

The workshop explored how to ensure the most effective contribution of current RDPs and future CAP Strategic Plans to support the implementation of EU biodiversity policy, by encouraging dialogue and facilitating exchanges among the relevant agriculture and environmental actors involved in biodiversity conservation in rural Europe.

Through presentations and group discussions, the participants discussed how the CAP and Rural Development Programmes have been used to contribute to nature conservation goals over the past and current programming periods, aiming to ensure that appropriate measures for biodiversity conservation will be included in the 2021-2027 CAP Strategic Plans.

Event Information

Title: ENRD Workshop on Biodiversity and the CAP: working together to reach conservation goals

Date: 29 January 2019

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: Environment, forestry and farming organisations, national and regional agriculture and environmental authorities, EU institutions

Outcomes: Exchanges on current practices and lessons learned and recommendations for the inclusion of biodiversity conservation measures in the future CAP Strategic Plans

Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-biodiversity_en

Working together to achieve conservation goals

State of play at the European level

Vuyadin Kovacevic (DG ENV) focused his [presentation](#) on the EU Biodiversity Strategy, which aims, among others, to enhance the contribution of agriculture and forestry to biodiversity. The Strategy relies on the funding instruments available under both CAP Pillars, totalling around 85.2 billion EUR – almost 80% of the total expenditure on biodiversity across various EU policies. However, the 2015 mid-term review of the Strategy showed the need for further progress on Target 3 – sustainable agriculture and forestry.

Recommendations include earmarking expenditure, enhancing coordination and coherence of policies, raising awareness and fostering stakeholder cooperation. A new evaluation study will be published in 2020.

Krzysztof Sulima (DG AGRI) [provided](#) an overview of the current state of play of the 2014-2020 EAFRD contribution to the protection of biodiversity. Environmental sustainability is indispensable to ensure long-term economic and social sustainability (e.g. food security) and this should be reflected in the MSs' implementation choices of the CAP and clearly communicated to farmers. The EAFRD priority with the highest public planned expenditure is Priority 4 focused on preserving and enhancing ecosystems including biodiversity, landscape, water and soil (46 %); however, the status of biodiversity conservation continues to deteriorate. The future CAP proposal, further [explained](#) by Martin Scheele (DG AGRI), addresses this challenge. Three of its nine specific objectives refer to environment/climate, and its green architecture aims to provide MS with both a frame and financial incentives to contribute to those objectives. At the same time, this new green architecture offers MSs more flexibility to better address local needs and deliver more for the environment and climate while reducing administrative complexity and focusing on identifying and communicating better the policy's impacts and results rather than on compliance.



Inspiring biodiversity initiatives in European rural areas

Hannah Denniston (Dept. Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland) [presented](#) the Irish experience of integrating biodiversity objectives in the agricultural policy by drafting the Priority Action Framework (PAF) in parallel with the development of the GLAS (Green Low Carbon Agri-environment Scheme) and the European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs). This led to a suitable choice of agri-environmental measures and targeted actions for different habitats, as well as two LIFE projects. Tomy Tchatchou (Service Public de Wallonie, Belgium) [explained](#) that in Wallonia the teams in charge of managing the RDP and PAFs are in the same department. Having one single Minister and one single Directorate General (DGANRE) helps coherent decision-making on both agriculture and nature, facilitating internal and external communications and an integrated management approach.

From a stakeholder perspective, Harriet Bradley (BirdLife Europe) [pinpointed](#) that, while the formal involvement of environmental NGOs in Monitoring Committees has improved, their views are not always necessarily taken on board. Challenges include lack of capacity and funding, and lack of commitment from managing and environmental authorities to a real debate. On the other hand, Katrina Marsden ([BIOGEA](#) research project) suggested that often farmers choose the least environmentally valuable options because the EU-level rationale for greening measures is not translated well at the local level.

Outcomes and actions

The participants were divided into [parallel working groups](#), balanced in terms of countries and types of organisations represented. Based on past and present experiences, they discussed three key topics:

- **Stakeholder engagement** – mentioned as a key element by all the speakers – is particularly effective when all stakeholders are involved at all levels (thus benefitting from mutual learning) throughout the whole process, from policy design to implementation and monitoring. Potential challenges include a binary approach by administrations (i.e. separating biodiversity plans and RDPs) and the unequal participation of stakeholders, often due to lack of capacity/resources.
- **Policy design and delivery** benefit from a territorial approach, well-designed indicators, the involvement of farmers and foresters and the possibility for multiple revisions during the lifespan of the individual measures. Plans should also be ‘marketed’ well to farmers. Potential bottlenecks may derive from a (perceived or actual) conflict in eligibility rules between CAP Pillars, lack of focus on Natura 2000 sites and a contrast between long-term biodiversity results and the fact that farmers work and manage their land on an annual basis.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of CAP-funded schemes would benefit from improved data collection and better information on environmental impacts. The risks are that farmers perceive monitoring as ‘punitive’ and that the control system does not sufficiently account for environmental risks.

In further discussion tables, the participants proposed [must-have elements](#) for ensuring that biodiversity is properly included in the future CAP Strategic Plans. The proposals, discussed in the final panel, included:

- developing specific monitoring indicators based on improved data availability;
- flexible CAP Strategic Plans (developed involving farmers and other stakeholders) that allow for regional specificities, set clear biodiversity targets and are simple for the users;
- using PAFs as key tools for the design of CAP Strategic Plans;
- earmarking sufficient funding for biodiversity;
- considering requiring biodiversity proofing;
- ensuring a strict enforcement of enhanced conditionality;
- acknowledging the importance of HNV farming/farming in conservation areas and rewarding it.

