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HELPDESK
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



WORKING PAPER

COMMON EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES 2014-2020

JUNE 2015

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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 E.4 'Evaluation and studies' 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>).

WORKING PAPER

COMMON EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES 2014-2020

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ACRONYMS

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
AWU	Annual Work Units
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCI	Common Context Indicator
CEQ-RD	Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EIP	European Innovation Partnership
EQs	Evaluation Questions
EU	European Union
ExCo	Expert Committee
FBI	Farmland Bird Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	GreenHouse Gases
GVA	Gross Value Added
HNV	High Nature Value
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
MA	Managing Authority
MS	Member State
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NRN	National Rural Network
PSEQ	Programme-specific evaluation questions
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RDR	Rural Development Regulation
R&D	Research and Development

1. INTRODUCTION

This document discusses the role of evaluation questions (EQs) in the assessment of impacts and achievements of the rural development policy and outlines the set of common evaluation questions for rural development (CEQ-RD) in the 2014-2020 programming period¹. The CEQ-RD have been developed in ongoing discussions between the European Commission (EC) and members of the Evaluation Expert Committee. As advocated by many evaluation stakeholders, the set of CEQ-RD has been reduced to the minimum number capable of assessing the EU rural development policy framework. For programme-specific aspects, Managing Authorities (MAs) are encouraged to apply programme-specific evaluation questions (PSEQ) in order to assess specific aspects of their RDP.

2. WHY EVALUATION QUESTIONS?

Evaluation questions (EQs) are an important element of the common monitoring and evaluation system for rural development. Namely, they define the focus of evaluations in relation to policy objectives and help to demonstrate the progress, impact, achievements, effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of rural development policy².

EQs are answered with the help of indicators. Judgement criteria specify the success of programme interventions. Also, judgement criteria link EQs and indicators which allow the design of robust methodological approaches to formulate answers based on qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Two types of EQs are distinguished in this document: (a) Common evaluation questions for rural development and (b) Programme-specific evaluation questions.

a) Common evaluation questions for rural development (CEQ-RD) are designed by the EC to be commonly applied across all EU Member States with the aim to:

- Support evaluation of the EU rural development policies. CEQ-RD help to evaluate the effects of programme interventions towards the hierarchy of objectives of the EU rural development policy.
- Demonstrate the contribution of EU rural development interventions in addressing the RDP territorial needs.
- Enhance comparability of evaluation results across Europe. CEQ-RD and the related judgement criteria and common indicators are part of an evaluation system commonly applied in all MS/regions. Thus, the comparability of evaluation results among RDPs is enhanced.
- Encourage programme bodies and other RD stakeholders to assess results and impacts. CEQ-RD ask for results and net impacts of the programme. The answers help to justify EU policy implementation and support EU policy formulation.

b) Programme-specific evaluation questions (PSEQs) are designed by Managing Authorities (MAs) of RDPs with the aim to:

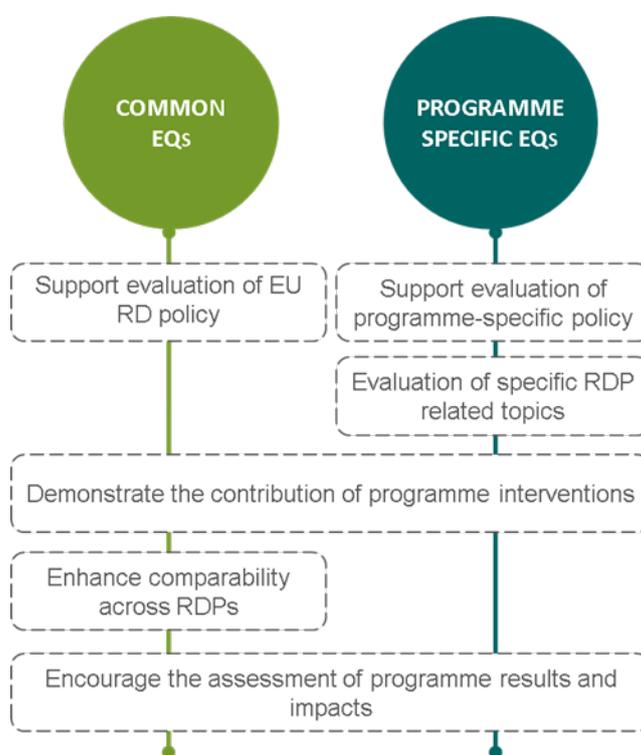
- Support evaluation of programme-specific policies. PSEQs focus the evaluation on programme-specific interventions and their contribution towards programme-specific policy objectives. The judgement on the success of the programme-specific interventions shall be specified with programme-specific judgement criteria. Answers to PSEQs are developed with the help of programme-specific indicators.

¹Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, Art.67; Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, Art. 14.1c), Annex V

²Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Art. 54 (1); Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 Art. 68 (a)

- Address evaluation of specific RDP related topics. PSEQs are designed to assess additional aspects of the programmes which are of particular interest for Managing Authorities (e.g. assessment of the programme implementation, management, delivery mechanisms, effectiveness of the communication strategy, etc.).
- Demonstrate the contribution of programme-specific interventions in addressing the identified specific RDP territorial needs.
- Encourage programme bodies and other RD stakeholders to assess results and impacts. PSEQs ask for results and net impacts of programme-specific interventions which justify programme-specific policy objectives.

Figure 1. Purpose of common evaluation questions for rural development (CEQ-RD) and programme-specific evaluation questions (PSEQs)



Source: Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

3. COMMON EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A total of 30 CEQ-RD have been designed for the 2014-2020 programming period³ Judgement criteria are proposed in this document for each CEQ-RD in order to specify the success of the intervention implemented within the programme. Common evaluation questions are answered with common rural development indicators⁴ and additional information if needed. The approach applied in the development of CEQ-RD is as follows:

- (1) **Development of CEQ-RD linked to RD policy objectives.** CEQ-RD ask for the contribution of the programme interventions in achieving the rural development and overall EU policy objectives

³ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, Annex V

⁴ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, Annex IV and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 834/2014, Annex - impact indicators

in terms of programme results and impacts. The set of CEQ-RD are mainly cause-effect questions (“to what extent...?”).

- (2) **Development of the proposed judgement criteria.** Judgement criteria are proposed for each CEQ-RD. The judgement criteria set the foundation to assess the success of the intervention in a given RDP context.
- (3) **Identification of relevant common rural development indicators linked to CEQ-RD** to provide evidence-based answers. In case the common indicators have not been sufficient to provide answers to CEQ-RD the collection of additional information is proposed in this document.

The described approach is illustrated with the figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Approach for developing common evaluation questions for rural development (CEQ-RD)



Source: Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

Programme-specific evaluation questions (PSEQs)

A similar approach can be applied when developing programme-specific evaluation questions. In case the RDP contains programme-specific objectives, the MA/evaluators shall raise evaluation questions in order to explore to what extent the programme has contributed to the achievement of programme-specific objectives, specifying the matter of success. Programme-specific objectives and evaluation questions shall be answered by means of programme-specific indicators, collected evidence and analytical methods.

For the 2014-2020 programming period, three groups of CEQ-RD are designed:

Focus area-related evaluation questions (18 CEQs illustrated in table 1 of Annex 1) are linked to the objectives of the focus areas of rural development priorities. Focus area-related evaluation questions capture the contribution of the interventions under the respective focus area (set of measures and sub/measures) in terms of programme **results**. Hence, the assessment is conducted on the basis of judgement criteria and on the evidence provided by common target and complementary result indicators. Additional quantitative and qualitative information is needed in cases where common rural development indicators are not sufficient to provide sound answers on the achievements of the focus area.

Focus area-related evaluation questions will be answered to present the evaluation results in the 2017 and 2019 enhanced AIRs and in the ex post evaluation⁵.

Evaluation questions related to other aspects of the RDP (3 CEQs illustrated in table 2 of Annex 1) are related to additional objectives pursued by the RDPs. Specifically, these CEQs aim to capture the **results** achieved by technical assistance, national rural networks and the complementarities and synergies among rural development priorities and focus areas supported within the programmes (Operational performance).

The assessment is conducted on the basis of judgement criteria and the evidence provided by common RD indicators. In this case as well, additional qualitative and quantitative information is needed where indicators are not sufficient to answer the CEQs.

Evaluation questions related to other aspects of the RDP will be answered to present the evaluation results in the 2017 and 2019 enhanced AIRs and in the ex post evaluation

Evaluation questions related to EU level objectives (9 CEQs illustrated in table 3 of Annex 1) are linked to the overall policy objectives (EU2020 objectives and CAP objectives) and aim to capture the contribution of the programmes in terms of **impacts**. Common impact indicators, common context indicators and complementary result indicators will provide the evidence to assess the intervention on the basis of the judgement criteria. Also here, additional quantitative and qualitative information may be needed in cases where common RD indicators are not sufficient to provide sound answers on the achievements of the programme.

Evaluation questions related to EU level objectives will be answered to present the evaluation results in the 2019 enhanced AIR and in the ex post evaluation.

⁵ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 808/2014, Art. 15, Annex VII, point 7

ANNEX 1

Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development

Table 1. Focus area-related evaluation questions

RD PRIORITY	FOCUS AREA	FOCUS AREA-RELATED EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS ⁶	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
P1	Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas	P1A Fostering innovation, cooperation, and the development of the knowledge base in rural areas	1. To what extent have RDP interventions supported innovation, cooperation and the development of the knowledge base in rural areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDP projects have been innovative and based on developed knowledge Operational groups have been created Variety⁷ of partners involved in EIP operational groups Innovative actions have been implemented and disseminated by the EIP operational groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of expenditure under Articles 14,15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (<i>FA 1A - Target indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of innovative projects out of all RDP supported projects Number and types of partners involved in cooperation projects Number of supported innovative actions implemented and disseminated by EIP operational groups
		P1B Strengthening the links between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation, including for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance	2. To what extent have RDP interventions supported the strengthening of links between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation, including for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term collaboration between agriculture, food production and forestry entities and institutions for research and innovation has been established Cooperation operations between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance have been implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of co-operation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Art. 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...), (<i>FA 1B - Target indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of cooperation operations continuing after the RDP support including for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance Number and types of partners involved in cooperation projects
		P1C Fostering lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors	3. To what extent have RDP interventions supported lifelong learning and vocational training in the agriculture and forestry sectors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of rural people who have finalised lifelong learning and vocational training in the agriculture and forestry sectors has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of participants trained under Art. 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (<i>FA 1C - Target indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of trainees receiving certificates from recognized educational and training institutions via activities supported

⁶ The methodology to calculate Pillar II common result indicators is outlined in the Working document "Target indicator fiches for Pillar II", 2015 [the complementary result indicators is no longer part of this document, H3 removed them so we will have a separate document]

⁷ Variety is defined by the representation of different socio-economic sectors (private, public, civil, agriculture, food industry, forestry, etc.) and organizations such as academia, banks, NGO, etc.

Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020

RD PRIORITY		FOCUS AREA	FOCUS AREA-RELATED EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS ⁶	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
						by RDP out of the total number of participants	
P2	Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests	P2A	Improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernisation, notably with a view to increasing market participation and orientation as well as agricultural diversification	4. To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to improving the economic performance, restructuring and modernization of supported farms in particular through increasing their market participation and agricultural diversification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural output per annual working unit of supported agricultural holdings has increased • Farms have been modernized • Farms have been restructured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in agricultural output on supported farms/AWU (FA 2A - Complementary result indicator) • % of agriculture holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (FA 2A - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of agriculture holdings with RDP support for investments regarding modernization • Economic farm size structure of supported farms
		P2B	Facilitating the entry of adequately skilled farmers into the agricultural sector and, in particular, generational renewal	5. To what extent have RDP interventions supported the entry of adequately skilled farmers into the agricultural sector and in particular, generational renewal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately skilled farmers have entered into the agricultural sector • The share of adequately skilled young farmers in the agricultural sector has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of agriculture holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (FA 2B - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of adequately skilled farmers in the agricultural sector of the RDP territory
P3	Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture	P3A	Improving competitiveness of primary producers by better integrating them into the agri-food chain through quality schemes, adding value to agricultural products, promotion in local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups	6. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitiveness of supported primary producers has improved • The share of the final price of agriculture products retained with primary producers has increased • The added value of agricultural products of primary producers has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (FA 3A - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural output on supported farms • Margin of primary producers in the final price of agricultural products • % of primary producers introducing quality schemes with RDP support

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RD PRIORITY		FOCUS AREA	FOCUS AREA-RELATED EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS ⁶	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
			and organisations and inter-branch organisations	circuits, producer groups and inter-branch organization? ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of quality schemes by primary producers has increased Participation of primary producers in short circuit schemes, quality-oriented producer group and/or inter branch organization has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of local markets⁹ Definition of short supply circuits¹⁰ 	
		P3B	Supporting farm risk prevention and management	7. To what extent have RDP interventions supported farm risk prevention and management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of farms in risk prevention and management schemes has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of farms participating in risk management schemes (FA 3B - Result indicator) 	
P4	Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry	P4A	Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes	8. To what extent have RDP interventions supported the restoration, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity including in Natura 2000 areas, areas facing natural or other specific constraints and HNV farming, and the state of European landscape?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity on contracted land has been restored, preserved and enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (FA 4A - Result indicator) % of forest or other wooded areas under management contracts supporting biodiversity (FA 4A - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of flora and fauna species on contracted land
		P4B	Improving water management, including fertiliser and pesticide management	9. To what extent have RDP interventions supported the improvement of water management, including fertilizer and pesticide management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water quality has improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (FA 4B - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional information on water quality of the land under management contracts

⁸The questions concern the share of primary producers at the final price of the agricultural products proposing various scenarios, e.g. quality schemes, adding value to primary products, participation in short supply circuits, promoting local markets etc.

⁹Local market is defined at the RDP level considering the programme context

¹⁰Short supply circuits is defined at the RDP level considering the programme context

RD PRIORITY		FOCUS AREA	FOCUS AREA-RELATED EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS ⁶	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
P5	Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors	P4C	Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management	10. To what extent have RDP interventions supported the prevention of soil erosion and improvement of soil management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil erosion has been prevented Soil management has improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management (FA 4B – Result indicator) % of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (FA 4C – Result indicator) % of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (FA 4C – Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional information on soil erosion of the land under management contracts
		P5A	Increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture	11. To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency in water use by agriculture has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation system (FA 5A – Result indicator) Increase in efficiency of water use in agriculture in RDP supported projects (FA 5A - Complementary result indicator) 	
		P5B	Increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing	12. To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food processing has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total investment for energy efficiency (FA 5B - Target indicator) Increase in efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food-processing in RDP supported projects (FA 5B - Complementary result indicator) 	
		P5C	Facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by-products, wastes and residues and of other non food	13. To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by-products, wastes, residues and other non-food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supply of renewable energy has increased The use of renewable energy has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total investment in renewable energy production (FA 5C - Target indicator) Renewable energy produced from supported projects (FA 5C - Complementary result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total investments for the use of renewable energy supported by the RDP Renewable energy used in supported holdings

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RD PRIORITY		FOCUS AREA	FOCUS AREA-RELATED EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS ⁶	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
P6	Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas		raw material, for the purposes of the bio- economy	raw material for purposes of the bio-economy?			
		P5D	Reducing green house gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture	14.To what extent have RDP interventions contributed to reducing GHG and ammonia emissions from agriculture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GHG and ammonia emissions from agriculture has been reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of LU concerned by investments in live-stock management in view of reducing GHG and/or ammonia emissions (FA 5D – Result indicator) % of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions(FA 5D – Result indicator) Reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide (FA 5D - Complementary result indicator) Reduced ammonia emissions (FA 5D - Complementary result indicator) 	
		P5E	Fostering carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry	15.To what extent have RDP interventions supported carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry has increased Agricultural and forestry land under enhanced management contract contributing to carbon sequestration has been enlarged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation (FA 5E - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional information on carbon conservation and sequestration of the land under management contracts
P6A	Facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation	16.To what extent have RDP interventions supported the diversification, creation and development of small enterprises and job creation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small enterprises have been created Small enterprises have diversified their economic activity Jobs have been created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs created in supported projects (FA 6A - Result indicator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of small enterprises in the non agricultural sector created with the RDP support % of new small enterprises created with the RDP support 		

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RD PRIORITY		FOCUS AREA	FOCUS AREA-RELATED EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS ⁶	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
	P6B	Fostering local development in rural areas	17. To what extent have RDP interventions supported local development in rural areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and local infrastructure in rural areas has improved • Access to services and local infrastructure has increased in rural areas • Rural people have participated in local actions • Rural people have benefited from local actions • Employment opportunities have been created via local development strategies • Rural territory and population covered by LAGs has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of rural population covered by local development strategies (<i>FA 6B – Result indicator</i>) • Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (<i>FA 6B – Result indicator</i>) • % of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (<i>FA 6B – Result indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects/initiatives supported by the Local Development Strategy • % of RDP expenditure in Leader measures with respect to total RDP expenditure
	P6C	Enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas	18. To what extent have RDP interventions enhanced the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access of rural households to ICT has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (Information and communication technologies – ICT) (<i>FA 6C – Result indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of rural households accessing ICT with the RDP support

Source: Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

Table 2. Evaluation questions related to other aspects of the RDP

OTHER RDP ASPECTS	POLICY OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION QUESTION RELATED OTHER ASPECTS OF RDP	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Operational performance	<p>Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, Art 3:</p> <p>The EARDF shall contribute to the development of a Union agricultural sector that is more territorially and environmentally balanced, climate-friendly and resilient and competitive and innovative. It shall also contribute to the development of rural territories.</p>	<p>19. To what extent have the synergies among priorities and focus areas enhanced the effectiveness of the RDP?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supported RDP measures are complementary so as to produce synergy through their interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All result indicators and complementary result indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive and negative interactions among the supported RDP measures¹¹ Secondary effects of supported RDP measures
Technical assistance	<p>Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Art 59(1):</p> <p>At the initiative of a Member State, the ESI Funds may support actions for preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and communication, networking, complaint resolution, and control and audit. The ESI Funds may be used by the Member State to support actions for the reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries, including electronic data exchange systems, and actions to reinforce the capacity of Member State authorities and beneficiaries to administer and use those Funds. The ESI Funds may also be used to support actions to reinforce the capacity</p>	<p>20. To what extent has technical assistance contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in Art. 59(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Art. 51(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional and administrative capacities for the effective management of the RDP have been strengthened Capacities of relevant partners as defined by the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Art. 5(1) have been reinforced RDP has been communicated with the public and information has been disseminated Monitoring has been improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of staff involved in RDP management Skills of staff involved in RDP management Types and number of capacity building activities Functionality of the IT system for programme management Number of RDP communication and dissemination activities Number of people receiving information about the RDP Information on the use of evaluation results

¹¹ MAs of RDPs and evaluators shall identify the methodology, information and data needed to capture and evaluate the complementarities among RDPs measures for capturing the interactions among the different RDP measures.

OTHER RDP ASPECTS	POLICY OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION QUESTIONRELATED OTHER ASPECTS OF RDP	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
	<p>of relevant partners in line with point (e) of Article 5(3) and to support exchange of good practices between such partners.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation methods have been improved and have provided robust evaluation results • Information on evaluation practices has been exchanged • The RDP implementation has been improved • Administrative burden on beneficiaries has been reduced 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The length of the application and payment process
<p>National rural networks (NRN)</p>	<p>Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, Art 54(2):</p> <p>a) Increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development</p> <p>b) Improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes</p> <p>c) Inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities</p> <p>d) Foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas</p>	<p>21. To what extent has the national rural network contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in Art. 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and types of stakeholders involved in RDP implementation has increased • The quality of implementation of the RDP has been improved through the activities of the NRN, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved capacity of RDP beneficiaries • Improved evaluation awareness • Lessons from evaluations are taken into account in programme implementation • Broader public and potential beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of thematic and analytical exchanges set up with the support of NRN (<i>Output indicator</i>) • Number of NRN communication tools (<i>Output indicator</i>) • Number of ENRD activities in which the NRN has participated (<i>Output indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of stakeholders (by type) participating in the implementation of the RDP due to activities of the NRN (including those through LAGs) • Number of RDP modifications based on evaluation findings and recommendations from thematic working groups organized by the NRN • % of RDP implemented projects encouraged by NRN(P) activities • Number persons that have been informed about the rural development policy and funding

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OTHER RDP ASPECTS	POLICY OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION QUESTIONRELATED OTHER ASPECTS OF RDP	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
			<p>are aware of the rural development policy and funding opportunities through activities of the NRN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation in agriculture, food production forestry and rural areas has been fostered by the NRN 		<p>opportunities through the NRN communication tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of innovative projects encouraged by NRN out of the total number of innovative projects supported by the RDP(s)

Table 3. Evaluation questions related to EU level objectives

EU OBJECTIVE	POLICY OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION QUESTION RELATED TO EU LEVEL OBJECTIVES	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
EU 2020 headline targets	<p>a) The employment rate of the population aged 20-64 should increase from the current 69% to at least 75%, including through the greater involvement of women, older workers and the better integration of migrants in the work force</p> <p>b) 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D&I</p> <p>c) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels or by 30%, if the conditions² are right; increase the share of renewable energy sources in our final energy consumption to 20%; and a 20% increase in energy efficiency</p> <p>d) The number of Europeans living below the national poverty lines should be reduced by 25%, lifting over 20 million people out of poverty</p> <p>e) Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss</p>	<p>22. To what extent has the RDP contributed to achieving the EU 2020 headline target of raising the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 to at least 75%?</p> <p>23. To what extent has the RDP contributed to achieving the EU 2020 headline target of investing 3% of EU's GDP in research and development and innovation?</p> <p>24. To what extent has the RDP contributed to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to achieving the EU 2020 headline target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels, or by 30% if the conditions are right, to increasing the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 20%, and achieving 20% increase in energy efficiency?</p> <p>25. To what extent has the RDP contributed to achieving the EU 2020 headline target of reducing the number of Europeans living below the national poverty line?</p> <p>26. To what extent has the RDP contributed to improving the environment and to achieving the EU Biodiversity strategy target of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services, and to restore them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rural employment rate of population aged 20-64 has increased • Investment for R&D has increased • Innovation has been fostered • The environment has improved • Climate change has been mitigated and the agricultural, forestry and food sector has been adapted • GHG and ammonia emissions have been reduced • Energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy have increased • The number of people living below the national poverty rate has decreased • Biodiversity and ecosystems services have been restored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural employment rate (<i>Impact indicator 14</i>) • % of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (<i>FA 1A - Target indicator</i>) • Total number of co-operation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Art. 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (<i>FA 1B - Target indicator</i>) • Emissions from agriculture (<i>Impact indicator 7</i>) • Increase in efficiency of energy use in agriculture and food-processing in RDP supported projects (<i>FA 5B - Complementary result indicator</i>) • Renewable energy produced from supported projects (<i>FA 5C - Complementary result indicator</i>) • Degree of rural poverty (<i>Impact indicator 15</i>) • Farmland Bird Index (FBI) (<i>Impact indicator 8</i>) • High nature value (HNV) farming (<i>Impact indicator 9</i>) • Water abstraction in agriculture (<i>Impact indicator 10</i>) • Water quality (<i>Impact indicator 11</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rate of the population aged 20-64 • RDP expenditure in R&D as a % of the GDP • Additional information on ecosystem services

EU OBJECTIVE	POLICY OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION QUESTION RELATED TO EU LEVEL OBJECTIVES	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	COMMON RD INDICATORS	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in efficiency of water use in agriculture in RDP supported projects (<i>FA 5A - Complementary result indicator</i>) • Soil organic matter in arable land (<i>Impact indicator 12</i>) • Soil erosion by water (<i>Impact indicator 13</i>) 	
<p>CAP objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fostering the competitiveness of agriculture b) Ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action c) Achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27. To what extent has the RDP contributed to the CAP objective of fostering the competitiveness of agriculture? 28. To what extent has the RDP contributed to the CAP objective of ensuring sustainable management of natural resources and climate action? 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? 30. To what extent has the RDP contributed to fostering innovation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Viable food production:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The agricultural entrepreneurial income has increased ○ The agricultural factor income has increased ○ Agricultural productivity has increased • <u>Sustainable management of natural resources and climate change:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GHG and ammonia emission from agriculture have been reduced ○ Farmland bird index has increased or maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Viable food production:</u> Sectoral impact indicators (<i>Impact indicators 1-3</i>) • <u>Sustainable management of natural resources and climate change:</u> Environmental impact indicators (<i>Impact indicators 7-13</i>) • <u>Balanced territorial development:</u> Socio economic impact indicators (<i>Impact indicators 14-16</i>) • <u>Innovation:</u> % of expenditure under Articles 14,15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (<i>FA 1A - Target indicator</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of innovation • Quantitative and qualitative information on innovation¹²

¹² Innovation is defined at the RDP level by Managing Authorities considering the programme context. Managing authorities identify the additional information needed to answer the common evaluation question 30 according to their specific definition of innovation.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The % of HNV farming land has increased or maintained ○ Water abstraction in agriculture has been reduced ○ Water quality has improved ○ The content of organic carbon in soils has increased ○ The share of agricultural area affected by soil erosion by water has been reduced ○ Soil loss by water erosion has been reduced • <u>Balanced territorial development</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rural employment rate has increased ○ Degree of rural poverty has decreased ○ Rural GDP per capita has increased • Innovation in rural areas and sectors has been fostered 		

Source: Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

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