

# Agri-environmental indicator - commitments

Statistics Explained

*Data from June 2017*

*Planned update: November 2021*

This article provides a fact sheet of the [European Union \(EU\) agri-environmental indicator agri-environmental commitments](#) . It contains an overview of the final outputs of the Rural Development Programmes (RDP) 2007-2013 Measure 214: Agri-environment payments. A brief summary is also made of targets set by Member States in the RDP period 2014-2020 under Rural Development [Priority 4: "Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry"](#) for Measure 10.1: "Agri-environment-climate commitments" and Measure 11: "Organic farming commitments". The data are complemented by information on definitions , measurement methods and on the context needed to interpret them correctly. This agri-environmental commitments article is part of a [set of similar fact sheets](#) providing a complete picture of the state of the agri-environmental indicators in the EU.

The indicator presented in this article gives information on the agricultural area which is covered by commitments under the Rural Development Programmes for several (but not all) types of environmentally friendly farming practices. It shows the implementation of such practices at the end of the programming period 2007-2013 and the corresponding targets for the current [programming period 2014-2020](#) .

### Main indicator:

- Share (%) of area under agri-environmental commitments in Priority 4 on total [utilised agricultural area \(UAA\)](#)

### Supporting indicators:

- Area (ha) in Priority 4 under agri-environmental-climate commitments (Measure 10.1)
- Area (ha) in Priority 4 in conversion to organic farming (Measure 11.1)
- Area (ha) in Priority 4 in maintenance of organic farming (Measure 11.2)

## Key messages

- At the end of the Rural Development Programmes covering the period 2007-2013, the agricultural area under agri-environmental commitments amounted to nearly 46.9 million ha and represented 26.3 % of the UAA in the [EU-28](#).
- The area under agri-environmental commitments varied considerably between Member States. The shares of agricultural land enrolled in agri-environmental measures in 2013 equalled 93.7 % of UAA in Finland and 1.8 % of UAA in Greece. The data cover physical areas supported by agri-environmental payments under the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, which included payments supporting organic farming. The figures do not include areas worked according to agri-environmental principles but not supported through the Rural Development Programmes, or supported by national or other programmes.
- The data from 2013 cannot be directly compared to the number of hectares targeted to be covered in 2020 by agri-environment-climate commitments, due to changes in policy set-up that took place in the revision of the [CAP](#) post-2013. Several types of environmentally friendly commitments included in the output of 2013 are allocated to other rural development measures in the 2014-2020 programming period. The output targets set by the Member States for the Priority 4: "Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry" for Measure 10: "Agri-environment-climate" and Measure 11: "Organic farming" under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes are used in this factsheet.
- Targets for 2020 differ greatly between countries. For Finland, for example, the target is to have 100 % of its utilised agricultural area enrolled in agri-environmental measures by 2020. These targets obviously reflect the rural development that have already taken place over the past programming periods and national circumstances. Thus, overall the target within Priority 4 for the EU-28 is that 40.3 million hectares should be under an agri-environment-climate or organic farming commitment in 2020. Taking into account land under an agri-environment-climate or organic farming commitment but programmed by Member States to contribute to other [Rural Development Priorities](#), this area is planned to reach 44 million hectares.

## Assessment

### Share of total UAA (main indicator) and number of hectares of agricultural land enrolled in agri-environmental measures (sub-indicator 1)

According to figures reported by the Member States in compliance with the [reporting requirements of the Rural Development Programmes' monitoring system](#), in 2013 the agricultural area under agri-environmental commitments amounted to nearly 46.9 million ha and was equal to 26.3 % of the utilised agricultural area (UAA) in the EU-28 (not including Croatia) (Table 1).

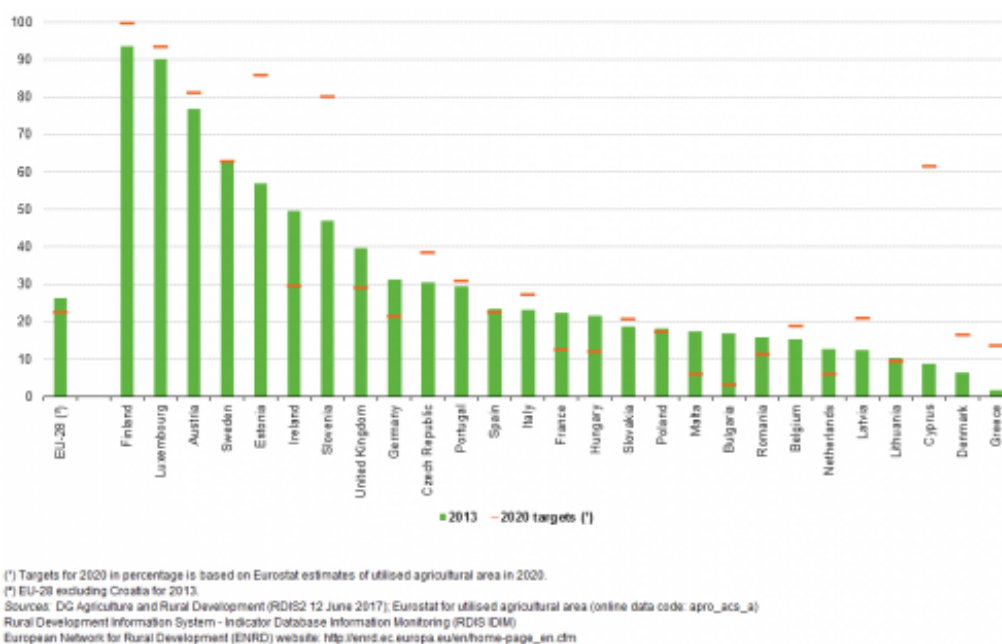
	Agricultural area under agri-environmental measures (ha)		Share of area under agri-environmental commitments on total UAA (%)	
	2013	2020 targets	2013	2020 targets (*)
<b>EU-28 (*)</b>	<b>46 854 995</b>	<b>40 275 490</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>22.5</b>
Belgium	204 866	249 878	15.3	18.8
Bulgaria	841 454	159 000	16.8	3.2
Czech Republic	1 075 214	1 345 500	30.5	38.5
Denmark	171 749	432 106	6.5	16.4
Germany	5 211 697	3 590 253	31.2	21.5
Estonia	549 764	854 000	56.9	86.0
Ireland	2 222 104	1 308 689	49.6	29.5
Greece	93 273	691 531	1.8	13.6
Spain	5 526 029	5 369 765	23.5	22.5
France	6 473 440	3 710 007	22.3	12.7
Croatia	:	98 644	:	6.4
Italy	2 870 459	3 455 054	23.1	27.3
Cyprus	9 445	77 742	8.8	61.5
Latvia	235 050	395 000	12.5	21.0
Lithuania	297 991	286 300	10.3	9.5
Luxembourg	118 393	122 800	90.3	93.5
Hungary	1 156 936	649 679	21.7	12.2
Malta	2 036	700	17.4	6.0
Netherlands	235 994	112 250	12.8	6.1
Austria	2 202 586	2 210 600	76.9	81.3
Poland	2 614 808	2 504 000	18.1	17.4
Portugal	1 092 928	1 144 525	29.4	30.9
Romania	2 195 185	1 577 050	15.8	11.4
Slovenia	225 589	382 810	47.1	80.3
Slovakia	359 832	396 490	18.7	20.6
Finland	2 115 695	2 271 121	93.7	99.9
Sweden	1 894 261	1 901 300	62.4	62.8
United Kingdom	6 858 216	4 978 697	39.7	29.0

(\*) Targets for 2020 in percentage is based on Eurostat estimates of utilised agricultural area in 2020.

(\*) EU-28 excluding Croatia for 2013.

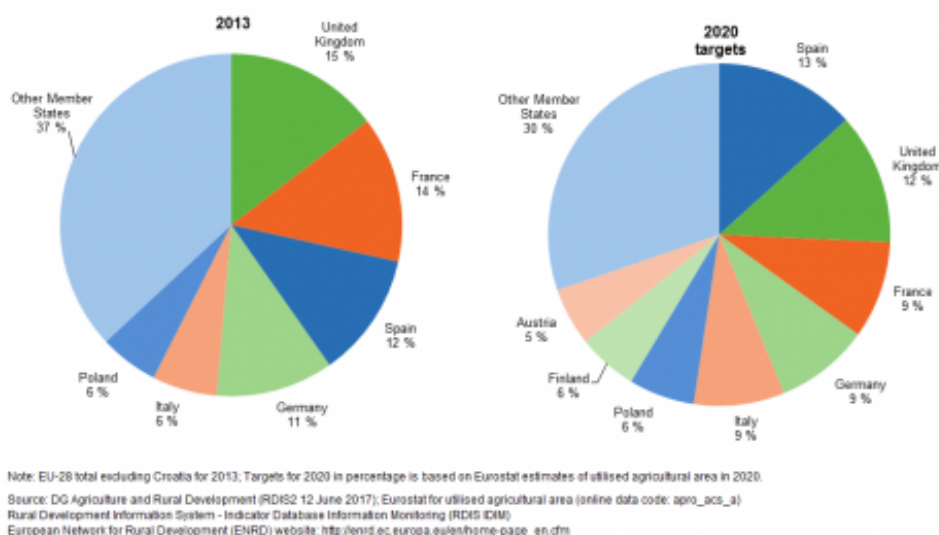
**Table 1: Agricultural land under agri-environmental measures; 2013 and targets for 2020 (hectares; share of total UAA)**

Agricultural land under agri-environmental commitments as share of UAA varies considerably between Member States (Figure 1). The shares of UAA enrolled in agri-environmental measures in 2013 ranged from 93.7 % in Finland to 1.8 % in Greece. Other Member States where more than half of the UAA was enrolled in agri-environmental measures included Luxembourg (90.3 %), Austria (76.9 %), Sweden (62.4 %) and Estonia (56.9 %). At the other end of the scale, in addition to Greece, less than a tenth of the UAA was enrolled in these measures in Denmark (6.5 %) and Cyprus (8.8 %). However, these figures should be interpreted with caution. The data only cover areas that were supported by EU payments for agri-environmental commitments in 2013, i.e. at the end of the Rural Development Programmes programming period 2007-2013. They do not include areas that were supported by national or other programmes. The level of implementation may also reflect the co-financing ability of the respective Member States and their capacity to administer these measures.



**Figure 1: Agricultural land under agri-environmental measures as share of UAA, 2013 and targets for 2020 (%)**

In 2013, the United Kingdom accounted for the largest share among the Member States in the total EU-28 area enrolled in agri-environmental measures under the Rural Development Programmes. With 15 % of the EU-28 total, the United Kingdom accounted for slightly more of this area than France (14 %), Spain (12 %) and Germany (11 %) (Figure 2).

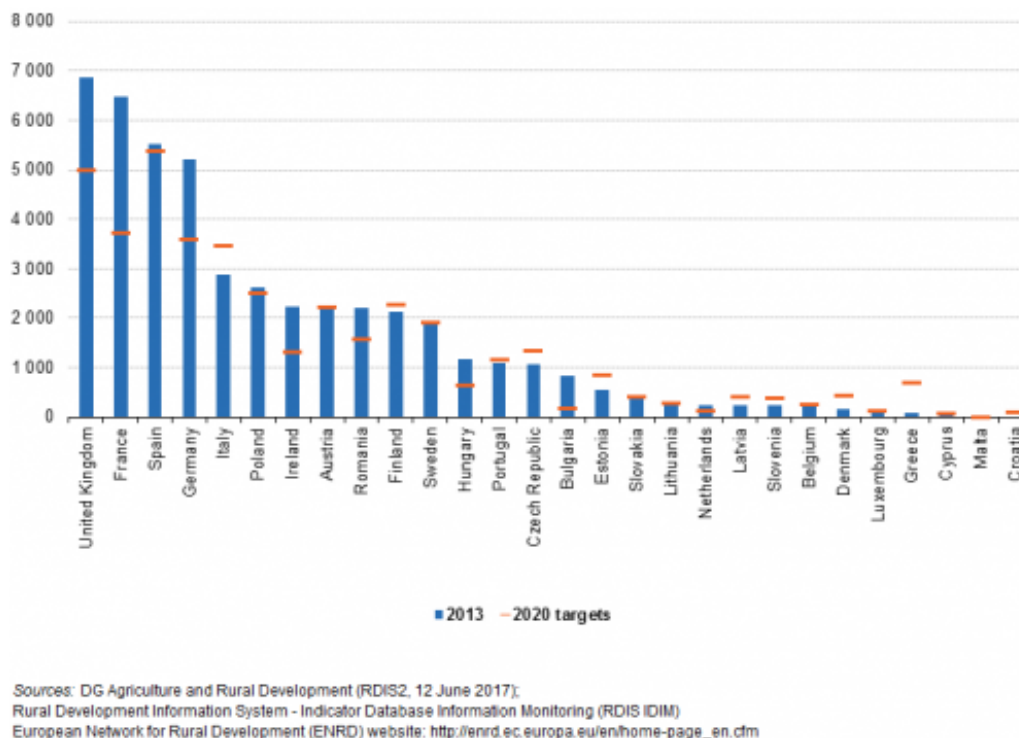


**Figure 2: Member States' share of EU-28 total agricultural land under agri-environmental measures; 2013 and targets for 2020 (%)**

The agri-environment-climate measure under RDPs 2014-2020 is different from 2007- 2013 (see further in section Data used and methodology ). Just as the implementation of the agri-environmental measures varied markedly between Member States in the programming period 2007-2013, so do the targets they have set for the programming period 2014-2020. These targets obviously reflect the rural development that have already taken place over the past programming periods and national circumstances and the different priorities set by Member States following their SWOT-analyses. Thus, overall the target for the EU-28 is that 44 million hectares should be enrolled in Measure 10: Agri-environment-climate and Measure 11: Organic farming in 2020. Of these, 40.3

million hectares are programmed to contribute to Priority 4, while around 3.7 million hectares are programmed to contribute to other EU Priorities such as enhancing the viability and competitiveness of agriculture, or low-carbon and climate-resilient agriculture.

It is anticipated that the country with the largest share of EU-28 utilised agricultural area enrolled in agri-environmental-climate measures in 2020 (Figure 2) will be in Spain, with 13 %, surpassing the United Kingdom where the share of the total is expected to be 12 %. The target for 2020 for Italy regarding hectares enrolled in agri-environmental-climate measures is higher than what was implemented in 2013 (Figure 3). As a result, the share of Italy will rise to match the shares expected for France and Germany, with all three Member States expected to account for around each 9 % of the total in 2020.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 3: Agricultural land under agri-environmental measures, 2013 and targets for 2020 (thousand hectares)**

Several Member States plan a considerable increase in the areas under agri-environmental measures towards 2020, including the Czech Republic, Denmark, Slovenia and Finland. Finland stands out, by targeting that 100 % of its utilised agricultural area should be enrolled in agri-environmental measures in 2020, compared to 93.7 % in 2013. The 2020 targets for areas enrolled in agri-environmental measures are ambitious also in Luxembourg (2020 target: 93.5 % of UAA enrolled), Estonia (86.0 % of UAA), Austria (81.3 % of UAA) and Slovenia (80.3 % of UAA).

In addition to areas under agri-environmental-climate commitments (Measure 10), Priority 4 'Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems' of the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 also covers areas supported for the maintenance of organic farming (Measure 11). For the EU-28, the target for 2020 agri-environmental measures for organic farming is 10.2 million hectares, of which 8.0 million concern the maintenance of organic farming areas and 2.2 million concern the conversion of ordinary agricultural land to organic farming (Figure 4). For the EU-28, the share of maintenance of existing organic farming areas makes up around 78-79 % of the areas supported.

Among the Member States, the countries that aim to support the largest areas for organic farming by 2020 are

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that the 2020 targets in percentage of utilised agricultural area under agri-environment-climate measures are based on Eurostat estimates of UAA in 2020.

Italy (1.8 million hectares, or 18 % of the EU-28 total supported area under Measure 11), Spain (1.3 million hectares, or 12 %) and Germany (1.1 million hectares, or 11 %). The Member States where there is most focus on converting conventional agricultural land to organic farming are Malta, Greece and Romania. However, these are all countries where the total size of the areas supported for maintenance of and conversion to organic farming towards 2020 are relatively small.

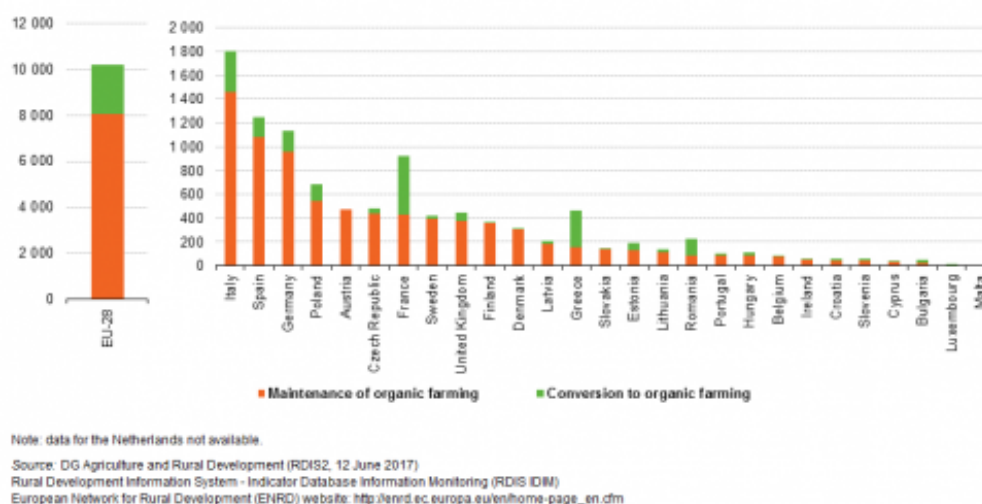


Figure 4: Share of area under maintenance of and conversion to organic farming commitments, targets for 2020 (thousand hectares)

## Source data for tables and graphs

- [Download Excel file](#)

## Data sources

### Indicator definition

The indicator gives information on the agricultural area which was covered by funding from Rural Development Programmes Measure 214: “Agri-environment payments” (programming period 2007-2013), and targets set for Measure 10 “Agri-environmental-climate commitments” and Measure 11 “Organic farming” under Priority 4 “Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems” of the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 .

The indicator "Agri-environmental commitments" is linked to the other indicators presented in Eurostat’s dedicated section on [agri-environmental indicators](#) .

### Data used and methodology

The indicator is built on the basis of administrative data reported by Member States in compliance with the reporting requirements of the Rural Development Programmes’ monitoring system. Data for the programming period 2007-2013 are derived from the annual information reported to compile the [Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework \(CMEF\)](#)’s output indicators, linked to the [Measure 214 "Agri-environmental payments"](#) .<sup>2</sup>The 2013 data includes all the commitments financed through the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 under [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1698/2005](#) .

The output indicators of the CMEF are measuring activities that are directly realised within the Rural Development Programmes. The data presented in this article are all expressed in 'physical terms', i.e. in hectares. Monitoring data are reported annually by Member States to [DG Agricultural and Rural Development](#) , within

<sup>2</sup>Article 79 – 83 of [Regulation \(EC\) No 1689/2005](#)

the Annual Progress Report which is compiled for each programme. Data are reported and processed by means of the Rural Development Information System - Indicator Database Information Monitoring (RDIS IDIM).

The data on the national targets for implementation by 2020, provided by the [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#) <sup>3</sup>, covers the anticipated output from the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 for Measure 10 “Agri-environmental-climate commitments” and Measure 11 “Organic farming commitments”, programmed towards Priority 4 ‘Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems’ of the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020.<sup>4</sup>

In the RDP 2007-2013, the Measure 214: “Agri-environment payments” included support to several measures which are separate measures in the programming period 2014-2020. Among these is support to organic farming. The programming structure is so different during the two periods, that the hectare targets should not be directly compared.

### Main indicator and sub-indicators

Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013: Data come from the monitoring information collected from the Member States of the output indicator ‘Physical area under agri-environmental support’. For each Rural Development Programme, the information of the monitoring tables includes an estimation of the physical supported utilised agricultural area (UAA) in hectares (ha). Any double counting of areas with several different types of agri-environmental schemes have been corrected. This means that if a single beneficiary has more than one contract covering the same area, this area is registered only once. This area corresponds to the physical area under agri-environment contract. This is necessary, as several contracts can be signed for the same area, but for different environmental purposes. For example, there can be one agreement for landscape management and another separate agreement for organic farming for the same area.

The indicator on the physical area was introduced for the first time in the programming period 2007-2013. It is an output indicator of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the Rural Development Programmes. The aim was to improve the quality of the monitoring information. As it excludes double counting of areas, it differs from the total area enrolled in agri-environmental commitments where the same area can be counted several times if several types of commitments apply on the same land.

The indicators for the reference year 2013, i.e. the end of the programming period 2007-2013, include the area which was enrolled in agri-environmental schemes in 2013. In practice this means that the data for 2013 include commitments signed in the previous years of this programming period (Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005).

Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020: The data on the national targets for implementation agri-environmental schemes by 2020 covers the anticipated physical output in hectares from the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 (Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013). Monitoring data are generally only available at the Focus Area level, i.e. for Focus Area 4A ‘Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems’. However, national targets to be realised by the end of the programming period are available for Measure 10 “Agri-environmental-climate commitments” and Measure 11 “Organic farming commitments” (11.1 “Area (ha) - conversion to organic farming” and 11.2 Area (ha) – maintenance of organic farming”, respectively).

## Context

Agri-environmental instruments are needed to support the sustainable development of rural areas and to respond to society’s increasing demand for environmental services. Payments granted under agri-environmental measures encourage farmers and other land managers to serve society as a whole by introducing or continuing to apply agricultural production methods compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, the landscape and its features, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity.

The agri-environment measures have been widely applied throughout the EU farmland, despite considerable differences in priority between different Member States and regions. Some Member States and regions have chosen to spread the funds available for co-financing large areas, others smaller areas; more focused and/or with higher payment levels. The level of the payments should be sufficient to attract farmers to enrol in the measures

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<sup>3</sup>Date of data extraction 12 June 2017

<sup>4</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) No 1305/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)



but can not undermine the general principle of calculating the payments based on income loss and additional costs, potentially including transaction costs. There may also be more practical reasons for the difference in national and regional application of the agri-environmental measures. For instance, the administrative resources required (for identification of key environmental issues of concern, design, processing of applications, training etc.) to successfully implement the measures may not be available. Moreover, the agricultural context differs between EU Member States, concerning age and educational levels of farmers, intensity of agriculture, and environmental challenges.

## Policy relevance and context

In the current [2014-2020 rural development programming period](#), agri-environmental measures, together with the Leader measure the only obligatory measures of rural development, are designed to encourage farmers to protect and enhance the environment on their farmland by paying them for the provision of environmental services. Farmers commit themselves, for a five-year minimum period, to adopt environmentally friendly farming techniques which go beyond the baseline which is made of [Good agri-environmental conditions \(GAEC\)](#) the [Statutory management requirements \(SMRs\)](#), minimum agricultural activities and minimum requirements for fertilisers and plant protection products use. Codes of GAEC are defined by Member States, in the context of CAP pillar I direct payments, to provide a minimum environmental baseline, in order to minimise some of the potential negative environmental effects of the agricultural activity. This ensures that the agri-environment measures deliver more environmental benefits than what is delivered by the application of mandatory requirements. In return for their commitment, farmers receive financial assistance that compensates for additional costs and lost income from these environmentally friendly farming practices.

Agri-environment measures are currently the main instrument for the integration of environmental goals into the [Common agricultural policy \(CAP\)](#) and for meeting society's demand for environmental outcomes provided by agriculture. The CAP was substantially reformed in 2013. This reform underpinned producer support, integrating a more land-based approach and sustainable agriculture with 'green' direct payments. The new CAP offers a more holistic and integrated approach to policy support. Specifically, it introduced a new architecture of direct payments; better targeted, more equitable and greener, an enhanced safety net and strengthened rural development. As a result, it is adapted to meet the challenges ahead by being more efficient and contributing to a more competitive and sustainable EU agriculture. The Rural Development Programmes for the programming period 2014-2020 are built around six priorities, which are sub-divided into focus areas. Each national or regional rural development programme must cover at least four of these priorities. Thus, the framework for designing national and regional rural development programmes is flexible. The agri-environmental schemes can be adapted to local or regional farming and environmental conditions, which are very diverse throughout the EU. As a consequence, there is a wide range of agri-environment measures in different Member States.

Commitments designed by national/regional agri-environmental measures can cover the following activities: integrated production, other extensification of farming systems (i.e. fertilisers and [pesticides](#) reduction, extensification of livestock), crop diversification or crop rotations, reduction of [irrigation](#); action to conserve soil, buffer strips and field margins, management of landscape, pastures and high nature value farming, actions to maintain habitats favourable for biodiversity, support for genetic resources, other targeted actions which for example include the use of integrated environmental planning. Commitments for organic farming cover the conversion to or maintenance of organic farming.

Agri-environment measures are proposed by Member States or regions and submitted to the Commission for approval under Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, as part of their [Rural Development Programmes \(RDPs\)](#). In most cases, agri-environment measures are the main environmental policy instruments to fulfil the environmental objectives set out in the RDPs. They are also a key tool for achieving EU level environmental objectives, such as those set out in the [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020](#).

The spatial distribution of different agri-environmental commitments is not available, data are only available at programme level. Therefore, the indicator could potentially be shown at regional level only for some countries. A further effort would be needed to assess the targeting of agri-environmental measures (classified by sub action) to the local needs (such as [Nitrate Vulnerable Zones](#)).

## Agri-environmental context

The main specific environmental objectives of agri-environment schemes are the protection and improvement of landscape and its features, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity by means of the increase of sustainable management of agricultural land. A thorough [analysis of the Measure 10.1 'Agri-environment-climate](#)

commitments' has been made by the [European Network for Rural Development \(ENRD\)](#) .

## Other articles

- [ENRD Workshop on Agri-environment-climate Measures](#)

## Database

- [Agriculture](#) , see:

Agricultural production (apro)

    Crops products (apro\_cp)

        Crop statistics (area, production and yield) (apro\_acs)

            Crop statistics (from 2000 onwards) (apro\_acs\_a) (including data on utilised agricultural area)

## Dedicated section

- [Agri-environmental indicators](#)

## Publications

- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics - 2016 edition](#)
- [Organic farming statistics](#) (online publication)

## Legislation

- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1305/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
- [Summaries of EU legislation: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#)
- [Commission Communication COM\(2006\) 508](#) - Development of agri-environmental indicators for monitoring the integration of environmental concerns into the common agricultural policy
- [Commission Staff working document](#) accompanying COM(2006)508 final

## External links

- **Data sources:**
  - [ENRD monitoring results](#)
    - [European Network for Rural Development \(ENRD\)](#)
- **Publications:**
  - [EAFRD Project Brochures](#)
    - [EU Rural Review](#)
    - [Rural Connections Magazine of the ENRD](#)
- **Other external links:**
  - [ENRD Factsheets](#) for the CAP Rural Development Priorities and the associated Focal Areas

- European Commission – Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development - Agriculture and the environment
- European Commission – Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development – Rural Development 2014-2020
- High Nature Value Farming – European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism
- OECD - Sustainable agriculture