

Comparative analysis of the CAP Strategic Plans and their effective contribution to the achievement of the EU objectives



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Main observations

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2023-2027 framework introduced changes aimed at increasing overall policy coherence between Pillar I and II of the CAP. The two pillars are now combined under single Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan(s) (CSPs) and Member States (MS) were asked to commit significant resources to green and sustainable objectives, primarily via eco-schemes.

The study

The objective of this study is to provide insights into the implementation characteristics of the CAP 2023-2027 across the EU-27.

EU resources for the 2023-2027 CSPs from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) amount to **€260.9 billion** (75.4% for EAGF and 24.6% for EAFRD, a proportion similar to the 2014-2022 period).

Economic support to farms via direct payments remains the dominant feature of the CSPs. Basic income support for sustainability represents the largest share of direct payment funding (51.5%). Compared to the previous programming period the main changes include:

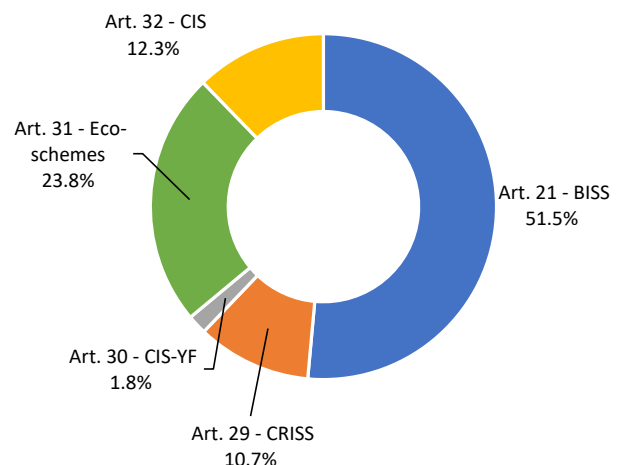
- (1) an increase in redistributive income support (from 4.3% of direct payments in 2019 to 10.7% for 2023-2027),
- (2) the extension of coupled income support (from 10.8% in 2019 to 12.3% for 2023-2027) and
- (3) the introduction of the eco-schemes (23.8 % of direct payments for a total number of 158 eco-schemes).

Only 11 MS apply capping and/or degressivity and 3 foresee risk management tools under the direct payments.

Rural development support is very diverse across the Member States. Environment and climate interventions,

risk management tools and LEADER have been strengthened, while investments and compensation for natural constraints remain key priorities.

Distribution of direct payments 2023-2027



Source: Project team, based on Structural Funds Communication (SFC) data (January 2023)

At the level of young farmers, there is an overall shift to support via direct payment. Support for non-agricultural rural development is increasingly supported through LEADER.

The relevance of the CSPs is high in terms of economic needs and moderate for rural development and for environmental needs according to the ex-ante evaluations of the CSPs. Economic and environmental needs are emphasised across the 28 CSPs of the 27 Member States, with a clear focus on targeting economic farm needs which translates into less ambitious environmental and rural development objectives.

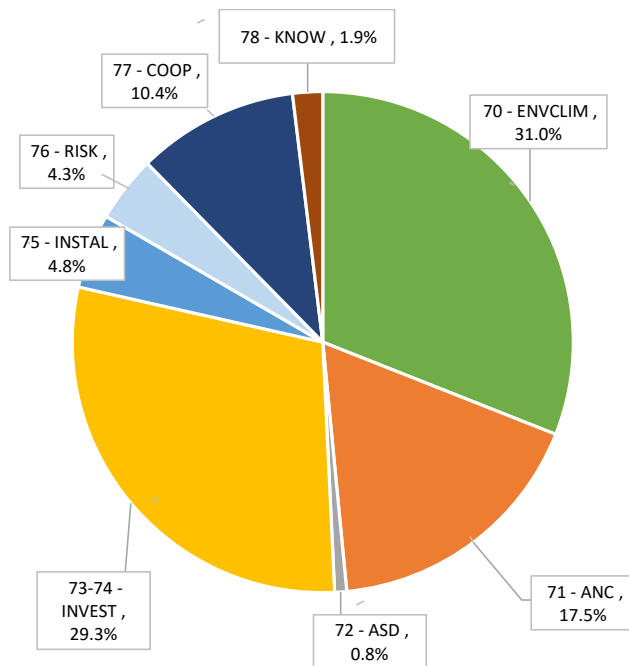


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Distribution of Rural Development funding (EU and national) 2023-2027



Source: Project team, based on SFC data (January 2023)

Some Member States deal with significant needs outside the framework of the CAP. This is often the case for rural investment needs (broadband and infrastructure) targeted by the Resilience and Recovery Facility, and also for forestry, risk management and the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System via national policies.

While the European Green Deal's objectives are mentioned by all CSPs, they are non-binding and not consistently specific. The eco-schemes, together with the agri-environment and climate measures including organic farming and strengthened conditionality, are likely to contribute to the objectives.

Member States are provided with significant increased flexibility in their evaluations, with fewer common

requirements. However, this may result in heterogeneous evaluations, produced too late to support adaptation of the current period and even the post 2027 period.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

To achieve the CAP's environmental and climate goals, the project team recommends to **carefully assess the MS green architecture and, based on this assessment**, to foresee the necessary adaptations including in some MS more ambitious eco-schemes.

The new evaluation framework gives Member States more flexibility over when and how they assess the CAP. **In order to be useful for the 2027+ period, the project team recommends an initiation of activities already by 2025.**

The result indicators in the PMEF do not consistently capture intervention results or outcomes. **Evaluations at EU and Member State level should feature significant ambition in the assessment of results and link them to the related interventions.**

In order to assess whether the foreseen administrative simplification has resulted in actual changes in administrative burden perceived by beneficiaries and authorities, **a systematic EU-27 assessment of administrative burden is recommended.**

Key findings

The 28 CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) of the 27 Member States are characterised by heterogeneous and specific approaches. **Direct payments remain the most prominent funding instrument of the CAP**, targeting primarily economic farm needs. The 2023-2027 period also sees the introduction of the innovative eco-schemes to promote environmentally and climate friendly farming practices. Rural development funding emphasises farm and environmental support, with a lower focus on non-agricultural development than in 2014-2022.

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