



The 3rd meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Water & Soils management brought together more than 30 TG members, including a guest speaker from Turkey, to discuss the findings of the analytical work on result-based payment schemes, multi-actor approaches and nutrient management plans. The presentations portrayed the application of these three approaches to soil and water management, making use of the 43 case study examples collected and the analysis carried out to date. In the working sessions participants exchanged experiences focusing on success factors and possible challenges in using these approaches to improve soil and water management in the current RDP framework. The outcomes of the discussions provided the building blocks for recommendations to be developed by the TG and discussed at the next meeting in May.

Event Information

Date: 22 March 2018

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Chair: Ben Allen (ENRD Contact Point/IEEP)

Participants: 36 - including Managing Authorities, European organisations, European institutions, National Rural Networks, IPARD Managing Authority (Turkey), and private sector representatives.

Outcomes: findings, conclusions of working sessions integrated into planning and development of TG recommendations.

Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/3rd-meeting-thematic-group-sustainable-management-water-and-soils_en

Working session1: Results Based Management Schemes (RBPS)

Following [an introductory presentation by Clunie Keenleyside \(IEEP\)](#), participants discussed three questions related to resource requirements, support needs of farmers and possible objectives for pilot RBPS schemes.

A key element, participants agreed, is **the initial funding and resources needed to design, test and monitor the scheme**. This covers investment in technical expertise, data collection and analysis to establish effective result indicators, together with the equipment and services needed for monitoring and controlling the results.

Participants underlined **the risk factor for farmers and paying agencies** – no payment in case of failure. The application of ‘hybrid’ schemes, where a basic management-based payment (MBPS) is accompanied by results-based payment, was suggested as a useful approach to reduce such risks. A **pilot is a useful way of testing and refining the scheme and helps to allay** farmers’ and paying agencies’ fears. **Specialist on-farm advisory and capacity building support** is vital from the outset.

Farmers’ participation in RBPS is more likely if they understand the evidence and the benefits for their farming system. In schemes operating at scales larger than farm level (e.g. catchment area) there is a risk that ‘gaps’ left by non-participating farmers may reduce effectiveness. Adjusting the scale of the target area may help in such cases. Planning RBPS is virtually impossible without establishing **the baseline and using high-quality result indicators** for the target area. Implementation is ineffective without a clear, **robust monitoring and control system** combined with the understanding and active support of the paying agency.



Working session 2: Multi-actor approaches

The [introductory presentation by Silvia Nanni \(IEEP\)](#) summarised the key findings of the analysis carried out so far, with emphasis on enabling factors and barriers. Participants discussed the key requirements for encouraging the participation of farmers and other rural actors in multi-actor approaches, as well as factors that can support the wider use of these approaches in the EU. All discussion groups agreed that one key element to encouraging farmer participation is portraying **both the environmental and private** (e.g. economic, knowledge and understanding) **benefits** of multi-actor approaches. Shared – and lower - risk, more knowledge exchange and lower cost of administration of the specific interventions were listed among these benefits.

The **clear definition of the challenge** to be tackled should be a prerequisite of setting up a multi-actor approach, followed by establishing a sustainable **partnership with clear decision-making mechanisms**. **Creating trust** among participants is equally important. This is usually facilitated by **trusted organisations or 'local champions'**. Farmers who recognise the **added value and common objectives of the joint initiative** are more inclined to test innovative approaches to soil and water management and continue performing them over time. **The timespan required to build a strong sense of 'ownership'** within the partnership should be considered. Within the current RDP framework, **higher support rates** for applications underpinned by multi-actor approaches or **preferential selection criteria** for group applications can be used to encourage more participation. The availability of **capacity building and training**, as well as **support for running costs of multi-actor initiatives** – preferably for the whole lifetime of the partnership - are clearly much needed elements of support.

Working session 3: Nutrient management plans (NMP)

The [introduction to the theme by Ben Allen \(IEEP\)](#) described the varying relationship between the use of management plans in RDPs and where they are required as part of the regulatory baseline or reference level. Participants agreed that RDP support to nutrient management planning could facilitate the implementation of plans through identification of the necessary actions and include support for the necessary advisory services, training and investments. TG participants suggested to broaden up the focus in such a way that nutrient management plans should address 'soil management' in a more holistic way: nutrients are only one factor to be considered in the sustainable management of water and soils and focusing on nutrients only does not fully address the complex interrelationships between nutrients, soil biology, soil and water, soil and crops and a larger territorial scope.

Update on RDP Screening and stakeholder perspectives

ENRD CP reported on the [state of play of RDP screening](#) on the agri-environmental measure (M10.1). The analytical work is focused on 12 RDPs selected based on TG member suggestions and examines how RDPs support input reduction and management. The outputs of the analysis will include a database of approaches, case studies and a document summarising the research. The [presentation on Agri-environment schemes under Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development \(IPARD\) in Turkey](#) provided insight into how 'soil and water' issues are approached in an IPARD framework. The application of MBPS in Turkey is prevalent - in part due to farmers' lack of willingness to participate in environmental schemes. The assessment of water issues in Turkey as assessed by a Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) project found that water quantity and availability are the main issues for the agriculture sector.

Key messages from discussions

- Understanding farmer attitudes and investing in adequate support for capacity building, training and on-farm advisory support is an important success factor in new approaches to RDP support for soil and water objectives;
 - The 'right' scale is important – interventions where the objective is best achieved at a broader territorial scale can be more successful in a multi-actor scheme, perhaps jointly with RBPS where this is feasible.
 - Establishing a solid baseline, evidence-based result indicators and simple yet strong monitoring and control system are essential.
 - Piloting schemes help to test and refine the design and address the concerns of farmers and paying agencies about the risks.
 - Farmers' willingness to participate in environmental measures can be improved by the application of 'hybrid' approaches that combine management-based and result-based payment. Moreover, based on the case examples discussed, it was found that RBPS are often facilitated through multi-actor approaches for better results. This linkage can be explored in more detail.
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Thematic Group work next steps

Work on finalizing the TG thematic papers, fact sheets, and collection of case examples for the TG inventory continues. The final meeting of the TG will be held on 15-16 May 2018 in Finland. Final TG outputs and recommendations on how to improve RDP implementation for soil and water management will be discussed.