

3 Methodology

3.1 General approach, scope and timeframe

The mid-term evaluation of the EU FAP consists of two parts:

- (1) a description of the implementation; and
- (2) an evaluation of the Action Plan.

The general conceptual approach to the study follows the general EU guidelines for evaluation, as outlined in Figure 3. The description of the implementation presents what activities have been taken, by whom and using which resources, as well as what outputs (concrete products and services) have been produced during the period of analysis. Evaluation concerns effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation, i.e. the implementation is assessed in relation to which results have already been achieved and which results and impacts are expected to be achieved by the EU FAP. Furthermore evaluation concerns also the relevance of the Action Plan, in other words the Action Plan is assessed in relation to the needs, problems and issues that the EU FAP is expected to address.

The evaluation covers the EU FAP – i.e. 18 Key Actions and 55 activities defined in the EU FAP work programme – at the Community level and in the 27 EU Member States. The description of the Community level implementation is based on the progress reports presented by the Commission as a part of the Standing Forestry Committee annual work programmes, and on the information collected by evaluation questionnaires and interviews. Member State activities – inclusive of any additional EU FAP activities – are investigated in a survey as part of the implementation review.

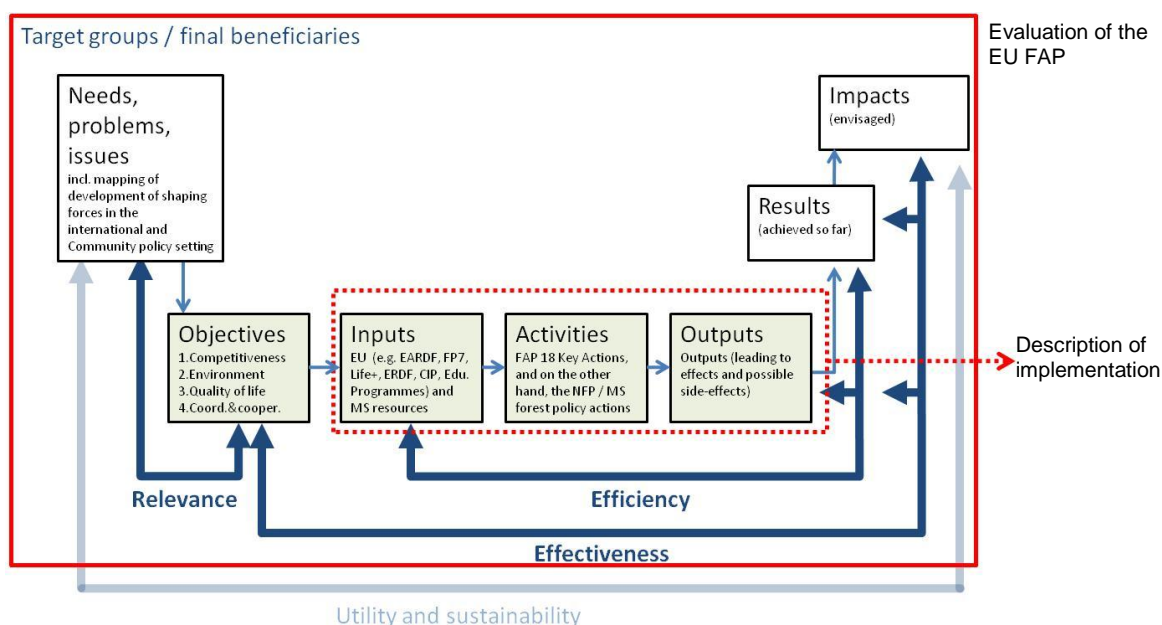


Figure 3. EU FAP mid-term evaluation: the scope of the implementation review and the evaluation.

The period of analysis is from the beginning of the implementation of the EU FAP (January 2007) up until the mid-term review and the time of data collection by the evaluation surveys (March 2009). More recent activities and developments up to June 2009 have been added when they are relevant for the description. Stakeholder involvement and activities parallel to the EU FAP are included to the extent that such references are made in the documents reviewed and in the surveys carried out for the mid-term evaluation.

3.2 Intervention logic model, definitions and judgement criteria

The Intervention Logic Model is used as the method of analysis. It depicts causal relationships between the Outputs of the EU FAP (including relevant connection with inputs and activities) and its expected Outcomes (results) as presented in Figure 4.

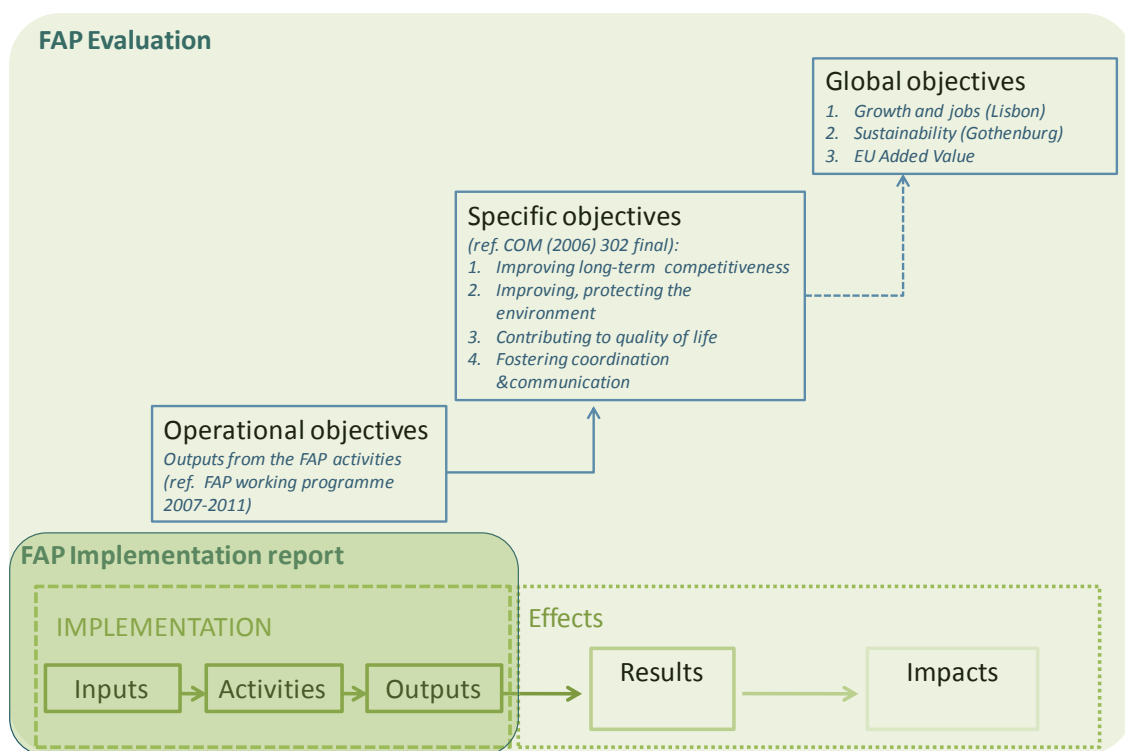


Figure 4. The intervention logic approach for the EU FAP mid-term evaluation.

The two key features of the framework – implementation reporting and evaluation – are closely connected. The definition of the generic framework for the intervention logic linking the intended objectives and the EU FAP actions builds on what is already in place as defined in the work programme 2007-2011 – i.e. the Key Actions, expected results, as well as the activities and the main actors to implement the Action Plan.

While the implementation review is performed to compile information on the amount and nature of activities carried out to implement the proposed actions, the evaluation is performed against the *expected outcomes and impacts* as defined in the EU FAP specific objectives and the global objectives. The Intervention Logic Model is used to

illustrate the EU FAP logical relationship between the Plan, activities and outputs and the expected results and effects as defined in the Objectives, Key Actions and activities of the EU FAP, in other words, the logic how the measures are expected to lead and contribute to the targeted objectives.

The evaluation is constructed in accordance with the 11 Evaluation Questions grouped under six Evaluation Themes assessing the *effectiveness*, *efficiency* and *relevance* of the Action Plan. Judgements are based on the above intervention logic approach.

The Evaluation Questions concerning *efficiency* and *effectiveness* are set as to what extent the activities of specific Key Action(s) of the Forest Action Plan contributing to a specific EU FAP objective have been *carried out so far effectively and efficiently*, or to what extent the activities of specific Key Action(s) of the Forest Action Plan *carried out so far have been effective and efficient* in contributing to a specific EU FAP objective. The Evaluation Question concerning *relevance* is defined as to assess the EU FAP in relation to the *needs that the Plan was meant to address*. The approach to judging effectiveness, efficiency and relevance is as follows:

- **Effectiveness** refers to the extent to which the EU FAP objectives and intended results are achieved or are expected to be achieved. Based on the inventory of activities evidence is gathered about results and effects from the activities. Evidence is collected both from the secondary sources and from the perceptions of the Leading Actors implementing the Action Plan (the Commission departments and services, and the Member States) as well as from the stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by the Action Plan.
- **Efficiency** refers to the extent to which outputs and/or the desired effects are achieved with the lowest possible use of resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.). The Action Plan indicates existing financial instruments which can be used in implementing the activities (ref. Commission staff working document, Annex to COM(2006) 302 final, p.23). However, no financial targets are set in the action plan documentation. Information collection uses reviews on secondary sources (financing programmes) and information from the Leading Actors and the stakeholders. The perceptions of Leading Actors as well as stakeholders on good practices and/or shortcomings in the implementation are used to illustrate the assessment of efficiency.
- The question of **relevance** is approached from three angles: (1) relevance of *issues* (the EU FAP Objectives including also investigation of new emerging issues); (2) relevance of *instruments* (Key Actions and activities including also investigation of any activities missing from the Action Plan); and (3) relevance of the *organisational set-up*. These themes are approached by expert perspective of the evaluation team, by perceptions of the Leading Actors implementing the plan (the Commission and the Member States), as well as by the feedback from the stakeholders.

3.3 Data and information sources

The mid-term evaluation of the EU FAP is carried out after only two years of implementation, and this limits the analysis and assessment of impacts and realisation of the expected (or other) effects – e.g. measures from specific studies and reports to implementation require time before results from activities by expected target groups (e.g. policy and decision makers or the stakeholders) can be demonstrated. The EU FAP has no specific resources allocated for implementation and no clearly defined financial or other quantified targets, and therefore the quantitative data available for analysis is limited. Assessment needs to lean on qualitative analysis and information and assessments collected directly e.g. from the Leading Actors implementing the EU FAP. The Leading Actors are defined in the EU FAP work programme 2007-2011 i.e. they are the Commission, the Standing Forestry Committee and the Member States. The feedback from stakeholders is used to validate the information and assessment at the Community level, and at the national and sub-national levels.

The data and information collection is based on document and database reviews and information collection by surveys designed for the mid-term evaluation.

Document reviews cover the official documentation of the EU FAP and its implementation. Some of the documents are publicly available, and some are not publicly available. The Commission has delivered for the evaluation team e.g. meeting and working group materials. The evaluation team has had available the meeting documentations of the Standing Forestry Committee (June 2006 – February 2009). Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (March 2004 – February 2009) and the Inter-services' Group on Forestry (September 2006 – February 2009). Reviews of the official documents of the European Council and the European Parliament are based on the internet-based document registers, i.e. only the publicly available materials. Also materials from relevant stakeholders, including the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, have been reviewed. Furthermore, information on activities carried out has also been collected from the databases of the financing instruments which were indicated in the EU FAP.

Specific information collection tools (i.e. survey and interview questionnaires) were designed for three target groups: (1) representatives of the Commission; (2) Member States; and (3) stakeholders.

The Commission is a Leading Actor in the implementation of the EU FAP, and the interview questionnaire was constructed so that it goes through all EU FAP activities in detail. The level of detail was approached in all interviews, but in practice, the interviews concentrated on questions about the themes and specific Key Actions that the interviewee's work relates to. Consequently the information collected presents descriptions of the implementation and self-assessment of the progress made as well as assessment of the involvement of other Leading Actors (i.e. other Commission departments and the Member States) and stakeholders in the specific EU FAP objectives or Key Actions.

In total 14 Commission departments and services were contacted for the assessment, and interview/questionnaire responses were received from DG AGRI, DG ENV, DG ENTR, DG ESTAT, DG RTD, DG EMPL, DG TREN, DG TRADE, DG SANCO, JRC, DG DEV and DG REGIO. The response from Commission Directorates General shows that many of the DGs are actively involved in the implementation of the EU FAP, which is certainly also due to the EU FAP itself. Though information and perceptions were collected from several departments, the evaluation report does not distinguish which department has been active in which Key Action or given which assessment.

The Member State survey consisted of two parts: (1) a detailed inventory of the EU FAP Key Actions and activities where the Member States are indicated as Leading Actors in the EU FAP work programme; and (2) assessment questions on effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the EU FAP, including the relationship of the national forest programme and national forest policy to the EU FAP. The survey questionnaire was distributed through the contact persons for the Member State representatives in the Standing Forestry Committee.

All 27 Member States were contacted for the survey, and a response was received from 24 Member States (AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK and UK) – responses were not received from Portugal, Malta and Belgium. Together with the status of implementation, the Member States were also requested to specify the most important measures in their country contributing to achievement of the EU FAP objectives. The level of detail in the Member States' responses varies considerably. A number of respondents pointed out that it is difficult to indicate activities at the national level that were implemented specifically due to the EU FAP. Rather, the activities were ongoing – in many cases, for several years already – and they would have taken place also without the Action Plan, even though they now contribute to the objectives defined in the EU FAP. As a consequence, the resulting list of activities in the Member States is not exhaustive, but rather gives a sample of activities and types of activities carried out within the objectives of the EU FAP. Member State assessments of the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the EU FAP provide feedback to the Community level implementation i.e. implementation by the Commission as a Leading Actor, implementation by the Member States as Leading Actors, and involvement of the stakeholders in the EU FAP as a whole.

The stakeholder questionnaire was more general than the questionnaires for the representatives of the Commission and Member States. The questionnaire included assessment questions on effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the EU FAP. Over 70 stakeholder organisations were contacted, mainly based on the list of contacts of the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork. A total of 31 responses were received. These stakeholder responses represent: producers (16); traders, operators, industry and workers (8); environmental organisations (2); and other stakeholders (5). Other stakeholders include mainly research and technology related organisations, e.g. COST and FTP, and various interests, e.g. the European Economic and Social Committee EESC. As defined by the respondents themselves, the stakeholder responses reflect both the level of European federations (8 responses from representatives of Brussels-based offices and 14 responses from representatives of other regional/international federations) and the level of national federations/associations (9 responses).

To allow comparison of the assessments by the three target groups, parts of the questionnaires were identical for all three groups.

All responses were invited as an expert assessment, thus no official statements were requested from the organisations. This affects the quality of information, and consequently the nature of conclusions that can be drawn from the assessments. The assessments cannot be directly generalised to cover the organisation or e.g. the group which the individual respondent represents. The level of detail and explanation of the views given vary considerably in the written questionnaire responses. This needs to be taken into account when reading the analysis for the evaluation questions.

In order to improve the traceability of how the judgements are concluded and to show evidence for the statements made, Chapter 5 indicates the number of responses, on which statements made in the analysis are based. Summing-up the assessments for the analysis in this way requires generalisation of the responses. The self-assessments of the Leading Actors are included in the judgements, and feedback from other actors and the stakeholders is given in order to show whether the statements given can be verified. Conclusions made in the analysis are based on the evaluators' external view and expert opinion, unless specifically otherwise indicated.