



## TOOL 3.1

# EXAMPLES OF GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE APPRAISAL OF THE INTERVENTION STRATEGY, TARGETS AND MILESTONES

THEMATIC WORKING GROUP No 7  
'PREPARING FOR THE EX-ANTE EVALUATION OF THE CAP  
STRATEGIC PLAN'

OCTOBER 2019

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## ACRONYMS

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CPR	Proposal for Common Provisions Regulation, COM/2018/375 final
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGF	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GQ	Guiding Questions
MS	Member State
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SO	Specific Objective
SPR	Proposal for CAP Strategic Plan Regulation, COM/2018/392 final
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats Analysis



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## INTRODUCTION

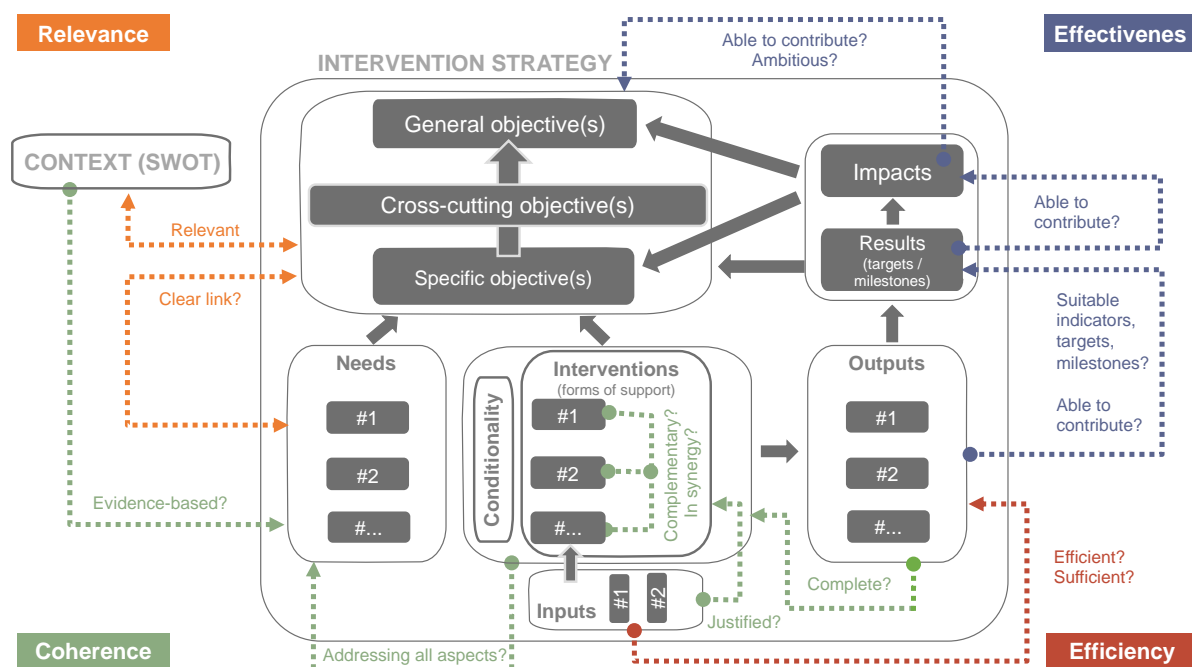
This tool has been prepared by evaluation experts taking into account the legal proposal for the CAP Strategic Plans *COM(2018) 392 final (hereafter referred to as SPR)* and the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC). The drafting work has been carried out in the context of the Evaluation Helpdesk's [Thematic Working Group no. 7](#). The suggestions and comments of evaluation stakeholders from the Member States have been collected through a written Sounding Board consultation in September 2019 and were used to refine the document.

The tool aims to **build capacity on appraising the intervention strategy, targets and milestones of the CAP Strategic Plans 2021-2027**. This document contains examples of guiding questions (GQ) and criteria to support the ex-ante evaluators of the CAP Strategic Plans 2021-2027 in their task to appraise the intervention strategy, targets and milestones. The examples of **guiding questions and criteria in this tool are not mandatory**.

The assessment areas of Article 125(3) covered by this tool include<sup>1</sup>:

- (a) contributions to the CAP specific objectives;
- (b) internal coherence and relationship with other relevant instruments;
- (c) consistency of the allocation of budgetary resources with the specific objectives of the CAP Strategic Plan;
- (d) contribution of expected outputs to results;
- (e) realistic target values for results;
- (h) suitability of the milestones selected for the performance framework;
- (j) rationale for the use of financial instruments financed by the EAFRD.

Figure 1. Ex-ante appraisal of the intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan



The ex-ante appraisal of the intervention strategies of the CAP Strategic Plans (as seen in Figure 1) focuses on the **relevance and coherence** of the intervention strategy. It explores if the interventions

<sup>1</sup> Please note, that the points (f), (g) and (i) of Article 125(3) are not considered by this tool, since they are linked to management, monitoring and implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan.

designed and grouped around specific objectives are capable of addressing the identified needs, are based on evidence from the SWOT analysis and are able to achieve the CAP objectives. The ex-ante evaluation assesses if the interventions are consistent and work in synergy (internal coherence) and looks at their relationship with other relevant policy instruments (external coherence).

In the ex-ante stage, **effectiveness and efficiency** can be examined with regard to whether the overall design and distribution of the funds, the conditionality and the targets set are likely to make a noticeable impact. For this purpose, the chain of effects between the budgetary inputs for the designed interventions and their expected outputs, results and impacts is assessed. The assessment of the expected effects helps to check if the target values and annual milestones of the result indicators have been calculated properly and realistically based on the amount of allocated inputs, planned outputs and results.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

### RELEVANCE and COHERENCE: Relations between needs, objectives and interventions, as well as with other relevant instruments

**Relevance** expresses the extent to which the intervention strategy is pertinent to the needs identified in the SWOT analysis of the current situation.

The **internal coherence** of the CAP Strategic Plan's intervention strategy expresses the extent to which there is consistency between the identified needs, the general and specific objectives, the interventions and allocated financial resources. It also relates to the complementarity and synergy between the interventions in achieving the specific and general objectives.

The **external coherence** of the CAP Strategic Plan concerns the relationship of the CAP Strategic Plan with other relevant instruments (e.g. ESI funds, EU, national and regional policies and legislation, financial instruments, and international treaties where the EU is signatory).

The **ex-ante evaluation** explores if the interventions designed and grouped around specific objectives are capable to address the identified needs and to achieve the CAP objectives.

Furthermore, the ex-ante evaluation investigates, to what extent interventions work in synergy and whether negative trade-offs are addressed and minimised where possible.

In this regard, Article 125(3) of the SPR proposal specifies that the ex-ante evaluation shall appraise:

- (a) the contribution of the CAP Strategic Plan to the CAP specific objectives, taking into account national and regional needs and potentials for development as well as lessons drawn from the implementation of the CAP in previous programming periods.
- (b) the internal coherence of the proposed CAP Strategic Plan and its relationship with other relevant instruments.

#### GQ 2.1 To what extent does the CAP Strategic Plan contribute to the CAP specific objectives, taking into account the national and regional needs and potentials for development?

Explore if the following criteria are fulfilled:<sup>2</sup>

- a) The **lessons learned** from addressing national/regional needs with rural development programmes and Pillar I operations in the past implementation periods have been taken into consideration when designing the intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan.
- b) The CAP Strategic Plan includes for each (programmed) specific objective **a sound and well documented intervention logic**<sup>3</sup> showing how conditionality, the designed interventions<sup>4</sup> in the form of direct payments, rural development and sectoral interventions and their combination will contribute to the specific objective and ensure positive results and impacts.
- c) The designed interventions under each (programmed) specific objective address the national, regional and local needs and potentials for developments as identified in the SWOT analysis and the assessment of needs.<sup>5</sup>
- d) The CAP Strategic Plan shows how the designed interventions are able to contribute to the achievements of the CAP general and cross-cutting objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2, 3 and 5 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>3</sup> Does not have to be a graphical representation but the logic should be inherent in the descriptive text.

<sup>4</sup> For example, eligible beneficiaries, actions and planned forms of support (grants, mutual funds, guarantees, credits, etc).

<sup>5</sup> Article 99 of the SPR proposal.

## **GQ 2.2 To what extent does the CAP Strategic Plan demonstrate greater overall contributions to environmental and climate related objectives<sup>6</sup>?**

*Explore if the following criteria are fulfilled:<sup>7</sup>*

- a) The CAP Strategic Plan intervention strategy describes how the CAP Strategic Plan addresses the environmental and climate related national, regional, and/or local needs identified through the SWOT/needs assessment.<sup>8</sup>
- b) The CAP Strategic Plan intervention strategy shows how conditionality, interventions (including planned forms of support and budgetary allocations) and their combination ensure a greater contribution to the environment/climate related specific objectives to achieve greater effects on environment/climate compared to the baseline situation in 2021.<sup>9</sup>
- c) The CAP Strategic Plan shows more ambitious targets in relation to the environment and climate objectives compared to the previous period.<sup>10</sup>

## **GQ 2.3 To what extent is the CAP Strategic Plan internally coherent?**

*Explore if the following criteria are fulfilled:<sup>11</sup>*

- a) The **lessons learned regarding the internal coherence** of rural development programmes and Pillar I operations from the past implementation periods have been taken into consideration when designing the intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan.
- b) There is **complementarity and synergies among the interventions** (and their planned forms of support) in reaching the programmed specific objective.
- c) There is **coherence, synergies and balance between the interventions across all the programmed specific objectives set out in Article 6(1)** (i.e. there are interventions which contribute to several specific objectives and support each other working in synergy, or there are interventions which compensate or mitigate the negative trade-off between other interventions and avoid incompatibilities in the achievement of specific objectives).
- d) There is **coherence, synergies and balance between the different objectives at the horizontal level**, including the specific interventions designed for each objective and towards the general and cross-cutting objectives. This includes possible trade-offs between different objectives.
- e) The CAP Strategic Plan **intervention strategy demonstrates consistency** by showing clear links to the SWOT analysis and to the assessment of needs.<sup>12</sup>

## **GQ 2.4 To what extent is the CAP Strategic Plan coherent with other relevant instruments<sup>13</sup>?**

*Explore if the following criteria are fulfilled:<sup>14</sup>*

- a) The **lessons learned concerning the external coherence** of rural development programmes and Pillar I operations<sup>15</sup> from the past implementation periods have been taken into consideration while designing the CAP Strategic Plan.
- b) The intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan clearly shows the **contributions to relevant policy objectives and targets of national, EU and international policies and/or strategies signed by the EU** (e.g. external national or regional policies mentioned in the

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<sup>6</sup> Article 92.1 of the SPR proposal.

<sup>7</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2, 3 and 5 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>8</sup> Article 99 of the SPR proposal.

<sup>9</sup> Article 99 of the SPR proposal.

<sup>10</sup> Article 99 of the SPR proposal.

<sup>11</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2, 3 and 5 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>12</sup> A more specific set of guiding questions for assessing the SWOT analysis and assessment of needs can be found in [Tool 2.1](#).

<sup>13</sup> External coherence with all EU, national, regional, local policy instruments relevant for the interventions of the CAP Strategic Plan.

<sup>14</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2 and 3 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>15</sup> In the past implementation period, there has been a different situation. The RDPs 2014-2020 were part of a Partnership Agreement, whereas for Pillar I interventions the external coherence concerned only the relationship with national funds.

SWOT and needs assessment, EU [Youth strategy](#), EU Biodiversity strategy, [EU Climate action 2050 Long-term strategy](#), EU strategy for the Danube regions, EU Employment strategy [Paris agreement, national climate and energy plans](#)).

- c) The CAP Strategic Plan provides a clear **overview of the demarcation, complementarities, synergies and coordination** between the CAP Strategic Plan conditionality, interventions and other interventions funded by **other Union funds** active in rural areas and/or addressing similar beneficiaries, actors and/or areas of work.<sup>16</sup>
- d) The **intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan is consistent with the legislative instruments** (including programmes and plans derived therefrom) **concerning the environment and climate** as listed in Annex 11 to the SPR proposal and **contribute to the established long-term national targets** stipulated in / derived from these instruments. In particular, strategic and management plans at the national and regional levels descending from EU legislation such as the Prioritised Action Framework, the Nitrate Action Plan and the River Basin Management Plans should be taken in account. With respect to **environment, climate, young farmers and risk management** the CAP Strategic Plan shows consistency and complementarity of its interventions with **the relevant EU, national and regional interventions in the above areas**.<sup>17</sup>
- e) **Potential overlaps (double financing) or funding gaps** between relevant policy instruments and interventions are adequately addressed by the coordination and demarcation mechanisms proposed, including avoiding these overlaps and possible gaps.

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<sup>16</sup> Article 98(d)(iii) of the SPR proposal.

<sup>17</sup> Article 97(2)(b and c) of the SPR proposal.

## EFFECTIVENESS and EFFICIENCY: Relation between input, outputs, results, impacts

**Effectiveness** is the extent to which objectives pursued by an intervention are achieved. It is calculated by relating an output, result or impact indicator to a quantified objective.

**Efficiency** concerns the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved in pursuing a given objective through an intervention. Efficiency addresses the question whether greater effects could have been obtained with the same budget or whether the same effects could have been obtained at a lower cost?

**The ex-ante evaluation assesses the chain** of effects between the budgetary inputs for the designed interventions and their expected outputs, results and impacts. Inputs can be planned in the form of grants or financial instruments. The assessment of the expected effects helps to check if the **target values and annual milestones** of the result indicators have been realistically established and calculated properly based on the amount of allocated inputs, planned outputs and results.

*In this respect, Article 125(3) of the proposed regulation for the CAP Strategic Plan specifies, that the ex-ante evaluation shall appraise:*

- (c) the consistency of the allocation of budgetary resources for the specific objectives of the CAP Strategic Plan.*
- (d) how the expected outputs will contribute to results.*
- (e) whether the quantified target values for results are realistic with regard to the support envisaged from the EAGF and EAFRD.*
- (h) the suitability of the milestones selected for the performance framework.*
- (j) the rationale for the use of financial instruments financed by the EAFRD.*

### GQ 2.5 To what extent will the expected outputs contribute to results as expressed in realistic target values?

*Explore if the following criteria have been fulfilled:<sup>18</sup>*

- a) The **lessons learned concerning the contributions of expected outputs to results and targets** from the past implementation periods have been taken into consideration when designing the CAP Strategic Plan.
- b) The **causal relationships between inputs, outputs, results and target values** are clearly explained and complete:
  - i. The CAP Strategic Plan specifies how the expected outputs will be generated by the planned financial inputs allocated for specific interventions.
  - ii. The CAP Strategic Plan specifies how the expected results will be achieved with the expected outputs through the specific interventions.
  - iii. The CAP Strategic Plan shows how the expected results will contribute to each specific objective.
- c) Each intervention is clearly linked to **one or more result indicators**.
- d) **Targets are set** for each relevant result indicator based on the designed interventions linked to that result indicator.<sup>19</sup>
- e) The target values for each result indicator are **realistic**, when taking into account critical factors such as:

<sup>18</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2, 5 and 6 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>19</sup> Article 97(1)(a) of the SPR proposal.

- i. The design of the related interventions<sup>20</sup> and the financial allocation per intervention to generate the expected results.
  - ii. The lessons learned from the past implementation periods (e.g. the implementation profile of similar interventions in the past period (speed of absorption, identified bottlenecks and external conditions)).
  - iii. The experiences and capacity of beneficiaries to apply and to implement the designed interventions.
  - iv. The existence of reliable data sources.
- f) The provided **justification for the target values**<sup>21</sup> takes into account the critical factors and is in line with the assessment of needs.
- g) **Targets for result indicators** related to the environment and climate related CAP specific objectives take into account the **environment and climate architecture** of the CAP Strategic Plan and already established long term national targets as stipulated in instruments listed in Annex XI to the SPR proposal.
- h) **The role of the enhanced conditionality** (in terms of requirement, ambition, coverage, etc.) is taken into account in the strategy and intervention design. Even if areas subject to conditionality are not explicitly accounted for when defining result indicator targets, the role of conditionality should be considered when establishing both the strategy and the target setting. For example, if a Member State establishes a very demanding crop rotation standard in GAEC 8, it could be a good justification for why interventions on crop rotation are very targeted to a few areas and the related targets are quite low.

## **GQ 2.6 To what extent are the allocated budgetary resources consistent with the specific objectives of the CAP Strategic Plan?**

*Explore if the following criteria are fulfilled for the CAP Strategic Plan:*<sup>22</sup>

- a) The **lessons learned concerning the financial allocations** from past periods have been clearly taken into consideration when designing the budget of the CAP Strategic Plan (e.g. problems with specific kinds of interventions, the size of their budget and their uptake).
- b) The **financial plan of the CAP Strategic Plan shows the breakdown** of allocations per designed intervention for direct payments, sectoral interventions and interventions for rural development.
- c) In case there is any **transfer of allocated budgetary resources between direct payments, sectoral types of interventions and types of interventions for rural development**, this is clearly stated in the financial plan and explained how this transfer plans to foster the achievement of the CAP specific objectives.
- d) There is a **clear justification of how** the budgetary resources have been **allocated to the designed interventions** for different types of sectors, regions, beneficiaries, etc.
- e) **The role of the enhanced conditionality** (in terms of requirement, ambition, coverage, etc.) is taken into account in the intervention design and its financial allocation.
- f) The allocation of budgetary resources for each intervention is **justified in accordance with the assessment of needs**.
- g) The allocation of budgetary resources for each intervention is **adequate for achieving the targets** and:
  - o **has a transparent and credible link** between the financial allocations (inputs) and expected outputs, results and calculated target values/milestones of result indicators.
  - o takes into consideration the **socio-economic and environmental situation** of the supported areas, sectors, beneficiaries and supported types of interventions.

<sup>20</sup> Article 97(1)(c) of the SPR proposal.

<sup>21</sup> Article 97(1)(a) of the SPR proposal.

<sup>22</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2, 5 and 6 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

- a risk **analysis of the implementation** of the designed interventions has been carried out (demand, absorption contracting, finalising the projects, etc.).
- the **enhanced conditionality requirements** are taken in account.

## **GQ 2.7 To what extent are the milestones selected for the performance framework suitable?**

*Explore if the following criteria have been fulfilled:<sup>23</sup>*

- a) Annual **milestones indicating the annual breakdown of the established targets are set up for each relevant result indicator** based on the designed interventions linked to this result indicator.
- b) The value of each annual milestone for the calculated targets of result indicators is set up taking into consideration:
  - **Lessons learned** from the past implementation periods of similar interventions and their implementation profile (timing and volume of absorption of funds by potential beneficiaries across the implementation period for specific interventions).
  - **External conditions** for absorption of funds (e.g. socio-economic context of potential beneficiaries, legal framework, natural and climate conditions).
  - Identified commitments from the current implementation period, especially if they have to be paid in the next implementation period.
  - The **enhanced conditionality requirements**.
  - **Internal conditions** of the CAP Strategic Plan's implementation (e.g. quality of information, past bottlenecks in the project application administration, the experience and capacity of beneficiaries to apply and implement designed interventions).
- c) The **milestones for result indicators** related to the environment and climate specific objectives take into account the **environment and climate architecture of the CAP Strategic Plan** and already established long term national targets as stipulated in the instruments listed in Annex XI to the SPR proposal.

## **GQ 2.8 To what extent is the use of financial instruments financed by the EAFRD justified?**

*Explore if the following criteria are fulfilled:<sup>24</sup>*

- a) The provided **justification for using or not using financial instruments** to implement the CAP Strategic Plan interventions is supported by relevant evidence from the SWOT and assessment of needs as well as common context indicators which show the socio-economic status of potential beneficiaries (e.g. C14, 15, 16 and C25, 26, 27 and 28).
- b) The **definitions, type and main conditions of the planned financial instruments** are provided in the description of the intervention and they are consistent with the justification for using financial instruments financed by the EAFRD.
- c) The **annual financial allocations for each intervention** include, where applicable, a breakdown of the amounts planned for grants and amounts planned for financial instruments.<sup>25</sup>
- d) There is a **consistent link** provided between the use of financial instruments as inputs and the expected outputs and results.
- e) In case the Managing Authority decides in its CAP Strategic Plan to contribute EAFRD resources to InvestEU<sup>26</sup> the **justification provided** for that decision is based on evidence and is in line with the national and/or regional needs.
- f) The expected **contribution of InvestEU** to the achievement of the policy objectives under the CAP Strategic Plan is described.

<sup>23</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2 and 6 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>24</sup> Possible information sources for the analysis: Sections 2 and 5 in the CAP Strategic Plan template.

<sup>25</sup> Article 99(h) of the SPR proposal.

<sup>26</sup> Article 75 of the CPR proposal.





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