

EUROPEAN
EVALUATION
HELPDESK
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION-RELATED QUERIES

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The Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for the evaluation function within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) by providing guidance on the evaluation of RDPs and policies falling under the remit and guidance of DG AGRI's Unit C.4 'Monitoring and Evaluation' of the European Commission (EC). In order to improve the evaluation of EU rural development policy the Evaluation Helpdesk supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, RDP managing authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building, and communicating with network members on evaluation related topics.

Additional information about the activities of European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development is available on the Internet through the Europa server (<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

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ACRONYM LIST

| | |
|---------|---|
| AIR | Annual Implementation Report |
| AWU | Annual Work Units |
| CAP | Common Agricultural Policy |
| CCI | Common Context Indicators |
| CEQ | Common Evaluation Questions |
| CLLD | Community-Led Local Development |
| CMES | Common Monitoring and Evaluation System |
| DG AGRI | Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development |
| EAGF | European Agricultural Guarantee Fund |
| EARDF | European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development |
| EC | European Commission |
| ENRD | European Network for Rural Development |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| EP | Evaluation Plan |
| EU | European Union |
| EURI | European Recovery Instrument |
| FA | Focus Area |
| FADN | Farm Accountancy Data Network |
| JC | Judgement Criteria |
| LAG | Local Action Group |
| LEADER | Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale |
| MA | Managing Authority |
| MS | Member State |
| NRN | National Rural Network |
| NRNP | National Rural Network Programme |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PA | Paying Agency |
| PSEQ | Programme Specific Evaluation Question |
| RDP | Rural Development Programme |
| SFC | Shared Fund Management Common System |
| WD | Working Document |

1. INTRODUCTION

This working document compiles a selection of evaluation-related queries raised by the Member States between 2016 and October 2021. Answers were prepared by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development in collaboration with the responsible Commission services.

For further information please send your evaluation-related queries to info@ruralevaluation.eu

2. EVALUATION PLAN

2.1 Reporting on the progress of the implementation of the evaluation plan

Q. What does the EC expect in terms of reporting on the progress of the evaluation plan following the approval of the RDP? How is the reporting on the evaluation plan linked with the common evaluation questions to be answered in the enhanced AIRs?

A. Reporting on the implementation of the evaluation plan is done every year, under section 2 of the annual implementation report¹. RDPs must briefly identify, for the calendar year to which to AIR refers to, the: a) modifications made to the evaluation plan and their justification; b) evaluation activities carried out; c) data provision and management activities; d) list of completed evaluations and their website links; e) summary of the completed evaluations, focussing on the main findings; f) communication activities; and g) follow-up given to the evaluation results. The relevant findings of the evaluations carried out should be used to reply to the evaluation questions in section 7 of the so-called enhanced AIRs in 2017 and 2019.

2.2 Modifications of the evaluation plan

Q. To what extent is it possible to modify the evaluation plan?

A. The evaluation plan is an integral part of the rural development programmes financed by the EAFRD² and can be modified if justified.

Modifications of the evaluation plan may be done in the context of a RDP modification. The evaluation plan should be modified (via a RDP modification) when the modification concerns the basic elements of the evaluation plan³, namely: a) purpose of evaluation, b) governance structures and coordination of evaluation, c) evaluation topics and activities, d) data and information provisions, e) timeline of evaluation activities, f) communication of evaluation results, g) the allocation of resources for evaluation.

¹ Annex VII, point 2(a) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

² Article 8.1 (g) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013

³ Annex I, Part 1, point 9 to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

3. ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO RDP FOCUS AREAS

3.1 Secondary (=additional) contributions to focus areas

Q. Annex I, Part 1(11) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 lays down the rules for the Indicator Plan in the Rural Development Programmes. Point 11 (c) establishes the definition of an Indicator Plan, which comprises separate structured tables setting out, qualitatively, the additional contribution of measures to other focus areas. However, it is not entirely clear how the RDP Managing Authorities will monitor, quantify, or assess these secondary (=additional) contributions. Can it be confirmed that secondary contributions will be assessed by using complementary result indicators in the enhanced AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019, as well as in the ex post evaluation of RDP 2014-2020?

A. Yes secondary contributions are assessed in the context of the evaluation activities carried out for the enhanced AIRs and for the ex post when calculating the Complementary Result Indicators R2, R13, R14, R15, R18 and R19 and Result Indicator R21. At the stage of the RDP implementation, in the operations database, and for each individual operation approved, it is necessary to flag for types of operations where a potential secondary contribution is expected to focus areas as referred in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 point 2(a) and point 5 (a) to (d) and point 6 (a), namely FA 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D and 6A. Please note that in the Annual Implementation Reports - Table B4 'Total public expenditure of the operations which have secondary (additional) contributions to other focus areas' of the Working Document 'Rural Development Annual Implementation Report Monitoring tables (2014-2020)' (update August 2018 ver. 2.2) - the total public expenditure includes the operations having secondary (=additional) contributions to other focus areas.

In this table it is compulsory to identify (flag) the projects with secondary contributions to Focus Areas 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D and 6A (Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014). To report and quantify "programme achievements, in particular through assessment of the complementary result indicators, and relevant evaluation questions" (Annex VII, point 7 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014), evaluators should, if possible, calculate / assess the complementary result indicator of a specific focus area, taking into account both, primarily programmed operations and the operations which have secondary contributions to that specific focus area. The quantification of secondary contributions provides a much completer and better picture of the achievements of the specific focus areas under each RDP priority.

Q. Annex IV to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 establishes that complementary result indicators are related only to FAs 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D. However, the SFC 2014 allows to flag secondary (=additional) contributions for all FAs. What will happen if there are secondary (=additional) contributions to FA for which there are no complementary result indicators? Does this mean that those secondary contributions will not be measured?

A. No. Managing Authorities are encouraged to measure identified secondary (=additional) contributions of operations to Focus Areas 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D and 6A (flagged at the stage of RDP implementation) as well as of those under focus areas which are not equipped with complementary result indicators. In case significant secondary (=additional) contributions of operations can be expected, additional result indicators may be developed by the MA to assess the secondary contributions.

Q. Is it necessary to justify and explain the secondary contributions of a measure to a FA or is it sufficient to fill in the SFC table without providing any further explanation?

A: Yes, whenever possible Member States should fill-in the RDP SFC template with the secondary contributions of measures to other focus areas⁴, and provide also an explanation of those additional contributions in reply to questions.

Q: Given the importance of evaluating the efficiency of interventions in achieving the objectives of a certain focus area, will the assessment of secondary contributions consider the public expense allocated to a given measure/sub-measure/action and how?

A: Yes. Article 68 (a) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 establishes that effectiveness and efficiency of interventions should be assessed. The assessment of RDP results considers the primary and secondary contributions of operations to the achievement of focus area related objectives. This includes also the assessment of the effectiveness of contributions (to what extent have the operations contributed to the achievement of above objectives) and their efficiency (at which cost the contributions have been achieved).

Q: In the Annex 11 of the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' - Fiches for answering the CEQs for RDP 2014-2020, it is requested to indicate the measures primarily programmed under the FA linked to the respective CEQ and measures which show secondary contributions to that FA . However, it is unclear whether it is necessary to calculate secondary contributions of measures.

A: When calculating the gross/net value of indicators (complementary result indicators, additional indicators and common context indicators) for answering the CEQ, both primary and secondary contributions of operations and their uptake are taken into consideration. Regarding the secondary contributions, in reporting and quantifying "programme achievements, in particular through assessment of the complementary result indicators, and relevant evaluation questions" (Annex VII, point 7 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014), evaluators might take them into account (if possible, it's not compulsory) in calculation / assessment of the complementary result indicator of a specific focus area.

In case there are no measures programmed under a certain focus area, but still there are secondary contributions expected from the measures programmed under other focus areas, the related CEQ may be answered while taking into consideration the above secondary contributions (if possible, but it is not compulsory). For this purpose, the linked result/target indicators (common, additional, context) might be calculated by taking into consideration only the secondary contributions. For example, if there are no measures programmed under the FA 6A, but measures programmed under the FA 3A are expected to contribute to the rural diversification and job creation (objective of the FA 6A), the CEQ no. 16 can be answered by using the Common Result/Target Indicator R21/T20 (jobs created in supported projects) based on the secondary contributions only.

⁴ Annex I, Part I, point 11(c) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

4.1 Focus area related common evaluation questions

Q. How to answer the focus area related common evaluation questions (no. 1 – 18)?

A. Focus area related common evaluation questions are specified with (not binding) judgment criteria and should be answered with the means of common result indicators, (target indicators and complementary result indicators)⁵. When the CEQ cannot be answered with common result indicators (e.g. because the common indicators do not provide sufficient evidence to measure the success of the intervention), other common indicators (context indicators and output indicators) as well as additional indicators can be used. Additional indicators are developed by the programme authorities/evaluators. Examples of additional information to be collected for answering the CEQ are provided by the Working Paper '[Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020](#)'. The development of additional indicators is further described in the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017'.

Q. Objectives linked to rural development priorities and focus areas are assessed through 18 focus area related evaluation questions. To answer these questions, it is useful to plan different studies in the evaluation plan. However, there are different possibilities to plan this: Article 56 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 states that *“at least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the ESI Funds have contributed to the objectives for each priority”*. Does this mean that one must answer the evaluation questions at least once during the whole programming period? For instance, can one assess priorities 1 to 3 in the first enhanced AIR submitted in 2017, and then priorities 4 to 6 in the enhanced AIR submitted in 2019? In Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, it is specified that *“for each focus area included in the RDP, the related question shall be answered in the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports submitted in 2017 and 2019, and in the ex-post evaluation report”*. Does this mean that Managing Authorities should launch evaluations for priorities 1 to 6 already for the first enhanced AIR submitted in 2017, and then renew these evaluations for the second enhanced AIR submitted in 2019? What is the preferred option?

A. The assessment of RDP results was for the first time reported in the AIR submitted in 2017. In this report all the common evaluation questions linked to the focus areas under which the RDP has shown an uptake had to be answered. Hence, the system to evaluate all RDP Priorities 1 to 6 and focus areas was already set up for the first enhanced AIR submitted in 2017 and the evaluation is renewed for all priorities and focus areas also for the second enhanced AIR submitted in 2019.

Q. Shall CEQs be answered if, under a given focus area, no measures/sub-measures have been primarily programmed but there are secondary contributions to that focus area?

A. It is not compulsory but considered to be a good practice to answer also the CEQ linked to focus areas under which no measures have been primarily programmed. For this purpose, the relevant secondary contributions of operations programmed under other focus areas (e.g. FA 2A, 3A) are taken into consideration when assessing the programme results under the given focus area (e.g. FA 4D) and when answering the related CEQ.

⁵ Annex IV to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

Q. How to answer the common evaluation question related to Focus Area 3A ("*To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to improving the competitiveness of supported primary producers by better integrating them into the agri-food chain through quality schemes, adding value to the agricultural products, promoting local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups and inter-branch organization?*") if the direct beneficiaries are associations of farmers? Our RDP has allocated a large part of funds to FA 3A, Measure 4.2 - which is targeted at Priority Associative Entities for food processing and marketing. Shall in this case the common evaluation question for FA 3A remain the same as stated in the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 or shall it include a specific evaluation question directed towards the competitiveness of Priority Associative Entities?

A. You shall answer to the common evaluation question linked to FA 3A also in case the direct beneficiaries of Measure 4.2 (under the FA 3A) are associations of farmers rather than farmers/primary producers.

The common indicator to be used to answer the above question is: "% of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations".

If this common indicator is not sufficient to capture the effects of the programme interventions on the competitiveness of primary producers through Priority Associative Entities, we propose to employ additional evaluation elements to answer the CEQ. For example:

- **Additional judgment criteria:** The competitiveness of primary producers – members of Associations named Priority (treatment) Associative Entities (= Organizations) has been increased.
- **Additional indicator:** "Change in agriculture output/AWU of primary producers with the members of Priority (treatment) Associative Entities (= Organizations) supported by the programme".

Q. Should the focus area related common evaluation questions be answered when the level of RDP uptake of measures with a primary contribution is low, while the level of RDP uptake of measures with a secondary contribution is relevant?

A. The focus area related common evaluation questions should be answered when there is a relevant level of RDP uptake of operations with secondary contributions, as well as when there is a low level of RDP uptake of operations with primary contributions.

For this purpose, any common and additional indicators linked to that focus areas are calculated by taking into consideration the operations with both primary and secondary contributions.

However, if the level of RDP uptake of operations with both primary and secondary contributions does not provide sufficient quantitative evidence the RDP Managing Authority may also apply alternative approaches, such as qualitative assessment, as proposed in Annex 11 of the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' or in the Guidelines 'Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019'.

4.2 Common evaluation questions related to other RDP aspects

Q. How to reply to the common evaluation questions related to other aspects of the RDP (i.e. CEQ no. 19, 20, and 21)?

A. To answer the common evaluation questions related to other RDP aspects the following is proposed:

1. The answer for CEQ 19 “*To what extent have synergies between priorities and focus areas enhanced the effectiveness of the RDP?*” can be based on a qualitative assessment, e.g. as shown in the Guidelines ‘Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017’, Annex 10. Table 12 allows to indicate primary and secondary contributions of operations under RD measures and sub-measures towards focus areas. Primary contributions are vertical contributions of measures/sub-measures directly programmed under the respective focus areas. Secondary contributions are diagonal contributions of measures/sub-measures programmed under one focus area to another focus area. In the table programme authorities can mark those secondary contributions which are significant in terms of the scope of the operations and the financial allocations. Table 13 allows to indicate horizontal linkages between focus areas and priorities, both positive and negative. If both tables are applied, it is possible to assess the synergies between focus areas and priorities in a qualitative way and to identify also the negative transverse effects. In order to triangulate these findings, the Guidelines propose to use a panel of experts.
2. The CEQ 20: “*To what extent has technical assistance contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in Article 59(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 51(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?*” can be answered in a qualitative manner. The CMES does not provide common indicators to answer this evaluation question but the Working Paper ‘Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020’ recommends some judgement criteria and additional information to be collected for answering the CEQ. The MA may also wish to develop their own judgment criteria and additional indicators to answer the CEQ 20. With respect to the evaluation methods, interviews with various actors involved in programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation may be an option. The analysis of specific surveys, information from events, reports and audits can also be useful. The analysis of the delivery mechanism can provide important evidence for answering this CEQ. Further information for answering the CEQ can be found in the Guidelines ‘Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017’ and its Annex 11.
3. The CEQ 21: “*To what extent has the national rural network contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?*” may be answered with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. There are three common output indicators to answer this CEQ, which however are not sufficient to assess the NRN results (and impacts). NRN stakeholders should therefore establish the NRN intervention logic including NRN results and impact and define result and impact indicators. Guidelines ‘Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017’, as well Guidelines on ‘Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020’, published by the Evaluation Helpdesk, provide detail guidance for the evaluation of the NRN, and also for answering the CEQ 21.

Q. CEQ 25 asks to calculate the reduction of the number of people under the national poverty threshold within a certain area. Considering that data are available only at NUTS-2 level and to separate rural from urban areas at least using the OECD-Eurostat methodology requires data at NUTS-3 level. How do you recommend to proceed in answering this CEQ? One possible option would be to use as proxy the data collected from income tax on physical persons in respect. Moreover, there is the project TIPSE from ESPON (<https://www.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2013/applied-research/tipse->

territorial-dimension-poverty-and-social) which is very interesting to be used for the purpose, but also expensive and unrealistic to be reproduced annually for the regional RDPs resources. If no data is available to answer the CEQ 25, could we consider not to answer this evaluation question?

A. The CEQ 25 must be answered in the AIR in 2019 and in the ex post evaluation. It refers to the EU 2020 Strategy headline target of reducing the number of Europeans living under the national poverty line. The answer shall refer to what extent the RDP has contributed to the EU headline target: “20 million less people should be at risk of poverty”, which are translated into the national Target. The calculation will need to consider directly and indirectly affected population under the poverty risk which has been withdrawn from this group due to the RDP interventions. The common CAP indicator I15 rural poverty rate and its numerator shall be used to answer CEQ 25. In case regional data is not available and Eurostat does not provide data at NUTS-3 level for the degree of urbanisation, the evaluator can also use data from national statistics and provide an estimate at the regional level. The recommended evaluation methodologies for netting out the Impact Indicator I15 are described in the Guidelines ‘Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019’.

4.3 Judgment criteria for answering the common evaluation questions

Q. Following the approach described in the Working Paper ‘Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020’, June 2015:

- Evaluation questions help to focus the assessment of the achievements of programme objectives;
- Judgement criteria specify the evaluation questions and define the success criteria of an intervention; and,
- Indicators measure the success of an intervention as specified with the judgment criteria.

Following this logic, who defines the judgement criteria?

A. The European Commission’s Working Paper ‘Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020’ suggests non-binding judgment criteria for the common evaluation questions. These judgment criteria may be further reviewed/completed by the Managing Authorities in accordance with the specific RDP intervention logic. For example, FA 2A is evaluated based on farms that have been restructured and modernised with the operations programmed under the FA 2A. If the Managing Authority wishes in this context also to assess other aspects (e.g. market participation) respective judgment criteria need to be formulated. Own judgment criteria may also be developed for programme specific evaluation questions or whenever the judgement criteria proposed in the Working Paper are not considered relevant. Further information for the development of judgment criteria in Member States can be found in the Guidelines ‘Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017’.

4.4 Additional information for answering common evaluation questions

Q. The Working Paper ‘Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020’, June 2015, proposes additional quantitative and qualitative information for answering the focus area related evaluation questions. The purpose of the additional information is to collect data and information that are not covered by the common indicators. Does the European Commission wish to systematically receive this additional information, or is it up to the Managing Authority to collect and report these indicators?

A. No, it is up to the Managing Authority to collect and use this additional information. The use of additional indicators is not compulsory, unless they are included in the RDP indicator plan. Managing Authorities may answer the common evaluation questions also without any additional indicator.

5. INDICATORS

5.1 Complementary result indicators

Q. How to calculate and net out the complementary result indicators?

A. According to the European Commission's Working Paper '[Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020](#)' complementary result indicators are used to answer the focus area related common evaluation questions no. 4 (FA 2A), 11 (FA 5A), 12 (FA 5B), 13 (FA 5C) and 14 (FA 5D)⁶. Complementary result indicators are used for the quantification and assessment of RDP achievements, and are calculated for the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports submitted in 2017 and 2019⁷. All complementary result indicators **shall** be calculated **in gross values**. The Complementary Result Indicator R2: "*Change in Agriculture Output on supported farms/AWU (Annual Work Unit)*" **shall also be calculated in net values** by using a counterfactual analysis. Other Complementary Result Indicators R13, R14, R15, R18 and R19 **may** be calculated **in net values**, if possible.

When calculating the values of complementary result indicators, two types of operations shall be considered: operations of measures primarily programmed under the focus area and operations programmed under other focus areas which show secondary contributions to the focus area linked to the respective complementary result indicator.

The '[Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDPs](#)' (2014) recommend several techniques (e.g. Quasi experimental with control groups), data sources (FADN), and standards which are useful also for netting out the complementary result indicators of the 2014-2020 period. Control groups shall be representative and allow the extrapolation of the findings to the entire population. If using regional data for netting out the indicators' values, the evaluators should contact the National Agencies in order to get FADN-data at NUTS II, III, IV, V level.

More detailed information on the methodology/formula to transform data from the operations database into value for the complementary result indicators are published in the Guidelines '[Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017](#)' and in the Working Document '[Complementary Result Indicator fiches for Pillar II](#)'.

Q. The Working Paper '[Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020](#)', mentions the complementary result indicator for assessing the contribution of the RDP to the FA 2A: "*Change in agricultural output on supported farms/AWU*". What are the precise definitions of "Agricultural Output" and "AWU" for calculating the Complementary Result Indicator R2? Moreover, for the calculation of the indicator in the enhanced AIR, the most updated version of FADN data will be from the previous year. How to deal with data gaps or outdated data?

A. To calculate the Complementary Result Indicator R2 reported in Annex IV, point 2 to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, please check the Working Document '[Complementary Result Indicator fiches for Pillar II](#)'. You can use the ratio between:

⁶ [Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) No 808/2014](#).

⁷ Evaluation Helpdesk (2015, p. 81). [Guidelines – "Establishing and implementing the evaluation plan of 2014-2020 RDPs"](#).

1. Numerator: “FADN definition of Total Output (SE 131)”, calculated as the sum of SE 135 (total output crops and products) + SE 206 (Total Livestock and Products) + SE 256 (other outputs).
2. Denominator: “FADN definition of AWU (SE 010)”

For more details on these definitions, please consult the FADN publication ‘[Definitions of Variable used in FADN standard results](#)’ and Figure 1: Output, Balance of subsidies and taxes, Income (Revision 9.2, December 2014).

In case the FADN does not provide actual data for the enhanced AIR, it is recommended to use the national/regional data and to ensure its transmission to FADN.

In the absence of updated national/regional statistics, it may be useful to conduct a survey with beneficiaries to generate more actual data from the annual accounts. Ideally, the sample of surveyed beneficiaries should be identical with those present in the FADN survey. Finally, when quantifying the indicator, the calculation should cover the primary and secondary contributions of RDP operations to the focus areas.

Q. Shall the RDP evaluators consider only investment-type operations for the calculation of complementary results indicators?

A. No, the fiches contained in the Working Document ‘[Complementary Result Indicator fiches for Pillar II](#)’ do not specify that only investment-type operations⁸ should be considered, but rather all those which are programmed under a specific focus area of a given RDP to which the complementary result indicator is linked. This includes area-based⁹ and so called “soft” operations¹⁰, even if no significant effects of these operations are expected.

Q. Please confirm if the Complementary Result Indicator R18 must be calculated for interventions programmed directly for the reductions of emissions of methane and nitrous oxide (Focus Area 5D), but also for operations that indirectly affect FA 5D (or with potential side effects). Moreover, if the RDP has not programmed any direct and secondary contributions to this FA, is it still mandatory to calculate this complementary result indicator?

A. The evaluator shall calculate the gross value of the Complementary Result Indicator R18, if operations under the FA 5D have been programmed. This calculation may also take into consideration, the secondary contributions of operations programmed under other focus areas - this is however not compulsory. In case there are no programmed measures with primary and secondary contributions to FA 5D, the related complementary result indicator does not need to be calculated.

Q. Do you have examples in using the methodology to calculate the Complementary Result Indicators R18 and R19 and could you provide web links to such studies, evaluations?

A. The Working Document ‘[Complementary Result Indicator fiches for Pillar II](#)’ proposes the methodologies for the quantification of R18 = Reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide; and R19 = Reduced ammonia emissions. Further guidance is provided also in the Guidelines ‘[Assessment](#)’

⁸ Investment-type operations refer to the Articles 17,18,19,20 and 21 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

⁹ Area-based operations refer to the Articles 28,29 and 30 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

¹⁰ Soft measures refer to the Articles 14, 15, and 16 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' and its Annex 11 (fiche for answering the CEQ No 15).

In the AIR submitted in 2017 few RDPs reported quantified values of these two complementary result indicators. Three examples and relevant links are listed below:

1. R18 – RDP IT Lazio

Methodology used: IPCC (1996¹¹). R18 values were calculated for measures with both primary and secondary contribution to FA 5D.

Link to the methodology used: <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gl/invs1.html>

2. R19 – RDP Slovakia

Methodology used: Nicholas Hutchings and col. Manure management EMEP/EEA emission inventory guidebook 2013 (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/emep-eea-guidebook-2016/part-b-sectoral-guidance-chapters/4-agriculture/3-b-manure-management-2016>), and national guidance for setting up of amounts of dangerous emissions from cattle breeding in Slovakia. In the analysis, the evaluators have assessed only the contributions of RDP operations towards NH3 based on the sub-measure M14.1 for poultry.

3. R18 and R19 in DE-Schleswig-Holstein

Methodology used for R19: IPCC guidelines for the compilation of the national emissions inventory and the national emissions reporting system of Germany (Rösemann et al., 2017).

Methodology used for R18: The reduction of N2O emissions is calculated on the basis of the supported area and the mean savings of the amount of nitrogen fertilizer used in kg / ha supported area. The calculations in the German greenhouse gas reporting for agriculture are carried out using different emission paths. Simplifying, according to Flessa et al. (2012) it can be assumed, however, that a total of 5.92 kg of CO2 Eq N2O are saved per kg of nitrogen saved (N). Taking into account that operational adjustments to nitrogen fertilizer are most likely to be made via mineral fertilizer, additional savings in the production of synthetic chemical fertilizers in the upstream chain can be taken into account. According to Flessa et al. (2012) about 7.5 kg CO2-eq / kg saved nitrogen. In total, it is assumed that 13.4 kg CO2eq / kg of reduced N fertilization.

Fertilizer savings can be assumed for both Agri-Environmental and Climate Measures (AECM) based on the literature (Holsten et al., 2012, especially Osterburg and Runge, 2007), and based on the ex post evaluation, i.e. for both winter greening (10.1. 1) as well as for low-emission and water-friendly application of farm manure (10.1.2).

For the 'soft' instruments of sub-measures / types of operations 1.1, 2.1.1 and 16.1, there are mainly indirect effects in the focus. For these, the complementary result indicators are not computable or only with considerable effort and only linked to high uncertainties. Concerning education and advisory services there is only some information and impulses provided, e.g. to address behavioural changes in relation to emissions-producing activities in agriculture. Instead of directly measurable or predictable emission reductions, indicators and criteria must focus on the relevant behavioural change.

¹¹ Updated version (2006) is available on: <https://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/vol4.html>

Q. Can non-completed operations be considered in the calculation of the complementary result indicators?

The amendment to Article 5 (3) of Regulation (EU) No 215/2014, introduced by the Regulation (EU) No 276/2018, states that *“The milestone and target for an output indicator shall refer to the values achieved by operations, where all the actions leading to outputs have been implemented in full, but for which not all the related payments have necessarily been made, or to the values achieved by operations which have been started, but where some of the actions leading to outputs are still ongoing, or to the both”*. Does the amendment also apply to the result indicators, including complementary result indicators, used for the evaluation in 2019?

A. As regards the use of non-completed operations, the amendment to Article 5(3) of Regulation (EU) No 215/2014, introduced by Regulation (EU) No 276/2018, applies to all related indicators of the EAFRD Common Monitoring and Evaluation System, where relevant.

In order to ensure coherence, this also applies to the result indicators which use outputs in nominators. However, it is recommended to evaluators to consider that in the case of specific measures (e.g. investments, area-based, water efficiency and energy efficiency etc.) the use of non-completed operations for evaluation purposes may give a biased picture and should therefore be well reflected. In each case, it is a good practice to make it transparent whenever non-completed operations have been used for the calculation of the indicator values.

5.2 Target Indicator T20: "Jobs created in supported projects"

Q. Could you clarify the following issues concerning the Target Indicator T20¹² *"jobs created in supported projects"*?

1. The definition of the target indicator does not include the "jobs maintained";
2. The definition of the indicator does not specify if the "jobs created" in supported projects are those included *during* the realization of the project, or only those *after* the realization of the projects;
3. Does the Target Indicator T20 have a link with the common evaluation question related to the Union level objectives¹³: *"To what extent has the RDP contributed to the CAP objective of achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment"*?
4. How do other ESI Funds (e.g. ERDF, ESF, etc.) measure the jobs-related indicators? Do they measure the jobs created *during* the programming period or those *maintained* after the funding period? How are the *"maintained"* jobs defined or measured?

A. Answers to above points:

- Point 1 and 2: The above indicator "Jobs created in supported projects" relates to jobs created through the implementation of RDP operations and as the direct effect of supported projects. For example, if the project is about the creation of a farm shop, the indicator does not count employment generated during the design/construction building phase – consultant/architect/builders - but the employment which is created when the shop is running (manager, sales assistants, etc.) and which are mentioned in the business plan/project application. This corresponds to the definition provided in the section: "Data required for the

¹² Annex IV (4) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

¹³ Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

individual operation" of the Working Document '[Target indicator fiches for Pillar II](#)'. On the other hand, the indicator does not include "maintained jobs" because of the difficulty to assess them.

- Point 3: Target Indicator T20 is linked to the FA 6A of the rural development priority no. 6 "promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas". Priority 6 is linked to the CAP objective "Achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment" in the intervention logic of the CAP pillar II¹⁴, as accompanied with the common evaluation question (CEQ) 29: "To what extent has the RDP contributed to the CAP objective of achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment?". Therefore, the findings obtained via Common Target Indicator T20 can be utilised in the answering this CEQ.
- Point 4: In the assessment of ERDF interventions, the common indicator "Employment increase in supported enterprises" is used. This indicator represents the gross new working positions in supported enterprises in full time equivalents (FTE), as defined in the Annex I to Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013. Essentially, this is a "before-after" indicator which captures the part of the employment increase due to the direct consequence of project completion (i.e. the staff employed to realize the project is not counted). The positions need to be filled (vacant posts are not counted), and increase the total number of jobs in the enterprise. If total employment in the enterprise does not increase – the value is zero – it is regarded as realignment.

5.3 Target Indicator R24/T23 "Jobs created in supported projects" (Leader)

Q. The Common Target Indicator R24/T23 should be transmitted every year in the AIR, and it should be broken down by gender. The Working Document '[Target indicator fiches for Pillar II \(Priority 1 to 6\)](#)' of April 2015 specifies that the indicator should be "validated through a sample of completed projects which will also assess the gender of job holders". Moreover, it seems that the sampling survey should be done by the evaluator for the evaluation in the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports and ex post. Specifically:

1. How to report this indicator in the AIR?
2. How to report "jobs created in supported projects through LEADER" after the implementation of the project (2 or 3 years later for example)? Should this indicator be reported if it has not been verified?
3. Which criteria are suggested for the sampling?

A. The sampling mentioned in the fiche for Target Indicator R24/T23 does not refer to evaluation. The main purpose of the sampling mentioned in the fiche is to validate (and complete for the gender) data collected via monitoring at application level. When all projects are finalized, this sampling can be replaced by a systematic collection of all payment claims. In both cases (data collected at application level or from all payment claims), this indicator refers only to jobs created in supported projects or, in another word, jobs which have been created directly by the project implementation. About the specific questions:

- Point 1: The AIR reports the numbers of jobs created through the supported operations – committed and realised (completed projects) as mentioned first in the project application and after project completion in the payment request (i.e. both filled in by the beneficiary).

¹⁴ Technical Handbook for the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020, <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=21095&no=>

- Point 2: Jobs created due to the LEADER support after project implementation (2 – 3 years) are indirectly created jobs, therefore, they should NOT be counted for T23/R24. T23/R24 should only include jobs created through support for the implementation of operations under the CLLD strategy. If there are jobs created due to the LEADER support at later stages (after the implementation of the project) they shall be recorded with an additional indicator, e.g. “Jobs created via LEADER supported projects” - and used for tracking the number of both directly and indirectly created jobs. These should be assessed in the enhanced AIRs as well as in the ex post evaluation.
- Point 3: Regarding the sampling mentioned in the fiche, the only criterion is to check whether the jobs reported in the application forms and in payment claims are still valid after the project has been completed. Sampling is done by the paying agency, based on the random selection of beneficiaries.

For the sampling used in the evaluation, the aim is to calculate the above proposed additional indicator (jobs created VIA support) for gross and net values. Gross values include all observed jobs created via the projects in supported businesses (directly and indirectly). Net values include all above jobs attributed to the RDP support. Here the sampling is done by the evaluator who selects the representative sample from all completed projects with job creation due to LEADER and checks the number of jobs created via the support - both gross and net numbers.

Q. How to gather information for measuring this Common Result Indicator R24/T23¹⁵: “Jobs created through supported projects” in the following case: **Support for the development of a shop:** The shop has just been created and is looking for support to reach more clients and be stronger. LEADER support could enable the shop to employ 2 seasonal workers. Should these jobs be counted, or should evaluators only count the jobs that will be created after the end of the support?

A. The gathering of information for R24/T23 should be as follows: In using the Common Target Indicator T23: “Jobs created in supported projects” (LEADER), all part time, seasonal, ad hoc jobs should be counted in terms of FTE. All jobs created due to the project implementation, should be calculated. These jobs should be recorded during the selection of projects (application forms and business plans), and later at the stage of the project completion (payment requests). They are validated through a sample of completed projects, which will also assess the gender of the job holders.

Q. How shall the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) be used for counting the created jobs? For example, if the duration of the contract for a created job is:

- one permanent job at 100%?
- one job for 2 years?
- 6-months at 100%?
- 18-month contract at 100%?

A. Jobs created in supported projects are counted in accordance with the definition of Full time equivalent - FTE (hours worked by one employee on a full-time basis)¹⁶ and are linked to the project implementation:

¹⁵ See the Working Document: Target Indicator Fiches Pillar II (Priority 1 and 6), April 2015

¹⁶ FTE, is a unit to measure employed persons or students in a way that makes them comparable although they may work or study a different number of hours per week.

- The target indicator fiche sets 1 year as the minimal duration of the jobs activity to count 1 job created= 1 FTE independently on the duration of the contract. This implies that if the duration of the contract of the created job is 2 years or more, it counts only for 1 FTE.
- One job contract lasting 6 months represents 0.5 FTE.
- 18 months contract at 100% of time counts for 1 FTE.
- Similarly, a fixed-term contract of 6 months at 80% of time is equal to 0.4 FTE.

Jobs created through the projects are considered as “created” also after the project completion. They are not considered to be “maintained” jobs. If relevant for the evaluation, a specific additional indicator can be created, such as: *“of which, number of jobs created still existent 6 months after the end of public support”* to evaluate the *“quality”/“viability”* of these jobs.

Note: in case one farmer/entrepreneur/worker performs 1 FTE and in addition does extra hours (part time job) at the same time, only 1 FTE is counted in calculation of the target indicator. The same person cannot represent more than 1 FTE.

Q. When a fixed-term contract is turning into an indeterminate duration contract, because of a supported project through LEADER, shall it be considered as “maintained job” (and thus excluded) or could it be considered as a “created job”?

A. No. Jobs created through the support for implementation of operations under the CLLD strategies are counted as created jobs, independently of the character of the contract (permanent, fixed term). **Maintained jobs** are jobs which would be lost without project implementation (existing jobs which are maintained due to the project). The Common Target Indicator R24/T23 does not include maintained jobs. In case the support enables to maintain jobs and evaluation stakeholders (MA, PA, LAG, evaluator) want to track them, an additional result indicator should be developed for this purpose, e.g. “Number of jobs maintained due to the RDP support”.

Q. In general, what kind of proof of creation of jobs is the beneficiary of LEADER supposed to provide? For example, when the beneficiary is a public authority, what should it provide at the selection and completion phases of the project?

A. The beneficiary shall declare the created jobs in the application form (and in the business plan if relevant) and in the payment request. The paying agency can check the reality through on-the-spot checks during the project implementation and after it via sampling.

Q. When a shop (direct beneficiary of LEADER support) has raised its business figure from 10 000 € (at the beginning of the project) to 50 000 € (at the end of the project), can one conclude that the shop has created jobs? Is it possible to consider that 40 000 € (50 000 – 10 000) is more than twice the minimum wage in the country, thus, the shop has created at least 1 FTE?

A. No. The number of jobs must be clearly stated and not assumed based on the annual accounts. It is recommended to conduct a survey with beneficiaries and ask how many jobs they have created due to the RDP LEADER interventions. However, the evaluation will be responsible for identifying the number.

The unit is obtained by comparing an employee's or student's average number of hours worked to the average number of hours of a full-time worker or student. A full-time person is therefore counted as one FTE, while a part-time worker / student gets a score in proportion to the hours he or she works or studies. For example, a part-time worker employed for 20 hours a week where full-time work consists of 40 hours, is counted as 0.5 FTE [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Full-time_equivalent_\(FTE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Full-time_equivalent_(FTE))

5.4 Common context indicators

Q. How to access the common context indicator updates?

A. DG AGRI publishes an update of the common context indicators each year in December, provided the data is available. The update can be found at the following webpage: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-indicators/context_en.

Q. If common context indicators' (CCI) values are updated during an RDP modification, do the new CCI values need to be taken into account in the subsequent evaluations of the RDP?

A. Yes, the baseline values of common context indicators shall be updated for the year 2013 in the context of RDP modifications, in case at the time of programme design it had not been possible to obtain 2013 values.

The 2013 values (if available) for CCI shall be used:

- In the evaluation reported in AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019;
- In the ex post evaluation of the RDP 2014-2020, in the assessment of impacts.

The value of CCI are updated at the Member States level, transferred to the EU data sources (Eurostat, FADN etc.) and subsequently published by the European Commission. For the HNV indicators, it is up to the Managing Authority to establish a method using appropriate and available data, which will enable to estimate the HNV area that matches with the commonly agreed definition (as set out in the indicator fiche).

Regionalized RDPs shall collect regional data for CCI. For some regions, CCI are collected at a regional basis by Eurostat. When Eurostat does not provide the CCI at regional level, it is the responsibility of the Managing Authority to collect and provide such data, and finally transfer it to the European Commission through the SFC. There are several options to collect regional data: 1.) National sources (same data as presented by Eurostat). 2.) Proxy indicators if data at national/regional level are missing. For further information about proxy indicators, see the Working Document 'Defining Proxy Indicators for Rural Development Programmes'.

5.5 Impact indicators

Q. When shall the impact indicators be used for the assessment of the RDP?

A. The impact indicators listed in Annex, point 1 to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 834/2014 are used in the evaluation activities carried out for the AIR submitted in 2019 and in the ex post evaluation 2024. Further information can be found in Annex VII, point 7 to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014.

Q. Among the 16 CAP Impact Indicators, 13 coincide with the common context indicators. In these 13 cases, should the Managing Authority of the RDP (national/regional) assess how these values have evolved over time, and then try to assess which share is due to the RDP?

A. Yes, impact indicators which coincide with the common context indicators and relate to Pillar II operations should be assessed for the enhanced AIR submitted in 2019 and for the ex post evaluation

of the RDPs 2014-2020¹⁷. The Pillar II-related impact indicators should be calculated in net values to attribute the changes of the indicator's value to the RDP interventions. Further information can be found in the Guidelines '[Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019](#)'.

Q. Is it correct to assume that the European Commission is responsible for calculating the other three impact indicators that do not coincide with the common context indicators because these are closer to the 1st pillar of the CAP?

A. Yes, it is correct that the calculation of the other three impact indicators related to Pillar I is under the responsibility of the European Commission.

Q. In case of impact indicators for which data in Eurostat only exists at national level, should their calculation be done only once for the whole Member State even in regionalized RDPs?

A. No. Impact indicators are requested to be calculated at programme level. Regional RDPs should quantify their (regional) impact indicators. If the regional values for the impact indicators do not exist or are not collected, the evaluator may also use the regional estimation of the national values (e.g. using coefficients), upscale the values from micro-level (if relevant) or apply a proxy indicator (see the [Working Document 'Defining Proxy Indicators for Rural Development Programmes'](#) and Guidelines '[Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019](#)').

Q. Is there a reason why the Common Impact Indicator I.11.2 (nitrates in freshwater) refers to two different units to measure nitrate in groundwater (mg NO₃ / l) and nitrogen in surface water (mg N / l)?

A. It is not an error to use different units of measurement of nitrates concentration in freshwater, particularly mg/l of nitrates (mg/l of NO₃) for groundwater and mg/l of nitrogen (mg/l of N) for rivers.

Indeed, both units measure the concentration of nitrates expressed as weight of nitrates (the whole anion NO₃) in mg/l of water or weight of nitrogen (i.e. N as part of the anion NO₃) in mg/l.

It is possible to convert the concentration of nitrates from one unit of measurements to another by taking into account the molecular mass, without changing the result. To convert nitrate concentration measured as mg/l of NO₃ to nitrate concentration measured as mg/l of N, the first has to be divided by a factor of 4,42681.

For example: a concentration of nitrates expressed as 50 mg/l of NO₃ is equal to a concentration of nitrates of 11.2948 mg/l of N.

(New)

Q. I have a question regarding impact indicator I.11-2 nitrates in freshwater. a) Groundwater quality: % of monitoring sites; b) Surface water quality: % of monitoring sites. N.B. The concentration of nitrates is expressed as mg/l of nitrates (NO₃-mg/l) for groundwater and mg/l of nitrogen (N-mg/l) for rivers. Can you explain why it is nitrogen concentration (N-mg/l) and not nitrate concentration (NO₃-mg/l) for rivers? And is it this also applicable for lakes? I have been confused about this as the data used for the nitrate directive regards nitrate concentration (NO₃-mg/l) for both groundwater and surface water. That is, in our country we have data for nitrate concentrations in ground water as well as surface water (rivers and lakes). Also, when I look at EEA website nitrates concentrations in rivers/lakes are presented

¹⁷ Article 54(1), 56(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013; Article 68(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013; and Annex VII, point 7, to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

(https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/daviz/rivers-nutrient-trend-4#tab-googlechartid_chart_11). Please explain the background and why the indicator is designed like this.

A. The Impact Indicator fiches updated by October 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/impact-indicator-fiches_en.pdf) clarify that, for I.11, the AEI 15 on Gross Nutrient Balance is [...] considered the most appropriate indicator to assess the CAP's impact on water quality, since it is directly linked with agriculture. It must be noted, however, that this indicator is only indirect; it shows the potential risks, depending on local soil conditions and farm management practices, rather than the actual water quality trends.

For this reason, the preferred option is to use data for Gross Nutrient Balance (4-year average) in combination with data for nitrates in freshwater by water quality classes. On the one hand, figures for nitrates in freshwater would give a comprehensive overview of the actual state of water bodies, allowing comparison over time. On the other hand, data for Gross Nutrient Balance would provide an indication of the potential impact of agriculture on those figures and give information about potential pollution by phosphates.

However, since data for both indicators are only available at national level and since annual national balances can mask important regional or monthly variations, other sources at Member State level should be explored. Therefore, evaluators could use different units of measurement of nitrates concentration in freshwater, particularly mg/l of nitrates (mg/l of NO₃) for groundwater and mg/l of nitrogen (mg/l of N) for rivers. Indeed, both units measure the concentration of nitrates expressed as weight of nitrates (the whole anion NO₃) in mg/l of water or weight of nitrogen (i.e. N as part of the anion NO₃) in mg/l.

(New)

Q. What definition of moderate to severe erosion should be used in the ex-post and netting out the effects of I.13 Soil erosion by water? I find two different classifications.

- Total (> 0 tonnes per hectare per year)
- Moderate or severe (> 5 tonnes per hectare per year)
- Moderate (5-10 tonnes per hectare per year)
- Severe (> 10 tonnes per hectare per year)

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Agri-environmental_indicator_-_soil_erosion&oldid=473348#Data_sources

Impact Indicator Fiche: The indicators assess the soil loss by water erosion processes (rain splash, sheet wash and rills) and give indications of the areas affected by a certain rate of soil erosion (moderate to severe, i.e. >11 t/ha/year in the OECD definition).

A. It must be noted that the rates of soil loss by water erosion (t ha⁻¹ year⁻¹) at Member State level represent national average values and therefore may mask higher erosion rates in many areas even for those countries that have a low mean. Hence, it is suggested to use the classification which better reflects the average situation in the given Member State. However, accepting the definition of severe erosion as 10 t ha⁻¹ year⁻¹ and above, ensures compatibility with the ESDAC (JRC) definition and thus comparability with values in other Member States and the EU average.

Q. The calculation of net effect of RDP on Impact Indicator I.14 (CEQ 22) is not feasible since there is an enormous amount of exogenous variables very hard to control and therefore even if the efforts to

isolate the net policy effect (e.g. using a counterfactual approach, not considering the unlikely possibility to find a decent control group) the result would remain strongly biased. Given this, the application of a simple methodology which calculates the contribution of the RDP measures to the CAP impact indicators in terms of incidence (e.g. measuring the ratio made by the number of employees directly created by the RDP FA/measures over the total number of employees created in a certain area measured starting from a baseline year) is suggested. Is this method acceptable?

A. Yes, the described method is in principle acceptable. However, whenever possible (e.g. if data from national/regional statistics allow for the construction of control groups) the evaluator shall consider the use of more advanced evaluation approaches, such as PSM or GPSM. Recommended evaluation approaches to calculate the Indicator I.14 are described in the Guidelines 'Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019', published in August 2018 by the Evaluation Helpdesk.

Q. Impact Indicator I.03 is useful in combination with Impact Indicators I.01 and I.02 to answer the CEQ 27 on agricultural sector competitiveness. The problem of this indicator is that data are not available at regional level. The same problem arises in the calculation of Impact Indicator I.04 and I.05. Can we drop them? Do you suggest some proxies?

A. All common evaluation questions must be answered in the AIR in 2019 and in the ex post evaluation. Indeed, in order to answer CEQ 27 the common CAP Impact Indicators I.01, I.02 and I.03 shall be used. Impact Indicators I.04 (EU commodity price variability), I.05 (consumer price evolution of food products) and I.06 (agricultural trade balance) are not expected to be quantified within the framework of Rural Development Programmes.

In case Regional statistics or EU data sources do not provide the values for the common CAP impact indicators at the regional level (e.g. I.03) they can also be estimated for the regional level (NUTS-2) based on national data (e.g. by summing up data based on the units collected within the respective region). The Guidelines 'Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019' provide information how to assess the Indicators I.01, I.02 and I.03. The information on how to use proxies in the assessment of RDP achievements is provided in the Working Document 'Defining Proxy Indicators for Rural Development Programmes' (February, 2016).

5.6 Additional indicators

Q. Where shall additional indicators be reported in the enhanced AIR?

A. Additional indicators are reported in Chapter 7 of the SFC template for the enhanced AIRs.

Q. Should the additional indicators for answering CEQs have an associated target?

A. No. Article 27 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 establishes that each priority shall set out indicators and corresponding targets expressed in qualitative or quantitative terms, in accordance with the Fund-specific rules, to assess progress in programme implementation aimed at the achievement of objectives as the basis for monitoring, evaluation and review of performance. The CMES target indicators as listed in the Annex IV, point 4 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 play this role, and there is no requirement to set up the targets for other types of indicators including additional ones.

5.7 Proxy indicators

Q. Does the set-up of a proxy indicator replace a common indicator?

A. No, it is not possible to replace a common indicator with a proxy indicator.

5.8 Data for indicators

Q. How to use the operations database in RDP evaluation?

A. The operations database can be used for the collection of information for the RDP evaluation. For example, in case the data for complementary result indicators, and additional indicators cannot be found in EU data sources (FADN, FSS) and national statistics, it can be collected through the operations database. Data can be collected from beneficiaries with the help of application forms, payment requests, beneficiaries' business plans. After project finalisation data and information can still be collected also with a sample.

6. EVALUATION APPROACHES

Q. What qualitative estimations can be used for assessing the common impact indicators?

A. To the extent possible evaluations should provide a quantified estimation of the net contributions to changes in the CAP impact indicator values.¹⁸ If needed, additional impact indicators can be used to support the evaluation findings regarding RDP effects and its contribution to objectives.

Qualitative estimations obtained from qualitative approaches can be used for the purposes outlined in the Guidelines 'Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019' (see 'Quick Guide #5' on page 21). The Guidelines suggest a set of qualitative approaches (e.g. focus group, MAPP, interview, survey), among the possible alternatives.

If data is insufficient, qualitative approaches can be used to collect evidence and answer the common evaluation questions. The RDP Managing Authorities have flexibility to choose the most appropriate evaluation approach in their situation in terms of RDP size, level of uptake, data availability, aiming for the most robust assessment possible.

When choosing the evaluation approaches, it is important to be aware of the trade-offs in terms of data demand, ability to reduce selection and other biases, credibility/rigor, reliability, etc. (see 'Quick Guide #3' on page 18 of the Guidelines 'Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019').

¹⁸ Annex VII, point 7 to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

7. EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD

Q. Is self-assessment sufficient to comply with the “specific evaluation activities” required from LAGs? Do the local action groups' "specific arrangements for evaluation" and "specific evaluation activities" in the framework of Article 33(1)(f) and Article 34(3)(g) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 have to comply with the conditions defined in Article 54(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013?

A. For evaluation of the local development strategy, yes, self-assessment is sufficient.

Article 54(1) indicates that evaluations shall be carried out to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes.

Article 54(3) of R1303 provides for evaluations to be carried out by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation. – but this does not apply to CLLD strategies.

Since article 54(1) relates to "operational programmes" and to "rural development programmes", not to "community-led local development strategies", the requirements set in paragraph (3) of that Article do not apply to local development strategies.

Consequently, a Local Action Group can choose to carry out (exclusively) a self-assessment of its CLLD strategy, in compliance with Article 33(1)(f) and Article 34(3)(g) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

Q. Is it correct that the contributions of LEADER to other FAs than 6B (secondary contributions) must not be evaluated any longer (mandatory)?

A. Contributions of LEADER/CLLD to other focus areas than 6B (secondary contributions) should possibly be assessed and findings used to answer the related evaluation questions¹⁹ (read more in the Guidelines 'Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD' and 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017'). Moreover, if calculating the gross values of indicators (common and additional) used in answering the CEQ no. 4, 11, 12, 13 and 14, the secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD should be quantified, whenever possible, in Chapter 7 of the AIR.

It is compulsory to identify (flag) the projects with secondary contributions to Focus Areas 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D and 6A (Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014). The quantification of secondary contributions is not compulsory but still very useful to demonstrate the full achievements of the programmes (in this case, of LEADER).

Q. When identifying the contribution of LEADER-supported operations to specific focus areas, there is a problem when linking the projects about energy efficiency and climate change to the RDP - Priority 5. In fact, some projects are not part of the agriculture, food, and forestry sectors as it is foreseen in the Priority 5²⁰.

If there are some LEADER-supported projects aiming at "*promoting savings and energy efficiency among SMEs, local authorities and households*", but their actions are not targeted to agriculture, food, and forestry companies, should these projects be linked to other focus areas? For example, shall this kind of projects be linked:

- to Focus Area 6A, when targeted to the general Small Medium Enterprise,

¹⁹ The choice of RDP focus areas to which LEADER/CLLD is contributing depends on national/regional decisions of which measures/operations the LAGs can include into their strategies.

²⁰ RDP Priority 5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors.

- to Focus Area 6B, when targeted to the local governmental entities, and
- to Priority 5, when they are targeted specifically to SMEs operating in the forestry and agribusiness sector?

A. The starting point in evaluating the contribution of LEADER/CLLD to the RDP objectives is to identify which types of operations implemented under the CLLD strategy will contribute to which RDP focus area(s). This can be done either by the local action group or by the evaluator.

In the specific example mentioned in the question, the CLLD strategy's operations shows strong linkages to Focus Area 5B (i.e. increasing efficiency in energy use). The fact that Focus Area 5B refers to "agriculture and food processing" should not be a limiting factor. What is more important is the fact that the projects aim to contribute to increasing energy efficiency or reducing the emissions of Green House Gases. Indeed, the LEADER approach itself envisages area-based projects crossing over multiple sectors. Therefore, it is recommended for the evaluation of these operations to develop programme-specific evaluation questions related to the FA 5B, e.g. "*To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to increasing efficiency in energy use in rural areas?*". The following programme-specific indicators can be used to answer this evaluation question:

- For SMEs (other than in agri-food): Tonnes of Oil Equivalent (T.O.E.)/standard output of production (in accordance with production or service provided). This indicator would be like the Complementary Result Indicator R14;
- For public buildings: T.O.E./m² since in this case projects would mainly relate to surface area.

With this approach, the contribution of the LEADER-supported projects to the climate change objectives can be captured in the RDP results.

8. EVALUATION OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORKS

Q. NRN related evaluation questions are part of the section on evaluation question related to other RDP aspects. Thus, should the evaluation questions be treated at the national level or should they concern the regional Rural Network, and therefore be answered at the regional level?

A. It is the responsibility of the Managing Authority of the NRN to answer the common evaluation question No 21²¹ for actions with a national scope, and it is up to the regional authorities to answer questions related to actions linked to regional programmes. (Read more in Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' and 'Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020').

Q. How can National Rural Networks support the evaluation of RDPs? Should the National Rural Networks also include some specific activities/indicators in their Multi-Annual Action Plan?

A. Article 54(3), point b(IV) of the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 establishes that EAFRD support under Article 51(3) shall be used [by the National Rural network] for the preparation and implementation of an Action Plan. The Action Plan can cover – among other tasks – the setting up of activities regarding the sharing and dissemination of RDP monitoring and evaluation findings. Example of these activities are:

- informing stakeholders about monitoring and evaluation findings during general NRN events or organizing specific, *ad hoc* events and working sessions to disseminate the RDP monitoring and evaluation;

²¹ Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

- organizing working groups based on the information resulting from monitoring and evaluation;
- publishing the RDP monitoring and evaluation reports on the NRN website;
- disseminating monitoring and evaluation findings via various NRN publications, for example:
 - Factsheets and statistics based on latest monitoring data;
 - Descriptions of Good Practices based on evaluation case studies;
 - News-alerts about the achievement of the evaluation milestones (e.g. in AIR2017, AIR2019, ex post);
 - Articles on RDP stories of successes and failures based on evidence stemming from evaluation;
 - Yearly newsletter articles summarizing the main information reported in Annual Implementation Reports;
 - Publication of links, studies, and references where evaluation findings can be downloaded;
 - Articles based on interviews with evaluators.

However, experience also shows that the support from the NRNs to the evaluation goes beyond the dissemination and sharing of evaluation findings. Some NRNs take also a more proactive approach in promoting and supporting monitoring and evaluation activities in the RDP, for instance:

- developing trainings and other evaluation capacity building activities for various RDP stakeholders (e.g. LAGs);
- disseminating guidance documents and other materials of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development;
- participating in and publicizing ENRD - Evaluation Helpdesk's activities/events (e.g. Good Practice Workshops, Yearly Capacity Building events);
- establishing specific working groups/task forces on evaluation;
- developing guidelines/manuals on monitoring and evaluation (in accordance with Managing Authority of the RDPs);
- participating in the Rural Network's Steering Groups for the evaluation of RDPs;
- assisting the Managing Authority along the collection of data and information related to specific RDP indicators via NRN members - support the collection of surveys in relation to monitoring and evaluation (e.g. of ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk);
- contributing to the collection of Good Practices in relation to monitoring and evaluation (e.g. through ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk).

9. ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

9.1 Conducting the evaluation for the enhanced AIRs by an independent evaluator

Q. The Guidelines 'Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020' suggest at page 34 (2.1.3 Actors evaluating the network): "*the evaluator could also be a public agency or functionally independent department within the same authority as the MA*". The question is what do you mean by "functionally independent"?

A. Article 54(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 states that Evaluations shall be carried out by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation. To this respect, the Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation for the programming period 2014-2020 issued by DG Regional Policies in March 2014 clarifies that the level of independence should be such that there is no doubt that the work is carried out with objectivity, and the evaluation judgments are unbiased and not subordinated to an agreement of the services responsible for conducting the programme. Therefore, the Commission services consider it as best practice to assign the evaluation to external experts or to a different organisation from that responsible for managing / implementing the programme and any of the intermediate bodies reporting to it. Regarding the issue of functional independence, such an arrangement does not raise any doubts. Where the implementation of the programme and the evaluation are assigned within the same organisation, a good practice is also, to ascribe them to different departments. Finally, where evaluation and programme implementation are assigned to the same department or unit of an organization, this could give rise to doubts about the "functional independence" of the evaluation function. Hence, clear arrangements for ensuring independence, though, for instance, the following measures should be made:

- Clear job description for the person, team or sector assuming the evaluation function;
- Exclusion of the person, team or sector from the authority of the services in charge of programme design/implementation.

With respect to the responsibility for drafting and submitting the AIR, Article 66.1(g) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 specifies that the Managing Authority shall be responsible for drawing it up including aggregate monitoring tables, and, after approval by the Monitoring Committee, submitting it to the Commission.

9.2 Transition arrangements in the reporting

Q. Shall the payments from the RDP 2007 – 2013 be included in the evaluation for the Annual Implementation Report to be submitted in 2019?

A. For the AIR to be submitted in 2019 there are some rules to be respected for the transition arrangements:

- the 07-13 measures paid with 07-13 budget are not reported at all in the AIR to be submitted in 2019;
- the 07-13 measures paid with 14-20 budget (even if only partially - if 1 operation is only partially paid with 14-20 budget, it nevertheless counts for 1 operation in the 14-20 target value) are included in Chapter 7 of the AIR to be submitted in 2019 (no distinction 07-13 and 14-20 measures);
- the 07-13 discontinued Measures 113, 131, 341 are outside the targets/outputs (even if paid with 14-20 budget). They can be considered in the answers to be reported in Chapter 7 only if the 14-

20 budget for those discontinued measures is not significant. Otherwise, the RDP Managing Authority should develop an additional indicator and include it in Chapter 7.

Further information can be found in the paragraph '*What is the reporting period for the AIR 2017*' of the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' (see Chapter 1.1 on page 8).

9.3 Reporting in case of a lack of data

Q. Do the answers to the common evaluation questions only consider operations that are finalized or also those that are approved/started? Moreover, even if the operation is finalised in the year before the assessment, the data about farm/enterprise to set up the control groups (e.g. for the calculation of the R2 indicator) will still be only from the two years before the end of the reporting period. It therefore seems impossible to give any calculations on finalized operations because we can consider only outdated data. Please clarify, if it is sufficient to evaluate operations completed only two years before the reporting period and use outdated FADN data?

A. The answers to common evaluation questions shall consider primarily the completed operations by the end of the assessment period (31/12). It may also consider committed operations before last payment is made in case their implementation is ongoing (e.g. operations which are implemented in stages are already ongoing and may show effects)²². Especially in case of low uptake, you may assess the total available population of beneficiaries (completed operations, operation's applications and ongoing contracts) while using qualitative methods or theory of change and explain the situation.

In order to set up control groups for netting out the Complementary Result Indicator R2 (change in agriculture output/AWU) in case FADN or national statistical data for the end of the assessment period are not available, we advise you to consider the following options:

- calculate the net value based on existing statistical data for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In order to fill the data gap for the year for which data is not available conduct a survey with non-beneficiaries (and also include beneficiaries if data are not collected via the operation database); or
- calculate the net value based on the existing statistical data on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and the gross value based on the data on beneficiaries for the years when statistical data are not available.

Q. In case of low uptake under a given focus area, what are the indications for answering the focus area related evaluation questions in the enhanced AIR to be submitted in 2019?

A. In case of low uptake under a given focus area, the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' (see Chapter 1.3 on page 10), specify the following: "*In cases of **low uptake**, it is necessary to take into consideration any information available on potential beneficiaries (e.g. assess the total available population of beneficiaries: applications, existing/ongoing contracts) and explain the situation why result indicators could not be calculated as required.*"

²² Article 1 of the Amendum 2018/276 to the Article 5(3) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 215/2014

9.4 Reporting on Measure 10, Priority 4

Q. For the tables related to Measure 10, Priority 4, of the AIR, the amounts shall be divided into three Focus Areas (4A, 4B and 4C). This should be done also for the field F510 in the X-tables. However, there are activities in the collective scheme that should be completed on the parcels for a collective to get paid. These activities should also be divided into three focus area codes. In this way, it is not possible to see which “reduction on which activity” has led to a “reduction in payment” because there are some reductions that are calculated on the whole amount of all activities “per habitat”. Moreover, when filling Table B3, there are activities in a habitat which have different dimensions. Shall the tables be filled with the (net) correct areas, by dividing the amount on the level of habitat proportionally to the hectares?

A. No, in the AIR, the EC does not ask the break down by FA for P4. Regarding the X-tables, there is no issue as well. As concerns the reporting in the X-tables, there is no need for breakdown in respect of the data field F510, as the code "P4" is defined and accepted on priority level. The codes "4A", "4B" and "4C" can be used but are as such not compulsory. This is also described under Chapter 4.1.2 of the Document: Frequently Asked Questions to "X-tables control data / control statistics" DG AGRI – Unit J.1 (10 December 2015). About the proposal, it seems reasonable if the proportionality with the hectares is respected.

9.5 Using qualitative indicators in reporting on RDP results

Q. Additional indicators are sometimes qualitative estimations but meaningful to answer the common evaluation questions. Should we add them to the list of criteria and indicators in the SFC template for the enhanced AIRs?

A. Qualitative indicators can be used as additional indicators for answering the common evaluation questions. They should be listed in the SFC template, Chapter 7 of the enhanced AIR.

9.6 Reporting on the follow-up to evaluation results in Chapter 2

Q. What is expected to be reported on the follow-up of the evaluation activities in the sub-section 2.g) of the AIR?

A. In the sub-section 2.g) of the AIR, the Managing Authority can report on any follow-up given to the results obtained through evaluation activities conducted in the reference year.

Based on AIRs submitted in 2017, the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk observed that follow-up activities included: (a) improvements of the monitoring system, revision and adaptation of (the definition of) indicators, data collection tools and guidelines to increase the data quality and avoid errors (b) improvement in the management (c) communication, such as improvement of communication instruments, better targeting of activities (d) simplification, e.g. of delivery mechanisms, legal constraints (e) establishment of control groups, exchange of good practice.

The summary report on the progress of the implementation of evaluation plans of RPDs 2014-2020, which is based on screening of the Chapter 2 of the AIRs submitted in 2019, provides an overview of follow-up activities on the use of the results of evaluations conducted. The summary report is published on the website of the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk.

9.7 Further guidance documents on the enhanced AIR for RDP 2014-2020

Q. Does the European Commission intend to develop more detailed guidelines for facilitating the Member States in carrying out the evaluation activities for the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports of Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020?

A. The European Commission - DG AGRI has issued a SFC2014 template in 2017 and has updated it in 2018/2019 for the evaluation to be submitted in 2019. The purpose of this document is to provide detailed technical guidance on the structure and content of an AIRs for the RDPs 2014-2020. It can be used by Member States to prepare their AIR before submitting it to the European Commission through the SFC2014 system. Moreover, please note that more detailed guidance regarding Point 7 of Annex VII to Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 are provided in the Guidelines 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017' as well as in the Guidelines 'Evaluation of Innovation in Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020', 'Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020', 'Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD' and in the Guidelines 'Assessing RDP Achievements and Impacts in 2019'.

10. EX ANTE ASSESSMENT OF THE CAP STRATEGIC PLANS

10.1 Context indicators in the ex ante of the CAP Strategic Plans

Q. Which codes of the context indicators have to be used in the ex ante evaluation of CAP Strategic Plan? The CMEF codes (current) of the context indicators or PMEF codes? (e.g. Agricultural areas C.18 (CMEF), C.17 (PMEF))

A. Despite the list of Performance Monitoring Evaluation Framework (PMEF) context indicators is a draft which is in the process of discussion, PMEF context indicator codes should be used in the ex ante assessment of the CAP Strategic Plans. However, the correspondence with the CMEF codes could be maintained (e.g. by putting CMEF codes in brackets or by using a table with two columns for the indicator codes, one for the PMEF and one for the CMEF) to track them in case the codes are eventually modified.

10.2 Appraisal of the assessment of needs including SWOT of the CAP Strategic Plans

Q. How points (b) 'addressing institutional capacity building needs (e.g. in relation to AKIS)' and (c) 'addressing national, regional and local needs' (The note on how to fill the Column 6 of the Analytical Table 5 in the ex ante assessment Tool 2.2 'Analytical tables supporting the appraisal of the assessment of needs including the SWOT') relate to the requirements in the Article 96 of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation (SPR) proposal? Are the aforementioned points (b) and (c) mandatory for the needs assessment, for example through other regulations or parts of the SPR proposal, even if they are absent from Article 96 itself?

A. The Analytical Table 5 is a non-binding example of a table showing how an ex ante evaluator could check the extent to which the assessment of needs is transparent, specific and complete. It takes as a starting point the Guiding Questions 1.6 and 1.7 and their respective criteria in the Tool 2.1 'Examples of guiding questions supporting the appraisal of the assessment of needs including the SWOT'.

The point (b) ‘addressing institutional capacity building needs (e.g. in relation to AKIS)’ has a link to the Article 103 (2) of the SPR proposal the ‘SWOT analysis shall also provide relevant information about the functioning of the AKIS and related structures’. The institutional capacity building needs to make AKIS work can be considered a relevant information the ex ante evaluator may want to check in this respect.

The point (c) ‘addressing national, regional and local needs’ follows the general principle of territorial breakdown as stated in the Article 125(3)(a). The ex ante evaluator may therefore want to check if national, regional or local specific needs are addressed in a comprehensive and complementary fashion with conditionality (Article 11) and payments for the schemes for the climate and the environment (Article 28).

Disclaimer. This answer may be reviewed and modified according to the outcomes of the adopted version of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation.

Q. How to understand the criterion of ‘evidence of access to finance’ related to the assessment to what extent is the SWOT based on evidence? (See Tool 2.1 ‘Examples of guiding questions supporting the appraisal of the assessment of needs including the SWOT’ and Tool 2.2 ‘Analytical tables supporting the appraisal of the assessment of needs including the SWOT’)

A. The ex ante evaluator may want to check the evidence on the access to finance due to the following reasons:

- The ex ante evaluator has the task to judge on the rationale for the use of financial instruments financed by the EAFRD (Article 125 of the SPR proposal), and needs to be generally aware of all relevant evidence from the SWOT and assessment of needs as well as from common context indicators which show the socio-economic status of potential beneficiaries and their access to finance (e.g. C14, 15, 16 and C25, 26, 27 and 28).
- In the Article 103 (2) of the SPR proposal, the analysis of the access to finance is considered as a specific requirement for Specific Objective 7 on young farmers.
- According to Recital 42 of the SPR, the ‘need to fill the investment gap in the Union agricultural sector and improve access to financial instruments for priority groups, notably young farmers and new entrants with higher risk profiles’ is expressed and the use of the InvestEU guarantee and combination of grants and financial instruments is encouraged if such need is identified in the Member State.

Disclaimer. This answer may be reviewed and modified according to the outcomes of the adopted version of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation.

11. EX POST EVALUATION OF RDPS 2014-2022

11.1 Transition period and the ex post evaluation

Q. How will the transition period of the RDPS affect the ex post evaluation in terms of timing, evaluation period, changes in evaluation requirements?

A. The Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 of 23 December 2020 laying down certain transitional provisions for support from EAFRD and EAGF has not introduced any new requirements for evaluation. However, some amendments of the Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and 1305/2013 concern also the ex post evaluation of RDPS. First of all there is a change in the timing: The ex post evaluation reports shall be prepared by the Member States for each of their RDPS in 2026 and shall be submitted to the Commission by 31 December 2026.

Taking into account that the duration of Rural Development Programmes is extended until 31 December 2022 (following the N+3 rule the implementation period ends by 31 December 2025) the period that the ex post evaluations have to cover is consequently extended by 2 years.

The common evaluation questions for rural development (Annex V to the Regulation (EU) 808/2014) which have to be answered in the ex post evaluation report remain the same.

Managing Authorities may amend RDPs following the new implementing rules defined in the transition regulation as well as due to other reasons (e.g. changes in the context and/or approach to address identified needs, redefinition of the content of measures). Such amendments may change the intervention logic of the RDP and should be reflected in the ex post evaluation.

Q. Will there be any additional *enhanced* AIRs requested before the ex post evaluation due to the transition period?

A. No, there are no additional enhanced annual implementation reports (AIR) required due to the transition period. However, each consecutive year until and including 2026, Member States shall submit to the Commission the standard AIRs on the implementation of the RDPs in the previous calendar year.

Q. How will the ex post evaluation take into consideration the impact of the transitional funds and EURI resources?

A. The European Recovery Instrument (EURI) measures which address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on agriculture and rural development are carried out in accordance with the relevant EU acts laying down rules for RDPs, and they are programmed and monitored separately from the additional resources for rural development provided by the EAFRD.

As a consequence, the additional EURI funds for rural development measures will be 'flagged' by Member States and this allows for the ex post evaluation to seek to assess their contribution to the achievement of the EURI objective of '*paving the way for a resilient, sustainable and digital economic recovery in line with the objectives of the Union's environmental and climate commitments and with the new ambitions set out in the European Green Deal*'. The additional EURI funding may also influence the revision of targets for 2025. This reinforces the point that the ex post evaluation may assess the contribution of this additional funding for the relevant measures to the achievement of the revised targets.

The Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with evaluation experts and DG Agri has developed the Working Document 'Evaluating RDP effects on competitiveness of agriculture in a changing context' which provides examples and recommendations for dealing with contextual changes in evaluation.

11.2 Financing evaluations during transitional period and ex post evaluation

Q. What are the possibilities to prolong the contract with the ongoing evaluator and to increase the finances for the additional AIRs in the transitional period? How can the ex post evaluation be financed?

A. The Managing Authorities may adapt the necessary budgetary resources for financing annual implementation reports, modified or newly prioritised evaluations during the transition period. The evaluation activities are financed from the technical assistance as referred to in Article 59 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. These changes will typically lead to a modification of the RDP's evaluation plan and be further specified in the tendering documents for specific evaluation contracts (e.g. ongoing evaluation, evaluation studies). Amendments in ongoing evaluation contracts are done according to the conditions agreed in the contract and other binding legislation in the Member State.

The ex post evaluation like any other evaluations are financed from the technical assistance budget of the EAFRD. Considering that the ex post evaluation in Member States may take place in 2026, this evaluation activity should be financed from the CAP Strategic Plans' technical assistance.

11.3 Reporting on ex post evaluation

Q. How will the SFC template for reporting the ex post evaluation look like? Will there be any changes in the reporting tables for indicators?

A. In 2021, Evaluation Helpdesk will propose the SFC template for ex post evaluations of RDPs 2014-2022. The proposal will take into account the identified issues during reporting on AIRs of the previous years. The draft proposal for the SFC template will be discussed with the Member States' delegates in the Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP.

11.4 Specific considerations for the ex post evaluation

Q. Are the NRN Programmes and risk management programmes (national programmes) affected by the ex post assessment?

A. All rural development programmes, national frameworks, national rural network (NRN) programmes and any other programme supported by the EAFRD for the 2014-2020 programming period and programming years 2021 and 2022 are subject of the ex post evaluation.

Q. Could it be clarified the possible use of LEADER/CLLD, and its inclusion in the ex post evaluation – is there more flexibility possible in capturing its effects?

A. The process of evaluating LEADER/CLLD is similar to the evaluation of the RDP and can be carried out in the context of the wider RDP ex post evaluation activities. However, Member States may also carry out separate stand-alone evaluations of LEADER/CLLD. The RDP evaluation plan can for example further specify, what will be evaluated in relation to LEADER/CLLD, how the evaluation at the RDP level will be linked to the LAG level, and when the evaluation will be conducted? The evaluations findings on LEADER/CLLD will in each case be included in the respective Evaluation Questions included in the reporting of RDP ex post evaluation.

The common evaluation elements provide the basis to allow for the assessment of primary contributions of LEADER/CLLD and ensure the comparability of evaluation results across the EU. However, they may not capture all the effects caused by LEADER/CLLD and its added value. Therefore, Member States are encouraged to develop additional evaluation elements (e.g. judgement criteria, indicators) to capture these effects. (Read more in the Guidelines '[Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD](#)'.)

11.5 Contextual change, COVID-19

Q. How will the effects of COVID-19 be assessed in the context of rural development?

A. COVID-19 represents a considerable contextual change, that significantly influences the effects or Rural Development Programmes. It should therefore be taken into consideration when preparing and conducting the assessment of RDP effects. The Evaluation Helpdesk has for this purpose published a Working Document '[Evaluating RDP Effects on Competitiveness of Agriculture in a Changing Context](#)'.

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