Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal, local development and jobs in rural areas

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aims and Approach

The aim of this evaluation was to assess how different Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) measures and instruments affect generational renewal (GR) in rural areas, with a secondary focus on rural jobs.

The evaluation focused on CAP instruments and measures having both direct and indirect impacts on generational renewal in rural areas. It has in particular assessed the impact of young farmer supplements to Direct Payments in Pillar 1; young farmer business start-up aid in Pillar 2 (Measure 6.1), Pillar 2 investment measures when modulated in favour of YF (e.g. M4.1), supporting measures which are tailored to accompany them (e.g. M1 training, M2 advice, M16 co-operation); and brief comparison of the 2007-2013 early retirement measure. It has also covered CAP measures promoting wider rural GR, wherever this goal is explicit in targeting or selection /eligibility criteria (e.g. under LEADER, Measure 7 (basic services in rural areas), or Measures 6.2-6.3 (business start up). In overview, the ‘CAP measures relevant to generational renewal’ vary between countries and regions according to the specific choices of Programming Authorities. The evaluation covers the programming period from 2014-2020 (although earlier evidence is also cited, where relevant), and all EU-28 Member States (MS).

The challenge to foster ‘balanced territorial development’ is enshrined in EU policy in the Lisbon Treaty and Europe 2020 Strategy. Within this, rural vitality – ‘a living countryside’ – has been an increasing concern of structural and agricultural policies since the 1970s. The EU has an ageing population and in the farm sector, this is more visible: older people account for 31% of the farming population and 55% of EU farmers are 55 or older. The Commission Communication ‘The Future of Food and Farming’, 29 November 2017 states strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas as a key objective of the CAP post-2020, in two main aspects: 1) growth and jobs; and 2) generational renewal; in rural areas.

The methodology adopted a mixed-method, triangulated approach with five main elements:

- EU level informed opinion - literature review, selected key stakeholder interviews and an online survey of MS administrations accessed via ENRD contact points;
- EU level data analysis - exploring relations between context, input and impact indicators of the CMEF, including: maps of key variables; correlation analyses; econometric multicriteria analysis (MCA); and generating two rural typologies at NUTS 3 level which influenced case study selection and supported identification and estimation of certain impacts;
- Case-based detailed analysis of causal effects, delivery approaches and their impacts, efficiency and added value in case studies covering seven contrasting Member States (France, Belgium-Flanders, Italy, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Ireland);
- Additional, focused quantitative analyses: counterfactual analysis of FADN panel data in France and Italy to assess the impact of YF aids upon farm performance; and CGE-based modelling to examine the implications of GR expenditure upon rural employment, based in Poland but considering its wider EU relevance;
- Triangulation via comparative analysis of case study findings; EU level evidence and modelling results; and validation in seven workshops at national level, and three workshops at EU level involving stakeholders and policy officials - two hosted by ENRD.

Case studies analysed material at national, regional and local (NUTS 3) levels. This included secondary sources (previous evaluations, research), interviews with policy officers, experts, stakeholders and beneficiaries, and primary data on delivery and
beneficiary impacts, plus examples of good practice in policy design/delivery, innovation and coordination.

The study provided answers to 17 Evaluation Study Questions (ESQs) specified in the Terms of Reference. ESQs were grouped under the following themes: Effectiveness and Relevance; Efficiency; Coherence and EU Added Value, as well as overall performance.

Effectiveness covered the impact of YF measures on GR (ESQ 3); also the impact of CAP GR measures upon key factors including: intergenerational knowledge transfer and innovation (ESQ 2), social capital, infrastructure and governance (ESQ 4); rural jobs, their quality and durability (ESQs 5, 13 and 15); and access to land, capital and knowledge (ESQs 12, 16). Efficiency questions addressed the efficiency of delivery of CAP GR measures and the nature of administrative burdens (ESQs 6, 8). Coherence included the internal coherence of CAP GR measures and the whole CAP (ESQ 9); coherence with other non-CAP EU policies (ESQ 10) and with non-EU policies and external factors (ESQs 11, 14). Overall performance included the effectiveness of the whole CAP in promoting GR (ESQ 1), the efficiency of its indirect impacts upon Quality of Life, and EU added value for GR (ESQ 7, 17).

**Study Findings**

**Conclusions on overall effectiveness and relevance**

**Overall impact of the whole CAP upon GR:** The study found evidence that the CAP as a whole has a positive effect in fostering generational renewal, particularly in agriculture, which varies in extent from significant to only weakly effective between different MS and territories. Differences in the magnitude of impact are determined by a combination of the underlying socio-economic and cultural context, also CAP instrument selection and measure design, as well as delivery choices and provision. The best evidence of sustained and positive impact is in MS and regions in which a variety of measures and instruments is used in complementary ways, including funding and investment aids for business start-ups, advice and training, incentives for collaborative institutional, legal and/or fiscal arrangements easing inter-generational transfer, also broader support for rural services, infrastructure and quality of life. FADN counterfactual analysis in Italy and France demonstrated the additionality of CAP YF aid in enhancing farm performance and business resilience.

In respect of non-agricultural GR (encouraging young people to live and work in rural areas), the study found less evidence overall concerning CAP impacts, which is likely because this specific goal is less prioritised, despite significant need being evident in many situations, and because of the strong influence of non-CAP factors. However, where CAP resources are focused upon non-farm GR, principally through LEADER and other Pillar 2 measures including M7 and non-farm elements of M6; significant and positive impacts at local level were found.

The CAP measures most relevant for GR vary between countries and territories within countries, reflecting the different barriers and opportunities for GR in each, as well as the choices of managing authorities. The case studies and econometric analysis suggest that CAP YF measures have some ability to promote rural vitality in marginal rural territories suffering economic and demographic decline, poor infrastructure and services, with low economic diversification and little value-added in agriculture and forestry; particularly when they are delivered with good supporting advice. However, in some situations the impact of CAP YF aid is constrained by these other limitations, often compounded by wider economic and cultural disincentives to farm. Where this is the case, farmers, experts and policy makers in case studies, also previous research and EU level evidence, suggest that parallel approaches which support broader rural development, more diverse economies and quality of life are needed.

The study found that CAP GR measures in agriculture are very effective in cases where complementary national, regional and local policies support and enhance GR. These include institutional mechanisms and fiscal incentives to increase land mobility and ease the process of inter-generational transfer for older, as well as younger, generations. Examples include creating farm partnerships; incentivising share-farming and other
collective business models; providing help with retirement income planning and tax breaks for the gradual transfer of assets; and using land banks or creating new non-profit organisations to consolidate and re-let landholdings to new entrants. Older farmers may be disincentivised to transfer their farms to a younger generation if their access to income and a reasonable quality of life depends upon continuing receipt of CAP pillar 1 aids. Initiatives using ‘soft’ approaches including awareness-raising, advice and planning for successful handover may also help.

It is too early to identify clear evidence of the impact of the YF supplement to direct payments under Pillar 1, introduced in 2015. This ‘top-up’ has very different significance to farms in different MS, and its pattern of distribution is very different to that for planned spending on GR in Pillar 2 RDPs. Case studies highlight situations where the supplements support GR in complementary ways to Pillar 2, but this depends upon careful design of the delivery approach which is not widespread among MS.

This study has gathered much evidence which supports the adoption by MS of a multifaceted and co-ordinated approach to GR in agriculture, in which various CAP (and non-CAP) measures operate together in a coherent way. In proven effective and long-established cases, co-ordination means the promotion and integrated delivery of a ‘package’ of aids, information and incentives to YF and their farms, with a single point of application and a jointly-devised budgetary and assessment process. This reflects the role and responsibilities of Member States having made certain policy choices in designing and calibrating CAP aids. Comparative evidence from case studies suggests this is a most cost-effective approach. However, the current logic of programming by single measure is not best designed for using integrated packages of measures, as the financial requirements and selection criteria are specific to individual measures and this is not efficient for a set of co-ordinated interventions.

In the case of support for new entrants to farming, evidence from most case studies suggests that current measures may not be optimally tailored to their needs. This group generally faces a greater diversity of challenges than farm successors who inherit from their parents. Stakeholders and experts report that they tend to be older and to lack knowledge about the aids and how to apply for them. The kinds of holding that they typically take on are smaller and perhaps less conventionally viable than the average farm, also their (often novel) business plans may involve more risk or be unfamiliar to agricultural assessors. Thus they more often fall short of eligibility or selection criteria, despite their potential to make a positive contribution to GR and rural innovation. Without inheriting a farm, they face particular difficulties from rigidity in the land market and tough credit rules for people who lack financial collateral. Finally, they may lack farmer support networks and integration into the knowledge and information system, which leaves them more vulnerable than successor YFs. New entrants in all CS agreed that CAP YF aids were more difficult and costly for them to access.

There remain important obstacles to successful agricultural GR in many MS which are probably more efficiently addressed through institutional and fiscal arrangements than through direct funding of beneficiaries. These include some types of access to land, and helping older farmers with a gradual transition process in transferring to a younger generation. Financial Instruments (which case studies suggest have not been widely used for YF) may offer opportunities to address the significant challenge of start-up access to credit.

The balance of impacts of current support in Pillar 1 of the CAP upon rural quality of life depends upon wider socio-economic conditions and other economic and social policies, which vary considerably between countries and regions (case studies). So, the efficiency of spending money on CAP Pillar 1 income support, as a way to promote GR indirectly through enhanced quality of life, will vary in space and over time, as conditions change. Nevertheless, MCA analysis suggests that on a per-Euro basis, for the EU as a whole, putting money into general Pillar 1 support will have a weaker impact in increasing YF numbers than if the same amount of funding were devoted to CAP YF measures.
Conclusions on more specific impacts of CAP GR and YF measures

Pillar 2 measures relevant to GR show a positive, but relatively limited, connection to fostering knowledge exchange and innovation within agriculture. A significant proportion of farmers, experts and policy makers in case studies and EU interviews cited improved knowledge, skills and innovation occurring through CAP GR-supported farm transfers. Across the EU, access to Pillar 2 YF aid is conditional upon beneficiaries having an adequate level of training and this condition is also applied in nine Member States or regions to the receipt of the Pillar 1 YF DPs supplement. Case studies show how these conditions indirectly promote knowledge exchange, improve YFs’ technical and business skills and increase skills in the farming population. The value of delivering advice and business planning in a coherent process, throughout the installation period, was also demonstrated. LEADER has promoted innovation by offering support to new entrants to farming and to non-farm business start-ups, which are seen as increasingly important for rural GR. Positive impact on innovation is anticipated from EIP-Agri operational groups; some embrace GR goals, but impact is not yet assessed (2019).

On the impact of CAP YF measures: a range of evidence suggests these aids have a positive impact upon GR in agriculture, supporting YF incomes, performance and employment. MCA of EU data, also FADN counterfactual analysis of farms in France and Italy, and CGE modelling of the regional economy in Poland, all provide quantified evidence for this. Case study evidence for significant impact from CAP YF measures, directly or indirectly, is weak in some MS (Flanders, Estonia), strong in others (France, Italy) and intermediate in a third group (Hungary, Poland, Ireland). Stakeholders (farm and non-farm) and policy makers are generally strongly in favour of these aids and most YF are keen to use them, but many also face barriers to access land, capital, and information which are not easily addressed by funding. Some MS have developed additional approaches to tackle barriers. It is widely agreed that CAP YF aids support succession more than new entry, but with evidence of additionality.

Particularly in marginal or remote areas, the impact of CAP YF measures may be dwarfed by negative influences including socio-cultural and wider economic disincentives to farm or live in rural areas. In more prosperous agricultural areas, the YF aids enable GR when the amount of aid offered and the conditions of the offer are significant in relation to farm business size, land values and knowledge provision, but there are also case study examples where aid is either too small or too costly to access, reducing its GR impact.

Big differences in MS decisions concerning rates of aid, maximum eligible areas and links to national reserve entitlements1, mean that the Pillar 1 YF supplement is reportedly having little effect in some regions, while in others it is felt to have a significant and positive impact upon agricultural GR. These views are shared by policy makers, farmers organisations and experts. Pillar 2 YF aids are assessed as effective in a variety of situations, but low additionality was found in cases lacking sufficient advisory and technical assessment support (Poland, Estonia).

CAP YF aids and their value should not be assessed in isolation from wider socio-economic conditions in rural areas. Even the best YF packages will be ineffective if farming cannot offer a sufficient standard of living and quality of life to attract a younger generation. Also, rural areas lacking basic infrastructure and services will struggle to retain young people even if the returns to farming are broadly comparable to other sectors. Generally, if national economies are buoyant and unemployment low then rural exodus is favoured wherever city living offers young people a better quality of life. Conversely, when economies are in recession and unemployment is high, returning to the family farm can appear an attractive alternative to subsisting on welfare benefits or short-term, low paid jobs in a city. The YF share in total farmer numbers increased during the early years of the recent global recession, in many MS.

It is possible to design YF packages which give appropriate and significant additionality by tailoring aid rates and delivery to local conditions, using measures in a co-ordinated way and co-ordinating them with non-CAP policies. The best examples of YF effectiveness

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1 In those MS using the Basic Payment Scheme, not those adopting the SAPS where these entitlements do not apply
in CS are seen when CAP measures are designed to work alongside other legislative and fiscal arrangements, with support from specific institutions and processes at local level. Through creative use of the Pillar 2 menu, many of these elements could already be CAP-funded.

In fostering social capital, infrastructure and good governance in rural areas, case study evidence suggests CAP GR measures have a limited, mainly positive direct and indirect impact. It suggests that measures targeting rural services (notably Pillar 2 M7 and LEADER) have more significant impact in this respect, and that when applied synergistically with YF aids and initiatives, benefits to both arise (in Italy, France and Hungary). Evaluation of RDPs 2007-2013 indicated that investment in rural services, infrastructure and economic diversification can boost rural vitality and promote positive social and governance outcomes.

**CAP GR impacts upon rural employment, its quality and durability:** CAP YF measures have an impact on maintaining employment in agriculture relative to the counterfactual. In some MS, the reported impact is significant. The MCA indicated that CAP spending has a small but positive impact upon numbers of YFs in most rural areas of the EU, which implies a positive impact upon total employment in agriculture, although this depends upon the rate of retirement of older farmers being lower than the rate of recruitment of young ones. The Polish CGE modelling indicated positive net employment impacts, for both CAP Pillar 1 DPs and CAP YF aids, in agriculture and in related up- and downstream sectors of the economy. It suggests that the relative impact of Pillar 2 YF aid upon up- and downstream sectors is greater than the impact of CAP Pillar 1 aid on these sectors (both total Direct Payments and the YF DPs supplement), while total CAP Pillar 1 aid stimulates greater employment in agriculture than Pillar 2 YF aids. This finding is consistent with literature and expert opinion in the CSs.

Regarding non-farm employment, great variation between MS was indicated in case studies and from the MCA results. Some CSs report increases in young people employed in rural areas as a result of CAP spending, while others indicate a decrease but found no evidence linking this to CAP funds. Trends in rural employment are strongly influenced by EU-wide economic phenomena, of which CAP resources are only a small part. Broadly speaking, rural employment depends on particular provisions of national legislation and the economic climate. It can be favoured indirectly by CAP funds to provide facilities for young people in small towns and villages, also business start-ups and farm diversification: several CSs provide evidence.

To the extent that CAP GR measures promote more robust farm succession, they are likely to increase the socio-economic sustainability of farm businesses. The FADN analysis provides quantified evidence from France and Italy. The study found very little evidence concerning whether the non-farm jobs promoted with CAP funding were sustainable or not, but in case studies the opinion of stakeholders (experts and beneficiaries) was positive. The impact of CAP GR measures on both farm and non-farm rural jobs was widely perceived as positive, although hard to estimate, in case studies. This is due to multiple intervening and often much stronger, influences from wider economic policies (e.g. national growth plans, public spending cuts), market trends and conditions. Against these, it is likely that CAP-induced employment changes will be relatively modest: the findings of the Polish CGE analysis support this.

**CAP GR impacts on access to land, capital and knowledge:** Significant evidence from case studies, EU survey and research literature confirms these as key factors for successful GR in EU agriculture. However, their causes, and therefore the best mechanisms for addressing them, vary considerably according to local context and farm types – from very marginal to highly productive areas, and from remote and declining regions to growing peri-urban areas.

In respect of their relevance to address access to land, capital and knowledge, CAP GR aids fall into three categories. Firstly, aids which provide funding to assist with the general costs following set-up (Pillar 1 supplement and M6.1) and early years investment (M4.1) have relevance and potential value but they will often be insufficient, on their own, to address these barriers because the funding cannot address wider issues which
prevent a good functioning of land and credit markets. Secondly, aids which promote co-operation, innovation, training and advice may be highly relevant in helping YF gain knowledge and think about new ways to access land and capital and to overcome these barriers, also helping older farmers to manage transfers positively. Finally, aids which promote rural economic diversification, added value and better services, including broadband, may not appear directly relevant but they are relevant and potentially vital to create a wider economic climate, particularly in remote areas, in which the barrier of access to land and credit is reduced because there are alternative income and employment opportunities for YF and family members. Thus all CAP GR measures may be relevant and necessary if targeting and criteria are well-tailored to local conditions.

Overall, CAP GR measures appear to play only a modest role in enabling YF to gain access to land by impacts upon land mobility. Providing financial support to YF alone does not free up the land market (e.g. Poland, Estonia, Ireland). However, effectiveness is greatly enhanced if combined with appropriate national policies that support land transfers, favourable attitudes among agricultural banks, also financial instruments (interest-free loans, credit associations, loan guarantees) to reduce the cost of borrowing or make more resources available to YF. In these situations, it is a combination of national effort and CAP funding for start-ups, investments, advice, training and/or co-operation which provides a secure route to accessing land and capital. MS with the longest history of supporting agricultural GR under the CAP also tend to be those that have developed the most versatile and multi-faceted approaches to ease access to land and capital through national policies (Italy and France).

Conclusions on efficiency and the administrative burden

The study gathered new evidence on these points. Key efficiency factors include the ratio of applicants to available funds (a high ratio can swamp the delivery system and lead to long delays) and the quality of information (including transparent selection and eligibility processes). Making advice and support available to ensure high quality applications (to reduce delays and requests for more information); and ensuring adequate skills, resourcing and co-ordination of the public administration are also key. This facilitates swift and robust appraisals, enables funding to focus on cases offering best additionality, and eases associated permissions or checks. Operational continuity and frequent, high quality communication between beneficiaries and administrative/ advisory personnel is vital, for trust and efficiency.

Case studies show efficiency is not necessarily inversely linked to the complexity of the delivery model. Although Pillar 1 YF aids have a low administrative burden because they are standardised aids, comparative analysis demonstrated that a package of Pillar 2 measures can be more efficient than an approach based on single measures. Efficiency in mixing different instruments to pursue the objective of generational change is more evident in French and Italian cases, France able to combine RDP instruments and national policies accompanying installations, Italy mixing different instruments and simplifying applications in a “one-stop shop”. Targeting by MS or regional administrations appears an efficient way to address instruments toward certain goals, evidence shows that offering higher rates of aid or prioritising applications (in scoring) can facilitate significant public investments and impacts in the most fragile areas. Efficiency is strongly conditioned by State and regional institutions. Delivery models using an integrated set of CAP measures and national policies can stimulate positive learning in administrations and the private sector: they require more co-ordination effort among the different bodies responsible for policy management; and foster more holistic farm and development strategies among young entrepreneurs.

Conclusions on coherence

The evaluation found varied evidence of the coherence of CAP measures with each other. In most cases the measures are coherent but in some local situations Pillar I payments contribute to limit land availability and therefore, make it more difficult for Pillar 2 YF aids to have greatest effect. Conflicts and coherence of the CAP with particular national and regional policies were identified, particularly for land and capital availability.
Spatial planning and infrastructure policies in MS directly affect farm business development and also influence the wider rural economy. Insofar as these policies promote quality of life in rural areas, business opportunities and increased social capital, they should contribute to GR. Positive examples are cited in CS (Estonia, Hungary, Poland, France). Fiscal and legal elements in national policies are crucial for the successful implementation of CAP GR support. There are examples where coherent approaches on land laws, advisory provisions and effective monitoring enhance the implementation of CAP GR measures, but also examples where this does not happen. CAP-funded co-operation and institutional processes (land banks, financial instruments, partnerships, national reserves) help to reduce barriers to access land, capital and knowledge. Complex requirements for funding may cause reluctance of YF to participate (France), especially if linked to a lack of affordable advisory support (Poland).

**Recommendations**

For the YF supplement and Pillar 2 YF start-up aids, the study recommends adjustment to allow more MS choice in how they are designed and deployed between and within regions, to enable multi-measure packages and one-stop shops working in a streamlined way and tailored to local needs. In some situations it may be important to enable small, part-time and less highly-educated beneficiaries to access funding, with appropriate advice, so MS do not target support only to the most conventional businesses and don’t establish eligibility and selection criteria that always favour big holdings or only young people with an agricultural background: these tactics reduce additionality. A general move away from just giving financial aid to successors on farms, and towards using support to build broader networks of farmer learning and collaboration, and a balanced transfer process which helps the older generation at the same time as encouraging the younger generation, could bring significant dividends.

For all CAP aids relevant to GR, we recommend that MS are encouraged to make more use of the co-operation measure to devise or enhance institutional mechanisms to aid GR, and also to provide adequate administrative support for an efficient delivery. Providing appropriate advice, networking and learning opportunities as part of the package also appears essential. For new entrants, in addition to these changes new approaches may be needed to reflect the more diverse needs of this group and their potential: for example, allowing more bottom-up co-design of projects for rural innovation through GR.

Facilitating improved access to land and capital may require changes to improve the coherence of national legal and fiscal policy with CAP GR goals. In addition, working to enhance the application of financial instruments to support GR, building upon the 2019 EIB and Commission initiative to increase access to credit, appears worthwhile.

For non-farm GR, more attention to investment in rural services, broadband and quality of life measures is particularly needed. This point is especially important when overall CAP resources are reducing, as farm-level adjustment will be eased if families can access income from other sectors and have reassurance that basic services will be sustained.

There is considerable scope for MS administrations and managing authorities to learn from good practices in other MS – especially concerning the scope for more creative application of measures to enable institutional and social innovations, also to encourage new entrants, and to exchange experience about the types of non-CAP policy development that can assist GR.

The proposed holistic, cross-pillar and strategic approach to meeting the GR goals of the new CAP is a positive development which should promote enhanced policy performance, in future.

Experts, policy makers and farmers organisations agree that more practical help for innovation in land-based businesses is needed, particularly in the context of the global climate challenge. Support for broader self-help learning among farmers and other rural actors, for mentoring, facilitation and digital literacy, is widely favoured among contributors to this study.
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