

The second in a series of four planned Thematic Labs considered the ways that LEADER and Local Action Groups (LAGs) can contribute to effective local action in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Participants were updated on the specific issues of climate change, how this can affect local rural development and how the future programming framework under the CAP Strategic Plans (CAP SPs) can enable LEADER to contribute with local solutions.

Local practitioners from Belgium, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom described climate initiatives led or supported by LAGs, demonstrating their varied experiences and lessons learnt. Participants engaged in workshop discussions focusing on key success factors – and how these can be activated – in the LEADER delivery framework under the CAP SPs in the upcoming programming period.

Setting the scene

[Eamon O'Hara](#) (ECOLISE – network of LAGs engaged in climate action) set the scene for the day's discussion highlighting the European Parliament's Climate Emergency Declaration and the social transformations that are needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet targets for global temperatures by 2030. He considered the implications for local communities and stressed that uptake of opportunities is key. [Christine Falter](#) (DG AGRI) shared the European Commission's perspective on climate change mitigation and adaptation, providing examples of how CAP post 2020 and LEADER can contribute.

Member State perspectives

Climate action is on the agenda of a large number of LAGs across the EU. LAGs can act as local catalysts and supporters of the social innovation and awareness raising required for climate action locally.

On the island of Gotland, Sweden, the [eco-village of Suderbyn](#) is acting as a 'social laboratory' and follows the 'ONE PLANET Living' approach in the production and utilisation of renewable energy, education, transport, food production and building construction. The objective is to live within the biocapacity of their region, using local resources effectively and efficiently to support the community.

In Catalonia, Spain the [ENFOCC project](#) builds on the cooperation of LAGs and was triggered by the need to utilise local resources and keep rural jobs. With a focus since 2010 on energy transition and sustainable forest management for local biomass utilisation, the project has developed an online energy management tool and set up energy agencies that provide advice and support to local companies and individuals.

In Wallonia, Belgium the LAG Pays de Condruses aims to [reduce CO2 emissions by 40 % by 2030 through a local climate plan](#) which includes using the renewable energy potential of the territory, maximising energy savings and reducing CO2 emissions. Seven local municipalities signed up to it. The awareness-raising for companies, municipalities and village representatives is a core component of the Climate Plan.

In Wales, UK the well-being goals followed by [PLANED](#) are in harmony with sustainable development goals. Integration, collaboration and thinking for the long-term are some of the key principles they apply for delivering vocational training academies, renewable energy for communities, community land trust and community-based healthcare. In addition to LEADER funding the LAG uses other funds, including national funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the Prince's Countryside Fund.

Challenges and success factors for LEADER to support climate action

Following the presentations, a wider discussion took place between presenters and the participants. This considered the role of the LAGs in climate action; local governance; awareness-raising at community and all other levels of governance, as well as how to maintain long-term commitment into the future. It was agreed that a common vision shared by all levels is essential. The EU 'Green Deal' should be reflected at national, regional and local level and in all future strategic documents, including CAP SPs and Local

Event Information

Title: LEADER Thematic Lab on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Date: 10 December 2019

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organiser: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: Representatives of LEADER LAGs and beneficiaries, National Rural Networks, EU-wide networks, universities, delegates from Managing Authorities of the RDPs and EU institutions (DG AGRI).

Outcomes: Practical examples and exchanges between participants on the success factors and basic conditions needed to support climate action through LEADER.

Website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-leader-thematic-lab-climate-change-mitigation-and-adaptation_en



Development Strategies (LDS). It was suggested that the nature of the change is less about technology and more about local awareness-raising, engaging local communities and how decisions are made about local futures. Consideration should be given to all four main dimensions of living – social, cultural, economic and ecological. For instance, during their ‘community visioning process’ the Welsh posed the question, “How do we take everyone with us?”. Communities all over Europe need more awareness about their local resources and the potential in utilising these sustainably.



To support this process, LAGs may need to shift from being ‘small grant offices’ to ‘local development agencies’ that can be a catalyst of change. This catalyst role does not require huge investments. LAG Pays de Condruces demonstrated how relatively small amounts of LEADER support targeted at feasibility studies and awareness-raising resulted in millions of Euros of investment in renewable energy and the setting up of local energy cooperatives. Such transition processes can also be recognised by national governments: in Sweden, the long history of sustainability initiatives in Gotland prompted the government to decide that the island should become the first fossil-free island of Sweden.

By creating a local network of projects, initiating their own projects and connecting people, LAGs are able to add power and momentum to the transition process. Regional and national authorities also need to recognise and support this role of the LAGs. Participants also agreed that whether climate action is about cooperative wind energy plants, community asset funds or other innovative approaches, the key is community involvement and interest, and this requires engaging with local communities and local politicians as well.

Key success factors for LEADER and climate action under the CAP Strategic Plans

Long-term climate considerations need to be built in to rural development at all levels (LDS, CAP SPs) and in synergy with regional and national planning documents.

Connecting key actors at local level: The make up of the LAG partnership will be very important and LAGs should involve the most relevant environment/climate actors fully. Partnerships should be sufficiently flexible to include and encourage climate experts to be involved right from the drafting phase of the LDS.

Animation capacity of the LAG: Consideration should be given to ringfencing specific budget to animating climate actions as it is a specialist area and needs more technical facilitation. Extended funding periods through ‘bridging’ programming periods would ensure sustained animation and retention of expertise. Consider LAG-led projects and enabling LAG projects to support animation/coordination of those. Ensure the understanding by authorities of the key role of LEADER animators and enshrine it in CAP SPs.

A flexible framework for LAGs should allow them to work across all CAP objectives. Pilot projects, experimenting and learning from failure should all feed back into LDS and LAGs should be encouraged to refine, change and adapt their LDSs as conditions evolve.

Realistic expectations within an LDS: Consider what can be achieved in an LDS, set realistic objectives and expectations for climate ambitions. Look to build on existing partnerships and work collectively to create the greatest impact.

Raise awareness for climate actions and build up understanding of the different types of technologies.

Conclusions and next steps

Delegates were encouraged to start now raising awareness within communities and highlighting that even small amounts of money can make a big impact on climate issues. Stability is seen to be really important to ensure the right expertise is maintained in the CAP post 2020.

Sharing good practice examples through case studies and videos was thought to be helpful to raise awareness of the issues and what LEADER has already done in relation to climate action.

Colleagues from Ireland and Romania intend to open discussions with their Managing Authority on their return home, to share the knowledge gained during the event.

In Latvia other groups, such as Young Farmers, have been included in CAP Planning consultations.



ENRD Resources and Tools

Your gateway to the LEADER knowledge gathered on the ENRD website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-resources_en