



Rural Evaluation News  
Number 4 - June 2010

## The newsletter of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

### In This Issue

**News** about a new working paper which provides general support for the assessment of impacts of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) as well as specific support for measuring, interpreting and judging the seven common CMEF impact indicators • The second EU-wide synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports on ongoing evaluation • The details of the Annual Work Programme for 2010 • An overview of ongoing evaluation system and the mid-term evaluation in Sweden • Two examples of current practice: reversing biodiversity decline (UK) and assessing RDP impacts of water quality (Italy) • News in brief, including progress with the TWG on the assessment of the impacts of Leader and Quality of Life, the definitions of GVA indicators etc.

### Contents

New Working Paper on assessment of impacts of RDPs.....	1
Synthesis of the annual progress reports for 2008 on ongoing evaluation .....	7
Annual Work Programme 2010.....	9
Ongoing and mid-term evaluation in Sweden .....	10
Reversing biodiversity decline - good practice from the UK .....	13
Improvement of water quality – current practice from Italy .....	14
News in Brief .....	15
FAQs .....	18

## New Working Paper on assessment of impacts of RDPs

*Robert Lukesch*

**F**or the 2007-2013 programming period, the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) requires Member States (MS) to assess the impacts of their Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) during two main evaluation milestones – mid-term (MTE) in 2010 and ex-post evaluation in 2015. As MS have reported difficulties in identifying the impacts attributable to specific RDP measures particularly where there are multiple intervening factors, the Evaluation Expert Network has developed a document describing a range of methods and tools for possible use in assessing such impacts, focusing to a large extent on measurement and interpretation of 7 common CMEF impact indicators.

For environmental impacts (represented by the common impact indicators 4-7), there are particular challenges with establishing the intervention logic and conducting quality evaluations, because such impacts are strongly influenced by site-specific circumstances (e.g. soil, temperature, rainfall). Both environmental and socio-economic impacts (the latter reflected by the common impact indicators 1-3) may take a long time to emerge and may depend on other intervening factors (e.g. national/regional policies, implementation).

### Three stages and two basic questions

The aim of the Working Paper is to inspire and to encourage the evaluators, not to restrict or constrain them. The assortment of recommended methods and pathways reflects two underlying principles: to strive for optimal evidence in preparing evaluations and to appreciate the complexity and uniqueness of rural societies, economies and places.

Assessing impacts should not be understood as merely measuring indicator values. Therefore the document proposes a three-stage process. The first stage consists of gathering the information and data from various sources to build up a body of evidence to gauge change. From this evidence, in the second stage, the drivers of change can be identified, including analysing relevant detail to use in answering common and programme specific evaluation questions.

*Continued on* ►

### Your feedback is welcome

This newsletter is intended to be applicable, accessible and user-friendly for anybody dealing with the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and measures in the EU. We therefore welcome your feedback on the content presented and we would encourage you to provide suggestions regarding appropriate articles or regular features. Please send us your comments to: [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu)

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This leads to the third stage of actually developing and delivering answers to the evaluation questions and concluding on future interventions. These answers always address two basic questions:

- Has there been change which can be traced back to the causal influence of rural development intervention measures?
- How and by which combination of circumstances did change happen?

### Key challenges for assessment of impacts

Evaluation should reduce uncertainty in order to contribute to responsible and accountable decision making. This means tackling the following key questions and challenges:

- What would have happened to the respective programme area without a given programme? This implies the requirement to assess, wherever possible, the programme impacts against their counterfactual, i.e. calculating the changes that would have occurred without the specific programme intervention.
- To disentangle the effects of single measures or the programme as a whole from effects of other intervening factors. This requires measurement of both the micro and the macro level effects and to meaningfully combine the results into one picture. It also involves netting out the following types of effects of RDP measures:
  - o **deadweight** (effects that may have occurred without the policy intervention);
  - o **displacement** (effect obtained in an eligible area at

the expense of another area);

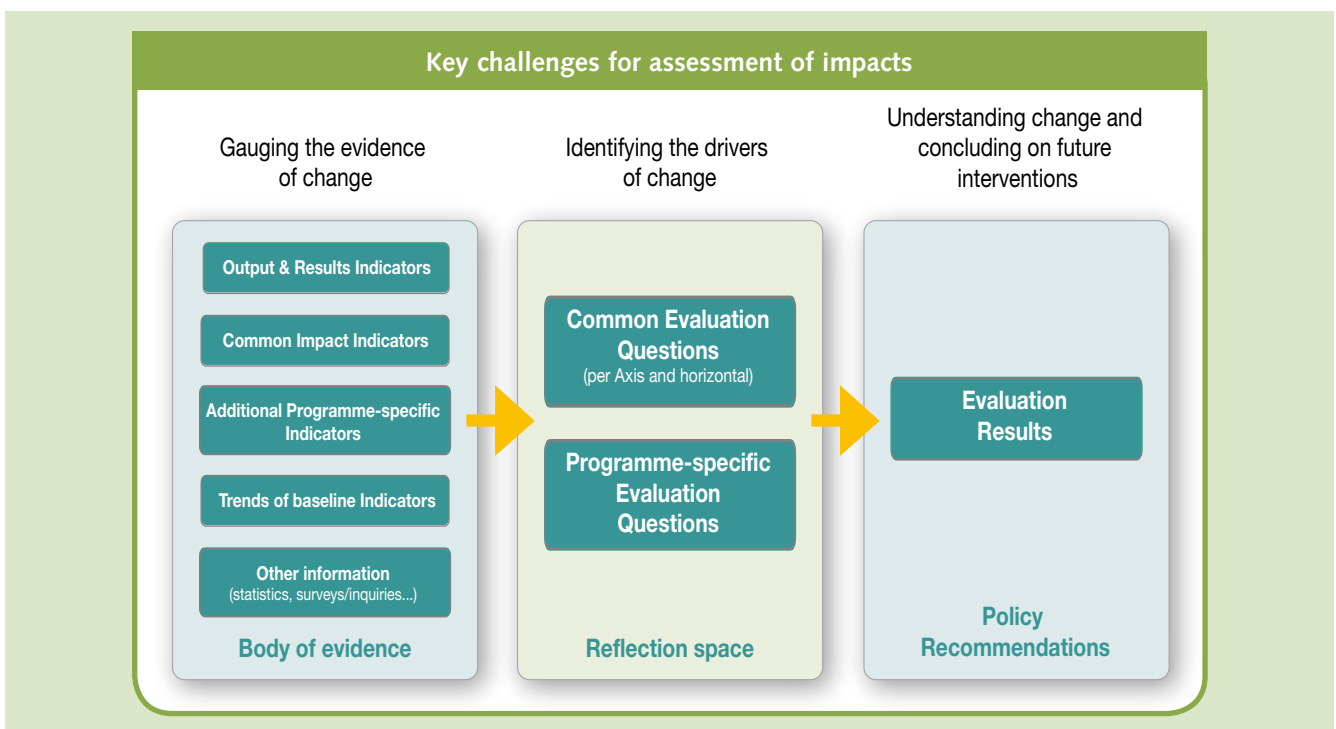
- o **substitution** (effect obtained in favour of direct beneficiaries at the expense of a person or organisation that does not qualify for the intervention);
- o **leverage** (propensity for public spending to induce private spending among direct beneficiaries); and
- o **multiplier** effects (secondary effects resulting from increased income and consumption generated by the public intervention).
- To ensure the availability and validity of data and information required to construct a viable body of evidence. To satisfy this requirement, a data and information base must be constructed which allows for the unbiased computation of the programme effects.
- To put the partial results in a meaningful relation with the overall Rural Development Programme and the overall policy context and to provide relevant and accurate answers to the evaluation questions.

### The socio-economic indicators

The three socio-economic indicators have aspects in common, including the methods and tools for measurement.

#### Economic Growth (Impact Indicator 1)

According to the CMEF, the impact of an RDP on economic growth is to be measured in terms of the Net Additional Gross Value Added expressed in purchasing power standard: NAGVA-PPS.



## Employment Creation (Impact Indicator 2)

The CMEF describes measuring employment effects in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs created, expressed as the number of additional jobs created directly in supported projects and indirectly in the programme area and lasting for at least 10 years.

## Labour Productivity (Impact Indicator 3)

The CMEF states that the labour productivity indicator should be measured as the change in Gross Value Added per Full Time Equivalent (GVA/FTE). GVA is defined as value of output less the value of intermediate consumption; the definition of FTE is equal to that of impact indicator 2.

For all three indicators the document recommends using propensity score matching (PSM) for constructing the control group. It also suggests calculating the difference in differences (DID), i.e. the combined comparison between two points in time (before-after) and between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. After having estimated the direct effects

on programme beneficiaries, the indirect effects can be measured by appropriate methods to discount deadweight, substitution and displacement effects, and to take into account leverage and multiplier effects. The latter requires considering and cross-relating impacts at micro and macro level for which modelling or econometric methods – or combinations of both – are in use.

An overview of current practice shows that for Axis 1 measures the recommended methods can be more easily applied than for Axes 3 and 4 measures, as these latter two axes are often characterised by low uptake, or project-type (and therefore quite singular) measures, or site or community specific particularities which makes it difficult to establish control groups and sites.

As a general recommendation, both quantitative and qualitative methods for assessment of impacts should be used to get the “full picture” of effects of RDPs. This is particularly the case for estimating effects of axes 3 and 4 measures for which relevant quantitative data is often more difficult (and relatively expensive) to collect.

### Example of current practice – estimation of leverage effects

The Farm Investment Programme in Schleswig-Holstein (Germany, 2000-2006) was assessed on the basis of the DiD method using PSM for constructing the control group. Application of this methodology to estimation of the leverage effects for the measure: *Investments in milk and beef sectors* on the basis of 1,333 bookkeeping farms (101 beneficiaries and 1,232 non-participants) specialized in milk production indicates significant leverage effects, i.e. participation in the programme resulted in significant additional transfers of funds from farms to household (average EUR 4,653 per farm for living or EUR 3,178 per farm for building private assets – calculated from ATT, or Average Treatment on Treated (i.e. the average effects of the measure on the beneficiaries).

#### Estimation of the leverage effects in AFP programme (Schleswig-Holstein) Result indicator: Money transfer from farm to farm household for living

Calculation basis	Variable: Money transfer from farm to farm households for living		
	2001	2007	D I D (2007-2001)
Unmatched P=1 (101)	30,072	43,810	13,738
Unmatched P=0 (1,232)	24,512	32,336	7,824
Ø (1,333)	24,933	33,206	8,273
Difference (1 minus 0)	5,560	11,473	5,913
Difference (1- average Ø)	5,139	10,604	5,465
Matched M= 1 (101)	30,072	43,810	13,738
Matched M= 0 (1,067)	27,647	36,732	9,085
ATT	2,424	7,077	4,653

#### Estimation of the leverage effects in AFP programme (Schleswig-Holstein) Result indicator: Money transfer from farm for building of private assets

Calculation basis	Money transfers from farm for building of private assets		
	2001	2007	D I D (2007-2001)
Unmatched P=1 (101)	18,447	48,302	29,855
Unmatched P=0 (1,232)	11,632	31,926	20,294
Ø (1,333)	12,148	33,167	21,019
Difference (1 minus 0)	6,814	16,376	9,562
Difference (1 minus average Ø)	6,299	15,135	8,836
Matched M= 1 (101)	18,447	48,302	29,855
Matched M= 0 (1,067)	17,504	44,181	26,677
ATT	942	4,120	3,178

### Specific approach measuring labour productivity (Flanders)

The Flemish Rural Development Programme 2000-06 (Belgium) provides an example for a well-designed conceptual mix between qualitative and quantitative methods. In their attempt to measure labour productivity, the contracted evaluators used a diverse set of complementary data and information sources, i.e.

- An **expert-workshop** involving both academic staff, sector experts and administration staff from different departments, brought together to identify and validate the most important causal relationships between RDP measures and three thematic areas: agri-food economy; environment and landscape; quality of life;
- A **survey** among a representative sample of Flemish farmers, with questions on the investments they made, their motives to do so and the effects they observed;
- The accounting data in the **FADN** database for these (surveyed) farmers, with information on employment & working hours per activity, added value created, output/turnover and other farm-specific characteristics;
- **Further databases**, such as accounting data for the agri-food industry, or the database of the Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund; and
- The **application dossiers** for the agri-food measure 9.3.7 during RDP 2000-2006.

The coupling of the accounting databases allowed the evaluators to compare farms/companies with RDP support and others - such as to detect correlations between e.g. investments and support, between investments made with and without support, as well as the added value created per FTE etc.

These correlations at the level of farm investments could then be compared with the results of the survey. The result of this analysis was a cross-measure and micro level assessment of potential and identified impacts of the Flemish RDP.

*Source: Katrien Van Dingenen, IDEA-Consult, October 2009*

### Environmental indicators

The complexity of the environmental indicators requires focusing on various approaches, trends of baseline indicators and place-specific additional indicators.

However the methods for constructing control groups (PSM) as well as DiD can also potentially be applied for the environmental indicators. Data availability is crucial in this area.

### Reversing Biodiversity Decline (Impact Indicator 4)

The impact indicator for biodiversity is defined in the CMEF as change in trend in biodiversity decline as measured by farmland bird species population in the area targeted by the intervention. Farmland bird species population is an indicator of general biodiversity trends for which the best data exists in terms of time series and geographic distribution. The farmland bird species population trends are measured with the multi-species Farmland Bird Index (FBI), which has been adopted as an EU Structural Indicator and a Sustainable Development Indicator. Aggregated European indices are calculated using population-dependent weighting factors for each country and species sizes.

With regard to their local conditions, Member States and regions may need to use an alternative composition of bird species where this is appropriate, as is suggested in the following example from Finland, and may also choose a different reference year if more appropriate, for instance if the FBI, which is normally indexed on the year 2000, was an extraordinary year.

### Example of a MS using their own national baseline indicator (Finland)

Finland has decided to use biodiversity baseline indicator no 17B "Bird indicator based on the ecological grouping of birdlife nesting in farmland". The indicator is defined as the average index of about 40 species and can be ecologically subdivided into species feeding in farmland and breeding in arable areas, field margins, forest areas or farmyards. Ecological grouping helps to identify the impacts in greater detail because species in different groups experience farming work, management and land use differently.

*Data sources: RDP for Mainland Finland 2007-2013*

[http://www.mmm.fi/en/index/frontpage/rural\\_areas/ruraldevelopmentprogrammes/strategyandprogramme20072013.html](http://www.mmm.fi/en/index/frontpage/rural_areas/ruraldevelopmentprogrammes/strategyandprogramme20072013.html)

The FBI can also be complemented by other existing indicators such as population trends of agriculture related butterfly species, or trends in important bird areas (IBAs) considered as threatened by agricultural intensification, under-utilisation of land or abandonment.

To guarantee a high quality FBI at the national level it is necessary to have an appropriate monitoring scheme covering representative amounts of farmland. A variety of sources of information need to be taken into account in order to understand what is going on in the area-specific context. In-depth field studies are indispensable for constructing reliable reference models.

### **Maintenance of HNV Farmland and Forestry (Impact indicator 5)**

The CMEF defines the impact indicator as changes (utilised agricultural area (UAA) in ha) in High Nature Value farmland and forestry. HNV farmland is characterised by the presence of particular land cover types and patterns which indicate that this farmland is valuable for nature conservation. The presence of populations of particular wildlife species may also provide this indication. The denomination refers to both the land cover (farmland or forest) and the way it is managed for production by a particular farming system and practice.

The evaluation of the impact of RD measures examines intended and unintended influences of RD measures on farmers' decisions, the extent of participation, the coincidence of participation with the observed changes and the distinction of programme-induced changes from those induced by other factors (climate, commodity prices, etc).

As in many Member States the baseline (number of HNV hectares) has not been sufficiently established, it is important to complement the quantified estimate with qualitative assessment, for example through multi-disciplinary studies. The CORINE land cover database is an important one to estimate the extent of grassland under livestock farming, but it most likely includes intensively grazed or non-grazed land as well. It is therefore recommendable to enrich the background picture in various ways using national data.

### **Improvement in Water Quality (Impact indicator 6)**

The CMEF defines this impact indicator as changes in gross nutrient balance (GNB) attributable to the intervention. The GNB indicates potential nutrient losses to the water bodies likely to be detrimental for the quality of water. The GNB includes all residual nutrient emissions of environmentally harmful compounds from agriculture.

### **Enriching CORINE land cover approach (Bulgaria)**

In Bulgaria several land cover data were added, including:

- Types of Natura 2000 habitat threatened by abandonment of extensive agricultural practices (mainly grazing), from national inventory of Natura 2000 habitats.
- Semi-natural grasslands, from national inventory of semi-natural grasslands.

These data have been incorporated in the Land Parcel Identification System so that blocks of parcels can be identified as HNV.

*Source: Managing Authority for RDP, Bulgaria*

The farm represents the micro unit of measurement. Several methods have been developed for assessing a farm nutrient budget, either based on an aggregate of individual fields or on an analysis of the farm as a whole. The latter is more recommendable since it takes into account the influence of farming practices. The most appropriate method to determine the impact of RD measures on the change in GNB is calculating the difference in differences.

The macro level of analysis is the farming region, identified as the geographic entity with similar geological, soil, climatic and social features. Several models (CAPRI, RAUMIS etc.) have been developed to estimate soil gross or net nutrient balance at aggregated regional levels in Europe.

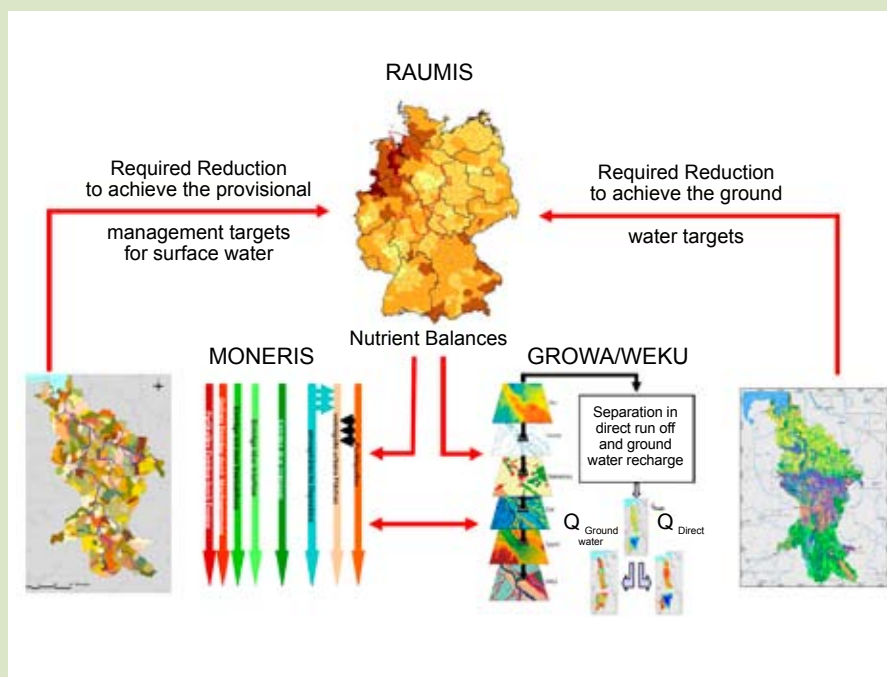
### **Contribution to Combating Climate Change (Impact Indicator 7)**

The CMEF defines this indicator as quantitative and qualitative change in the production of renewable energy, measured in units of ktOE (kilotonnes of oil equivalent). The indicator shows the reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions (i.e. carbon dioxide) attributable to the substitution of fossil fuels by non fossil alternatives such as bio-energy crops, perennial grassland, short rotation coppice on agricultural land, afforestation, residues or bio-waste, wind and hydropower capacity. The data availability is relatively good: FADN provides farm scale data on land under specific crops, and there is also information on installed capacity (biomass, biogas and wind).

For fuel crop areas (translated into ktOE or CO<sub>2</sub>e), the macro picture can be developed bottom-up (based on qualitative surveys of a cross section sample of recipients) or top-

### Interdisciplinary model network example (Germany)

An interdisciplinary model network was developed consisting of the regionalized agricultural and environmental information system RAUMIS (Heinrichsmeyer *et al.* 1996), the hydrogeological model GROWA/WEKU (Wendland *et al.* 2002; 2004) and nutrient emissions in river systems MONERIS (Behrendt *et al.* 1999) to analyze the impacts of nutrient reduction measures on the water quality of a 49,000 km<sup>2</sup> catchment in Germany. Within this modelling network RAUMIS calculates the regional soil surface gross nitrogen balance. The figure shows the interactions modelled for the Weser River basin in Germany.



Source: Kreins *et al.* 2009; [http://www.esee2009.si/papers/Kreins-Costs\\_of\\_achieving.pdf](http://www.esee2009.si/papers/Kreins-Costs_of_achieving.pdf)

down (based on representative modelling of a range of farm types using linear or dynamic programming methods), at best combined.

The outcomes of climate change, water quality and HNV indicators need to be considered altogether to derive a net picture of combined impact. In order to assess impacts at the programme level, all measures (not just those from Axis 2) have to be considered.

### Combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Spain)

In Spain a quantitative land use forecast (i.e. useable agricultural area) was combined with qualitative interviews to evaluate a limited number of Axis 2 measures. The quantitative analysis considers the likely area to be recorded under miscellaneous bio-fuels. Interviews are used to understand the different crop choices and the extent to which these are likely to be used as substitutes for fossil fuels.

Source: Ana Sáez García, Tragsatec

### Finalisation and dissemination

The Working Paper is available on the website of the Evaluation Expert Network in two forms: as an ordinary pdf and as an interactive version. The latter provides specific features to ensure its user-friendliness, e.g. coloured margins guiding the reader through general information and methodologies for the assessment of impacts, boxes with current practice examples, bookmarks at each of these sections.

It is accompanied by a brief User Information Brochure for the Working Paper which outlines the purpose and contents of the document and how to use it. It also includes summary tables on the findings for each of the seven common impact indicators.

### Find out more

- o Read the Working Paper on “Approaches for assessing the impacts of the RDPs in the context of multiple intervening factors”. Published in two versions: [text](#) and [interactive](#)
- o Read the [User Information Brochure for the Working Paper](#)

# Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2008 concerning ongoing evaluation

*Hannes Wimmer & Margot Van Soetendael*

**T**he Evaluation Helpdesk has conducted the second synthesis of the ongoing evaluation sections in the Annual Progress Reports (APRs). The synthesis is based on the reports submitted by Managing Authorities (MAs) in June 2009 covering the evaluation activities carried out in 2008.

A total of 88 reports were examined, including 19 national and 69 regional reports. The synthesis structure includes summary chapters within the main headings of the indicative outline of an APR on ongoing evaluation (as per Guidance note B of the Handbook on CMEF). As with last year, each main chapter includes examples from various RDPs and concludes with a set of concise recommendations for the Member States and the EC.

## Main Findings

Whereas the ongoing evaluation section of the APRs for 2007 concentrated on how the ongoing evaluation systems were being set up, during what was effectively the first year of the programming cycle (2007-2013), it was expected that the reports for 2008 would focus in particular on evaluation activities undertaken (capacity building, methodological work, data collection and references to difficulties encountered) including preparation for the MTE in 2010.

Due to the late finalisation and approval of many RDPs, the MAs continued to describe the establishment and fine-tuning of their evaluation systems in the APRs for 2008. The description of the 'ongoing evaluation system' and 'data collection' are the most prominently covered topics (in more than half of the reports), while 'networking activities' and 'difficulties encountered' are reported less often.

## The evaluation systems

A majority of RDPs were still focused on administrative preparations for tendering evaluations, particularly for the MTE. From this, different models for outsourcing evaluations were emerging. Steering Groups for evaluation had become increasingly operational, with 36 programmes mentioning the establishment of such (non-compulsory) bodies, compared to only 14 mentioned in APRs for 2007.

## Ongoing evaluation activities

Improved coverage of activities is noted compared to 2007, reflected both in the range of activities described and the high proportion of reports (about 80%) dealing with evaluation activities. This includes increased reporting of the review of result/impact indicators, the intervention logics and to a lesser extent the evaluation questions – each of these activities is important in preparing for the MTE.

Development of evaluation methodologies and tools has progressed during 2008, while lessons from the ex post (2000-2006) and ex ante evaluations are followed-up in some RDPs, including recommendations for improved data systems and more accurate reviewing of the intervention logic and indicators. Thematic studies are increasingly evident as a tool to enhance information for RD evaluation activities, particularly in the environment field.

## Systems for data collection and management

Data collection attracts major attention in the APRs for 2008, and different organisational models are emerging for data systems and data management in terms of division of responsibilities, the degree of centralisation and externalisation. While MAs have been exploring ways of upgrading their IT systems, the main data gaps identified by MS relate to environmental indicators and gross value added indicators for non-agricultural activities. RDPs have started responding to these challenges through various activities to overcome data gaps and improve data quality.

## Networking activities

Networking activities are gradually increasing, and these include formal and informal information exchange at programme level. At national level, some countries have pro-active exchange mechanisms established, but for the majority of MS there is little evidence yet of networking. At European and international levels, activities with the Evaluation Expert Network and the Evaluation Expert Committee are most prominent. Although, capacity building actions showed an increase in 2008 they still remain at a rather low level.

## Difficulties encountered and need for additional work

The number of difficulties encountered in relation to evaluation has increased, however the issues described are of a more practical dimension than previously. A total of 25 APRs, i.e. more than twice as many as in the year before, included a section on difficulties encountered in relation to evaluation. The reported difficulties mainly concern IT systems, the application of the CMEF, increased workload and monitoring tables.

## Explanatory note to assist future reporting

New in the Synthesis for 2008 is an **Explanatory note** (complementing what is already provided in Guidance note B) with suggestions for Member States on what aspects to describe and provide information about when preparing the evaluation section of the annual progress report, as summarised below.

### Find out more

- o Read the [Synthesis of annual progress reports for 2008 concerning ongoing evaluation](#).

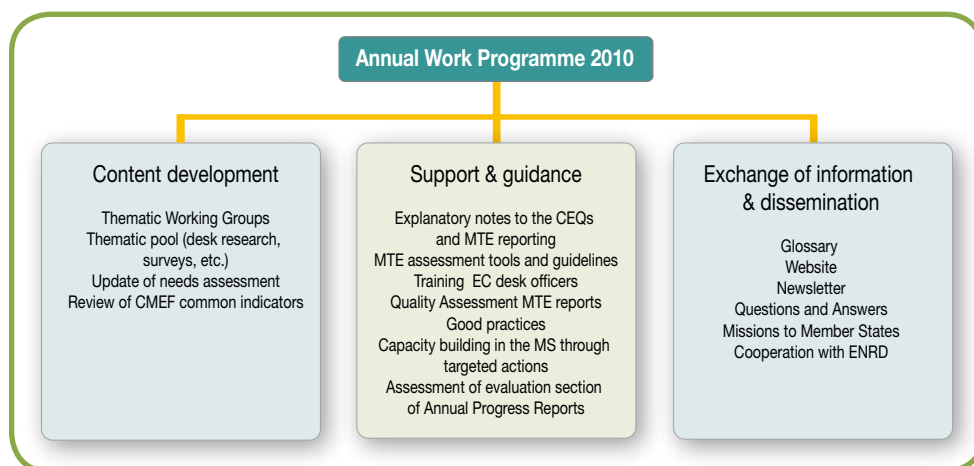
CMEF INDICATIVE OUTLINE	Proposed contents (optional)
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Brief overview</b> of the most important milestones during the reporting period as regards the ongoing evaluation</li> <li>• <b>Major progress towards</b> the preparation of mid-term and ex post evaluation (i.e. where do you stand?)</li> </ul>
<b>2. The system established for ensuring ongoing evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Evaluation system and evaluation plan:</b> Who does what, how and when?</li> <li>• <b>Administrative arrangements for selecting evaluators (ongoing, MTE, ex post)</b> e.g. preparation of ToR, type of tender, start and closure dates, activities outsourced, information on contracted companies etc.</li> <li>• <b>Coordination with evaluation stakeholders</b> i.e. interaction with evaluators, Steering Groups etc.</li> </ul>
<b>3. The evaluation activities undertaken (ongoing and finished)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Evaluation activities in relation to evaluation plan</b></li> <li>• <b>Preparatory activities for the main evaluation events (MTE, ex post)</b> e.g. reviews of intervention logic, result and impact indicators, and evaluation questions</li> <li>• Information on the <b>follow-up of previous evaluations</b>, if relevant</li> <li>• Outline of <b>specific evaluation methodologies</b> developed</li> <li>• Themes, outcomes and use of <b>commissioned studies</b></li> </ul>
<b>4. Data collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approaches and systems for <b>data collection and management</b> (information flows)</li> <li>• Main <b>data sources and types</b> used (incl. data providers)</li> <li>• <b>Overview on main data gaps</b> and activities to overcome such gaps (indication on data quality)</li> <li>• <b>Arrangements taken</b> to provide evaluators with data</li> </ul>
<b>5. Networking activities of the people involved in evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participation in relevant networking activities at programme, national and EU level</b> (e.g. interaction with evaluation stakeholders, with national evaluation network, with Evaluation Expert Network, with research community etc).</li> <li>• <b>Purpose, outcome and follow-up</b> of networking events, workshops and seminars (e.g. the initiators, the participants, the lessons learned etc).</li> <li>• <b>References to further documentation</b> about these networking events (e.g. links to websites and publications)</li> <li>• <b>Capacity building actions</b> in the field of evaluation, e.g. training sessions, seminars etc.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Difficulties encountered and need for additional work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Difficulties experienced in carrying out ongoing evaluation activities</b> (use cross-references where problems are reported in other sections of the APR, distinguish at which level they have to be solved)</li> <li>• <b>Planned and realized solutions for overcoming difficulties</b> (solutions adopted, involved actors, lessons learnt)</li> </ul>



# The Evaluation Expert Network's Annual Work Programme 2010

Hannes Wimmer

In 2010 the mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) 2007-13 will be a key preoccupation of the evaluation community EU-wide. The Managing Authorities (MAs) must appoint independent evaluators to conduct this activity, and equip them with all the necessary data and support to complete the evaluations before the end of the year. The Evaluation Expert Network's Annual Work Programme (AWP) for 2010 therefore puts emphasis on providing practical support to the MAs and the evaluators through three work areas (see diagram) to help them successfully prepare and implement this important evaluation milestone.



## Content development

Two **Thematic Working Groups** (TWGs) are providing support and assistance in applying RD evaluation methodologies in the Member States:

1. *TWG on the assessment of socio-economic and environmental impacts*, which was launched in 2009, published the outcome of its work early this year. Appropriate follow-up support will be developed (for example, through technical questions). Read article on page 1.
2. *TWG on Leader and Quality of Life* is exploring possible ways of how to capture the impact of Leader and measures to improve the Quality of Life. Read article on page 15.

The needs assessment will be carried out through Focus Groups in the Member States and the SWOT analysis on the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be updated. These activities will provide Member States' input for the preparation of the AWP 2011 and stimulate discussions contributing to a review of the common CMEF indicators for the post-2013 period.

## Support and guidance

Explanatory notes to the MTE report and the common evaluation questions (CEQs) are intended to support MAs and evaluators in completing the mid-term evaluation in 2010. In addition, the notes will also give answers to frequently asked questions, and provide examples of good practice. In prepara-

tion for the assessment of the mid term evaluation reports, a series of activities are also targeted at the EC Desk Officers (DOs) in order to help them assess the MTE reports in 2011 in a coherent way. Good practices in evaluation methodologies and processes will be collected in order to further illustrate the guidance work developed in wide-ranging thematic areas (for example, practices in assessing net impacts, socio-economic impacts, etc). The evaluation section of the Annual Progress Reports will be assessed by the Helpdesk and summarized in order to provide an overview on the state of play of RD evaluation in the Member States.

## Exchange of information and dissemination

The dissemination and communication activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk will be given a boost when the fully developed public website becomes fully operational in 2010. The Helpdesk service addressing technical questions will be strengthened in 2010. Three issues of the Rural Evaluation Newsletter will be published. Exchanges with the EC, the Member States and the European Network for Rural Development will be stepped up through participation in meetings and missions.

Several cross-cutting activities are foreseen in order to involve evaluation stakeholders in Member States to a greater extent in the work. For example, more participants from the Member States will contribute to the TWGs, and more interaction will be sought with experts in developing methodological support.

## Find out more

- o Read the [Annual Work Programme 2010](#).

## Ongoing and mid-term evaluation in Sweden

*Per Persson, Swedish Board of Agriculture*



### Sweden's RDP in brief

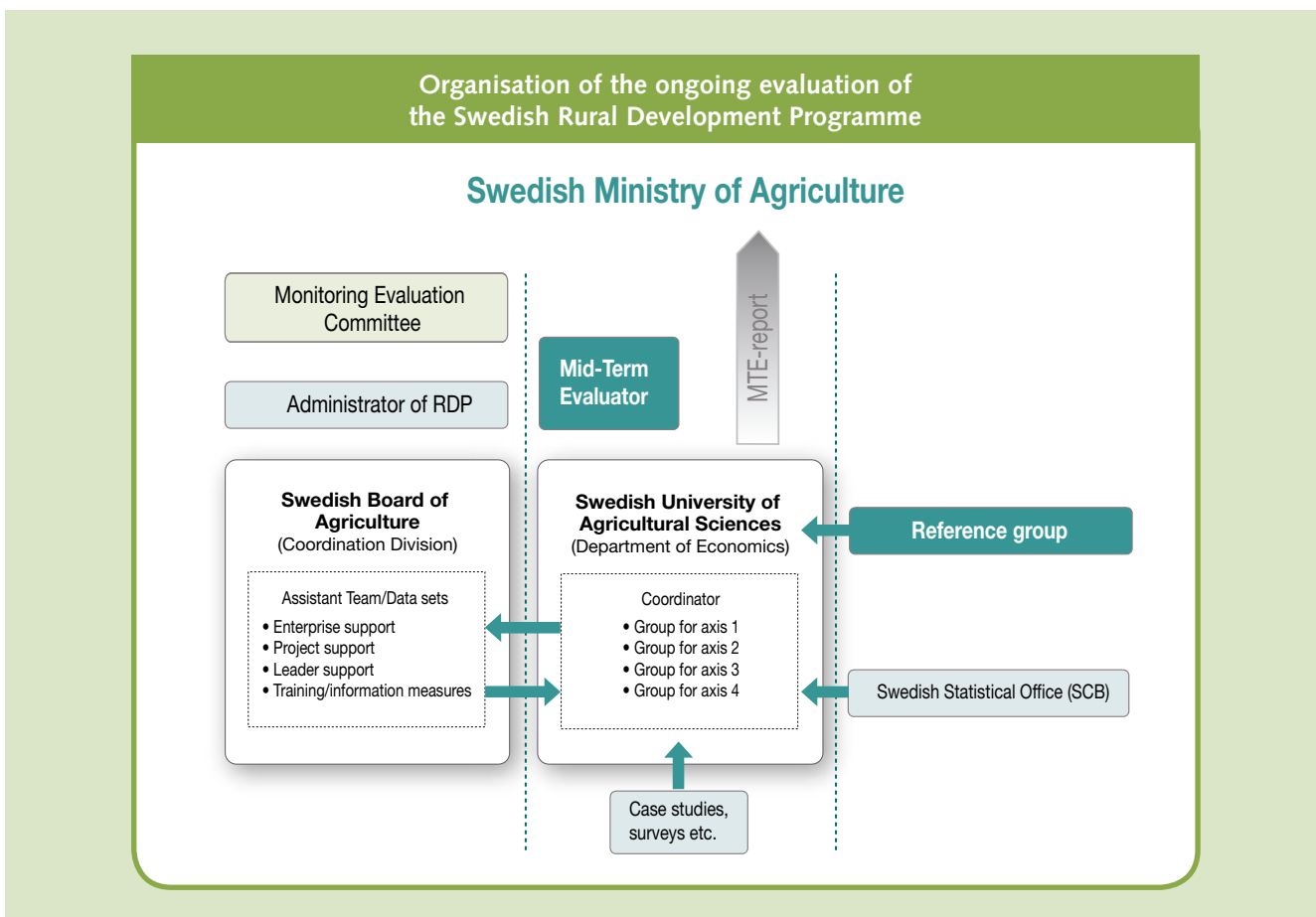
Sweden's Rural Development Programme has a heavy emphasis on axis 2 (land management and improving the environment), and in particular measure 214 (agri-environment-

tal supports). Advanced IT systems have been introduced to handle measure 214 supports.

Axis 1 (supports to competitiveness of agri-food and forestry) include the most popular measures in terms of demand i.e. 112 (setting up of young farmers) and 121 (modernisation of agricultural holdings) and other mostly investment support measures. Measures within axis 3 (improving quality of life) consist of a mixture of projects and investment support to enterprises. Leader (axis 4) interventions are only in the form of project support.

### Organisation, structuring and responsibilities

The **Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA)** acts as Management Authority and also as Paying Agency for funds disbursement, and provides a range of organisational and managerial services.



The Swedish Ministry of Agriculture is rather a small institution compared to other Member States. The basic information needed for political decisions (for example, about less favoured areas and the Health Check) is provided by the SBA. Reporting obligations (including Annual Progress Reports) are the responsibility of the SBA, along with methods and systems to collect relevant data and meet the requirements of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF). SBA is organised in four different teams: enterprise support, project support, Leader support, and measures connected to training. One person within SBA is responsible for reporting on baseline figures.

### Preparation for the MTE

For conducting the mid-term evaluation (MTE) in 2010 the Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences (SLU) has been contracted. The work started in autumn 2009; working groups have been set up for each axis to collect data, and carry out analyses to answer the evaluation questions as stated in Guidance note B of the CMEF. A combination of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (surveys and case studies) methods are being used. The coordinator at the SLU, Department of Economics, gathers the results of the working groups and is responsible for dealing with the common evaluation questions.

SLU will work for about one and a half years as the MTE evaluator, according to the Terms of Reference. During this time, the main task of the SBA is to assist the SLU with the collection of data and other information. A reference group, with an advisory function, composed of stakeholders from various organisations (SBA, Farmers Union, universities, Swedish Rural Development Network etc.) has been set up by the SLU. The Swedish Statistical Office (SCB) has an important role to play in providing the SLU with appropriate statistical information. The SLU may also carry out surveys in areas where additional information is required.

The most challenging aspect of the MTE is measuring the impact indicators and assessing impacts overall at programme level. In the two previous programming periods the evaluators noted a lack of relevant data for many of the measures and therefore improvements in this area are considered a priority.

### Data sources for use in the MTE

For axis 2, SBA has access to a large amount of information available in the very well developed administrative IT systems to address the evaluation questions. For the Farm-



Photo: Courtesy of Urban Wigert

*A rural landscape in Sweden*

land Bird Index (FBI) (used in measuring the impact indicator 'reversing biodiversity decline'), SBA has a contract with the University of Lund. They are building up a model for estimating the impact of measure 214 based on the number of farmland birds. Other external institutions have been contracted for data and information for other axis 2 impact indicators, for example, for the assessment of High Nature Value areas, the consultancy METRIA has carried out a special study on the different types of areas with a high degree of biodiversity.

In contrast to axis 2, all applications for axes 1, 3 and 4 are handled with relatively little IT support by the county boards and therefore only basic information is available for evaluation purposes. In the early programme years, for instance, important information about targets of the investment/project and basic economic facts was missing. To overcome these gaps, information required for the evaluation process needs to be taken from other sources. SBA has chosen to handle a great deal of this work internally, and contractors are only used for limited, well defined areas. The reasons for centralising the data collection in this way are: (i) SBA wants to have full control of the quality of the data; and (ii) the number of applicants for axes 1, 3, and 4 is relatively low, which makes it possible to handle the collection of data with few staff.

To assist the evaluation process, SBA has built up a special data system (EVALD) drawing on information from applications and other relevant sources. The county boards send the SBA copies of all the relevant parts of applicants' files. This material is very diverse in content and difficult to analyse as the activities are broad in scope. Therefore, a contractor assists SBA with the collection of relevant information (for example, statistics on the number of women in employment, full-time equivalents, etc.) by liaising with farmers, managers of small enterprises and general business consultancies. Some of the staff has been trained to collect the data by using specially designed business plans for evaluation.

To assess the impacts of investment support measures and projects, SBA conducts random surveys on the actual effect of the intervention support. The results of these surveys are registered in the system and form the basis for assessing the impacts of the RDP programme.

## Evaluation challenges

For axes 1, 3 and 4 the guidance provided in the CMEF for assessing impacts is mainly focused on economic growth and employment. Significant challenges for smaller interventions in axes 3 and 4 are to: a) find good control groups for measuring the counterfactual (i.e. what would have happened without the RDP intervention) and overall impact; b) identify relevant methods of measurement; and c) collect relevant data and information for the control groups to conduct the evaluation.

For project-type support measures, some are small and easy to analyse, while others are more complex with many effects on diverse beneficiaries. The challenge here is not so much to answer a few limited indicator questions but to use a more open approach starting from an inventory of what questions could be relevant for any part of the RDP. Additional programme indicators are helping to measure impacts.

For axis 2, since most of the support measures are payment type, it is not possible to go through all the applications and make an assessment, as is the case for axis 1 and 3. Instead, models have been developed and the information is handled on a macro level. The current focus of the work is on how the Less Favoured Areas support measures and some sub-measures within measure 214 are affecting changes in High Nature Value areas and the Farmland Bird Index.

If you are interested in finding out further information about the ongoing evaluation system and MTE in Sweden, contact Per Persson: [Per.Persson@jordbruksverket.se](mailto:Per.Persson@jordbruksverket.se)

## Find out more

- o The Rural Development Programme for Sweden 2007-2013. The Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, Information material Jo 08.008 2 June 2008 <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/08/27/31/de111eed.pdf>
- o Ex Post evaluation of the Swedish Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2000-2006. (In Swedish only). <http://www-mat21.slu.se/publikation/pdf/LBUFinal.pdf>
- o The Leader approach in Sweden <http://www.jordbruksverket.se/swedishboardofagriculture/engelskasidor/ruralopportunities/theleaderapproach.4.160b021b1235b6bb8618000441.html>
- o Rural development measures <http://www.jordbruksverket.se/swedishboardofagriculture/engelskasidor/ruralopportunities/ruraldevelopmentmeasures.4.6621c2fb1231eb917e680003958.html>
- o Environmental support <http://www.jordbruksverket.se/swedishboardofagriculture/engelskasidor/ruralopportunities/theruraldevelopment-programmeinfigures/environmentalsupport.4.6621c2fb1231eb917e680003988.html>

## Assessing RDP impacts on reversing biodiversity decline - good practice from the UK

Andrew Cooke, Natural England

The impact indicator 'reversing biodiversity decline', as measured by changes in farmland bird species populations, is one of seven indicators provided by the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) to assess the impacts of the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). Along with the High Nature Value (HNV) Farmland and Forestry impact indicator, the farmland bird species population indicator is intended to contribute to evaluating the impact of programmes on biodiversity. This article presents the approach that Natural England, an independent public body working with Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in the UK, has chosen to assess this indicator.

At national level, the UK Government has set a target to reverse the long-term decline in farmland bird populations in England by 2020, and progress against this target is measured using a smoothed index of the breeding abundance of 19 bird species (11 are common with European FBI species, the other 8 are specific to the UK) that are closely associated with farmland. This 'Farmland Bird Index' (FBI) is presented relative to the farmland bird population in 1966 and is updated annually. The index would appear to provide a sound basis for reporting against the EU impact indicator. However, multiple intervening factors affect the populations of these species and so using the FBI alone to measure the impact of RDPs would not present an accurate picture. The decline in the FBI since the mid-1970s may have been driven by various interacting factors including changes in commercial farming and other land use, weather, etc. Moreover, the bird trend data used to build up the FBI reflects the situation on all land, not just that influenced by RDPs measures.

In a nutshell, Natural England believes it is not yet possible to build up a fully comprehensive and scientifically accurate picture of the direct impact of the RDPs on farmland birds. However, component elements are available to build a chain of causality between agri-environment management and bird populations:

- Autecological studies showing a positive response to targeted agri-environmental management measures by rare and localised species such as stone curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*), cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*) and black grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*).
- Farmland bird index and the national population data for 19 species.
- Scientific evidence for the response of widespread farmland bird species to agri-environment schemes and management options.

Photo: Courtesy of Wikipedia



Grey Partridge, *Perdix perdix*, one of the declining farmland bird species monitored in the UK.

Natural England suggests the impact indicator "reversing biodiversity decline" might be measured using the following three parameters, while also discussing some of the other factors that may have affected farmland bird populations during the programme period:

- The farmland bird index.
- Measurements of the area of habitat being provided under Axis 2 RDPs measures that is known to be of value to the farmland bird species tracked in the index.
- Direct measurement and analysis at different scales of the response of farmland bird populations to delivery of key habitats. (Note: 1 and 3 in the first list above are sources of evidence for point 3 in this second list.)

To conclude, by 2013 analysis for widespread farmland birds will be available covering more than 7 years of large-scale agri-environment management in England. Natural England suggests that this, together with data for rare and localised species, should then provide the best possible measurement of the extent to which the RDPs have contributed towards the ultimate target of reversing the decline in farmland bird populations in the UK.

### Find out more

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- o UK Farmland birds index:  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/environment/wildlife/download/pdf/NSBirds20081031.pdf>
- o Guidance document on the application of the HNV indicator. [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/hnv/guidance\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/hnv/guidance_en.pdf)

## Assessing RDP impacts on improvement of water quality – current practice from Italy

Stefano Lo Presti, Agriconsulting S.p.A

Improvement in water quality is one of four common environmental impact indicators which are required to be used to assess the effects of each Rural Development Programme (RDP) in Member States. The water quality indicator (Impact indicator 6) is measured by observing changes in the gross nutrient balance (GNB), expressed in kg/ha, resulting from the difference between inputs (fertilization, net livestock manure, fixation) and outputs (harvest and forage crops) that potentially contribute to pollute ground and surface waters.

In assessing RDP impacts, the evaluators are required to answer the common evaluation questions of the Handbook on CMEF. One of these questions in Measure 214 (Agri-environment payments) relates specifically to water quality: “To what extent have agri-environmental measures contributed to maintaining or improving water quality? To answer this question, Agriconsulting, an independent evaluator for the three Italian regions of Emilia Romagna, Veneto and Lombardia, uses the following criterion and indicators:

Criterion	Indicator from Handbook on CMEF
Reduction of potential water pollutants	<b>Result indicator 6: Area under successful land management contributing to water quality [Ha]</b>
	Divided by: preferential areas, altitude areas, cropping systems
	<b>Impact indicator 6: Improvement in water quality:</b> Measured by changes in amount of: pesticides, nutrients, and gross nutrient balance

The following approach and methods are used by the evaluator:

- **Result indicator 6:** Using a GIS, Agriconsulting estimates the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) under the RDP measures, which reduce the amount of chemical fertilizers, organic manure and plant protection products. They then compare it with the total regional UAA. Particular attention is given to areas with higher pollution problems. Monitoring data is also used to complete the picture.
- **Impact Indicator 6:** is subdivided into the main polluting elements (nitrogen, phosphorus, pesticides) that negatively affect water quality. The total amount of each polluting element is calculated using the nutrient balance for nitrogen and phosphorus and estimated by agricultural sources for the pesticides.

Availability of reliable data is a key consideration, and the evaluators ensure collection of primary data in the following ways: a) directly from farms (sample survey); or b) through



DEM (Digital Elevation Model) with the regions of Po Valley (Italy) where Agriconsulting is the evaluator of the RDP.

expert interviews (with field agronomists, farmers, local technicians, etc.) using participatory evaluation techniques or c) through a combination of a) and b).

Reliable data is also needed to establish the counterfactual situation, so that the net contribution of the RDP can be checked. One of the challenges is to find control groups of non-beneficiary farms which have similar soil characteristics and climatic conditions, size and cropping systems to those of the RDP supported farms.

If it is to be an effective tool for collecting relevant data for impact indicator 6, the GIS system should contain information about soil cover and type. Information on the measure used is also needed (UAA under conventional techniques and UAA under measures 214 of the RDP), along with climatic information (rainfall and temperature over the growing season). Finally, the database should include crop succession, with technical management itineraries (for example, method of soil cultivation, seeding, fertilizing, etc.) for single crops and monitoring any differences between conventional farming and farming practices under measures of the RDP.

One of the main challenges is to get reliable estimates of fertilizer inputs for each farm. Furthermore, the calculation from micro to macro level remains rather complicated, especially for the non-beneficiary areas: additional context data is required but is not easy to obtain because it may not be updated or available at the required territorial scale.

### Find out more

- o Contact Stefano Lo Presti, Agriconsulting S.p.A.: [s.lopresti@agriconsulting.it](mailto:s.lopresti@agriconsulting.it)

## News in Brief

### Thematic Working Group on Leader and Quality of Life *Ulrike Weinspach*

In response to Member States' needs, a Thematic Working Group (TWG) has prepared support for assessing impacts of Leader and of measures in Rural Development Programmes to improve Quality of Life (QoL). There is strong rationale for addressing these evaluation aspects through one TWG, because Leader (axis 4) is playing a prominent role in delivering QoL (axis 3) measures, and there are common issues between the two axes.

The key evaluation challenges were identified through feedback loops from Member States (MS), including: assessing the "double scope" of Leader (it is both a process, and produces products); there is very little guidance in the CMEF on Leader and QoL; the need to adequately define what is "Quality of Life"; tackling the qualitative nature of the effects; identifying contributions from small-scale interventions; assessing the stimulation of cultural change through Leader; and the fact that the CMEF requires assessment of impacts firstly at local level and then by estimating the contribution at programme level.

A group of experts with relevant experience in evaluation of the two axes, were responsible for research and drafting, including state-of-the-art and current methods and tools, predominantly within the EU context but also open to global practices. Drafting the working paper (also making use of workshops) and validation and finalisation using feedback from MS were the main steps of the process. Early research and drafting addressed the definition of Quality of Life and the link to Leader. Concepts and expected impacts were considered in relation to four fields of observation: socio-culture and services, rural environment, rural economy and governance. In order to develop these further a framework of reference (overview table structured according to these four fields of observation) was elaborated. Each field of observation is introduced by the relevant evaluation questions (EQ) from the CMEF. The framework table includes 7 impact categories, the suggested judgement criteria, additional impact specific EQ, as well as the definition of a few relevant impact indicators for each of the impact specific EQs.

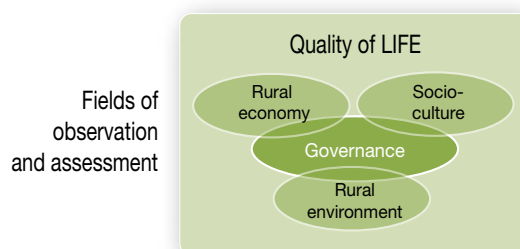
The methodological approach considers the perspective of external evaluators as well as the internal perceptions and judgements of stakeholders. This is believed to be necessary to take into account the key features of Lead-

er as well as the area-based nature of Leader and Axis 3 measures. The TWG working paper therefore suggests a three-step methodological approach including:

- Completion of a framework of reference on the monitoring information (CMEF indicators, outcomes of the self-evaluations) and on preliminary answers to the evaluation questions relevant for axis 3 and 4.
- The organisation of round table meetings with selected stakeholders in order to collect complementary qualitative information; and contrasting the result of the first two steps with the baseline situation.
- The final step is to confront these judgements with the baseline situation. Stakeholder panels and evaluators would have to agree on a multi-criteria ranking format as a final outcome.

The methodology section includes main standard tools, participatory tools as well as more specific ones. It points out that triangulation (or validation through the use of more than 2 methods) is highly relevant especially when evaluating complex socio-cultural and institutional aspects of axes 3 and 4 measures. A series of boxes presents the current practice examples collected from MS.

#### Representation of Leader in relation to Quality of Life



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

## News in Brief

### Third and fourth meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee

Due to a busy schedule of Evaluation Expert Network activities, the Evaluation Expert Committee met twice in Brussels in recent months – on the 7th December 2009 and on the 15th March 2010 attended by representatives from Member States (MS), officials from the European Commission and the Network's Helpdesk.

With the mid-term evaluation (MTE) clearly in view, the main agenda item for both meetings was the presentation of a version of the working paper on the assessment of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of the RDPs in the context of multiple intervening factors. In December, the working paper was already well advanced and the main findings were presented, followed by feedback from Member States on how the usability of such a technical document could be improved to support evaluation practitioners in the mid-term evaluation. By the time of the March meeting, improvements had been integrated into the document in response to previous feedback. Several Member States welcomed the work. They underlined the more reader-friendly nature of the working paper compared to earlier versions, and its usefulness, for example, in bridging the gap between the measurement of indicators and judgment in assessment of impacts. (Read article on page 1).

Presentations were also made at both meetings about the plans and early findings of a Thematic Working Group established to provide methodological support to capture the impacts of Leader and of measures designed to improve Quality of Life. (Read article on page 15).

Early results of the synthesis of Annual Progress Reports for 2008 concerning ongoing evaluation were presented during the December meeting, followed by a more complete summary in March as the synthesis was completed by then. (Read article on page 7).

Findings from the assessment of Member States' needs, and details about the Annual Work Programme for 2010 (AWP 2010) of the Evaluation Expert Network were presented during the December meeting. The delegates were informed about the results of Focus Groups which took place in the second half of 2009, and feedback from missions and other contacts with Member States. The needs identified during these exchanges have been translated into a series of activities in the AWP 2010. (Read article on page 9).

A round-table was conducted at the March meeting, based on a short questionnaire sent in advance to MS, to give an

Photo: Maylis Campbell



*Delegates at the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee in December 2009*

overview of the state of play for the MTE. Most MS were well advanced in terms of contracting out the activity, and on target to complete MTE reporting by the end of 2010. A second round-table, also in March, gave MS the opportunity to give their impressions about the implementation of the CMEF with a view to looking toward the next programming period (post 2013).

The meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee provide also a good platform to exchange experiences and good evaluation practices. In December a representative from the Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA) presented the ongoing evaluation system in Sweden and details of the preparations for the mid-term evaluation (see article page 10). In March, a presentation was made on findings from a French research project about assessment of the net effects of agro-environmental measures through counterfactual analysis through control groups conducted with non-experimental methods. The full text of the report is available at: <http://agriculture.gouv.fr/sections/publications/evaluation-politiques/evaluations/estimation-effets>

Finally, both the December and March meetings included presentations on monitoring related aspects of the result indicators. In December the results from the work of a DG AGRI Task Force that prepared explanations to Member States queries, particularly in relation to gross value added, were presented. The focus in March was on the most common monitoring related difficulties and mistakes identified from a screening of the Annual Progress Reports for 2008.

The next meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee is planned for 2 July 2010.



## News in Brief

### Definitions of the CMEF gross value added indicators

The Evaluation Helpdesk has received a number of questions and requests for clarifications from several Member States (MS) concerning the definition (or measurement) and application of the value added indicators (GVA) included in the CMEF and their application. To address the issues, a working group was set up by DG AGRI, supported by the Helpdesk. A working paper, which deals with the evaluation and monitoring-related aspects of the GVA indicators, has been finalized and communicated to the MS. A brief summary of final conclusions of the evaluation-related aspects of this work is given below.

- **Net versus gross.** Guidance Note I (CMEF Handbook) is inconsistent in dealing with measurement of gross value added for result indicators #2 and #7, and the algorithm in the fiches actually calculates profit rather than GVA. The revised definition in the fiches now aligns measurement of these two indicators with that defined by accountancy standards (including FADN). Also, the Commission paper remedies the confusion that has arisen between the use of the words “net” and “gross” in relation both to the value added (i.e. gross/net value added) and to the effects of policy intervention (i.e. gross/net effects) for impact indicator #1.
- **Output versus turnover.** The algorithm provided in Guidance Note I for the result indicators #2 and #7 is based on a calculation of turnover (or sales) rather than output. In reality output includes both sales and the change in stocks and the on-farm use and consumption. However, the algorithm provided in Guidance Note J for the impact indicator #1 uses output and sales interchangeably. The Commission has now brought into harmony the three fiches (for impact indicator #1 and for result indicators #2 and #7).
- **Treatment of support and compensation payments.** The paper provides guidance on addressing the complex question: should the various kinds of support and compensatory payments that the beneficiary holdings/enterprises receive be excluded from or added to the turnover?
- **Paid versus unpaid labour.** The paper provides clarification how to deal with unpaid labour in valuations and in calculation of direct costs. It aligns the

definition in this respect with the FADN methodology by stating that unpaid labour should not be included in the calculation of the result indicators #2 and #7.

- **Current versus constant prices.** Current prices should be used for the calculation of the result indicators #2 and #7. However, the impact indicator #1 requires a conversion into Purchasing Power Standards (PPS). The possible effects of inflation over time should therefore be considered when interpreting the observed trends of result indicators #2 and #7.
- **Data collection.** The quality of economic data collected at individual holding/enterprise level may be low. The paper states that the information on data collection in the fiches should be considered good practice suggestion, while leaving it to MS to choose the most appropriate method. The Evaluation Expert Network will be assisting on further good practice development. Use of data from business plans is not considered the most appropriate as evaluation should assess the *actual* effects of policy intervention rather than *predicted* effects.
- **Slowly unfolding effects.** Where investment-type measures may take a long time before effects are apparent, the Commission recommends caution in using solely annual results; rather more appropriate is evaluative judgments based on trends observed over a longer time span and using a broad information pool (indicators, evaluation questions, qualitative methods, etc).

In addition, explanations are provided on these aspects: treatment of the value of services provided by farmers regarding the calculation of GVA in result indicator #2, and of investment related support for result indicators #2 and #7; dealing with unpaid voluntary work; the importance of all common indicators related to measures included in RDPs.

#### Find out more

- o Read the [Working Paper on the CMEF Gross Value Added Indicators](#)

## First set of FAQs is published

The Helpdesk receives questions from stakeholders in Member States on aspects of evaluation methodologies, processes and other evaluation subjects. In recent months there has been an increase in the number of questions received in the Helpdesk's electronic mailbox [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu). These questions cover a wide range of issues related to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the EU.

As a way of sharing knowledge among these stakeholders and increasing understanding of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) and its Handbook, a selection of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) has now been published on the website of the Evaluation Expert Network. Organised into several sections, the FAQs deal with: aspects of the CMEF and ongoing evaluation including the mid-term evaluation (MTE), annual progress reports and data provision, indicators, including quantifying and monitoring gross value added etc. Two examples from the FAQs are provided below.

### **What expectations does the European Commission have for the mid-term evaluations of RDPs which have to be submitted by 31 December 2010 considering that the implementation of many of the programmes is at an early stage?**

Article 86 (6) of Council Regulation 1698/2005 specifies what the European Commission expects from the mid-term evaluation:

"... shall examine the degree of utilisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming of the EAFRD, its socio-economic impact and its impact on the Community priorities. They shall cover the goals of the programme and aim to draw lessons concerning rural development policy. ... identify the factors which contributed to the success or failure of the programmes' implementation, including as regards sustainability, and identify best practice".

The European Commission expects these provisions to be met to the greatest possible extent. Addressing the common measure specific and horizontal evaluation questions needs to be considered in the MTE as stated in the Handbook on CMEF ([Guidance note B – Evaluation Guidelines](#)). Preliminary impacts should be assessed, however, if this is not yet possible, future impacts could be inferred from the analysis of the results obtained so far. Trends should be analysed and described including (where applicable) those flowing through from previous programme periods. The MTE should also propose measures to improve the quality of RDPs and their implementation with a view to informing possible revisions of the programmes. The MTE has also to prepare for the ex post evaluation and, more generally, future ongoing evaluation activities.

### **When is the section on ongoing evaluation required in the Annual Progress Report (APR)?**

In accordance with articles 82 and 86 of Council Regulation (EC) 1698/2005, for the first time in 2008 and by 30 June each year, the Managing Authority shall send the Commission an Annual Progress Report (APR) on the implementation of the programme. Each APR shall contain a summary of ongoing evaluation activities.

In 2010 and 2015, ongoing evaluation shall take the form of mid-term and ex post evaluation reports respectively. These reports, however, have a different objective and scope and do not replace the annual reporting on ongoing evaluation. Therefore, in a nutshell this means that the Member States shall include a summary of ongoing evaluation activities in the APRs submitted in June 2010 (for 2009) and June 2015 (for 2014).

An Explanatory note (complementing what is already provided in the CMEF Guidance note B) with suggestions for Member States on what aspects to describe and provide information about when preparing the evaluation section of the APR is included in the Synthesis of the APRs for 2008 (see article page 7).

If you have a question, send an E-mail to: [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu)

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