

Rural actors and communities involved in the bioeconomy need data about the climate impacts of their activities in order to set targets, to learn and improve practices and to share them with others. The participants discussed what kind of data and monitoring frameworks would enable farmers and rural communities to apply effective climate change mitigating approaches and how tools such as certificates and labels can further incentivise climate action. Instead of measuring greenhouse gases directly, monitoring actions that are known to provide climate benefits is often more feasible. Higher-level data and reporting needs should be met in ways which do not burden local rural actors.

### Event information

**Date and Location :** 19 February 2020, Brussels, Belgium

**Organisers:** [ENRD Contact Point](#)

**Participants:** RDP Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks, advisory services, EU institutions, researchers, national and regional stakeholders.

**Outcomes:** Sharing approaches to monitoring and validating data on rural climate change mitigation efforts

**Web page:** [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/3rd-meeting-enrd-thematic-group-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/3rd-meeting-enrd-thematic-group-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas_en)

## Climate data and monitoring

### Empowering rural actors



[Catherine Bowyer](#) (ENRD/IEEP) advocated that information on climate performance should support the understanding of the bioeconomy as a low-carbon transition. Data are needed to demonstrate that all parts of bioeconomy value chains are contributing to climate targets. Well-structured approaches to monitoring and reporting on rural climate action can promote rural actors' understanding of the climate impacts of their activities, if they are linked to relevant advice. Such approaches should be based on indicators that are tailored to each actor's needs.

### EU policy context

[Benoit Esmanne](#) (DG AGRI) and [Sarah Mubareka](#) (EC's Joint Research Centre - JRC) explained how climate monitoring relates to the [EU Green Deal](#) and the monitoring framework of the [EU Bioeconomy Strategy](#). EU climate law will be the key legislative element to ensure EU climate neutrality by 2050. All policy areas, including the CAP, will be reviewed to align them with the Green Deal and its main strategies. The performance-based approach proposed in the [CAP Strategic Plans \(CSPs\)](#) will have to show that it can credibly deliver on the ambitions of the Green Deal and the [Farm to Fork strategy](#). Reliable data and suitable monitoring systems will be essential and will need to be established through stakeholder dialogue on the CSPs. The JRC aims to provide the knowledge and tools for monitoring the ecological boundaries of the bioeconomy. Its indicators are organised in tiers which progress from primary data towards aggregated indicators. Case studies of local experiences complement this knowledge base.



## Data needs and methods for rural actors and communities

### German farmers' experience

[Volker Kromrey](#) described the [Lake Constance Foundation](#)'s experience of accompanying farmers to apply climate change mitigation actions over time. They use an open source whole farm assessment tool, [ACCTool](#), developed through a [LIFE+ project](#) to carry out periodic monitoring based on selected farm management approaches. Monitoring large numbers of individual farms has been found to be too costly, so alternative approaches are being developed. One option is to use data from representative sample farms as a basis of calculation. Farmers' understanding of the climate impact of their actions is key for any efficient monitoring scheme. However, providing relevant advice to all farmers remains a challenge.



### Climate monitoring options for rural communities

[Tom Henfrey](#) (ECOLISE network) underlined that whereas monitoring a single aspect of a community's climate impact makes little sense, setting up a comprehensive monitoring framework is very difficult and practical examples are hard to find. Most cases of local community climate monitoring rely on self-assessments. Communities that do monitor their climate performance typically combine Life Cycle Assessment type approaches and the use of proxy measures that can be associated with certain volumes of GHG emissions.



## Experiences of combining bioenergy production, rural development and environmental goals in Croatia



[Biljana Kulišić](#) ([Energy Institute Hrvoje Pozar](#)) pointed out that to capture the multiple benefits of bioenergy projects, it is necessary to assess the cost effectiveness of investments in the sector – not only in terms of kWh produced, but also in terms of the number of social beneficiaries in rural areas and the environmental benefits.

The benefits of biogas digestate in agriculture – such as soil improvement or reduced nutrient leakages – should be tracked. If climate, energy, biomass production and rural development continue to be seen as separate fields with their own targets, the potential multiplier effects of bioenergy production for the climate and broader rural development will be lost.

## Certification and labels for rural climate action

### Developing monitoring systems and standards

[Andrés Estebán](#) from the Spanish National Standardisation Agency [UNE](#) presented the EIP-AGRI cooperation project [CARBOCERT](#). The project is designing and testing certification schemes for carbon sequestration in soil achieved by selected agricultural practices used in certain Mediterranean crops. The project will provide guidelines for farmers and establish a certification scheme for selected land management practices that are known to be positive for carbon performance, in particular by increasing soil organic carbon content. The application process should be easy for farmers.



### Rural mitigation methods acknowledged by the French Low Carbon Label



[Julia Grimault](#) ([I4CE](#)) briefed the audience on the French national [Label BasCarbone](#) that qualifies rural projects for carbon offsetting funding. The label recognises different climate mitigation methods in agriculture and forestry, including the [CarbonAgri](#) approach for livestock farms and afforestation. Labelled projects track emissions saved compared to a baseline scenario without the project. New methods are being included under the label, for example carbon storage in agricultural soils and sustainable building projects. They are developed by stakeholders and validated by national authorities. Only mitigation efforts going beyond business as usual are considered. Other elements of the initiative include third-party validation and traceability through a national register to avoid double funding.

## Insights on climate for the future CAP Strategic Plans

The Managing Authorities shared insights about their experience in preparing the CSPs. Governments should take the main responsibility for collecting relevant climate data and avoid burdening rural stakeholders with monitoring. They also need to set clear criteria for good practices on the environment, climate, soil, water, biodiversity and social sustainability. Collaboration between different government departments is key for implementing effective climate policy. Experiences from this programming period, for example the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, are valuable for defining interventions that respond to rural actors' needs. Smart CSP interventions combine climate action with other objectives such as those derived from the [Nitrates Directive](#). An outstanding challenge is how to find ways of linking agriculture and rural sectors to national GHG inventories and to [National Energy and Climate Plans](#). This will require further exchanges between Member States.

## Outcomes of group discussions

On data needs:

- Farmers need data on several aspects of climate friendly practices, e.g. the effect on yields and input costs – not only GHGs;
- Identifying activities with most significant GHG emissions is necessary both at farm level and in the value chains to target actions where they have most effect.

On monitoring frameworks:

- Rural actors can provide the data, but authorities should do the actual monitoring;
- Intermediaries such as farmers' organisations or advisory services are necessary to reach out to large numbers of rural actors and to aggregate data;
- A multi-level system can allow local actors to collect data that is accessible and useful for them, facilitate aggregation that makes sense at a territorial level and finally provide necessary national monitoring data;
- The standardisation of rural climate data would reduce the burden on rural actors of providing slightly different data to different monitoring and reporting structures.

On data types:

- Satellite data are useful to support aggregated monitoring (e.g. Copernicus); open source data is very important.
- Land management practices known to have positive climate effects in most cases, such as no tillage or year-round soil cover, are valid indicators.

