



Rome
6 & 7 March 2013

The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (Under the guidance of DG AGRI – Unit L4)

Good Practice Workshop

Specific challenges in using common RD indicators at regional level



Introduction >>>

This workshop took place on 6 and 7 March 2013 in Rome and was hosted by the *Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria* – INEA in collaboration with the *Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali* of Italy. 59 representatives (10 countries) from the Evaluation Expert Committee, Managing Authorities, evaluators, data providers and the European Commission (EC) participated with the aim to

- Assess the **availability of regional data/information** for common RD indicators used in evaluation of rural development policy;
- Discuss the **feasibility and transferability of appropriate approaches** to bridge the data gaps in regional RDPs.

Main focus >>>

Use of indicators to better understand the territory and the reasons for the actions proposed in the programme

The common indicators are used to develop RDP strategies and to monitor and evaluate the effects of rural development policy. The impact of this policy in the specific socio-economic and environmental context of the country or region and its contribution to the CAP and EU objectives is assessed with indicators (impact and context) used to describe the policy context.

In this programming period, the *ex post* evaluations of the RDPs in 2015 will assess the net effects of rural development policy using the impact indicators. The baseline and final values for all these indicators will be one of the most important prerequisites for carrying out a good evaluation.

For the next programming period (2014-2020), the impact indicators are included in the set of context indicators which will be used in conducting the SWOT analysis and needs assessment, which form the basis for developing the RDP strategy. Context and impact indicators will also be used in the later assessment of the RDP impacts and contributions to the CAP objectives and the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

To fulfil these functions, baseline values are required at the starting point of the RDP implementation, and updated values will be required for the subsequent assessment of impacts: in 2017/2018 to allow analysis for the enhanced 2019 Annual Implementation Report - AIR (Article 44(4) CPR), and a final value for 2021/22 to be used in the *ex post* evaluations to be completed by December 2023 (Articles 50 CPR and 85 RDR).

In practice, context indicators should

- Give a comprehensive picture of the territory;
- Reveal the particular characteristics of the territory;
- Feed through into the design of the RDP, influencing the construction of intervention logic;
- Use the most recent data.

Compared to the current period, a reduced set of Common Context Indicators (CCI) allows Managing Authorities for the next period to concentrate on developing more programme-specific indicators.

Programme-specific indicators are needed to:

- Complete the territory description and address specificities;
- Describe issues for which data for common indicators is not available;
- Underpin the SWOT, needs assessment, strategy, and intervention logic in the specific regional context.

Data for CCI is available from official statistical sources such as Eurostat, FADN, etc. at least at national level, although not always available at lower territorial levels. This represents a specific challenge for Member States with regional RDPs which have to provide indicator values at RDP-level. Furthermore, enhancing the data availability at regional level is also an important concern for all Member States that aim to include regional specificities in their national RDPs.

The EC will provide data at national level for the full CCI set (with the exception of HNV farming). The estimation of the extent of HNV farming is the responsibility of the Member State/Managing Authority. The provision of data at territorial level for regional RDPs, for those indicators for which the EC does not have access to regional data, is the responsibility of the Member State/Managing Authority. In some cases, regional data corresponding to the definition of the Common Context Indicator will be available, and in these cases it should be used. Where such data is not available, proxy indicators should be used as an alternative.



Reduced set of Common Context Indicators: availability of data at regional level

Indicators for socio-economic and rural situation

- Refer to the needs related mainly to RD priority 6
- Set the baseline for the following impact indicators
GDP/capita
Poverty rate
Employment rate

Annual data for all indicators is available in Eurostat at both national and regional levels (including breakdown for rural areas).

BUT

Regional data broken down by economic branches (agriculture, forestry, food industry) is being requested from EUROSTAT

Indicators for agriculture

- Refer to the needs related to RD priorities 2 and 3
- Set the baseline for the following impact indicator:
Agricultural income and productivity

Data for all indicators is available in Eurostat at national and regional levels.

BUT

In the Farm Structure Survey, data is not collected annually (2010, 2013, and 2016).

Gaps in regional data for 2 indicators (10 - *Agricultural entrepreneurial income* and 11 - *Agricultural factor income*).

Indicators for environment / climate

- Refer to the needs related to RD priorities 4 and 5
- Set the baseline for the following impact indicators:
Farm Bird Index (FBI)
High Nature Value (HNV)
Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture
Water abstraction from agriculture
Water quality and soil erosion

Both national and regional data is currently available for 8 indicators (some gaps may exist); variable periodicity in providing data.

BUT

No regional data for 7 indicators (which also may show gaps in national data); variable periodicity.

Methodological problems/issues for 4 indicators.

Questions & answers >>>

Will data for Common Context Indicators be provided by the EC at national/regional level?

The EC intends to provide to the Member States data for proposed Common Context Indicators for which information is available in EU data sources at national level (with the exception of HNV). For most indicators, data will also be provided NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 level.

What is the comparative function of indicators? Can proxies be compared between different RDPs?

The Common Context Indicators aggregate and compare information at EU level. These indicators have a common definition and therefore a common meaning. Direct comparability of proxies and programme-specific indicators will not be possible. However this should not be an issue as long as they are defined in the programme and used for describing specificities of particular RDPs. The main idea is to capture the trend within RDPs.

What flexibility do MS have in using Common Context Indicators in the SWOT and needs assessment?

By reducing the common set of context indicators, the EC intends to give more space, resources and scope to allow MS to use their own programme-specific indicators. When conducting the SWOT and needs assessment, the set of common indicators has to be used, since they are fundamental for the description of the territory (population, employment, etc.). Programme-specific indicators need to be used in order to capture the specificities of the RDP territory in a satisfactory manner.

How to use Common Context Indicators for thematic sub-programmes?

The same steps apply for thematic sub-programmes as for full programmes; this implies that data is needed to describe the geographical area in which the thematic sub-programme is implemented. This justifies the interventions proposed within that area.

How to collect data at sub-regional level (rural/urban split)?

For the next programming period, the number of indicators where there is a rural/urban split has been reduced. For those with a rural/urban split, data is either already available or available at NUTS 3 level, so that it allows the calculation. For RDPs using a specific definition of rural territory, programme-specific indicators should be used where possible.

How to deal with outdated data for the Common Context Indicators ?

At the moment of the situation analysis, SWOT and needs assessment, the latest available data has to be used as data for 2013 is not yet available. When available, the baseline values should be updated. The data in Eurostat comes from the MS but the validation process is long and more recent data may be available in the MS. By all means the latest available data should always be used.

Why do we only talk about context indicators and not the whole set of common RD indicators?

Impact indicators are included in the Common Context Indicators. Data availability for output and result indicators, including those used for target setting and the performance framework is much less of a concern as it comes directly out of programme implementation.

What is the date for setting up values for target indicators? 2020 or 2023?

Expenditures for the next programming period will go beyond 2020. Targets are set-up in relation to resources allocated for the programming period regardless how long it takes to spend it.

Two national case studies from Italy and Spain and one regional case from Azores (Portugal) showed the use of common indicators (context and impact), the main challenges, the approaches for data collection, the lessons learnt as well as the remaining open issues.



ITALY
HNV, FBI,
GROSS NUTRIENT BALANCE

SPAIN
HNV, FBI,
WATER QUALITY

AZORES (PT)
ENVIRONMENTAL AND AGRICULTURAL INDICATORS

MAIN CHALLENGES CONCERNING REGIONAL DATA

- Data is not available at regional level particularly for environmental indicators.
- Regions implement different methodological solutions for data collection which hampers comparability of results among regions.
- Lack of long time series of data for environmental indicators.

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- Regions implement different methodological solutions for data collection which hampers comparability of results among regions.
- Insufficient disaggregation of statistical data for lower territorial levels (rural/ urban) and by sectors.

- Data is not available at regional level particularly for environmental and agricultural indicators.
- Azores and continent (PT) implement different methodological solutions for data collection which hampers comparability among both regions.
- Insufficient disaggregation of statistical data for lower territorial levels (rural/ urban) and by sector.

APPROACHES FOR DATA COLLECTION

- The leading role for data collection is in the hands of the National Rural Network (NRN);

- Ministry of Agriculture coordinates data collection through ad-hoc studies.

- Creation of a Monitoring Committee to include Azores' forest related data into the national forest inventory report.
- Implementation of proxies when data is not available for a particular indicator.
- Establish protocol agreements between responsible entities (e.g. environmental agencies, water agencies, etc.) and main data providers, under the coordination of RDP MA.



SOLUTIONS ADOPTED IN 2007-2013

- The NRN:
- Provides technical support to MAs and evaluators in data collection.
 - Acquires information in data and methodologies through workshops, conferences and research studies.
 - Facilitates knowledge sharing among main RD stakeholders (MAs, evaluators, data providers, etc.).
 - Activates collaboration and partnership with relevant stakeholders to:
 - a) develop methods for data collection
 - b) provide data on problematic RD indicators
 - Identifies governance solutions for data collection.
 - Identifies expert/focal points in specific topics.

- The Ministry of Agriculture:
- Coordinates the improvement of statistical systems relevant for RD with other Government Directorates.
 - Conducts ad-hoc studies to collect data for RD indicators (HNV, FBI, and Water Quality) in collaboration with other Directorates and in partnership with NGOs (e.g. SEO Birdlife) and research institutes (e.g. universities).

- The Regional Government of Azores:
- Raises awareness among main stakeholders on the importance of RD indicators.
 - Promotes meetings between MAs, evaluators and regional statistical services regarding data availability for RD indicators.
 - Organizes institutional meetings to define governance structures for data collection (responsibilities).
 - Collects studies and articles on relevant issues.
 - Participates in workshops (e.g. Good Practice Workshops organized by the Evaluation Helpdesk).



LESSONS LEARNT FOR 2014-2020

- Horizontal and vertical communication at regional, national and EU level plays an important role.
- A central authority should play the key role in coordinating data collection methods among regions, involving data providers and evaluators in discussions.
- The implementation of common methods of data collection for all regions which are built on existent experiences enhances efficiency and ensures the provision of consistent data series.
- Financial support is needed to update data on RD indicators.

- Ad-hoc studies are adequate to collect data on some indicators, e.g. FBI and pollution by nitrates, but more problematic in case of HNV and pollution by pesticides.
- Ad-hoc studies should use common methods for all regions, compatible with standard national methods.
- Ad-hoc studies are highly dependent on public funding. Therefore they cannot secure the continuity of data provision.
- Ad-hoc studies often show some delays in delivering results.

- It is challenging to provide:
 - a) Disaggregated data at lower territorial levels and by agricultural branches (agricultural indicators).
 - b) Data for certain environmental and agricultural indicators.



OUTLOOK ON NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD

- Regional MAs will have data available based on sound and common methodologies for all Common Context Indicators at the beginning of the programming period or alternatively:
 - Data will be provided at national level while allowing regions to implement programme-specific indicators for further details.
- Financial resources will be needed to address open issues regarding data collection for the HNV and Gross Nutrient Balance indicators.

- Common Context Indicators for which data is not available might not be used for regional RDPs, in order to avoid additional costs compared to national RDPs, where data is available.

- At the beginning of the programming period, data gaps will remain for 19 out of the 50 proposed Common Context Indicators, mainly for environmental and agricultural indicators.



Outcome of the open space discussions >>>



In working groups the participants discussed the identified challenges and possible solutions to overcome data gaps for RD indicators. Seven out of nine topics were selected for the discussions. Below you will find a summary of the outcomes per working group.

1. Using National Rural Networks (NRN) to improve the collection of regional RD data.

- NRN are considered as a good example to help bridging data gaps for RD indicators at regional level.
- MS with regional RDPs have the possibility to establish and finance the NRN Programmes using EAFRD funds.
- NRN can be used for carrying out monitoring and evaluation tasks including data collection for RD indicators, involving regional RDPs.
- NRN need sufficient capacities in terms of resources, technical knowledge and responsibilities.
- NRN at MS level can facilitate the screening and coordination of data providers at various levels (EC, MS, RDP) horizontally and vertically.
- The Evaluation Helpdesk at EU level is expected to coordinate evaluation stakeholders in the evaluation horizontally and vertically, e.g. via Good Practice Workshops.

2. Using coordination bodies to get data providers from different sectors together and provide better RD data.

- Various bodies (Monitoring Committee, Steering Group) can be used as coordinators.
- The coordination body has to be able to manage its own budget in order to finance the necessary activities.
- At EU level the coordination among evaluation and monitoring units and geographic desks within DG AGRI should also be enhanced.
- This approach can potentially be used to collect data for all types of indicators.

3. Using proxies to bridge data gaps for regional RDPs

- A proxy is an alternative measurement unit of a proposed Common Context Indicator (CCI) for which data is not available.
- The identification of an adequate proxy and a proper calculation method should ideally be conducted by the scientific community.
- It is suggested to consider the possibility for proxies to become permanent indicators, if they are more cost-effective than the proposed CCI.
- Communication concerning proxies should be improved at EU level.
- A list of indicative proxies should be elaborated by the EC.
- The main stakeholders (MA, evaluators, NGOs, researchers, Paying Agencies) should be involved when developing adequate proxies.
- Support and coordination is needed to facilitate the implementation of proxies.

Good Practice Workshop on "Using common RD Indicators at regional level" webpage, click [here](#)

4. Cost-effectiveness of data collection for RD indicators.

- Data collection systems which do not need additional adjustments and additional data collections can considerably reduce the costs.
- Cost-effectiveness can be achieved via:
 - Reducing the statistical burden on farmers;
 - Using administrative data and standardised application forms;
 - Ensuring open access to statistical database sources;
- Cost of data collection for the common RD indicators can be covered by the Technical Assistance measure.

5. Using context indicators in the programme design phase

- CCI are considered useful for comparisons among MS at EU level but their relevance is questioned in the description of the SWOT analysis for regional RDPs.
- The role of stakeholders in the development of the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment is considered very important.
- It is suggested that main trends in the SWOT could also be described in a qualitative way without CCI or with the programme-specific indicators. This is judged more relevant to the specific context of the regional RDP.
- For indicators without regional data, using proxies should be allowed. Once data collection problems are solved, original indicators should replace them later.

6. The use of context indicators for the assessment of impacts.

- A common set of context indicators (including impact indicators) should include baseline values updated across the programming period, to observe performance and effectiveness of the implemented measures.
- The same methodology of data collection should be applied across the EU.
- Data and indicator values alone are not sufficient for the assessment of impacts and do not replace evaluation.
- It stays unclear who will be responsible for the calculation of the impact indicators in the evaluation.
- Programme-specific indicators are used to show causal links within specific programme interventions.

7. The role of beneficiaries in data collection.

- Beneficiaries of the RDP often do not distinguish between policy and payment.
- There are several possibilities to collect data via beneficiaries
 - (a) Before the project starts
 - (b) After completion of the project
 - (c) Five years after completion of the project in case of area-based payments.
- The new proposal of the draft RDR sets up a strong legal basis for the type of data to be collected for monitoring and evaluation from beneficiaries.

The Evaluation Expert Network operates under the guidance of DG AGRI – Unit L4.

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

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