

This webinar took stock of the lessons learned concerning the contribution of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) to a climate resilient, low-carbon economy in Europe's rural areas. Reflections were shared based on the work carried out by the ENRD [Thematic Group](#) on Bioeconomy and Climate Action in Rural Areas, which highlighted the EAFRD's potential in enabling an economically-profitable climate change mitigation in agriculture and rural bioeconomy. Stakeholders from EU Member States demonstrated how they used RDP support to implement Agri-Environment-Climate measures, advice, LEADER projects, cooperation and investments to advance their transition towards circular, low-carbon and sustainable practices. The possibilities of integrating related interventions into the CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) were also discussed.

### Event Information

**Date:** 25 June 2020

**Location:** webinar

**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point

**Participants:** 98 representatives of MAs, National Rural Networks, LAGs, EU-wide networks, NGOs, universities, farmers and rural entrepreneurs, EU Commission and institutions

**Outcomes:** Exchange of concrete examples in using RDP funding to support the low-carbon transition and climate resilience in EU rural areas.

**Web page:** [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-climate-action-and-resilient-rural-economy\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-climate-action-and-resilient-rural-economy_en)

## Rural climate action contributing to EU Green Deal objectives

Mario Milouchev (Director, [DG AGRI](#)) underlined the importance of the new [EU Green Deal](#) as a document that puts the sustainability into the heart of the discussions about the future growth strategy and its environmental, social and digital dimensions. The related strategies and policy tools will help farmers in producing more sustainably to future-proof EU agriculture and food system, and rural areas more widely. [Herwig Ranner](#) from DG AGRI continued discussing Rural Development Policy and instruments in the context of the EU Green Deal. He reminded the audience that the sustainability of land-based activities encompasses climate and the environment, as well as fair incomes and a social development in rural areas. The [Farm to Fork strategy](#) will play a key role in reducing emissions from agriculture as well as improving the sector's performance with regard to biodiversity, in line with the new [Biodiversity Strategy](#). These two strategies address the Green Deal targets on reducing the use of pesticides, fertilisers, and antimicrobial inputs and increasing organic farming and the preservation of landscape features. The CAP Strategic Plans are central to translating these targets into national interventions that contribute to a resilient EU food system and a circular bioeconomy.

## Successful experiences from the RDPs

[Petr Marada](#) (CZ) presented the [Ekofarma P.Marada](#) as an example of how to mainstream climate action in agriculture. With the support of the Agri-environment-climate measure, the farm transformed eroded arable land into orchards, wetlands and grasslands to increase biodiversity. Trees were planted to avoid soil erosion from water, wind and snow. Biological pest control is applied to protect the farm's organic fruit production. The farm works as a demonstration farm disseminating the good practices to a wide audience of farmers, NGOs, game-keepers, local authorities, and school and pre-school children.

[Laura Schicktanz](#) (AT) presented the LEADER-supported '[Climate and Energy Region](#)' that brings together 13 Tirolian municipalities and local stakeholders around an awareness and education campaign on climate change mitigation. The project succeeded in creating a holistic territorial approach

involving several specific projects on mobility management, sustainable procurement and the use of renewable energies, among others. A regional coordinator and an approach that allows all actors to identify their options for climate action were the success factors behind the initiative.

[Jason Kiem](#) (NL) demonstrated how the bioeconomy can offer diversification for rural activities. [FeedBackFarm](#) is a test facility supported by the cooperation measure aimed at bringing different types of farming together into one system. Organic waste from a dairy farm producing cheese is valorised by using the larvae of black soldier flies that digest it into fertiliser. Flies have good protein value and are fed to fish in an aquaponic system whose waste waters are used for fertilising vegetables. The project involves local authorities and government organisations, research and educational institutes, investors, feed producing companies and farmers. It aims at the commercialisation of the system by 2021.

## Discussion highlights

### Elements to mainstream climate action in agriculture:

- Functional collaboration among all actors (farmers, researchers, advisers, local authorities, policy makers, processing companies, retailers and consumers) to mainstream climate smart practices at all levels;
- Raising awareness and exchanging knowledge, including through demonstration activities in the field;
- A regulatory and policy framework must enable the adoption of innovation and science-based approaches;
- Tools which can be used to calculate the climate contribution of entire supply chains.

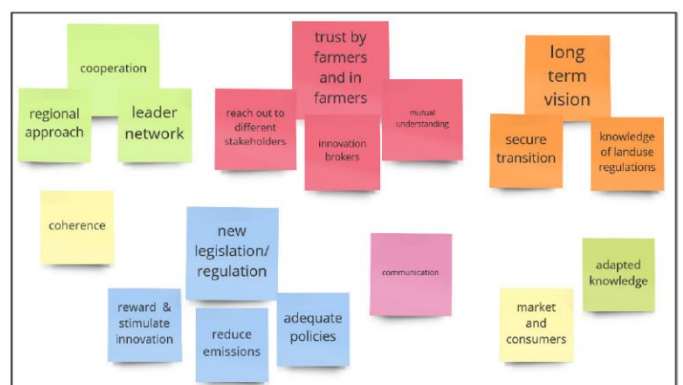
What do you consider the number one priority for territorial climate mitigation approaches to succeed?



How to ensure that developments in bioeconomy contribute positively to economic and social development at the local level?



What is needed to ensure rural actors can increase their competitiveness and income using low-carbon, bio-based solutions?



## Tools and enablers: Knowledge, understanding and participatory approaches

[Maria Stenberg](#) (Jordbruksverket, SE) presented [Klimatkollen](#), the Swedish climate advice module promoting climate mitigation in farming. It helps farmers evaluate the individual climate effect of their farms and supports them in choosing the most suitable measures to reduce emissions and nutrient losses. The evaluation helps farmers to identify where in the production process the emissions come from, whether from the soil, feed, livestock etc. The farmers then discuss the mitigating measures with an adviser and decide which actions to carry out. Follow-up consulting visits help demonstrate the effects of the new practices. The data from the visits is entered in a database and that information is used to provide feedback to the farmer.

[Carla Scotti](#) (IT) explained how the [PRATI CO Operational Group](#) in the Emilia-Romagna region measures the carbon footprint of Parmigiano cheese. Permanent meadows where cows traditionally pasture give their flavour to the cheese and maintain the biodiversity. However, they are losing ground to the cultivation of alfalfa. The project demonstrates to farmers, through scientific evidence, that permanent meadows store twice as much carbon as alfalfa fields. The project also provides farmers with [communication tools](#) so they can demonstrate the environmental and climate benefits of maintaining the meadows to other farmers and consumers.

[Fanny Berlingen](#) ([French Agroforestry Association](#), FR) presented the [Label Haie](#), which was developed with [LEADER support](#) to source energy wood from sustainably managed hedgerows. Hedgerows deliver a range of benefits including biodiversity, water filtering and increased carbon storage. In many places, however, they have been destroyed or neglected as a result of lost knowledge about their maintenance. The label aims to reverse the trend by valorising the hedgerows. Farmers can increase their income by selling wood products from hedges, or by seeking compensation for the resulting environmental benefits, for example on the carbon markets or by asking higher prices for products managed in a sustainable way.

Two videos were shown of EAFRD-supported rural enterprises which are reducing their emissions through practices and technologies whilst also enhancing their profitability. In one, a French dairy farmer, [Romain Leblanc](#), is seen implementing several emission reducing practices including grassland pastures, hedgerows, local feed systems and efficiency measures to decrease the farm's carbon footprint. This followed a carbon audit supported by the EU's LIFE funding. In the other film, a Polish entrepreneur, [Paweł Kotowicz](#), reduced the ecological footprint of his furniture SME by switching to resource efficient machinery, recycling sawdust for heating pellets and installing solar panels on his enterprise.

## Supporting climate action through the future CAP Strategic Plans (CSP)

[Christine Falter](#) (DG AGRI) discussed the CAP post-2020 and its contribution to a resource efficient and climate resilient rural economy. Responses to the challenges imposed by the climate crisis can be turned into opportunities for rural areas and increase their sustainability. CSPs can be used to enable these opportunities through flexible support for climate change adaptation, mitigation and resource efficiency interventions that benefit rural economies according to each Member State's specific situation. Support for climate resilient land management practices are central and under the CSP they can be supported by both Pillar 1 'eco-schemes' and Pillar 2 approaches that already exist such as AECM. In addition, several Pillar 2 interventions (see table below) will have a key role in enabling the rural climate transition.

[Simon Lox](#) (VLM, Belgium) shared Flanders' insights on making the most of the flexibility offered by the CSP. Following the needs assessment to identify specific opportunities in the region, the rural development stakeholders are considering how to transfer EAFRD 2014-20 successes into the CSP. The lessons include helping farmers and other actors cooperate on landscape management and in systematically valorising biomass waste streams. Farmers' cooperation and knowledge transfer have proved valuable for example in increasing soil carbon with the application of compost. The creation of more diverse landscapes using different types of trees and the development of local markets are also envisaged.

CSP intervention types to promote rural climate action and bioeconomy	
Investments – adaptation, resource efficiency, bio-economy, renewable energy, short supply chains, circular economy, tourism etc.	Knowledge transfer, training and advice – a key enabler to support the transition
Non-productive investments to achieve environmental and climate objectives; e.g. agro-forestry	Territorial approaches: LEADER and Smart Villages – integrated community-focused approaches and testing new solutions
Ecosystem restoration and protection; e.g. carbon rich soils in wetlands and peatlands	Cooperation, EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: multi-actor, multi-sector collaboration – ensure research is applied in practice, dissemination of findings to reach practitioners; cooperation around supply chain actors
Change in land management practices: both Pillar 2 AEC commitments & Pillar 1 Eco-schemes (new!)	

## Conclusions

Valeria Forlin ([DG CLIMA](#)) underlined the importance of economic profitability as an incentive for climate mitigating practices. Besides yields and efficiency savings, profitability encompasses the possibility for farmers and foresters to be paid for ecosystem services such as storing carbon. This implies the adoption of new business models via carbon farming, voluntary carbon markets, and private investments. Solid monitoring and tools such as farm level carbon audits are key enablers for such business models. The [European Climate Pact](#), to be launched in November 2020, will provide a platform to give visibility to carbon farming projects and to support networking or knowledge-sharing activities.

The webinar's key messages for the future CAP Strategic Plans:

**COLLABORATION, AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE,  
ADVICE, & INNOVATION**

- Katerina Vrablova ([COPA-COGECA](#))

Asger Mindegaard ([EEB](#)) called for a paradigm shift for farming in the EU. Agro-ecology combines the socio-economic and agronomic resilience of farming while maintaining the sustainability of ecosystems. The relation between producers and consumers also needs to change to ensure climate action can be mainstreamed in the food system and the broader bioeconomy: producers need a fair price for climate friendly products. Collaboration across sectors is needed from the EU to local levels to ensure enabling policy tools and frameworks are put in place.