deliver messages about the CAP to a large number of participants. This could be an interesting complement of information, given that the topic of the CAP is usually not at the forefront of such events.

Sources: Website of Open Farm Day (<https://www.avatudtalud.ee/et/kulastajale>), publications available on the website of the Ministry of Rural Affairs (<https://www.agri.ee/et/uudised/avatud-talude-nadalavahetusel-tehti-kulastusrekord>), technical grant report of Agri Aware (2018).

Following this overview, the evaluation team has assessed the extent to which the communication measures developed by national public authorities are complementary to the objectives and messages outlined in DG AGRI's external communication strategy for the period 2016-2020.

As highlighted in the country case studies, national communication priorities are mainly relevant for stakeholders, but also often focus on the general public. Besides engaging with farmers and rural actors, DG AGRI's communication strategy also stresses the importance of "rais[ing] public awareness on the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development through the CAP"⁹³. This objective is only partially achieved: despite the dissemination of some messages of interest to the general public (e.g. those linked to food, health and the environment), the case studies sometimes reveal a lack of information to the needs of average citizens. Efforts to deliver messages tailored for specific segments of the general public, such as young people – a key target audience, as underlined by DG AGRI⁹⁴ – are even less common. However, as the most recent Eurobarometer results show,

⁹³ European Commission, *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020*, Brussels, 2016, p.4.

⁹⁴ European Commission, *External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020*, Brussels, 2016, p.6.

an increasing number of Europeans believe that the CAP benefits all citizens, not only farmers. Still, the present analysis indicates further room for improvement, with better targeted communication to be developed at national level. This, in particular, could be achieved under the new CAP, under which Member States will have the obligation to communicate about their CAP Strategic Plans.

Among Member States, Sweden stands out with the highest degree of public awareness of the policy in the EU. The corresponding case study notably links this achievement to the efforts of the Swedish Government to launch innovative initiatives to enhance the engagement of citizens with EU affairs. For instance, the 'EU thematic consultation forums' were successful in informing the general public about the CAP and in generating feedback for the government. Strengthening the engagement of the general public through the use of appealing communication activities supported by clear and easily understandable messages therefore appears to be an effective way to better reach average citizens. However, knowing about the CAP does not necessarily translate into holding an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the policy: the Swedish case study makes it clear that much criticism of the policy occurs in Sweden.

The table below outlines the main messages promoted by the DG AGRI external communication strategy, as well as examples of those communicated by national public authorities.

Table 34. Examples of messages promoted by DG AGRI external communication strategy and communicated by national public authorities

Messages promoted by DG AGRI external communication strategy on the CAP (2016-2020)	Information communicated by national public authorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EU ensures safe and high-quality food that is produced sustainably, while reflecting consumer expectations on animal welfare, environmental and other standards. - CAP support is provided for sustainable production practices and other measures that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change. - Messages should focus on addressing the existing (mis)-perceptions about European agriculture and farming rather than on policy content. - The CAP benefits all EU citizens, farmers and non-farmers alike. - The CAP contributes to the economic growth of rural areas, especially of SMEs. The CAP supports growth, jobs and investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CAP is needed to keep healthy food available and maintain food security. - The CAP contributes to addressing climate and environmental objectives. - The CAP is important to provide reasonable consumer prices. - The CAP ensures the viability of agri-business and enables the stabilisation of farm incomes and the enhancement of rural communities' investments. - Dissemination of success stories and good practices under the RDPs. - Information on the new environmental strategies of the CAP post-2020. 	Messages in line with DG AGRI messaging

Messages promoted by DG AGRI external communication strategy on the CAP (2016-2020)	Information communicated by national public authorities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on funding schemes and instructions on how to apply. - Overview of the CAP reform, including information on the national CAP Strategic Plans and the negotiation process. - General information on the history, legal basis, objectives and measures of the CAP (first and second pillars). - Dissemination of EU and national reports and analysis (evaluation of the RDPs, research reports on environmental issues and organic farming, DG AGRI documents etc.) 	<p>Messages neither contradicting nor directly supporting those promoted by DG AGRI</p>

Sources: External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020. The European Commission, 2016; country case studies and mapping exercise of the national communication measures.

Overall, national public authorities perform quite well when it comes to presenting the CAP as a policy that benefits not only farmers but also the rest of society, with messages generally well aligned with those considered important by DG AGRI. However, with a strong focus on CAP income support and the policy reform, policy content remains a noticeable part of communication actions by public institutions. In the future, under the new CAP, there will be further scope to explore synergies and cooperation with the Member States. The new policy envisages a stronger role for the Member States in communicating about their CAP Strategic plans. This should increase opportunities to address, for example, the (mis)-perceptions about European agriculture and farming, by strengthening the focus on the positive contributions made by the CAP – beyond its support to farmers.

Several levers, either already available or under development, help to maintain and strengthen coordination between DG AGRI's messages and those delivered by national actors. The existence of direct platforms of communication between DG AGRI representatives and national public authorities represents one of these levers, and helps to support the shared management of the policy. Each year, officials from DG AGRI participate in several national fairs as well as in the Citizen Dialogues, while national representatives participate regularly in conferences, workshops, seminars and other events organised by DG AGRI. During the evaluation period, DG AGRI also organised outreach exercises aimed at informing stakeholders and citizens in the Member States about CAP developments. Some 47 events were organised between November 2017 and March 2018, on the Commission's 'Communication on the Future of Food and Farming'. Between June 2018 and the end of the year, some eighty outreach events took place in the Member States to inform and discuss with public authorities and other national stakeholders about the future of the CAP and sectoral MFF legislative proposals. Outreach activity continued into 2019 including in the run-up to the European elections, with some 100 events taking place. The impact of this activity in the Member States was also enhanced through media and social media multipliers. Moreover, some of the national authorities (and other national stakeholders) consulted also noted the importance of information provided by DG AGRI for their own communication.

Events run by EU-level organisations (e.g. ENRD) are also usually attended by both DG AGRI and representatives of public authorities at national level, as well as various rural stakeholders and researchers. These occasions offer unique opportunities for DG AGRI to

present its key messages to national actors, to disseminate information that can be later relayed via national public channels as well as to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience about the specific challenges faced by each country. The development of personal connections, as well as informal exchanges resulting from repeated contacts at various events, also help to reinforce the coherence of the communication on the CAP at different levels. In addition, various DG AGRI publications and webpages also constitute sources of information for national public entities: links to DG AGRI publications or webpages are often provided on ministerial websites, for example.

Furthermore, the CAP post-2020 might enable the better alignment of communication by national public authorities with DG AGRI communication strategy in the future. Indeed, the proposal for Regulation COM (2018) 392⁹⁵ requires the Member States to prepare national CAP Strategic Plans related to both pillars of the CAP. This new responsibility notably includes the conducting of ex-ante evaluations prior to drafting the CAP Strategic Plans⁹⁶; monitoring and assessing their performance⁹⁷; as well as delivering annual evaluation reports to the Commission⁹⁸. Several public consultations to assess the agricultural needs of each country and help draft the required SWOT analysis have already taken place or are being held in several Member States. Ultimately, this should also generate a more targeted way to communicate about the CAP and related topics at national level. In parallel, this new framework offers additional opportunities for direct collaboration with the Commission: for instance, the Member States will be required to organise annual review meetings about their Strategic Plans with the Commission⁹⁹, and the development of national CAP networks and a European CAP network is planned to enhance the participation of all stakeholders, encourage peer learning, disseminate good practices and more generally assist the Member States in their new missions regarding the CAP Strategic Plans.¹⁰⁰

Based on the above, the Managing Authorities could consider ensuring that publicity is generated for the national CAP Strategic Plan by informing beneficiaries and the general public of EU support for agriculture and rural development through the CAP Strategic Plan.

Coherence with the communication actions on the CAP by other national actors

Aside from public authorities, other non-governmental actors (with representatives of farmers' and environmentalists' associations at the forefront) also provide information about the CAP and related topics at national level. The analysis of their communication measures is based on the case studies and the mapping exercise.

⁹⁵ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

⁹⁶ Ibid, Article 125.

⁹⁷ Ibid, Article 115.

⁹⁸ Ibid, Article 121.

⁹⁹ Ibid, Article 122.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, Article 113.

- As with public authorities, the communication activities implemented by these national actors are highly diverse, ranging from organising events to disseminating multiple audio and audio-visual productions.
- Farmers' and environmentalists' associations usually adopt a narrow approach in terms of their target audiences, mainly focusing on their membership (e.g. through newsletters, specialised magazines, training events and reserved areas on websites). They sometimes seek to reach politicians and the media when attempting to influence the future directions of agriculture and the CAP.
- In general, the messages delivered include the following: information on CAP subsidies, calls for application and implementation mechanisms; political discussions about ongoing changes and reforms regarding the policy; position papers about their views on the CAP; information on the contributions made by the policy (ensuring food safety, economic stability of farms even during the pandemic, the vitality of rural areas etc.); as well as news on agriculture and associated topics. Stakeholder associations also relay official information from DG AGRI or national governments, but using simpler terminology to ensure it is more accessible to their members.
- There are also reports of critical messages. These come from some farmers' and environmentalists' associations, generally denouncing the CAP as struggling to tackle environmental issues and claiming the distribution of subsidies is unfair. While such messages are rarely developed into structured communication campaigns against the policy, but instead react to recent policy developments or focus on specific aspects of the CAP, examples of long-term projects engaging in critical communication have been identified in the mapping exercise. The cases of the French and Spanish platforms 'For another CAP' are outlined in the box on the next page.

Box 4. Examples of communication messages critical of the CAP at national level

'For another CAP' in France ('Pour une autre PAC') and Spain ('Por otra PAC')

The platforms 'For another CAP', which have been developed in France and Spain by more than 30 national associations gathering together farmers, environmentalists, nutritionists, consumers etc. in each country, represent examples of existing critical messages (alternative visions). The context of the CAP reform process has provided a window of opportunity for such groups to state their objectives and visions for the new policy. The Spanish website sets out 20 priorities, including the "end of perverse subsidies for people, climate and nature" and "access to land for sustainable production". In line with the Spanish version, the French platform outlines 12 priorities including "giving real incomes to farmers to protect them against price volatility" and "supporting the production in favour of healthy and quality food".

The purpose of these demands is to overcome what the authors perceived to be limitations of the current CAP. For instance, the French version of the campaign states, among other criticisms, that the 2015-2020 CAP was costly and poorly distributed, and lacked proper measures to encourage a real ecological transition, and led to unfair competition towards Southern countries. The Spanish version is just as severe, making the claim regarding the CAP that "most of its funds favour intensive production and practices that harm animal, human and nature welfare". While neither version challenges the concept of a common agricultural policy set at the European level – the associations seek only to redesign the policy's architecture – the current CAP is nevertheless depicted from a highly critical angle, at odds with the positive approach favoured by DG AGRI in its communication strategy.

Aside from creating dedicated websites, the campaigns also rely on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube), as well as publishing information and

opinion articles, infographics, videos, newsletters, a comprehensive atlas to understand the CAP, open letters addressed to politicians, as well as various events (protest movements, webinars, debates etc.). The French and Spanish coalitions are also part of a European movement 'Good Food Good Farming', which also reinforces these positions.

Sources: Website of the French platform (<https://pouruneautreCAP.eu/>) and website of the Spanish platform (<https://porotrapac.org/>)

- Different critical messages across the Member States are given further visibility by national media, which act as multipliers by relaying the political statements of government officials as well as NGO claims. However, given that the CAP is perceived as a technical subject to communicate, the policy does not draw widespread attention from non-specialised journalists, even when efforts are made to communicate about it in relation to the policy cycle of the reform or when specific events occur (farmers' protest movements, droughts, discussions about the Mercosur Agreement, Brexit etc.). Besides, as shown by the mapping exercise of national media, articles with a negative framing only represent a minority of the overall communication by journalists about the CAP. Therefore, the evaluation team does not foresee any necessity for DG AGRI to intervene following the publication of negative messages in the media.

In terms of coherence with DG AGRI's external communication strategy, the conclusions are broadly similar to those in the case of national public authorities: some aspects are not given enough attention, such as those relating to the importance of agriculture and the CAP for society as a whole ("the benefits of the CAP to all EU citizens"). The same is true of certain target audiences, namely the general public and its sub-groups. This trend in communication leads to a combination of a lack of knowledge and misunderstandings about the policy, sometimes amplified by topical (and, more rarely, long-term and structured) negative communication about the current CAP. Therefore, dispelling misperceptions about the policy is one aspect of DG AGRI communication strategy that needs to be further addressed at national level. In this regard, grant projects, carried out in the Member States and co-financed by DG AGRI, appear a relevant tool.

The coherence of grant projects with national communication actions

As outlined in a previous section, by highlighting the benefits associated with the CAP, clarifying misunderstandings, and developing communication activities that are tailored to local audiences and targeted at the general public, grant projects help fill the communication gaps in individual Member States. This not only implies a high level of relevance, given that they respond to informational needs, but also indicates a significant degree of coherence with national communication actions. As shown by the case studies, grant recipients often conducted *ex-ante* assessments of the level and limits of the information about the CAP in their respective countries, then focused their communication campaigns on agricultural topics that received little national coverage and targeted audiences that were usually neglected. This enabled grant recipients to deliver messages corresponding to the level of knowledge of national populations, prolonging and completing national information actions. A few examples of grant projects' reports illustrating this complementary approach are presented in the table below.

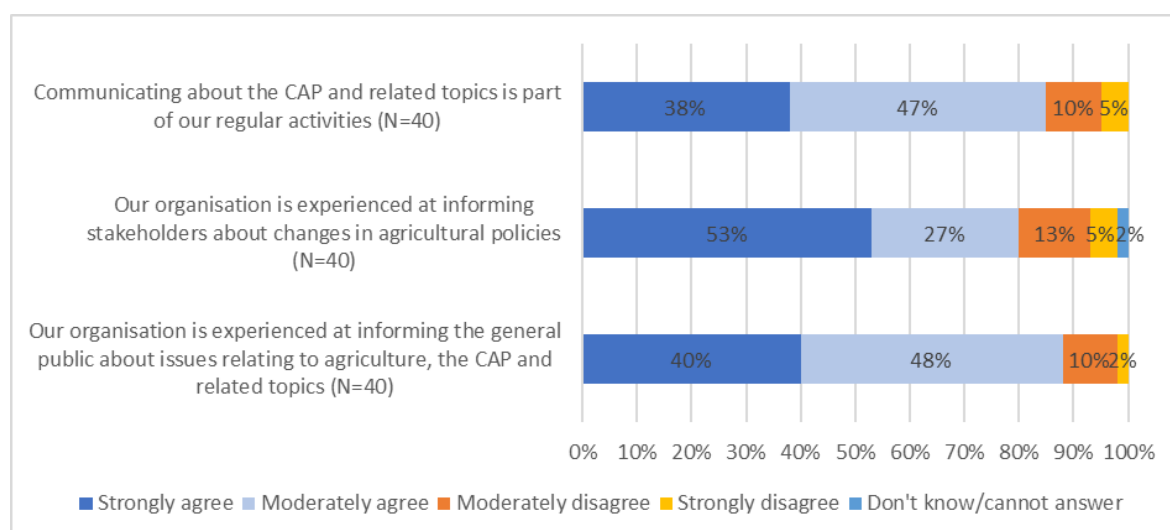
Table 35. Examples of grant projects complementing national communication measures on the CAP by responding to national informational needs

Grant project	Country	Mention of the adaptation of the project to national informational needs on the CAP
'The CAP in school: informal educational offers as a complement	Germany	We focused, in particular, on vocational schools as <i>they prove to be in special need of European citizenship education</i> . Studies (e.g. Besand 2014) show that

Grant project	Country	Mention of the adaptation of the project to national informational needs on the CAP
to formal curricula' by EUROSOC #DIGITAL (2016)		citizenship education in vocational training, in particular, is in bad shape due to a lack of training among vocational school teachers in the areas of politics, the EU and its policies. [...] <i>Therefore, the need for training in EU topics (such as CAP) is more pressing.</i>
'iCAP: Challenges for the future' by Radio Italia Puglia (2017)	Italy	This second target group (i.e. the general public) is certainly interested in issues relating to the enhancement of this rural area (southern Italy is a strong agricultural region) but is <i>not fully informed of the policies implemented at Community level</i> . The choice, therefore, of radio broadcasting, has been the best option, considering that radio is one of the mass media for excellence.
'My land, your land – Ireland' by Agri Aware (2017)	Ireland	<i>An obvious need</i> to communicate the overarching important role which CAP plays in guaranteeing food security, quality, safety, traceability and affordability; contributing to our economy; social, economic and environmental sustainability; and animal welfare and to identify and dispel the common misperceptions associated with the policy was identified by Agri Aware.
'CAP works for us!' by AgriGate Media (2018)	Bulgaria	During the project period, all the eight events envisaged to be held in high schools and universities were organised and successfully carried through. [...] <i>It was proved that there is a lack of information about the CAP's instruments and the way they support farmers and rural areas in Bulgaria even among young people studying agricultural specialties.</i>
'Discovering tomorrow's Farm Leaders' by Strategma (2018)	Bulgaria	The production of information materials was a key campaign activity for two major reasons: a. raising the public's awareness, in particular of school and university students, of the opportunities that CAP creates for rural areas and the achievements it has supported so far <i>is essential since that awareness is low</i> ; b. building a true image of the CAP and its potential <i>is very important, because the one currently prevailing is distorted by the mass media's predominantly negative coverage of problems, protesting farmers, unhappy village residents and depopulated areas.</i>
'#ReConnect Farmers and Nature' by Natuurpunt (2018)	Belgium	There are important regional differences in how farmers and naturalists perceive each other. In the north of the country (Flanders), there is a more pronounced distance between farmers and naturalists. In Wallonia, farmers and naturalists have been working together more intensively. Nevertheless, <i>we found that in all regions, work needs to be done to facilitate the conversation between both parties.</i>

Source: Extracts from technical grant reports.

This ability to capture national informational needs with regard to the CAP can be explained by the fact that agricultural policies usually feature highly in the communication priorities of grant beneficiaries. Indeed, evidence from the results of the grant applicants' survey and the grant case studies reveals that grant recipients are often well-established organisations, experienced in communicating about the CAP and related topics to various target audiences in their countries (see results from the survey on the next page).

Figure 130. Experience of grant beneficiaries in communicating about the CAP and related topics

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the grant applicant survey.

Such familiarity with the subject suggests the grant recipients regularly monitor what is communicated about the CAP at European and national levels, as well as maintaining connections with other national and local actors involved in CAP communication, such as ministries and farmers' associations. In addition, support to the grant projects from ministries and stakeholder organisations is frequently reported in the case studies and technical reports (see table below), and is probably enhanced by contacts already developed prior to the projects.

Table 36. Examples of grant projects benefitting from the support and cooperation of national actors

Grant project	Country	Mention of collaboration with ministerial actors and other relevant institutions
'Terra Terra' by Coldiretti (2016)	Italy	Moreover, other websites linked to the agricultural sector published these products [publications], like one of the Italian Rural Networks of the Ministry of Agriculture.
'CAP it ALL off!' by Opinion and Action (2017)	Cyprus	The seminars for teachers have provided the project team with useful information to develop the educator's toolkit that was further distributed through the Ministry of Education to schools [...].
'The Young Farmers Engine for the CAP 2020' by RTV Slovenia (2017)	Slovenia	Within this project, we participated well with the Ministry of Agriculture, both in the workshop for young transferees of farms, as in the preparation of event at the Historic Garden.
'CAP for you' by the Croatian Chamber of Agriculture (2018)	Croatia	At the very beginning of the project (during the first three months), the 10 most successful projects funded by Rural Development Measures have been selected. The Selection Committee (established for this purpose) was made up of representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, a representative of the young farmers' association [...] and a Croatian Chamber of Agriculture representative.
'Many hats, one CAP' by Agri Aware (2018)	Ireland	Agri Aware, as part of the CAP communication campaign, organised the Republic of Ireland's inaugural "Open Farm Ireland" event. Agri Aware will organise this national event in conjunction with a number of key industry stakeholders: the Irish Farmers Journal [...], Department

		of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Goulding Fertilisers and the UCC-Teagasc Food Alliance.
'Parlez-vous CAP?' by Fédération Française des Maisons de l'Europe (2018)	France	Ile-de-France: 22 October 2018 (18h30-20h), launch event in Paris. Thematic: What new face for the CAP? Public conference. Speakers: Frédéric Michel from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Vincent Cordonnier from DG AGRI and Patrick Dezobry, grain farmer and Vice-President of Île-de-France FDSEA.

Source: Extracts from technical grant reports.

These examples of cooperation demonstrate a certain national approval of the grant recipients' communication, and are therefore indicators of coherence between the information disseminated at national level and DG AGRI's indirect communication measures. On some occasions, coherence goes even further than the participation of national actors in events and their dissemination of the projects' content. The project '#Reconnect Farmers and Nature' by Natuurpunt is a successful example in this regard: financed by both DG AGRI and the Flemish Ministry for Farming, Nature and the Environment, it enables a perfect complementarity to be achieved between communication by the Ministry and the implementing organisation, within the framework of a specific information campaign.

However, it is not always the case that projects are carried out using a combination of ministerial and European financial resources. Cooperation between grant beneficiaries and national entities of the type analysed in some of the grant and country case studies does not always occur. For instance, in Portugal, the case study shows that agricultural organisations were either unaware of the grant projects or merely knew of their existence, but had little knowledge of their objectives and messages. Similarly, the case study focusing on Czechia reveals that around half of the representatives of public institutions interviewed were not aware of the grant projects in their country. There is room for deeper collaboration between relevant national actors and grant recipients to enhance the coherence of the messages produced, not only in Portugal and Czechia, but also in countries where national actors know about the projects. Indeed, even when national actors were somehow involved in the projects, collaboration was only short-term and limited to the timeframe of a specific activity.

Overall, grants represent a good investment for DG AGRI, with the potential for long-lasting effects. Indeed, even after the end of a grant project, organisations can continue to ensure coherence between the messages promoted by DG AGRI and national information measures. Indeed, as indicated previously in the sub-chapter focusing on the grants' efficiency, 29 out of 45 grant beneficiaries only received one grant from DG AGRI

Coherence with communication by the Member States: summary

While the main messages and target audiences outlined in DG AGRI external communication strategy are reflected in national communication, indicating a certain coherence, some of them are insufficiently well addressed. In particular, communication campaigns directed towards average citizens and focusing on the CAP in relation to its contribution to health, food and the environment are relatively rare in comparison to information presenting the policy and farming components of the CAP. As a result, interviewees for the case studies identified stakeholders as the main target audience of national communication. Further efforts to increase the development of positive information campaigns specifically tailored to the general public and its sub-groups are therefore the next steps to strengthen awareness of the CAP, to dispel common prejudices and ultimately to ensure better complementarity with DG AGRI's objectives.

DG AGRI's main levers to pursue the highest level of coherence between its messages and those implemented at the national level are as follows:

- Events (conferences, civil dialogue groups, webinars, workshops, meetings etc.) that enable national actors – potential multipliers – to learn directly about the messages promoted by DG AGRI.
- Grant projects that complement national information efforts on the CAP and offer opportunities for collaboration between grant beneficiaries and other national actors.
- The framework of the future CAP, which will offer new networking opportunities through the national and European CAP networks, as well as increasing the level of engagement by national authorities in relation to communication about both pillars of the policy.

during the evaluation period. This means that, after implementation their project, most of the grant recipients returned to being independent national actors. Given their experiences, these organisations are particularly aware of the messages supported by DG AGRI, and likely to follow the Commission's communication on the CAP in the future. In fact, following their grant projects, many of these organisations plan to increase their focus on the CAP as well as carrying out other projects with the same communication objectives. In these cases, independent communication activities from these national actors are likely to remain in line with DG AGRI messaging.

7.4.5. *Coherence: the components of the information policy on the CAP and the activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative, including co-financed measures (ESQ 13)*

Coherence of the strategy and activities: topics, messages, target groups

As the first part of our analysis of internal coherence, we look at whether all topics, messages, and target audiences defined in strategic documents are covered in the communication activities implemented as part of the annual action plans. Desk research formed the core of the evidence base for this question, complemented by insights from interviewees (both from the general programme and the case studies). Overall, there has been good coherence between what DG AGRI defined in its external communication strategy, and the activities implemented by the DG.

The target audiences defined in the DG AGRI communication strategy were coherent with the target audiences of the various activities implemented during the evaluation period. All of the audiences defined in the strategy were targeted and reached through a combination of different communication activities. The table below provides an overview of the activities that targeted key segments of DG AGRI's two audiences – the general public and stakeholders.

Table 37. Target audiences: strategy and selected activities

	Segments	Activities
General public	<i>School children and teachers</i>	<i>Grant projects:</i> 8 out of 25 grant projects analysed in the case studies targeted schoolchildren and teachers, including through events as well as educational materials prepared. <i>The Teachers' Resource Pack:</i> the most direct demonstration of how DG AGRI targeted teachers during the evaluation period. This publication, produced for teachers, was extensively promoted by targeted advertising on Facebook, as well as being available for download from the website.
	<i>Families</i>	<i>Fairs:</i> agricultural fairs attract the general public. The participant observation exercise carried out for this evaluation also confirmed that DG AGRI's stand at SIA International was predominantly visited by families.
	<i>Young people</i>	<i>Grant projects:</i> 21 out of 25 grant projects analysed in the case studies targeted young people with their activities
		<i>Social media:</i> DG AGRI's social media (especially Facebook and Instagram, but also to some extent Twitter) were tools that helped to effectively target young people. Overall, the audience of Facebook ¹⁰¹ , Twitter ¹⁰² , and Instagram ¹⁰³ is predominantly young, with more 60% of these channels' users being under 34 (between 30 and 35 per cent are under 24). <i>Fairs:</i> besides attracting families, fairs also are visited by young people, including schoolchildren attend the fair with their schools.
Stakeholders	<i>Beneficiaries of the CAP</i>	<i>Ag-Press:</i> most of the journalists who participated in Ag-Press events are affiliated with specialist agricultural media, thus

¹⁰¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/376128/facebook-global-user-age-distribution/>

¹⁰² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/283119/age-distribution-of-global-twitter-users/>

¹⁰³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/>

	Segments	Activities
		their outputs mainly helped to reach farmers. The journalists interviewed also confirmed that farmers were their main target audience.
		<i>Social media</i> : beneficiaries of the CAP also follow DG AGRI on social media (around 14% of those who responded to the main survey were farmers).
		<i>Website</i> : beneficiaries of the CAP also visit the DG AGRI website (around 7% of those who responded to the website survey were farmers).
		<i>Events</i> : farmers took part in the fairs that DG AGRI visited, but were most represented at conferences through multipliers.
	<i>Multipliers</i>	<i>Website</i> : multipliers visit the DG AGRI website (around 12% of those who responded to the website survey were representatives of NGOs; a further 24, representatives of national, regional or local public institutions).
		<i>Events</i> : conferences implemented by DG AGRI attracted the DG's key stakeholders, both in Brussels (namely through the Outlook conference) and in the Member States.
		<i>Social media</i> : DG AGRI engaged with multipliers on Twitter by retweeting their tweets. Multipliers (stakeholder organisations) also said that they retweet DG AGRI's tweets.

All of the messages defined in DG AGRI's external communication strategy could be found in the various communication activities discovered through desk research, indicating a good level of coherence between the strategic documents and the activities implemented. Messages aimed at the general public refrained from talking about the policy context and focused more on food quality and specificity. Meanwhile, those messages targeting stakeholders focused on CAP's contribution to economic growth and rural development, as well as seeking to highlight sustainability aspects.

Table 38. Messages: strategy and selected activities

	Segments	Activities
General public	Messages should attract the interest of the general public, especially young urban dwellers, in food quality and specificity, as well as healthy eating.	<i>Social media</i> : DG AGRI's Facebook focuses heavily on communicating this message. The Instagram account established by DG AGRI also further strengthened this dimension of the DG's communication.
		<i>Grants</i> : in projects that focused on young people and the general public, food-related messages were often present.
		<i>Fairs</i> : one of the ways in which this message was covered at the fairs attended by DG AGRI is through tasting/introducing GI products.
	The message should be promoted that the EU consistently ensures safe and high-quality food that is sustainably produced to 500 million EU consumers, while reflecting consumer expectations on animal	<i>Social media</i> : multiple messages on this topic can be found across DG AGRI's social media channels. <i>Ag-Press</i> : qualitative content analysis of Ag-Press articles revealed coverage of the contribution made by the CAP (or EU

	Segments	Activities
	welfare, environmental and other standards, which are among strictest in the world.	support) towards ensuring safe and high-quality food, in the articles produced by the journalists taking part in the press trips.
	Messages should focus on addressing existing (mis)-perceptions about European agriculture and farming, rather than policy content.	<i>Social media:</i> evident was found of DG AGRI's Facebook and Instagram accounts refraining from talking about the policy context. The policy context deliberately received more coverage on the stakeholder-oriented Twitter account (e.g. using the hashtag #FutureofCAP).
Stakeholders	Promote messages that would help ensure greater awareness of the contribution that the CAP makes to supporting the economic growth of rural areas, especially of SMEs	<i>Ag-Press:</i> qualitative content analysis of Ag-Press articles showed that CAP (or EU) support for rural areas featured prominently in the articles produced by the journalists taking part in the press trips. <i>Events:</i> the topic was covered at various events, for example, in the Outlook conferences.
	Messages should promote the contribution that is made by the RDPs	<i>Social media:</i> DG AGRI promoted the European contribution to rural development through its social media. For example, by sharing the European Rural Development newsletter or success stories about investment in rural areas. <i>Events:</i> one of the conferences organised by DG AGRI specifically focused on rural development (Cork 2.0, held in 2016)
	Messages should emphasise the support provided for sustainable production practices and other measures that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change	<i>Social media:</i> DG AGRI promoted the European emphasis on sustainability using its social media. The word <i>sustainable</i> (or variations of it) was mentioned 39 times in the Facebook posts published by DG AGRI as of January 2018.
		<i>Website:</i> the website contains a separate section providing information about sustainable farming.

Coherence between different CAP information policy measures

There are many positive examples of internal coherence between the individual information measures implemented by DG AGRI during the evaluation period. Building links between different information measures can also help to exploit their potential by ensuring that messages reach their target audiences.

For instance, social media has been successfully exploited to promote other activities. DG AGRI's various social media channels are the most convenient tool to achieve integration between different activities. DG AGRI uses its social media presence to promote other activities, particularly events. For example, in addition to sharing information about the events taking place, DG AGRI streamed the Outlook conference in its entirety on Facebook. The opportunity to apply for grants to implement information measures is also promoted on social media. Moreover, clear internal coherence between the social media channels is both elaborated by DG AGRI and implemented in practice. Its Facebook focuses on stories; its Twitter focuses on news; its Instagram is used as a photo album. While all channels seek to reach a general audience, Twitter differs in the sense of having a greater focus on

journalists/stakeholders. While this can help to achieve more focused and tailored communication, there is a possible drawback to this strategy due to the fact that Twitter is less popular in Eastern Europe compared with Western Europe. Thus, communication with stakeholders is likely to be limited to more European-level organisations.

A minor gap concerning the internal coherence of DG AGRI's social media channels is in their titles. Different account names are used for Twitter ('EU Agriculture') and Facebook/Instagram/YouTube ('EU Food&Farming'). While these names may align with the specific target audiences of the channels, different names may be confusing for users. DG AGRI's social media accounts include links to the website section on the CAP at europa.eu. This helps to drive website traffic to DG AGRI's sections. Meanwhile, of the two pages that present DG AGRI at europa.eu, one includes links to DG AGRI's social media sites¹⁰⁴, the other does not¹⁰⁵.

In addition to links between social media and other activities, positive efforts have been made by DG AGRI to establish integration between other activities. During the most recent grants kick-off meeting held in 2020, a presentation was given on the Ag-Press network¹⁰⁶. Grant recipients were introduced to the network and invited to join the online platform, giving them access to internal materials as well as networking opportunities with local journalists. A good synergy was also developed between one of the Ag-Press network's seminars and the annual Outlook conference. The seminar for journalists was held a day before the conference, which the journalists then also attended. These examples show that DG AGRI exploited synergies between different information measures, and where possible sought to promote internal coherence between different actions.

Internal coherence of the information policy: summary

The various activities making up the information policy can be considered internally coherent. Only minor gaps were discovered in terms of internal – notably, with regard to the links from the website to DG AGRI social media sites, and the different names used for individual social media accounts. Despite this, DG AGRI sought out various opportunities to align different activities, and succeeded in doing so.

7.5. EU added value

7.5.1. EU added value provided by the information policy on the CAP (ESQ 14)

The final evaluation study questions concern the added value that resulted directly from the EU intervention (the information policy on the CAP), and not from public authorities in the Member States or other communicating actors. As this competence is shared between the EU and the Member States in the field of agriculture, **the comparison with communication activities implemented by national public authorities is exceptionally important**. This section is divided into four types of **effects, each indicating the EU added value when compared with other communicating actors: volume, scope, role, and process**. For each type, we further present the effects that the information policy on the CAP had when compared with other actors.

¹⁰⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/agriculture-and-rural-development_en

¹⁰⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/organisation/dg-agri-dg-agriculture-rural-development_en

¹⁰⁶ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/grants-kick-off-2020-ag-press-access-food-farming-media_en.pdf

Volume effects

The information policy on the CAP has increased the volume of information available by substantially increasing the total reach of CAP-related messages in comparison to what could have been reached solely through the channels of public authorities in the Member States. Through activities implemented via the information policy on the CAP, a significant number of Europeans (5.9 million via the website, and even more on social media) were reached and informed about the CAP and related issues during the period 2016-2020. Significant volume effects that the information policy on the CAP can be attributed to its results and impacts. Respondents to the main survey who had used various information measures often found the content on the CAP useful and shared it, further increasing the reach of its messages. Respondents to the main survey said they intended to seek the content again in the future, indicating potential long-term effects of DG AGRI messaging on the CAP.

In terms of impacts, DG AGRI's major accomplishment is the achievement of the objectives laid out in the external communication strategy for the CAP. Most respondents agreed that the activities they encountered – from events to the website or social media posts – had the impact of helping them see the CAP more positively, as well as increasing their understanding of the policy and increasing their awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development. These changes in opinion, understanding and relevance were recognised by at least a half of respondents in relation to every information measure analysed. In some cases, the number of respondents indicating a change exceeded 90%. Some of the stakeholders interviewed also agreed that DG AGRI communication on the CAP has a positive impact.

National communication actions by public authorities in general communicate with the general public in a less systematic way than they do with stakeholders. Therefore, campaigns targeted at citizens and implemented at a national level with the help of the information policy on the CAP (grant scheme) are especially important. Only around one-third of grant recipients surveyed said that they would probably have implemented at least a part of their project even without funding from DG AGRI. This result shows that the information policy on the CAP managed to attract funding for communication campaigns on the CAP at Member State level from organisations that would otherwise have been unable to implement such campaigns.

Scope effects

The information policy on the CAP has been successful in broadening the scope of communication directed at various stakeholder groups, when compared with the groups with which national public authorities communicate. This effect was particularly strong in the case of various European and national CAP-related associations, networks and NGOs that were reached through conferences, the website, and via social media. DG AGRI has also managed to attract a broad audience using its social media accounts. This audience consists of members of various types of target groups interested in agriculture and rural development, and are uniquely within reach only because of the information policy on the CAP. In addition, the Ag-Press network has been a very powerful measure to reach media professionals who would be otherwise harder to reach. It is therefore safe to say that many of the aforementioned audiences would not be reached by the Commission's corporate communication or by communication on the part of public authorities in the Member States on topics related to improving the understanding of the CAP and the relevance of the policy.

While around half of respondents to the main survey agreed that they could obtain similar information elsewhere, many respondents – particularly among the stakeholders interviewed – said they could not get specific information from other sources. Similarly,

most of the stakeholders interviewed agreed that the information provided by DG AGRI is unique. The respondents agreed that it is important to communicate about the CAP at European level, not just at national, regional and local levels, to ensure that the information is always correct.

Lastly, four out of the five grant recipients surveyed who said they would have implemented their communication campaigns without funding from DG AGRI, said that they would have been forced to reduce the scope of their activities in such a situation. This statement reveals the substantial scope effect that the grant scheme had on such campaigns, helping them to reach various audiences in different Member States.

Role effects

The provision of information is the major role of the information policy on the CAP when compared with other communicating actors. While national communication actions by public authorities often focused to a great extent on rather technical information (e.g. various funding opportunities under the CAP, eligibility conditions, the duties of beneficiaries, as well as deadlines and instructions to apply to the schemes), the information policy on the CAP focuses on increasing understanding on a wide range of topics within the CAP, and the relevance of the policy.

By being the primary, reliable source of information on the CAP (more than 92% of visitors said they trust is the information on the DG AGRI website), the information policy also ensured that information on the topics of food, farming, and rural development is always available, and that these topics are communicated accurately among citizens and stakeholders. As can be seen from the interviews with stakeholders and the main survey, the information disseminated by DG AGRI is taken up by various multipliers who disseminate this information further. The key examples are associations that publish information obtained from DG AGRI to their members, and media organisations that publish such information for their audiences.

Process effects

The information policy on the CAP had various process effects, each of which provided added value to the publicly available information on the CAP both at European and national levels. Among such examples is the Ag-Press network, which provides a unique process for working with media professionals and is perceived positively by them. Similarly, the activity of communicating the CAP through grants ran smoothly: the majority of grant recipients agreed that all of the procedures within the grant scheme ran efficiently, and that they were satisfied with the evaluation process. Most recipients were satisfied with their overall experience with the scheme. This process effect allowed the grant campaigns to supplement communication at national level. Similarly, the stakeholders were successfully engaged via civil dialogue groups, conferences, and other events that had no equivalents organised by the Member States.

The collaboration process within the European Commission on the information policy for the CAP was also successful, with officials from different DGs evaluating it positively. This shows the added value of the information policy on the CAP in the context of corporate communication.

EU added value: summary

Significant volume, scope, role and process effects of added value were identified throughout the evaluation, showing that the information policy on the CAP brought added value when compared with what was or could be communicated by public authorities in the Member States or by other actors. The information policy on the CAP:

- increased the reach of CAP-related messages and ensured that they had an impact.
- helped to reach target audiences that might otherwise not have been reached.
- played the role of being the primary, reliable source of information on the CAP, trusted by various audiences at European and national levels.
- helped to implement unique processes that allowed communication activities that had no equivalents in the Member States.

8. **CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, we present conclusions in relation to each of the evaluation study questions defined in Chapter 4. In line with the overall structure of the reports, some evaluation study questions cover each information measure separately, while others cover the information policy on the CAP in general.

8.1. ESQ 1 Effectiveness: improving understanding and perception of the CAP

Achievement of objectives

The information policy on the CAP was **successful** in improving the understanding and perception of the CAP. Stakeholder consultations revealed that most stakeholders experienced **positive results and impacts** of the information policy through various information measures.

Based on the results of the main survey and Eurobarometer, the objectives of the information policy were **achieved to a great extent**. Stakeholders stated that they were well informed about some aspects of the CAP and moderately informed about others. Increasing levels of awareness of the CAP were found among European citizens, and an increasing proportion of citizens agreed that the CAP positively contributes to different aspects of society, the economy and climate change. In addition, few citizens think that EU support for farmers is too high, and the majority of citizens believe that the CAP does not only benefit farmers.

Overall, the information policy on the CAP provides **a good mix of information measures** that is instrumental in increasing the understanding and perception of the CAP. The level of effectiveness achieved by each activity is further presented below.

Ag-Press

The Ag-Press network mostly functioned effectively, contributing to improved understanding and a more positive perception of the CAP amongst the journalists, who acted as multipliers of DG AGRI information. The events organised around the AG Press network facilitate access by journalists to information about the CAP and agricultural conditions in Europe, through participation in expert policy briefings and seminars, by observing farming conditions in various MS, and through the exchange of knowledge and experience. These actions are carried out while ensuring full respect for the independence and integrity of the participating journalists. The usefulness of the different activities (events, platform, newsletters) contributed to high-quality outputs produced by members of the network. These outputs were then disseminated by the journalists to their (mainly farmer-centred) audiences, both online and in print publications. However, not all of the majority of journalists who participated in the network's events later published articles, which is one of DG AGRI's key aims for the network. The journalists themselves chose which aspects of their experiences to highlight, how to present the CAP (be it positively or negatively), and if and when to publish their outputs. In the rarer cases where articles were not published, the journalists – despite gaining an improved understanding and perception of the CAP – cannot be considered effective multipliers of the information. As regards the content of the articles published, the majority make the connection between the CAP and EU support helping the farmers they visited during press trips, or relay the messages promoted by DG AGRI during the seminars. Not all of the articles published after press trips make the connection between the story and CAP/EU support, however. Of the 127 articles reviewed for this evaluation, 45 did not mention the CAP or EU support at all. Overall, the elements important to European agriculture are promoted in the articles, and journalists participating in Ag-Press develop a better understanding of agricultural policies.

Social media

In general, DG AGRI's social media demonstrated positive growth in terms of followers, reach and engagement during the evaluation period, contributing to users' increased understanding and a more positive perception of the CAP. Nevertheless, many representatives of stakeholder organisations do not follow DG AGRI on social media at all. Those who currently follow DG AGRI intend to continue doing so in the future. The findings suggest that DG AGRI's social media is effective in serving its current users, but there is still potential for better reach, especially among the representatives of stakeholder organisations (on the stakeholder-focused Twitter channel).

Website

While it is still too early to say if the digital transformation¹⁰⁷ has been a success story, the evidence shows a promising start. Visits to and downloads from the new website are increasing, and most users perceive the content very positively: they trust it, they find it useful, and they agree that there is a lot of it. While there is still a need to tailor content to the needs of the general public, it is still assessed positively. However, many users noticed problems with the website's usability, as revealed during usability tests and interviews. The problems relate mostly to navigation, language and search:

Navigation. At least one in three users experience problems relating to navigation: being unable to find the information they are looking for, or taking too much time to find it.

Language. Some users of the website are unable to access all of the content because it is not available in their language. Lack of content in their national language can be especially problematic for rural citizens, who are less likely to understand English but fall within the key target audiences of the information policy on the CAP.

Search. Major sections and pages that are dedicated to citizens are not prioritised enough in search results. Therefore, search results are often irrelevant as they contain old or technical information only because of keyword matches. In addition, the need was identified to optimise the website for search engines.

Events

The 'EU Agricultural Outlook Conference' has become one of the key annual gatherings of European stakeholders providing an annual forum for consultation and discussion on the future of agriculture in Europe.

Possibly due to the varying nature of fairs, reporting on the number of visitors to DG AGRI's stands is incomplete and not always consistent. This makes it extremely challenging to assess how many people have been reached by DG AGRI through these events.

Participation in conferences and agri-food fairs helps to improve one's understanding of the CAP and related topics, and to increase one's awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development. Such participation is in line with the objectives of the information policy on the CAP and the intervention logic DG AGRI applies to events. Conferences and fairs are well-tailored to different target audiences, considering their range of needs.

¹⁰⁷ DG AGRI started transferring the content from the old website to a new class on the Commission's website, 'Food, Farming, Fisheries', in 2018. The process was completed in late 2019. The purpose of this digital transformation was to make the website more citizen-friendly and focused on serving the user.

Events have had an impact, but this has been limited, as it takes more time to change people's perceptions than to trigger their interest for a short period, or even to inform them.

Events (including conferences and Commission stands at fairs) are well organised by DG AGRI, but some Commission officials feel they need more preparation and training before going to fairs.

Grants

The grant scheme can be considered effective from the perspective of both project management and implementation, as well as the achievements of projects. Importantly, the grant scheme was effective in improving the organisational capacities of the beneficiaries when it comes to communication. The scheme helped strengthen various aspects of the beneficiary organisations in relation to CAP communication activities. This should be viewed positively as a long-term (sustainable) effect of the grant scheme. By implementing the grant projects, these organisations gain valuable knowledge on how to communicate the CAP effectively, and can use this knowledge later, even after the projects have ended.

The projects implemented helped to reach a significant number of Europeans and inform them about the CAP and related aspects. Various target groups were reached, including schoolchildren and teachers, young people and stakeholders. Evidence suggests that grant projects contributed towards increased awareness and improved understanding of the CAP among their target audiences. Although no aggregated quantitative evidence exists on the overall impact of the grants programme, data submitted in the final technical reports for the individual grants includes data on the perception of the CAP among the target groups.

8.2. ESQ 2 Effectiveness: reinstating consumer confidence

During this evaluation period, we did not identify any severe market disturbances involving measures to restore consumer confidence via communication. It is therefore impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the information policy in reinstating consumer confidence when needed.

8.3. ESQ 3 Effectiveness: promoting the European model of agriculture

Effective promotion of the European model of agriculture is linked with increasing levels of awareness and understanding of the CAP. Better awareness of the policy supports the promotion of the European model of agriculture, with its social economic and environmental dimensions.

8.4. ESQ 4 Effectiveness: intervening factors

Negative information about the CAP exists; it comes from different stakeholder groups. Most of these offer diverse views on the relevance of the current CAP, direction the policy should take and the role it can or should play in the future development of the EU agricultural sector. Such negative information about the CAP is not seen as dominating the discussions around the current implementation of the policy or its future development, but rather as an alternative opinion on the changes needed to the policy. Hardly any stakeholders question the foundations of the CAP as such.

Some of the negative communication is seen as biased and inevitable, coming from stakeholders who question the foundations of the Union's role in agricultural policy. But

most of the criticism can be seen as crucial to informing the policy debate and increasing awareness of the CAP. Engaging in a constructive and objective debate about the policy provides opportunities for the future development of the policy, and can improve the effectiveness of the information measures that support it.

8.5. ESQ 5 Effectiveness: grant application procedure

The grant application process functioned effectively. Grant beneficiaries were satisfied with the application process and the overall experience of participating in the grant scheme. The transparency of the process, selection criteria and the time period for submitting applications were all deemed appropriate and not requiring any changes. Supporting materials provided by DG AGRI were especially valued and helped the grant applicants during the process. One area in which the application process that could be improved was the user-friendliness of the environment in which applicants submit their applications. Organisations applying for the first time experienced some difficulties in filling out their applications. Grant beneficiaries also reported glitches with the ICT system that occurred when they were in the process of submitting their applications.

8.6. ESQ 6 Efficiency: conveying messages and achieving expected objectives

DG AGRI's communication budget is split in half between activities implemented by DG AGRI (media networking, social media, website, events) and those co-financed through the grant scheme and implemented by the grant beneficiaries. Based on the assessment of individual information measures that are discussed below in greater detail, no waste of resources or notable inefficiencies were identified. The cost of the information measures implemented by DG AGRI varied, with events (also in the context of Ag-Press) and fairs being notably more expensive compared with social media and website activities, particularly when considering their reach. Nevertheless, each activity brought significant benefits that justified the money spent. These investments (constituting half of the total DG AGRI communication budget) also proved important in strengthening communication with the general public at national level. Thus, overall, the information policy on the CAP has been implemented efficiently.

Ag-Press

With the current level of investment, the activities of the Ag-Press network met the needs of the journalists and mostly achieved positive benefits. The costs per event attendant even decreased compared with the previous evaluation, pointing to a notable efficiency gain. The seminars can be considered the most cost-effective event, having the lowest cost per participant and on average resulting in the most articles being produced. This cost-effectiveness is achieved through economies of scale, as the format of the event allows for a larger number of participants compared with press trips or press trip-seminars. Nevertheless, the content of the seminars is often tailored to the specialised audience interested in the CAP as policy, while the main difficulties in communicating the CAP arise when addressing the general public. Thus, while press trips are the most expensive activity, their cost-effectiveness should be considered quite positively, due mainly to their high relevance. Efficiency was hampered to a limited extent by gaps in effectiveness, notably because while the majority of journalists produced articles and promoted CAP/EU support in the stories they wrote, not all of them did. As the costs of the network are reasonable (event costs per participant on average decreased compared with previous evaluation), efficiency can mainly be improved by boosting effectiveness (through a higher number of articles being produced and disseminated).

Social media

DG AGRI used social media efficiently during the evaluation period. Its activity on social media increased, through a rise in the number of posts published (from 662 in 2016 to 1 533 in 2020), and through the launch of a new social media channel (on Instagram). Targeted advertising helped to boost impressions while maintaining a good cost per result (below industry average). With similar levels of investment, DG AGRI's Twitter account outperformed DG SANTE's Twitter account on food, but performed less well than DG SANTE's Twitter account on health. This is likely to be because of the comparatively greater interest of Europeans in health issues.

Website

No inefficiencies were identified in the management the website. While the average cost per visitor and per download were higher than those for DG SANTE, the overwhelming majority of traffic still comes from organic sources rather than paid channels. The current evaluation period was also exceptional due to the process of digital transformation, which affected the cost of running the website.

Events

No inefficiencies were identified in the organisation of events. However, efficiency varied greatly from event to event. Normally, conferences organised in Brussels (e.g. the Agricultural Outlook) achieved a better efficiency rating than those organised in other EU countries¹⁰⁸. Conferences organised by DG AGRI and stands set up by DG AGRI at fairs were both assessed positively by participants.

Grants

The grant scheme overall proved efficient, based on a qualitative assessment presented by the evaluation team. Quantitative comparison of the cost rankings of different grant projects was not feasible, due to limited availability of monitoring data and a lack of comparability. Following the recommendations of the previous evaluation of the information policy on the CAP, DG AGRI allocates around half of its communication budget to grants. Considering the gap in communicating the CAP to the general public (which the grants most often do), this is a reasonable investment by DG AGRI. Grant beneficiaries also exploited different techniques to generate efficiencies within their projects. Relying on their strong pre-existing online platforms to reach their target audiences, forming partnerships with other stakeholders, and producing re-usable materials, all proved helpful in achieving greater efficiency in the implementation of the projects.

The quality of the monitoring data collected by grant recipients is a recurrent issue: the evaluation report for the previous period suggested "more standardised expectations for the outcomes of grant projects [...] via a more systematic use of performance indicators"¹⁰⁹. In the 2019 call for proposals, the Commission published a 'best practices guide' to support the preparation of final technical reports, which included the data to be submitted by

¹⁰⁸ The costs of Brussels-based events and non-Brussels based events cannot be directly compared, given the large number of services covered by 'in-house' services when in Brussels, which do not appear in the operational budgets of the events concerned, and were therefore not taken into consideration in the current study.

¹⁰⁹ European Commission, *Evaluation of the information policy on the CAP: Final Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015, p. 115.

beneficiaries in relation to specific activities¹¹⁰. In the 2020 call for proposals, the Commission introduced a standardised monthly report to support the monitoring of the impacts of each activity¹¹¹. However, grant recipients still follow individual approaches to data collection, leading to major differences in the level of information available in the grant reports. The methodological choices (counting methods, timeframe) are rarely standardised. The common set of indicators itself only offers a limited basis for comparability; the part of the reports relating to the impact of the projects is especially limited, and could be further elaborated. Indeed, not all organisations reported the percentages of individuals who had increased their knowledge and awareness of the CAP, by using the results of surveys carried out following certain events. Therefore, a broader quantitative approach could be pursued, focusing on different types of activities but also on questions relating to changes in opinions on the CAP after the projects. This could provide a better picture of the overall achievements of the projects and enable the aggregation of impact data on all grants.

8.7. ESQ 7 Efficiency: evaluating applications for grants

The distribution of different grant sizes shows that the scheme is open to organisations with different co-funding capacities. Some grant beneficiaries consider the co-financing rate low. While the evidence on eventual grant sizes shows that organisations are generally able to commit the necessary funds, cases have occurred in which the applicants could not sign the grant agreement due to a lack of capacity to gather the necessary financing. There is also a clear trend indicating that organisations who successfully apply for grants multiple times, develop expertise and build their capacity allowing them to develop and implement larger projects (due to their stronger capacity, enabling them to commit larger sums themselves). The evidence shows that some grants are implemented by the same organisations applying multiple times, and that grants are implemented far more actively in some countries than in others. While the selection of projects ultimately and depends solely on the quality of the applications, overall familiarity with the grant scheme can be considered a factor that influences an applicant's success. Therefore, according to stakeholders, more information about this scheme should be promoted more widely.

8.8. ESQ 8 Relevance: information policy meeting the needs of the target audiences

The information policy on the CAP meets the needs of their target audiences to a great extent, as revealed by strategic documents and stakeholder consultation. The communication objectives for the CAP conform with the aims stated in Article 45 in relation to European Commission communication. The stakeholder groups identified in the objectives are targeted through various information measures, and understand the relevance of the information addressed to them.

Ag-Press

All of the activities of the Ag-Press network – namely, the events, the platform, and the newsletter – met the needs of the journalists and were of high relevance. Participation in the network's activities allowed the journalists to address the difficulties of communicating the CAP to both specialised and general audiences. While press trips provide valuable

¹¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/gim-best-practices-technical-report_en.pdf

¹¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds/grants-information_en

materials for communicating to both the general public and to farmers, seminars present more opportunities to communicate policy aspects to the stakeholders. Due to the complexity of the policy, however, certain communication difficulties still exist. In addition to these other Ag-Press activities, being part of the network led to the establishment of valuable contacts both between journalists, but also between journalists and information sources at the Commission (the DG AGRI media team and the SPP).

Social media

DG AGRI's social media was mostly relevant and useful for its followers. Some of the stakeholders interviewed claimed that more personal stories from farmers could further boost the relevance of DG AGRI's social media content.

Website

A high rate of returning users indicates that the website meets their needs. Most users also agree that the website is relevant, and that the information presented there is interesting. Based on triangulation from various stakeholder consultation activities, we conclude that the website is highly relevant for the different target audiences defined in the communication objectives.

Events

Both conferences and fairs meet the needs of various audiences. Stakeholders agree that these events are useful and interesting, and that they gained new contacts there, as well as new and important information. Many stakeholders were aware of the EU Agricultural Outlook conference and said that it was useful. The relevance of both types of events is perceived as high.

Grants

Overall, the grant scheme meets the expectations of grant beneficiaries, and the projects are fairly effective in communicating messages about the CAP that are locally relevant for the target audiences in the Member States. Co-financing from DG AGRI was relevant to the applicants when deciding the scope of the project or considering the overall decision to implement the project. The grants are relevant, taking into account the national contexts, where CAP communication is often stakeholder-centred and local. However, this relevance may be limited by the overly restricted geographic scope of the projects implemented.

8.9. ESQ 9 Relevance: activities of the information policy meeting the needs of the European citizens

Based on results from Eurobarometer, as well as from the main survey and interview programme, it can be stated that the information needs of European citizens concerning the CAP and related matters are met to a great extent. Citizens are aware of the relevance that agriculture and rural areas have to the future of the European Union. Most of them are also aware of the CAP and perceive the policy positively. However, the general public is also often seen by stakeholders as the audience that requires more attention from DG AGRI, and the CAP is seen as a policy that is not easy to understand or communicate about.

8.10. ESQ 10 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and corporate communication of the European Commission

The information policy on the CAP is completely coherent with the corporate communication policy of the EU. CAP-related topics are not among the major themes of

corporate communication campaigns; however, these topics were still visible in corporate communication by relevant stakeholders. This has been achieved through constant, strong and professional collaboration between DG AGRI and DG COMM, and especially the proactivity of DG AGRI officials in aligning the information policy with corporate campaigns. The prominence of CAP-related topics in future corporate communication is likely to increase in the near future, due to the significance of the European Green Deal and its dedicated corporate communication campaign. This represents an opportunity for the information policy on the CAP.

8.11. ESQ 11 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and the information policies on related EU policies

The information policy on the CAP is coherent with information policies on related EU regional, health and environmental policies, as revealed through desk research and interviews. Potential exists for even greater synergies in the future. While the available data on the information policy on EU trade policy were limited, we could identify some level of coherence and an absence of conflicting messages.

8.12. ESQ 12 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and other information actions on the CAP

Communication by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI), and the EU market observatories complements the information policy on the CAP. In addition, synergies were identified between communication through the ENRD, EIP-AGRI and the activities of DG AGRI Unit B1.

8.13. ESQ 12 Coherence: information policy on the CAP and the communication by the Member States

Shared responsibility for communication about EU issues is one of the key principles of the Commission's contribution to the Sibiu declaration¹¹². The principle of shared management in the implementation of the CAP also sets the stage for shared communication responsibilities between both the Commission and public authorities in the Member States. The findings of this evaluation point to synergies in CAP communication at national and European levels, both in terms of common activities implemented and topics covered, as well as the audiences targeted. Notably, the messages outlined in DG AGRI's external communication strategy are also communicated at national level both to the stakeholders and to the general public, meaning that the objectives of DG AGRI communication are reinforced at national level. Moreover, the presence of DG AGRI officials in the Member States, including through their participation at different events, helps to bring European messages to national audiences, further boosting communication synergies. Shared implementation of communication actions with public authorities in the Member States was, however, less common – pointing to possible room for deepening cooperation. This is probably due to the communication by national authorities being mostly dominated by fairly technical information on CAP support, and highly dependent on the national context of policy implementation. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that information made available by DG AGRI is useful to public authorities in communicating about the CAP in their own countries.

¹¹² European Commission, *Europe in May 2019: Preparing for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in an increasingly uncertain world. The European Commission's contribution to the informal EU27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu (Romania) on 9 May 2019.*

The actions of DG AGRI at national level are usually targeted at stakeholders with potential as multipliers. These include public authorities, stakeholder organisations and the media. By attending events at national level, DG AGRI officials convey their messages on policy development through direct engagement with policy officials, as well as by effectively exploiting media multipliers and media exposure. In this regard, networking activities represent a good investment, providing a platform for DG AGRI to exchange information about its communication priorities and deliver its messages to potential multipliers. This is in line with the DG AGRI external communication strategy, which states that most of the information measures on the CAP directed towards the general public should be implemented in this way. One particular example of such cooperation were the outreach exercises implemented during the evaluation period, via which DG AGRI put significant efforts into communicating the latest CAP developments, enabling them to reach significant number of stakeholders across the Member States. To engage the general public directly, DG AGRI also used paid social media campaigns reaching members of the general public across the EU-27. This proved to be a cost-effective option for conveying messages tailored to the average citizen. With the new CAP and the obligation on the Member States to communicate about CAP Strategic Plans, potential exists for DG AGRI to pursue even stronger synergies.

Grants represent another effective way for DG AGRI to indirectly communicate key messages on the CAP at national level, with grant recipients developing communication actions that are relevant to local audiences. Although better publicity for grant projects at national level is not an objective of the scheme, it could intensify the cooperation between grant beneficiaries and other national actors who would be interested in such partnerships, but may be currently unaware of the existence of such projects in their countries. By doing so, it could make the grant scheme more popular among national organisations and potentially increase the number of applications in subsequent years.

8.14. ESQ 13 Coherence: the components of the information policy on the CAP and the activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative, including co-financed measures

The internal coherence of the information policy is good, both in terms of its alignment with the external communication strategy and between the individual information measures. The topics, messages and target audiences that DG AGRI defined in the strategy were all addressed through DG's communication. Moreover, no significant overlaps were discovered between individual DG AGRI communication events. Different activities were well integrated, with DG AGRI effectively exploiting the potential synergies between activities. Social media, in particular, offers good links with other communication tools, especially events.

8.15. ESQ 14 Added value provided by the information policy on the CAP

Significant volume, scope, role, and process effects were identified throughout the evaluation, showing that the information policy on the CAP brought added value when compared with what was or could be communicated by public authorities in the Member States, or by other actors. The information policy on the CAP increased the total reach of CAP-related messages and ensured that they had an impact. It helped to reach target audiences that would otherwise not have been reached. It played the role of being the primary, reliable source of information on the CAP, at EU level, trusted by various audiences. It also helped to implement unique processes that allowed communication activities that had no equivalents in the Member States.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation results, recommendations addressed to DG AGRI have been developed. They are presented by information measure and linked with evaluation study questions in the table below.

Recommendations		Questions concerned	Evidence
General	Focus on reaching citizens. This should be done by communicating not only at European level, but also at national, regional and local levels. In the context of the Sibiu meeting ¹¹³ and the CAP reform, this increased focus could involve national actors, including national (as well as regional and local) public authorities. More shared responsibility between the Commission and the national public authorities in communicating about the CAP could lead to enhanced synergies. As the willingness and competence of national authorities to carry out specific activities may vary across Member States, the Commission should proactively engage with relevant authorities in each Member State to reach an agreement (ideally in a form of a memorandum of understanding or similar document) on how exactly these responsibilities shall be allocated. A stocktaking exercise to identify the best practices of such collaboration should be carried out at a later point; this could be used to inform the future collaboration between DG AGRI and the Member States. Naturally, the activities which require a very deep knowledge of local context should be attributed to Member States and the ones where there are economies of scale from applying them in several countries, or a particular added value from Commission presence should be attributed to DG AGRI.	1, 9	<p>The stakeholders interviewed view the general public (non-specialists) as the audience that requires more attention.</p> <p>Desk research indicates increased responsibility by the Member States in communicating about the CAP.</p>
	Further strengthen the focus on communication through multipliers: intermediary organisations such as national, regional and local agricultural associations; small and medium-sized businesses based in rural areas; and national, regional and local news media. Collaboration with associations or enterprises could focus on initiating articles and press releases (e.g.	1, 9, 12	<p>The stakeholders interviewed view the general public as the audience that requires more attention.</p> <p>Only 37.8% of respondents from the Ag-Press network agreed that issues concerning the CAP and related topics that are relevant to the general public are covered</p>

¹¹³ European Commission, *Europe in May 2019: Preparing for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in an increasingly uncertain world. The European Commission's contribution to the informal EU27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu (Romania) on 9 May 2019.*

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
developing stories about farmers), while collaboration with media outlets could lead to earned media opportunities (e.g. public broadcasters often publish advertisements without a fee if they are understood as important to the public).		sufficiently in the national, regional and local media. Desk research and country case studies showed that some of the main messages and target audiences outlined in DG AGRI's external communication strategy are insufficiently addressed in national communication.
Keep under review the opportunities to support multipliers in better understanding the CAP, so as to improve their capacity to communicate the policy clearly and effectively.	9	Only 33.8% of respondents from the Ag-Press network agreed that it is relatively easy to explain issues concerning the CAP and related topics to those members of the general public who follow the national, regional and local media.
<p>As soon as the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic allows, increase the amount and variety of physical activities in the Member States. The activities could be increased by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capitalising on participation at fairs in various Member States: 1) by participating in smaller, existing regional and local events, and 2) by organising roadshows. Participation in regional and local events and the organisation of roadshows could help to reach rural and urban audiences who are unable to travel to the main event (e.g. Salon International de l'Agriculture). Strengthening the focus on communication activities in the Member States that hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU. This focus brings a challenge: namely that in Presidency countries, the partners and stakeholders are already busier than usual. However, bearing in mind the increased attention that EU-related topics receive during the Presidency, it is still worth pursuing synergies with national public authorities and other stakeholders to the extent possible. 	1, 12	<p>Desk research and country case studies showed that some of the main messages and target audiences outlined in the DG AGRI external communication strategy are insufficiently addressed in national communication.</p> <p>Scoping interviews suggested that capitalising on the Presidency of the Council of the EU is an effective way to engage citizens on CAP-related topics.</p>
During the COVID-19 pandemic and as long as the restrictions and/or public reluctance to hold physical events remain, test various new technologies and formats to better reach target audiences online. If they prove	1	Desk research of social media analytics data showed that of the 10 posts with the highest engagement on DG AGRI's Facebook account, seven are videos.

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<p>successful, these innovative formats could be continued after the pandemic. The examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising the use of video content. While DG AGRI already uses video in many appropriate ways (e.g. the Farm to Fork conference, Twitter posts), it could be beneficial to further apply this medium by publishing live videos on social media (e.g. Q&A sessions with the Commissioner) or video tutorials for specific target audiences (e.g. a step-by-step guide to becoming an organic farmer). Interactivity. To increase the engagement of target audiences, it is worth providing interactive experiences for different types of target audiences: stakeholders (e.g. eligibility for income support calculator) and the general public (e.g. educational quizzes on farming, augmented reality or 360-degree videos with elements from farming realities, podcasts). 		<p>Industry good practice: a HubSpot survey of practitioners showed that "99% of current video marketers told us they'll continue using video in 2020, and 95% plan to increase or maintain their spend."¹¹⁴</p> <p>Industry good practice: a study by Demand Metric showed that "interactive content such as apps, assessments, calculators, configurators, and quizzes generate conversions moderately or very well 70% of the time, compared to just 36% for passive content."¹¹⁵</p>
<p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, test various new content-related approaches that are in line with industry trends. If they prove successful, these approaches could be continued after the pandemic or once the restrictions are relaxed. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximised use of personalised content. While DG AGRI already uses personalisation on social media to some extent (e.g. targeted advertisements), it could be beneficial to personalise even more content throughout 	1	<p>Industry good practice: a study from Econsultancy found that 93% of companies see a rise in conversion rates from personalisation.¹¹⁶</p> <p>Some of the stakeholders interviewed suggested that DG AGRI should present more personal stories of farmers and use simple language to engage the general public.</p> <p>Industry good practice: a study by Mavrck showed that user-generated content featuring a brand drove 6.9x higher</p>

¹¹⁴ HubSpot, *The State of Video Marketing in 2020 [New Data]*, available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/state-of-video-marketing-new-data>

¹¹⁵ Demand Metric, *Content & Buyer's Journey Benchmark report*, available at: <https://www.demandmetric.com/content/content-buyers-journey-benchmark-report>

¹¹⁶ Econsultancy, *Conversion Rate Optimization Report 2017*, 2017, available at: <https://econsultancy.com/reports/conversion-rate-optimization-report/>.

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<p>various activities (e.g. showing different content to visitors depending on their location, previous visits or preferences).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplification of content. While some stakeholders (e.g. experts) require more detailed and technical information, most of the content on the CAP, especially that targeted at the general public, would benefit from being kept as clear as possible and based either on simple facts or personal stories. Such messages could focus on the benefits of the CAP to citizens or the challenges faced by farmers. • User-generated content. Publishing more content created by stakeholders and citizens would make the information on the CAP seem more authentic and trustworthy. This type of content could be generated by asking users to send a specific type of photos or videos (e.g. for a contest) or by searching for such content on social media and requesting permission to repost. • Influencer marketing. This could be particularly useful for reaching very specific countries, regions or social groups that need to be activated at a specific time. As already proven by the DG AGRI-managed Instagram account, food is a social media-friendly topic, and this could be easily exploited for influencer marketing. 		<p>engagement than brand-generated content.¹¹⁷</p>
<p>React to discussions on both positive and potentially negative aspects of the CAP by providing factual and objective evidence that addresses misrepresentations and highlights advantages that outweigh the potential disadvantages inherent to the policy. Engaging constructively with stakeholders irrespective of their positions on the CAP is central to the early identification of misinformation</p>	4	<p>Desk research identified negative information about the CAP on Twitter.</p> <p>Media monitoring conducted in the EU Member States classified 18.4% of articles relating to CAP as being negative towards it.</p> <p>Of the main survey respondents who remembered seeing information about the CAP from other sources, 37.2% said that</p>

¹¹⁷ Mavrck, *The 2017 Facebook User-Generated Content Benchmark Report*, 2017, available at: <https://info.mavrck.co/facebook-user-generated-content-benchmark-report-q1-2017>.

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
and the clarification of any misrepresentations of the policy.		<p>this information contained both complementary and conflicting elements, and 4.2% said that this information conflicted with information provided by DG AGRI.</p> <p>Many of the stakeholders interviewed sometimes see negative or contradicting information on the CAP. Some of them noticed aggressive communication against the CAP.</p>
Continue to participate actively in the Commission-wide network set up to counter misinformation and, insofar as it is possible, deepen its cooperation and support to the Commission's representations in the Member States to ensure the accessibility of factual information on the CAP.	4	<p>Desk research identified negative information about the CAP on Twitter.</p> <p>Media monitoring conducted in the EU Member States classified 18.4% of articles relating to CAP as being negative towards it.</p> <p>Of the main survey respondents who remembered seeing information about the CAP from other sources, 37.2% said that this information contained both complementary and conflicting elements, and 4.2% said that this information conflicted with information provided by DG AGRI.</p> <p>Many of the stakeholders interviewed sometimes see negative or contradicting information about the CAP. Some of them noticed intensive negative communication against the CAP.</p>
Prepare a communication strategy that would better integrate different EU policies/strategies and would focus still further on working together with other DGs to communicate these policies. One example could be a dedicated communication plan to showcase how the CAP contributes to the Farm to Fork ambitions.	10, 11	<p>As different EU policies become increasingly integrated and relevant to several different DGs (e.g. Farm to Fork), it is important to reflect this with collaboration with other DGs on the strategy.</p>
Prepare a communication strategy that would take into account the increased role envisaged for the Member States in communicating the CAP, and which focuses on creating synergies with Member States governments in communicating their CAP Strategic Plans.	12, 14	<p>Desk research on the Sibiu meeting and the new CAP reform shows the increased role of the Member States.</p>
Improve the provision of links from DG AGRI website to its social media accounts. DG AGRI could also provide links from one social media account to the others. These links could help to	13	<p>Desk research findings: of the two web pages presenting DG AGRI at europa.eu, one includes links to</p>

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
drive traffic between social media sites and boost the reach of the content.		<p>DG AGRI's social media sites¹¹⁸, while the other does not¹¹⁹. For comparison, DG MARE Facebook account includes a link to its Twitter.</p> <p>The 'about' descriptions of DG AGRI social media accounts do not include links to its other social media accounts (e.g. a link to DG AGRI Twitter is not included in the description section of the DG AGRI Facebook account).</p>
<p>Facilitate the Ag-Press members' access to 'exclusive content' to improve the effectiveness of the platform and encourage journalists to write about CAP-related topics. Exclusive content could comprise <i>ad-hoc</i> factsheets or background information on key policy aspects – such content would help journalists put the 'news of the day' into context and eventually improve the accuracy of articles and media reports.</p> <p>Facilitate 'exclusive answers' to the questions posed by journalists looking for information for their articles. Simplified and exclusive content by DG AGRI could help the journalists to present the information in an accessible way.</p>	1	Interviewed Ag-Press journalists claimed that CAP is a difficult topic to communicate about, sometimes due its technicality.
<p>As the presence of the Commissioner or high-level officials contributes to conveying the messages about the CAP, offer more in-depth seminars on CAP-related topics and ensuring the presence of high-level speakers from DG AGRI, the Cabinet or SPP, who would speak on the record. This is likely to encourage journalists to write articles about CAP policies as they are communicated by the Commission, and thereby increase the effectiveness of Ag-Press.</p>	1	<p>Qualitative content analysis of articles issued by journalists revealed the prominent quotations from high-level officials (including the EU Commissioner for Agriculture), meaning that their messages were directly conveyed.</p> <p>Members of Ag-Press who were interviewed also underlined the importance of being able to ask questions to the Commissioner directly.</p>
<p>While COVID-19 restrictions remain in place, focus on webinars for Ag-Press members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one such event could be organised per quarter to maintain the level of activity within the network and 	1	Media industry practice is that in the pandemic situation, journalists have become much more used to online press conferences and seminars. This suggestion is a temporary solution, which could be undertaken to maintain the

¹¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/agriculture-and-rural-development_en

¹¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/organisation/dg-agri-dg-agriculture-rural-development_en

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<p>maintain relationships with its members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To compensate for the fact that press trips cannot take place during the current and continuing restrictions, do not limit the focus of the webinars to policy content. Some of the webinars (or their parts) could be dedicated to presentations by farmers, especially on the topic of how they were affected by the pandemic and how the CAP helped them to recover. <p>As pandemic-related restrictions are relaxed, organise no more than two press trips a year, preferably to countries holding the Council Presidency. In addition to the press trips, hold two or three seminars. One of these seminars could be aligned with a conference organised by DG AGRI (e.g. the Outlook conference) and one could remain in the format of a webinar and be held online (to ensure its accessibility to a larger number of the network members).</p>	<p>1, 6, 8, 13</p>	<p>network's activity while COVID-19 restrictions are still in place.</p> <p>The evidence base for this recommendation comes from differences in the network's two types of journalist-targeted events in terms of performance and content. Press trips help to better relay messages about the CAP to the general public. Seminars help to gather the largest number of participants, resulting in the largest number of articles published. Thus, we consider both types of events to be important: press trips for providing content relevant to the general public, and seminars for achieving results at a comparatively lower cost. The recommendation suggests a balance between both.</p> <p>Organisation of the Ag-Press seminar aligned with the Outlook conference was identified as a synergy, boosting the internal coherence of DG AGRI activities.</p>
<p>Because it is vital to react quickly, especially on social media, keep under review the existing internal procedures used by the DG AGRI social media team to react swiftly to the dissemination of misinformation about the CAP on social media channels. Reactions could present evidence-based replies (linked to factual information) to negative aspects raised by social media users.</p> <p>Align the names of different DG AGRI social media accounts.</p>	<p>1, 4</p> <p>13</p>	<p>Desk research identified negative information about the CAP on Twitter.</p> <p>Scoping interviews and clarifications with DG AGRI staff revealed a consciousness of the need for constant vigilance to ensure the timely rebuttal of inaccurate material.</p> <p>Desk research: different account names are used for Twitter ('EU Agriculture') and Facebook/Instagram ('EU Food&Farming'), which may be confusing for users.</p>

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<p>Tailor the content to the needs of the general public by further simplifying it (e.g. removing jargon, introducing storytelling), separating technical information from content dedicated towards citizens, and providing various pages or tools that could be used to attract visitors to the website (e.g. a food price calculator, national recipes, etc.).</p>		
<p>Conduct continuous user research to improve the information architecture of the website – testing early and often. Investing in card sorting and usability testing exercises could help to identify the main problems and find their solutions based on the opinions and behaviours of real users.</p>	1	<p>Usability tests showed that users are often unable to find the content they are looking for on the DG AGRI website.</p> <p>Interviews with stakeholders showed that they are often unable to find the content they are looking for on the DG AGRI website.</p> <p>Less than 70% of respondents to the website survey agreed that it was easy to navigate between pages.</p>
<p>Prioritise the translation of all pages in the class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' into all official EU languages.</p>	1	<p>Some participants in the usability testing exercise complained that not all of the content on the DG AGRI website is provided in their native language.</p> <p>Some respondents to the website survey, when asked "What is the one thing we could improve?", requested that the website be translated.</p>
<p>Push for the Commission-wide improvement of the website search engine to make the most important sections and pages dedicated to citizens appear more often in its results.</p> <p>Consult with DG COMM on how to improve the visibility of the main pages in search results (e.g. working with keywords in headlines).</p>	1	<p>Usability tests showed that users are often unable to find what they are looking for via the search engine on the DG AGRI website.</p>
<p>Strengthen the website in the area of search engine optimisation by working to improve the key usability issues mentioned above, as well as other related aspects, e.g. site speed and the relevance (and clarity) of content, as well as the relevance of keywords and tags.</p>	1	<p>Usability tests showed that users are not always able to find the DG AGRI website when searching for specific agriculture-related content on Google.</p>
<p>Choose and consistently follow the same methodology to estimate and report on the number of visitors to DG</p>	1	<p>Desk research revealed that reporting on the number of people that visit DG AGRI's stand</p>

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<p>AGRI's stands at fairs. In all cases, DG AGRI could calculate the number of visitors per day by assessing the number of visitors at the most and least busy hours, calculating the average number of visitors per hour, and then multiplying it by the number of hours the stand operates per day.</p>		<p>at fairs is incomplete and not always consistent. This makes it extremely challenging to assess how many people DG AGRI has reached through such events and to evaluate their impact.</p>
<p>Keep under review the preparatory activities held for DG AGRI officials before they go to agri-food fairs, covering not only the organisational aspects and the relevant local policy issues, but also some key principles on representing the Commission to and interacting with people who hold contrasting views.</p>	1	<p>Interviews with DG AGRI officials showed that some of them feel they need more preparation or even training before going to fairs in order to effectively represent the Commission there.</p>
<p>Monitoring of the grant projects could be improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define KPIs the grant recipients should follow when implementing their activities. The indicators from the Communication Network framework could be considered. • Define the timeframe for monitoring continuous activities (e.g. impressions per month/week, visitors per month/week). • Develop a common approach to how certain indicators should be counted. For example, how to uniformly count participants at events with no formal registration (e.g. fairs). • Provide suggestions on how to better measure project results and impacts in terms of improved understanding and a more positive perception of the CAP. Potential examples include common questionnaires for event participants, as well as surveys carried out before and after the project. <p>Reporting of monitoring results could also be improved:</p>	1, 6	<p>The methodologies applied by grant recipients in collecting monitoring data are different, hindering comparability of the projects in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency and impact.</p> <p>Monitoring at the level of results and impacts is limited, as not all grant recipients provide comprehensive monitoring data at this level in their grant reports.</p>

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More emphasis could be placed on the preparation of the indicators for results and impacts to be submitted in the final reporting. • Intermediate reporting should be improved to ensure it allows progress to be monitored in the implementation of the project. It should also increase opportunities to leverage other communication channels (e.g. by providing a list of upcoming activities that could be leveraged by DG AGRI communication channels), but should not overburden the grant beneficiaries with excessive reporting requirements. 		
<p>Put more effort into promoting the grant scheme, especially in countries where none or few grants were implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social media channels used for promotion should be carefully selected (depending on their popularity in specific countries) to effectively reach potential applicants, with the potential use of paid advertising. • Key stakeholder organisations (potential applicants) in the Member States could be specifically targeted (e.g. with the help of the Commission Representations) with invitations to participate in the call. • If possible, DG AGRI could consider adding geographical criteria into the selection process (e.g. additional points if no grant projects were implemented in the country over the previous 2-3 years). This could increase the motivation of organisations from these countries to apply. Moreover, it could boost the number of transnational projects implemented, as more active organisations would be 	7	<p>The geographical balance of countries in which grant projects are implemented is uneven. During the last four years, the beneficiaries of grants came from 22 countries, some more often than others (e.g. 20 grants were implemented in Italy).</p> <p>38% of grant applicants that responded to the survey believed that opportunities to receive funding from the grant scheme are not well known among potential applicants in their country.</p> <p>Few applications are received for cross-national projects, as evidenced by desk research in the grant case studies.</p> <p>As evidenced by the grant case studies, the burden currently required to enlist affiliated entities into the project is considered too high, and therefore most applicants focus on working only locally.</p>

Recommendations	Questions concerned	Evidence
<p>motivated to look for partners in less active countries.</p> <p>In addition to promoting the grant scheme in countries where grants are rarely or never implemented, promote more cross-national projects, provided that the messaging remains consistent with the objectives and profiles of local audiences, which means that the messages should be tailored specifically to the information needs of the audience in each country where the grant project is implemented. The focus on communicating to and engaging with local audiences should remain, even in transnational projects. This will require the review and simplification of the current requirements imposed at application stage on working with affiliated entities and linked third parties located in other countries.</p>		

ANNEX 1. EVALUATION GRID

In this chapter, we present our operationalisation of the evaluation study questions, following the five evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. The operationalisation includes our interpretation of the content of the question, the judgement criteria, indicators and information sources. With regard to the judgement criteria for quantitative indicators, we use a baseline of 70% which was selected on the basis of the results of the previous evaluation and the average for the European Customer Satisfaction Index¹²⁰ in all categories (including public services).

Effectiveness

The assessment of effectiveness will follow the intervention logic and measure the extent to which the intervention achieved its objectives. To analyse the extent to which operational, specific and general objectives of the information policy were achieved, we have developed a set of specific indicators for each level of information and communication policy effects and impacts. Below, we present our operationalisation of the sub-questions of the effectiveness evaluation criteria.

ESQ 1. To what extent has the information policy on the CAP been effective in improving the understanding and perception of the CAP for the different target audiences, both inside and outside the Union, in particular in informing citizens, farmers and other stakeholders active in rural areas on the CAP?

This evaluation study question can be divided into three separate sub-questions:

ESQ 1A. The effectiveness of the information policy in improving the understanding of the CAP;

ESQ 1B. The effectiveness of the information policy in improving the perception of the CAP;

ESQ 1C. The extent to which the objectives of the information policy were achieved.

Content of the question

This evaluation study question is aimed at measuring one of the impacts of the information policy on the CAP. In general, it seeks to assess whether the information policy succeeded in making the CAP better understood among the target groups. To answer this question, we will mainly distinguish between two groups defined in the DG AGRI external communication strategy: the general public and stakeholders (farmers, NGOs, etc.). Where relevant, we will further break down the two target groups, according to the audience segments defined in the external communication strategy.

We will first assess how different parts of the information policy contributed towards improving the understanding and perception of the CAP, and then draw conclusions at the policy level. With regard to the general public, we will look primarily at trends in Eurobarometer data and the implementation of grant-financed information projects that targeted the general public. With regard to stakeholders, we will conduct extensive consultation with DG AGRI target groups, including organisations active in the field of the CAP, to determine the extent to which their understanding and perception of the CAP improved due to DG AGRI communication actions.

We understand this evaluation study question as a composite one, covering not

¹²⁰ The Institute of Customer Service, *EUCSI: A European Customer Satisfaction Index. Eight countries compared*, available at: <https://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/research-insight/research-library/eucsi-a-european-customer-satisfaction-index-eight-countries-compared>.

	<p>only the understanding and the perception of the CAP as two separate sub-questions, but also a broader range of indicators related to the extent to which the objectives of the information policy on the CAP were achieved. This need to evaluate whether or not the objectives were achieved (in terms of outputs, results and impacts) is an important part of the evaluation. Still, it is not covered by other evaluation study questions. Therefore, the first evaluation study question is the most suitable for this assessment.</p>
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities were implemented as planned. • At least 70% of the different target groups have an improved understanding and perception of the CAP (from different parts of the information policy). This criterion covers indicators from various information measures and includes answers from surveys of stakeholders, grant applicants and the Ag-Press network, as well as interviews with members of different target audiences. • At least 70% of the different target groups agree on questions covering various output, result and impact level indicators connected to positive attitudes towards information measures. • At least 70% of DG AGRI internal KPIs achieved. • Positive change (increase in percentage points) identified in survey answers when compared with the previous evaluation and in related Eurobarometer questions. • Desk research data show improved knowledge among the general public and various stakeholders as regards the CAP. • Case studies reveal the contribution made by information measures towards the improved understanding and perception of the CAP among the general public and stakeholders, and positive attitudes towards different information measures.
Indicators [information sources]	<p><u>1. Achievement of the policy's general objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who state that they are better informed about various aspects of the CAP, compared with the previous evaluation [survey of stakeholders] • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who better evaluate various aspects of the CAP, in comparison to the previous evaluation [survey of stakeholders] • Percentage of citizens who have heard of the support that the EU gives farmers through its CAP; change over time [Eurobarometer] • Percentage of citizens who know the details of the EU support to farmers through the CAP; change over time [Eurobarometer] • Percentage of citizens who agree that the CAP contributes to different aspects of society, the economy, climate change; change over time [Eurobarometer] <p><u>2. Achievement of the policy's specific objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed whose organisation is interested in further informing stakeholders, compared with the previous evaluation; examples of such multiplier effects [survey of stakeholders; interviews] • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed whose organisation is interested in further informing the general public, compared with the previous evaluation; examples of such multiplier effects [survey of stakeholders;

interviews]

- Percentage of citizens who agree that the EU's financial support to farmers is too high; change over time (decreasing proportion would be a positive result) [Eurobarometer]
- Percentage of citizens who agree that the CAP benefits all European citizens and not only farmers; change over time [Eurobarometer]

3. Media networking:

- **Impacts:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that they view the CAP more positively [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press (participant observation)]
- **Impacts:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that they view the CAP more positively because of information in the media; examples of such change [survey of stakeholders, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that their awareness about the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development increased [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press (participant observation)]
- **Results:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that they have an improved understanding of the CAP [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press (participant observation)]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that the information in the media has increased their awareness about the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development; examples of such an increase [survey of stakeholders, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that information in the media has improved their understanding of the CAP; examples of such improvement [survey of stakeholders, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that participation in a trip/seminar helped them to produce high-quality output for their work; examples of such outputs [survey of Ag-Press network, interviews, case study on Ag-Press]
- **Results:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that they cover CAP related issues more frequently after a trip/seminar [survey of Ag-Press network, interviews, case study]
- **Results:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who say they would like to/intend to participate again in various activities in the future [survey of Ag-Press network, interviews, case study on Ag-Press]
- **Results:** Percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that the photo service provided during their trip (pictures taken by a professional photographer) was useful for their work [survey of Ag-Press network]
- **Results:** percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who agree that: Ag-Press.eu is one of their main sources of information on the developments of the CAP; they have used information from Ag-Press.eu to develop their stories; Ag-Press.eu portal is sufficiently comfortable to use [survey of Ag-Press network]
- **Results:** number of articles on the CAP published by Ag-Press network members (comparison between those who participated in press trips and those who did not) [desk research]
- **Outputs:** number of online views of DG AGRI media releases [desk research]

- **Outputs:** number of online views of Ag-Press network members' articles [desk research]
- **Outputs:** number of Ag-Press network members participating in DG AGRI events (e.g. trips) [desk research]
- Combination of output, result and impact level indicators for the measures [desk research; survey of Ag-Press network]
- Proportion of DG AGRI internal KPIs achieved [desk research]
- Reasons for not achieving KPIs, main success factors [desk research, interviews, case study on Ag-Press]

4. Web-based:

- **Impacts:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that they view the CAP more positively because of content on the website or social media (including audio-visual material and publications); examples of such change [survey of stakeholders, interviews, case studies on the website and social media]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that the information on the website or social media (including audio-visual material) has increased their awareness about the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development; examples of such an increase [survey of stakeholders, interviews, case studies on the website and social media]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that the information on the website or social media (including audio-visual material) has improved their understanding of the CAP; examples of such improvement [survey of stakeholders, interviews, case studies on the website and social media]
- **Results:** extent to which the target groups surveyed/interviewed agree that they intend to visit the DG AGRI website or follow content on DG AGRI's social media accounts in the future [surveys, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of website users who agree that the website is useful; the most valuable elements on the website; problems identified by website users [website survey, case study on the website (usability testing), interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who viewed DG AGRI audio-visual content and found it useful; reasons for usefulness [survey of stakeholders, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of surveyed stakeholders who viewed DG AGRI publications and found them useful; reasons for usefulness; evidence on the usability of the Teachers' Resource Pack [survey of stakeholders, interviews, case study on the Teachers' Resource Pack (usability testing)]
- **Results:** number of return visitors to the DG AGRI website [desk research]
- **Results:** number of engagements on DG AGRI Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook: shares, likes, click-throughs, clicks on the print button, comments [desk research, case study on social media]
- **Outputs:** number of visits, visitors and page views on the DG AGRI website [desk research]
- **Outputs:** number of DG AGRI Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook followers, posts, post/tweet/video impressions [desk research, case study on social media]
- **Outputs:** percentage of DG AGRI videos with a completion rate of 50%

or more / 100% [desk research, case study on social media]

- Combination of output, result and impact level indicators for the measures [desk research, survey of stakeholders, case studies on the website and social media]
- Proportion of DG AGRI internal KPIs achieved [desk research]
- Reasons for not achieving KPIs, main success factors [desk research, interviews, case studies on the website and social media]

5. Events:

- **Impacts:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that they view the CAP more positively after visiting an event; examples of such change [survey of stakeholders, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders/citizens surveyed who agree that awareness about the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development has increased after visiting an event; examples of such an increase [survey of stakeholders, case study on events (participant observation), interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that their understanding of CAP-related topics has improved after visiting an event; examples of such improvements [survey of stakeholders, interviews]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that an event was useful for their work [survey of stakeholders]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that an event was well organised [survey of stakeholders]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that they have shared opinions or spoken positively about an event to others [survey of stakeholders]
- **Results:** percentage of stakeholders surveyed who would like to/intend to participate in similar events in the future [survey of stakeholders]
- **Outputs:** number of attendees at DG AGRI conferences or fair stands [desk research, case study on events]
- **Outputs:** reach of posts promoting DG AGRI events [desk research]
- Combination of output, result and impact level indicators for the measures [desk research, survey of stakeholders, case study on events]
- Proportion of DG AGRI internal KPIs achieved [desk research]
- Reasons for not achieving KPIs, main success factors [desk research, interviews, cases study on events]

6. Grants:

- **Results:** percentage of grant applicants who agree with positive statements and disagree with negative statements relating to project management and implementation [survey of grant applicants]
- **Results:** percentage of grant applicants who agree that their project had various positive influences on their organisation related to the CAP [survey of grant applicants]
- **Results:** percentage of grant applicants who agree that the co-funding rate currently provided by the grant scheme is sufficient and that the amount is neither too low nor too high [survey of grant applicants]
- Combination of output, result and impact level indicators for the

	<p>measures [desk research, survey of stakeholders, case studies on grants]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence on the audiences of grant projects regarding their improved understanding of the CAP [desk research, case studies on grants] • Proportion of KPIs achieved [desk research] • Reasons for not achieving KPIs, main success factors [desk research, interviews, case studies on grants]
<p>ESQ 2. To what extent has the policy been effective in reinstating consumer confidence when needed? In answering this question, the contractor should pay attention to the implementation of the policy.</p>	
Content of the question	<p>This evaluation study question is aimed at measuring one of the impacts of the information policy on the CAP. Measures to reinstate consumer confidence may or may not be taken by DG AGRI (e.g. when a quick reaction is required to a crisis that has arisen). To answer this question, we will: a) seek to identify significant instances of a loss of consumer confidence (if any); b) determine if any steps from DG AGRI were needed; c) assess what steps (if any) DG AGRI took to address them; d) assess whether they helped to reinstate consumer confidence. Based on Regulation (EU) No 1144/2014, we will assess whether DG AGRI should have taken action, and: if yes, whether the actions were in line with the best practices from existing research; if no, whether the readiness to take action and the potential procedure were appropriate.</p>
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues diminishing consumer confidence are identified, and DG AGRI reaction (or no reaction at all) is in line with what the stakeholders interviewed expected.
Indicators [information sources]	<p>Media networking, web-based, events, grants, horizontal (to be identified after scoping interviews and initial desk research, where relevant):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of events during the period 2016-2020 that could diminish consumer confidence and assessment of DG AGRI reaction to these events, if any [desk research] • If no events identified, the assessment of the procedure and the preparedness of the groups involved [desk research]
<p>ESQ 3. To what extent has the policy been effective in promoting the European model of agriculture?</p>	
Content of the question	<p>This evaluation study question is aimed at measuring one of the impacts of the information policy on the CAP. To answer this question, we identify the critical elements of the European model of agriculture. It is important to note that such a model is not formally defined, therefore its main two pillars (support for family farming and multifunctional agriculture) were established during scoping interviews. We draw on the Eurobarometer survey and the different roles of the CAP, which reflect the elements of the European model of agriculture, especially in terms of multifunctional agriculture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers; • Creating growth and jobs in rural areas; • Ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers; • Securing a stable supply of food in the EU; • Ensuring a sustainable way to produce food; • Protecting the environment and tackling climate change;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing safe, healthy food of high quality. <p>In addition, we include the role of the CAP in terms of family farms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting family farming. <p>We will then look at whether the content of various information measures promoted these elements, and whether there were changes in perceptions among the general public and the stakeholders about the European model of agriculture.</p> <p>While the aforementioned roles of the CAP are not official elements of the European model of agriculture, in this evaluation, we consider them the closest definition of such a model.</p>
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 70% of different target groups agree that the CAP fulfils its various roles associated with the European model of agriculture. • Positive change (increase in percentage points) identified in survey answers when compared with the previous evaluation and in related Eurobarometer questions.
Indicators [information sources]	<p><u>Achievement of the policy's general objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who agree that the CAP fulfils its different roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Securing a stable food supply ◦ Providing safe, healthy food of high quality ◦ Ensuring a sustainable way to produce food ◦ Ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers ◦ Protecting the environment and tackling climate change ◦ Ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers ◦ Creating growth and jobs in rural areas ◦ Supporting family farming <p>(change over time when compared with the previous evaluation) [stakeholder survey]</p> • Percentage of citizens who agree that the CAP fulfils its different roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Securing a stable food supply ◦ Providing safe, healthy food of high quality ◦ Ensuring a sustainable way to produce food ◦ Ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers ◦ Protecting the environment and tackling climate change ◦ Ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers ◦ Creating growth and jobs in rural areas <p>(change over time where applicable) [Eurobarometer]</p> • Percentage of citizens who perceive different priorities of the CAP to be important; change over time [Eurobarometer]

ESQ 4. To what extent have external intervening factors such as information provided by other parties on their own initiatives and means limited the effectiveness of the policy? Empirical

evidence on this issue should be gathered by the case studies, surveys or interviews.

Content of the question This question aims to look at external intervening factors that may have limited the effectiveness of the policy. To answer this question, we will identify communication actions, if any, that provided information on the CAP that is contradictory to information disseminated through the information policy. These can be actions implemented either at EU or national level. Moreover, communication on the CAP is sensitive to external factors such as various crises arising that may hinder the effectiveness of the policy.

Furthermore, actions at the national level and by other DGs, if contradictory, could affect the effectiveness of the information policy. To avoid duplications, these issues will be covered when assessing coherence.

Judgement criteria To a large extent if:

- At least 70% of target groups surveyed noticed negative communication about the CAP at fairs, or communication campaigns contradicting DG AGRI campaigns.
- At least 70% of target groups surveyed who noticed contradictory campaigns, stated that they were more relevant to them than DG AGRI campaigns.
- Desk research shows that contradictory communication actions were implemented on a large scale and had a strong potential for impact.

Indicators [information sources] Factors hindering effectiveness (achievement of the policy's general and specific objectives):

- Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who participated in fairs and noticed negative communication about the CAP; evidence from a visit to Salon International de l'Agriculture 2020 [survey of stakeholders, case study on events (participant observation)]
- Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who noticed conflicting information about the CAP between DG AGRI campaigns and other campaigns coming from outside the European Commission [survey of stakeholders]
- Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who stated that campaigns from other sources seemed more relevant than campaigns from DG AGRI [survey of stakeholders]
- Number of contradictory campaigns identified [desk research, interviews, case study on events (participant observation)]
- Messages that are contradicted the most often [desk research, interviews]
- Examples of external factors that negatively affected communication about the CAP (e.g. diseases, protests, drops in employment) [desk research, interviews]

ESQ 5. To what extent has the implementation of the procedure of evaluation of the applications for grants for information actions been effective?

Content of the question This question aims to assess the procedure for evaluating grant applications to determine whether it has been implemented effectively. To answer this question, we will focus on whether the process is clear and easily understandable to the different stakeholders involved, as well as how clearly it is defined.

Judgement To a large extent if:

criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 70% of grant applicants surveyed agree on various positive aspects regarding the information, timing, transparency and clarity of the procedure, and their overall satisfaction with participation in the grant scheme. • Positive change (increase in percentage points) identified in survey answers when compared with the previous evaluation. • Desk research and interviews show that the process is clearly defined and accurately followed.
Indicators [information sources]	<p>Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The documentary analysis shows that the process is clearly defined and accurately followed [desk research, interviews] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that the time period for submitting proposals is appropriate [survey of grant applicants] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that the application form and related requirements are clear and adequate to present the proposed project; evidence of diverging opinions between successful and unsuccessful ones [survey of grant applicants] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that the evaluation and selection process is transparent; evidence of diverging opinions between successful and unsuccessful ones [survey of grant applicants] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that the selection criteria are appropriate; evidence of diverging opinions between successful and unsuccessful ones [survey of grant applicants] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that it is easy to plan the costs of the project and to prepare an accurate budget proposal [survey of grant applicants] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that the supporting materials prepared by DG AGRI are useful to them in applying [survey of grant applicants] • Percentage of grant applicants surveyed who agree that they are satisfied overall with their participation in the grant scheme [survey of grant applicants]

Efficiency

Assessment of efficiency is aimed at identifying and quantifying the regulatory costs and benefits of the intervention and its implementation at different levels. The evaluation of efficiency considers the relationship between the resources spent on the intervention and (negative or positive) changes produced by the intervention.¹²¹ In this evaluation study, we aim to assess how different CAP information policy measures perform in terms of their cost-efficiency.

¹²¹ European Commission, 'Guidelines on evaluation and fitness checks', *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Chapter VI, Brussels, 2017, pp. 50-66.

ESQ 6. To what extent are the different tools of the information policy on the CAP efficient in order to convey the messages and achieve the expected objectives?

Content of the question

This question aims to identify how efficient the information measures on the CAP are in achieving the foreseen objectives at the lowest costs possible. The efficiency of the measures of the information policy on the CAP is assessed in terms of the efficient (cost-effective) organisation, implementation and management of measures, as well as an efficient message on CAP dissemination. The costs will be associated and judged against the benefits achieved by information measures.

Two types of costs will be taken into account:

- Financial resources used (in Euros)
- Human resources used (in FTEs)

We will mainly draw on the measurement of cost per unit of benefit for the different types of measures implemented (e.g. cost per visitor, cost per view, etc.) while also considering their satisfaction with the object being assessed, seeking to identify the most and the least cost-effective measures.

Judgement criteria

To a large extent if:

- Different information measures disseminate information on the CAP in a quick and cost-appropriate way when compared with similar information measures within and outside the European Commission.
- Different information measures disseminate information on the CAP in a quick and cost-appropriate way when compared with the previous evaluation.

Indicators [information sources]

1. Media networking:

- **Output:** cost per attendee / network member [desk research]
- Inefficiencies noted by Ag-Press network members [survey of Ag-Press network]
- Comparison of cost rankings across different events, considering the level of satisfaction with their activities [desk research]
- Comparison of cost rankings with the previous evaluation [desk research]
- Comparison of cost rankings with the European Network of Agricultural Journalists [desk research]

	<p><u>2. Web-based:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output: cost per engagement / visitor / video view [desk research, case studies on social media and website] • Comparison of cost rankings per different item, considering the level of satisfaction with social media and website content [desk research, case studies on social media and website] • Comparison of cost rankings with the previous evaluation [desk research] • Comparison of cost rankings with other DGs belonging to the Food, Farming, Fisheries group: DG SANTE and DG MARE [desk research] <p><u>3. Events:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output: cost per attendee / visitor [desk research] • Comparison of cost rankings across different events, considering the level of satisfaction with social media and website content [desk research] • Comparison of cost rankings with the previous evaluation [desk research] • Comparison of cost rankings with other DGs belonging to the Food, Farming, Fisheries group: DG SANTE and DG MARE [desk research] <p><u>4. Grants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per activity; availability of monitoring data on grant efficiency [desk research, survey of grant applicants, case studies on grants] • Inefficiencies noted by grant recipients [survey of grant applicants] • Comparison of costs committed for similar information measures across different grant proposals [desk research, case studies on grants] • Comparison of the results of similar projects with different budgets [case studies on grants] • Comparison of costs for projects under the previous evaluation period (2010-2015) [desk research] • Comparison of cost rankings across different grant projects [desk research]
<p>ESQ 7. To what extent has the implementation of the procedure of evaluation of the applications for grants for information actions been efficient?</p>	
<p>Content of the question</p>	<p>This question aims to assess the efficiency of the procedure for evaluating grant applications. To evaluate the efficiency of the process, we will mainly look at the time, financial and human costs acquired in the procedure, and assess their appropriateness.</p>
<p>Judgement criteria</p>	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost-appropriateness of the procedure is higher when compared with the previous evaluation.

Indicators [information sources]	<p>Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project selection and conclusion of grant agreements (time-to-inform, time-to-contract, time-to-grant) [desk research] • Average evaluation costs per proposal [desk research, interviews] • Inefficiencies noted by grant recipients [survey of grant applicants] • Comparison of procedural cost rankings between different grants in the same time cycle (one year) and between different time cycles; evidence of change in efficiency, if any [desk research] • Differences with efficiency indicators from the previous evaluation [desk research]
---	---

Relevance

Assessment of relevance includes an analysis of the extent to which an implemented intervention is relevant for the current needs and issues in society. In general, this evaluation criterion examines the relationship between the needs of society and the objectives of the intervention.¹²²

¹²² European Commission, 'Guidelines on evaluation and fitness checks', *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Chapter VI, Brussels, 2017, pp. 50-66.

ESQ 8. To what extent does the information policy on the CAP respond to the information needs of the target audiences as defined in article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013?

Content of the question

This question examines how well information policy measures of the CAP correspond to the needs of the target audiences identified in Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013. We do not include the general public as a target group because it is separately analysed in the next evaluation study question. Here we focus on farmers and other parties active in rural areas. In addition, the relevance for the target groups identified in the external communication strategy will be considered, as this involves a more focused identification of the main target audiences. We will look into how relevant the objectives of the CAP information policy are for the aforementioned target groups, i.e. how well the objectives correspond to the needs of the groups and address the prominent challenges.

Judgement criteria

To a large extent if:

- At least 70% of target groups surveyed find different information measures relevant and interesting.
- At least 70% of target groups surveyed agree on various positive aspects of relevance in the context of the information policy on the CAP.
- Positive change (increased in percentage points) identified in survey answers when compared with the previous evaluation.
- Desk research shows that audiences defined in Article 45 and the external communication strategy are targeted and reached.

Indicators [information sources]	<p><u>1. General:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the objectives of CAP information measures are in line with Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, communication on 'The CAP towards 2020' [desk research] <p><u>2. Media networking:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Ag-Press network members who said that different activities (study trips, seminars, portal) are relevant/interesting to them [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Percentage of Ag-Press network members who said that they made new contacts during the different activities / that meeting colleagues was a valuable professional experience [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Percentage of Ag-Press network members who said they had received new/useful information through the network activities [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Percentage of Ag-Press network members who claim that developments in the CAP are covered sufficiently in specialised agricultural media in their country [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Percentage of Ag-Press network members who claim that explaining the CAP to the readers of specialised agricultural media is relatively easy [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Percentage of Ag-Press network members who would consider contacting DG AGRI staff / SPP as a source of information for their stories [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Comparison of survey responses with the results of the survey from the previous evaluation [survey, desk research] <p><u>3. Web-based:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of target groups surveyed/interviewed who agree that the information on the DG AGRI website and social media accounts is relevant/interesting [surveys, interviews, case study on the website (usability testing, web survey)] <p><u>4. Events:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the interviewees agree that different aspects of the events they visited are relevant to them [interviews, case study on events] Percentage of surveyed stakeholders who agree that different aspects of the events they visited are relevant/interesting [survey of stakeholders] Percentage of surveyed stakeholders who agree that they have gained new/important information during events [survey of stakeholders] <p><u>5. Grants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data evidence from grant projects indicating their relevance to the target groups [case studies on grants, desk research] Percentage of grant recipients who state that their organisation would not have chosen to implement the project or parts of it without funding from DG AGRI [survey of grant applicants] Percentage of grant recipients who agree that with less funding from DG AGRI, the project would have been implemented on a smaller scale
---	---

	<p>or without focusing on CAP-related issues [survey of grant applicants]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of grant applicants who said that the opportunity to participate in this call for proposals is important to them; differences between successful and unsuccessful applicants [survey of grant applicants] Percentage of grant applicants who said that the opportunities to receive funding from this grant scheme are fairly well known among potential applicants in their country [survey of grant applicants] Reasons for applying, including the relevance of experience or the objectives of the call [survey of grant applicants] Comparison of survey responses with the results of the survey from the previous evaluation [survey of grant applicants, desk research]
ESQ 9. To what extent do the activities of the information policy on the CAP meet the needs of the European citizens?	
Content of the question	<p>This question focuses on the relevance of actions taken, from the perspective of EU citizens. It aims to identify how the measures of the information policy on the CAP meet the needs of European citizens (the general public), in terms of addressing wider societal challenges and issues related to the field of the common agricultural policy.</p>
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 70% of citizens surveyed agree that the information measures on the CAP are focused on addressing existing societal issues. At least 70% of Ag-Press network members surveyed agree that issues relevant to the CAP are covered sufficiently in the national and regional media, and that explaining CAP-related issues to citizens is relatively easy. Desk research (including Eurobarometer) shows that the objectives of the information measures on the CAP are focused on addressing existing societal issues.
Indicators [information sources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of citizens surveyed who agree that the information measures on the CAP are focused on addressing existing societal issues [public consultation] Percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who say that CAP-related issues relevant to the general public are covered sufficiently in the national and regional media of their country [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] Percentage of Ag-Press network members surveyed who say that explaining CAP-related issues to the general audience of the national and regional media is relatively easy [survey of Ag-Press network, case study on Ag-Press] The extent to which the measures of the information policy on the CAP correspond to existing societal challenges and needs, based on a detailed analysis of CAP information policy actions in the context of existing data (statistical and other data from desk research) on the situation: information asymmetry, information accessibility, etc. [desk research, interviews]

Coherence

The criterion of coherence aims to evaluate the extent to which an intervention is coherent (consistent) internally and externally. Internal coherence refers to comparability across the whole package of the information policy on the CAP, namely the different measures

implemented under the umbrella of the information policy on the CAP.¹²³ Meanwhile, external coherence involves examining the consistency of the intervention in relation to other EU interventions, as well as information and communication on the CAP through the Member States, stakeholder networking and peer learning. Below, we provide the operationalisation of the internal (question 13) and external (questions 10-12) coherence questions.

ESQ 10. To what extent is the information policy on the CAP coherent with the communication policy of the European Commission as a whole?	
Content of the question	This question aims to evaluate whether the information policy on the CAP is coherent and works well together with the communication policy of the European Commission. Namely, we will analyse the extent to which these two policies (aim) to achieve common objectives and/or work as complementary actions.
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 70% of target groups surveyed did not notice any contradictory information about the CAP between DG AGRI campaigns and corporate communication campaigns. • Desk research and interviews show that the information policy and corporate communication policy are complementary. • Desk research shows that corporate communication campaigns reflect the issues addressed by the information policy, as defined in the external communication strategy.
Indicators [information sources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who noticed corporate communication campaigns from the European Commission on CAP-related topics [survey of stakeholders] • Percentage of stakeholders surveyed who noticed conflicting information about the CAP between DG AGRI campaigns and the European Commission's corporate communication campaigns [survey of stakeholders] • The measures of the CAP information policy are in line with and aim to achieve similar goals to those identified in the communication policy of the European Commission [desk research, interviews] • There are no contradictions or approaches that might cause inefficiencies between the CAP information policy and the communication policy of the EC [desk research, interviews] • Issues relevant to the information policy are reflected in the main corporate communication campaigns [desk research]
ESQ 11. To what extent is the policy coherent with the information policy on related EU policies such as regional, health, trade and environmental policies?	
Content of the question	This evaluation study question aims to assess the extent to which the information policy on the CAP is coherent with the information policies on the regions, health, trade and environmental issues. We will analyse the extent to which the information policy on the CAP is consistent with each of these four policies (regions, health, trade, the environment). We will study if these policies have similar/complementary objectives and form beneficial synergies.

¹²³ European Commission, 'Guidelines on evaluation and fitness checks', *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Chapter VI, Brussels, 2017, pp. 50-66.

Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research and interviews reveal that the information policy on the CAP duplicates or has synergies with the objectives/actions of the information policies on the regions, health, trade and the environment • Desk research and interviews show that the measures of the CAP information policy are in line with and aim to achieve similar goals to those identified in the strategic documents and initiatives of DG REGIO (e.g. regional Policy priorities for 2014-2020), DG SANTE (e. g. the third health programme), DG TRADE (e.g. the 'Trade for all' strategy) and DG ENV (e.g. the sustainable development strategy).
Indicators [information sources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of synergies comparing each of four policies to the information policy on the CAP (i.e. in what ways are the objectives of the different policies complementary) [desk research, interviews] • Absence of contradictions or approaches that might cause inefficiencies between the CAP information policy and regional, health, trade and environmental information policies [desk research, interviews] • Perceptions of stakeholders (mainly EC officials) regarding the extent to which each of the four policies is coherent with the information policy on the CAP [interviews]
ESQ 12. To what extent is the policy coherent with other information actions on the CAP like those of Rural Development policy (e.g. European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI)), and the agricultural markets (EU Market Observatories), including at the level of Member States?	
Content of the question	<p>This question examines the extent to which the measures of the information policy on the CAP are coherent with other information actions under the CAP umbrella, namely the policies of the European Network for Rural Development, the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, and the agricultural markets (EU Market Observatories). We will also place a strong focus on the level of the Member States. Because the Member States have a significant budget allocated to the communication on the CAP, it is especially important to assess whether these efforts are truly in line with the objectives of the information policy and the messages that DG AGRI seeks to promote.</p>
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research and interviews show that the information policy on the CAP duplicates or has synergies with the objectives/actions of other CAP information policies. • Desk research reveals that the measures of the CAP information policy are in line with and aim to achieve similar goals to those identified in the strategic documents of other CAP policies. • Desk research and case studies show that communication actions implemented by the Member States contribute towards the strategic objectives of DG AGRI communication.
Indicators [information sources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of synergies comparing each of the policies to the information policy on the CAP [desk research, interviews]. • Absence of contradictions or approaches that might cause inefficiencies between the CAP information policy and other CAP policies. • Perceptions of stakeholders (mainly EC officials) regarding the extent to which each of the policies is coherent with the information policy on the CAP [desk research, interviews] • Evidence from case studies and mapping point to synergies between

	communication by Member States and DG AGRI's external communication strategy; general objectives of the information policy [desk research, country case studies]
ESQ 13. To what extent are the components of the information policy, notably the communication strategy, the annual action plans and their operational objectives, the co-financed measures and the activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative consistent with each other?	
Content of the question	This question aims to identify the extent to which the measures of the information policy on the CAP are internally coherent. We will aim to assess the extent to which the actions/objectives of each of the four components of the CAP information policy are consistent and complementary.
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research and case studies show that synergies are identified between the four components of the information policy on the CAP, i.e. different parts of the policy contribute to the achievement of policy objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The activities outlined in the action plans (including grant projects and the Commission's own initiatives) contribute to the objectives of the policy defined in the external communication strategy; they cover topics / convey messages identified in the strategy. ◦ The external communication strategy is implemented in line with Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013. • Desk research and case studies show that there are no contradictions or approaches that might cause inefficiencies among different CAP information policy measures.
Indicators [information sources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of synergies between the four CAP information policy components: all topics, messages, target audiences defined in strategic documents are covered by the activities implemented [desk research, various case studies] • Absence of contradictions or inefficient approaches [desk research, various case studies] • Perceptions of stakeholders (mainly DG AGRI officials and successful grant applicants) regarding the extent to which the four components of the CAP information policy are coherent with each other [desk research, interviews, various case studies]

EU Added value

The EU added value criterion should look into the additional value (impact) that can reasonably be attributed to the EU intervention. Here, we will aim to assess the value that is in addition to the value that would have derived from interventions at regional or national levels.¹²⁴ In many cases, the criterion on EU added value brings together evidence of other

¹²⁴ European Commission, 'Guidelines on evaluation and fitness checks', *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Chapter VI, Brussels, 2017, pp. 50-66.

criteria, presenting arguments on causalities and providing conclusions.¹²⁵

ESQ 14. To what extent has the information policy on the CAP, both through co-financed measures and through activities implemented at the Commission's own initiative, provided EU added value?	
Content of the question	This question assesses the changes (impacts) that can be attributed to the information policy on the CAP rather than to any other parallel actions and factors. We will also look at four types of effect in assessing the added value: volume effects, scope effects, role effects, and process effects.
Judgement criteria	<p>To a large extent if different research methods show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recognition of the CAP, its presence and objectives are more prominent in countries where co-financed and direct activities by the EC were implemented, compared with those countries that were not targeted, and the differences cannot be explained by actions implemented by the Member States. • Co-financed measures would not have been implemented due to a lack of funding, if they had not been financed by the EC. • Changes (impacts) made by the information measures would not have been achieved by interventions only at regional/national level. • Evidence of volume, scope, role and process effects is found.
Indicators [information sources]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume effects, e.g. co-funding attracted from stakeholder organisations to communicate on the CAP; a number of people from target audiences reached that could not have been reached in other ways; increased CAP awareness in MS specifically targeted by DG AGRI actions; or the extent to which the information policy on the CAP achieved its objectives and had an impact, and the extent to which this impact can reasonably be attributed to EU intervention [conclusions based on the data collection and analysis activities carried out] • Scope effects, e.g. unique types of groups reached (national communication rarely involves networking and peer learning across borders; communication with EU stakeholders supported the development of EU-wide consensus on CAP reform); unique messages (European dimension of the CAP while national communication often fails to mention CAP is an EU policy); or the perception of the stakeholders / Ag-Press network as to whether the measures of the information policy on the CAP are unique, and the key elements of such uniqueness identified [conclusions based on the data collection and analysis activities carried out] • Role effects, e.g. innovation and transfer of ideas through the exchange of good practices during networking with media and stakeholders [conclusions based on the data collection and analysis activities carried out] • Process effects, e.g. learning and capacity-building effects in participating organisations, continued communication about the CAP even after the completion of grant projects [conclusions based on the data collection and analysis activities carried out]

¹²⁵ European Commission, 'Guidelines on evaluation and fitness checks', *Commission Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines*, Chapter VI, Brussels, 2017, pp. 50-66.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service: – by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls), – at the following standard number: +32 22999696, or – by email via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (<http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en>) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.



Publications Office
of the European Union

doi: 10.2762/9812
ISBN 978-92-76-23142-4