



The seminar aimed to progress current thinking on the best local and strategic actions to promote resource efficiency in rural areas and how these can be supported effectively by the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

It built on the work of the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Resource Efficient Rural Economy, focusing on soil nutrients, soil carbon and water availability.

In this context, the seminar explored how to:

- increase farmers' and Managing Authorities' motivation to engage with these issues;
- enhance knowledge;
- design and implement Rural Development Programmes to encourage greater coherence between policies

Event Information

Title: Opportunities and Future Perspectives for Resource Efficiency in Rural Areas

Date: 13 June 2017

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Chair: Mario Milouchev (Director, DG AGRI)

Participants: 89 - including farmers, researchers, Managing Authorities, EU organisations' policy experts, European institutions, National Rural Networks and private sector.

Outcomes: A set of conclusions on how to further promote resource efficiency in agriculture

Web page: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-resource-efficiency_en

Framing the opportunities for resource efficiency in rural areas

International and EU Policy Context

Kaley Hart, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and ENRD Contact Point



The importance of improving resource efficiency is recognised in both **global and EU-level policy commitments**. For example: the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the targets set in the Paris Climate Agreement; and the EU 2030 climate and energy framework.

These priorities can be **translated into action** on the ground through the implementation of specific legislation (e.g. Water Framework Directive), using tools and instruments provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (notably the **Rural Development Programmes**), research (H2020 etc.) and pilot actions (EIP-AGRI, LIFE Programme etc.).

The role of RDPs

Krzysztof Sulima, DG AGRI



Resource efficiency is mainly addressed by the **Rural Development priorities**: P4 Ecosystems management and P5 Resource efficiency and climate.

The **Focus Areas (FA)** of most relevance are: Water management (FA4B); Soil erosion & soil management (FA4C); Water use efficiency (FA5A); and Carbon conservation & sequestration (FA5E).

Four categories of **RDP Measures** can be used to support these forms of resource efficiency: a) land management measures, including organic farming and agri-environment-climate; b) measures for knowledge transfer, training and advisory; c) investment measures; and d) forest-related measures.

Support programmed through RDPs

Silvia Nanni, IEEP and ENRD Contact Point



Relevant RDP targets:

Soil nutrients - 108 RDPs have set targets for the percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (under FA4C), ranging from 79% in Austria to 0.5% in the Netherlands.

Soil carbon - 88 RDPs have set targets for the percentage of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration & conservation (under FA5E), ranging from 15% in Estonia to 0.02% in Slovakia.

Water availability – 54 RDPs have activated FA5A in support of water efficiency in rural areas. The targeted share of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation systems ranges between 50% in Bulgaria to 1% in the UK.

Outcomes from workshop discussions

1. Benefits for land managers of sustainable water and soil use

Introductory presentations

- **Josiane Masson, DG ENV** - [‘Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Management of Soil Resources’](#).
- **Kari Koppelmäki, University of Helsinki (FI)** - [Economic benefits for farmers.](#)
- **Fabrizio Ruozi, Family Farmer (IT)** - [Switching to conservation agriculture.](#)



Key messages

- The primary motivation for farmers relates to the economic impact on their farm business.
- Benefits from e.g. increased crop yields and fuel savings need to be demonstrated and communicated to encourage the implementation of resource-efficient actions.
- Moving to more resource-efficient practices can require up-front investments and changes in the way farms are managed. Transition support may be needed to compensate for any short-term costs and/or income losses.
- Transitional advice is also important, based on a good understanding of any risks of new resource-efficient practices.

2. Achieving effective and coherent policy design and RDP implementation

Introductory presentations

- **Emma Svensson, Swedish Board of Agriculture (SE)** - [How RDP Measures are combined in Sweden.](#)
- **Eszter Kovacs Krasznai, University of Cambridge (UK)** - [Research on agri-environment payments in Hungary.](#)

Key messages

- Policy design and implementation need to be realistic in what they expect farmers to be able to implement and achieve.
- Land managers should be involved in the design of the policy and there should be more and stronger links between them and the different implementing agencies.
- Improved complementarity and links are required both between RDP measures and Pillars 1 and 2 of the CAP to better support resource efficiency.
- Integrated policy and delivery need to consider the impact of evolving markets and ensure that advice and advisors are up to date.
- Compensation should be paid to farmers based on results and linked to weighted improvement in resource efficiency – for this, a much better monitoring and evaluation framework is necessary.

3. Exchanging knowledge to improve outcomes

Introductory presentations

- **Eija Hagelberg, Baltic Sea Action Group (FI)** - [Knowledge exchange in Finland.](#)
- **Koen Van Keer, Yara International (BE)** - [The evolving role of the private sector.](#)

Key messages

- RDPs should focus on facilitating farm advice which is of practical nature and responding to the actual needs of farmers
- Advice on resource efficiency issues must be tailored to the needs of a territory, whilst always keeping in mind that it must demonstrate the economic impact and potential benefits for farmers to be adopted.
- Topics and content of advice should be adaptable to evolving situations or emerging challenges rather than being fixed at the beginning of a programming period.
- Advisory services should also enable space for co-creation of knowledge.
- Innovative communications approaches could be used ‘more and better’ to promote the dissemination of information and advice e.g. social media and webinars.
- Overly complicated public procurement processes for the provision of advice and training can block the process.



4. Planning tools and their use at different scales

Introductory presentations

- Claire McCamphill, DG ENV - [River Basin Management Plans \(RBMPs\)](#).
- Pál Goda, Discovery R&D Center (HU) – [Soil data and databases in Europe](#).
- Danilo Marandola, CREA (IT) - [The RDP for Emilia-Romagna](#).

Key messages

- Planning tools are crucial for effective resource management.
- To inform these tools, accurate, consistent and harmonised data need to be collected, processed and made available.
- More efficient management techniques can be supported by better implementation and enforcement of regulation, and also by providing improved incentives.
- More could be made of the opportunities to combine measures to provide an integrated package of options to farmers. Operational Groups were highlighted as one means to develop more efficient measures.
- The EU's LIFE programme is useful in funding projects that can test what works in practice and encourage strong networking and exchange amongst land managers.
- More coordination and collaboration between governments, agencies and stakeholders is essential to share ideas, priorities and overcome barriers to gathering and sharing appropriate data.



5. Knowledge and technology exchange in practice

Introductory presentations

- Greet Ghekiere, Inagro (BE) - [Operational Group on Controlled Traffic Farming](#).
- Robert Jordas, Robbes Little Garden Ltd (FI) - [A closed vertical growing system](#).

Key messages:

- The RDP Cooperation Measure (M16) can create important spaces for cooperation and new innovative ideas in the agriculture and food sectors.
- Farmers do not usually have the knowledge of the latest innovations or the capacity to lead project proposals – innovation brokers can play a key role as animators.
- Implementation of the Measure needs to effectively engage farmers around a specific project/action and offer them ownership of the approaches and practices.
- Administrative requirements can limit uptake of the Measure - public funding decisions are often slow to enable financing of specific new technologies.

6. Developing results-based approaches

Introductory presentations

- Stephen Chaplin, Natural England (UK) - [Paying farmers for biodiversity results](#).
- Clunie Keenleyside, IEEP and ENRD Contact Point - [Designing results-based schemes for resource efficiency](#).

Key messages

- The use of result-based RDP payments for biodiversity conservation in a few Member States has shown their development is an iterative process that takes time.
- Before considering use of result-based schemes for soils and water within RDPs, sufficient evidence needs to be gathered of their potential effectiveness and limitations.
- Specific, locally-tied objectives and realistic measurable indicators are essential for reflecting the diffuse nature of natural resources, as well as appropriate timescales for assessing impact.
- Reliably monitoring the agreed indicators then requires local physical, biological and land use data and the scientific skills to interpret them.
- Hybrid RDP options – management-based payments at farm level and specific rewards for results at catchment level – are potential opportunities to be explored.
- It is critical to work through these (potential) issues with Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, advisors and farmers.



Future perspectives for policy design and implementation



Tim Hess, Cranfield University (UK)

Professor Tim Hess gave a presentation on [Technological developments for water resource efficiency](#) e.g. efficient irrigation systems. He highlighted their potential benefits, but also possible trade-offs, for example if their use increases energy consumption.

He stressed the importance of associated land-management decisions and the role of policy and regulation in putting safeguards in place regarding water use. It is crucial to ensure that water saved under one activity is not used elsewhere or there will be no saving at river-basin level.

Claudia Muresan presented the European Commission's [Task Force on Water](#) – a joint initiative of DG AGRI and DG ENV to promote a cross-sectoral approach to water and agriculture.

It aims to mobilise joint short-term actions to enhance the contribution of existing policies to a cross-sectoral approach to water and agriculture. It also seeks to catalyse a new way of working on agricultural water-related research and innovation, investments, and governance throughout the EU.



Claudia Muresan (DG AGRI)

Conclusions: how to promote resource efficiency in agriculture

- Improving the efficient management of soil and water is key for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, but also for the long-term functioning of agriculture and forestry which are **vital to the rural economy**.
- **RDPs can play a central role** in helping achieve this goal, offering flexible approaches adapted to the different contexts and needs across rural areas in the EU.
- A key element for supporting farmers (and other land managers) to move towards resource-efficient practices is increasing their **knowledge and motivation** to take action.
- Farmers need to be helped to understand what **practical actions** are required on their farm - in the context of the wider territory. The **profitability of farm businesses** needs to be at the heart of these discussions.
- Farmers may require **investment support** where the transition to more resource-efficient farming systems requires significant structural changes or new machinery.
- Farmers are likely to need **increased advice and capacity building** to manage the transition process.
- Achieving successful transitions will require **exchange and co-learning** at all levels and between all stakeholder groups – notably to spread awareness of examples which have been shown to work in practice.
- There are already many relevant **RDP tools and opportunities**, but their use could be improved in many regions - the rules underpinning the use of RDP Measures must enable flexible and creative responses.
- Good governance frameworks at both the decision-making and programming level are essential to enable **policies to work together** in a coherent way and avoiding unintended perverse effects between policies.
- More work is needed on how to design **result-based schemes, as a parallel alternative to management based schemes, promoting sustainable management of soils and water** - especially identifying appropriate, realistic and measurable indicators, and ensuring the availability of data.
- A **hybrid model** with management at farm level, but some results-based 'bonus' at catchment area level can be an interesting approach combining benefits of result- and management-based models and/or serving as a transition phase between these two models, where relevant.
- Building a truly sustainable and resource-efficient rural economy requires **multi-stakeholder engagement** involving actors along agri-food supply chains from farmers to consumers and also policy-makers.
- The **ENRD's ongoing work** (2017-2018) will continue to explore some of these issues within its thematic work under the overall topic of 'Greening the Rural Economy'.

Visit the ENRD Thematic page on resource efficiency:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/resource-efficiency_en