

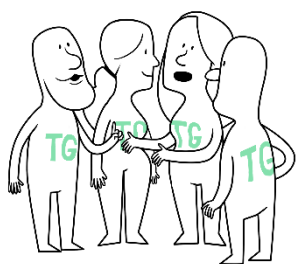
ENRD Thematic Group on Resource Efficiency *2nd Thematic Group Meeting*

Event Summary |
14 December 2016

About the Thematic Group

The ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on resource efficient rural economy was set up based on interest expressed by various stakeholder groups in the Rural Networks Steering Group. The second meeting was organised on the 14 December 2016 in Brussels. Inspiring examples were shared at the meeting and the members of the group mapped out in principle the work to be followed in order to ensure that the TG makes a real contribution to improving the implementation of RDPs across the EU

ENRD Resource Efficiency Thematic Group defined the area of focus



Three thematic areas (*Soil Nutrients, Soil carbon, and Water availability*), and three cross cutting themes (*Motivation gap, Policy gap Implementation gap (see P. 2)*) were identified in the [first TG meeting](#), the scope of the work was still relatively broad. To make the work manageable and ensure that useful and succinct outputs were developed, the second TG meeting focused on providing specific research needs and questions that will help the group deliver solutions to improving RDP measure use, design and uptake to improve the resource efficient use of soils and water in the EU. The key question for the group was “*Where can we add value to this process?*”.

To help in addressing this question four members of the TG presented existing good practice examples and work that has been done in other projects on this same topic. This got the group thinking about the sorts of questions and information we still needed to understand and how to build on what is already out there.

- **Kimo van Dijk** from the European Sustainable Phosphorous Platform (ESPP) talked about ‘*Recycling nutrients from bio-wastes as opportunity for rural economy development*’. He presented some examples of nutrient recycling cases studies such as the Friesland Campina milk cooperative; the risks posed by allowing Phosphorous and other minerals to be wasted such as the EU being 90% reliant on imported P; and the opportunities and synergies for increasing their recovery and reuse, including examples of different nutrient recycling products and their need to correspond to user needs and requirements.

- **Elisabet Nadeu** from the RISE foundation then spoke about the findings of the '*Nutrient Recovery and Reuse (NRR) in agriculture*' study produced by RISE. The report considers (1) What is the potential scale for enhanced recovery and reuse of N and P in the EU?; (2) What are the challenges in doing it? and (3) What actions are required to stimulate a wider adoption of nutrient recovery and reuse in Europe?

It concludes that information, research and development are essential, yet to trigger action in this area requires both incentives and targets for good practice, as well as well as penalties and restrictions for bad practice.

- **Wojciech Frateczak** from the Regional Water Management Board in Warsaw in Poland spoke about the '*LIFE + EKOROB project: Ecotones for reduction of diffuse pollution*'. The project addressed the water pollution issue in the Pilica River Catchment in Poland, the sources of pollution (largely nutrient run-off) and their impacts on eutrophication. The action plan, developed to tackle these issues included reduction of municipal pressures on water, improved agricultural practices, and a focus on eco-hydrological approaches (e.g. buffer zones) to prevent run-off from reaching the water. Improving environmental awareness of local society was also found to be important, with regular workshops, activity days and meetings organised for a range of societal sectors.
- **Maria Valentina Lasorella** from the Council for Agricultural Research and Agricultural Economy Analysis (CREA) in Italy spoke about the PACA project "*Actions supporting agro-environmental-climate priorities of RDP's*". PACA is a project of Italian Rural Network supported by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for the period 2016-2018. Its objectives are to support the Italian Regions and other local actors to promote effective and efficient use of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in the achievement of Priority 4 and Priority 5 of the RDPs. It involves three core work areas: (1) Analysis of 21 Regional RDP's, data gathering and analysis of Regional strategies related to agro-environmental climate actions; (2) Exchanging experiences and sharing best practices at National, Regional and local level on AEC issues; and (3) Institutional coordination among different AEC policies.

Presentations from the workshop can be found on the ENRD contact point website:


https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-‘resource-efficient-rural-economy’_en

Cross-cutting challenges

Following the presentations, the TG discussed what sort of specific questions to answer that would add value to the large amount of work already out there. In particular, they considered how the work could make a contribution to the three challenges identified at the previous meeting:

- The motivation gap: what more is not being done on resource efficiency on the ground;
- The knowledge gap: do actors understand and have access to information about what can/needs to be done to improve resource efficiency and what impacts it may have; and
- The policy gap: the join-up between different policies with similar aims.

The motivation gap



1 THE MOTIVATION GAP...

You MUST DO MORE WITH LESS!

WELL, WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

MOTIVATION

What are the opportunities for farmers and are these being communicated in the right way?

Are successful cases of value chain improvements well communicated?

Are farmers aware of the tools and support available to them?


Are incentives at the right level?

Could a results-based approach give farmers more flexibility to act?

Motivation is high when there is a problem, but this can be too late. Why doesn't action happen in advance?

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The knowledge gap



2 THE KNOWLEDGE GAP...

YOU SHOULD BE DOING BETTER!

SOIL AND WATER

HOW?

3 POLICY GAP

KNOWLEDGE

What are the impacts on farmers for taking action on resource efficiency?

What training activities are available to farmers, scheme designers, Managing Authorities, etc.?

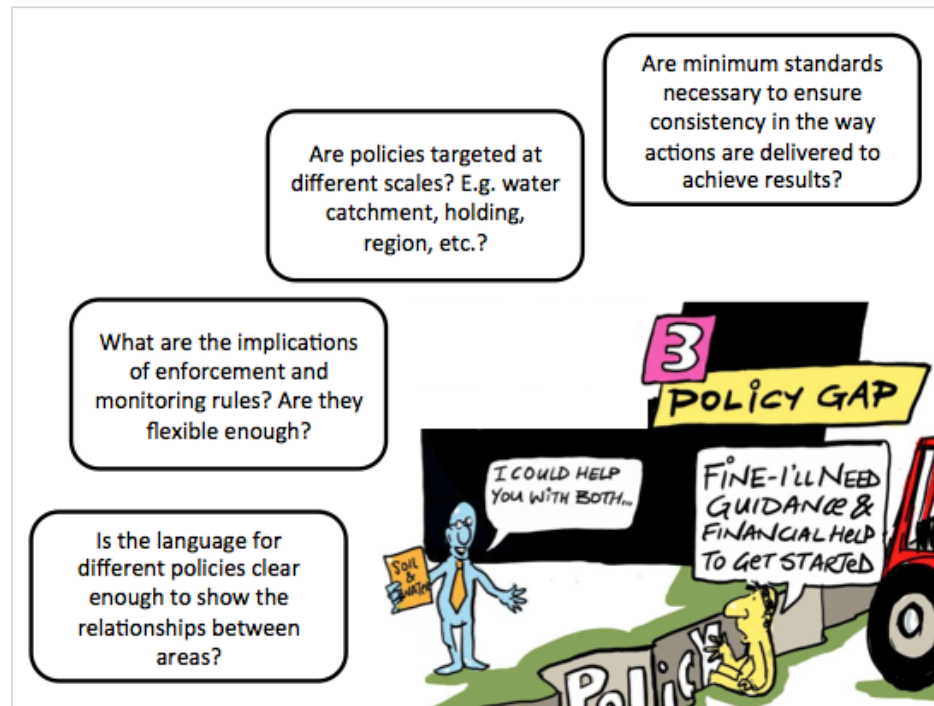
Is there a match between the 'best approach' and what is available under RDPs?

Are other sectors and policy areas aware of the potential of RDPs for delivery on the ground?

Are Managing Authorities and those implementing RDPs aware of the opportunities and issues?

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The policy gap



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Delivering results

The thematic group suggested that the questions raised above could best be answered through:

1. analysing what is proposed in a sample of RDPs
2. looking into more detail about how RDPs are implemented and their links to other policies; and
3. collecting good practice examples.

Throughout the discussions, it was clear that the TG should not start from scratch and that the first step in all the group's activities should be to assess and build on what has already been done. For instance, there are existing resources such as DG Environment's Wiki on soil actions and policies in EU Member States. In addition, whilst a summary assessment of all RDPs based on existing literature and studies would be useful, it would also be time consuming, and the TG felt that effort should be focused on developing a more detailed understanding of specific elements in the design of RDPs and their implementation in a selected number of regions.

The regions to be assess are yet to be decided by the TG but suggestions include: **Italy**, **Finland** and **Hungary**, and areas where water and soil are a 'priority' for rural development action (e.g. **Lower Saxony [DE]** and **Flanders [BE]**), as well as areas close to Brussels for longer term observation and access.

RDP analysis

Here the TG discussed the importance of assessing what a sample of RDPs offer on the theme of resource efficiency of soils and water. This might include an assessment of SWOT analysis used to determine priorities for an RDP and resulting strategy employed to meet the needs in a region or Member State; an assessment of the measures available to farmers and other (potential) beneficiaries to deliver on resource efficiency objectives; payment rates; and the specific details of what sort of actions are supported under the individual measures.

Understanding how RDPs bring together different measures into packages to address specific topics will also be important. This analysis of RDPs will help the TG to understand what is intended to happen in relation to resource efficiency and how this is communicated. However, to understand what happens in practice, requires a more in depth look at the situation in selected Member States and regions and discussion with different actors. This will be carried out through a so-called regional analysis.

Regional analysis

Regional analysis will be an important strand of the TG's work, looking beyond what is set out in the RDPs and see what is actually happening on the ground. This will necessarily cover a range of different elements of implementation and the use of measures in different contexts. For example:

- Understanding the types of calls that have been released under the RDPs and which themes these address, along with selection criteria;
- Whether there is coherence with delivery of priorities in other policies, and how RDPs are contributing;
- Understanding how the implementation of the same measures is applied in different contexts, in different regions, or between different farmers;
- Seeing how measures are targeted or brought together in different packages of measures to address specific issues, individuals, or geographic areas;
- How complementary are the measures with other support tools, such as European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other EU and national instruments?;
- and the role of stakeholders (private, public) in delivering activities to further resource efficiency in practice.

“...especially in the bioenergy sector there is a lot of money involved and there is a competition from the energy side which creates opportunities not for the farmers but for the bigger companies. Yet, on the other hand there are big opportunities for nutrient recycling and there we should focus on the great potential for tackling resource efficiency using RDP funding”

***Kimo van Dijk** (European Sustainable Phosphorous Platform (ESPP), Brussels)*

Good practice examples

The TG felt that understanding what is taking place in RDPs and how implementation is happening on the ground would be enriched by identifying concrete examples from which lessons could be drawn. This area of work for the TG includes the identification of primarily EAFRD supported examples where support has been used to improve the resource efficiency of soils and water. Work under this topic could include identification of examples, where efforts have been successful and where they have not; as well as analysing examples to see what specifically made them effective, what are the factors of success and of failure.

As with previous work areas, the TG felt that there were already many great examples of good practice out there that we could learn from, including the current [LIFE projects database](#) and the projects and examples gathered for the [ENRD website](#). Looking through these various databases will help to gather a wide range of examples from which to draw out success factors and where there have been barriers. This will also build on the success factors and analysis undertaken in the previous [TG on Green Economy](#). The TG also felt that even where good practice examples and case studies exist, they often do not contain the level of detail or specificity necessary to understand why and how initiatives developed and worked in practice.

“...when it comes to rural development there are lots of fantastic initiatives / projects that are going on, but there are a lot of challenges to get funded in one way or another. There are two keywords there, one is being creative and the second one is to pull funds from various sources...”

Koen van Keer, Yara

Practical outcomes – adding value and avoiding information overload

In the last session of the workshop TG members considered what sort of materials and outputs the group should produce and where could they add most value. Collating information and understanding what is necessary and what is possible is important.

“...sometimes farmers are interested to take care of the environment but they do not know how. There is a knowledge gap and there is an economic gap. Also local authorities, especially municipalities, cannot help either because national legislation prohibits them to intervene or they do not know where to get knowledge...”

Bianca Cavicchi, Norwegian Institute for Bioeconomy Research (NIBO)

One clear message came through in this discussion, that *'short, clear and targeted information would be more useful than a long report'*. Reflecting on this point, the TG members suggested various ideas on what sorts of materials might be useful. These included:

- ✓ Collating existing information and resources in that could be accessed through the **ENRD website**. This could take the form of a web-based portal for information on resource efficiency in the context of RDP implementation. This could include a map based start page with links to existing resources, examples, and guidance;
- ✓ **Factsheets, guides or checklists** on specific topics, such as overcoming the motivation gap for farmers, which could be used by Managing Authorities or those responsible for implementing RDPs;
- ✓ **Presentations and other material** that could be used or modified to explain resource efficiency and aspects to consider when developing RDPs, or used in newsletters and promotional materials and replicated by TG members in their communication media;
- ✓ A **video or other type of media** to introduce the topic of resource efficiency and some of the positive actions to think about and take when designing and implementing RDPs.



As the work progresses, other materials may be developed, depending on needs of the TG.

The audience for the TG work remains primarily those involved in the development and implementation of RDPs in practice. However, there are opportunities for some of the TG materials to be of use and accessible to beneficiaries wanting to know more about the subject and see how they can help improve resource efficiency and benefit in the process as well as stakeholders interested in the topic resource efficiency in RDPs. The outputs from the work will take this into account and be presented in an accessible format for a wide range of actors.

Members' perspectives



Elisabet Nadeu
(RISE Foundation)

What recommendations do you have for how the group could add value in its work on resource efficiency?

The diversity and knowledge in the TG, from farm and regional level to the European Commission, can facilitate a better understanding of what makes RDPs related to resource efficiency work or not work and how their implementation and impact could be boosted. This could serve as a valuable input for the upcoming CAP reform. Indeed, the outcomes of this TG might be timely towards proposing facts or recommendations regarding what the CAP post2020 could offer in terms of resource efficiency through the Rural Development Programs.

What sort of outputs do you think would be most helpful to you and the people you work with?

Factsheets with case studies showcasing what is and what is not working in current RDPs related to resource efficiency would be very helpful. Although it may sound simple, this is a kind of information very scarcely available and very much sought-after!



Kimo van Dijk
(European Sustainable
Phosphorous Platform)

What recommendations do you have for how the group could add value in its work on resource efficiency?

In the last years the European Sustainable Phosphorus platform (ESPP) has seen an increasing attention in Europe for a nutrient circular economy among industry, governments and research. We appreciate the focus of the task group on resource efficiency in the rural economy. There are large opportunities for distributed rural job creation and economic benefits for European agriculture and farmers by implementing nutrient recycling and sustainable use of resources. ENRD can help inform farmers and Rural Development managers about success stories and inspire them to take steps in their businesses or local communities. Rural Development policy and funding mechanisms can evolve to better integrate nutrient recycling and management, in synergy with energy and climate.

What sort of outputs do you think would be most helpful to you and the people you work with?

ESPP, our members and stakeholders, would welcome critical recommendations to the European Commission and the Member States to better integrate nutrient stewardship and the nutrient circular economy into Rural Development programmes. Also, tools are needed to inform and inspire farmers and rural development professionals. Simple but illustrative videos about nutrient challenges and solutions could be produced and a database of success stories developed. It is important that RD funded projects provide feedback to such a database.





Anne Maréchal
(PEGASUS/IEEP)

What recommendations do you have for how the group could add value in its work on resource efficiency?

PEGASUS is looking at new ways to drive change both in policy and in practice and I think the variety of experts participating in the TG provides us with a great opportunity to do just that. To me, a good way to add value would be to further identify those motivation, knowledge and implementation gaps that are most commonly found when dealing with resource efficiency issues. The objective would be to then make the link with the way RDP measures are currently implemented in different contexts, to understand whether uptake (often motivation and knowledge gaps) or effectiveness (often an implementation gap) of the measures proposed are sufficient to ensure real change happening. In doing that, we may find weaknesses in the coherence of the message sent to rural actors on the ground and I'm particularly interested in the issue of (mis-)alignment of policies at territorial level.

What sort of outputs do you think would be most helpful to you and the people you work with?

The most useful things for Pegasus is seeing what has worked in practice, what the success factors were, especially in terms of stakeholders' dynamics, and how the motivation gap was overcome on the ground.

Future meetings

Two further meetings of the TG are planned

- **TG3** will take place on 7th of March in Brussels/Virtual link. This will be a shorter meeting than previous TGs with the aim of presenting and discussing the initial findings of the TG work.
- **TG4** will take place over three days in Bologna, Italy from the 3rd to 5th of May. Here we will discuss further findings of the work and emerging conclusions. We will have the opportunity to visit some good practice examples, talk with local stakeholders and test some of our thinking with those on the ground.

Finally, an ENRD seminar is foreseen for June 2017. This will bring together more than 100 stakeholders, in Brussels to showcase the work of the group and discuss its findings. The event will include presentations of good practice examples from across the EU and share the TG's work with EU stakeholders and policy-makers.