

SEPTEMBER
2025
ISSUE

10

10

Evaluating CAP simplification: insights from farmers and Member States' experiences



Newsroom

Discover the latest publications and activities from the Evaluation Helpdesk

02-03



Spotlight

Read insights from a study on simplification for beneficiaries and administrations

04-07



Showcase

Learn from Spain, Sweden and Luxembourg in assessing CAP simplification

08-09



Networking

Dive into the 2025 Good Practice Workshops

10-11



Funded by the European Union



NEWSROOM

Discover the latest activities from the Evaluation Helpdesk

Assessing the effectiveness of CAP support for organic farming: a European perspective

Organic farming in the EU has grown significantly, with CAP support playing a key role. By 2022, [10.5% of the utilised agricultural area](#) - 16.9 million hectares - was organic, up from 9.1% in 2020. The CAP's Measure 11 under the 2014-2020 RDPs funded both conversion and maintenance.

The EU CAP Network, supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP, analysed 60 evaluations from Member States and the UK, focusing on the CAP and organic farming. The latest [CAP Evaluation Insights](#) summarises these findings.

Evaluations from 13 countries demonstrated substantial progress in the adoption of organic farming, although regional disparities highlight uneven uptake. Environmental benefits were strong as organic farming enhanced biodiversity, improved soil health, reduced nitrogen leaching and ammonia emissions, and increased soil carbon sequestration. Austria and Lithuania reported notable CO₂ reductions.

Socioeconomic impacts were mixed. Organic farms often relied on subsidies, especially in less-favoured areas, but contributed to rural employment, attracted young farmers and supported local economies. A persistent gap was noted between organic production and consumer demand, with supply exceeding demand.

The report also explores methodological challenges in assessing CAP support for organic farming. Strong evaluations used



clear intervention logic, distinguishing the CAP's role in the adoption of organic farming from broader environmental and socio-economic effects. They drew on diverse data sources such as administrative registers (IACS, LPIS), Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN), certification data, surveys and spatial tools. Yet, data fragmentation, attribution issues, and the lack of long-term monitoring to track changes and trends over time remain barriers. Key methodological challenges involved establishing causality, defining baselines and correcting for selection bias to improve attribution.

“Organic farming is a flagship CAP measure,” said Alice Devot, Evaluation Manager at the Evaluation Helpdesk. “The evaluations analysed confirmed the CAP’s central role in driving organic growth but also highlight the need for Member States to better assess its design and impact in order to tailor support more closely to farmers’ needs.”

The report’s recommendations focused on enhancing data interoperability, building panel datasets, broadening indicator sets and standardising methods across Member States.

Read the full report ‘[CAP Evaluation Insights: organic farming](#)’.



Strengthening CAP evaluation quality through capacity-building

Improving the quality of evaluations under the CAP was the focus of an online capacity-building event held on 13 and 28 May. Organised by the EU CAP Network and facilitated by Carina Folkesson and Professor Dimitris Skuras, from the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP, the event brought together 80 participants from across Europe, including Managing Authorities, evaluators and experts. The aim was to share lessons learned, discuss common challenges and explore practical solutions for enhancing CAP evaluation practices.

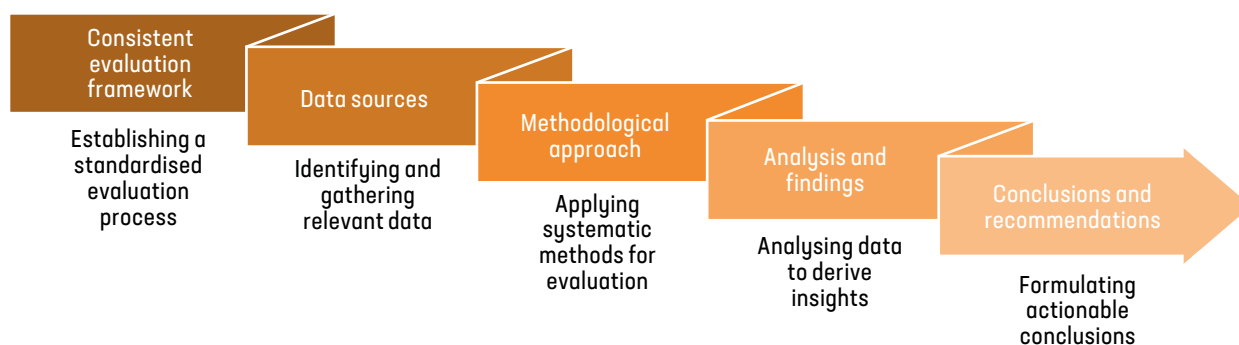
The event was designed in direct response to recurring issues identified by the Evaluation Helpdesk through its experience of conducting in-depth appraisals of evaluations each year. Common challenges

include defining evaluation frameworks, the use of intervention logics, and ensuring methodological and data quality. By providing a platform for peer exchange and hands-on guidance, the two-part event supported participants in tackling these common obstacles and strengthening their evaluation practices.

A key takeaway was the importance of having a well-defined intervention logic and close collaboration between Managing Authorities and evaluators. Political compromises can sometimes weaken this logic, making ongoing revision and joint discussion important for maintaining transparency and enhancing the collaboration between stakeholders.

What do we look for when appraising the quality of evaluations?

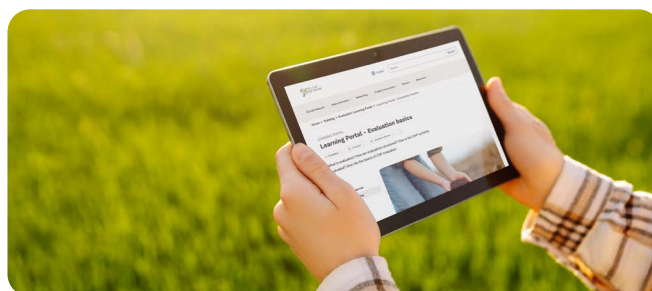
Evaluation process sequence

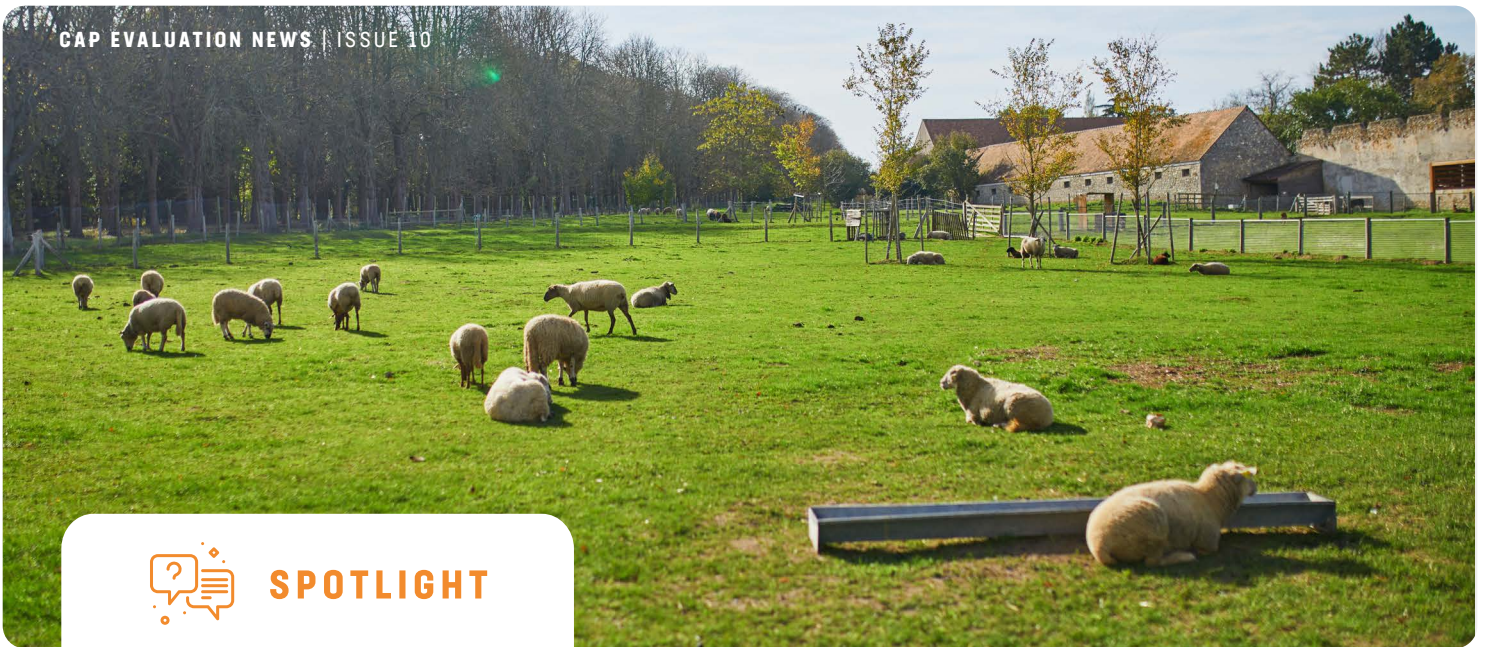


Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025)

The event also underlined the value of designing a robust evaluation framework, early planning and adapting [EU indicators to national contexts](#). Participants shared practical solutions such as supplementing databases with targeted field sampling, drawing on academic research and simulating counterfactuals when direct comparisons were not available. The Evaluation Helpdesk concluded by emphasising that evaluation is an investment in both data and institutional capacity. Building permanent data systems, maintaining stakeholder dialogue and keeping feedback loops open are all essential for high-quality evaluations.

For more guidance, the online evaluation learning portal on ‘[Evaluation basics](#)’ remains a valuable resource.





SPOTLIGHT

A new study reveals administrative burdens on farmers, reinforcing the case for CAP simplification

A comprehensive EU-wide study published in May 2025 confirms that bureaucratic complexity remains a key barrier to effective CAP implementation. The findings support ongoing simplification efforts at both the EU and Member State levels.

Farmers across Europe grapple with complex CAP rules, forms and inspections, but momentum is building to simplify the system. The [‘Study on simplification and administrative burden for farmers and other beneficiaries under the CAP’](#), coordinated by the EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP, aims to paint a detailed picture of administrative workload under the 2023-2027 CAP, as well as pointing to the complexity of requirements outside the CAP.

Crucially, it explores many burdens not only to EU law, but also to how Member States interpret and apply the rules, underscoring the need to continue the simplification at both EU and national levels.



Methodology in focus

The study combines quantitative and qualitative data from a diverse range of sources:

- Nearly 27 000 responses to the European Commission targeted consultation on simplification (March-April 2024).
- 298 in-depth farmer interviews across all 27 Member States.
- Online surveys of CAP beneficiaries, including Local Action Groups (LAG), EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OG), wine growers and producers, producer organisations (PO) of the fruit and vegetable sector and advisory services.
- Around 150 interviews with Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, other national stakeholders and with EU-level farmer organisations.
- Extensive documentary analysis, covering EU legislation, CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) and previous evaluations.

This triangulated approach allowed researchers to map burden sources, capturing issues and solutions in real-world implementation across Member States.

The study also attempts to quantify administrative costs for farmers and other beneficiaries.

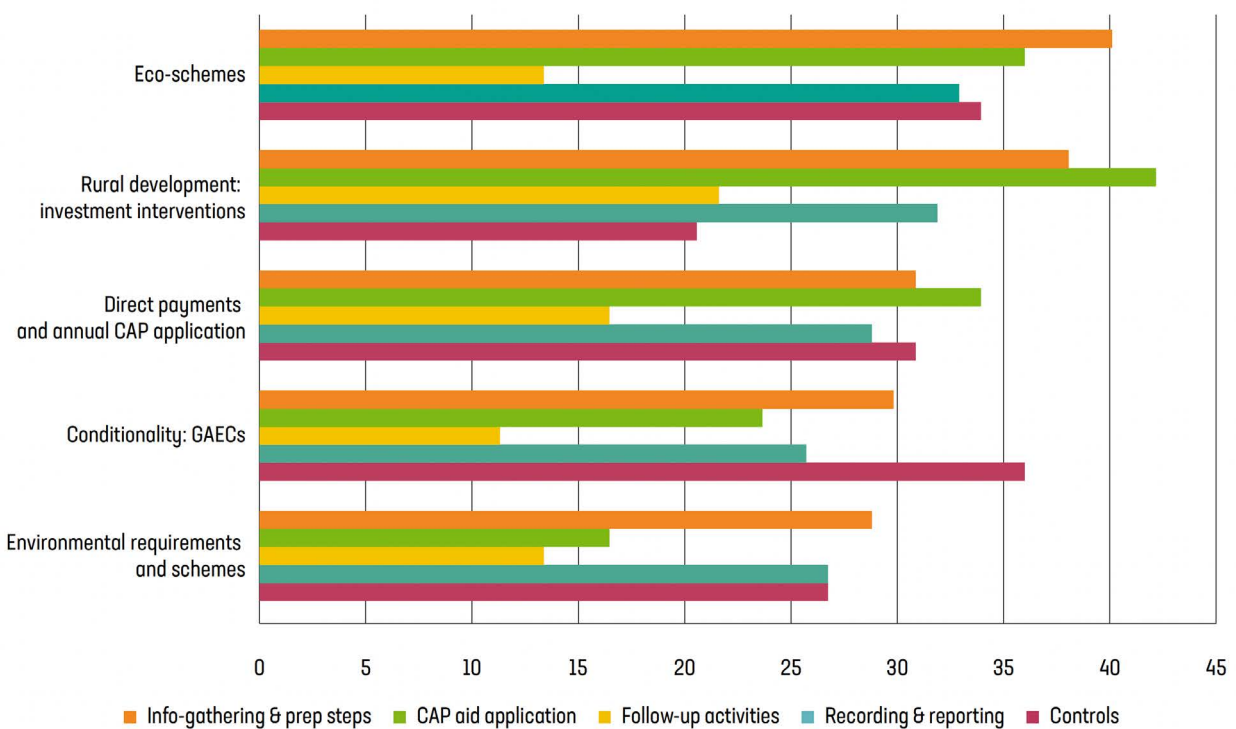
The findings are consistent across all data sources. Farmers and other beneficiaries report that **administrative tasks are a significant burden, especially those related to applying CAP support, reporting to authorities and undergoing inspections.** While investments involve substantial paperwork, the digital platforms and tools used for direct payments and area-based interventions are frequently described as not user-friendly.



Moreover, **farmers often find conditionality requirements difficult to comply with**, enforced without flexibility and misaligned with local conditions. Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 6 (soil cover), GAEC 7 (crop rotation), GAEC 8 (landscape features) and, outside the CAP, rules on nitrates are most frequently cited. Additionally, many farmers criticise the lack of clarity in the rules and frequent changes, which hinder effective planning. Eco-schemes are, in some cases, not fully understood by farmers or considered not adequately adapted to real-world farming practices.

The following table summarises the study's findings regarding the main causes of burden for CAP beneficiaries in relation to the relevant procedural steps, the main requirements and interventions.

Distribution of procedural steps indicated as most burdensome, for the top five areas of burden

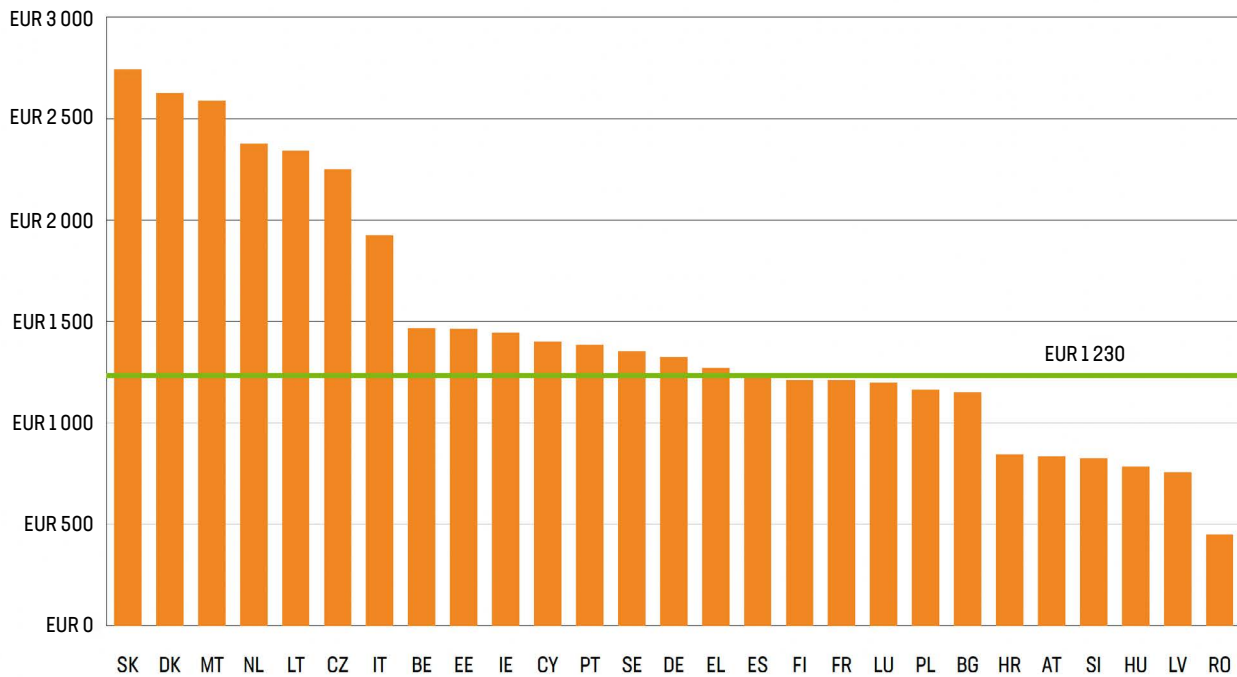


Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025)

On average, **CAP-related administrative work consumes seven working days per year**. Time and complexity increase with farm size. In terms of costs, farmers report spending approximately EUR 1 230 annually, divided equally between internal and external

consultancy expenses. Significant variations are observed across Member States. In Slovakia, Denmark and Malta, farmers report spending over EUR 2 500, while in Romania, the average cost is below EUR 500.

Average total costs spent by farmers on administrative tasks by country



* EU estimate of the average total cost spent by farmers on administrative tasks, taking into account the estimate of spending seven working days per year on CAP-related administrative tasks

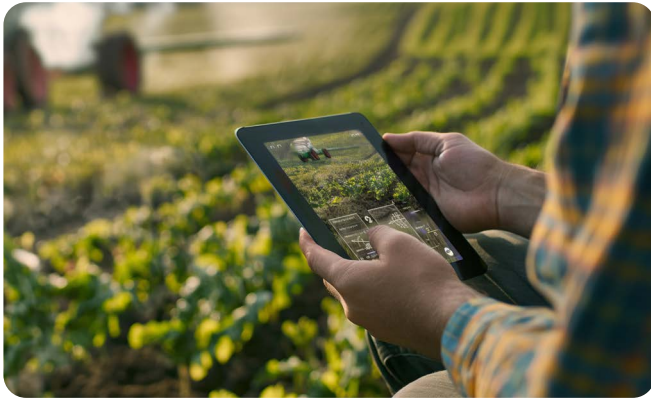
Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025)



Burdens related to sectoral interventions included in CSP are even more pronounced. Producer organisations report spending over 100 days annually on CAP-related administration.

For LAGs and OGs, the burden depends largely on team size and the complexity of the projects they manage, since they rely less on external consultants.

The CAP's new delivery model gives Member States greater flexibility, but this often results in added complexity. National authorities may impose additional requirements, extend procurement rules to private beneficiaries or maintain duplicative reporting systems that fail to integrate with Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies' IT systems.



The study also identifies cases of 'gold-plating' where Member States impose rules that go beyond EU requirements and are not strictly necessary for the achievement of CAP objectives.

Marco Mazzei, one of the study's lead authors, notes: "One contributing factor to overregulation is a 'fear of audit', which can lead national authorities to adopt a more cautious stance and delay simplification."

The study highlights significant scope for simplification – over 60% of interviewees consider that some of the burden imposed at national level is 'unnecessary'.

Indeed, the **analysis looks at the Member States' efforts to simplify the CAP that are already underway**, including increased digitalisation, streamlined procedures and implementation tools (e.g. simplified costs) as well as efforts for better communication from authorities and support to beneficiaries.

While targeted simplification actions may effectively address urgent issues, the study concludes by emphasising **the importance of longer-term approaches**.

As Marco adds, "simplification should continue to be pursued at all levels, focusing on horizontal actions across the EU - such as enhanced digitalisation - as well as customised solutions aligned with the reality of each Member State."

Read the [Study on simplification and administrative burden for farmers and other beneficiaries under the CAP](#).



Looking ahead

The European Commission proposed [a new set of simplification measures on 14 May 2025](#), taking into account many findings of the '[Study on simplification and administrative burden for farmers and other beneficiaries under the CAP](#)', as well as several consultations, including the '[Strategic dialogue on the future of the EU agriculture](#)'. The package increases flexibility for organic farms, introduces new tools to support small farms and reduces the burden on CSP authorities.

The Evaluation Helpdesk continues its analytical work to gain a clearer understanding of the actual requirements imposed on farmers. To this end, a follow-up study aiming

to create an 'inventory of requirements affecting farmers' has been launched:

The study, currently ongoing, explores EU and Member State legislation in the areas of greater complexity for farmers, such as CSP interventions and the environmental and sanitary policies within and outside the CAP, with the aim of identifying and classifying the relevant requirements.

To serve as a useful tool for further analysis, the inventory will also include information about the source of the requirements and the nature of the burden associated with them.



SHOWCASE

Simplifying the CAP: lessons from evaluations in Spain, Sweden and Luxembourg

Simplification and reduction of administrative burden remain high on the agenda for CAP implementation. Evaluations conducted in Spain, Sweden and Luxembourg illustrate three distinct but instructive approaches to systematically assess and improve CAP simplification under the 2023-2027 programming period.

Spain: Managing complexity through coordinated governance

The [Spanish evaluation](#) is underway and is planned to be completed by the end of this year. In Spain, simplification is being assessed in a highly decentralised governance context. With 17 autonomous regions, each responsible for its evaluations, the Spanish Managing Authority adopted a proactive approach to ensure coherence and to produce a summative evaluation. Supporting documents such as evaluation guidelines and a shared matrix were developed collaboratively with regional authorities.

Preliminary findings indicate that the principle of simplification has been duly considered in the design phase of the CAP Strategic Plan (PEPAC), through the revision of elements from previous programming periods. Nevertheless, despite the adoption of a continuity-based design approach, the new delivery model has not resulted in significant simplification. On the contrary, it has constrained the system's responsiveness to the needs of a dynamic agricultural sector.

In contrast, the digital tools developed by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) to support the implementation of interventions across the autonomous

communities have contributed to operational simplification. The enhancement of key systems, such as the Area Monitoring System (AMS) and SIEX (farm information exchange system), is expected to lead to a substantial reduction in administrative burden in the medium to long term. Despite existing challenges, the current level of digitalisation within the implementation framework is already high.

The integration of all CAP interventions under a single CAP Strategic Plan has reinforced the need to strengthen multi-level governance structures, ensuring effective coordination and cooperation between national and regional authorities.



Sweden: Evaluation embedded in policy learning



Sweden offers an example of how early evaluation can feed into ongoing CAP strategic plan implementation. In 2023, the Swedish Board of Agriculture assessed administrative burden from simplification measures introduced in the 2023-2027 CAP, such as the replacement of multiannual schemes with eco-schemes and the use of area-based monitoring. [The evaluation](#) applies both efficiency and effectiveness criteria, combining surveys and interviews with both farmers and administrators.

To ensure institutional learning, recommendations from the evaluation are assigned to specific 'owners' within the administration, who report annually on progress. Some measures, such as removing cumbersome steps or adjusting support schemes, have already been implemented. Others, requiring regulatory change, are earmarked for future revisions of the policy. Notably, Sweden also emphasised inclusive communication through blogs and seminars to broaden the reach of evaluation findings.

Luxembourg: Tight rules but communication matters

In Luxembourg, a recently published [horizontal evaluation](#) of the CAP Strategic Plan also addresses simplification in a broader policy context.

The evaluation found that the complexity facing farmers arises not only from CAP regulations and their frequent updates in implementation, but also from the combined effects of related European regulations, audits, controls, national legislation and established good agricultural practices.

While simplification potential exists, it has sometimes remained underutilised due to political constraints or choices made (e.g. number of interventions, anticipatory obedience due to fear of audit findings).



A takeaway is that better communication about existing and upcoming simplifications could ease farmers' perception of administrative burden.

However, evaluators caution that communicating about simplification without accompanying tangible changes in workload could erode trust if farmers feel the burden remains the same.

Looking ahead

These diverse evaluation experiences highlight the importance of adapting simplification assessments to specific national and regional contexts. From Spain's coordinated multi-level governance to Sweden's iterative feedback mechanisms and Luxembourg's focus on clearer communication, Member States are actively exploring how simplification can be understood, measured, and, where feasible, advanced under the CAP.

Simplification is not a one-off task but requires ongoing assessment to improve policy design and reduce administrative burdens. Evaluating its impact offers insights into both costs and effectiveness. Nonetheless, meaningful evaluation faces methodological challenges, necessitating targeted data collection and stakeholder coordination to foster trust and establish credibility. A comprehensive approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods such as the standard cost model and stakeholder interviews, is vital for effectively capturing simplification.



NETWORKING

A deep dive into the 2025 Good Practice Workshops

This year, CAP evaluation events took an interconnected approach. The first Good Practice Workshop of the year was in Italy and explored simulation models for estimating CAP impact indicators and counterfactuals. The second focused on big data for assessing the CAP's environmental impacts. The upcoming Bucharest workshop in October will address remaining impact indicators and showcase best practices.



The [next Good Practice Workshop](#), organised by the EU CAP Network, will take place in Bucharest, Romania, on 16-17 October. It will focus on netting out impacts, a crucial topic for the effective evaluation of the CAP, and will be built on the experiences shared in the previous workshops.

In the [workshop in Bari](#), Italy, on 3-4 April, case studies from Austria, Hungary and the Netherlands showed how partial equilibrium models like [PASMA](#) and [CAPRI](#), or farm-based models like

[FARMDYN](#), are being used to quantify policy impacts and bridge data gaps, particularly in the environmental field and for Pillar 1 type interventions.

Participants saw the value of simulation models to strengthen evidence-based policymaking but noted challenges, including access to data and transparency around model assumptions.

One of the speakers, Bérénice Dupeux, from the Horizon Europe project [Tools4CAP](#) highlighted: "To capture the complexity of the agricultural system, you need multiple tools; farm simulation models are only some of them."



Several participants called for investments in technical capacity and in support of a 'modelling culture' where simulation complements, rather than replaces, empirical evaluation methods.

Building on this momentum to further strengthen technical capacity, the [workshop in Hannover](#), Germany, on 12-13 June, spotlighted big data's role in evaluating the CAP's environmental impacts. Participants explored how the combinations of tools, such as Earth observations, the Integrated Administrative and Control System (IACS) and the evolving Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN), can deliver more timely and precise insights for policy evaluation.



“Earth observations are no longer a tool of the future; they are a present-day asset for smarter, more transparent CAP evaluation.”

DIMITRIS SKURAS
University of Patras, Greece

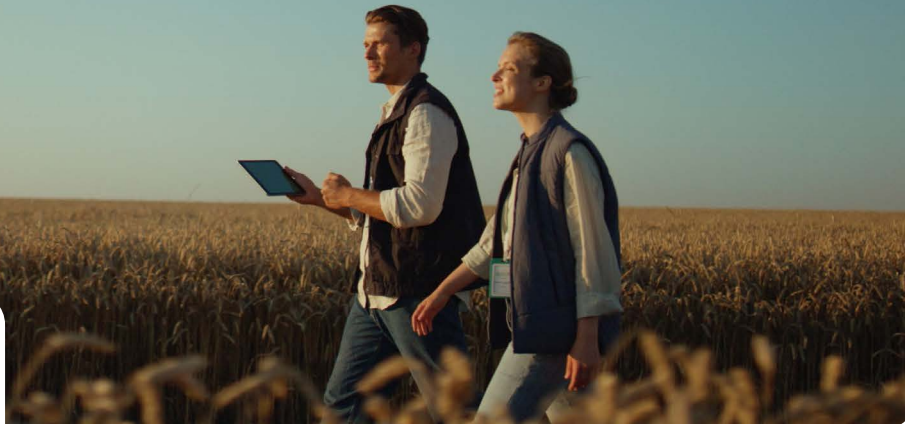
The workshop concluded that realising the benefits of big data requires not only technological advancement but also sustained investment in skills, better data governance, stronger partnerships and effective communication to ensure that data-driven insights translate into more effective and accountable policies.

The lively exchanges in Bari and Hannover underscored innovative tools and the importance of collaboration to address future challenges in evaluation. The Bucharest workshop promises to build on this momentum. Registration is open until 26 September via the [EU CAP Network website](#).

Evaluation reading corner

- › [EU CAP Network \(2025\) - Rough estimate of the climate change mitigation potential of the CAP Strategic Plans \(EU-27\) over the 2023-2027 period](#)
- › [EU CAP Network \(2025\) - Exploring the potential of simulation models for assessing the CAP](#)
- › [EU CAP Network \(2025\) - Assessment of environmental impacts of the CAP](#)
- › [European Commission, Joint Research Centre \(2025\) - Assessing the distributional consequences of the transition in the EU](#)
- › [OECD, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(2025\) - OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2025-2034](#)
- › [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(2025\) - The Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems](#)




GET INVOLVED


Events calendar

Below is a pick of the latest and upcoming events that can help evaluation stakeholders improve the quality and effectiveness of CAP assessments across the EU.


- 
 17-19 September 2025 - Saarbrücken, Germany - German evaluation society - [28th DeGEval Annual Conference](#)
- 
 23-25 September 2025 - Bucharest, Romania - European Rural Development Network - [Food systems transition for sustainable rural development](#)
- 
 25-26 September 2025 - Berlin, Germany - [Energy Evaluation Europe Conference 2025](#)
- 
 16-17 October 2025 - Bucharest, Romania - EU Cap Network - [Good Practice Workshop on netting out CAP impacts](#)
- 
 30-31 October 2025 - Rennes, France - French evaluation society - [French evaluation day](#)
- 
 25-27 November 2025 - Brussels, Belgium - European Commission - [FI Campus 2025](#)

EU CAP Network supported by European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP


 Avenue des Arts 46
1000 Brussels, Belgium


evaluation@eucapnetwork.eu


[Website](#)


 +32 2 808 10 24

Newsletter Editorial Team: Margherita Sforza, Hannes Wimmer

Contributors: Alice Devot, Carina Folkesson Lillo, Marco Mazzei, Marili Parissaki, Filip Stefanic

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP works under the supervision of Unit A.3 (Policy Performance) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily express the official views of the Commission.

