



European
Commission



© Shutterstock/Cousin_Avi

Assessment of climate action

How to assess the mainstreaming
of climate action in Rural
Development Programmes

ERDF

European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development
2014-2020

Climate Action

Introduction

This Fact Sheet describes the main issues that will be considered when assessing the mainstreaming of climate action in the Rural Development Programmes (RDP) of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the period 2014-2020.

A separate Fact Sheet describes the potential for mainstreaming climate action in the EAFRD's Rural Development Programmes (RDP).

The EAFRD is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)¹ for the ESIF defines the contents of the Operational Programmes (OPs).

The Commission has issued a Working Paper which provides details on programme document structure and contents, along with the requirements specified in the EAFRD Regulation².

The climate assessment will concentrate on those parts of the OP that are of particular relevance from the perspective of mainstreaming climate action. It will focus on the following areas of the programme document:

- SWOT and identification of needs
- Programme strategy
- Financing plan
- Contribution to integrated approach
- Implementation arrangements.

It is essential that the climate assessment of the RDP gives due regard to the specific country, sector and/or regional context, relevant climate mitigation and adaptation aspects.

The climate assessment will investigate how climate action has been incorporated and indicate where further climate action would be relevant in order to address specific needs identified at national/regional level.

SWOT and identification of needs

The climate assessment will consider the comprehensiveness and logical adequacy of the SWOT analysis. In doing so, it will first take a close look at the analysis which underlies the SWOT, as presented in the RDP. The climate assessment will then consider whether the analysis is comprehensive in view of climate topics, which are relevant in the specific context and whether it applies all the relevant Common Context Indicators, possibly supplemented by programme specific indicators. Relevant climate topics could consider, for example, erosion, condition of wetlands, CO₂ emissions, vulnerability to droughts, floods or loss of biodiversity.

The climate assessment will evaluate whether the SWOT sufficiently combines the climate change issues (largely under Opportunities and Threats) and the affected sectors and areas (Strengths and Weaknesses). The identified needs must be coherent with the findings of the SWOT and its preceding analysis.

The assessment will also take stock of the conclusions of the relevant supporting documents which accompany the programmes, e.g. the ex-ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Programme Strategy

The climate assessment of each RDP will address the Programme's contribution to the climate change objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

This part of the climate assessment will concentrate on the intervention logic. It will consider whether the RDP formulates climate related objectives, and if these are coherent with the SWOT and the needs assessment. The climate assessment will consider whether the objectives are accompanied by appropriate target indicators and whether the objectives, targets and financial allocations are properly balanced.

The climate assessment will evaluate whether the selected measures and their description provide adequate responses to the objectives. In this respect, the assessment will focus on the objectives' focus areas and measures of particular relevance to climate change.

The climate assessment will further explore whether the strategy (with regards to climate action) takes into account Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Semester, the Country Specific Council Recommendations (CSR), and is consistent with the relevant provisions of the Partnership Agreement and with national and/or regional strategies in the area of climate change.

Financing plan

A key indicator for climate action at Member State level is the share of ESIF support that will be used for climate change objectives. This relates to the target that climate related expenditure will correspond to at least 20 % of the EU budget for the period 2014-2020. Furthermore, with the rural development programmes' budget, Member States will have to spend at least 30 % of this on targeted agri-environmental climate measures related to land management and the fight against climate change.

Integrated approach

The assessment will consider whether the approach ensures synergies vis-à-vis other financing instruments.

Implementation arrangements

The assessment of implementation arrangements will be confined to issues relating to climate in the foreseen plan for fulfilment of the ex-ante conditionalities for Union Priority (UP) 4 and Thematic Objectives (TO) 5 and 6. An assessment will be made as to whether actions have been taken to involve relevant partners in the preparation and implementation of the programmes. Finally, the indicator plan will also be briefly assessed with a focus on its completeness and adequacy in addressing issues relevant to climate change.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, published in the Official Journal, OJ 347 20.12.2013

² Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, published in the Official Journal, OJ 347

EAFRD Rural Development Programmes – assessment of the climate mainstreaming

Programme part	Main areas for climate assessment	Reference
Rural Development Programme Analysis		
Analysis of the geographical area covered by the Programme	<p>Assess the completeness of the analysis that underlies the SWOT analysis in relation to climate change issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the completeness of the necessary information and data for the description and analysis of the area - Are all the climate change relevant Common Context Indicators used? Are any additional Programme Context Specific Indicators used for climate issues? - Is specific reference made to issues like exposure, vulnerability and resilience to climate change impacts? - Does the analysis of the key themes take climate change properly into account (e.g. in relation to biodiversity, soil, water, carbon sequestration and emissions of nitrous oxide and methane emissions)? - Are the contents of the RDP in line with the description of the SEA, especially on environmental issues like Biodiversity, Climate and Landscape (See Annex I, lit. f of the Directive 2001/42/EC)? 	EAFRD Regulation art.8.1 (b) and “CMEF 2014-2020 Indicators” and WP ³ p.11ff
SWOT analysis	<p>Assess the completeness, consistency and appropriateness of the SWOT analysis covering the whole programming area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess if the climate related information of the SWOT is consistent with the information provided by the Common and Programme Specific Context Indicators? Is there, in the SWOT table (or tables) good coverage of the relevant climate change issues? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ° In mitigation: CO2 emissions, soil tillage, leaching, erosion, manure storage, fertilizer use, maintenance of wetlands and peat lands ° In adaptation: droughts, forest fires, floods, rain and hail, habitat fragmentation, loss of biodiversity, temperature increases and stress and pests and diseases - Do the climate change issues in the SWOT table relate well to the Common Context Indicators, and the possible Programme specific Context Indicators? - In the event that the RDP contains separate SWOT tables for Union Priority 4 and Union Priority 5, is climate change addressed in depth in here? - Are there climate change references to other Union Priorities in the SWOT tables? - Is there a separate SWOT for the cross-cutting objectives on climate change mitigation and adaptation? If this is the case, is the content of this cross-cutting SWOT consistent with the SWOT of the Union Priorities? - Strengths and Weaknesses: Does the SWOT adequately reflect climate change issues in the areas covered by the RDPs, e.g. in relation to: the status quo of agriculture, e.g. on the dependency on energy inputs (fuel, fertilizers) and the related GHG agriculture and LULUCF emissions, environment, rural structures, exposure, vulnerability and resilience as strengths and weaknesses? - Opportunities and Threats: Are climate change impacts such as temperature increases, frequency and intensity of extreme weather events or yield changes described as opportunities and threats? 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (b) and WP p.11ff
Needs identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess if the needs identified are coherent with the SWOT findings. Can the needs be directly extracted from the SWOT tables (especially, if available for the separate SWOT on Union Priority 4, Union Priority 5 and the cross-cutting SWOT table on climate change mitigation and adaptation), but also on other Union Priorities? - Are the needs consistent with national and regional climate strategies and action plans (if any)? - Does the RDP respond to the findings of the ex-ante evaluation considering the specific needs concerning climate change mitigation and adaptation as a cross-cutting objective across Union Priorities for rural development? 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (b) and WP p.7

³ Working Paper Elements of strategic programming for the period 2014-2020

Programme part	Main areas for climate assessment	Reference
Justification of the financial allocation	<p>Assess the mainstreaming of climate change into the Programme considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the prioritisation of the needs reflected in the financial allocation of the RDP? Check the financial tables of the RDP. - Is the allocation justified and adequate, i.e. proportionate? 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (c) (iii) and WP p. 18, 25, 28 ff.
Rural Development Programme Strategy		
Description of the strategy – objectives	<p>Assess the consistency and comprehensiveness of the Intervention Logic and the selected objectives in relation to climate change issues, in other words: Assess if the Intervention Logic of the RDP is consistent from the perspective of climate change. i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are climate change related objectives included in the RDP, and to what extent (main, secondary, cross cutting)? - Are these objectives coherent with the findings of the SWOT and the Needs Identification? - Are the objectives served by appropriate target indicators and programme specific result indicators, which reflect the intended change on climate change mitigation and adaptation? - Are the objectives, targets and allocated financial resources balanced? - How did the RDP respond to the findings of the ex-ante evaluation and the SEA, considering consistency and external coherence to climate change related policies and objectives? <p>In the case that the RDP contains Thematic Sub-Programmes, the same assessment principles will apply for each Sub-Programme.</p>	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (c) and WP p.16ff, Annex III and Annex IV.1, art. 8.2 (a)-(c)
Description of the strategy – Focus areas and measures	<p>Assess whether the selected focus areas and measures adequately respond to the defined climate relevant objectives, and contribute to mainstreaming climate change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the selected focus areas and measures (including the detailed description of each measure) the appropriate response to the defined objectives? The focus should be on the objectives, focus areas and measures that are of particular relevance to climate change and sustainability provisions - Verify that the types of actions described in the RDP give due regard to the Programme's climate related targets, the general requirement of mainstreaming of climate action and the reaching of the climate related aspects of the horizontal objective of sustainability - Is the “red thread” of climate change integration visible e.g. is climate change addressed directly or synergistically through all measures or through adequately designed combinations of measures? 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (c)(ii)
Ex-ante conditionalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify whether the ex-ante conditionalities which relate to climate change (GAEC, fertiliser specifications, and risk assessments and climate adaptation strategies) are appropriately described - Are these ex-ante conditionalities in place? - Is there adequate description in the relevant measures on how they are taken into account (e.g. climate actions going beyond the GAEC)? - If the ex-ante conditionalities are not yet fulfilled does the RDP have actions foreseen and a time plan for the fulfillment of the climate related ex-ante conditionalities? 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (d) EAFRD Regulation Annex V

Programme part	Main areas for climate assessment	Reference
Integrated approaches		
Description of the strategy – objectives	<p>Assess the consistency and comprehensiveness of the Intervention Logic and the selected objectives in relation to climate change issues, in other words: Assess if the Intervention Logic of the RDP is consistent from the perspective of climate change. i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are climate change related objectives included in the RDP, and to what extent (main, secondary, cross cutting)? - Are these objectives coherent with the findings of the SWOT and the Needs Identification? - Are the objectives served by appropriate target indicators and programme specific result indicators, which reflect the intended change on climate change mitigation and adaptation? - Are the objectives, targets and allocated financial resources balanced? - How did the RDP respond to the findings of the ex-ante evaluation and the SEA, considering consistency and external coherence to climate change related policies and objectives? <p>In the case that the RDP contains Thematic Sub-Programmes, the same assessment principles will apply for each Sub-Programme.</p>	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (c) and WP p.16ff, Annex III and Annex IV, art. 8.2 (a)-(c)
Arrangements for the implementation of the RDP		
Operation selection	<p>Assess the promotion of climate change mitigation and adaption in principle for project selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess whether the approaches of the RDP for the definition of the selection criteria for projects and local development strategies have, in principle, integrated climate change considerations - Where relevant, verify whether the RDP foresees climate proofing of project proposals as a requirement for eligibility of EAFRD support. Climate proofing means considering the climate change mitigation potential and climate change resilience of the operation - Assess whether the criteria for the selection of operations include considerations as to the contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy - Verify whether the guiding principles ensure that investments with significant adverse climate impacts do not benefit from EAFRD support 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (m) (iv)
Indicator Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess if the use of relevant common indicators are adequate to reflect the contribution of the RDP to climate change mitigation and adaptation - Assess whether the Programme reasonably includes programme specific results and output indicators for the reaching of climate change related specific objectives. - Assess the adequacy of result and output indicators for any climate-related objectives 	EAFRD Regulation art. 8.1 (i) and WP p.32f, Annex IV.1
Programme monitoring and evaluation procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify whether the Managing Authority has the necessary administrative and technical capacity required for the monitoring and evaluation of climate change actions - Verify whether the Monitoring Committee includes relevant competences in the field of climate action - Examine to what extent the suggestions on monitoring of the SEA (art. 10 of Directive 2001/42/EC) have been taken into account 	EAFRD Regulation art. art. 8.1 (m)(ii), and WP p.26f, p.37f

Background information

Why do we need to take climate action?

Tackling climate change is one of the great challenges facing the EU and its global partners.

The need for urgent action is clearly reflected in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU 20/20/20 targets for climate change mitigation, i.e. to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 % (30 % if the conditions are right); reduce energy consumption by 20 % through increased energy efficiency; and to meet 20 % of energy needs from renewable sources.

Climate change is already happening and its effects will become more severe in coming years. So we need to take action on mitigation, and we also need to act to protect people, buildings, infrastructure, businesses and ecosystems from the impacts. These adaptation measures, which will make us more resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change, will become increasingly important. Adaptation measures can be taken at national, regional and local levels. Adaptation measures include, for example, actions that can stimulate more efficient water use, and the development and implementation of design standards that protect constructions against the impacts of future climate conditions and extreme weather events. Other examples include building flood defences, raising the levels of dykes, and replacing exposed power overhead lines with underground cables. It also includes measures to take advantage of possible opportunities arising from climate change. The aim of the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change is to help make Europe more climate resilient and enhance its preparedness and capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Building a low-carbon and climate resilient economy will enhance Europe's competitiveness, create new, greener jobs, improve energy security and bring health benefits to Europe's citizens by making the air cleaner.

EU funding over the period 2014-2020

The EU budget has an important role to play in promoting climate action in all sectors of the European economy and in catalysing the investments needed to meet the climate targets and ensure climate resilience. Investment is needed in a wide range of technologies that improve energy efficiency, in renewable energy sources and related infrastructure, and in the adaptation to climate change.

Based on a proposal put forward by the Commission, the European Council concluded on 7-8 February 2013 that 'Climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020 and therefore be reflected in the appropriate instruments to ensure that they contribute to strengthen energy security, building a low-carbon, resource efficient and climate resilient economy that will enhance Europe's competitiveness and create more and greener jobs'.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

ESIF include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The ultimate responsibility for implementing the EU budget lies with the European Commission, but the ESIF are implemented under 'shared management', with individual EU countries actually distributing the funds and managing expenditure. Checks and balances are in place to ensure that the funds are managed properly and in accordance with the rules.

Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

The CPR sets out the means to achieve consistency with the economic policies of the EU and its Member States, coordination mechanisms among the ESI Funds and with other EU policies and instruments, horizontal principles and cross-cutting policy objectives. It lays down arrangements to address territorial challenges, suggests action with high European added value and sets out the principles and the priorities for action.

Each Member State will prepare a Partnership Agreement, in cooperation with its partners and in dialogue with the Commission.

In preparing the Partnership Agreement, each Member State translates the elements set out in the CPR into the national context and sets firm commitments to achieve the EU's objectives through the programming of the ESIF.

ESIF will be implemented through programmes in accordance with the Partnership Agreement. Each programme will cover the period 2014 - 2020. It will set out a strategy explaining how the programme will address the national and/or regional needs and contribute to the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in line with the applicable regulations and the Partnership Agreement.

The CPR defines in Article 9 eleven Thematic Objectives (TOs) which will contribute to the implementation of the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The eleven TOs are:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT (information and communication technologies)
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, of the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and of the fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF)
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

The fund-specific regulations define for each TO the corresponding investment priorities.

TO4 and TO5 are dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In addition, climate action issues can be mainstreamed into other TOs. Hence, ESIF can significantly contribute to achieving the climate objectives and the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will make a major contribution to the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient Europe.

This Fact Sheet outlines the key issues to be considered when assessing the climate mainstreaming in EAFRD Rural Development Programmes.

The EAFRD is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) under the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR).

These funds play a key role in achieving the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The five funds will contribute to the target that climate-related expenditure will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020, while helping to improve energy security, build a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate resilient economy that will boost Europe's competitiveness and create more and greener jobs.

The CPR defines 11 Thematic Objectives that will contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The EAFRD translates these Thematic Objectives into Union Priorities. There is a major potential for mainstreaming climate action in all the Union Priorities of the EAFRD. By doing so, the EAFRD can contribute towards reaching at least 20 % climate-related expenditure out of the overall EU budget.

© European Union, 2015

Further information

DG Climate Action:
<http://ec.europa.eu/clima>



ISBN 978-92-79-46590-1
doi: 10.2834/700514