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Project of the month



CAP funds nurture the resilience of nutritional food supplies in Italy

Key aims of the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) include ensuring food security, nutrition, and public health, making sure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, sustainable food. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support is helping Member States achieve these aims and an Italian climate action project by the Società Agricola Terre Sabine shows how CAP can make this happen on the ground for the long term.

Europe's health, climate, and conflict crises underline the importance of food security and nutrition for EU citizens. CAP can help strengthen the autonomy of supplies of healthy plant-based foods including fruit and vegetables. One of many CAP examples of this is found in Italy's Lazio region where the nutritional, economic, and environmental value of cherry orchards has been protected by Rural Development Programme funds covering 80% of hail netting costs. Results of this [good practice](#) approach safeguard the security of healthy food supplies by adapting [fruit production](#) practices to better cope with extreme weather risks.

News



CAP strategic plans: observation letters

The European Commission has sent 'Observations letters' to 21 Member States who were among the first to submit their proposed CAP Strategic Plans.

These letters were sent to Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. They identify elements of the proposed plans that require further explanation, completion or adjustments before the Commission can approve them. Alongside the letters, the Commission has created an [overview of the content of the letters](#), which summarises the key elements of the first 19 proposed plans and the related observations which are made for each country.



Simplifying and strengthening geographical indications for food

New simplification measures are being proposed to strengthen and improve the existing system of [Geographical indications](#) (GIs). Revised GI procedures aim to boost the number of quality products, benefit rural economies, preserve natural resources, and protect the global reputation of EU food.

Member States' [GIs](#) provide high food quality standards and ensure that cultural, gastronomic, and local heritage is preserved and certified as authentic within the EU and across the world. [Revised GI proposals](#) published at the end of March plan to modernise and merge the different technical and procedural rules within a single simplified GI registration procedure for EU and non-EU applicants. Harmonisation is expected to increase GI attractiveness by reducing time periods between submission and registration of GI applications.



Food security crises: conflict, COVID, and climate

Member States' food security continues to suffer from shocks which the European Commission has committed to help tackle through a new eight-point international plan.

Launched in late March to support the United Nation's (UN) food security agenda, this EU set of [voluntary alliances](#) for collective action intends to help transform food systems to advance the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#). Topics include international networking of best practices in tackling food waste and nutrition issues, shifting production towards plant-based diets, and upscaling agro-ecology through local innovation, science, and knowledge. The UN also released information, at the end of March, of relevance to EU Member States about [impacts of the Ukraine war on food security](#) covering risks and recommendations - such as caution concerning spread of animal disease and the need to avoid introducing export barriers.



CAP-funded credit for solar powered irrigation

More than 40 Megawatt of new solar energy capacity for agri-food irrigation is planned through innovative financial instrument proposals for the CAP in Spain. This is being progressed by the [SolAqua Horizon project](#) which is focused on increasing Europe's share of renewable energy consumption through solar powered irrigation by the agri-food sector.

A core component of [SolAqua's](#) knowledge development and networking actions involve piloting new credit tools to facilitate market uptake of photovoltaic irrigation systems. The project's financial instrument tests will help support contributions to the [European Green Deal's Fit for 55 initiative](#) regarding reducing greenhouse gas emissions. SolAqua staff are keen to share their proposals and they invite CAP Managing Authorities to contact them for further information about their inspired use of CAP financing. They highlight the range of possibilities that CAP Managing Authorities can take advantage of from financial instruments - to help make public money go further and investing in climate action more affordable for the agri-food sector.



ENRD Thematic Groups and events

Our ENRD Thematic Groups continue to progress their work and new meetings of the members are being organised over the coming months.

The 2nd meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group on [Rural Proofing](#) is scheduled for 19 May. On 25 May our ENRD Thematic Group on [Making the seven LEADER principles work in practice for all LAGs under the CAP Strategic Plans](#) will continue their work. Members gather on 1 June for the next meeting of the Thematic Group on [Sustainability Agreements in the agri-food supply chain](#) and the [Carbon Farming Thematic Group](#) will meet again on 9 June. Stay up-to-date with these Thematic Groups through their [event webpages](#) which include [video recordings](#) from the main plenary presentations.

Other ENRD meetings in the pipeline include the [22nd National Rural Network's meeting](#) on 5 May, and 16 May is the date for the ENRD's [17th Rural Networks Steering Group](#).



CAP facts and figures analysis

Member States' contributions to the specific objectives of the new CAP are analysed and explained in a set of new country fact sheets available on the EU's Agri-food data portal.

A collection of informative graphs and figures have been produced for the new [analytical factsheets](#). These illustrated facts and figures provide an overview of the agricultural sector and rural development at EU and country levels based on the ten specific objectives and indicators used to measure the performance of the CAP.



Videos: social farming success stories from Belgium

'Social farming' and 'Green Care' farms have been growing in experience around Europe during recent CAP programming periods. Belgium's Walloon region is one area that is developing a critical mass of holistic expertise in this socio-economic and environmental field.

A series of [seven new videos](#) (in French with English subtitles) have been produced through assistance from the [Walloon Rural Network](#) and LEADER. These show how social farming in Belgium is providing multi-functional benefits supporting jobs in rural areas, through the creation of social services with environmental outcomes. You can also learn more from a [Festival of Social Agriculture](#) that is being organised on 30 April in Floreffe, Belgium.



Food security and climate action in the EU neighbourhood

Agriculture and rural development in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey will benefit from over €900 million from the European Commission for the period 2021-27. This will be used to help investments in agri-food sector competitiveness, environment management, climate action and improved attractiveness of rural areas.

Food security, climate action, alignment with EU standards and increased resilience of agriculture are among driving factors behind this aid package from the European Commission instrument for pre-accession assistance for rural development ([IPARD](#)). It is expected to leverage a total investment of over €2 billion when combined with national public and private contributions. The programmes are designed to contribute also to the objectives of the [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#) and the [European Green Deal](#) more broadly. This will be done for example through EU support for asset modernisation, manure and waste management, renewal and efficient energy, organics and environmental technologies, innovation, and climate. A [press release](#) details the IPARD measures involved.



Carbon removal certification: call for evidence

Carbon farming stakeholders are invited to participate in the European Commission's consultation on a framework for the certification of carbon removals.

Our [ENRD Thematic Group on Carbon Farming](#) held their [first meeting](#) in March, during which [DG CLIMA](#) highlighted the EU's [Call for evidence for an impact assessment concerning certification of carbon rules](#). The consultation is aimed at entities delivering carbon removals, including land managers, farmers, foresters, and industrial companies operating the capture and storage of carbon. It also concerns academia and all potential purchasers of carbon removals, including companies in the food processing sector and digital technology sector, as well as public administrations in Member States interested in increasing carbon removals. Other groups of stakeholders are those in existing voluntary carbon removal markets, e.g. certification bodies or financial agents traditionally supporting the land sector. This call for evidence is open for feedback until 2 May 2022.

In other news about carbon farming, Member States' [agricultural ministers have adopted conclusions on carbon farming](#), based on the parts of the Commission's 'sustainable carbon cycles' communication that deal with agriculture and forestry.

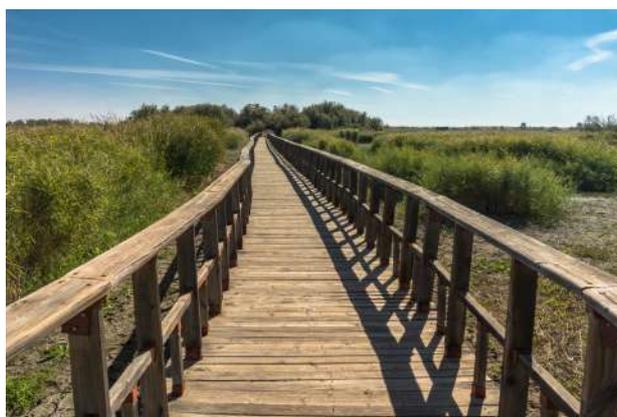


Strengthening social capital in Ireland's

countryside

LEADER's capacity for inspiring rural innovation and building social capital in rural Europe is personified by an Irish cooperation project example. This takes advantage of digital opportunities to network local people around common rural development interests.

The www.innovating.ie project covers six LAG areas along the EU border region with Northern Ireland. It provides an interactive online tool for rural residents to highlight their own priorities, interests, challenges, and ideas that could be advanced through rural development projects. People first advertise their proposals on the website in a Challenge Bank. Then, if enough local people collectively endorse the proposal submitted, a second stage involves capacity building training being arranged to develop a project that could implement the proposal. Training needs identified already include issues around minimising food waste, habitat conservation, and social services. Ireland's example shows how LEADER support strengthens and sustains social capital in rural Europe.

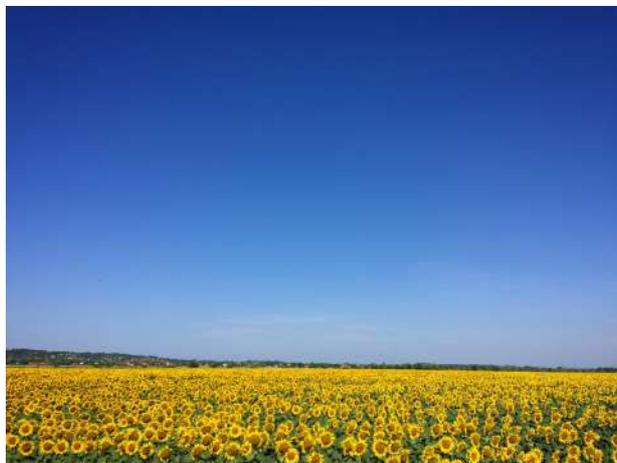


Transition pathway for tourism

Together with the EU tourism community, the European Commission has launched the [Transition Pathway for Tourism](#) - a roadmap for the industry and destinations, a blueprint of European tourism that is greener, fit for the digital age and future challenges and ultimately more resilient and competitive.

The co-creation process has been inclusive, working with the industry, public national, regional and local authorities, social partners and other stakeholders, including also in rural areas. Tourism ecosystem has been the first to launch this pathway to accelerate the green and digital transition among the 14 industrial ecosystems ([European industrial strategy](#)).

To implement the pathway together, tourism stakeholders are invited to reflect on what could be their concrete commitment towards the transition of EU tourism by 2030 through an [online survey](#), open until the end of May. The promotion of rural tourism in line with the EU's long-term vision for rural areas is important for this transformation.



Agricultural land rents: comparative data

Many EU farmers rent their land, as either a short- or long-term business decision, and new Eurostat data for arable land and/or permanent grassland rents in 2020 reveal the variations that exist for different farmers in different Member States.

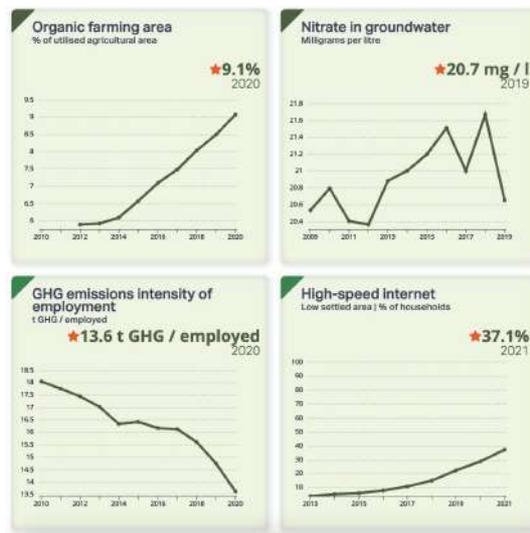
[Eurostat's latest data](#) for arable land and/or permanent grass land rents show that (for EU regions which data are available) renting this type of agricultural land was cheapest in Sweden's central Norrland and Upper Norrland regions (both €34 per year). The highest rent prices for arable land and/or permanent grassland in 2020 were found in Italy's Friuli-Venezia Giulia region (on average €1 714 per hectare), where it was more than twice the country's average.s transformation.



EU Pollinators Initiative: consultation

Have your say on strengthening actions to reverse the [decline of pollinating insects](#) through a [public consultation](#) on the revision of the [EU Pollinators Initiative](#).

This consultation is seeking opinions from a wide range of stakeholders. These specifically include farmers, foresters and other land managers, beekeepers, farm advisers, businesses in the agro-industry and food and beverage industry, NGOs dealing with environmental protection, public-sector authorities and bodies at local, regional and national level, in particular those dealing with the environment, agriculture, public health, urban development and spatial planning as well as experts focused on pollinators and pollination, agronomy, ecotoxicology and ecology. [Have your say](#) on the consultation before the 9 June deadline.



European Green Deal Statistics

You can follow progress with the European Green Deal through a new set of data charts provided by the European Commission. These give an overview of 26 indicators divided into three main topics: Reducing our climate impact; Protecting our planet & health; and Enabling a green and just transition.

This latest data is presented through a series of [new interactive visualisation tools](#) showing statistics relevant for the [European Green Deal](#), which is one of the six [European Commission priorities for 2019 – 24](#). The tool aims to help users of European data discover the statistical indicators in an attractive and intuitive way.



EU Ecolabel tourist accommodations

Synonymous with environmental excellence, the EU Ecolabel is awarded to products and services that meet very strict environmental standards throughout their life cycle.

In the [tourism](#) sector, over 500 hotels and campsites across Europe and also its rural areas have been awarded the EU Ecolabel. These environmentally conscious tourism operators are committed to reducing water consumption, plastic waste and greenhouse gas emissions while you are travelling.



How can forests help reduce reliance on fossil fuels

On 21 March the [10th International Forestry Day](#) celebrated and raised awareness of the importance of all types of forests. The theme for 2022, chosen each year by Collaborative Partnership on Forests, was 'Forests and sustainable production and consumption.'

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently published the [report](#) that brings together the most up-to-date knowledge on the role of forest products in the global bioeconomy and the possibilities for wood-based products to replace fossil-based and greenhouse gas-intensive products. According to this report, switching from fossil-based products to renewable wood-based products can help mitigate climate change and can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Podcast: EU Organic Awards

The new EU Organic Awards are featured in this month's Food for Europe podcast from DG AGRI which interviews different actors in the organic value chain including leading organic producers and suppliers.

Episode 14 of the [podcast series](#) also includes policy contributions from Janusz Wojciechowski - Commissioner for Agriculture, Peter Schmidt - President of the European Economic and Social Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment section, and Uroš Brežan - Mayor of the small Slovenian town of Tolmin and representing the European Committee of the Regions.



Rural services in the Nordic countries

The Nordic Thematic Group for Green and Inclusive Rural Development has been [analysing essential service needs](#) for different types of societal groups and rural areas. The aim is to better understand and define both demand and solutions to challenges of rural service provision.

Access to libraries and pharmacies emerges among the biggest differences between Nordic rural and urban regions. Common challenges identified for rural regions include the limited availability of public sector funds to cover all the service needs and this inhibits capacity to attract skilled workers. Digital solutions are seen as a potential way forward in rural service provision, as well as in employment and education. Appreciation of the importance of monitoring is considered key to sustaining the right level and model of place-based service delivery for rural services.



Honey bees: protection study

A new study about the risks to honey bees from the parasitic mite *Varroa destructor* provide important results that will help contribute to reducing the treatment of bees with chemical and pharmaceutical products.

The [study](#) was the largest assessment on honey bee selection ever conducted in Europe. It explored the possibilities for increasing the resistance of commercial bees to the Varroa mite by selective breeding. It also analysed the ways to improve beekeepers' access to resistant material. [Conclusions](#) demonstrate that selection on Varroa tolerance can be efficient and detail how breeding structures should be established.



Brain drain: consultation

Several Member States and regions are facing population decline, caused by factors such as low fertility rates and net emigration. The emigration of skilled workers, referred to as 'brain drain', undermines the growth potential of the concerned regions.

A [public call for evidence](#) is open until 22 June 2022 on this brain drain topic. Findings will help prepare information to analyse the various drivers and long-term consequences of brain drain, as well as potential solutions to stop or even reverse it. This may include a territorial analysis identifying the impacted regions and an assessment of the sectors and professional activities most exposed to brain drain (such as health professionals, scientists, and researchers).

Publications



Rural Proofing: ENRD Thematic Group meeting report

A highlights report of the 1st meeting of the Thematic Group on Rural Proofing is now [published](#). Our [online meeting](#) networked knowhow about lessons learned, success factors and challenges emerging from rural proofing experiences in different countries. Discussions also focused on how to design effective rural proofing mechanisms tailored to specific contexts and how to apply them in practice at different administrative levels.



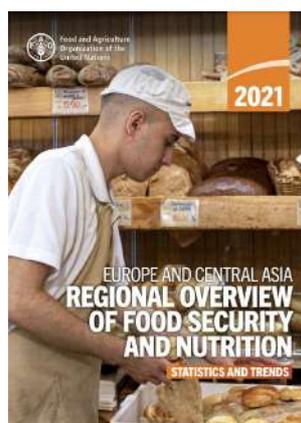
ENRD Policy Insight: Deploying data as digital soil

Data is the topic for our latest [Policy Insight](#) quick-read publication. Data has been described as 'the new oil' for the 21st century due to its potential to drive modern economies. This remains increasingly valid in rural Europe where data can be called the 'new soil' because of its significance for supporting existing prosperity and



Food and feed safety vulnerabilities in the circular economy

The European Food Safety Authority has published a new review of [circular economy practices within all stages of the food and feed production chain in Europe](#). Four broad macro areas are identified: primary production of food and feed; reducing industrial/manufacturing/processing waste; reducing food and feed waste in wholesale, food retail, catering, and households; and reducing food and feed packaging waste.



FAO: Europe & Central Asia Statistics & Trends 2021

EU level and Member State data is provided in the [Europe and Central Asia Statistics and Trends 2021 report](#) published by the FAO. Its content illustrates trends and progress of UN Sustainable Development Goals concerning access to food and nutrition by all. Unlike in previous years, this edition of the FAO publication only covers analyses of the statistics and trends, without an overarching theme or special analysis of the drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition.



Rural Development Programme projects and practices

See our most recent [project and practice examples](#) from the Member States' Rural Development Programmes.

Past Events

Rural Revitalisation:

Forum for the Future of

ENRD Thematic Group

Our ENRD Thematic Group on Rural Revitalisation's [2nd meeting](#) took place at the end of March. It built on progress made by Thematic Group members during their initial meetings and follow-up work, providing a space for exchange on the key enabling factors that support rural revitalisation. Population loss, ageing, and a lack of economic opportunities were a particular focus for sharing experiences and ideas. Other networking took place regarding success factors for the future Rural Revitalisation Platform and design of rural revitalisation policies more generally. Next steps will involve using the Thematic Group's findings to help inform the [Rural Pact Conference](#) outcomes on 15-16 June 2022.

Agriculture 2022

This year's annual conference of the [Forum for the Future of Agriculture](#) involved a synthesis of high-level and applied discussions on the future of European and world agriculture. Food security and environmental security were the main topics engaging delegates during the March meeting. Dedicated sessions included carbon farming, regenerative agriculture, true cost of food, nature-based solutions, and many more agri-food subject areas with CAP relevance. A library of [videos is available from the conference sessions](#).

TerraNova: a digital atlas of Europe

The European Landscape Learning Initiative organised an [awareness raising event](#) last month about the TerraNova project's mission to present a digital atlas that can help appraise scenarios of future land management. It does this by indicating areas of Europe with positive potential for ecological restoration (based on rewilding principles and other sustainable landscape management practices). [Terranova](#) aims to make the practice of landscape management more tangible with latest insights in scenarios and guidelines on land management practices, strategic guidelines and instruments and tools for decision making.

Events

30 April 2022

Festival of social agriculture

Organiser:

Wallon Rural Network

[Find out more](#)

2-6 May 2022

XV World Forestry Congress

Organiser:

FAO

[Find out more](#)

3 May 2022

Technology and innovation in mountain youth entrepreneurship

Organiser:

Youth4Mountains

[Find out more](#)

5 May 2022

22nd NRN meeting

10-13 May 2022

Regional Conference for Europe

12-14 May 2022

International congress of mountain and steep slopes

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

Organiser:
Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United
Nations

[Find out more](#)

viticulture

Organiser:
CERVIM

[Find out more](#)

16 May 2022

**17th Rural Networks Steering
Group meeting**

Organiser:
DG AGRI

[Find out more](#)

17 May 2022

**Network to innovate: Farm
data and IT solutions**

Organiser:
Estonia and Finland NRNs

[Find out more](#)

19 May 2022

**2nd meeting of the ENRD
Thematic Group on Rural
Proofing**

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

24 May 2022

**2nd meeting of the ENRD
Thematic Group on Making
the seven LEADER principles
work in practice for all LAGs
under the CAP Strategic
Plans**

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

1 June 2022

**2nd meeting of the ENRD
Thematic Group on
Sustainability Agreements in
the agri-food supply chain**

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

9 June 2022

**2nd meeting of the ENRD
Thematic Group on Carbon
Farming**

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

13 June 2022

**Agriculture and Fisheries
Council**

Organiser:
Council of the EU

[Find out more](#)

15-16 June 2022

The Rural Pact conference

Organiser:
European Commission

[Find out more](#)

25-27 October 2022

**12th European mountain
convention**

Organiser:
Euromontana

[Find out more](#)

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