



ENRD webinar

## Second meeting of the Thematic Group

### Highlights report

The webinar focused on the transition to sustainable agricultural and forestry practices that contribute to CAP climate and environment specific objectives and to the European Green Deal targets, as set out in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. Selected national approaches to reduce pesticide use and nutrient losses and to extend organic areas were presented.

Participants exchanged experiences of upscaling agroforestry, sustainable forest management practices, use of biocontrol and conservation agriculture. They identified success factors and conditions for upscaling and discussed potential future CAP interventions to promote the adoption of sustainable practices by farmers and foresters.

The discussion feeds into a factsheet providing ideas and orientation for the CAP Strategic Plans (CSP).

#### Event Information

**Date:** 10 December 2020

**Location:** Webinar


**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point


**Participants:** RDP Managing Authorities, EU institutions, representatives of farmer associations, environmental and nature conservation organisations, advisory organisations, local and territorial organisations.

**Outcomes:** Identification of CAP Strategic Plan interventions that could help upscale sustainable practices in forestry and agriculture.

**Web page:** [2nd meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group on the European Green Deal and Rural Areas](#)

## National approaches contributing to European Green Deal and Farm to Fork targets


 Danilo Marandola from [CREA](#) / IT NRN talked about streamlining the relevant targets of the National Adaptation Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides ([NAP](#)) with those of the CSP to reduce the use of harmful pesticides, including in the area reserved for organic farming. He also dealt with the reduction of particular substances in specific areas like Natura2000 sites. Eco-schemes will also play an important role in reducing pesticide use by the majority of farmers. The Managing Authority recommends supporting actions such as training, skills and knowledge transfer.


 [Elen Peetsmann](#) from the [Estonian University of Life Sciences](#) presented the success of organic agriculture in Estonia – currently accounting for over 20% of agricultural land– based on the broad uptake of RDP organic farming support measures, extensive grasslands (67% of UAA) and strong market demand especially for organic cereal from other EU countries. A long-term knowledge transfer programme has supported the organic expansion. The next step is to find a way to increase the value added of its organic produce and build domestic demand.

 Marko Mäki-Hakola from [MTK](#) / Finnish NRN presented the National Nutrient Recycling Action Plan 2019-30 that is expected to reduce nutrient runoff from fields and livestock farms, while increasing the use of bio-based recycled fertilisers and offering new economic opportunities to rural areas e.g. around biogas production. The work is only just starting and it includes building markets for recycled fertilisers and biogas. In addition to the CSP, the European post-covid recovery funds can support the implementation of the plan.

## Success factors of promoting the transition to sustainable farming and forestry practices

### Agroforestry and high diversity landscape features

 [Euridice Leyequien](#) presented lessons of the [FarmLife project](#) that introduces agroforestry practices to NL and BE farms. The project relies on network creation for knowledge sharing, brokering, and advocating at different levels. At farm and provincial/municipal level, farmer-to-farmer awareness raising is key to upscale new practices. At national level, facilitation and subsidies for networking are needed. Support programmes for agroforestry should provide economic incentives to minimise risks of transition, with suitable support covering initial investment and the following first five to six years of activity.

 **Discussion highlights:** The new CAP regulation provides the MS with new flexibility in defining eligible hectares, so that agroforestry practices and high diversity landscape features can be supported through the CSP. Many Managing Authorities are not sufficiently aware of the environmental, economic and social potential of these practices, therefore sharing

good experiences could be a mean to improve their knowledge and willingness to implement new approaches. Eco-schemes can potentially address these practices and are being considered as a means to upscale them, for example in IT and NL. Pillar 2 environment-climate interventions and non-productive investments can be useful as well. Land managers also need to see the economic benefits of agroforestry and diversified landscape features, implying support for adding value to products from these systems and strengthening related value chains. It is important that definition and eligibility issues for both agroforestry and landscape features are taken in account in CSP according to the specific context in the MS, keeping in mind for instance that agroforestry is a different practice compared to forest management or afforestation and is suitable for agricultural areas.

## Transition to biocontrol / Integrated Pest Management



[Vicente Dalmau Sorlí](#) from Plant Health Service of Generalitat Valenciana presented the territorial upscaling of biocontrol in rice farms in Albufera, ES. The use of pheromone dispensers to fight rice stem borer, made compulsory and subsidised by the region, has reduced the use of insecticides by up to 97% compared to conventional control methods. The result is improved biodiversity indicators. The experience showed that bio-control methods allow commercial rice production also in nature reserves and tourist areas.



*Discussion:* Environmental legislation and national action plans on the sustainable use of pesticides strongly orient initiatives to upscale biocontrol and Integrated Pest Management practices. Pilot and demonstration projects, as well as accessible and practical information, are important to build trust and raise awareness amongst farmers. Downstream, producer groups play a key role in mainstreaming them. In the CSP, eco-schemes could be used for a more general adoption of practices, whereas agri-environment-climate commitments can offer more specific instruments. The integration of several interventions, essentially AECM with advice, training, study groups and information days, is most effective.

## Upscaling sustainable forestry practices



[Silvère Gaudet](#) from the [French Federation of Forested Municipalities](#) presented the [RENFORT](#) project that used RDP measures 20 and 8 to activate public and private forest owners in sustainable forest management through networking and facilitating their access to applicable information, tools and services. The owners of small forest lots are not actively managing their land as it brings in little revenue. Collective approaches create economies of scale and help address environmental and climate change-related crises like bark beetle invasions and forest fires. The project helped municipalities combine abandoned forest land into larger forest units. It also brought hunters and foresters together to manage more balanced forest-game units. RENFORT was instrumental in designing national recommendations for a more geographically targeted use of RDP forest measures across French regions.



*Discussion:* CAP cooperation instruments can be used to support collective approaches and producer organisations. Knowledge and information for the promotion of management practices through the AKIS and EIP-AGRI groups have proved effective. Economic opportunities are the primary incentive for owners to manage their forest property, although experiences of subsidised conservation schemes such as [Metso](#) in Finland show that biodiversity values also motivate owners. The CAP can support further economic incentives in rural areas, for example in the bioeconomy. It can provide investment support for afforestation or non-productive investments to restore forest lands especially in less productive areas, possibly coupled with management commitments to ensure continuity over time.

## Conservation agriculture

[Danilo Marandola](#) (CREA/IT NRN) explained how the regional RDP agri-environment-climate scheme succeeded in upscaling conservation agriculture in the Apulia region. The scheme, building on no-tillage, cover crops, organic matter inputs and crop rotation, enabled improvement of soil quality and structure in a region that faces high soil erosion and loss of soil organic matter. The uptake of the measure was enhanced by the availability of suitable agricultural machinery. The role of farmers as mentors has played a key part in the extension of conservation agriculture practices.



*Discussion:* Collective schemes allow for a greater flexibility for individual farmers as targets are set and controlled at the collective level. Result-based payments can support conservation agriculture. However, their design and objectives should be as simple as possible and respond to local needs. Several interventions currently supported under Pillar 2 could be shifted to Pillar 1 in the CSP. For instance, eco-schemes could support catch crops and more ambitious crops. Experiences from sectoral interventions could also be useful. CMOs and producer organisations can act as innovation brokers and champions in a specific area, enhancing the collective uptake of certain practices. Crop diversification also requires the development of a market for the different crops produced by the system. Certain Local Action Groups focus on agri-environmental and climate objectives as a way to support territorial cooperation and the upscale of sustainable practices.

## Further discussion



Amelie Krug from [ECOLISE](#) drew attention to local collective actions that can contribute to European Green Deal objectives beyond the adoption of single land management practices. Sustainable food systems can be promoted through community initiatives that empower more people to be involved in food production. Peter Toth (ENRD CP) recapped the discussion from the ENRD [LEADER Thematic Lab](#) 'Developing local strategic approaches to address green issues' on the role of local development strategies and LEADER/CLLD in catalysing the transition to sustainable practices.