

The 2nd meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Water & Soils, held through video-conference, brought together TG members to discuss the initial findings of the sub-themes examined so far: Results Based Payment Schemes (RBPS), collective approaches, and nutrient management plans. TG members had the opportunity to reflect on and exchange ideas about the focus of the investigation as well as the working methodology. In this context, the objectives of the 2nd meeting were to:

- share and comment the initial findings and content;
- collect feedback on the work process and scope of the investigation.

Event Information

Date: 15 December 2017

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Chair: Ben Allen (IEEP / ENRD Contact Point)

Participants: 31 (including 15 online participants) - including Managing Authorities, European organisations, European institutions, National Rural Networks and private sector representatives.

Outcomes: Feedback and suggestions on aspects of particular interest to be further investigated.

Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-sustainable-management-water-and-soils_en

Providing an overview on RBPS, collective approaches & nutrients management plans



Results Based Payment Schemes

Clunie Keenleyside, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and ENRD CP

Clunie Keenleyside presented the main features of RBPS and highlighted some key aspects that should be considered when examining the application of RBPS to water and soil related issues. RBPS have been used for over 20 years to deliver biodiversity objectives on farmed land and are becoming more actively promoted at the European level. In comparison to traditional management-based schemes, which pay farmers on the basis of actions undertaken, RBPS pay farmers on the basis of the results achieved, and thus rely on clearly defined environmental objectives and measurable indicators. In considering how RBPS might be used to support water and soil objectives, the parameters to be examined include the definition of clear objectives, the scale of application, the selection of effective indicators and the motivation of land managers to join RBPS.



Results Based Payment Schemes in Ireland

Brendan Dunford, Burren Programme, IE

The Burren area has unique environmental features and is a UNESCO supported Geopark. In order to reverse the trend of undermanagement of the area, support from the LIFE Programme was used to develop a locally-led, farmer centered approach that combines RBPS with environmental investment support. The scheme is based on an annual assessment of the environmental performance of the farm with a user-friendly 'habitat health' checklist. The Burren experience offered some recommendations for RDPs in relation to RBPS such as the need for longer timeframes and greater adaptability over time, as well as the need to engage farmers in the design and assessment process in a way that helps to improve their environmental performance.



Collective approaches

Silvia Nanni, IEEP and ENRD CP

Collective approaches come in a variety of different forms, either formalised collectives or less formalised groups of individuals. Different RDP measures may be used in collective approaches such as M10 – agri-environment climate measure, M11 – organic farming, measures on advice, investments, and also M16 – the cooperation measure. Collective approaches can have a significant impact on water and soils as coordinated action is often required at a landscape rather than farm level. Aspects to be further explored via the TG could include examining how M16 and LEADER can be best applied to support collective approaches for soils and water and considering ways of mainstreaming collective approaches through the RDPs. Promoting the benefits of collective action for water/soils with MAs and other stakeholders, as well as finding solutions to common barriers.



Collective approaches: the Dutch experience

Aard Mulders, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, Food Quality, NL

In the Netherlands 40 certified collectives exist. They deliver at regional level, good habitat conditions for rare species and water quality. They ensure a balance between regional responsibility and government requirements for control and reporting. A new area based scheme is being designed to ensure better integration of both CAP Pillars, through an enhanced result-based component and new improved approaches for controls and applications. Collectives are also supported to implement pilot projects for delivering public goods and ecosystems services.



Setting the frame on nutrient management plans

Ben Allen, IEEP and ENRD CP

Nutrient management plans are supported through agri-environmental schemes and are required under the water framework and nitrates Directives, in river basin management plans, as well as in nitrate vulnerable zones. Further TG work could focus on identifying best practices, providing recommendations on monitoring and reporting, combining nutrient management plans with collective and results-based approaches. Also, how RDP measures can complement the implementation of nutrient management plans, including support for implementing management as well as providing advice and coordination.



Optimised soil nutrient management in Hungary

Vince Lang, Discovery, R&D Center, HU

In Hungary, soil sampling and lab analysis are carried out every five years, while nutrient management plans are prepared every year. Implementing 'site specific nutrient management' can increase farm profitability and its application involves several steps, including soil sampling and data collection, as well as developing maps displaying the actual fertilization requirements at the sub-field level. A key factor for upscaling the approach is to promote and facilitate access for farmers to the modern technology required for the application of precision agriculture.



Updated TG workplan & methodology

Alex Papakonstantinou, ENRD CP

An on-going process of collecting evidence for the TG has been established through various sources, including an online survey, collecting examples e.g. from LIFE, inquiries to EU organisations and targeted investigation to specific Member States. Screening of RDPs is also envisaged. Some 24 cases have already been collected, along with some others that require further research. TG members were presented with the anticipated next steps of work focusing on intensifying the collection of information until the next TG meeting – date to be specified.

Key messages from discussions

- **Soils and water objectives are interlinked** and need to be considered together as we move forwards in the TG.
- **Results-based payments are not a solution** for addressing all challenges of soil and water management. Defining RBPS indicators can be challenging for the TG work. RBPS are likely to be only part of a package of approaches, including collective action and effective planning and targeting of management-based schemes as well as initiatives of the private sector.
- **Identifying and monitoring the impact of an RDP intervention** is key to addressing soil and water objectives. The TG could explore how water or soil quality is improved and at what level this should be measured (farm or area/region).
- The combination of **RBPS agri-environment-climate support and M4.4 - Non-productive investments** could be explored to see what potential exists for improving soil and water management using both measures.
- The TG could also consider discussing the **future CAP and integrating Pillar 1 and Pillar 2**.
- The **EAFRD payment calculation** is seen by some as a potential barrier to implementing more effective approaches, such as RBPS. However, there is scope to make more use of possibilities offered by the current formula, for example by the intelligent use of allowable transaction costs.

Thematic Group work next steps

- Feedback from TG members through the VIIMA platform is invited.
- The collection of information continues, and TG members will be contacted in support of this process.
- Next TG meeting is provisionally proposed for the 22nd March 2018 in Brussels – date to be confirmed. The 4th and final meeting of the TG will be held in May 2018 in Finland, with the kind support of Eija Hagelberg and Teemu Hauhia (date tbc.).