

Bioeconomy can make a major contribution towards decarbonising the economy, but the land-based biomass producing sectors are still either net emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) or have a significant untapped potential to increase carbon sequestration in soils and biomass. It is therefore crucial that CAP tools are encouraging and supporting sustainable land management practices which are key to address climate change. Various factors affect producers' and rural communities' decisions to take climate action. Understanding the climate impact of one's own activities is key. Carbon neutral practices are easier to promote if they also benefit rural actors and communities economically and socially. Advice, knowledge transfer and community-led initiatives should be coupled with economic incentives for climate neutral production practices.

Event information

Date & Location: 11 December 2019, Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: 37 participants representing Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks (NRNs), EU institutions, forest and farm associations, researchers and Local Action Groups.

Outcomes: Shared approaches to upscale climate change mitigating activities in rural areas.

Webpage: enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-thematic-group-meeting-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas_en

Approaches to incentivise rural climate change mitigation

Farm level decision support tools to reduce the climate impact

[Pat Murphy](#) (Teagasc, IE) presented the [Carbon Navigator tool](#) which is used by 33 % of Irish livestock farms. The tool calculates the impact of different farm management practices for GHG emissions and farm income. Its use is based on dialogue between the farmer and the advisor. The tool has resulted in significant reductions in farm-level emissions, however Ireland's overall emissions from the livestock sector have increased due to increased production. A broader approach is required, including carbon offsetting practices such as afforestation. Several tools exist to promote farm level sustainable practices, including the H2020 Landmark project's [Soil Navigator tool](#).



Why do rural communities opt for climate action?

[Robert Hall](#) (European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability, [ECOLISE](#)) echoed discussions from the [ENRD Leader Lab on climate action](#) and spoke about the opportunities to create local social value through collective climate initiatives. Community-led initiatives on energy, food production and transport have the potential to reduce GHG emissions while increasing social cohesion and well-being. Social connections and opportunities to improve the quality of life are at the heart of people's decisions to opt for sustainable practices. Eco-villages are bottom-up movements aiming at carbon neutral and inclusive societal transformation. Their experiences are disseminated and upscaled through ECOLISE.



How to upscale support approaches that work well?

Scaling up mitigation in the French livestock sector

[Jean-Baptiste Dollé](#) (Livestock Institute, FR) presented initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of the French livestock sector. Building on the whole farm assessment tool [CAP'2ER](#), over 40 mitigation practices are used to reduce farms' emissions and to increase CO2 sequestration while ensuring also other environmental co-benefits. Dozens of commercial enterprises and public institutions participate in a partnership to reduce the carbon footprint of dairy, beef, sheep and other agricultural value chains. A low carbon label (Label BasCarbone) has been established to help certifying production practices that reduce net emissions. In the future they can be financed through carbon offsetting schemes, facilitated by the [France Carbon Agri](#) association. Similar work is being replicated in the EU through the [LIFE Beef Carbon](#) project and further projects are being planned.

Promoting rural energy entrepreneurship as climate action



[Nils Lagerroth](#) (Landsbygdsnätverket, SE) presented the information campaign '[Countryside delivers fossil free energy](#)' coordinated by the Swedish NRN. It raises awareness about the importance of 'green' businesses for sustainable development, their contribution to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, and how they represent opportunities for a diversified farm income. The campaign targets farmers and rural entrepreneurs, advisors, financing institutions and local authorities. Examples of rural enterprises producing renewable energy are disseminated in short [videos](#), webinars and meetings to increase the uptake of existing technologies and the offer of locally produced green energy. New rural energy entrepreneurs also benefit from the Swedish RDP's investment measures and advisory services.

Policy tools to scale up rural climate change mitigation

CAP and soil based approaches to climate change mitigation

[Silvia Nanni](#) (IEEP) summarised messages from [previous ENRD thematic work](#) on soil and a recent [evaluation study](#) of the impact of the CAP on Climate Change and GHG. The CAP's contribution to climate action has been limited, but current RDPs offer several opportunities to support soil protection and add value to a carbon neutral bioeconomy. Collective approaches, results-based payment schemes, diverse agri-environment-climate commitments and organic farming practices all enhance agricultural soils' capacity to sequester and conserve carbon. Future CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) should scale up these efforts while addressing factors that have limited the uptake of related measures in the past.



Linking climate change mitigation and bioeconomy in the post-2020 CAP Strategic Plan



[Katja Christensen Wolfhechel](#) (Ministry of Environment and Food, DK) explained that Denmark has identified peatland rewetting and permanent grasslands as key areas where its future CAP Strategic plan could contribute to climate change mitigation. Biomass harvesting from peatlands might help control nutrient leakage caused by the rewetting, linking the action to new economic opportunities in the bioeconomy. Related interventions could be built on the relevant standards for good agricultural and environmental condition of land (GAEC), eco-schemes and voluntary environmental, climate and other management commitments. The CSP shall contribute to Denmark's national target of 70 % reduction of GHG emissions by 2030 and its effects must be measurable for national GHG inventories.

Discussion highlights

Participants [discussed](#) approaches that could help transform existing knowledge about carbon neutral practices into actions, and possibilities to upscale them. Examples from farms, enterprises and communities show that rural climate actions needs to be understood in concrete and local terms in order to be motivating. Changes in practices are often spurred by the necessity to deal with the local effects of climate change. Attractive mitigation practices also generate other outcomes, such as social cohesion, appreciation by peers, and economic benefits and opportunities. Consumer demand for climate standards is a key upscaling factor.

Advisory services and upgrading skills are central to ensuring that individual rural actors, such as producers, can adopt carbon neutral practices. Peer to peer learning and demonstrations of new practices are important in convincing not only farmers, but also citizens across the board of the feasibility of climate mitigating activities. Rural communities can take climate action on a scale that is big enough to make sense, but small enough to relate to people's reality. Flexible support for local climate initiatives, for example through LEADER, is necessary.

