

Implementation plan for the evaluation of the Rural Network

The evaluation of the Rural Network is structured around the Network's goals. The baseline data for the evaluation comprises monitoring data (output indicators, Mavi) collected by the Rural Network Services. Other data is also available, compiled in the archives of the Rural Network Services, for use in the evaluation. The evaluation of the Rural Network is targeted at measures and activities funded from the technical support of the Rural Development Programme. The following table comprises the goals of the Rural Network, the questions aimed at evaluating the goals, and the data used in the evaluation.

Goal	Evaluation question	Specification of evaluation question	EU common Indicators	Other Indicators	Other data
Stakeholder participation in rural development increases	- Did the number of people participating in the Rural Network increase, and to what extent did stakeholder involvement improve qualitatively?	Participation in the Rural Network's activities	1. Number of events organised by the European Rural Development Network which rural network members have attended (output indicator, Hyrrä) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ number of events in which the rural network was actively involved 	2. Breakdown of the number of persons who attended the events organised by the Rural Network (Additional indicator, Network Services): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ by region ○ by background actor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ELY Centre ○ Leader action group ○ Finnish Forest Centre ○ Village Action Association of Finland ○ Rural business ○ Regional Council ○ Municipality/YTA ○ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry ○ Producer/entrepreneur organisation ○ Advisory organisation 	The feedback forms of the Rural Network's training events are used to study qualitative participation.

	<p>- To what extent did the Rural Network's tools (training service packages,...) increase the participation of new operators in the network's activities?</p> <p>- To what extent have the Rural Network's activities strengthened the regional networks for rural development?</p>	<p>Stakeholder participation in the implementation of the service packages</p> <p>Is there more activity within the Rural Network?</p> <p>New operators in the Rural Network</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ University/university of applied sciences/vocational school ○ Research institute ○ Youth organisation ○ Ministry of Employment and the Economy ○ Rural Policy Committee (YTR) ○ Forestry organisation ○ Environmental organisation ○ Ministry of the Environment ○ The Rural Development Programme for the Åland Islands ○ Other 	<p>Database of the Rural Network: organisers of service packages</p> <p>The development of participation is evaluated through network analysis.</p> <p>Database of the Rural Network: participants (<i>information on existing participants needed</i>)</p> <p>The development of regional networks is evaluated through network analysis.</p>
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<p>The quality of the Rural Development Programme's implementation, and their regional visibility in particular, are improved</p>	<p>○To what extent did the Rural Network's activities promote competence development at ELY Centres and in Leader action groups?</p> <p>- How much impact have the Rural Network's measures had on improving the implementation, that is to say better administration and/or better projects?</p> <p>- Did regional actors succeed in improving the regional visibility of the Rural Development Programme?</p> <p>-How much did the Rural Network's actions improve the flow of information between stakeholders and the authorities?</p>	<p>Co-operation, peer support and the dissemination of good governance practices among ELY Centres</p> <p>Co-operation, peer support and the dissemination of good governance practices among Leader action groups</p> <p>This means the actors involved in the ELY Centre's programme</p>	<p>1. Number of thematic and analytical exchanges of information carried out with the support of the Rural Network (output indicator, Hyrrä)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakdown of thematic working groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distribution and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results ○ Targeted at advisors and/or innovation support services ○ Leader, including co-operation - Breakdown of stakeholder negotiations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distribution and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results ○ Targeted at advisors and/or innovation support services ○ Leader, including co-operation - Breakdown of others (trainings, online forums): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distribution and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results ○ Targeted at advisors and/or innovation support services ○ Leader, including co-operation 	<p>2. Number of Rural Network measures with an impact on improving programme implementation (Additional indicator, Network services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training sessions - Workshops - Study trips - International events 	<p>The feedback forms on Rural Network communication network actors; ask whether the Rural Development Programme's visibility has improved in the region by regional actors</p> <p>- Assessment of the ELY-Centers; how well did the Rural Network activities promote the information and knowledge transfer between the stakeholders and authorities to implement a better RDP</p> <p>Feedback survey to government actors in connection with training (on a scale of 1 to 5)</p>
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<p>Information on rural development opportunities is conveyed to potential beneficiaries</p>	<p>- To what extent did showcasing the programme's special themes and areas of emphasis (e.g. a campaign to launch the programme) improve the Rural Development Programme's visibility in the media?</p> <p>- To what extent has the Rural Network contributed to conveying information on rural development opportunities to potential beneficiaries?</p>		<p>1. Number of communication tools (output indicator, Hyrrä)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakdown of events organised by the Rural Network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Distribution and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results o Targeted at advisors and/or innovation support services o Leader, including co-operation - Breakdown of the number of publications (brochures, news releases, magazines, including e-publications): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Distribution and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results o Targeted at advisors and/or innovation support services o Leader, including co-operation - Breakdown of the number of other tools (web pages, social media): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Distribution and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results o Targeted at advisors and/or innovation 	<p>2. Number of messages conveyed to potential beneficiaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internet - Sosial media - Puplication 	<p>One question in the feedback form about the events and training sessions of the Rural Network is: did you receive new information on the programme (on a scale of 1 to 5)?</p>
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Information on the programme's implementation and results is exchanged among the actors and conveyed to the public	<p>-To what extent were external communications able to convey information on the programme's results?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How effective a communication channel was social media in external communications? <p>-How well does the general public know the Rural Development Programme and its opportunities?</p> <p>-What percentage of citizens agrees with this claim: <i>"The countryside generates</i></p>		<p>1. Number of communication tools (output indicator, Hyrrä)</p>	<p>2. Number of publications produced by Network divided by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leader groups - Innovation activities - Supply chain and competitiveness - Climate change and environment - Other <p>3. Use of Web-pages and social media:</p>	<p>number of visitors on the maaseutu.fi website per month</p> <p>Social media use (re-Tweets, followers, active users)</p> <p>Awareness survey</p>

	<i>well-being for the whole country and can help bring solutions to competitiveness, climate and environmental issues”?</i>				
More innovations in rural livelihoods, agriculture, food production, forestry and rural services, and regeneration of livelihoods	<p>-To what extent did the Rural Network manage to create the conditions for events that generate innovations?</p> <p>-To what extent did the Rural Network manage to create the conditions for events that regenerate livelihoods?</p>	<p>including putting research data into practice</p> <p>including training advisors</p>	1. Number of communication tools (output indicator, Hyrrä)	<p>2. Number of events promoting innovation (events attended by entrepreneurs and/or funders)</p> <p>3. Training of advisors</p>	<p>Other network events promoting innovation</p> <p>Number of applicable coordination projects and national projects</p> <p>Self-assessment of the Rural Network’s working group on innovation (2015 and 2016)</p> <p>Summary of the previous term’s innovation camps and the impact on business life.</p> <p>Feedback surveys on training sessions for advisors</p>

A comparison of stakeholders gives an idea of which target groups have been reached, but in itself it does not reveal anything about the impact of the activities. The evaluation is aimed at identifying the activities of the Rural Network have had any impact on realising the desired changes and

the way that the nature of the Rural Network’s activities has developed. The development of participation is evaluated through network analysis. It is a tool on the basis of which conclusions can be made on the composition of the Rural Network, the intensity and direction of co-operation, and the network’s key points. This information can be used as basis for evaluating whether the development of the participation of stakeholders in the programme has met the target. The analysis was last carried out in 2012 for the Rural Network of the previous programme period. It could be used as baseline. The network analysis is carried out twice during a programme period, first in 2017 and subsequently in connection with the ex-post evaluation. A counterfactual analysis is possible by comparing the results of the network analysis of the previous programme period with the analysis of the current Rural Network.

Evaluating the impactfulness of the connection between improved programme implementation and the Rural Network’s activities is difficult, because the measures taken by the ELY Centres and the Agency for Rural Affairs have more impact on programme implementation compared to the Rural Network’s actions. The evaluation method comprises interviews and case studies, which monitor the impact of specific functions of the Rural Network on how the quality of programme implementation is improved. For the purposes of the evaluation, it is necessary to differentiate between the actions taken by ELY Centres and the Agency for Rural Affairs in their capacity as authorities and the activities of the Rural Network.

The impactfulness of communications is evaluated by conducting an awareness survey, which studies how well the general public know the Rural Development Programme and the opportunities it offers. It will also include finding out what percentage of citizens agrees with this claim: “The countryside generates well-being for the whole country and can help bring solutions to competitiveness, climate and environmental issues”? An awareness survey is carried out in 2018 and in connection with the ex-post evaluation. Comparison of time is also possible. The baseline data is derived from an awareness survey conducted by TNS Gallup in 2013. The level of penetration of communications is evaluated by monitoring the media on an annual basis. A separate evaluation of the penetration of specific special themes or areas of emphasis (e.g. the campaign to launch the programme in 2015) in the media is also carried out. The success of external communications is evaluated by measuring the monthly number of visitor of the maaseutu.fi website.

The evaluation studies whether the network activities have promoted the emergence of innovations and changes to the operating environment that support the regeneration of livelihoods. The evaluation method is a case study.

Timetable

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Rural network						
-stakeholder participation in development		Network and regional network analysis				Network analysis

- quality of Rural Development Programme's implementation							
- communications	Functioning of network communication tools		Awareness survey			Awareness survey	
- innovations and industrial renewal							

Answering the evaluation questions

The general evaluation question of the Commission regarding rural network activities is general by nature. The impactfulness of a network is often evaluated through national evaluation questions, which are presented above. The set-up of the evaluation presented above has been compiled around the goals of the Rural Network, which are the same as the goals referred to in Regulation (EU) 1305/2013, article 54, section 2. The common evaluation question 21 can be answered by compiling the answers to the national evaluation questions.

21. To what extent has the national rural network made progress in attaining the goals set in Article 54, Section 2 of the Regulation (EU) N:o 1305/2013?

This question must be answered in 2017, 2019 and in connection with the ex-post evaluation.

The hierarchy of goals of the Rural Network (draft 10 September 2015 by Sari Rannanpää)

Goals (article 54)

- Increasing stakeholder involvement
- Improving the quality of implementation
- Conveying information on the programme and the funding opportunities it provides
(*survey*)
- More innovations

Impacts (medium term /long-term results: need a baseline!)

- Level of activeness of stakeholders (quantity, quality, new)
 - Processing times (MAVI), customer satisfaction (*survey*)
 - % of people in Finland know about MarSu and the funding opportunities (*survey*)
- At the result of events that promote innovation
 - number of innovations developed/taken into use (*survey*)

Objectives (FI RDP)

- Improving regional visibility
- Conveying information about programme implementation and results
(*media*)
- Regeneration of livelihoods
- Improved flow of information between the authorities and stakeholders
- Competence increases through exchange of experiences

Outcomes (immediate results)

- indi? *qualitative research, awareness survey*
 - Number of information recipients (*monitoring the media*)
- Impact of innovation camps on livelihoods (*analyysi*)
 - indi? *qualitative research, survey*
 - indi? *qualitative research, survey*

Operational objectives

- X training (breakdown by subject/target group??)
- X service packages
service packages
- X events (breakdown by subject??)
- X communication tools (breakdown by subject/channel??)
- X project examples
- X times participated in ENRD events
- Strengthening regional networks
- X negotiations with stakeholders (breakdown by ELY/Leader)

Outcomes (where the programme funds go)

- Number of training sessions, number of participants
 - Number of service packages, number of participants, organisers of
- Number of events, number of participants
 - Number of communication tools
 - Number of project examples
 - Number of participants in ENRD events
 - indi? *qualitative research, network analysis*
 - Number of negotiations with stakeholders

