

EUROPEAN
EVALUATION
HELPDESK
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



SUMMARY REPORT

SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATION
COMPONENTS OF THE 2017 ENHANCED
AIR – CHAPTER 7

DECEMBER 2017

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The Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for the evaluation function within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) by providing guidance on the evaluation of RDPs and policies falling under the remit and guidance of DG AGRI's Unit E.4 'Evaluation and studies' of the European Commission (EC). In order to improve the evaluation of EU rural development policy the Evaluation Helpdesk supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, RDP managing authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building, and communicating with network members on evaluation related topics.

Additional information about the activities of European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development is available on the Internet through the Europa server (<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

SUMMARY REPORT

SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATION
COMPONENTS OF THE 2017 ENHANCED
AIR – CHAPTER 7

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
ATT	Average Treatment Effects on the Treated
AWU	Annual Work Unit
CCI	Common Context Indicator
CLLD	Community-led Local development
CEQ	Common Evaluation Question
DiD	Difference-in-difference-method
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EIP	European Innovation Partnership
EP	Evaluation Plan
ESI Funds	European Structural and Investment Funds
FA	Focus Area
FADN	Farm Accountancy Data Network
GHG	Green House Gas
GIS	Geographical Information System
HNV	High Nature Value
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
JC	Judgement Criteria
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LAG	Local Action Group
LPIS	Land Parcel Identification System
M	Measure
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRN	National Rural Network
P	Priority
R	Result indicator
RD	Rural Development
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SFC	Structural Funds Communication System

T	Target Indicator
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Starting in June 2016, and each year until 2024, the Member States shall submit to the European Commission an Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The AIR provides information concerning the implementation of the rural development programmes (RDP) and the Evaluation Plan (EP). **The AIR submitted in 2017** not only includes information about the progress in implementing the EP (Chapter 2) but also contains the quantification of programme achievements, through the assessment of the result indicators and answers to relevant evaluation questions (Chapter 7).

The Evaluation Helpdesk has assessed the progress in the implementation of the EPs included in each RDP and prepared a synthesis of the evaluation components included in Chapter 7 of the enhanced AIRs to provide an overview of the achievements of the EU's rural development policy.

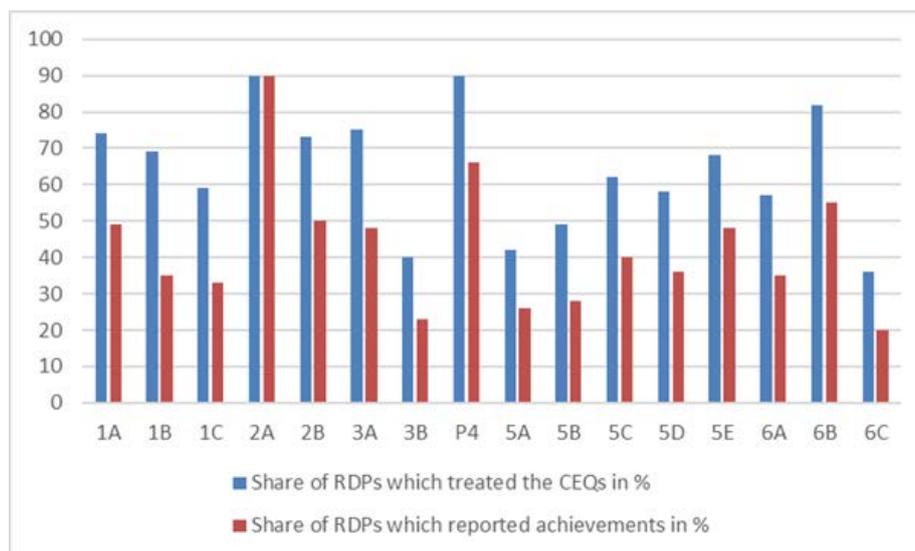
The findings of the RDPs' achievements gathered from the AIRs submitted in 2017 are summarised in the Commission Staff Working Document "Synthesis of Evaluation Results and Plans under the ESIF Programmes 2014-2020" and in the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 - Summary Report of the programme annual implementation reports", to be published by the end of 2017.

To what extent have policy results been assessed in the AIRs in 2017?

The majority of the RDPs has systematically dealt with evaluations even at an early stage of programme implementation. Managing Authorities took the opportunity to address the 21 common evaluation questions (CEQ). For example, in 90% of all cases, the CEQs related to the FA 2A (economic performance) and the financially significant RD Priority 4 (ecosystems) were addressed. Only a small share of the AIRs did neglect answering some of the CEQs in case there were operations completed in the reporting period in the respective FA.

Achievements are consistently reported, though with varying degrees of detail. A high proportion of Managing Authorities reported achievements in relation to FA 2A (e.g. farms modernised and restructured), to FA 6B (e.g. access to services and local infrastructure improved, rural territories and populations covered by LAGs increased) and in relation to RD Priority 4 (e.g. biodiversity on contracted land has been restored, preserved and enhanced, water quality and soil management improved, and soil erosion prevented). Some of the achievements are based on ex-post evaluation findings of the 2007-2013 period, which were extrapolated to the current programmes.

Figure 1. Share of RDPs that evaluated the FAs and reported achievements



Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

What was the evidence-basis on which RDP achievements have been assessed?

The link between the evaluation elements (judgement criteria, indicators) overall were well established in most of the AIRs. However, there have also been several inconsistencies: sometimes no indicator was linked to a judgement criterion or the criteria and indicators were possibly not filled in correctly in the SFC-template or wrongly paired. The main inconsistencies identified in the screening are related to the use of additional result indicators and include the pairing of the judgement criteria with the additional indicators, the quality of the additional indicators or their general absence.

The evidence-base for RDP achievements, expressed in quantified common result indicators, varies across programmes and FAs and does not necessarily correlate with the level of uptake.

The quantification of common result indicators varies by FA. A high degree of quantification was achieved for FAs 2A (economic performance), 4A (biodiversity), 4B (water management), 4C (soil management) and 6B (local development). Concerning Priority 5 (resource efficiency) and FAs 3B (risk prevention) and 6C (ICT), quantification remains limited. Complementary result indicators (such as R2 labour productivity) could only be quantified in a few cases.

Common result indicators have been used to assess RDP results, but they have not been sufficient to answer the common evaluation questions. Additional indicators and also common context indicators have been used for this purpose in addition to common result indicators. The complementary result indicator R2 'change in agriculture output/AWU' has been calculated in several RDPs, but it was netted out only in a few cases due to the low level of RDP uptake and late provision of FADN data, which in many cases has prevented the application of a proper counterfactual assessment.

Which methods have been used to assess RDP achievements in the AIRs in 2017?

The use of standard evaluation methods was predominant, however, in some cases these standard evaluation methods were complemented with a qualitative assessment. The most used standard evaluation methods include the analysis of data from the monitoring systems on the available completed operations, the analysis of project and programme documentation or the sectoral analysis of statistical data. Standard evaluation methods were in some cases (i.e. in instances of low or very low RDP uptake) complemented with a **qualitative assessment**. For this purpose, various qualitative tools were used, such as surveys conducted through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

Advanced quantitative evaluation methods were more frequently applied in the assessment of RDP results in FA 2A and 3A as well as in Priority 4 and FA 5D. This includes the use of counterfactual analysis to calculate the common and additional indicators with the help of the PSM or DiD methodology. An in-depth assessment could also be observed in some cases under Priority 4 (restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems) and FA 5D (reducing green-house gas and ammonia emissions) and in FA 5E (fostering carbon sequestration and conservations in agriculture and forestry). For these FAs information from GIS and LPIS were used to analyse the interventions.

The use of more advanced methods is envisaged in AIRs for future evaluations (in 2019, ex post). This was particularly evident for the methods indicated for the assessment of FAs linked to complementary result indicators and additional result indicators. The future use of counterfactual assessments was mentioned not only for socio-economic indicators, but also, for environmental indicators, where spatial analysis is the basis for the assessment (using GIS, LPIS, measuring spots, etc.).

Qualitative evaluation methods have been used to overcome data-gaps rather than for the triangulation of quantitative findings. Due to the scarcity of data, qualitative evaluation methods have been employed instead of quantitative methods. For this purpose, interviews and focus groups with stakeholders were conducted, surveys with RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have been carried out, and online questionnaires with RDP measure managers were conducted. Case studies on selected projects were mainly used in RD Priorities 4 and 5. Theory of change has been applied in cases where there was low uptake and based on the programmed/committed operations.

What were the main challenges in the assessment of RDP achievements?

The major reported methodological challenges were insufficient time, missing data for non-beneficiaries and the low response rate to surveys. The lack of data for evaluation concerned both data for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. It was primarily caused by low programme uptake or by insufficient information from the operations database. The late availability of statistical data for the evaluation in 2017 (e.g. FADN data) and the short time for conducting the evaluation was a considerable concern in many AIRs. Furthermore, challenges in relation to the application of surveys were reported in terms of a low response rate of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, which affected the representativeness of the survey.

The use of more advanced evaluation methods was hindered through problems in data availability and a low level of uptake. Delays in the availability of appropriate data at the time of the evaluation made it difficult to apply advanced evaluation methods. Existing data sources still needed to be adapted for the RDP evaluation (GIS and ongoing environmental monitoring).

The quantification of complementary result indicators provided specific challenges, while the quantification of common result indicators automatically calculated via the operations database was only an issue in cases where there was low uptake.

What was the contribution of Pillar II to CAP objectives and rural development priorities?

For the analysis of the policy results, primarily the common indicators recorded in the SFC database were used. Data on common output, target and result indicators and complementary result indicators were extracted from the SFC database.

The common indicators have been supplemented by the Helpdesk's AIR screening data. Achievements reported in Chapter 7 of the AIRs were screened and classified by the Evaluation Helpdesk into major, medium or minor achievements. More frequently major and medium achievements were identified and reported.

The analysis by the Helpdesk also addressed the combination of measures with primary and secondary contributions, as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, which could achieve the objectives of the RD priorities.

Around 20.4 billion EUR of public funds were spent by RDPs by the end of 2016 under Priorities 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (without Technical Assistance).

High expenditures are recorded in Priority 4 (ecosystems), where 22% of the allocated funds were already spent by the end of 2016. For all of the other priorities the expenditure rate is moderate (P2, P3, P5 <10%) to low (P6 <5%).

Under RD Priority 1, the implementation of the horizontal measures M1, M2, M16 to support training, cooperation and knowledge transfer by the end of 2016 was still in the start-up phase. Individual RDPs have succeeded in developing cooperative projects, developing operational groups for innovation partnerships and implementing training measures. These efforts contribute to fostering innovation, cooperation and knowledge transfer in rural areas.

Under RD Priority 2, around 44,000 agricultural holdings were supported to increase the farm's performance through modernisation and restructuring. Also, around 13,000 young farmers were supported to increase their skills and ease the entry into the agricultural sector. In some RDPs, it was possible to assess early effects. 15 RDPs were even able to quantify the change in the labour productivity on supported farms (R2) mainly based on gross effects. Achievements reported related mainly to the modernisation and restructuring of farms.

Under RD Priority 3, RDPs reported around 52,000 agricultural holdings that received support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations. Also, around 63,000 agricultural holdings participated in risk management schemes. A limited number of evaluations demonstrate a positive impact on production technology and product quality and state benefits from crop insurance assistance. Achievements reported relate mainly to the increased implementation of quality schemes by primary producers and the increased participation of farms in risk prevention and management schemes.

Under RD Priority 4, the expected targets are area-based. The targets are to manage an increasing share of agricultural land and forest to support biodiversity, water management and/or prevent soil erosion. The analysis of the common target indicators demonstrate that the EU-28 targets have already been largely achieved in agricultural land in the three areas biodiversity, water management and soil management, while forestry is lagging behind. Achievements reported related mainly to restored, preserved and enhanced biodiversity on contracted land and improvement of water quality and soil management.

Under RD Priority 5, the quantification of the common target indicators shows that significant results were achieved with respect to more efficient irrigation systems, investments in live-stock management and land management contracts to reduce GHG and/or ammonia emissions and to contribute to carbon sequestration and conservation. Only a very limited number of RDPs, however, were able to quantify one or more complementary result indicators on the basis of gross effects. Achievements in more qualitative terms were reported across all five FAs.

Under RD Priority 6, RDPs reported that around 1,200 holdings were supported for investment in non-agricultural activities and around 1,000 jobs were created/planned in those supported projects. Concerning local development, the LEADER measure has already been significant in a number of programmes and 2,356 Local Action Groups were selected in order to implement CLLD/LEADER operations. A limited number of RDPs report on improved services/infrastructures, which are of benefit for the rural population. With regard to information and communication technologies, a small number of projects could be completed by the end of 2016 due to the longer term infrastructural nature of the

measure. Achievements reported relate primarily to increased coverage of the rural territory and population by LAGs and the participation of rural people in local actions.

2 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Starting in June 2016, and each year till 2024, the Member States shall submit to the European Commission an Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The AIR provides the information about the implementation of the rural development programmes (RDPs). The legal acts specify the following:

- **Regulation No 1303/2013** (common provisions regulation) defines in Article 50 that ‘...Annual Implementation Reports shall set out key information on implementation of the programme and its priorities by reference to the financial data, common and programme-specific indicators and quantified target values, including changes in the value of result indicators where appropriate, and, beginning from the annual implementation report to be submitted in 2017, the milestones defined in the performance framework...’.
- **Regulation No 1305/2013** defines in Article 75 that ‘...By 30 June 2016 and by 30 June of each subsequent year until and including 2024, the Member State shall submit to the Commission an annual implementation report on implementation of the rural development programme in the previous calendar year...’.
- **Regulation No 808/2014** defines in Article 15 and Annex VII the structure and content of annual implementation reports.

The **AIR submitted in 2017** contains the reporting on the progress of the implementation of the Evaluation Plan (Chapter 2, sub-sections a-g) and the quantification of programme achievements, through the assessment of the result indicators (including complementary result indicators), and answers to relevant evaluation questions (Chapter 7).

The non-binding guidelines, *Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017*, have been published by DG AGRI to support the Member States in carrying out the evaluation activities for the AIR in 2017. A separate Annex 11, provides fiches for answering the common evaluation questions no. 1 – 21. Moreover, the Working Document ‘SFC2014 EAFRD AIR technical guidance’ on the proposed technical structure and content of the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) has been issued.

Each year, the Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for assessing the progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Plans included in each RDP. This assessment is carried out on the basis of the information included in Chapter 2 of the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs).

In 2017 and 2019 the Evaluation Helpdesk must also carry out a synthesis of the evaluation components included in Chapter 7 of the enhanced AIRs to provide an overview of the achievements of the EU’s rural development policy. **In 2017**, this synthesis focuses on the results achieved in relation to each priority and FA, including answers to relevant common evaluation questions.

The **findings on the RDPs’ achievements gathered from the AIRs submitted in 2017 are summarized** in the Commission Staff Working Document, [“Synthesis of Evaluation Results and Plans under the ESIF Programmes 2014-2020](#), and in the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, [“European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 - Summary Report of the programme annual implementation reports’](#), to be published by the end of 2017.

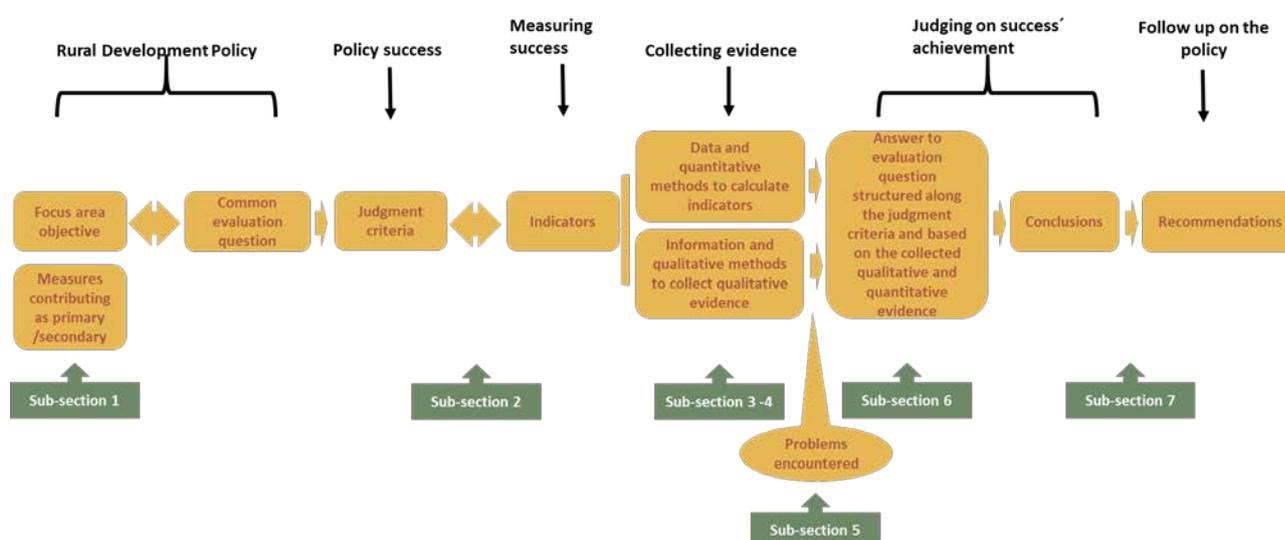
3 HOW HAVE THE POLICY RESULTS BEEN ASSESSED?

This chapter contains the analysis of the information stemming from Chapter 7 of the SFC focusing per priority on the intervention logic, consistency of the evaluation elements, the methods applied and the specific challenges observed in the assessment of the common evaluation questions.

The SFC template for the AIR submitted in 2017 includes for each of the 21 common evaluation questions 7 sub-sections, which were analysed for this purpose:

- **Sub-section 1**, shows the **list of measures contributing to the FA**. These are the primarily programmed measures/sub-measures under the FA as well as the measures/sub-measures which have been programmed under other FAs but show secondary contributions to the FA related objective.
- **Sub-section 2**, indicates what achievements are planned for each measures/sub-measures as expressed with the **judgment criteria** and as measured with **the result indicators and additional indicators**.
- **Sub-section 3**, contains a **description of the evaluation methods** applied for the assessment of RDP results and for the calculation of the common and additional indicators. Programme authorities were asked to describe the reasons for using the method, give a brief description of it and report about encountered challenges in applying the method. This information is important for judging on the robustness of the assessment.
- **Sub-section 4**, shows the **quantitative values of indicators** used to measure the success of the RDP's interventions, including common result/target indicators, complementary result indicators, additional indicators as well as information on **data** sources used.
- **Sub-section 5**, explains the **problems encountered** influencing the validity of the findings.
- **Sub-section 6**, provides the **answer to the common evaluation question** based on all quantitative and qualitative evidence from the evaluation activities (e.g. reference to judgement criteria, quantified common indicators, other qualitative or quantitative evidence).
- **Sub-section 7**, shows the **conclusions** based on the information in the answers to common evaluation questions and related (not mandatory) **recommendations**.

Figure 2. Link between evaluation elements presented in SFC and the assessment of RDP achievements



3.1 Approaches used to assess RD Priority 1

Measures and their uptake

Many RDPs **have not programmed any primary measures** under the FAs linked to RD Priority 1, and therefore the assessment had to rely on the measures with **secondary contributions**.

Overall these measures (M1, M2 and M16) had very low or no up take in 2017.

Consistency of evaluation elements

Evaluation elements under the FAs of this priority have overall been logically linked in the analysed AIRs. Gaps have been observed specifically for FA 1A for which the judgement criteria are not always linked logically to the common and additional indicators. In FA 1B, specifically, the indicators are not always logically linked with the judgement criteria.

	CEQ01-1A	CEQ02-1B	CEQ03-1C
JC and indicators are logically linked	67	53	60
Some JC are not logically linked with indicators	15	16	1
Some indicators are not logically linked with the JC	3	17	0
Any other gaps observed	6	4	4

Examples of specific observations:

- Additional judgment criteria have been included but not paired properly with indicators. (RO national, AT national, ES Castilla y Leon, LV national)
- Additional indicators have not been paired with any judgment criteria (ES Murcia, FR Alsasse, Champagne Ardenne).
- Output indicators have been used as additional indicators (PT mainland) or paired with indicators which could not collect sufficient evidence to judge on the success as expressed with the judgment criteria (CZ national).
- Judgment criteria were linked with several indicators (FR PACA, IT Sardegna), or common judgment criteria have been linked with common result indicators and with very similar additional indicators (ES La Rioja).
- Additional judgment criteria were linked to qualitative indicators (ES Baleares).

Methods applied

The analysis of monitoring data on completed (sometimes committed) operations was used by evaluators for the assessment in case of sufficient uptake under these FAs. This helped for the quantification of values of the common target indicators T1 (FA1A), T2 (FA 1B), T3 (FA 1C). Additionally, training statistics were analysed or specific research on potential operational groups have been carried out. Interviews and surveys with RDP measure managers and other RDP stakeholders further supported the analysis.

The envisaged use of more advanced evaluation methods in 2019 was mentioned in some AIRs and linked to the expectation that then RDP uptake under these FAs (primary and secondary contributing measures) will be sufficient to base the analysis of monitoring data exclusively on completed operations (both primary and secondary) and allow for the application of more qualitative in-

depth methods. Such methods include more extensive beneficiary surveys (FR Bretagne), the analysis of partnerships, interviews with EIP operational group leaders (FR PACA), separate studies (AT), and the collection of information from training participants via questionnaires disseminated at training events (DE Brandenburg and Berlin).

Challenges

Specific challenges reported in the assessment of the FAs of RD Priority 1 include:

- What are ideal indicators for measuring innovation or capturing various types of innovation?
- How to collect data through interviews and surveys that corresponds precisely to the needs of the analysis?
- How to structure and standardise interviews and surveys?
- How to avoid that findings of surveys are biased by a low response rate?
- How to ensure the representativeness among survey respondents?
- How to choose participants of focus groups and avoid biases in the findings?
- How to ensure a high quality of the statistical data collected by training institutions (i.e. which instructions are needed)?

3.2 Approaches used to assess RD Priorities 2 and 3

Measures and their uptake

The RDPs overall have shown a low uptake under the FAs of RD Priorities 2 and 3, though it has been higher compared to RD Priority 1 (specifically in M4, M7, M13 and M14). Evaluation questions were generally well addressed under these FAs.

Consistency of the evaluation elements

Evaluation elements under the FAs of these two priorities are overall logically linked. Gaps have been observed specifically for FA 2A for which indicators are not always linked logically to judgement criteria and FA 3A, where some judgement criteria were not logically linked with the indicators.

	CEQ04-2A	CEQ05-2B	CEQ06-3A	CEQ07-3B
JC and indicators are logically linked	76	72	68	44
Some JC are not logically linked with indicators	6	5	16	1
Some indicators are not logically linked with the JC	24	4	2	1
Any other gaps observed	6	5	10	5

Examples of specific observations:

- Judgment criteria were not linked to any indicator (BG national).
- Additional indicators were sometimes not consistently linked to the judgement criteria (FR Alsace, Champagne Ardennes, CZ national, SK national). For example, the judgment criteria 'GVA of supported holdings has been increased' was linked to the additional indicator 'Share of holdings with increased economic performance (%)', which is not sufficient to measure the success.
- In some cases, the common indicators have been used as additional indicators and paired with judgment criteria under a different FA (e.g. in ES Extremadura using the R2 indicator, in FR Bretagne using the 'Number of farmers trained in the agricultural sector' and in SK

national using the ‘Number of supported enterprises of young farmers’ to measure success as defined by the judgment criteria of FA 2B - the entrance of adequately skilled young farmers).

- In some cases, common context indicators have been used as additional indicators (ES Madrid) or were linked to several judgment criteria, e.g. CCI 17 on agriculture holdings (ES Baleares).
- Occasionally, the additional indicators have been identical to the common indicators (e.g. for T4 in ES La Rioja) or they have been in fact qualitative indicators (ES Baleares).

Methods

The low level of RDP implementation has considerably influenced the choice of methods used to assess the RDP’s results under the RD Priorities 2 and 3.

The common target indicators have been calculated through the monitoring system, (i.e. T4 (FA2A), T5 (FA2B), T6 (FA3A), T7 (FA3B), T8 and T9 (FA4A, T10 and T11 (FA 4B), and T12 and T13 (FA 4C)).

The described evaluation methodologies under Priority 2 and 3 were mainly related to the assessment of the **common result indicator R2** (change in agricultural output/AWU) and to the additional indicators.

The R2 indicator has been quantified with counterfactual analysis, comparisons and surveys with RDP beneficiaries:

- **Counterfactual analysis** has involved a quasi-experimental evaluation design with the application of advanced statistical matching techniques like PSM, GPSM, and DiD (e.g. EL national, RO national, LV national, SK national). FADN or similar data sources have been used (e.g. IE national, FR Corse, SK national). These analyses included the calculation of primary contributions of M4 under FA 2A, and secondary contributions of measures programmed under other FAs (e.g. SK national);
- **Naïve approaches** such as ‘before-after comparison’ and ‘participants vs. aggregated sample average’ (e.g. FR Bretagne, IT- Sicily, IT- Umbria);
- **Surveys with RDP beneficiaries** to collect their estimates for the R2 indicator (e.g. ES Cataluña, PT Madeira).

Alternative approaches to assess RDP results without quantifying the R2 indicator have been described in several cases:

- **A simple counting of the holdings involved** and other output data from the monitoring system (e.g. AT national, UK – Scotland);
- **Comparative analysis of statistical data (FADN)** of the agriculture sector between the years 2013 – 2015 (e.g. CZ national, FR Auvergne, FR Rhône – Alps);
- **Qualitative methods** including online questionnaires for RDP managers (e.g. IE national, ES- Andalucía); interviews with RDP managers and stakeholders, surveys with beneficiaries (e.g. ES - Asturias) and non-beneficiaries; qualitative surveys and focus groups to additionally validate quantitative findings (e.g. SK national);
- **Theory of change** (e.g. IT Piemonte).

The envisaged use of counterfactual assessment for the calculation of R2 in future evaluations has been mentioned by various AIRs.

The quantification and netting out of the R2 indicator has been a major challenge reported under the RD Priorities 2 and 3. These concerned mainly:

- FADN data was coming too late to conduct a proper assessment and netting out the R2 indicator. Only data from the previous calendar year was and could be used (e.g. LV

national, SK national, FR Pointou Charentes). For some regions, FADN data was reported not to be available at all (FR Guyane).

- The FADN data covered only a small proportion of beneficiaries in some cases (e.g. FR Pointou Charentes). Stakeholders therefore had to search for other data sources to conduct a counterfactual assessment, e.g. Eurostat data (e.g. FR Corse) or data like FADN collected by other data providers.
- The sample size of non-recipients was too small and did not allow to make a variance analysis. In such cases, a regression analysis was reported to be made on recipients.
- The setup of a proper control group was particularly challenging in RDPs where a large share of potential RDP beneficiaries is affected by the RDP treatment (e.g. HU national). As possible solution for such cases the GPSM method was mentioned (SK national).
- The selection bias and causal bias are reported as problems in the case of quasi-experimental evaluation designs (BE-Wallonia).

Qualitative methods to assess the RDP's results under FA 2A faced some difficulties due to the following challenges:

- How to ensure that surveys provide sufficient, objective and high-quality information?
- How to avoid the bias created by possible conflicts of interests of interviewed stakeholders and beneficiaries?
- How to choose focus group participants that are representative?

Analysis of monitoring data from the operations database was the predominant approach used for assessing the other FAs under the RD Priorities 2 and 3. Given that there was sufficient uptake, also a quantitative assessment of RDP result indicators and the calculation of the common result and target indicators was possible.

Qualitative assessment methods have been used in various cases. These methods included online questionnaires answered by RDP managers (ES Andalusia, Navarra), interviews with various RD stakeholders (PT Madeira), surveys with RDP beneficiaries (ES Asturias, AT national) including both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (LV national). Focus groups with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were employed (SK national). Secondary contributions of measures under other FAs than those in concern have been assessed primarily with the help of qualitative tools.

The envisaged use of more quantitative methods has been mentioned in some AIRs, for example:

- Semi-quantitative surveys on food industry, making use of a set of control variables and data from the committee on transmission facilities to calculate indicators (FR PACA).
- DiD-method within the counterfactual analysis (SI national).

Challenges

Specific challenges in the assessment of the FAs of RD Priority 2 and 3 (besides those related to FA 2A reported above) include:

- In case of carrying out a counterfactual assessment in a situation of low uptake, the effect of other factors than those caused by the RDP is rather high. This distorts the findings of the assessment (LV national – FA 3B, SI national – FA3A).
- A low response rate to quantitative surveys does not allow indicators to be properly calculated (ES Andalusia).
- The wrong design of interviews, targeted only at programme participants could potentially lead to a bias in the evaluation findings (e.g. ES Andalusia, SK national).

3.3 Approaches used to assess RD Priorities 4 and 5

Measures and their uptake

The RDP uptake under the RD Priority 4 was higher compared to other priorities, mainly due to M10, M11, M12, M13. Under RD Priority 5 the uptake under FA 5D (M11, M10, M1 and M4), and FA 5E (M10, M1 and M4) was relatively high. This has provided in many AIRs a sufficient number of operations to allow for the assessment of the RDP's results and to calculate the common result/target indicators.

Consistency of evaluation elements

The evaluation elements under the FAs of these two priorities have overall been logically linked in the AIRs. Gaps (e.g. judgement criteria not logically linked to indicators) have been observed in FA 4C and 5C (indicators not logically linked with judgement criteria).

	CEQ08-4A	CEQ09-4B	CEQ10-4C	CEQ11-5A	CEQ12-5B	CEQ13-5C	CEQ14-5D	CEQ15-5E
JC and indicators are logically linked	97	91	85	42	48	59	60	69
Some JC are not logically linked with indicators	0	2	4	1	1	2	0	3
Some indicators are not logically linked with JC	3	2	3	2	2	4	3	2
Any other gaps observed	6	10	12	6	5	3	2	8

Examples of specific observations:

- Consistency between judgment criteria and additional indicators was not fully given in some AIRs:
 - the common judgment criteria have been paired with common target indicators only (several ES regions, SK national, PT Madeira),
 - output indicators have been used as additional indicators (ES Navara, CZ national, ES national, PT Acores, LT national, PT mainland).
- Sometimes one additional judgment criteria has been paired with several additional result indicators (FI mainland, FR PACA), or one indicator has been paired with two judgment criteria (RO national):
 - 2 separate JC referring to (1) prevention of soil erosion and (2) improvement of soil management (NL national),
 - 2 separate judgment criteria referring to (1) carbon conservation and sequestration and (2) agricultural and forestry land contributing to carbon sequestration (PL national).
- In some cases, the additional indicators have been qualitative indicators (ES Baleares, IT Calabria).
- Context indicators have been used as additional indicators (ES Baleares, Madrid).

Methods

Common target indicators for both RD Priorities 4 and 5 have been calculated automatically through the monitoring system and therefore no specific methodology had to be applied. This concerns the indicators T8 and T9 (FA 4A), T10 and T11 (FA 4B), T12 and T13 (FA 4C), T14 (FA 5A), T15 (FA 5B), T16 (FA 5C), T17 and T18 (FA 5D) and T19 (FA 5E).

In most cases the complementary result indicators linked to RD Priority 5 have not been quantified. This concerns the indicators R13 (FA 5A), R14 (FA 5B), R15 (FA 5C), R18 and R19 (FA 5D). While it was expected that the complementary result indicators linked to FAs under the RD priority 5 will be calculated with the help of a quantitative assessment, many AIRs stated that it was too early to observe RDP effects on values of environmental indicators.

Additional indicators and common context indicators have been listed in many AIRs to assess RDP results under RD Priorities 4 and 5. Evidently, in many AIRs the common target indicators were considered as insufficient to answer the common evaluation questions.

Examples of common context indicators used for the assessment under RD Priority 4 and 5 include C35 (FBI) for FA 4A, C40 (water quality) for FA 4B, C41 (soil organic matters in arable land) for FA 5E and C42 (soil erosion by water) for FA 4C)¹.

Although common context indicators were presented as evaluation elements in many AIRs they have not been quantified.

Methods for successful quantifications included:

- counterfactual assessment for area based additional indicators (AT national),
- using the Margalef index to determine the richness of species and control groups comparing the treated and non-treated parcels (ES Castilla la Mancha),
- measuring the FBI through transect points which have been distributed across the whole country independently from RDP contracted areas (SK national),
- analysis of the nitrogen cycle (BE Wallonia),
- using the revised universal soil loss equation (FI national),
- using the soil fertility database of the Agricultural Research Centre for the calculation of soil organic matters in arable land (EE),
- applying a special analysis on the basis of GIS data and information (DE Schleswig Holstein),
- using a methodology for the quantification of biomass and CO₂ which can determine carbon fixation (CO₂ equivalent) retained in the forest mass (ES Castilla la Mancha, National Forest Inventory),
- using IPCC indicators for carbon sequestration (SK national).

Qualitative methods have been employed for assessing the results in RD Priority 4 and 5 (including the assessment of secondary contributions), whenever the additional and complementary result indicators could not be quantified. Such methods included for example:

- a survey with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (e.g. LV national),
- a matrix-analysis on the effects of the intervention on HNV agriculture and forestry systems (PT Mainland),
- a survey with key actors of the intervention under RD Priority 4 and 5. Three different questionnaires were used: for measures with high uptake, a synergy questionnaire and a forecast questionnaire (e.g. ES national),
- a qualitative analysis with a Likert scale to cross-check the potential contributions of RDP interventions to the RDP objectives (PT Acores).

The envisaged use of advanced methods to quantify complementary and additional result indicators has been mentioned in several AIRs and is planned for 2019 and/or in the ex post evaluation.

Examples include:

- Use of a sampling and MAPP method to assess environmental indicators (IT Toscana).
- A spatial modelling approach at the level of supported areas to establish a control group of non-treated areas for the purpose of assessing environmental indicators (PT mainland, SI National).
- Establishing a baseline for a counterfactual assessment of RDP effects on biodiversity, taking into consideration the most suitable species and habitat conditions (IE National) and a review of existing studies on biodiversity (DE Sachsen).
- Case studies on selected territories treated with agro-environmental and climate measures (FR PACA) and a study of soil erosion (AT National).

¹ All mentioned common context indicators are also impact indicators, which have to be assessed in 2019.

- A special survey on the extent of soil erosion in supported land plots (LT national) and an analysis of Soil Information System data in areas with a high number of contracts (FR PACA).
- Quantifying water efficiency (R13) through a survey with beneficiaries (AT national) or through project samples to assess the evolution of water consumption and production, including the calculation of the indicator R13 (FR PACA).
- Case studies on samples of projects for quantifying the energy efficiency (R14) and the production of renewable energy (R15) (FR PACA).
- Application of the ATT method to calculate the average differences between beneficiaries and the average emissions in agriculture (SI national).
- Measuring the RDP effects on carbon sequestration based on spatial data of the forest surface (including various forests types).

Challenges

Specific challenges reported in the assessment of the FAs of RD Priority 4 and 5 include:

- **GIS data is not sufficiently collected in line with the RDP's evaluation needs** (e.g. for the assessment of water quality, biodiversity). This limits the use of GIS data for the calculation of RD indicators, and for applying advanced evaluation methods (several RDPs).
 - GIS-data is not always broken down according to individual enterprises which makes it difficult to use it for a counterfactual assessment of soil quality and erosion (DE Bayern).
 - GIS data is sometimes published too late for the assessment (DE Thüringen).
- The bird and butterfly indices are not sufficient to describe the biodiversity of other species (e.g. living in soil) and there is a need to propose additional indicators (FI mainland).
- The implementation of AEC is partially overlaid with Pillar I greening effects (DE Thüringen).
- Using the data from the monitoring of the water directive is rather challenging:
 - The spatial distribution of measurement points for monitoring the water quality does not sufficiently reflect the RDP (SI national, LV national). Counterfactual analysis with DID would require the collection of data for all measuring points in a time series suitable for the RDP assessment (SI national).
 - The assessment of water quality affected by RDP interventions that aim to reduce the utilisation of pesticides and fertilisers is rather challenging: The chemical status of surface and underground waters is influenced by a series of local factors (type of soil, quantity of rain, plants grown, steepness of plots etc). The analysis must consider time series for individual catchment areas (SI national, LT national, DE Bayern).
- **Limited reliability of a qualitative assessment of water quality** as affected by organic and mineral fertilizers and pesticides if survey results (with beneficiaries) are not compared with general statistical data at the national level to exclude possible biases (SI national).
- **Data scarcity** on soil erosion and quality:
 - There is a lack of data concerning land soil erosion (LV national, PT mainland, LT national), soil organic matters in arable land (soil quality) (SI national) and forest soil erosion (UK England, SK national). If data is not available in time series (e.g. data collected in 2012 in LT national), the quantification of additional indicators for agriculture and forestry is difficult.
 - Data on soil erosion exists but in a table format rather than in isolines. This prevents its use for spatial analysis (e.g. LPIS structure in SK national, CZ national) and for conducting a counterfactual assessment (PT Acores).
- **Problems in conducting a counterfactual assessment of environmental indicators:**
 - A lack of data on farming practices makes the construction of the counterfactual in the assessment of soil and water quality difficult. There is also limited matching between data on RDP beneficiaries and public statistics (FR Haute Normandie).

- The counterfactual assessment on biodiversity is difficult due to a lack of spatial data (LV national, FR Haute Normandie) and due to missing periodical statistical surveys (FR PACA) needed for the construction of control groups.
- **Problems related to the calculation of R14:** if there is no system to track the energy consumption in supported projects before and after their completion it difficult to calculate the indicator R14 (PT Madeira, LV national, FR Franche Comte, ES Cataluña, DE Bayern, DE MVP, BE Wallonia). The result of investment into energy efficiency needs to be related to the company's production and any assessment of energy efficiency/saving must be in terms of energy use per produced unit before and after the investment (SE national).
- **Problems related to the calculation of R15:**
 - The data collected in the application forms only includes the quantification of the amount of investment in renewable energies. It is not possible to calculate how much of the renewable energy was produced in a pre- and post-project situation (PT Madeira, HU national).
 - Only the electricity production is measured, but there is no counter to measure the actual heat produced.
 - The Valbiom control report carried out at the end of the works does not allow to have the necessary recoil on the quantities of green energy actually produced during a standard year (BE Wallonia).
- **Problems related to the calculation of R18 and R19,** and concerning the assessment of the RDP achievements towards the contributions to FA 5D:
 - Data gaps concern baseline information on recalculated GHG emissions, nitric oxide, methane and ammonia emissions in crop and livestock production, reduction of nitrogen oxide, methane and ammonia emissions in supported farms (LV national, FR Franche Comte, ES Valencia, AT national).
- Carbon fixation was calculated for each measure separately. This made it difficult to assess the entire FA (ES Castilla la Mancha).

3.4 Approaches to assess RD Priority 6

Measures and their uptake

Except for FA 6B, there has generally been very low uptake under the FAs of RD Priority 6. This has in 2017 considerably affected the quality of the assessment of RDP results.

Consistency of evaluation elements

Evaluation elements under the FA 6A and 6C are overall logically linked. Gaps have been observed for FA 6B with many judgement criteria not always linked logically to indicators and with indicators not always logically linked to the judgement criteria.

	CEQ16-6A	CEQ17-6B	CEQ18-6C
JC and indicators are logically linked	60	58	34
Some JC are not logically linked with indicators	0	18	1
Some indicators are not logically linked with JC	0	33	0
Any other gaps observed	4	3	2

Examples of specific observations:

- **Common evaluation elements were not sufficient to assess all aspects of CEQ number 17,** e.g. judgment criteria and indicators concerning employment/jobs created

were not sufficient to answer the diversification and creation of enterprises (ES Castilla y Leon, Galicia), or the common and additional result indicators, based on outputs (T22, T23), have little relevance to answer the judgment criteria and the Evaluation Question (PT Mainland).

- **Context indicators have been used** and paired with judgment criteria (ES Madrid), and/or other additional indicators have been employed (SI).
- **Judgment criteria were not paired with indicators** or vice versa – indicators not paired with judgment criteria (BG, ES Castilla y Leon, Madrid, Murcia, FR Champagne Ardennes, HR, IT Emilia Romagna, MT, SK).
- **Judgement criteria were paired inconsistently with indicators** (CZ, PL), e.g. two different judgment criteria 'Access to services and local infrastructure has increased in rural areas' and 'Services and local infrastructure in rural areas has improved' were linked with the same indicator (PL).
- **Qualitative indicators have been paired** with common judgment criteria (ES Baleares).

Methods

Common result/target indicators have been calculated automatically through the monitoring system (i.e. T20 (FA 6A); T21, T22, T23 (FA 6B), T24 (FA 6C)). They have in general achieved rather low values.

Quantitative approaches have been applied in a small number of cases, for example:

- sector analysis based on FADN data comparing the situation in various variables between 2013 and 2015 (CZ national).
- A comparative statistical analysis using databases of the Regional Statistical, Economic and Territorial Information Service of the DRAAF (FR Auvergne Rhône-Alpes).

Qualitative evaluation methods were used to overcome the missing quantitative assessment in RD Priority 6, for example:

- Interviews with RDP measure managers to assess the progress and expected results of committed/completed projects (ES Andalusia, Canarias, Castilla la Mancha, FR Languedoc, SK national) and interviews with beneficiaries (ES Galicia).
- Surveys on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of implemented measures (LV national, RO national).
- Focus groups with participants from MA, experts and beneficiaries (SI national).
- Self-assessment and peer evaluation among LAGs (NL national), analysis of CLLD strategies and their projects selection criteria (IT Lombardia), story board approaches and surveys with LAG managers (IE national).

Envisaged methods for a future assessment of RDP results under RD Priority 6 have been rarely described. The few methods reported include:

- quasi-experimental design and qualitative approaches to assess the economic diversification in rural areas.
- tools and approaches to evaluate LEADER/CLLD and ensure a self-assessment of LAGs (LU national).
- Design a common evaluation framework for the 2014-2020 evaluation approach in collaboration with the 13 LAGs and the Regional Council, making use also of external support provided within the framework of the Regional Rural Network (FR PACA).

Challenges

The following **methodological challenges** have been reported concerning the assessment of the RDP's results under the RD Priority 6:

- Difficulties in finding a control group for the assessment of the RDP's effects on employment under FA 6B due to the fact that most municipalities are covered by CLLD strategies. (BE Wallonia).
- Validity of answers under risk in case of a survey on job creation which is more likely to be replied by those beneficiaries who could create jobs. (SI national).
- Low data quality concerning households connected to broadband internet is perceived as a problem (SI national).
- Difficulties to get stakeholders to participate in interviews due to a high workload (SK national).
- Risks of possible biases in results due to inappropriate selection of focus groups participants (SI national).
- Using dichotomous and ordinal Likert scales in survey questions for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries does not allow an exact assessment (LV national).
- Finding a representative sample of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries during the evaluation is generally perceived as very challenging. (ES Castilla y Leon).

3.5 Approaches to assess RDP synergies

Measures and their uptake

The assessment of programme synergies have, overall, been considered as very difficult as they are dependent on secondary contributions. In this respect, the low programme' uptake was the major obstacle.

Consistency of evaluation elements

Not applicable.

Methods

RDP synergies have been mainly assessed in a qualitative way, e.g. by using a theory of change approach (CZ national, SI national, FR Auvergne, Centre Guyana, IT Lombardia, Bolzano) and by taking into consideration primary and secondary contributions within the RDP intervention logic (FR Guyana).

When looking at the synergies between measures, the evaluators have used pair-wise matrices (CZ national, EE national, FR Auvergne) in which they have applied various criteria to assess the degree of synergies achieved (CZ national). Other approaches included a scoring of the synergies from 0 to 5 (being 0 neutral and 5 synergistic), or by indicating negative effects with a negative sign (ES Canarias).

Qualitative methods to assess synergies included e.g. surveys with programme managers (ES Cantabria, Pays Vasco) or with RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (LV national). Additionally, also focus groups with beneficiaries and interviews with experts were mentioned (SI national).

Quantification of programme synergies have been possible in few cases, for example:

- Calculation of the synergies with primary and secondary effects for area based measures under FAs of RD priorities 4 and 5 based on IACS-data, monitoring data and other complementary information (DE Nordrhein-Westfalen);
- Synthesis of result indicators (EE national);
- Quantitative assessment of synergies based on already calculated secondary contributions in FAs of P2, P3, and P4 (SK national).

Challenges

The specific challenges reported in relation to the assessment of RDP synergies include:

- the low level of RDP uptake, making it difficult to quantify RDP synergies,
- methodological challenges in assessing synergies with quantitative methods,
- the quantification of secondary contributions related to the assessment of synergies.

3.6 Approaches used to assess RDP technical assistance

Consistency of evaluation elements

The consistency of evaluation elements under this CEQ showed several problems. The judgement criteria were, overall, not logically linked with the indicators and in many cases there were also other gaps which were observed.

	CEQ20-TA
JC and indicators are logically linked	50
Some JC are not logically linked with indicators	20
Some indicators are not logically linked with JC	5
Any other gaps observed	10

Examples of specific observations:

- Some additional indicators are not logically linked to the judgement criteria (IT Abruzzo, ES Murcia), e.g. the indicator 'number of people receiving information about the RDP' is linked to the JC 'Information on evaluation practices has been exchanged' (PT Madeira), or some judgement criteria are not equipped with indicators (AT).
- Some additional indicators had little relevance to answer the judgement criteria and the Evaluation Question (SK, PT mainland, several IT regions).
- Various additional indicators have been proposed for one judgement criteria (SI, DE Niedersachsen Bremen, CZ).

Methods

The assessment of technical assistance has been primarily based on:

- the analysis of monitoring data on projects financed by the sub-measure M20.1 (budget, number of operations), both finalised (FR Alsace, Languedoc, MT national) and committed projects (FR Bourgogne);
- the review of various documents (e.g. analysis of the content of the RDP website);
- the analysis of the functionalities of the information system (PT mainland), collection of data on the personnel of the MA and paying agency and data on trainings (SI national);
- Qualitative methods, e.g. Interviews with the MA, on-line questionnaire with measure managers (ES Andalusia), focus groups with project planners of the Agro-environmental and Climatic Programme (FR Rhone Alp);
- The analysis of information from reports of the MA of the Partnership agreement on the common assessment of the technical assistance measures (CZ national, SE national).

Challenges

Specific challenges reported in relation to the assessment of technical assistance include:

- Reduced credibility of results caused by interviewing only one type of stakeholder such as from MAs (SI national) or of stakeholders which have limited information about technical assistance (SK national).
- Challenges in identifying information through surveys (ES Andalusia).
- Terminology used for the cross-fund evaluation of technical assistance is a problem, since it sometimes differs from the one used in RDP evaluation. (RO national).

3.7 Approaches used to assess the national rural networks

Consistency of evaluation elements

Evaluation elements under this CEQ were, when assessed, overall logically linked.

	CEQ21-RN
JC and indicators are logically linked	31
Some JC are not logically linked with indicators	1
Some indicators are not logically linked with JC	0
Any other gaps observed	0

Methods

The assessment of the national rural networks was mostly limited to information collected from monitoring data on the NRN's action plan (SE national) and on data collected from the common network statistics (CZ national), which in some cases were described and interpreted (ES Pays Vasco, UK Scotland).

Surveys were used in several Member States, e.g. with the MA (ES national), NRN beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (LV national), LAGs (ES la Rioja), innovation agents or operational groups (ES national). For the future evaluation of the network a stakeholder survey will be used in BE Wallonia.

A stand-alone evaluation of the NRN was mentioned in single cases (FI Mainland).

Challenges

Specific challenges reported in relation to the assessment of the NRN include:

- How to separate NRN effects from other factors (e.g. how many RDP beneficiaries have participated due to the NRN activities), and NRN effects on RDP non-beneficiaries (e.g. awareness raising)? For this purpose output indicators were not considered sufficient (SI national, DE NRN).
- How to include the NRN specific indicators in the monitoring system? If NRN specific indicators had not been included already at the beginning it was difficult to collect information directly from participants (SK national, LT national).
- How to choose the right people for conducting interviews? The people shall have skills and be trained beforehand (FR NRN).

- How to choose the right people to be interviewed? For example, to identify the sector to which participants belong in the list of attendance of NRN activities is necessary (SK national).
- How to ensure a good and representative response to surveys? Those who respond are usually more active than those who do not respond (bias). There is also a risk that the respondent does not correctly understand the question (SI national, AT national).

3.8 Conclusions

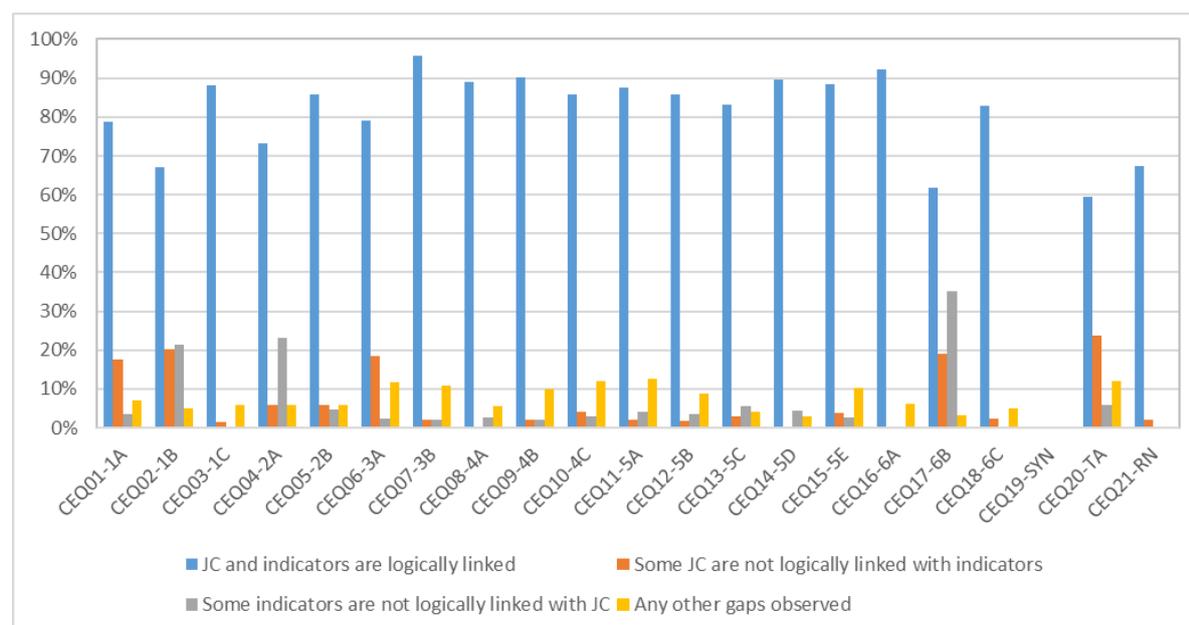
The link between the evaluation elements (judgement criteria, common or additional result indicators) is overall well established in most of the RDPs.

However, as shown in the figure below, several inconsistencies have been observed: sometimes no indicator was linked to a judgement criterion or vice versa or the criteria and indicators were possibly not filled in correctly in the SFC template or wrongly paired. This is more frequently observed for CEQ 1, 2, 4, 6, 17 and 20.

The main inconsistencies identified in the screening are related to the use of additional result indicators, and include:

- more than one Judgement Criteria was inserted into one line of the table;
- additional indicators have rather the character of output than result indicators;
- the additional result indicator is qualitative and can therefore not be quantified;
- the additional result indicators do not sufficiently cover the judgement criteria or is not well related to it;
- there are no additional indicators at all;
- a single indicator is linked to various judgement criteria, or vice versa.

Figure 3. Consistency between evaluation elements presented in SFC (Chapter 7, Sub-section 2)



The use of standard evaluation methods was predominant, in some cases, however, it was complemented with a qualitative assessment.

The most used standard evaluation methods included the analysis of data from monitoring systems on the available completed operations, but also making use of programmed/committed operations (particularly in case of low or very low RDP uptake).

The analysis of project and programme documentations (such as the application forms, payments request, or other programme documentations) or the sectoral analysis of statistical data (agriculture, forestry, food industry, etc.) was used and in some cases compared with the data of RDP beneficiaries.

Standard evaluation methods were in some cases (low or very low RDP uptake) complemented with a **qualitative assessment**. For this purpose, various qualitative tools were used, such as surveys conducted through questionnaires, interviews (with stakeholders, measure managers, and beneficiaries/non-beneficiaries) as well as focus groups.

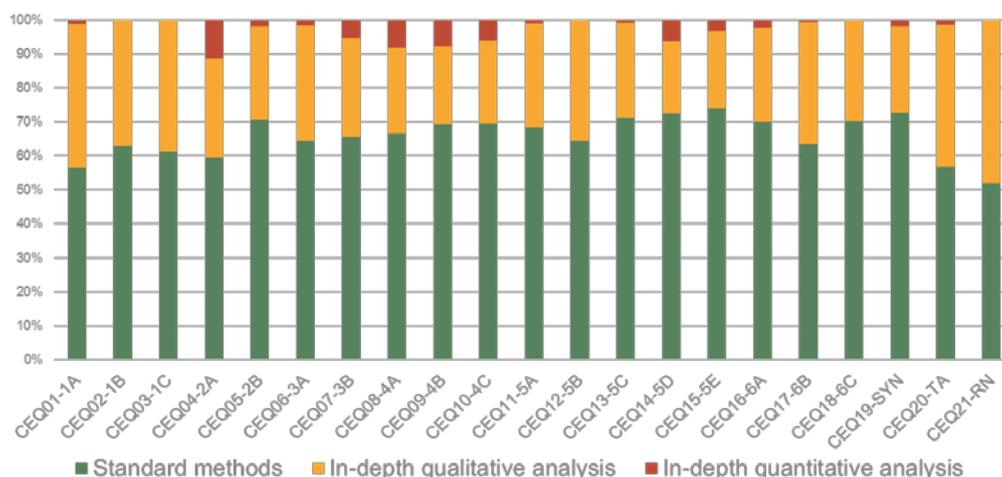
The assessment of RDP results in 2017 was overall affected by a low level of RDP uptake. For many FAs the AIR reported a lack of data or no completed operations. This dominated also the choice of methods used in the AIRs.

Advanced quantitative evaluation methods were more frequently applied in the assessment of RDP results on FA 2A and 3A as well as in RD Priority 4 and FA 5D.

These were mainly linked to FA 2A (economic performance, modernisation and restructuring of farms), and FA 3A (improving the competitiveness of primary producers and better integrating them into agri-food chains and adding value to agriculture products, short supply chains). This included also counterfactual analysis to calculate the common and additional indicators with the help of PSM or DiD methodologies.

In-depth assessments could also be observed in some cases under Priority 4 (restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems) and FA 5D (reducing green-house gas and ammonia emissions) and FA 5E (fostering carbon sequestration and conservations in agriculture and forestry). For these FAs information from GIS and LPIS was used to analyse the interventions. The overview of methods used to conduct the assessment and answers to the common evaluation questions is illustrated with the figure below.

Figure 4. Overview of evaluation methods used in the assessment of RDP results in 2017



The use of more advanced methods is envisaged in AIRs for future evaluations (in 2019 and the ex post).

This was particularly evident for the methods indicated for the assessment of FAs linked to complementary result indicators and additional result indicators. The future use of a counterfactual assessment was mentioned not only for socio-economic indicators, but also, for environmental indicators, where spatial analysis is the basis for the assessment (using GIS, LPIS, measuring spots etc.).

Qualitative evaluations have been used to overcome data-gaps rather than for the triangulation of quantitative findings.

Due to the scarcity of data, qualitative evaluation methods have been employed instead of a quantitative assessment. For this purpose, interviews and focus groups with stakeholders were conducted, surveys with RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries or RDP measure managers have been carried out. Case studies on selected projects were mainly used in RD Priority 4 and 5. Theory of change has been applied in the case of low uptake and based on the programmed/committed operations.

The major methodological challenges were insufficient time, missing data for non-beneficiaries and the low response rate to surveys.

The lack of data for evaluation concerned both data for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. It was largely caused by low programme uptake or by insufficient information from the operations database. The late availability of statistical data for the evaluation in 2017 (e.g. FADN data) and the short time for conducting the evaluation was a considerable concern in many AIRs. Furthermore, in the case of surveys the low response rate of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and concerns regarding the representativeness of the respondents was perceived as challenging.

Major challenges which hindered the use of advanced evaluation methods were reported in terms of data availability and the low-level of uptake.

Delays in the availability of appropriate data at the time of evaluation (e.g. the FADN data of the previous year comes too late to be used in the assessments to be submitted by 30 June) made it difficult to apply advanced evaluation methods. Existing data sources still needed to be adapted for the RDP evaluation (GIS, ongoing environmental monitoring). Moreover, it is important to which extent the interviews and questionnaires provided have been adapted to the evaluation's needs.

The quantification of complementary result indicators did provide specific challenges, while the quantification of common result indicators, automatically calculated via the operations database, was only an issue in case where there was a low level of uptake.

Common result/target indicators have been calculated automatically based on values of output indicators collected via the operations database. Common result indicators have been used to assess the RDP's results, but they have not been sufficient to answer the common evaluation questions. Additional indicators and common context indicators have been used for this purpose in addition to common result indicators.

The complementary result indicator R2 'change in agriculture output/AWU' has been calculated in several RDPs, but it was netted out only in few cases due to a low level of RDP uptake and the late provision of FADN data, which has prevented the use of a proper counterfactual assessment.

Complementary result indicators R13 (increase efficiency in water use in agriculture in RDP supported projects), R14 (increase efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing in RDP supported projects), and R15 (renewable energy produced from supported projects), R18 (reduced emission of methane and nitrous oxide) and R19 (reduced ammonia emission) have been rarely calculated due to a lack of baseline data.

There was a tendency to present common context indicators, which are also impact indicators, mainly to assess RDP results under FA linked to RD Priority 4, for example C35 (Farm bird index), C40 (water quality), C41 (soil organic matter in arable land), C42 (soil erosion by water) etc. Mostly these indicators have not been quantified due to a lack of data, or because available data has not been adjusted to the RDP assessment needs (e.g. existing GIS has not been adapted to RDP supported areas, or LPIS have not been provided in GIS format, etc.).

4 CONTRIBUTION OF PILLAR II TO CAP OBJECTIVES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Introduction

The following section provides information on the achievements by the rural development policy at the end of 2016 measured by the common output and result indicators and examples of achievements demonstrated by the 2017 AIRs.

Aggregated information on the achievements is presented for each of the six RD priorities. The six priorities are further elaborated through 18 FAs (FA) – jointly providing the basis for rolling out support under the EAFRD.

For the analysis of the policy results, the common indicators recorded in SFC were used which were specifically designed for reporting at the EU level. By means of common indicators it should be possible to present a plausible chain of inputs and outputs and related results for each intervention area.

The reference base are 115 AIRs (out of a total number of 118 RDPs in 28 Member States). Furthermore, there are three AIRs that refer to the National Frameworks of DE, ES, FR, which do not include an evaluation plan.

Specifically, the following information sources were used:

- The absorption rate in total public expenditures in relation to the planned total public amount by the end 2016 per FA and RDP and at the EU-28 level was taken from the SFC database (AIR Chapter 1). A table of the financial absorption rate by the FA by the end of 2016 is presented in Table 8 in the annex.
- Data on common output, target and result indicators and complementary result indicators were extracted from the SFC database (AIR Chapter 1, Chapter 7 and Annex 11/monitoring annex). AIR Chapter 1 data provides information on the progress of common target indicators at the EU-28 and Member State level in relation to the targets set for 2023. A list of the common target indicators defined for the FAs and the progress towards the targets can be found in Table 7 in the annex.
- ENRD key facts and figures were used to present the planned EU total values for the common output indicators aggregated at the EU-28 level².
- Achievements reported in Chapter 7 of the AIRs were screened and classified by the Evaluation Helpdesk into major, medium or minor ones. More frequently reported results were identified. Only those results are listed, where achievements were stated more frequently. Other single results, which may be relevant only in a specific RDP context are excluded. For the presentation of the policy results only major and medium achievements were considered. A table on achievements is presented Table 9 in the annex.

4.1 Transversal Priority 1: Knowledge Transfer and Innovation

Focus and measures

Under this priority, which is strongly interlinked with the other five RD priorities the RDPs:

- provide their stakeholders with a flexible package of soft measures related to advice, training, cooperation and knowledge transfer (FA 1A);
- support cooperation among their rural development stakeholders and research in order to boost innovation in rural sectors (FA 1B);
- foster lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors (FA 1C).

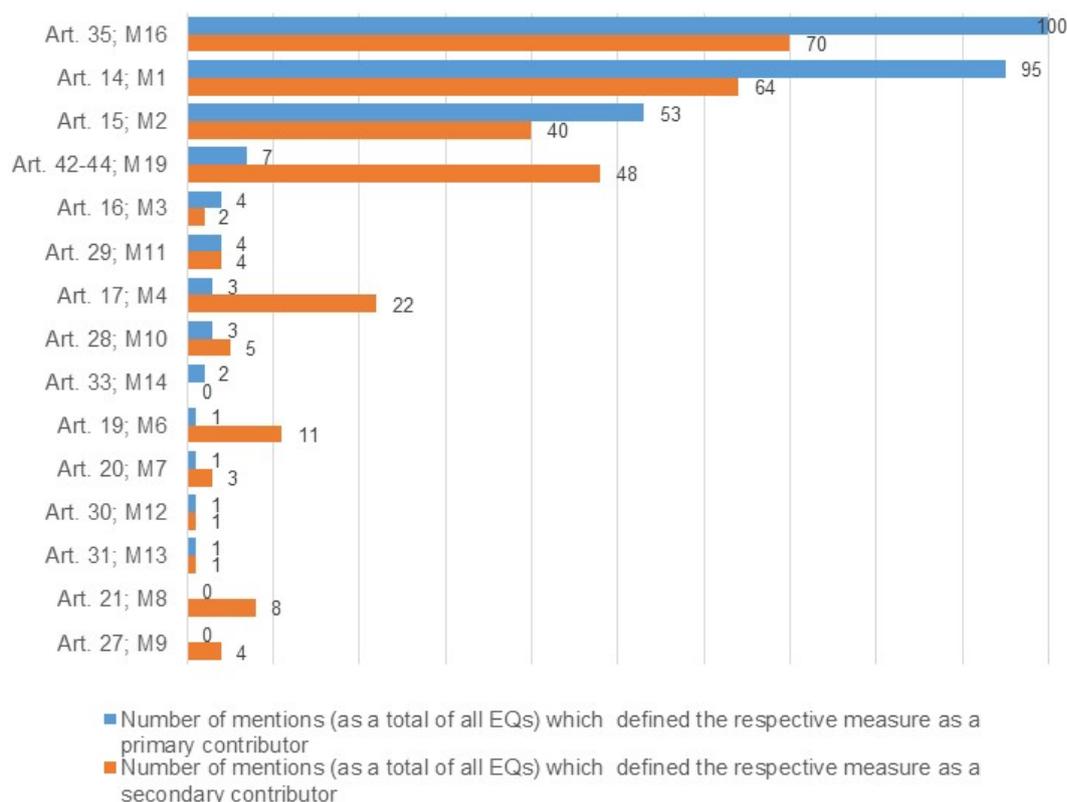
² https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/priority-focus-area-summaries_en

The following chart shows the combination of measures with primary and secondary contributions, as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, in order to achieve the objectives, set under this priority.

Mainly, the horizontal soft-measures M1 (knowledge transfer), M2 (advisory services) and M16 (cooperation) contribute to the priority, as well as the more investment-oriented measures M19 (CLLD/LEADER), M4 (investments in physical assets), M6 (farm and business development).

In RD Priority 1, secondary contributions play an important role because the horizontal measures are often implemented through the other RD Priorities 2 to 6.

Figure 5. Priority 1 - primarily and secondarily contributing measures³



Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017); only RDPs which replied to EQs in the 2017 AIR were considered; the number of mentions may exceed the number of 115 reporting RDPs because all EQs were summed up

Achievements

The implementation of the horizontal measures M1, M2, M16 to support training, cooperation and knowledge transfer by end 2016 were still in the start-up phase.

A higher share of expenditures for the horizontal measures in relation to the total RDP expenditures was for example achieved in Denmark.

Individual RDPs have succeeded in developing cooperative projects, developing operational groups for innovation partnerships and implementing training measures. These efforts contribute to fostering innovation, cooperation and knowledge transfer in rural areas.

RDPs started to develop cooperation projects under the cooperation measure and a minor number of RDPs reported achievements. In total, around 800 cooperation projects were supported in 16 RDPs.

³ For the exact name of the measures and their frequency see table 1 in annex 1.

Under knowledge transfer, in total 258,000 participants were trained in 31 RDPs.

In a few cases RDPs succeeded to establish and support operational groups for innovation partnerships (EIP) already by end 2016.

The following results were mentioned more frequently, however, they are not representative for all RDPs.

- A variety of partners is involved in the EIP operational groups.
- The transfer of innovation to the final beneficiaries has been promoted contributing to the development of innovation within farms / enterprises.
- Cooperation projects are innovative and based on developed knowledge;
- Cooperation operations between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation for improved environmental management and performance have been implemented.
- Long term collaboration between agriculture, food production and forestry entities and institutions for research and innovation has been established.
- The number of rural people who have finalised lifelong learning and vocational training in the agriculture and forestry sectors has increased.

4.2 Priority 2: Farm Viability and Competitiveness

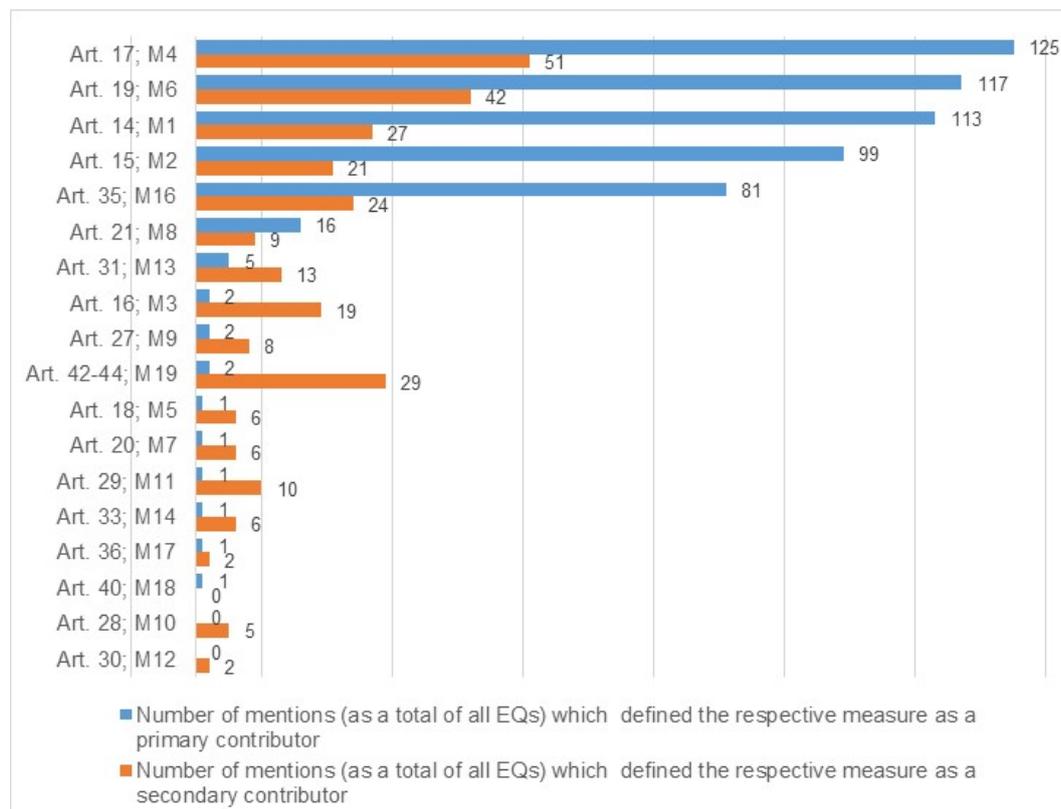
Focus and measures

Under this priority the RDPs:

- provide farmers with a flexible package of hard investment measures backed up by advice, training, cooperation and knowledge transfer (FA 2A). This helps farms to overcome major structural problems, invest in farm equipment and technology which improves their economic viability; and add value by investing in processing, marketing and product development,
- support young farmers with start-up aid and investments together with advice, training, cooperation and knowledge transfer (FA 2B) to encourage a generational change and innovative ventures in the agricultural sector.

The following chart shows the combination of vertical and horizontal measures with primary and secondary contributions, as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, to achieve the objectives, set under this priority.

Measures M4 (investments in physical assets) and M6 (farm and business development) primarily contribute to this priority, as well as the horizontal measures M1 (knowledge transfer), M2 (advisory services) and M16 (cooperation).

Figure 6. Priority 2 - primarily and secondarily contributing measures⁴


Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017); only RDPs which replied to the EQs in the 2017 AIR were considered; the number of mentions may exceed the number of 115 reporting RDPs because all EQs were summed up

Achievements

Under RD Priority 2, around 2.2 billion EUR total public funds were spent at the EU level by end of 2016 to support farm viability and competitiveness.

Around 44,000 agricultural holdings were supported in 93 RDPs to increase the farm's performance through modernisation and restructuring. 11% of the EU-28 target value to reach 2.73% of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation was achieved.

In some cases, (e.g. EE, SK, ES – La Rioja) RDPs have succeeded in describing various effects of investment support in a quantitative and qualitative way. For example, supported investments have contributed to the increase of the competitiveness through the increase of agriculture production, GVA and improvement of market participation. The effects are, however, often not statistically significant achievements due to the limited number of completed activities.

In a few cases RDPs were even able to quantify the change in the labour productivity on supported farms (R2) mainly based on the gross effects.

⁴ For the exact name of the measures and their frequency see table 2 in annex 1.

Additionally, around 13,000 young farmers were supported in 63 RDPs to increase their skills and ease the entry into the agricultural sector.

In some RDPs, it was possible to assess early effects. In the case of a high number of supported young farmers (FR-Rhone-Alpes) it was demonstrated that the RDP contributed largely to the regional renewal rate. It seems, premature, at this stage of programme implementation, however, to confirm that the start-up aid combined with the investment aid, has enabled the economic success of the projects.

7% of the EU-28 target value to reach 1.47% of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers was achieved.

The following results were mentioned more frequently and show interesting aspects of the implementation. These results are, however, not representative for all RDPs.

- The agricultural output per annual working unit of supported agricultural holdings has increased.
- Farms have been modernized.
- Farms have been restructured.
- Adequately skilled farmers have entered the agricultural sector.
- The share of adequately skilled young farmers in the agricultural sector has increased.

4.3 Priority 3: Food Chain Organisation and Risk Management

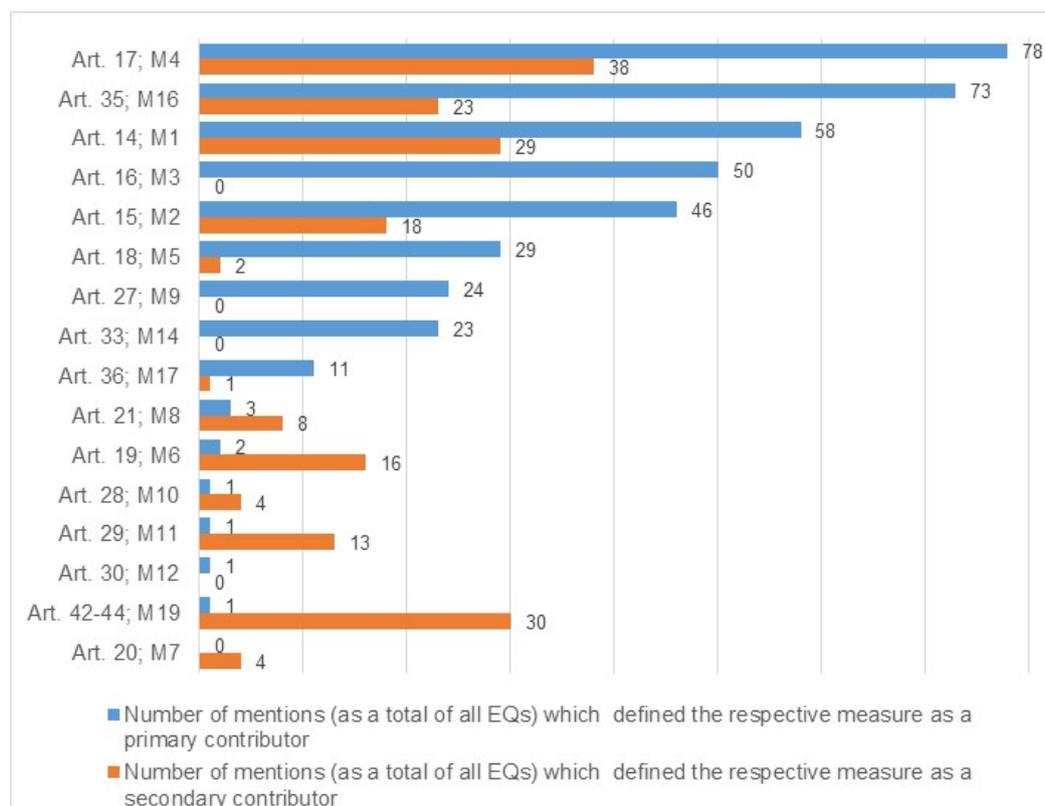
Focus and measures

Under this priority the RDPs:

- offer a combination of measures to improve the competitiveness of primary producers by better integrating them into the agri-food chain (FA 3A);
- help farms to prevent and manage various risks and to restore agricultural production damaged by natural disasters (FA 3B).

The following chart shows the combination of vertical and horizontal measures with primary and secondary contributions – as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, in order to achieve the objectives, set under this priority.

A wide range of measures such as M4 (investments in physical assets), M3 (quality schemes), M5 (restoring agri-cultural production), M9 (producer groups and organisations), M14 (animal welfare), M17 (risk management) contribute to the priority, as well as the horizontal measures M1 (knowledge transfer), M2 (advisory services) and M16 (cooperation).

Figure 7. Priority 3 - Primarily and secondarily contributing measures⁵


Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017); only RDPs which replied to the EQs in the 2017 AIR were considered; the number of mentions may exceed the number of 115 reporting RDPs because all EQs were summed up

Achievements

Under RD Priority 3 around 1.1 billion EUR public funds were spent by the totality of the RDPs by the end of 2016 to support food chain organisation and risk management.

40 RDPs reported around 52,000 agricultural holdings that received support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations.

A significant number of supported holdings were reported by Austria, Poland and UK – Scotland. In Austria, a survey of a sample of selected beneficiaries indicated that investments have had a positive impact on production technology and product quality. The competitiveness of the enterprises was increased.

6% of the EU-28 target value to reach 2.54% of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations was achieved.

21 RDPs reported that around 63,000 agricultural holdings participated in risk management schemes, a significant number in the RDP France National Programme. The evaluation of this RDP stated the relevance of crop insurance as an individualised, accountable, rapid and well-balanced climate risk compensation tool. More than 10% of French farms have benefited from crop insurance assistance in 2016.

⁵ For the exact name of the measures and their frequency see table 3 in annex 1.

9% of the EU-28 target value to reach 5.32% of farms participating in risk management schemes was achieved.

The following results were mentioned more frequently and show interesting aspects of the implementation. These results are, however, not representative for all RDPs:

- Implementation of quality schemes by primary producers have increased.
- The added value of agricultural products of primary producers have increased.
- Participation of farms in risk prevention and management schemes have increased.

4.4 Priority 4: Restoring, Preserving and Enhancing Ecosystems

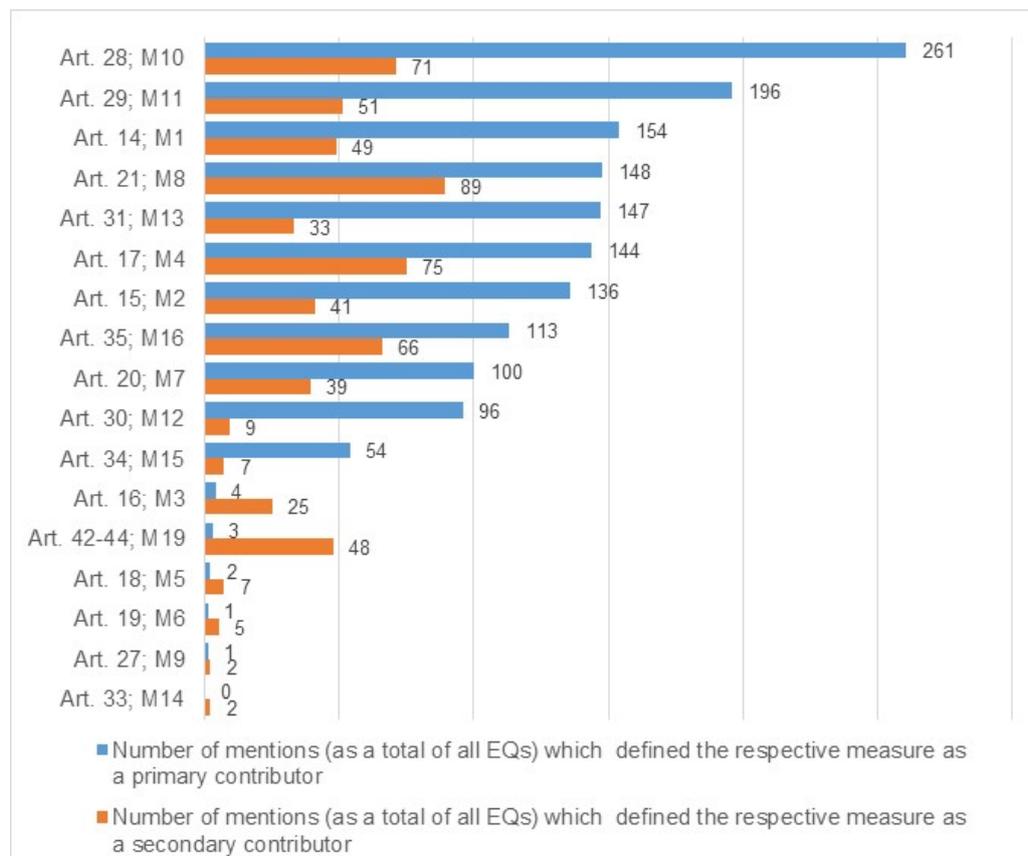
Focus and measures

Under this priority RDPs aim to:

- restore, preserve and enhance biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes (FA 4A);
- improving water management, including fertiliser and pesticide management (FA 4B);
- preventing soil erosion and improving soil management (FA 4C).

The following chart shows the combination of vertical and horizontal measures with primary and secondary contributions, as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, in order to achieve the objectives, set under this priority.

A very broad range of measures such as M10 (agri-environment- climate), M11 (organic farming), M8 (investments in forest area), M13 (ANC), M4 (investments in physical assets), M12 (Natura 2000), M15 (forest conservation) contribute to the priority, as well as the horizontal measures M1 (knowledge transfer), M2 (advisory services) and M16 (cooperation).

Figure 8. Priority 4 - primarily and secondarily contributing measures⁶


Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017); only RDPs which replied to the EQs in the 2017 AIR were considered; the number of mentions may exceed the number of 115 reporting RDPs because all EQs were summed up

A number of RDPs (e.g. in FR, DE, IT, AT, UK) allocated large amounts of funds to RD Priority 4. From the set of applied measures, two are particularly evident in terms of allocated funds: Agri-environment-climate (AEC) payments granted to farmers and land-managers (M10), and payment schemes areas facing specific constraints (M13). A third important measure supports organic farming (M11).

Achievements

Under RD Priority 4 around 15.5 billion EUR public funds were spent by the totality of RDPs by the end of 2016, which represents 22% of the planned public funds.

Key measures as well as related targets under this priority are area-based. The targets are to manage an increasing share of agricultural land and forest to support biodiversity, water management and/or prevent soil erosion.

79% of the RDPs reported results already on management contracts related to agricultural land in the three integrated FAs 4A, 4B and 4C, demonstrating that the measure has already been widely implemented.

With respect to forest land, the implementation has not yet started so broadly. Only 28% of the RDPs report on achievements related to management contracts in the three FAs.

The targets have already been largely achieved in agricultural land in three areas: biodiversity, water management and soil management, while forestry is lagging behind.

⁶ For the exact name of the measures and their frequency see table 4 in annex 1.

By the end of 2016, 0.18% of forest/other wooded area was under management contracts supporting biodiversity. 8% of the EU-28 target of 2.18% has been reached by 2016.

13% of the agricultural land was under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes. This means that the EU-28 target of 17.75% has already been reached at an early stage to a very high extent (75%).

9% of the agricultural land was under management contracts to improve water management. The EU-28 target of 15.1% has already been reached to a higher extent (57%) at this stage.

0.14% of the forestry land was under management contracts to improve water management. 17% of the EU-28 target of 0.81% has already been reached by 2016.

9% of agricultural land was under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion. 60% of the EU-28 target of 14.5% has already been reached 2016.

0.10% of the forestry land was under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion. 8% of the EU-28 target of 1.28% has been reached by 2016.

The following results were mentioned more frequently, however, they are not representative for all RDPs:

- Biodiversity on contracted land has been restored, preserved and enhanced.
- Water quality has improved.
- Soil management has improved.
- Soil erosion has been prevented.

4.5 Priority 5: Resource-efficient, climate-resilient Economy

Focus and measures

Under this priority the RDPs offer a wide range of objectives aiming:

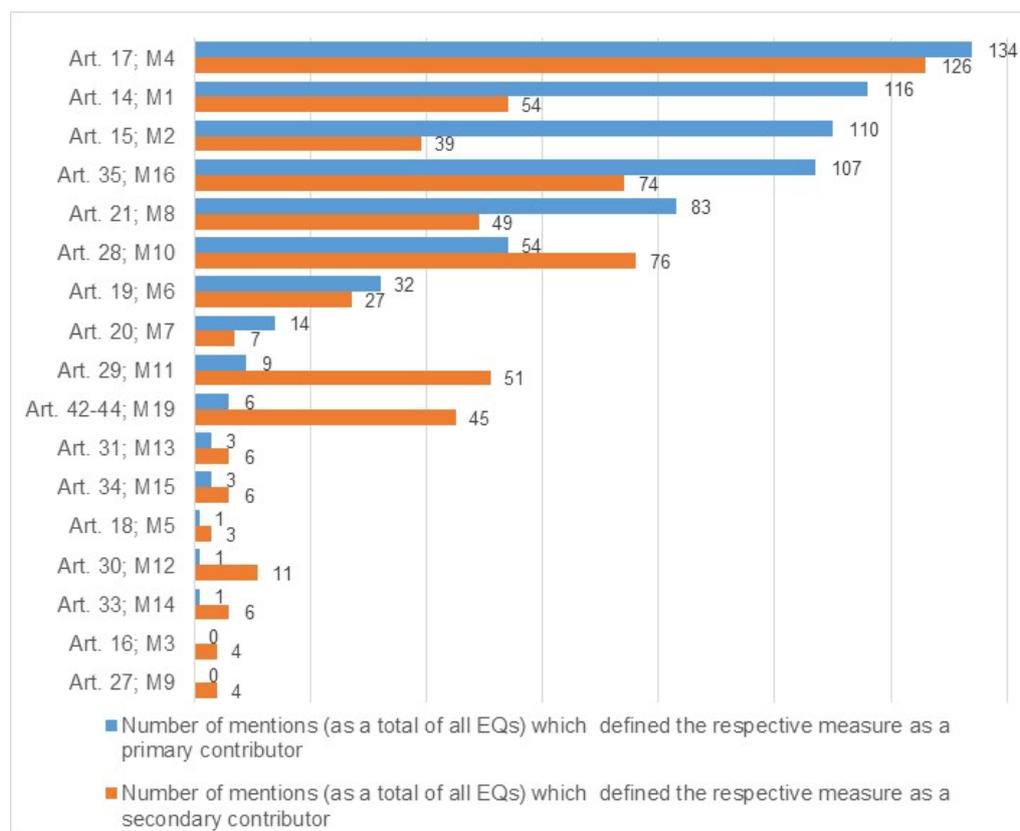
- to increase the efficiency of water use by agriculture mainly through physical investments in more efficient irrigation systems (FA 5A);
- to increase efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing mainly through physical investments in, for example, new or upgraded of machinery (FA 5B);
- to facilitate the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, by-products, wastes and residues other non-food raw materials for the purpose of the bio-economy through a broad mix of measures (FA 5C);
- to reduce greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from the agricultural sector through various measures (FA 5D);
- to foster carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry in many ways (FA 5E).

This can be complemented with measures that enhance the knowledge transfer, training, advise and cooperation.

The following chart shows the combination of vertical and horizontal measures with primary and secondary contributions – as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, in order to achieve the objectives, set under this priority.

Mainly the measures M4 (investments in physical assets), M8 (investments in forest), M10 (agri-environment- climate), M6 (farm and business development), M7 (basic services) contribute to the priority, as well as the horizontal measures M1 (knowledge transfer), M2 (advisory services) and M16 (cooperation).

In RD Priority 5, secondary contributions of other RD priorities play a particularly important role.

Figure 9. Priority 5 - primarily and secondarily contributing measures⁷


Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017); only RDPs which replied to the EQs in the 2017 AIR were considered; the number of mentions may exceed the number of 115 reporting RDPs because all EQs were summed up

Achievements

Under RD Priority 5 around 972 million EUR of public funds were spent by the totality of RDPs by the end of 2016.

13 RDPs reported achievements on more efficient irrigation system concerning a total area of 185,000 hectares. 14% of the EU-28 target to switch 13.02% of irrigated land to more efficient irrigation system was achieved.

18 RDPs reported investments for energy efficiency which make up for 93.6 Million EUR. Roughly 3% of the EU-28 investment target of 2,861 million was achieved.

26 RDPs reported investments in renewable energy production, which total to around 59 Million EUR and which represents around 2% of the EU-28 target value of 2,663 million EUR.

Only a very limited number (7 RDPs) reported investments in live-stock management in view of reducing GHG and/or ammonia emissions. 113,000 livestock units are concerned, most of it in Denmark. 11% of the EU-28 target to reach 0.77% of the total livestock was achieved.

25 RDPs reported results on agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions. The area concerned sums up to 2.3 million hectares. Already 44% of the EU-28 target value of covering 2.95% of total agricultural land was achieved at this early stage of implementation.

⁷ For the exact name of the measures and their frequency see table 5 in annex 1.

A comparably high number (46 RDPs) reported results on agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation. The area concerned totals to 1.7 million hectares. 43% of the EU-28 target value of covering 1.11% of total agricultural and forest land was achieved by end 2016, which is significant progress.

Only a very limited number of RDPs could quantify one or more complementary result indicators on the basis of gross effects. For example, only 10 RDPs, were able by the end of 2016 to demonstrate the amount of renewable energy produced from supported projects.

Many RDPs (12) calculated the reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide.

The following results were mentioned more frequently, however, they are not representative for all RDPs.

- Efficiency in water use by agriculture has increased.
- Efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food processing has increased.
- The supply and use of renewable energy has increased.
- Greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture has been reduced.
- Agricultural and forestry land under enhanced management contract contributing to carbon sequestration has been enlarged.
- Carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry has increased.

4.6 Priority 6: Social Inclusion and Economic Development

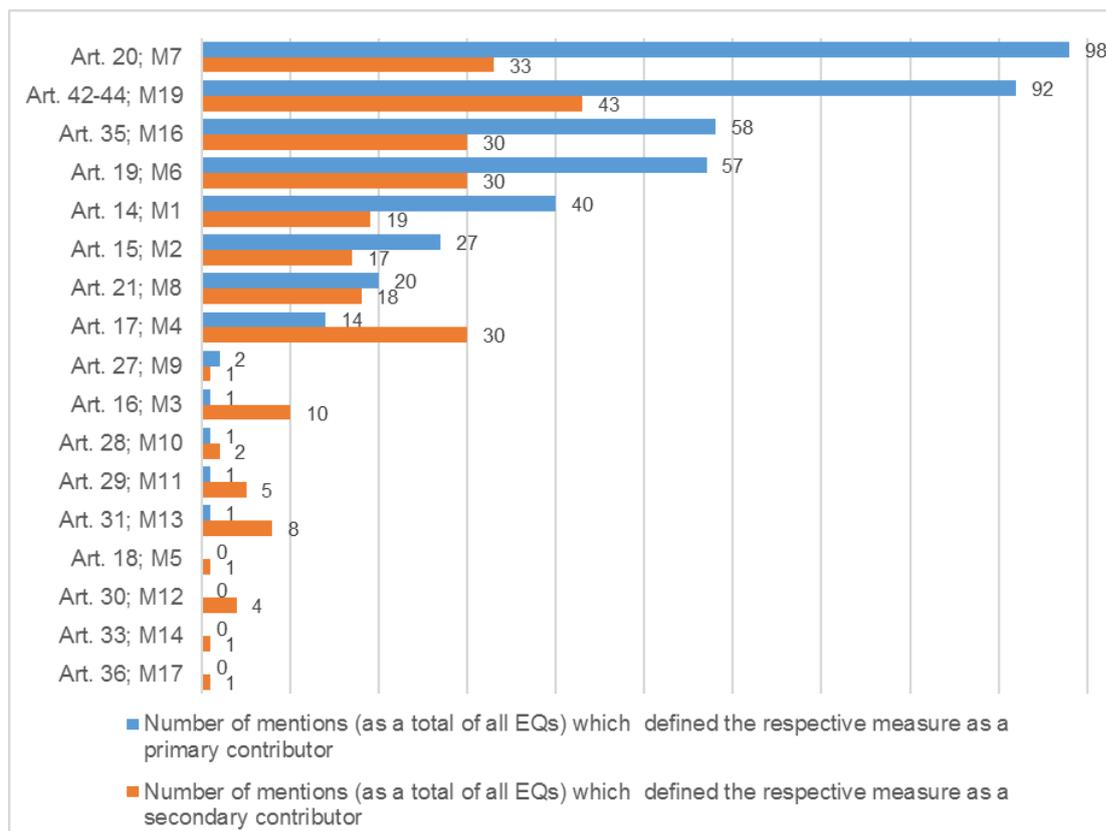
Focus and measures

Under this priority the RDPs offer a wide range of measures aiming to:

- facilitate economic diversification and the creation and development of small and medium sized enterprises as well as job creation. This is supported mainly through business start-up aid for non-agricultural activities in rural areas and investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities (FA 6A);
- to foster local development in rural areas most prominently through CLLD/LEADER and investments for basic services and village renewal. This is complemented by a small number of other measures such as support for cooperation (FA 6B);
- to enhance the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas through support of broadband infrastructure, provision of access to broadband, public e-government solutions (FA 6C).

The following chart shows the combination of vertical and horizontal measures with primary and secondary contributions, as it was presented in the 2017 AIRs, in order to achieve the objectives, set under this priority.

The measures M7 (basic services), M19 (CLLD/LEADER), M6 (farm and business development), M8 (investments in forest) and M4 (investments in physical assets) primarily contribute to the priority, as well as the horizontal measures M1 (knowledge transfer), M2 (advisory services) and M16 (cooperation).

Figure 10. Priority 6 - primarily and secondarily contributing measures⁸


Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017); only RDPs which replied to the EQs in the 2017 AIR were considered; the number of mentions may exceed the number of 115 reporting RDPs because all EQs were summed up

Achievements

Under RD Priority 6 around 593 million EUR of public funds were spent by the totality of RDPs by the end of 2016.

22 RDPs reported that around 1,200 holdings were supported for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas, which represents 2% of the planned EU-28 total value of 54,552 holdings.

Around 1,000 jobs were created/planned in supported projects in rural areas reported by 17 RDPs, which is around 1% of the EU-28 target value of 79,371 jobs created.

In local development, the LEADER measure has already started very well in a significant number of programmes. In 79 RDPs 2,356 Local Action Groups were selected to implement CLLD/LEADER operations. 94% of the planned EU-28 total value of 2,515 Local Action Groups has already been achieved.

Similarly, 91% of the EU-28 target to cover 52.68% of the rural population by local development strategies has been fulfilled.

Around 3,500 CLLD/Leader projects have been supported in 43 RDPs.

LEADER projects lead to job creation as reported by 41 RDPs. 425 created jobs in total are reported, which represents around 1% of the EU-28 target value of 44,034 jobs.

30 RDPs report on improved services/infrastructures, which are of benefit for the rural population. 69% of the EU-28 target value of 17.32% benefitting the rural population has already been achieved at this

⁸ For the exact name of the measures and their frequency see table 6 in annex 1.

early implementation stage. In this case, the high value is biased by double counting of the rural population (e.g. in DE – Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE – Saarland).

In information and communication technologies, a small number of projects could be completed by the end of 2016 due to the longer term infrastructural nature of the measure. For example, in DE – Nordrhein-Westfalen operations were supported to enhance the high-speed broadband network.

The following results were mentioned more frequently, however, they are not representative for all RDPs:

- Jobs have been created.
- Small enterprises have diversified their economic activity.
- Access to services and local infrastructure has increased in rural areas.
- Rural territory and population covered by LAGs has increased.
- Rural people have participated in local actions.
- Employment opportunities have been created via local development strategies.
- Access of rural households to ICT has increased.

5 ANNEX

Table 1. Primary and secondary contributions to the RD Priority 1: fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas

P1	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 35; M16; cooperation	100	70
Art. 14; M1; knowledge transfer and information actions	95	64
Art. 15; M2; advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	53	40
Art. 42-44; M19; support for LEADER local development (CLLD)	7	48
Art. 16; M3; quality schemes for agricultural products and food stuffs	4	2
Art. 29; M11; organic farming	4	4
Art. 17; M4; investments in physical assets	3	22
Art. 28; M10; agri-environment- climate	3	5
Art. 33; M14; animal welfare	2	0
Art. 19; M6; farm and business development	1	11
Art. 20; M7; basic services and village renewal in rural areas	1	3
Art. 30; M12; Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	1	1
Art. 31; M13; payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	1	1
Art. 21; M8; investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	0	8
Art. 27; M9; setting up of producer groups and organisations	0	4

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 2. Primary and secondary contributions to the RD Priority 2: enhancing the viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture, and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable forest management

P2	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 17; M4; investments in physical assets	125	51
Art. 19; M6; farm and business development	117	42
Art. 14; M1; knowledge transfer and information actions (horizontal)	113	27
Art. 15; M2; advisory services, farm management and farm relief services (horizontal)	99	21
Art. 35; M16; cooperation	81	24
Art. 21; M8; investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	16	9

P2	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 31; M13; payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	5	13
Art. 16; M3; quality schemes for agricultural products and food stuffs	2	19
Art. 27; M9; setting up of producer groups and organisations	2	8
Art. 42-44; M19; support for LEADER local development (CLLD)	2	29
Art. 18; M5; restoring agri cultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention	1	6
Art. 20; M7; basic services and village renewal in rural areas	1	6
Art. 29; M11; organic farming	1	10
Art. 33; M14; animal welfare	1	6
Art. 36; M17; risk management	1	2
Art. 40; M18; financing of complementary national direct payments for Croatia	1	0
Art. 28; M10; agri-environment- climate	0	5
Art. 30; M12; Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	0	2

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 3. Primary and secondary contributions to the RD Priority 3: promoting food chain organisation, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture

P3	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 17; M4; investments in physical assets	78	38
Art. 35; M16; cooperation	73	23
Art. 14; M1; knowledge transfer and information actions	58	29
Art. 16; M3; quality schemes for agricultural products and food stuffs	50	0
Art. 15; M2; advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	46	18
Art. 18; M5; restoring agri cultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention	29	2
Art. 27; M9; setting up of producer groups and organisations	24	0
Art. 33; M14; animal welfare	23	0
Art. 36; M17; risk management	11	1
Art. 21; M8; investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	3	8
Art. 19; M6; farm and business development	2	16

P3	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 28; M10; agri-environment- climate	1	4
Art. 29; M11; organic farming	1	13
Art. 30; M12; Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	1	0
Art. 42-44; M19; support for LEADER local development (CLLD)	1	30
Art. 20; M7; basic services and village renewal in rural areas	0	4

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 4. Primary and secondary contributions to the RD Priority 4: restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

P4	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 28; M10; agri-environment- climate	261	71
Art. 29; M11; organic farming	196	51
Art. 14; M1; knowledge transfer and information actions	154	49
Art. 21; M8; investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	148	89
Art. 31; M13; payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	147	33
Art. 17; M4; investments in physical assets	144	75
Art. 15; M2; advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	136	41
Art. 35; M16; cooperation	113	66
Art. 20; M7; basic services and village renewal in rural areas	100	39
Art. 30; M12; Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	96	9
Art. 34; M15; forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation	54	7
Art. 16; M3; quality schemes for agricultural products and food stuffs	4	25
Art. 42-44; M19; support for LEADER local development (CLLD)	3	48
Art. 18; M5; restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention	2	7
Art. 19; M6; farm and business development	1	5
Art. 27; M9; setting up of producer groups and organisations	1	2
Art. 33; M14; animal welfare	0	2

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 5. Primary and secondary contributions to the RD Priority 5: promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors

P5	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 17; M4; investments in physical assets	134	126
Art. 14; M1; knowledge transfer and information actions	116	54
Art. 15; M2; advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	110	39
Art. 35; M16; cooperation	107	74
Art. 21; M8; investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	83	49
Art. 28; M10; agri-environment-climate	54	76
Art. 19; M6; farm and business development	32	27
Art. 20; M7; basic services and village renewal in rural areas	14	7
Art. 29; M11; organic farming	9	51
Art. 42-44; M19; support for LEADER local development (CLLD)	6	45
Art. 31; M13; payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	3	6
Art. 34; M15; forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation	3	6
Art. 18; M5; restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention	1	3
Art. 30; M12; Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	1	11
Art. 33; M14; animal welfare	1	6
Art. 16; M3; quality schemes for agricultural products and food stuffs	0	4
Art. 27; M9; setting up of producer groups and organisations	0	4

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 6. Primary and secondary contributions to the RD Priority 6: promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas

P6	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a primary contributor	Number of mentions (as a total of all EQs) which defined the respective measure as a secondary contributor
Art. 20; M7; basic services and village renewal in rural areas	98	33
Art. 42-44; M19; support for LEADER local development (CLLD)	92	43
Art. 35; M16; cooperation	58	30
Art. 19; M6; farm and business development	57	30
Art. 14; M1; knowledge transfer and information actions	40	19
Art. 15; M2; advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	27	17
Art. 21; M8; investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	20	18
Art. 17; M4; investments in physical assets	14	30
Art. 27; M9; setting up of producer groups and organisations	2	1
Art. 16; M3; quality schemes for agricultural products and food stuffs	1	10
Art. 28; M10; agri-environment- climate	1	2
Art. 29; M11; organic farming	1	5
Art. 31; M13; payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	1	8
Art. 18; M5; restoring agri cultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention	0	1
Art. 30; M12; Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	0	4
Art. 33; M14; animal welfare	0	1
Art. 36; M17; risk management	0	1

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 7. List of common target indicators defined for the FAs and achievements by the end of 2016

FA	Target Indicator name	Realised 2016	% of achievement (completed)	Target 2023
1A	T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP	0,08	2%	3,97
1B	T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...)	795,00	5%	15.235,00
1C	T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013	258.108,00	7%	3.826.119,00
2A	T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation	0,30	11%	2,73
2B	T5: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers	0,10	7%	1,47
3A	T6: percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations	0,16	6%	2,54
3B	T7: percentage of farms participating in risk management schemes	0,49	9%	5,32
4A	T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity	0,18	8%	2,18
4A	T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes	13,24	75%	17,75
4B	T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management	8,57	57%	15,10
4B	T11: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management	0,14	17%	0,81
4C	T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion	8,72	60%	14,50
4C	T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion	0,10	8%	1,28
5A	T14: percentage of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation system	1,84	14%	13,02
5B	T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€)	93.637.115,07	3%	2.861.246.986,74
5C	T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€)	58.892.679,30	2%	2.663.036.865,96
5D	T17: percentage of LU concerned by investments in live-stock management in view of reducing GHG and/or ammonia emissions	0,09	11%	0,77
	T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions	1,29	44%	2,95
5E	T19: percentage of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation	0,47	43%	1,11
6A	T20: Jobs created in supported projects	990,56	1%	79.371,00

FA	Target Indicator name	Realised 2016	% of achievement (completed)	Target 2023
6B	T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies	48,15	91%	52,68
	T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures	11,94	69%	17,32
	T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader)	424,84	1%	44.034,00
6C	T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT)	0,49	8%	6,13

Source: EAFRD AIR Overview 2017

Table 8. Financial absorption rate by FA by the end of 2016

FA	Total Public amount in the Financing plan	Total Public expenditures by end 2016	Absorption rate %
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d) = (c) / (b)
2A	25.441.848.739,37	1.814.494.727,62	7,1%
2B	6.943.656.015,50	340.087.569,32	4,9%
2C	404.906.383,21		
P2	32.790.411.138,08	2.154.582.296,94	6,6%
3A	11.298.859.409,62	685.914.261,04	6,1%
3B	4.949.627.715,99	428.152.118,04	8,7%
P3	16.248.487.125,61	1.114.066.379,08	6,9%
P4	70.920.630.215,08	15.547.589.298,72	21,9%
5A	3.268.181.908,46	52.905.367,46	1,6%
5B	1.198.866.239,78	32.294.737,38	2,7%
5C	1.315.554.143,21	21.700.222,64	1,6%
5D	2.202.010.541,49	278.330.524,57	12,6%
5E	3.928.039.665,83	586.895.033,16	14,9%
5F	6.660.379,00		
P5	11.919.312.877,77	972.125.885,21	8,2%
6A	4.188.802.704,38	62.990.550,62	1,5%
6B	17.434.476.863,95	515.810.006,19	3,0%
6C	1.824.217.477,93	14.290.389,39	0,8%
P6	23.447.497.046,26	593.090.946,20	2,5%
DM / TA			
TOTAL (without TA)	155.326.338.402,80	20.381.454.806,15	13,1%

Source: EAFRD AIR Overview 2017

Table 9. Reported (major or medium) achievements by FA in the annual implementation reports 2017 of the RDPs

FA	Expected result	Frequency "Major achievement reported"	Frequency "Medium achievement reported"
1A	A variety of partners is involved in the EIP operational groups	2	2
1A	The transfer of innovation to the final beneficiaries contributes to the development of innovation within farms / enterprises	1	1
1A	Cooperation projects are innovative and based on developed knowledge	1	3
1B	Cooperation operations between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance have been implemented	2	4
1B	Long term collaboration between agriculture, food production and forestry entities and institutions for research and innovation has been established	2	3
1C	The number of rural people who have finalised lifelong learning and vocational training in the agriculture and forestry sectors has increased	3	7
2A	The agricultural output per annual working unit of supported agricultural holdings has increased	3	9
2A	Farms were modernized	5	19
2A	Farms were restructured	3	13
2B	Adequately skilled farmers entered into the agricultural sector	1	8
2B	The share of adequately skilled young farmers in the agricultural sector increased	3	11
3A	Implementation of quality schemes by primary producers has increased	2	4
3A	The added value of agricultural products of primary producers has increased	1	1
3B	Participation of farms in risk prevention and management schemes has increased	1	6
4A	Biodiversity on contracted land has been restored, preserved and enhanced	12	23
4B	Water quality has improved	8	15
4C	Soil management has improved	9	13
4C	Soil erosion has been prevented	5	8
5A	Efficiency in water use by agriculture has increased	2	5
5B	Efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food processing has increased	1	6
5C	Supply and use of renewable energy has increased	4	4
5D	Greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture have been reduced	4	5
5E	Agricultural and forestry land under enhanced management contract contributing to carbon sequestration has been enlarged	3	10

FA	Expected result	Frequency "Major achievement reported"	Frequency "Medium achievement reported"
5E	Carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry has increased	3	9
6A	Jobs have been created	1	5
6A	Small enterprises diversified their economic activity	1	2
6B	Access to services and local infrastructure improved in rural areas	4	6
6B	Rural territory and population covered by LAGs increased	14	10
6B	Rural people participated in local actions	4	6
6B	Employment opportunities were created via local development strategies	3	2
6C	Access of rural households to ICT increased	1	2

Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

Table 10. List of programme specific FAs and programme specific evaluations questions of the RDPs 2014-2020 (by the end of 2016)

MS	Programme specific FA	Programme specific evaluation question
AT	Animal Welfare	To what extent have interventions under the rural development program helped to increase the welfare of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs by encouraging animal welfare?
BE-Wallonia	LEADER	Has the strategy developed throughout the territory been monitored, or has it evolved during the implementation of the program?
BE-Wallonia	LEADER	Evaluation question specific to the program: Do the results of the different projects contribute to the achievement of the objectives developed in the strategy? How ?
BE-Wallonia	LEADER	Has the implementation of the strategy had any impact on the governance of the territory (enhanced partnership between municipalities, importance of public and private actors, development of cooperation, etc.)?
CZ	This PSEQ is not linked to a programme specific FA but it is a thematic evaluation question	To what extent is the mechanism of the process of RDP implementation sufficient from the point of synergies/complementarities with other programmes? It is possible to make it more effective? Were all planned synergies/complementarities implemented?
CZ	Improvement of economic performance of forestry	To what extent have the RDP interventions contributed to the enhancement of economic performance of forest holdings, mainly with respect to increased market participation and orientation?
CZ	This PSEQ belongs to FA 3A in addition to the CEQ and it is only focused on animal welfare	To what extent have the RDP interventions contributed to enhancement of the animal welfare?
CZ	This PSEQ is linked to FA 2A as additional to CEQ	How has the implementation of complex land consolidation contributed to resolving of land ownership rights and improving the country side?
CZ	Improvement of economic performance of forestry	the 2nd PSEQ lined to the specific FA: "To what extent have the RDP interventions contributed to increase of density of forest road network?"
ES - Pais Vasco	Supporting cooperation, innovation and the development of knowledge Strengthening links between agriculture food production, and forestry and research	Cooperation: What is the weight of the innovation broker in the cooperation processes? and To what extent do the operational groups (EIP and outside EIP) contribute to the development of rural areas?
ES - Pais Vasco	Improvement of economic performance of forests	How farms have improved their competitive situation after receiving RDP support? and To what extent the aid diversify the agricultural structure of the Basque Country?
ES - Pais Vasco	Not applicable	Not applicable

MS	Programme specific FA	Programme specific evaluation question
ES - Pais Vasco	4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes 4B Improving water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management 4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	How has the RDP favoured the restoration, preservation and improvement of biodiversity and landscape? What has been the impact of the RDP on the grasslands? How has water management been improved, as well as its quality in relation to the use of fertilizers and pesticides? To what extent does the PDR improve the management of fertilizers and pesticides, taking into account the little influence of the previous RDP in this matter? Have the RDP measures contributed to an improvement in soil management and quality? Does the RDP contribute to avoiding abandonment of farming? Does the RDP contribute to avoiding shrub invasion and degradation of agricultural land?
ES - Pais Vasco	Supply and use of renewable sources of energy	To what extent have the investments supported use of renewable energy sources? To what extent does RDP favour the use of waste as an energy source?
FR-Alsace	Improving the viability and competitiveness of forest enterprises and promoting sustainable forest management	Not mentioned
FR-PACA	Promoting the competitiveness of the wood sector and the sustainable management of forests	This evaluation question was not formulated
FR-Rhone Alpes	Promoting the competitiveness of the timber industry in the context of dynamic and sustainable forest management	This evaluation question was not formulated
HR	Improve the sustainability and competitiveness of forest enterprises and promote Sustainable Forest management	To what extent did the RDP interventions affect the improvement of sustainability and competitiveness of forestry companies and promotion of sustainable management of forests?
IT-National Programme	Not mentioned	Delivery system of the programme; Management and control system
LT	The development of economic value of forestry and increase in the area covered by forest	To what extent Programme interventions have contributed to the development of economic value of forestry and increase in the area covered by forest?
RO	Improving the economic performance of forests	Not mentioned
SI	4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes 4B Improving water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management 4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	What is the effect of the Measure 10 on adapting and mitigating climate change effects in agriculture?
SI	Not identified. Evaluation topic: Effect of M04 on qualification species and habitat types	To what extent do investments in fixed assets affect the qualification species and habitat types?

MS	Programme specific FA	Programme specific evaluation question
SI	Not defined in AIR. Evaluation topic: environmental objectives	To what extent has the RDP 2014-2020 achieved the environmental objectives, which are defined in the Environmental Report for the RDP 2014-2020?
SI	Not defined. Evaluation topic: Communication tools	To what extent has a specific communication tool affected the implementation of measures or the visibility of RDP (and thus also of the EAFRD) or to what extent is the communication tool appropriate for the beneficiaries/recipients?
SI	Not defined. Evaluation topic: Advisory services	To what extent has the implementation of advisory services within the Sub-measure 2.1 "Support to help benefitting from the use of advisory service" affected the satisfaction of the users with the delivered service?
SI	4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes 4B Improving water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management 4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	How much and in what way has the Measure 10 contributed to the awareness and knowledge about the importance of preserving the environment (biodiversity, waters, soil) and sustainable farming?
SI	Not defined. Evaluation topic: Forestry and participation of beneficiaries	To what extent have beneficiaries participated in the measures of RDP 2014-2020, which are linked to forestry and what was the implementation of those measures (effect of the measures on the status of the qualification species and habitat types)?
SI	4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes 4B Improving water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management 4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	What is the effect of M10 (operation 14 Rearing of domestic animals in the areas of appearance of large carnivores) on preserving of rearing (preserving of grasslands) and on co-existence with carnivores (reduction of damages to the farmed animals by carnivores - bear and wolf)
SI	4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes 4B Improving water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management 4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	What is the effect of the implementation of operations Special grassland habitats, Grassland habitats of butterflies, Bird habitats in humid extensive meadows, and Litter meadows within the Measure 10 on preserving the biodiversity in the areas, where these operations are implemented?
SI	4A Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes 4B Improving water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management	Are there displacements of effects and impacts between the individual operations of the AEC measure?

MS	Programme specific FA	Programme specific evaluation question
	4C Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	
SK	Improvement of economic performance of forests	To what extent have the RDP interventions contributed to the improvement of economic performance, restructalisation and modernisation of forest holdings?
UK-England	RDP: Implementation and Effectiveness	To what extent has the RDPE been; well implemented, effective in delivering desired impacts, and represented good value for money (vfm)?
UK-England	Countryside Productivity: Implementation, Effectiveness and Value for Money	To what extent has the RDPE countryside productivity scheme been; well implemented, effective in delivering desired impacts, and represented good vfm?
UK-England	Growth Programme: Implementation, Effectiveness and Value for Money	To what extent has the RDPE Growth Programme scheme been well implemented, effective in delivering desired impacts, and represented good vfm?
UK-England	Farm Recovery Fund: Implementation, Effectiveness and Value for Money	To what extent has the RDPE Farm Recovery Fund scheme been well implemented, effective in delivering desired impacts, and represented good vfm?
UK-England	Environmental Land Management: Implementation, Effectiveness and Value for money	To what extent has the RDPE Environmental Land Management scheme been well implemented, effective in delivering desired impacts, and represented good vfm?
UK-England	LEADER: Implementation, Effectiveness and Value for money	To what extent has the RDPE LEADER scheme been well implemented, effective in delivering desired impacts, and represented good vfm?

Source: SFC2014 (last update: 26.07.2017)

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