



Brussels, 7.12.2021  
SWD(2021) 980 final

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**  
**EVALUATION**

**ON THE INFORMATION POLICY ON THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

{SWD(2021) 385 final}

## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND OF THE INTERVENTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1.	Legal basis .....	3
2.2.	Evolution of information policy .....	4
2.3.	Intervention logic .....	5
2.4.	Baseline and points of comparison .....	9
<b>3.</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION/STATE OF PLAY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1.	Description of the current situation .....	9
3.2.	Description of the main elements .....	10
<b>4.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1.	Short description of the methodology .....	12
4.2.	Limitation and robustness of findings .....	13
<b>5.</b>	<b>ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1.	Effectiveness .....	13
5.2.	Efficiency .....	22
5.3.	Coherence .....	30
5.4.	Relevance .....	38
5.5.	EU added value .....	41
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
6.1.	Effectiveness .....	41
6.2.	Efficiency .....	42
6.3.	Coherence .....	43
6.4.	Relevance .....	43
6.5.	EU added value .....	44
6.6.	Lessons learnt .....	44
	<b>ANNEX 1: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>46</b>
	<b>ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION .....</b>	<b>47</b>
	<b>ANNEX 3: METHODS AND ANALYTICAL MODELS .....</b>	<b>50</b>

## Glossary

<b>CAP</b>	Common agricultural policy
<b>CDGs</b>	Civil Dialogue Groups
<b>DG</b>	Directorate-General
<b>DG AGRI</b>	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
<b>DG CLIMA</b>	Directorate-General for Climate Action
<b>DG COMM</b>	Directorate-General for Communication
<b>DG ENV</b>	Directorate-General for the Environment
<b>DG MARE</b>	Directorate-General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
<b>DG REGIO</b>	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
<b>DG SANTE</b>	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
<b>DG TRADE</b>	Directorate-General for Trade
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EIP-AGRI</b>	European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability
<b>EAFRD</b>	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
<b>EAGF</b>	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
<b>ENRD</b>	European Network for Rural Development
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>ESIF</b>	European Structural and Investment Funds
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GI</b>	Geographical Indications
<b>KPI</b>	Key performance indicator
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprise

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) aims to raise awareness and explain the CAP to stakeholders and EU citizens. The policy is subject to regular evaluation. This evaluation addresses the measures implemented in 2016 – 2020.

The present evaluation feeds into a European Commission report to the European Parliament and Council, as required under Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013. The external communication strategy for the CAP which was drawn up for the 2021 – 2025 period has also been informed by the results and lessons learnt in this evaluation.

The evaluation looks at the CAP communication strategy 2016 – 2020 and its implementation, covering direct measures implemented by the Commission, the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) and information actions carried out by third parties, through the co-financed grants scheme. It also refers to the overarching Commission corporate communication policy. The period covered is 2016 to 2020, although with some limitations for 2020 as regards data collection. The geographical scope is EU-28, except for 2020, when the UK was no longer part of the European Union (EU).

The evaluation focuses on assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value of the CAP information policy. It is underpinned by an external support study on the information measures under the CAP<sup>1</sup>, published on 4 March 2021 and takes into account additional experience gained in 2020 with the exceptional circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. BACKGROUND OF THE INTERVENTION**

### **2.1. Legal basis**

Information measures on the CAP are implemented by the European Commission on the basis of Article 6 and Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP<sup>2</sup>.

The objectives of such information measures are to help explain, implement and develop the CAP and to raise public awareness of its content and objectives to reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns, to inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas and to promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it.

Information measures financed fall into two main categories:

- those submitted by third party organisations for co-financing under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund - EAGF (grants)

---

<sup>1</sup> [Evaluation support study on the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy - final report.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Articles 6 and 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy (OJ L 347/564 of 20.12.2013) and, as of 2023, article 44 of the regulation repealing 1306/2013.

- those at the initiative of the Commission and financed at a rate of 100% under the EAGF (direct actions/public procurement).

## 2.2. Evolution of information policy

As the CAP has evolved in the context of successive reforms over decades, the communication surrounding it has also evolved. In the 2016-2020 period, factors which influenced the development of CAP communication measures include the growing interest and engagement of societal groups, the implementation of the “evaluate first” principle and also the renewed focus on consultation with the general public and stakeholders. Findings from the evaluation carried out in 2015 were also integrated in the communication strategy 2016-2020, including further cooperation between CAP information measures and communication actions on other related EU policies and also an increased specific focus on activities relevant for the general public. The shift from sectoral to cross-cutting policy goals promoted by the Juncker Commission, and intensified under the Von der Leyen Commission, encouraged more synergies and working together between Commission departments, including in the communications domain.

Thus, there was a sustained focus on corporate communication with the aim of assuring coherence across the Commission in promoting its political priorities. Under corporate communication, resources are pooled from different spending programmes, including the CAP, in order to fund communication priorities based on the general objectives of the EU. Under the Juncker Commission, there was a special emphasis on investment, economic growth and jobs, and delivering tangible benefits for citizens. In this period, DG AGRI participated in the development and implementation of the Commission's three corporate communication campaigns - #InvestEU; EU Empowers (“#EUandME”); EU Protects – with projects and material illustrating how the CAP delivers for Europeans.

In parallel, DG AGRI information measures were primarily focussed on supporting and highlighting the modernisation of the CAP within the context of the preparation of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. In essence, this meant mobilising to the maximum its range of communication tools, including digital tools, to inform and consult on the CAP reform process, and raise awareness of the relevance of the CAP for the future. This included comprehensive information actions (including conferences, a social media campaign and substantial outreach actions in the Member States in cooperation with the Commission Representations) around the public consultation on the future CAP in 2017<sup>3</sup>, and subsequently on the Commission Communication on The Future of Food and Farming (29 November 2017)<sup>4</sup>, and the legislative proposals on the CAP (1 June 2018)<sup>5</sup>. Other major priorities in this period included communication on the fairness in the food chain initiative and on enhancing communication actions related to the “quality policy”, in particular Geographical Indications (GIs).

---

<sup>3</sup> [Modernising and simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

<sup>4</sup> COM (2017) 713 final of 29.11.2017.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/new-cap-2023-27\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/new-cap-2023-27_en).

Towards the end of 2019, the Commission focused on delivering on the headline ambitions of the Von der Leyen Commission, notably on the European Green Deal. In 2020, the new Commission was rapidly confronted with the coronavirus pandemic, and the need to organise a concerted and coordinated European response to the emergency and recovery in line with the European Green Deal priorities. DG AGRI, in cooperation with other relevant Commission departments, contributed to communicating at both the corporate and sectoral level on the measures taken to protect the health and safety of citizens, to assure the continued effective functioning of the food supply chain and food security, and on the future oriented recovery plan proposed by the Commission based on the Green Deal objectives.

Every five years, DG AGRI develops an external communication strategy for the CAP, defining its specific communication objectives, target groups, main messages and communication tools. The strategy is reflected into annual action plans and contains the necessary flexibility to allow for adaptation to evolving political priorities and changing circumstances. Every two years, a report on the implementation of the CAP information measures is presented to the European Parliament and the Council<sup>6</sup>.

This evaluation looks at the implementation of the strategy over the evaluation period, its contribution towards improving the understanding and perception of the CAP, and its fitness in terms of communicating the CAP and its contribution to the political priorities of the Commission in the future.

### **2.3. Intervention logic**

Concerning the intervention logic for the evaluation, this has been developed in line with the framework of the Communication Network indicators, as defined by the Commission's DG Communication. It includes the following levels: needs, objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts. The general objectives are those defined in the legal basis of the Regulation. The specific objectives define what the policy intervention sets out to achieve. In the context of the information policy, the external communication strategy governs the way in which the policy is implemented over the five-year periods covered by each strategy and it sets out what the policy must achieve within a given period. Therefore, the specific objectives of the information policy during the evaluation period are those outlined in the External Communication Strategy 2016-2020.

#### ***Needs***

The need to implement information actions on the CAP stems from an information deficit on the topic principally among the general public and existing misperceptions surrounding the CAP, notably concerning:

- European agriculture and the role of farming in society.
- The contribution that the EU agri-food sector makes to the wider EU economy.
- The CAP within developing countries.

---

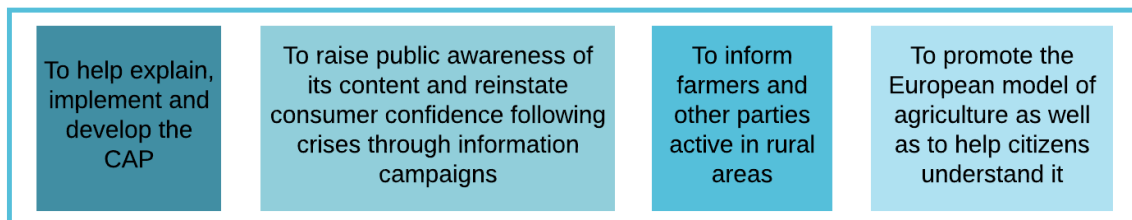
<sup>6</sup> COM (2017) 777 final of 19.12.2017; COM (2019) 634 final of 17.12.2019.

DG AGRI sought to address these misperceptions by targeting the general public directly and by engaging stakeholders who could potentially act as multipliers in disseminating the information about the CAP more widely, in line with overall policy objectives.

### **Objectives**

The general objectives are presented in the figure below:

**Figure 1. Objectives of the information measures on the CAP**



*Source: evaluation support study*

DG AGRI's external communication strategy for 2016-2020 further specified the objectives of the policy, defining key aims for its two target groups:

- for the general public: to raise public awareness about the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development via the CAP,
- for the stakeholders: to engage with stakeholders (mainly farmers and other parties active in rural areas) in order to further communicate the CAP to their constituencies and to the wider public.

### **Inputs**

These include budgeting, planning and ex-ante evaluation (evaluation before the start of the activity to determine need and best approach). The level of inputs also includes funding mechanisms to finance the various activities of the information policy. These consist of funds awarded from the EAGF through grants and public procurement, as well as any additional financial and human resources from DG AGRI that are needed to implement activities within a given year.

### **Activities**

Activities refer to what is done to produce and implement communications. Specific activities implemented by DG AGRI each year are set out in its annual action plans (planned activities) and annual reports. Activities encompass both measures implemented by third parties (under grants), and measures implemented at the initiative of the Commission. Thus, the activities in the intervention logic include organising and participating in events, social media and website presence, media networking, horizontal activities, and other activities implemented at the initiative of the Commission, as well as activities carried out by third parties under co-financed information measures on the CAP. In addition, reports are presented by the Commission every two years to the European Parliament and the Council, on the implementation of the information policy (implemented activities).

### **Outputs, results and impacts**

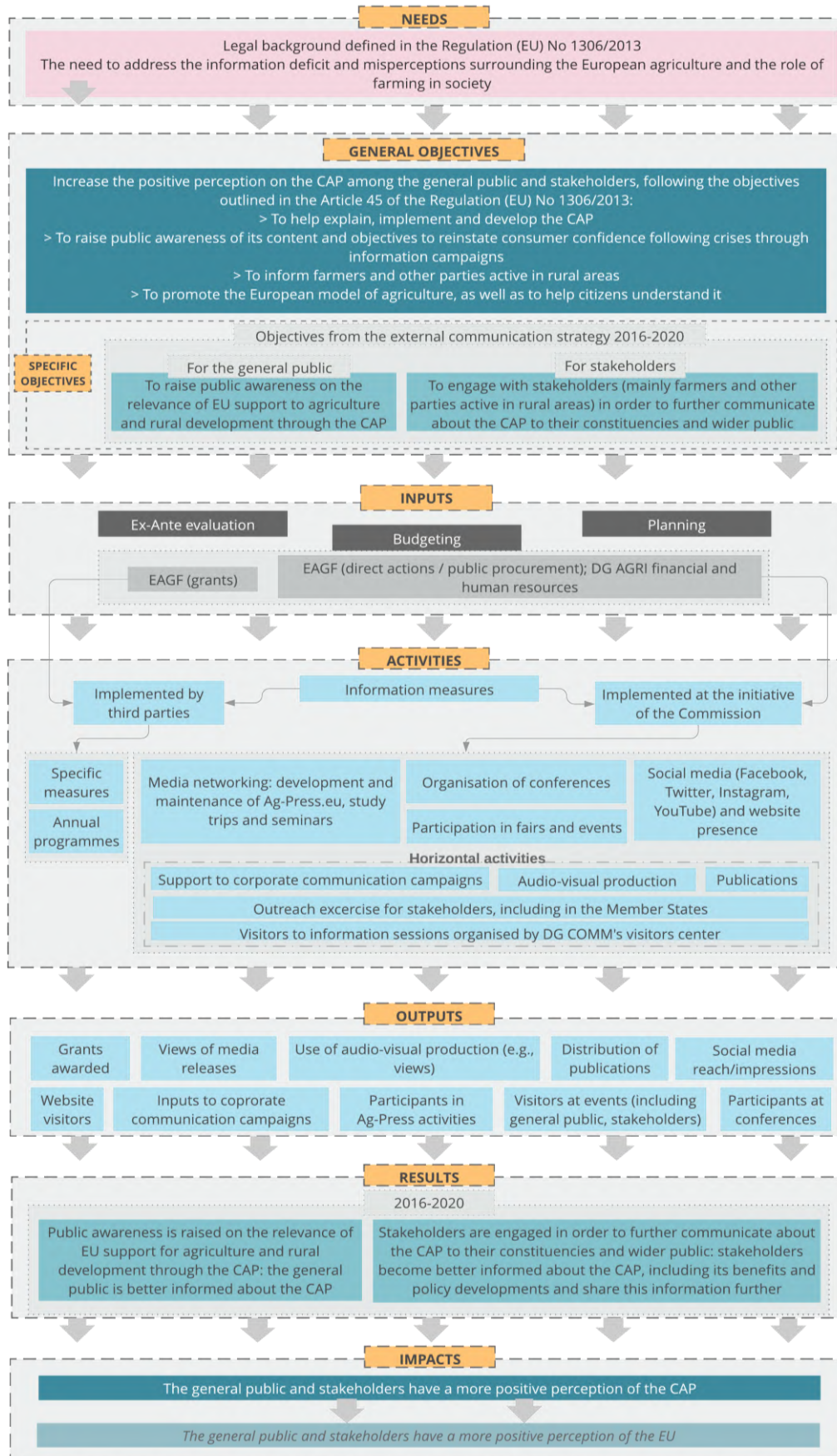
The three remaining levels of the intervention logic – outputs, results, and impacts – refer to the achievements of the policy. The output level involves questions concerning who

and how many are reached by the activities. Different communication activities are associated with different output level indicators. These include the number of grants awarded, the number of social media posts and the number of users reached through those posts, as well as views/downloads of the audio-visual production/publications, media mentions, visitors or participants at events, etc. ‘Results’ refers to what the target audience takes away from the communication. This includes their initial response and sustainable effects. According to the intervention logic of the evaluation, this level mirrors the specific objectives of the intervention logic, i.e. it measures the achievement of the objectives from the external communication strategy (2016-2020). Therefore the focus is on measuring whether the audiences became better informed about the CAP (its key elements, benefits and policy developments). In the case of stakeholders, the extent to which this information has been further shared is also assessed. Thus, the two specific objectives may also be interrelated: namely, if stakeholders not only become more aware of the CAP themselves, but also publicly disseminate this information, they indirectly contribute to the first specific objective of raising public awareness.

Finally, at the level of impacts, the focus is on whether the information measures implemented have succeeded in changing opinions towards the CAP. Although the impacts listed in the Communication Network framework focus on improved perceptions of the EU, this evaluation is focusing on changes in perceptions towards the CAP. Changes in perceptions towards the CAP may have led to changes in overall perceptions towards the EU, but valid measurement of this change is not possible within the scope of this evaluation.



**Figure 2. Intervention logic of the information policy on the CAP**



Source: evaluation support study

## **2.4. Baseline and points of comparison**

The Commission regularly polls European citizens on their view of agriculture in general and of the CAP in particular. Eurobarometer surveys were carried out in 2015, 2017 and 2020<sup>7</sup>. In planning its communication actions, including for the 2016-2020 period, DG AGRI factors-in the findings of the regular Eurobarometer surveys and uses them as baseline for evaluating to what extent the communication actions conducted contribute to improving the opinion of Europeans regarding farming and the CAP.

### ***Points of comparison***

The results of the previous external evaluation<sup>8</sup>, assessing the period 2013-2015, have been taken into account as a reference. The present evaluation also considers the results of the Eurobarometer surveys carried out regularly to monitor public perceptions of EU citizens on the CAP, agriculture, forestry and rural areas. Data from Eurobarometer surveys were used to assess the impact of communication activities, including trends and changes over time, as well as for triangulating research results (largely dependent on respondent perceptions).

Finally, the efficiency analysis looks at some information activities (website, social media and events) of other Commission departments that work on related policy fields, namely DG SANTE and DG MARE. Although the analysis was limited and could not provide an in-depth comparison in terms of results, the comparison is illustrative of the range of resources invested by different General Directorates.

## **3. IMPLEMENTATION/STATE OF PLAY**

This chapter gives an overview of DG AGRI's communication measures, including their alignment to the policy priorities of the Commission.

### **3.1. Description of the current situation**

As mentioned above, the legal basis requires the Commission to carry out information measures to help explain, implement and develop the CAP. The external communication strategy for the CAP sets out DG AGRI's main external communication objectives, target audiences, overarching strategic messages, communication tools, monitoring and evaluation tools. It aims to make more efficient and effective use of its communication tools, including adapting them to a rapidly evolving media environment. As in previous periods, the communication strategy is implemented through annual action plans.

---

<sup>7</sup> Special Eurobarometer 473, Special Eurobarometer 440 and Special Eurobarometer 504.

<sup>8</sup> [Evaluation of the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy - final report 2015.](#)

## 3.2. Description of the main elements

### *Principal tools*

**Media and on-line communication:** media is a key multiplier and provider of information on the EU and on the CAP. DG AGRI continues to deepen its contacts with, and support for, media and press representatives, notably through its network on agricultural press (Ag-Press), and also with the support of the Spokesman's Service. Ag-Press membership totalled 1140 at end 2020 reflecting the steady increase over the period from some 800 members in 2016. The network facilitates access by journalists to information about the CAP and agricultural conditions throughout Europe, through participation in expert policy briefings, seminars, and study trips. In addition, DG AGRI continues to focus strongly on developing its social media capacity and web based communication. Social media channels counted in June 2020 with 73 100 followers for Twitter, 11 900 followers for Instagram, 580 subscriptions for Youtube and 170 695likes. As regards the website, it counted on 1,97million users in 2019.

**Events:** engaging with stakeholders and reaching out to the general public are central to DG AGRI's communication actions. Conferences continue to be an important means for consultation and the exchange of information and ideas on relevant policy issues between the Commission and a wide variety of stakeholders, at regional, national and international level; in the 2016-2020 period, thirteen major conferences were organised<sup>9</sup> including three in on-line format during 2020. In addition, DG AGRI is keeping under review suitable opportunities for interaction with the general public and stakeholders at events such as farm fairs; typically this includes provision of attractive pedagogical material/activities for families, and where possible, leveraging the presence of senior EU and national figures for dialogue and media dissemination on policy issues. DG AGRI participated in twenty five such events during the evaluation period.

**Grants:** the Commission co-funds projects to promote and inform citizens (younger audiences, stakeholders, farmers and EU citizens) about the CAP. The socio-professional sector, as well as national, regional and local authorities inter alia can participate in the call for proposals, published once a year. During the evaluation period, 94 grants were awarded by the European Commission to various organisations to communicate about the CAP. These co-financed information actions were carried out typically by media and communications companies (often active across several Member States), EU level and national producer organisations; environmental and rural development NGOs, and academic bodies, among others. During the evaluation period, the calls for proposals encouraged information actions which aimed to illustrate the CAP's contribution to growth and jobs and viable rural communities; its role in climate adaptation and mitigation measures; sustainable farming, and improving fairness in the agri-food supply chain, and the importance of innovation and generational renewal in the sector. Overall, the calls for proposals encouraged information actions focussing specifically on the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability CAP; they also encouraged novel approaches to engage with young people.

---

<sup>9</sup> This figure does not include a number of specific workshops and roundtables organised to discuss and exchange with stakeholders on markets and environmental aspects linked to the modernisation of the CAP.

### ***Communication objectives***

In line with the overall corporate approach of the Commission, DG AGRI's external communication strategy was geared towards contributing to the achievement of the political priorities of the Commission in the 2016-2020 period and its inbuilt flexibility facilitated its evolution and implementation of measures in the transition to the new Commission. As mentioned earlier, the Juncker Commission put a special emphasis on investment, economic growth and jobs. Concerning the six headline ambitions of the von der Leyen Commission, while the CAP is relevant for all of these priorities, the main links are to the [European Green Deal](#), [A stronger Europe in the world](#) and [A new push for European democracy](#). Communication measures therefore were designed to reflect the contribution of the CAP to a more sustainable and climate-neutral Europe as well as the importance of agriculture for the European economy as a whole and for rural communities in particular.

A further key objective was to communicate on the CAP's essential role in the supply of safe and high quality food which is produced sustainably, reflecting consumer expectations. In addition to focusing on these headline objectives, communication actions continued to provide information on all major DG AGRI initiatives over the period, so as to develop positive perceptions and build trust with citizens and stakeholders.

### ***Messages***

The overarching message was and remains: the CAP is of central importance to reach EU social, economic, climate and environmental objectives, including long term food security. To ensure that key messages reflect the contribution of agriculture, forestry and rural development to the overall Green Deal sustainability objectives, DG AGRI has created specific communication material, for example, on organic, quality and innovation policy.

### ***Target groups***

Communication measures aimed at increasing support and endorsement of the Commission's political agenda, and more specifically of the role of the CAP in this context. In line with the legal basis, activities target citizens, farmers and other parties active in rural areas. Therefore both stakeholders (farmers, their representatives, rural dwellers, the food chain; public authorities, NGOs) and the general public continue to be targeted with the most appropriate tools.

As regards the general public, two subgroups are being targeted specifically: young people (16-24 year old) to raise their awareness of the CAP and its contribution to issues important to this target group such as climate change and sustainable, high quality food; children and teachers given the important role agriculture will play in meeting climate action targets and increasing sustainability of food systems.

While continuing to provide information and engaging in discussions with the general public, AGRI communication actions currently give priority to stakeholders acting as multipliers and opinion leaders via which the general public can also be reached.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation is underpinned by an external support study carried out during 2020 and complemented with internal analysis. Several surveys were carried out through the study and findings from relevant Eurobarometer surveys integrated in the analysis; thus, no public consultation took place.

### 4.1. Short description of the methodology

The analysis used available data and applied a mixed-approach to combine different data sources. The mixed methods of data collection are listed below:

- Desk research.
- Interviews with DG AGRI staff and with key stakeholders in the context of case studies. A mapping exercise to identify national communication actions in the Member States took place in cooperation with national experts.
- 17 case studies covering different communication activities, carried out by different actors, including the European Commission and third parties.
  - i. Country-level case studies (5), to analyse the complementarity between national information policies and the CAP;
  - ii. Grant case studies (6), to assess information measures implemented by third parties under grant agreements;
  - iii. Commission's own initiative case studies (5), to assess information measures implemented at the initiative of the Commission;
  - iv. Corporate communication case study (1), to examine DG AGRI's involvement in corporate communication campaigns.
- 4 stakeholder surveys covering general aspects and specific measures:
  - i. Main survey targeted at stakeholders active in the field of CAP;
  - ii. Ag-Press network survey;
  - iii. Website survey targeted at users of the CAP section of the European Commission's website as well as relevant pages under "Food, Farming, Fisheries";
  - iv. Grant applicant survey, both successful and unsuccessful.
- Usability testing aimed to understand the interaction of users as well as to identify positive aspects and points for improvement for two measures:
  - i. Website sections "Common Agricultural Policy" and its children pages as well as "Farming".
  - ii. Teachers' Resource Pack, tested with five<sup>10</sup> tests in different EU countries.

The data analysis combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative information was collected through desk research, interviews, case studies and surveys. Qualitative analysis was structured step-wise to classify, sort and arrange data. On the other hand, quantitative analysis was applied to data from desk research and surveys,

---

<sup>10</sup> Five tests were considered sufficient for the 41 expert teachers that participated. However, there should be mentioned a limitation in geographical coverage as all the 41 teachers came from Western European countries.

using statistical data to assess performance (e.g. social media and website) and reporting via descriptive statistics.

The design of the evaluation developed specific indicators for each level of information and applied judgement criteria using 70% as a general benchmark, selected on the basis of the results of the previous evaluation and the average for the European Customer Satisfaction Index in all categories, including public services.

Experience gained through the COVID-19 pandemic, which strongly influenced the organisation of communication activities in 2020, is also presented and considered.

## **4.2. Limitation and robustness of findings**

The evidence collected through the analysis provides a sound basis for a robust assessment, avoiding biases, presenting well-based assumptions and transparent reporting. The analysis provides a valid set of indicators and uses triangulation of different sources of evidence. The analysis also made use of existing work to avoid duplication. Some drawbacks are however inherent in the methods employed.

First, qualitative data collected relies on perceptions of respondents to interviews and surveys. The issue was counterbalanced by using larger samples (more representative of the population) and seeking confirmation with available quantitative data.

Second, the impact of communication in terms of changing perceptions is difficult to measure. The analysis needed to rely on the opinions of stakeholders and made use of Eurobarometer data that includes changes over time in order to complement and triangulate research results.

Lastly, data collection took place during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased difficulties to reach stakeholders and to participate in relevant events as those were cancelled or adjusted. To adapt to such circumstances, the analysis increased desk research and the time for data collection was extended so that no major data gaps remained.

## **5. ANALYSIS**

This section presents the assessment of the performance of the measures implemented under the CAP information policy. The assessment is based on the five evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.

### **5.1. Effectiveness**

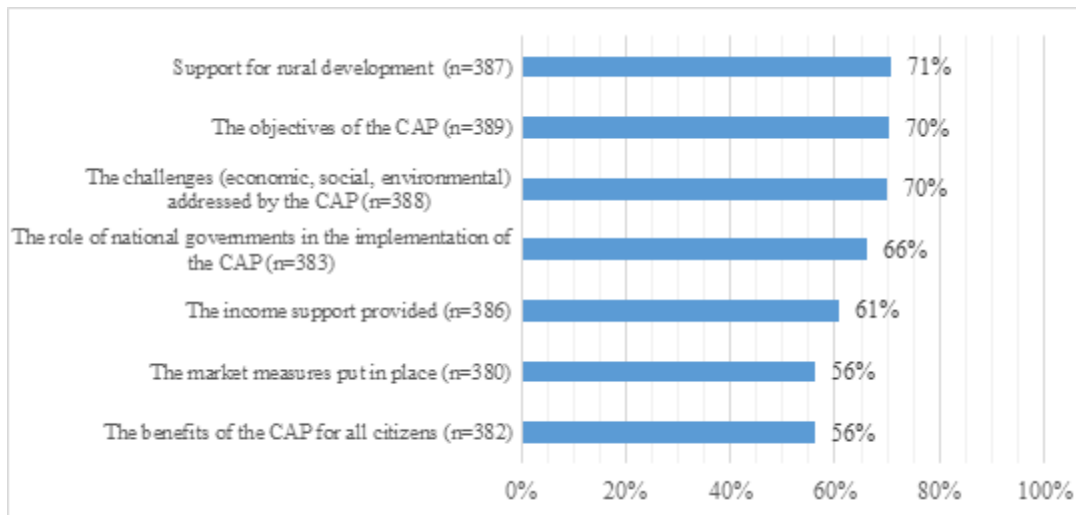
#### **5.1.1. General objectives**

The general objectives of the CAP information policy are being achieved to a large extent as the information policy is successful in improving the understanding and perception of the CAP.



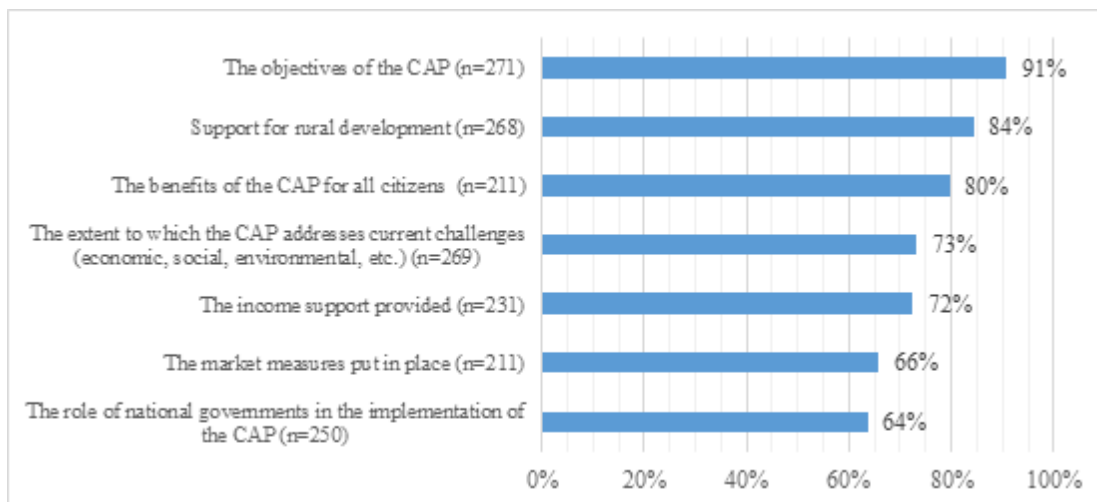
Stakeholders<sup>11</sup> are well informed about some aspects of the CAP, namely its objectives, the challenges addressed by the CAP and the support for rural development, but are slightly less familiar with other aspects. Those aspects that are more familiar, are generally more positively viewed. This suggests that information policy contributes to a positive perception. Stakeholder organisations have a tendency to be rather more interested in informing stakeholders than the general public.

**Figure 3. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who stated that they were informed at least to a moderate extent about various aspects of the CAP**



Source: evaluation support study, based on the main survey

**Figure 4. Percentage of respondents to the main survey who rated various aspects of the CAP very positively or moderately positively**



Source: evaluation support study, based on the main survey

Eurobarometer survey results<sup>12</sup> indicate that citizens are increasingly aware of the CAP and have a generally positive perception of it, considering that the EU's support to farmers is too low.

<sup>11</sup> The analysis reflects the percentage of positive answers among the main survey respondents but does not provide details about the profile of the respondents.

<sup>12</sup> Based on Special Eurobarometer 473, Special Eurobarometer 440 and Special Eurobarometer 504.

Citizens' perception of the performance and priorities of the CAP is overall positive, with a slightly increasing trend. In 2015, 59% of people agreed that the CAP fulfils its different roles. This increased negligibly in 2017 (to 60%) and markedly in 2020 to 67%. The percentage of citizens that agrees with the importance of the priorities of the CAP remained at 85% in 2015 and 2017, with a slight increase (87%) in 2020. Moreover, more EU citizens believe that the CAP benefits all citizens. Around three-quarters of Europeans consider that the CAP benefits all citizens, not only farmers (76% today, + 15 percentage points since 2017). However, the young (15-24 years old) are the least aware of the CAP and least likely to find agriculture and rural areas 'very important' for the future in the EU.

External factors (i.e. negative or contradictory information about the CAP) hindered the effectiveness of the CAP information policy only to a limited extent. While negative information about the CAP exists, it does not play a dominant role and is rather seen as part of the policy debate around improving the CAP.

During the 2016 - 2019 period, there were no major market disturbances; thus, there was no use of measures to reinstate consumer confidence. In 2020, the outbreak of the coronavirus had an unparalleled effect on the EU's society and economy. Communicating on the Commission's urgent coordinated action at EU level to ensure the health and well-being of the people of Europe was of the highest priority in 2020. The European Commission has provided [support to the agri-food sector](#) throughout the COVID-19 crisis through increased flexibility and specific market measures. In this period, informing citizens and policymakers in the Member States on the many measures adopted by the Commission with a view to simplifying the management of the CAP, and providing financial support to farmers and rural communities, was a critical task. For citizens and stakeholders alike, the COVID-19 pandemic underlined the importance of robustness and resilience in the agro-food sector so as to ensure that it functions in all circumstances.

### **5.1.2. Specific measures**

This chapter presents the effectiveness of individual information measures of the information policy.

#### **a. Media networking**

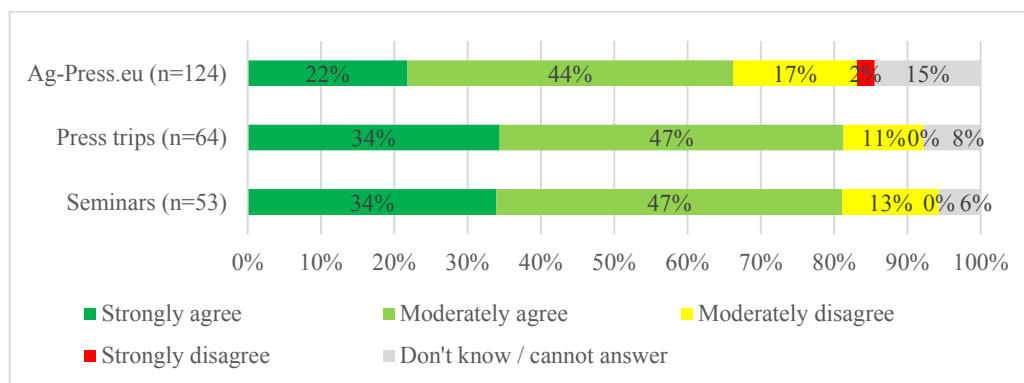
Media networking is in place since 2011, comprising press trips to several Member States, seminars in Brussels and an online platform (Ag-Press.eu). The number of members of the Ag-press network has grown steadily between 2016 and 2020, up to 1 079 members.

In the evaluation period, journalists acted as multipliers, further disseminating DG AGRI's messages and covering CAP related topics as a result of their participation in the network activities – 82% after a seminar and 90% after a press trip, according to the Ag-Press network survey. Moreover, 85% of respondents use information from Ag-Press to develop their stories.

The activities of the network had a positive impact, contributing to improving the understanding of journalists about the CAP and also to their positive perception of the policy.



**Figure 5. Viewing CAP more positively after Ag-Press activities**



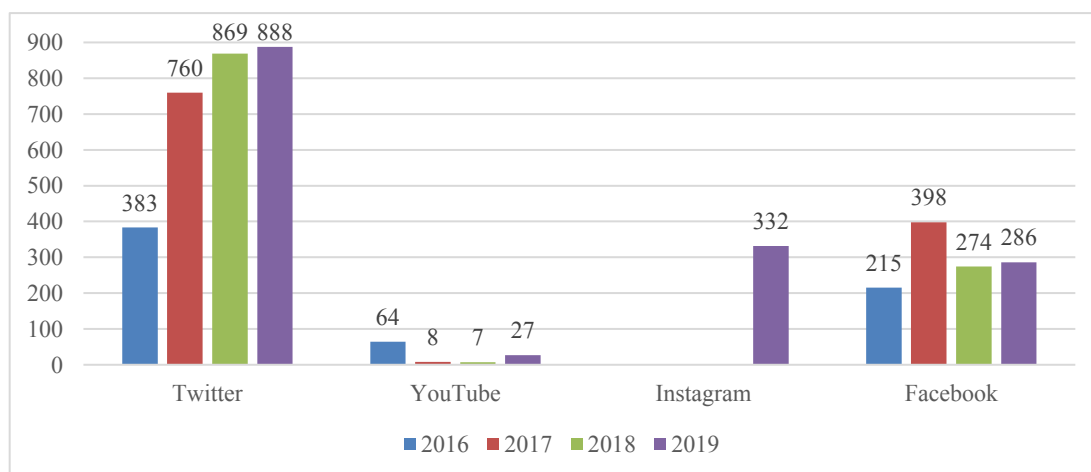
Source: evaluation support study, based on the Ag-Press network survey

Nevertheless, qualitative content analysis reveals that while articles produced after the network press trips reflected well the European dimension of farming, they did not always make the connection between the stories about farms or farmers, and the CAP or European support.

**b. Social media**

The number of followers of AGRI’s social media channels grew during the evaluation period. On average, the number of DG AGRI’s Facebook posts remained stable, meeting the generally agreed optimal values<sup>13</sup>; whereas the number of Twitter posts continued to grow each year. Posts on Instagram were slightly below the one post per day suggestion and the number of videos on YouTube varied greatly depending on whether series of videos were produced such as in 2016, the “Farming: at the heart of our life” series.

**Figure 6. Number of posts/tweets/videos published (2016-2019)**



Source: evaluation support study, based on social media monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

In general, the four channels tend to be followed by different audiences. Twitter and Facebook are mostly followed by stakeholder organisations and government bodies; however, many stakeholder organisations do not follow DG AGRI’s social media at all, revealing potential for further improvement and reach.

<sup>13</sup> According to industry standards.

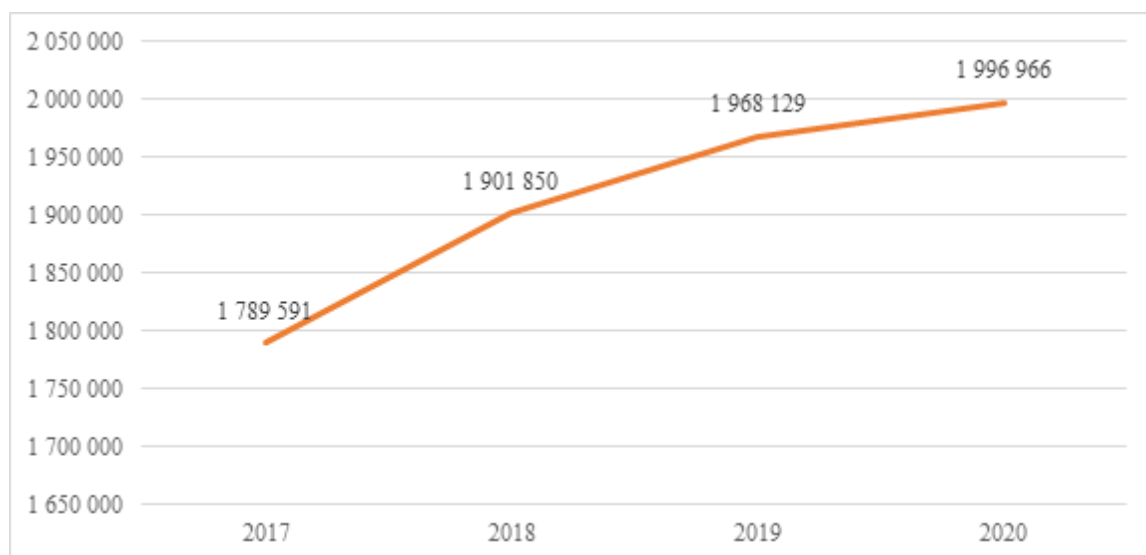
Expanded social media activity is helping substantially to raise awareness of the CAP and has resulted in increased engagement rates with key target audiences; it has led also to more efficient and effective dissemination of messages across all platforms, ensuring regular coverage of a wide variety of topics. Awareness and understanding of the CAP and related topics increased among social media followers, according to more than 80% of the main survey respondents<sup>14</sup>. Followers also found such activities useful (86%) and most intend to follow AGRI’s social media in the future (90%).

Information provided through AGRI’s social media contributed to some extent towards a more positive view of the CAP as expressed by 68% of the main survey respondents, just below the 70% benchmark<sup>15</sup>.

**c. Website**

Visits to DG AGRI’s website steadily increased from 2017 to 2019. This increase occurred during the digital transformation process of replacing the old website to the new one, which gained rapidly in popularity and surpassed the old website in 2019.

**Figure 7. Number of visits to the old (Europa) and new (Infosite) websites (combined)**



Source: evaluation support study, based on website analytics data provided by DG AGRI

Users are generally very satisfied with the website content and quality, which contributes to a better understanding and a positive perception of the CAP. Nevertheless, the positive impact in terms of influencing perceptions did not reach the 70% benchmark<sup>16</sup> (66% of main survey respondents and 63% of website survey respondents), indicating a limited impact.

<sup>14</sup> Survey respondents 388.

<sup>15</sup> Benchmark established as part of the evaluation study design.

<sup>16</sup> Benchmark established in the evaluation study design.

**Table 1. Percentage of website survey respondents who agree with the statements about the contents of the website**

Statements about website content	Percentage of website survey respondents who agree with the statements
I understand the information that is provided	88.6%
I trust the information that is provided	92.4%
The information provided is up to date	80.1%
The information provided is useful for the purpose of my visit	83.2%

Source: Evaluation support study, adapted, based on the website survey (611 responses received).

While the content of the website is perceived positively, and trusted by over 90% of respondents, users identified several problems with its usability. Some topics are easier to find (organic farming, market measures) while others are more difficult (statistical factsheets and Coronavirus response). This indicates room for improving the navigational capacity of the website.<sup>17</sup>

### **Website usability improvement**

Usability issues:

- Navigation between pages.
- Faulty search function.
- Limited accessibility in various EU languages.

Suggestions from usability test:

- Add a visible sitemap showing all links to all pages, while considering possible changes to information architecture.
- Creating more links to statistical factsheets.
- Better optimisation for external search engines (e.g. Google).

#### **d. Events**

DG AGRI organises conferences and participates in fairs; output performance is generally high, with most key performance indicators (KPIs<sup>18</sup> - set in DG AGRI's annual action plan for each event such as fairs and conferences) achieved for those events. Participants in conferences and visitors to fair stands are overwhelmingly satisfied (above 90%) with the organisation of events. However they are less satisfied (57%) with the possibilities to discuss policy matters with AGRI representatives. Farmers and the general public, including families, tend to prefer fairs, whereas broadly the stakeholder organisations prefer conferences.

<sup>17</sup> The planned migration of DG AGRI web content to the new EUROPA web publishing platform is expected to contribute to addressing the usability issues cited above.

<sup>18</sup> Key performance indicators for conferences are 80% satisfaction rate by participants with the conference organisation and content. For fairs, it is 70% satisfaction rate by attendees with the proposed activities.

Comparison with the previous evaluation reveals a decrease in the share of participants considering that participation in events has increased their understanding of the CAP and related topics from 87% in 2015 to 79% in 2020. Networking is an important motivation for attending events, with its attendant possibilities for the exchange of knowledge and experience. Overall, participants are highly satisfied with events, which generate positive results in terms of increasing their knowledge and awareness about the CAP. The data for web and social media dissemination for major events outlined in Table 2 illustrates their important multiplier impact in terms of reach. However, while events are effective, they achieve only limited impact (61%), as regards improving participants' perceptions about the CAP, below the 70% benchmark. In addition, the analysis indicated scope for improvement by, for example, keeping under review the preparation of Commission representatives participating and communicating at events; and also arrangements for ensuring diversity of views in planning events.

**Table 2. Performance of the selected events hosted or attended by DG AGRI**

	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>EU Agricultural Outlook Conference</b>	495 participants (1 290 web streaming attendees on the first day; 809 on the second)  Potential reach on Twitter: 340 600 people	635 participants (3 057 web streaming attendees on the first day; on 2 505 the second)  26 tweets and 179 100 impressions on Twitter	717 participants (n.d.)  13 tweets and 171 300 impressions on Twitter	755 participants (2 996 web streaming attendees on the first day; 1 273 the second)  295 098 organic impressions on Twitter; 3 974 people watched the conference live on Facebook; 11 093 saw the Facebook post on the Outlook report
<b>Internationale Grüne Woche</b>	214 416 visitors passed by the stand; 10 744 engaged with animations inside  n.d.	+/- 500 visitors per day  In total, 37 551 impressions for the top seven posts on Twitter; 34 539 people reached via the top five posts on Facebook	Between 3 000 and 10 000 visitors per day  One tweet and 6 681 impressions on Twitter	2 400 visitors per day on average  n.d.
<b>Salon de l'Agriculture</b>	+/- 400 visitors per day  n.d.	+/- 1 000 visitors per day  13 161 impressions for the top four posts on Twitter; 10 911 people reached via the top five posts on Facebook	An average of 4 500 visitors per day  11 tweets and 60 315 impressions on Twitter	An average of 4 500 visitors per day  6 tweets and 36 873 impressions on Twitter

Source: support study, based on internal documentation on the events provided by DG AGRI.

The advantages of the on-line format were reflected in the high level of participation in the 2020 edition of the EU Agricultural Outlook conference. It included up to 9 464 participants/viewers (on average: 7 630 viewers per day over the two days from 64 countries); on Facebook Live there were some 5 700 video views over the two days; on Twitter Live stream, over 2 800 views over the 2 days, and 286 500 impressions.

## e. Grants

Between 2016 and 2019, 72 grants were awarded by the European Commission to various organisations to communicate about the CAP<sup>19</sup>. In those four years, grant beneficiaries came from 22 countries, with six countries receiving a high number of grants and nine countries one or two; in a number of Member States, no grants were awarded. As data was collected in 2020 and the 2019 data was not yet available, the following analysis focuses on grant projects during the 2016 – 2018 period.

Grants typically contributed to the organisation of events, dissemination of information through social media, development of new websites, and audio-visual material, including articles, videos, TV productions and radio spots. The following table provides an overview of key figures relating to co-funded activities; the global figures reflect important differences in terms of the level of reach, depending on the nature and scale of the activity and the type of communication channel used. Very frequently, these events reached a wider audience beyond the immediate participants, due to the multiplier effect of the specialised press and media, as well as increased use of digital and social media as dissemination tools.

**Table 3. Key figures for grants**

Type of activity	Key figures <sup>20</sup> and information
<b>Events</b>	1 354 events  More than 6 million participants
<b>Social media channels</b>	113 channels used (most frequent Facebook, followed by Twitter and by YouTube)  More than 15 million people reached  Nearly 7 million followers
<b>Websites</b>	29 new websites, 12 new sections  More than 20 million visitors reported
<b>Audiovisual material</b>	Articles, videos, TV productions and radio spots were the most popular.  Multimedia stories, online material (e.g. pedagogical documents), advertisement campaigns in cinemas, online games, booklets and outdoor campaigns were among those less frequently used.

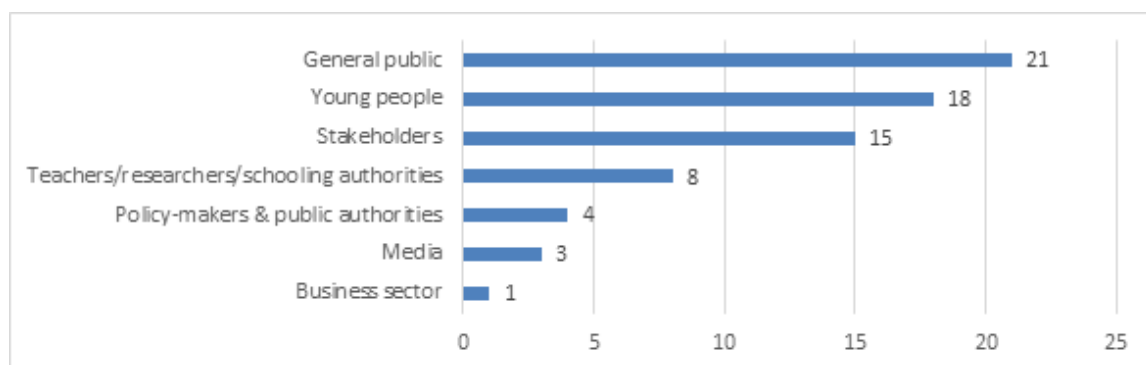
*Source: evaluation support study, adapted*

<sup>19</sup> 22 grants were awarded in 2020 but could not be included in the analysis as their communication actions were ongoing and not yet finalised.

<sup>20</sup> Figures based on data estimated in the support study and limited by the information available. The figures only represent rough estimates, with the aim of providing a general overview. For example, the actual number of event participants may be higher as with the available data represents only 1 139 events involving 38 grant recipients. At the same time, considering the fact that the same people might attend different events, the number of unique participants is likely lower, even though the geographical diversity of the events might limit this phenomenon. Similar considerations apply to social media and website.

In terms of audiences and project objectives, the grant projects mainly targeted the general public, young people and stakeholders. Overall, the main objectives of the projects targeting citizens were to raise awareness about the functioning and role of the CAP, and its relevance in addressing current and future challenges in the agro-food sector. With regard to youth, in particular, a number of projects created new pedagogical approaches to make pupils and students aware of how the CAP affects their lives. As regards projects focusing on stakeholders, the general goal was to foster dialogue, to enable the dissemination and exchange of good practice, to encourage innovative and sustainable farming models and to inform on the modernisation of the CAP including the importance of its environmental and climate dimension.

**Figure 8. Main target groups of the grants assessed in the case studies (n=25)**



Source: support study, based on grant and country case studies

Besides the tangible outputs, grants had a positive influence on the beneficiary organisations. They helped increase the knowledge and capacity of the recipients to communicate CAP topics to stakeholders and the general public (both above 96%, according to the grant applicant survey). The grant implementation process also contributed to improving the organisations' communication strategies and ability to cooperate with partners. Finally, they frequently resulted in positive continuity after the end of the grant period, as materials or projects developed in the context of the grant activity continued to be used.

Overall, grant recipients considered their projects successful in terms of improving public knowledge about the CAP. The data available in the grant reports showed that between 62% and 100% of persons across different projects declared an increased awareness of the CAP following project activities between 2016 and 2018. In addition, an average of 82% of individuals stated that they had improved their knowledge of the CAP and related issues as a result of their involvement in grant activities. These results mostly represent the opinions of participants in events<sup>21</sup>.

### ***The grant scheme and the application procedure***

Globally, participation in the grant scheme met the expectations of the grant recipients: a large majority of survey respondents (80%) declared themselves satisfied overall with

<sup>21</sup> [Evaluation support study on the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy - final report.](#)

their experience. However, the share has declined compared to the previous evaluation period (95%).

Supporting materials developed by DG AGRI as well as time to prepare proposals and their evaluation are among the most valued aspects of the grant scheme. Concerning the co-funding aspects, some respondents consider that the co-funding rate should increase and include a lower limit for co-funding. Some were of the view also that introducing interim or advance payments could help relieve financial constraints for certain grant holders. Some participants reported difficulties in using the online application system, especially organisations applying for the first time.

### **5.1.3. The COVID-19 pandemic**

The restrictions on face to face events due to the COVID-19 pandemic compelled testing new technologies and formats to effectively reach target audiences in response to the restrictions on physical events. The sudden impact of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of most face to face events in 2020 (as of 1 March), the adjustment of others and notably to a general move to the use of on-line organisational modes throughout the year. The advantages of the on-line format were reflected in the high level of participation in the events which took place in the second half of 2020. However, the less positive aspects of the online format, in relation to the lack of human interaction, and its impact on the exchange of good practice and networking were also highlighted by participants.

## **5.2. Efficiency**

### **a. Media networking**

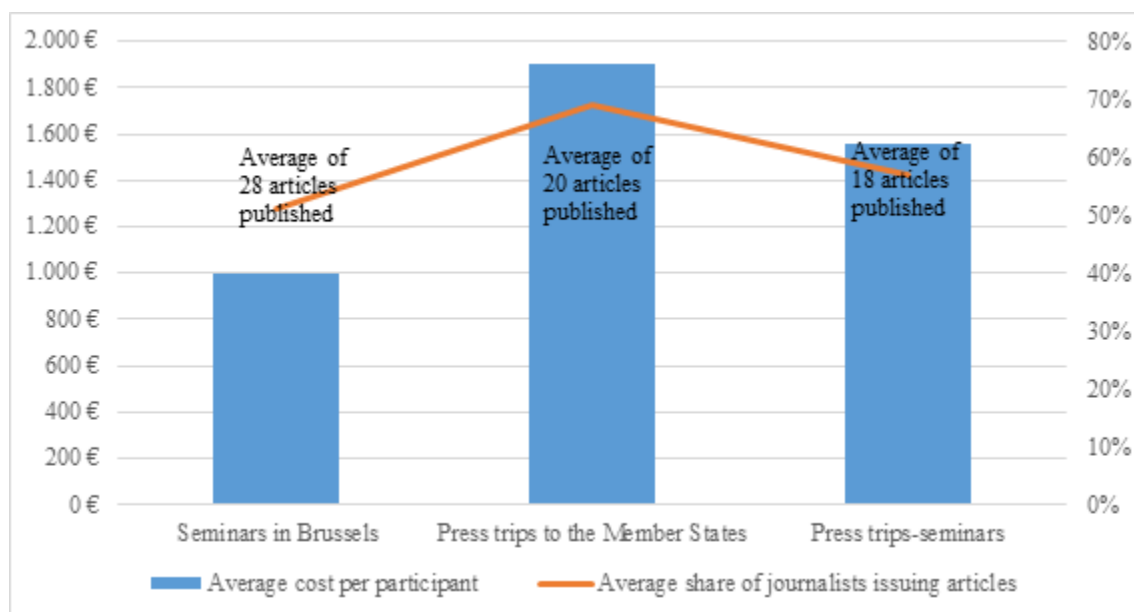
The costs of the Ag-Press online platform remained stable throughout the evaluation period, with a budget of EUR 15 000 per year. Combined with an increase in the number of members, this resulted in a slight increase in its efficiency.

The number of events organised by the Ag-Press network fluctuated during those years, which influenced the yearly costs. Seminars in Brussels seemed the most cost-effective events, as they have the lowest cost per attendee and the largest number of articles produced. An increase in the efficiency of the Ag-Press network events can be observed compared to the previous evaluation period. Between the two evaluation periods, the cost of having one journalist attend an event decreased from between EUR 1 500 and 2 000, to EUR 1 358<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>22</sup> [Evaluation support study on the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy - final report.](#)

**Figure 9. Cost comparison of Ag-Press events**



Source: evaluation support study, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

**b. Social media**

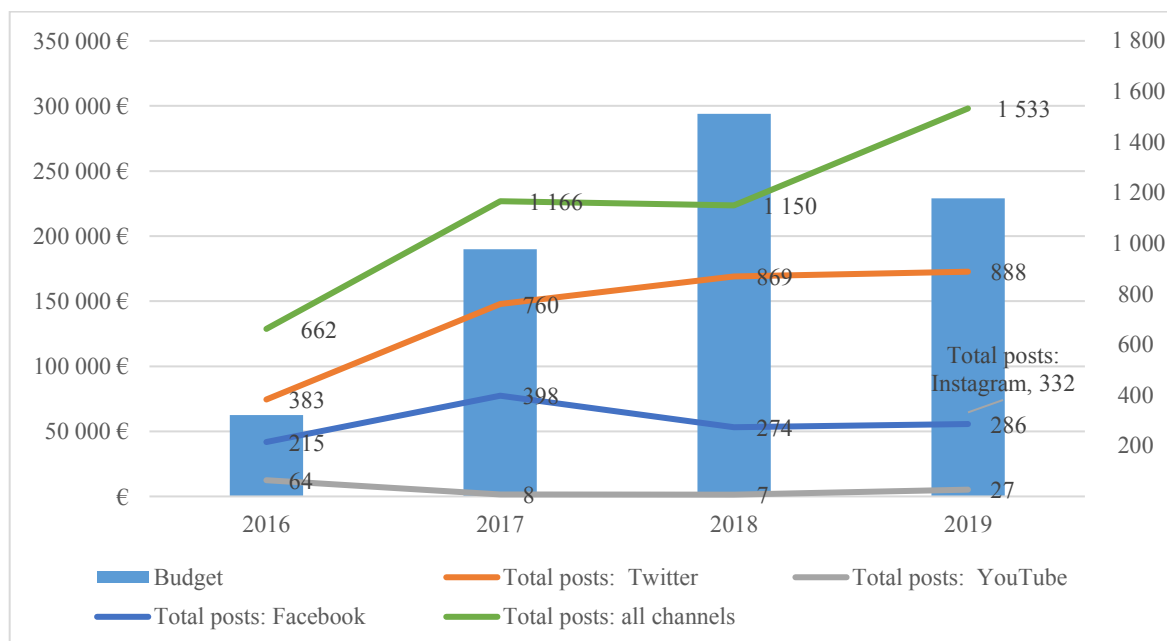
The social media budget grew in the first part of the evaluation period, shrinking again in 2019. The fluctuations were related to the expansion of social media activity between 2016 and 2018.

Two paid campaigns were assessed – the Teachers’ Resource Pack and the campaign on GIs - which demonstrated an efficient use of paid advertising as they had a lower cost per result compared to the average across all industries (EUR 1.45/click). The Teachers’ Resource Pack had a range of EUR 0.09 – 0.22/result and the GIs campaign of EUR 0.002 – 0.77/result.

A comparison of DG AGRI’s spending on social media with DG SANTE would at first sight indicate room for improvement. DG SANTE spending on social media advertising was somewhat higher but achieved substantially higher outreach; nonetheless, this is partially explained by the double policy field (public health and food safety) coverage by DG SANTE social media channels.



**Figure 10. Growth of social media budget and number of posts**



Source: support study, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI and its annual reports.

### c. Website

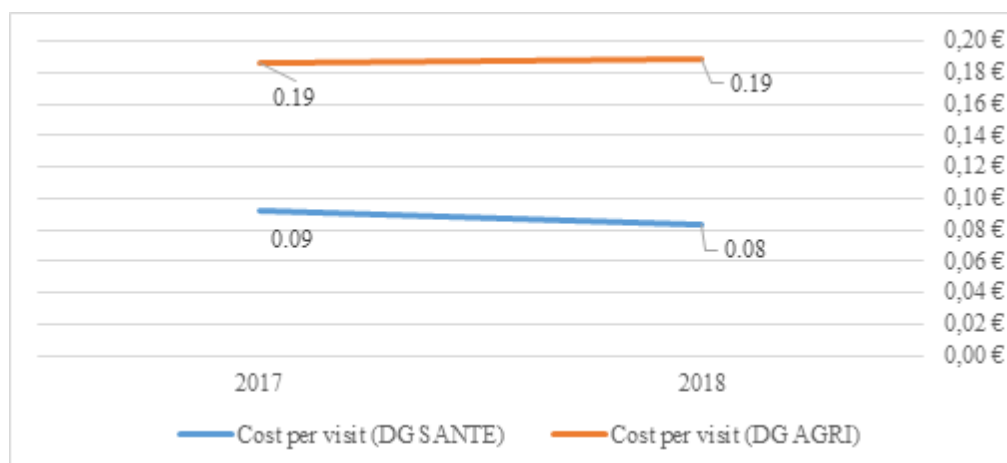
The digital transformation process largely influenced the costs of DG AGRI’s website. The analysis focused on the years 2017 – 2019<sup>23</sup>, as in 2016 different analytics software was used, making comparison impossible. While the average cost per visit decreased slightly between 2017 and 2019, the cost per download increased slightly in the same period. These changes seem rather related to the digital transformation process.

The cost of DG AGRI’s website was also compared to that of DG MARE and DG SANTE. DG AGRI allocates a similar amount of resources to its website as DG MARE and less resources than DG SANTE<sup>24</sup>. An additional comparison with DG SANTE for the period 2017 – 2018, shows that in terms of cost per visit and cost per download, DG SANTE performs better than DG AGRI.

<sup>23</sup> Comparison of cost per visit and per download for DG AGRI and DG SANTE focused on 2017 and 2018.

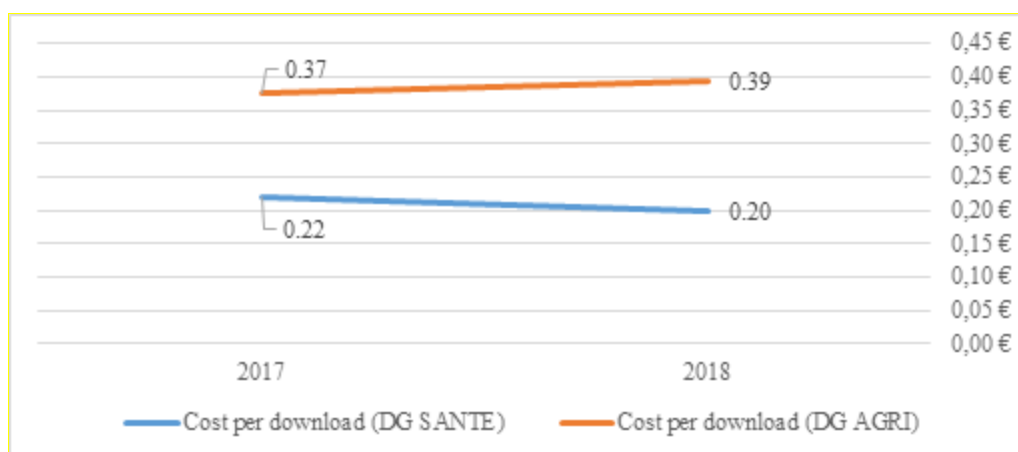
<sup>24</sup> Total website costs were for DG AGRI EUR 230 000 to 360 000 per year, for DG MARE 100 000 to 500 000, for DG SANTE 600 000 to 700 000.

**Figure 11. Website cost per visit incurred by DG AGRI and DG SANTE (EUR)**



Source: evaluation support study, based on data provided by the European Commission.

**Figure 12. Website cost per download incurred by DG AGRI and DG SANTE (EUR)**



Source: evaluation support study, based on data provided by the European Commission.

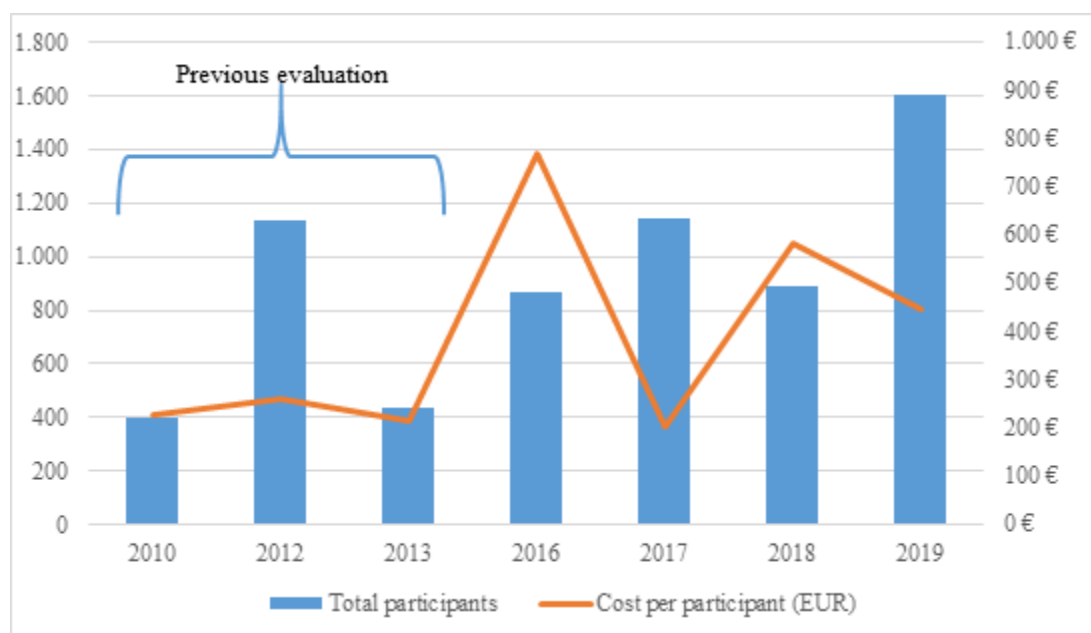
#### **d. Events**

The budget for events increased during the evaluation period, starting with EUR 1 million (in 2016<sup>25</sup> when the communications budget for DG AGRI was overall EUR 4 million) and reaching EUR 2.9 million (2019). For 2020, EUR 1.4 million was budgeted for events. Throughout the period, nearly EUR 4 million were devoted to conferences and EUR 2 million to fairs. The efficiency analysis focused on the costs per participant at conferences.

The cost per participant at conferences organised by DG AGRI fluctuated, remaining above the costs for the previous evaluation period. The higher costs are related to bigger conferences and events organised outside Brussels in the Member States (e.g. Cork 2.0 European Conference on Rural Development in 2016). The EU Agricultural Outlook conference (an annual event organised in Brussels generally at the Commission premises) had a lower cost per participant (less than half) and also obtained better stakeholder feedback as well as a wider dissemination of information.

<sup>25</sup> In the period 2017-2020, the communication budget of DG AGRI was EUR 8 million/year; for 2016, it was EUR 4 million.

**Figure 13. Trends in total participants and cost per participant at conferences organised by DG AGRI during previous and current evaluation periods**



Source: support study, based on DG AGRI annual reports on external communication action plans.

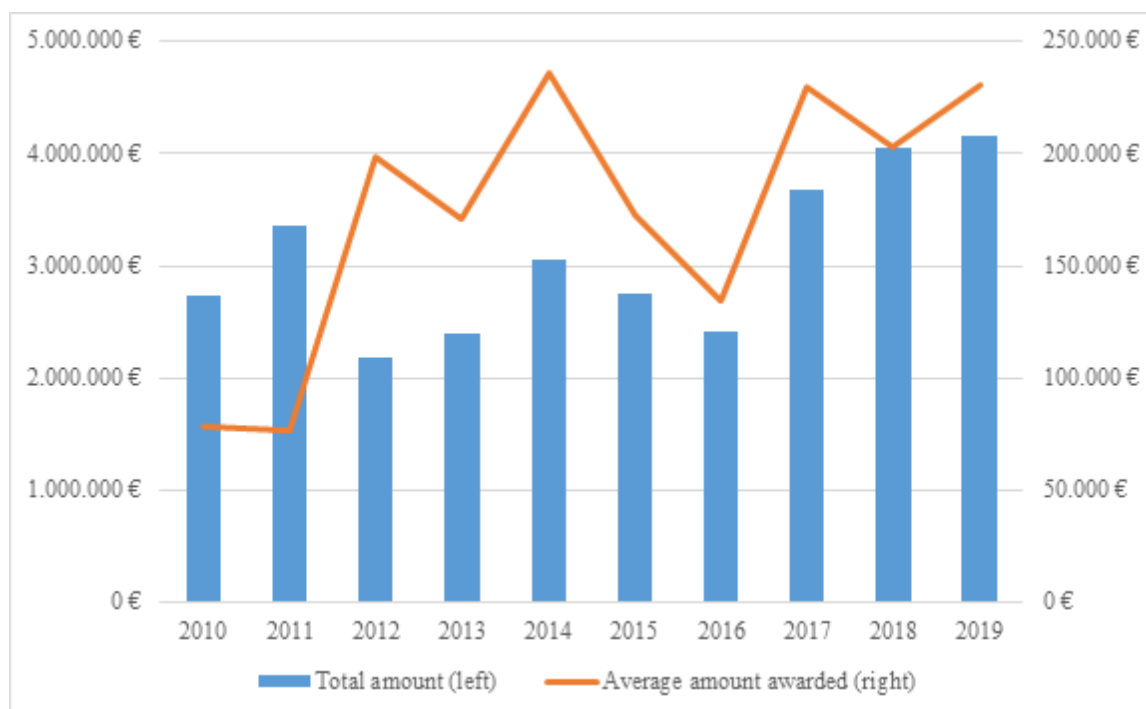
Costs for fairs were on average lower than those for conferences and remained relatively steady during the evaluation period, in the range of EUR 143 000 to EUR 180 000 (average cost per fair).

#### e. Grants

The overall budget for grants increased during the evaluation period from EUR 2.4 million (in 2016<sup>26</sup>) to 4.2 million, while the average grant size fluctuated with an increasing trend upwards to EUR 230 556. Except for 2016, when the communications budget for DG AGRI was overall EUR 4 million, the budget for grants was higher than in the previous evaluation period. The average number of grants per year was 19.

<sup>26</sup> In the period 2017-2020, the communication budget of DG AGRI was EUR 8 million/year.

**Figure 14. Trends in the grants budget and average grants awarded**



Source: support study, adapted, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Grant projects are highly diverse, which makes it difficult to compare them and to judge on the overall efficiency. Beneficiary organisations implement multi-channel communication and information campaigns. Each of the actions is unique. It responds to the same objectives defined in the call for proposals, and evaluated as part of the selection process. But each action targets different groups, with different communication messages and objective, makes different use of media channels, sometimes using traditional media (e.g. radio, broadcasting or print), sometimes making use of social media or events. As defined in the call for proposals (selection criteria) and included in the grant agreement, each grant action co-funded by the Commission provides data on the impact of the activities implemented as part of the final technical report, allowing the Commission to assess if the objectives established in the proposal were met.

A comparison of selected projects (school/young persons, actions, event-focused information campaigns, web/TV-based campaigns, audio-visual production) was carried out in order to determine key factors to ensure cost-effectiveness. They include the following:

- 1) Established online presence,
- 2) Capacity to establish partnerships with other organisations and
- 3) Investment in re-usable products (e.g. print or digital audiovisual materials) that continue to generate benefits after the grant period.

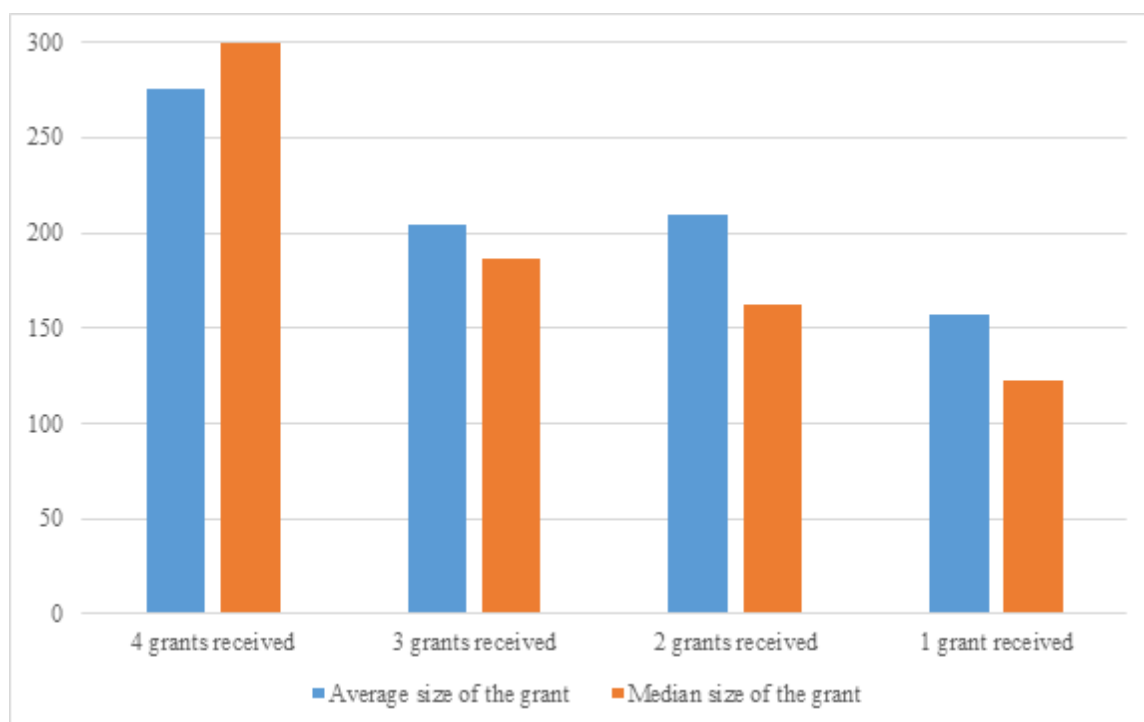
### ***The grant evaluation and implementation procedure***

Overall, there is very high satisfaction with participation in the grant scheme, with 93% of grant recipients<sup>27</sup> considering that the procedures run smoothly. Grants are accessible

<sup>27</sup> Respondents to the grant applicants survey: 45.

to different size organisations and levels of funding, although those organisations that received a greater number of grants also tended to have larger sums of co-financing.

**Figure 15. Average and median sizes of grants (by organisations receiving different numbers of grants), thousands of EUR**



Source: support study, based on monitoring data provided by DG AGRI.

Around 36% of the organisations have received co-financing more than once. Only 54% of the grant survey respondents considered that opportunities to receive funding are fairly well known among potential applicants in their countries. This indicates that there may be scope to increase the availability of information to potential applicants, especially in those Member States where potential participants do not habitually apply.

**Table 4. Overview of key figures, strengths and potential for improvement within information measures**

<b>Specific measures</b>	<b>Key figures/reach-out</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Potential for improvement</b>
Media networking	EUR 59 to 150 thousand/year (events and platform)  1 079 journalists members of platform  2 to 6 events/year	Efficiency gain compared to previous reporting period due to increasing membership	Further simplification of content for journalists to improve visibility.  Further provision of exclusive content and access to high level officials to continue to improve effectiveness of Ag-Press.
Social media	EUR 62 to 294 thousand/year  4 channels (followers): Facebook (170 695likes), Twitter (73 100), YouTtube (580subs – views) and Instagram (11 900)	Increasing activity on social media, even with decreasing budget  Targeted advertising provided boost in impressions at a good cost (below industry average)	Further adaptation to target audiences, including improving attractiveness of content for the general public, for example, further use of video in different formats.  Further development of interactive experiences to increase engagement, such as podcasts; more use of personalised content.  Keep under review procedures for enabling swift reaction to the dissemination of misinformation about the CAP.
Website	EUR 230 to 360 thousand/year  1.97 million visits (2019), 5.9 million visitors in the evaluation period	Digital transformation had a good start  Website good reference for stakeholders	Search engine optimisation to improve usability and navigation; to increase accessibility and visibility of agri-related content.  Further simplify content for the general public.
Events	EUR 1 to 2.9 million/year  2 to 3 conferences/year  2 to 7 fairs/year	Participants have the opportunity to learn and discuss CAP topics with AGRI representatives.  Suitable material, attractions for general public at fairs. Also	Continue to explore potential of various new technologies and formats to better reach target audiences online, bearing in mind the experience to date during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific measures	Key figures/reach-out	Strengths	Potential for improvement
		networking and opportunities for dialogue on policy between broad range of stakeholders.	
Grants	EUR 2.4 to 4.2 million/year 16 to 20 grants/year (total 72) Over 20 million citizens reached	Improvement of organisational capacities for grant holders, with long term benefits.  Reach significant number of Europeans and focus on specific target groups as well as considering national/regional dimensions.	Further focus on grants as a means to multiply communication through multipliers at national, regional and local level.  Keep under review reporting requirements to allow progress to be monitored in the implementation of projects, without however increasing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.  Further promote scheme more widely to potential applicants in Member States with lower participation.

### 5.3. Coherence

#### a. Coherence with corporate communication and information concerning other EU policies

DG AGRI provided a sizeable financial contribution to the Commission's corporate communication in the period; however, CAP-related topics were present only to a moderate extent in corporate campaigns. Nonetheless, such CAP-related information was noted and a source of information for stakeholders. DG AGRI and corporate communication activities are complementary, with a strong and professional collaboration with the Commission staff responsible for the campaigns. The corporate communication approach was an important element in DG AGRI's communication actions as it helped reach wider audiences, namely young people and children and teachers<sup>28</sup>. In 2017 -2018, for example, DG AGRI communicated widely on the simplification and modernisation of the CAP and the Multiannual Financial Framework sectoral legal proposals so as to highlight its contribution to the Commission's ten policy priorities and to the Sustainable Development Goals. The role of CAP-related topics is projected to increase in the future corporate campaigns related to Green Deal in terms of topics such as biodiversity, sustainability (e.g. sustainable food systems) and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

<sup>28</sup> CAP related learning material is available through the corporate Learning Corner website, available in 24 languages and targeting primary and secondary school pupils and their teachers.





**Table 5. Target audiences: strategy and selected activities**

	Segments	Activities
<b>General public</b>	<i>School children and teachers</i>	<p><b>Grant projects:</b> 8 out of 25 grant projects analysed in the case studies targeted schoolchildren and teachers, including through events as well as educational materials prepared.</p> <p>The <i>Teachers' Resource Pack</i> is the most direct demonstration of how DG AGRI targeted teachers during the evaluation period. This publication, produced for teachers, was extensively promoted by targeted advertising on Facebook, as well as being available for download from the website.</p>
	<i>Families</i>	<p><b>Fairs:</b> agricultural fairs attract the general public. The participant observation exercise carried out for this evaluation also confirmed that DG AGRI's stand at Salon International de l'Agriculture International was very popular with families.</p>
	<i>Young people</i>	<p><b>Grant projects:</b> 21 out of 25 grant projects analysed in the case studies targeted young people with their activities</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> DG AGRI's social media (especially Facebook and Instagram, but also to some extent Twitter) were tools that helped to effectively target young people. Overall, the audience of Facebook<sup>31</sup>, Twitter<sup>32</sup>, and Instagram<sup>33</sup> is predominantly young, with more 60% of these channels' users being under 34 (between 30 and 35 per cent are under 24).</p> <p><b>Fairs:</b> besides attracting families, fairs also are visited by young people, including schoolchildren attending the fair with their schools.</p>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<i>Beneficiaries of the CAP</i>	<p><b>Ag-Press:</b> most of the journalists who participated in Ag-Press events are affiliated with specialist agricultural media, thus their outputs mainly helped to reach farmers. The journalists interviewed also confirmed that farmers were their main target audience.</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> beneficiaries of the CAP also follow DG AGRI on social media (around 14% of those who responded to the main survey were farmers).</p> <p><b>Website:</b> beneficiaries of the CAP also visit the DG AGRI website (around 7% of those who responded to the website survey were farmers).</p> <p><b>Events:</b> farmers took part in the fairs and conferences that DG AGRI visited, but were most represented at conferences through multipliers.</p>
	<i>Multipliers</i>	<p><b>Website:</b> multipliers visit the DG AGRI website (around 12% of those who responded to the website survey were representatives of NGOs; a further 24, representatives of national, regional or local public institutions).</p> <p><b>Events:</b> conferences implemented by DG AGRI attracted the DG's key stakeholders, both in Brussels (namely through the Outlook conference) and in the Member States.</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> DG AGRI engaged with multipliers on Twitter by retweeting their tweets. Multipliers (stakeholder organisations) also said that they retweet DG AGRI's tweets.</p>

Source: evaluation support study

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/376128/facebook-global-user-age-distribution/>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/283119/age-distribution-of-global-twitter-users/>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/>.

**Table 6. Messages: strategy and selected activities**

Segments	Activities
<p><b>General public</b></p> <p>Messages should attract the interest of the general public, especially young urban dwellers, in food quality and specificity, as well as healthy eating.</p> <p>The message should be promoted that the EU consistently ensures safe and high-quality food that is sustainably produced for 500 million EU consumers, while reflecting consumer expectations on animal welfare, environmental and other standards, which are among strictest in the world.</p> <p>Messages should focus on addressing existing (mis)-perceptions about European agriculture and farming, rather than policy content.</p>	<p><b>Social media:</b> DG AGRI’s Facebook focuses heavily on communicating this message. The Instagram account established by DG AGRI also further strengthened this dimension of the DG’s communication.</p> <p><b>Grants:</b> in projects that focused on young people and the general public, food-related messages were often present.</p> <p><b>Fairs:</b> one of the ways in which this message was covered at the fairs attended by DG AGRI is through tasting/introducing GI products.</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> multiple messages on this topic can be found across DG AGRI’s social media channels.</p> <p><b>Ag-Press:</b> qualitative content analysis of Ag-Press articles revealed coverage of the contribution made by the CAP (or EU support) towards ensuring safe and high-quality food, in the articles produced by the journalists taking part in the press trips.</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> evidence was found of DG AGRI’s Facebook and Instagram accounts refraining from talking about the policy context. The policy context deliberately received more coverage on the stakeholder-oriented Twitter account (e.g. using the hashtag #FutureofCAP).</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <p>Promote messages that would help ensure greater awareness of the contribution that the CAP makes to supporting the economic growth of rural areas, especially of SMEs</p> <p>Messages should promote the contribution that is made by the Rural Development programmes</p> <p>Messages should emphasise the support provided for sustainable production practices and other measures that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change</p>	<p><b>Ag-Press:</b> qualitative content analysis of Ag-Press articles showed that CAP (or EU) support for rural areas featured prominently in the articles produced by the journalists taking part in the press trips.</p> <p><b>Events:</b> the topic was covered at various events, for example, in the Outlook conferences.</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> DG AGRI promoted the European contribution to rural development through its social media. For example, by sharing the European Rural Development newsletter or success stories about investment in rural areas.</p> <p><b>Events:</b> at least one of the conferences organised by DG AGRI specifically focused on rural development (Cork 2.0, held in 2016)</p> <p><b>Social media:</b> DG AGRI promoted the European emphasis on sustainability using its social media. The word <i>sustainable</i> (or variations of it) was mentioned 39 times in the Facebook posts published by DG AGRI as of January 2018.</p> <p><b>Website:</b> the website contains a separate section providing information about sustainable farming.</p>

Source: evaluation support study

In addition, the objectives and activities of the CAP communication strategy are complementary with communication actions carried out by other CAP related entities that focus on specific areas and specialised target audiences:

- The [European Network for Rural development \(ENRD\)](#) supports transnational and cross-border learning and exchange. The ENRD supports the effective implementation of EU Member States' Rural Development Programmes by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and cooperation across rural Europe. The communication objectives and activities of the network are in line with the general communication strategy but have a specific focus.
- The [European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability \(EIP-AGRI\)](#) supports the development of a competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry sector. It promotes innovation in the sector across Europe and contributes to sustainable growth. While communication is not the core business of the partnership, it contributes to promoting innovation by raising awareness, facilitating cooperation and dialogue between farmers and the research community as well as the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process across the EU.
- [Market observatories'](#) communication aims to disseminate market data, which is thematically focused information tailored towards specialised audiences. The information is provided via DG AGRI's website.
- The [Agri-food Data Portal](#) provides data on national and European agriculture and the CAP since 2018. The portal is developing on a continuous basis. It started with market data and CAP indicators and now it covers also farm economics and information on financial aspects of the CAP. The information is also provided via DG AGRI's website and the unique daily visits is steadily increasing and reached close to 600 in November 2021.

The activities carried out by these entities and described above are complementary with the general communication strategy, with a well-established cooperation between the responsible units. Furthermore, there is no issue of coherence with the [EU promotion policy](#)<sup>34</sup> as this policy is unrelated to the communication activities on the CAP.

### **c. Information actions by Member States and other actors at national, regional or local level**

The main messages and target audiences of the CAP communication strategy are in principle reflected in national communication, indicating a certain coherence. However, activities carried out by the national authorities focus to a large extent on stakeholders, such as farmers, and the agro-food sector, rural dwellers and entrepreneurs, civil society organisations, researchers, farm advisers, and environmental associations, providing mainly practical and technical information and advice for beneficiaries or addressing policy issues, rather than directly addressing the general public.

---

<sup>34</sup> Set out in Regulation (EU) No 1114/2014, the EU promotion policy aims to enhance the competitiveness of the EU agricultural sector and was subject to a recent [evaluation](#).

Nonetheless, the evaluation has identified some positive examples of national communication addressed to the general public, as presented in the box below.

### **'Europe is engaging in France'**

'Europe is engaging in France' is a project run by the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, the public authority responsible for the coordination of European funds, which is in charge of elaborating the communication strategy for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020 in France. The website 'Europe in France' is the main communication platform used for this initiative. It addresses the general public and public authorities, as well as beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of EU funds.

Key information about the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is presented in details. The website also provides an interactive map of France that offers tailored information on the ESIF for each region. This is particularly convenient for stakeholders interested in applying for funds.

Moreover, an entire section of the website is dedicated to presenting various projects that benefit from ESIF funding. Success stories of farmers who have modernised and developed their farming infrastructure (equipment, new buildings), notably to engage in more environmentally friendly farming methods, are reported by the EAFRD.

Besides the website, 'Europe is engaging in France' is also present on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube), where it disseminates content about news relating to the ESIF and to the European Union more broadly.

The main strengths of this communication action are:

- An effort to make technical information about EU funds accessible through appealing, simple and usually short visual and audio-visual formats (e.g. infographics, videos, interactive map).
- A 'projects' section that offers an overview of the support provided by ESI funds through concrete, personalised and 'in-the-field' examples, making it easy for the different target audiences, and especially the general public, to grasp the different contributions made by the funds.

These communication actions are an example of efforts made by public authorities to reach *inter alia* the general public with regard to the CAP and the ESIF.

### **Open Farm Day ("Avatud Talude Päev"), in Estonia (2015-2020)**

Open Farm Days in Estonia<sup>35</sup> have been organised since 2015 by the Ministry of Rural Affairs, the Agricultural Research Centre, the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, the Central Union of Estonian Farmers, local LEADER action groups and the 'Kodukant' Village Movement of Estonia. The project is co-funded by the EAFRD and the national authority under the RDP 2014-2020. Each year, farmers who registered for the event opened their doors to visitors for one or two days to present their profession, equipment and working environment, as well as to promote their local products.

<sup>35</sup> Open Farm Days and similar events targeting the general public are organised in many Member States.

The overall objective of the Open Farm Days is to introduce guests to the life of the countryside and the food production process, as well as to highlight the contributions and importance of agriculture for all citizens. According to Estonia’s Ministry of Rural Affairs, “Open Farm Day has become the biggest shaper of a positive rural image”.

The events are promoted through the website of the project, social media (Facebook and Instagram), media platforms, radio, information banners, posters, promotional items, a user-friendly application presenting the participating farms, as well as photos, videos and publications (notably on the website of the Ministry of Rural Affairs). They target people with a limited knowledge of agriculture and farming and particularly children.

The Open Farm Days communication activity combines several strong points:

- A large number of participating farms, enabling good geographical coverage (and therefore a potentially large number of visitors).
- Conducted on a regular, annual basis with effective publicity via conventional media and social media, ensuring the increased popularity of the event over time.
- Excellent organisation (information days for farmers, an inaugural event, a comprehensive app featuring the farms’ programmes and providing an interactive map, free bus trips for the citizens to go to the farms, etc.).
- Active, face-to-face interaction between farmers and the general public, leading to better connection between citizens and all elements of rural life. By creating a positive image of agriculture, the event can even encourage children to pursue agricultural vocations.
- The opportunity to carry out the 2020 edition, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, by respecting clear health-related measures (e.g. 2-metre social distancing between participants and a maximum number of visitors inside and outside).

The evaluation also identified good cooperation between DG AGRI representatives and national actors, which enables the latter to act as multipliers of DG AGRI messages, thus contributing to coherence between the EU and national level.

Finally, the communication activities carried out by grant beneficiaries also complement other national efforts and offer opportunities for cooperation at Member State level. In this context, the grant schemes plays an important role linking the EU and national levels, as well as linking authorities with other national actors.

**Table 7. Examples of grant projects carried out by non-governmental organisations complementing national communication measures on the CAP by responding to national informational needs**

Grant project	Country	Mention of the adaptation of the project to national informational needs on the CAP
‘The CAP in school: informal educational offers as a complement to formal curricula’ by EUROSOC#DIGITAL (2016)	Germany	We focused, in particular, on vocational schools as <i>they prove to be in special need of European citizenship education</i> . Studies (e.g. Besand 2014) show that citizenship education in vocational training, in particular, is in bad shape due to a lack of training among vocational school teachers in the areas of politics, the EU and its policies. [...] <i>Therefore, the need for training in EU topics (such as CAP) is more pressing.</i>
‘iCAP: Challenges for the future’ by Radio Italia Puglia	Italy	This second target group (i.e. the general public) is certainly interested in issues relating to the enhancement of this rural area (southern Italy is

Grant project	Country	Mention of the adaptation of the project to national informational needs on the CAP
(2017)		a strong agricultural region) but is <i>not fully informed of the policies implemented at Community level</i> . The choice, therefore, of radio broadcasting, has been the best option, considering that radio is one of the mass media for excellence.
‘My land, your land – Ireland’ by Agri Aware (2017)	Ireland	<i>An obvious need</i> to communicate the overarching important role which CAP plays in guaranteeing food security, quality, safety, traceability and affordability; contributing to our economy; social, economic and environmental sustainability; and animal welfare and to identify and dispel the common misperceptions associated with the policy was identified by Agri Aware.
‘CAP works for us!’ by AgriGate Media (2018)	Bulgaria	During the project period, all the eight events envisaged to be held in high schools and universities were organised and successfully carried through. [...] <i>It was proved that there is a lack of information about the CAP’s instruments and the way they support farmers and rural areas in Bulgaria even among young people studying agricultural specialties.</i>
‘Discovering tomorrow’s Farm Leaders’ by Strategma (2018)	Bulgaria	The production of information materials was a key campaign activity for two major reasons: a. raising the public’s awareness, in particular of school and university students, of the opportunities that CAP creates for rural areas and the achievements it has supported so far <i>is essential since that awareness is low</i> ; b. building a true image of the CAP and its potential <i>is very important, because the one currently prevailing is distorted by the mass media’s predominantly negative coverage of problems, protesting farmers, unhappy village residents and depopulated areas.</i>
‘#ReConnect Farmers and Nature’ by Natuurpunt (2018)	Belgium	There are important regional differences in how farmers and naturalists perceive each other. In the north of the country (Flanders), there is a more pronounced distance between farmers and naturalists. In Wallonia, farmers and naturalists have been working together more intensively. Nevertheless, <i>we found that in all regions, work needs to be done to facilitate the conversation between both parties.</i>

Source: evaluation support study, based on extracts from technical grant reports.

Altogether, there is room to build on the positive examples by national authorities and non-governmental stakeholders in order to further strengthen awareness of the CAP and disseminate positive messages to the general public at national level.

## 5.4. Relevance

### a. For target audiences

There is good correspondence between the objectives and audiences in the CAP communication strategy and the needs identified as aims set out in Article 45 of the Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Article 45 distinguishes five aims of the information measures for the CAP, which can be compared with various statements made when describing the communication objectives in the CAP communication strategy as presented in the following table.

**Table 8. Comparison of aims stated in Article 45 with communication objectives stated in the external communication strategy for the period 2016-2020**

Aims stated in Article 45	Communication objectives
1. “Help explain, implement and	“The common agricultural policy (‘CAP’) is a policy for all the people of the EU

Aims stated in Article 45	Communication objectives
develop the CAP”	and the benefits that it provides to those citizens must be clearly demonstrated”  “A particular aspect of this objective is to reach out to and raise awareness of the CAP among urban audiences and other non-beneficiaries”
2. “Raise public awareness of its content and objectives”	“Raise public awareness on the relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development through the common agricultural policy”  “When communicating to the general public <sup>36</sup> , the focus of information on the CAP should put greater emphasis on addressing the (mis-) perceptions of European agriculture and the role of farming in society instead of the policy content.”  “There needs to be a greater understanding of the enormous contribution the EU agri-food sector provides to the wider EU economy, through 44 million jobs which generate 7 per cent of European GDP.”
3. “Reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns”	“[the] EU is consistently ensuring safe and high-quality food to 500 million EU consumers which is produced in a sustainable way”  “Build trust within the EU and among all citizens, farmers and non-farmers”
4. “Inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas”	“Engage with stakeholders (mainly farmers and other parties active in rural areas)”  “It should be ensured that there is greater awareness of the contribution that the CAP makes to the support of economic growth of rural areas, especially SMEs”  “The focus on informing about policy developments would be maintained when communicating to stakeholders”
5. “Promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it”	“The key issues of food security, climate change and environmental protection as well as the maintenance of sustainable rural areas must all be consistent features of the messaging.”  “[the] EU is consistently ensuring safe and high-quality food to 500 million EU consumers which is produced in a sustainable way”  “Reflecting consumer expectations on animal welfare, environmental and other standards, which are among the strictest in the world”  “[the] EU is investing almost €100 billion in the period 2014-2020 for the development of European rural areas”  “It will also be emphasised [that] the support provided for sustainable production practices and other measures will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change”

Source: evaluation support study, based on the external communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2016–2020 and Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council.

Stakeholder consultations also confirmed that the CAP information policy generally meets the needs of the target audiences. Most stakeholders positively evaluated the relevance of information presented by specific information measures, which responds to the needs of target audiences to a great extent as presented below:

- Activities of the *Ag-Press network* are highly relevant to journalists, enabling relevant contacts among its members and provision of useful data. However, the

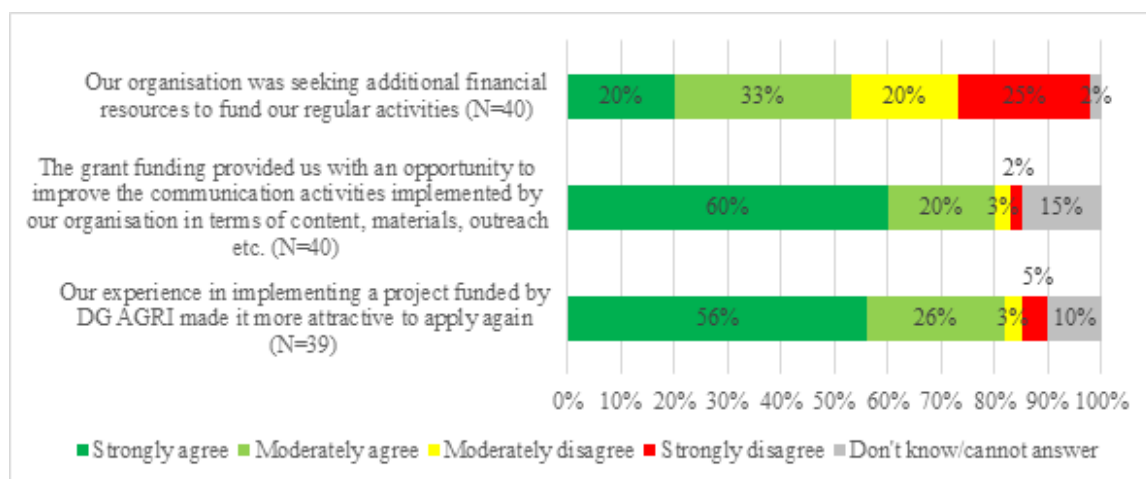
<sup>36</sup> This objective addressed findings from the 2015 evaluation report.



complexity and technical nature of the CAP can result in limited coverage in the general media and especially at national, regional and local level.

- *Social media and website* are also informative and interesting for the followers and users, which use them regularly mainly for work and study purposes. There is extremely small amount of negative feedback (< 0.01%) although website users could benefit from more country specific information.
- *Conferences* organised by DG AGRI are well suited for participants from the socio-professional sector, whereas *fair stands* target more the needs of the general public.
- *Grants* respond to applicants' needs for additional resources to implement large-scale activities that go beyond their regular activities or to focus content on agriculture and the CAP (see figure below). Moreover, projects implemented through grants play an important role to fill gaps in communication at national, regional and local level.

**Figure 17. Extent on which respondents found factors influencing the organisations decision to apply for a grant**



Source: support study, based on the grant applicant survey.

### b. For general public (EU citizens)

Communication activities on the CAP that target the general public have increased compared to the previous evaluation period. European citizens are aware of the relevance of agriculture and rural areas for the future of the EU. Eurobarometer data from 2020<sup>37</sup> shows that 95% of citizens perceive these aspects as being important for the future (an increase from 92% in 2017 and similar to the 94% in 2015). Nearly three out of four Europeans (73%, + 6 percentage points since 2017) are aware of the CAP. A longer term trend analysis reveals that awareness of the CAP is at its highest level since 2013, with a nine point increase over the period. Eurobarometer data also reveal that the provision of safe, healthy and quality food is most often considered by citizens as the main objective of the agricultural and rural policy. Both aspects are closely linked to the CAP and its information policy, indicating that the CAP's information policy meets the needs of EU citizens.

<sup>37</sup> Special Eurobarometer No 504 Europeans, Agriculture and the CAP published November 2020.



The priorities for the CAP in the public mind are clearly shifting. While providing safe and high-quality food is still considered the top priority, the focus on climate action, sustainable and environmentally-friendly agriculture and forestry is clearly increasing. This is in line with Green Deal objectives and warrants communication actions more focused on the potential of the CAP to contribute to the ecological transition and to address climate change. In this context, it is worth noting that young people are more climate conscious and have a more positive opinion of the EU in general. Promoting awareness of the central role of the CAP in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal and on COVID-related measures to assure the continued effective functioning of the food supply chain was central to DG AGRI's communication efforts throughout 2020.

There is also greater support among younger respondents for actions to be taken collaboratively with the EU, rather than just by the national government according to another special 2019 Eurobarometer on Environment<sup>38</sup>. The CAP survey also found that awareness of the EU's organic logo has increased dramatically, making it a potent communication message in the context of the Commission's Action Plan for the development of organic production<sup>39</sup>. While most Europeans consider that the EU is fulfilling its role on agriculture, notably on food security, there is a clear sense that support to farmers is too low.<sup>40</sup> While there might be a need to contextualise this result, it clearly indicates that citizens consider that financial support to farmers is justified, thus providing a good basis for communication about the CAP. This result also points to the economic importance that citizens attach to agriculture and its role in the economy as a whole.

The Eurobarometer results reflect very positively on the relevance of the CAP information policy. At the same time, the evaluation study<sup>41</sup> surveys (Ag-Press network and stakeholders) indicate certain limitations in the coverage of CAP related topics at national, regional and local level; there are difficulties in covering the CAP and related issues, both in the specialised agricultural media, but mainly in the general media. Journalists interviewed identified the complexity and technical nature of the policy as one of the reasons why it is difficult to communicate about the CAP. This reflects the need to increase efforts to develop communication material and more "personal" stories that resonate with the general public.

## **5.5. EU added value**

The CAP information policy generated significant EU added value, as the information measures implemented through the communication strategy address the needs of the CAP at EU-level. Thus, they complement the activities of national authorities and other actors. The implementation of the information policy has increased the volume of information

---

<sup>38</sup> Special Eurobarometer No 501 Attitudes of European citizens towards the Environment published March 2020.

<sup>39</sup> [com2021\\_141\\_act\\_organic-action-plan\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#).

<sup>40</sup> Special Eurobarometer No 504 Europeans, Agriculture and the CAP published November 2020.

<sup>41</sup> [Evaluation support study on the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy - final report.](#)

available on the CAP, respondents to the main survey often found that the content of CAP information measures was useful and shared it, further increasing the circulation of information about the CAP. This increased the knowledge of recipients about the CAP as well as contributing to their positive perception.

Moreover, the CAP information policy has extended the scope of the activities of other actors by reaching audiences not reachable or not targeted by national authorities or stakeholder organisations. The Europa website (AGRI) has reached 5.9 million visitors and the outreach through AGRI's social media is even higher. In addition, activities funded through the grant scheme have reached over 20 million citizens.

The information provided by DG AGRI's communication activities plays a reference role, as it serves as a primary and reliable source of information used and further disseminated by multipliers. More than 92% of the website visitors trust the information provided.

Finally, the CAP information policy has influenced processes by communication actors at EU and national level. A specific case is the Ag-Press network which has a unique character and does not exist at national level, providing information for media professionals. In addition, grant holders and their campaigns, have complemented communication activities at national level.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1. Effectiveness**

Overall, the evaluation concludes that the objectives of EU legislation on CAP information measures have been achieved to a large extent. Positive results and impacts of the information policy were identified when analysing the effects of various communication activities. The information policy on the CAP is deemed to provide a good mix of communication activities that is instrumental in increasing the understanding and perception of the CAP. This is reflected in Eurobarometer surveys which indicate that nearly three out of four Europeans are aware of the CAP and consider that the CAP benefits all citizens, not just farmers.

As regards media and on-line communication, the Ag-Press network contributed to improved understanding and a more positive perception of the CAP amongst the network journalists. Concerning social media, the findings suggest DG AGRI accounts are used effectively to communicate with their current users and that a positive expansion in activity took place in the evaluation period in terms of followers, reach and engagement. However, there is potential for better reach, especially amongst the representatives of stakeholder organisations. The website and its content is perceived positively by users though problems with website usability were raised related to navigation, language and search.

As regards fairs and conferences, the evaluation concluded that participation in such events was relatively effective in improving understanding of the CAP and related policy issues, and increasing awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development; networking was also an important motivation for attendance. In the course

of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in new methods of event organisation in online format, with high levels of participation but limitations in face-to-face interaction, and as a consequence less opportunities for networking and exchange of experience.

The grant scheme was judged effective when considering various project-related aspects (management and implementation), as well as the achievements of projects. Overall, the scheme was quite effective in communicating messages on the CAP. Significantly, it contributed to improving the organisational capacities of the beneficiaries (who are often important multipliers) and so in generating long-term positive effects, as well as tailoring messages to reflect national and local conditions. However, some first time applicants find the application process challenging.

## **6.2. Efficiency**

Based on the assessment of individual communication actions, the evaluation found no waste of resources and concluded that each of the activities generated benefits that justified the resources allocated. The evaluation found that Ag-Press network events, conferences and fairs, social media and web actions are efficiently organised.

Generally, the division of budget between DG AGRI activities and those implemented by third party grant holders is deemed appropriate. The grant scheme overall proved efficient and responded to the need for additional resources to enable the implementation of large-scale co-financed communication campaigns; without the co-financed element, it was concluded that the scope of many grant projects would have been more limited, or indeed in some cases they might not have been organised at all. DG AGRI is continuing its ongoing efforts to improve the quality and comparability of monitoring data, without however increasing the administrative burden on the grants beneficiaries.

## **6.3. Coherence**

The evaluation found that the CAP information policy is overall coherent with regard to the Commission's corporate communication policy, measures at national level, other CAP related instruments as well as other relevant EU policies.

As regards the Commission's corporate communication policy, the CAP information actions were considered complementary during the evaluation period and contributed to reaching wider audiences such as young people, school pupils and teachers. The evaluation also reviewed the coherence between CAP information policy and information policies in a number of related EU fields; it found that the information policy on the CAP is coherent with information policies on EU regional, health and environmental policies.

Different measures implemented under CAP policy are well integrated and exploit synergies between them. As regards coherence with the communication activities of other agri-related entities such as the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI), overall the evaluation found that their actions are broadly in line with the information policy on the CAP, with close cooperation, for example, on social media, dissemination of events, and sharing good practice projects.

In relation to information actions by the Member States, while the main messages and target audiences outlined in DG AGRI's external communication strategy are reflected in national communication, indicating a certain coherence, the evaluation found that in general there is more focus on stakeholders at Member State level and rather less on information actions aimed at the general public. However, it should be added that the communication actions carried out by grant beneficiaries complement efforts at Member State level.

The future CAP, through the national and European CAP networks, should increase the scope to pursue greater coherence between DG AGRI messages (for example, on the CAP in relation to its contribution to EU health, food, climate and environmental objectives) and those implemented at the national level.

#### **6.4. Relevance**

The evaluation found that the information activities carried out directly by DG AGRI (the Ag-Press network, the website, social media, conferences and fairs), and indirectly by the grant beneficiaries are relevant and address the needs of their target audiences (stakeholders and the general public). Moreover, the multiannual communication strategy includes flexibility, which allows for adaptation to evolving political priorities and changing circumstances.

The Ag-Press network actions were highly relevant for its members, providing new information, contacts and material useful for journalists' work. Social media and on-line actions are judged highly relevant for the different target audiences defined in the communication objectives. As regards the grants, an important point is that messages communicated in the course of the grant events were often relevant locally and resonated with the target audiences in the Member States. In addition, the grant scheme also frequently contributed to strengthening the communication capacity of the beneficiaries – often important multipliers in the Member States - and addressing gaps at national level as regards communication on the CAP.

The CAP's information policy also meets the needs of EU citizens, although there is scope to continue to keep under review and provide suitable communication material for the general public, focussing less on technical details and more on the human angle to which people can relate. In addition, the priorities for the CAP in the public mind are clearly shifting: while providing safe and high-quality food is still considered the top priority, the focus on climate action, sustainable and environmentally-friendly agriculture is clearly increasing and there is scope to highlight more this aspect in the communication policy.

#### **6.5. EU added value**

The evaluation found that the information policy on the CAP has achieved EU added value. It has increased the volume of information available by substantially increasing the total reach of CAP-related messages. In terms of impacts, the evaluation pointed to the achievement of the objectives laid out in the external communication strategy for the CAP – activities, from events to the website or social media posts. Those activities had

the impact of increasing the understanding of the policy and increasing awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development. As a primary, reliable source of information on the CAP, the information policy also ensured that information on the topics of food, farming, and rural development is made readily available, and disseminated by different channels including web based and digital communication.

## 6.6. Lessons learnt

The objectives of the information policy were achieved. Eurobarometer surveys show increased levels of awareness of the CAP among European citizens. The results show that a large majority of Europeans think that the CAP contributes to EU society in a number of ways including on the economy and climate change<sup>42</sup>. In addition, the evaluation identifies also a number of areas for reflection and improvement.

The evaluation demonstrates that information policy on the CAP is well aligned with the **corporate communication** policy of the EU. However, there is scope to seek **further synergies**, such as to intensify efforts to devise more user-friendly, human centred stories on how the CAP contributes to Commission policy priorities, which are suited to dissemination via social media. Furthermore, while the general public will remain an important **target group**, the limited resources devoted to communication in DG AGRI do not allow it to carry out wide-ranging information measures targeting citizens at EU level. There is scope to project more the EU agricultural dimension in the corporate campaigns and which are aimed at youth and the general public. This would allow DG AGRI to focus more on stakeholders acting as multipliers and opinion leaders, seeking their engagement to promote and stimulate debate on agricultural issues and the future CAP, which are also relevant for citizens generally. In this regard, DG AGRI will also continue to encourage grant projects that target the general public and resonate locally, in accordance with current practice.

The evaluation identified potential for enhancing synergy with the actions of Member State authorities. In this context, the importance of communication and ensuring visibility of EU funding is well reflected in the future CAP. Its implementation will provide increased possibilities for joint information actions between **the Commission and the national and regional public authorities** building on DG AGRI's long experience of working with these bodies. The external communication strategy for 2021–2025, factors in the future EU level CAP network and national networks, as well as the reformed CAP's requirement that Member States ensure publicity for their CAP strategic plan by informing beneficiaries and the general public of EU support for agriculture and rural development.

Opportunities to highlight the role of the CAP in achieving the Green Deal objectives should be actively kept under review, in particular integration of CAP communication activities with communication on other related policies and strategies such as the **Farm to fork** and **Biodiversity** strategies.

---

<sup>42</sup> Special Eurobarometer No 504 Europeans, Agriculture and the CAP published November 2020.

**The effectiveness of the Ag-Press network is being kept under review, for example the potential** to increase its visibility, especially on important policy issues and provision of suitable relevant targeted material and data. This should further improve the capacity of the network to act as a key multiplier, projecting major CAP themes in the media. DG AGRI can also build on its substantial expansion in recent years of **social media and web based communication**. Improving awareness of the CAP among target audiences with tailored messages on social media, and encouraging online interaction while addressing issues around the usability of the website, will offer more opportunities to target audiences to engage with EU policy on the CAP and Green Deal priorities. The positive experience gained during the pandemic with streaming conferences designed to be followed online confirms the capacity to reach wider audiences through social media. There is potential also to further develop the use of new tools such as podcasts designed to present topical issues in an attractive, user-friendly way. Regarding the website, it offers further opportunities to design content which responds to the needs of the general public.

As regards the co-financed **grants**, there is scope to further leverage synergies between the grant-awarded actions and DG AGRI's own information measures, with the objective of maximising the impact of information and communication measures on the CAP. There is scope to encourage grant applications from those Member States where potential applicants may be less familiar with the scheme and do not habitually participate.

## **ANNEX 1: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION**

### **Lead DG, Decide planning/CWP references**

Lead DG: Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Decide planning reference: PLAN/2019/5032

### **Organisation and timing**

This was a policy evaluation project included in the DG AGRI evaluation plan. It followed the Better Regulation guidelines with regard to evaluations. The evaluation work was carried out through an external evaluation study, contracted through DG COMM framework contract on impact assessment and evaluation of communication activities with reopening of competition. The work was carried out in conformity with the DG AGRI procedure for the organisation and management of policy evaluations carried out by external contractors. The project was supervised under the technical as well as the contractual management of AGRI unit C.4 in charge of Monitoring and Evaluation.

An Inter-service Steering Group (ISSG) was set up by the Commission on 14 January 2020, with the mandate to provide information, prepare the terms of reference, monitor the work of the external study team, discuss and give advice on the approval of the final report, comment on the draft evaluation SWD.

The ISSG was composed of the Secretariat-General of the Commission and DGs AGRI, COMM, SANTE, BUDG, CLIMA, ESTAT, MARE, OLAF and TRADE. The Steering Group started its meetings on 14 January 2020 and held 7 meetings.

The evaluation roadmap was published on 11 March 2019 and set out the context, scope and aim of the exercise. The roadmap presented the questions to be addressed under the five categories of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. During the feedback period on the roadmap, 3 contributions were received. These did not require changes of the approach towards the evaluation.

The evaluation support study carried out by the external contractor started on 12 December 2019. The final deliverable of the evaluation study was received on 14 January 2021. This external evaluation support study provided the basis for this SWD.

### **Exceptions to the better regulation guidelines**

A derogation was granted and no open public consultation was required for this evaluation. The extensive consultation carried out in the context of the study and the use of available Eurobarometer data replaced the open public consultation.

### **Consultation of the RSB**

This evaluation was not subject to scrutiny by the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

## ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

A number of consultation activities were carried out at different points in time for the elaboration of the evaluation, including surveys and interview in the context of the study. Furthermore, findings of relevant Eurobarometer surveys were used. The stakeholder surveys made in the context of the study covered general and specific measures. To ensure the surveys complemented other data collection methods and yielded the data required to answer key questions, they targeted different groups:

- For active stakeholders in the field of the CAP (main survey).
- For grant applicators (successful and unsuccessful; grant application survey).
- For members of the Ag-press network (Ag-press network survey).
- For users of the ‘CAP’ section of the EC website (website survey).

All of the surveys were disseminated via email except the Ag-Press network survey, which was shared over Ag-press (DG AGRI) platform and newsletter. Key targets on the basis of the number of respondents of the consultations and the margin of error that stem from them were elaborated.

**Table 9. Number of ideal respondents per target and type of consultation**

	Minimum target	Intermediate target	Ideal target
Main survey	97	196	385
Ag-Press network survey	88	165	280
Grant applicant survey	38	60	83
Website survey	97	196	385

*Source: Evaluation support study*

**Main survey** targeted at stakeholders active in the field of CAP, including beneficiaries, farming associations and other NGOs as well as public authorities. 388 complete responses were received, as most of the responses missed some of the questions (596). Overall, most stakeholders responded very positively about the last conference they attended that was organised by DG AGRI (Table 10), and their perception through the survey was positive in most of the statements they were asked on.



**Table 10. Rate of positive responses from stakeholders on their most recent experience of participating in a conference hosted by DG AGRI**

Participating in the conference was relevant for my work	92.68%
The conference was interesting	92.02%
I made new contacts during the conference	84.15%
I gained new information on the CAP and related topics during the conference	87.80%
I gained important information on the CAP and related topics during the conference	82.32%
My understanding of the CAP and related topics has increased	79.01%
My awareness of the relevance of EU support for agriculture and rural development has increased	73.29%
I now view the CAP more positively	58.28%
I have used information from the conference for my work	95.71%
The conference was well organised	94.44%
I have shared opinions or spoken positively about the conference to others	85.28%
I intend to participate in similar conferences in the future	96.32%
I can obtain similar information at other conferences	61.73%

Source: Adapted from the evaluation support study

The **Ag-Press network survey** targeted at journalists members of the Ag-Press network. 131 completed responses were received, reaching the minimum target. Ag-Press has been found positively relevant (96%), interesting (97.6%) by media workers, represented mostly by specialized agricultural media workers (90, 71% of the respondents). Respondents also showed that agricultural and CAP issues are not sufficiently covered in general media<sup>43</sup> (58%) nor it is easy to explain to the general public (62.5%). Nevertheless, respondents considered that specialized media covers it sufficiently (73.6%) and its readers are capable of following it (69.8%).

The **website survey** targeted at users of the CAP section of the European Commission’s website as well as relevant pages under “Food, Farming, Fisheries”. 611 full responses were received, above the ideal target. Information provided to respondents proved successful in increasing the understanding of the Common agricultural policy (84% of respondents, 485), in seeing the Common agricultural policy more positively (63.1%, 362) and in finding the European Union more positively (65.8%, 373).

The **grant applicant survey** targeted at grant applicants, both successful and unsuccessful. 45 completed responses were received, reaching the minimum target. Same as the previous cases, the perception of the CAP was positive on its effects on their organisations and society. This can be seen in Table 12.

<sup>43</sup> National, regional and local media of the respondents’ country.

**Table 11. Rate of positive responses from grant applicants**

The guidance provided by DG AGRI staff during the implementation of the project was sufficient and helpful	96.43%
Project reporting requirements were clear	92.86%
The effort required for project reporting was appropriate	85.71%
All the procedures of the grant scheme ran efficiently	92.86%

*Source: Adapted from the evaluation support study*

The results from the stakeholder consultations and the other methodological tools were assessed against the results of the **Eurobarometer** to guarantee its validity. In this instance, the analysis of the evolution of the perception of the CAP was done with the support of the Eurobarometer. Eurobarometer citizens' surveys show that in 2013, 64% of citizens were aware of the CAP; 69% were aware of it in 2015; 67% in 2017; and 73% in 2020, which goes in line with the positive results of the surveys. Most of the citizens surveyed agree that the CAP contributes to the EU's top priorities: securing a stable supply of food in the EU (80%); providing safe, healthy food of high quality (72%); ensuring a sustainable way to produce food (68%); ensuring reasonable food prices for consumers (65%); protecting the environment and tackling climate change (63%); ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers (62%); and creating growth and jobs in rural areas (58%), also in line with the results of the surveys, especially general one (showing its representativeness). Results of the perception have increased by between five and eight percentage points since 2017, indicating a very positive trend. Also, 76% of citizens surveyed in 2020 agreed that the CAP benefits all European citizens and not only farmers. This result almost reaches the level seen in 2013, when 77% of citizens surveyed agreed that the CAP benefits all European citizens. This figure had decreased to 62% in 2015, and to 61% in 2017, before going up again in 2020.

### ANNEX 3: METHODS AND ANALYTICAL MODELS

The methodological approach to the evaluation combined quantitative and mostly qualitative analysis, including a literature review, desk research analysis, surveys, interviews and case studies, primarily as part of the external and independent evaluation support study carried out by the external consultant PPMI. The interviews included DG AGRI staff and with key stakeholders in the context of case studies during the scoping phase.

**Desk research** involved reviewing key administrative documents relating to the implementation of grant projects and the Commission's own initiatives. National communication actions relating to the CAP in the Member States were identified and analysed.

**Interviews** were performed on relevant stakeholders, mostly National (from ES, FR and PL), Commission officials (Mostly AGRI) and representative associations, socio-economic interest groups, civil society organisations and trade unions represented in the CDGs. The number of interviews performed went, in most cases, over the targets set by the contractor, ensuring higher confidence in the results.

To ensure the **stakeholder surveys** (see Annex 2: stakeholder consultation for more detailed information) were representative, a target confidence level was set of 95% for the main survey, the Ag-Press network survey, and the website survey, considered an industry standard. For the grant applicant survey, a lower confidence level target of 85% was decided upon, due the smaller population of grant applicants.

As part of the **case study** on website, usability testing was used to understand how users interact with the CAP related sections and pages within the class 'Food, Farming, Fisheries' on the European Commission's website. The focus was made on the sections: 'Common agricultural policy' and its children pages; 'Farming' and its sections and pages.

Another usability testing took place as part of the case study on the Teachers' Resource Pack. The purpose was to understand how teachers interact with the Teachers' Resource Pack and to identify successful aspects, potential problems and solutions. As it was mentioned in the methodology section, 41 teachers (all from Western Europe) participated and 5 different tests were performed.

#### **List of case studies selection**

The selection of the **country case studies** was made so they represented a variety of contexts that made the study representative. Furthermore, it was also based on: agricultural data, as a share of GDP in each EU Member State in 2018; on the number of grants awarded between 2015 and 2018; share of population who are aware of the CAP (based on data from Eurobarometer); and to proxy for the negative perceptions of the CAP, the share of population who believed the financial support given to farmers was too high was used. The list of country case studies and their characteristics can be seen below.

**Table 12. Country case studies**

Country	Characteristics	Region
Czechia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Below average number of grants implemented</li> <li>- Average share of agriculture as a % of GDP</li> <li>- Below average awareness of the CAP</li> <li>- Above average negative perception of the CAP</li> </ul>	Eastern Europe
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Above average number of grants implemented</li> <li>- Below average share of agriculture as a % of GDP</li> <li>- Average awareness of the CAP</li> <li>- Above average negative perception of the CAP</li> </ul>	Western Europe
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No grants implemented</li> <li>- Below average share of agriculture as a % of GDP</li> <li>- Above average awareness of the CAP</li> <li>- Above average negative perception of the CAP</li> </ul>	Northern Europe
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Average number of grants implemented</li> <li>- Average share of agriculture as a % of GDP</li> <li>- Above average awareness of the CAP</li> <li>- Average negative perception of the CAP</li> </ul>	Southern Europe
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Above average number of grants implemented</li> <li>- Below average share of agriculture as a % of GDP</li> <li>- Below average awareness of the CAP</li> <li>- Below average negative perception of the CAP</li> </ul>	Western Europe

*Source: Evaluation support study*

The selection of **grant case studies** was performed to achieve representativeness of the different type of projects, co-funding level and geographical coverage. Overall, the selection of case studies reflects the fact that many of the projects implemented were information campaigns that included a combination of communication tools to achieve their objectives. Recently completed projects were selected to ensure that valuable feedback could be gained from stakeholders; the selection focused on projects between 2017 and 2018. Variety was ensured in terms of scope, both financial and geographical; the selection included projects included with various budgets, implemented within a single country or across multiple countries. To avoid issues with data endogeneity, grant case studies, Commission initiatives case studies and corporate communication case

studies were performed in different countries that those analysed on the country case studies that appear on Table 12.

**Table 13. Summary of grant case studies**

Type	Focus	Projects selected
Events	Events for one of the key target audiences – school children and teachers, and young people	‘Discovering tomorrow’s farm leaders’ (2018), implemented in Bulgaria by STRATEGMA Agency Ltd  ‘CAP works for us!’ (2018), implemented in Bulgaria by AgriGate Media Ltd
Audio-visual production	Projects focused on producing and promoting audio-visual materials	‘The Young Farmers Engine for CAP 2020’ (2017), implemented by RTV Slovenija in three countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Finland)  ‘ALOE: Agriculture Link Occitani-Europe’ (2017), implemented in France by Groupe La Dépêche du Midi
Information campaigns	An organisation that implemented information measures on multiple occasions (continuity of actions)	‘GAIA CAP’ (2016), implemented in Greece by GAIA  ‘Support for information measures relating to the CAP for 2017’, implemented in Greece by GAIA  ‘CAP forward’ (2019), implemented in Greece by GAIA (covered to the extent allowed by the data on this project that is already available)
Information campaigns	Projects with a wide variety of activities (internal coherence)	‘AHEAD FOR CAP - awareness raising campaign for CAP’ (2017), implemented in Bulgaria by Economedica  ‘#ReConnect Farmers and Nature’ (2018), implemented in Belgium by Natuurpunt vzw
Information campaigns	Web/TV-based campaigns only	‘More than farming’ (2018), implemented in Spain by La Vanguardia Ediciones S.L.U.  ‘La PAC pour tous les citoyens’ (2017), implemented by France Médias Monde in France, Romania and the France24 international network.
Information campaigns	Information campaigns with a strong focus on events	‘CAP it ALL off!’ (2017), implemented in Cyprus by Opinion and Action  ‘Parlez-vous PAC?’ (2018), implemented in France by Fédération Française des Maisons de l’Europe

Source: Evaluation support study

**Table 14. Summary of Commission’s own initiative and corporate communication case studies**

Type	Focus	Projects selected / scope	Methods
Social media	DG AGRI social media campaigns	Little Patch / Teachers pack (2018) EU Quality scheme (2018) Future of CAP (2018) Future of CAP (2017) The CAP in one word (2017)	Desk research Social media analysis Interviews
Website	DG AGRI website at europa.eu (content, design, navigation)	DG AGRI website: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy_en">https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy_en</a>	Desk research Interviews (usability testing) Website survey
Events	Conferences organised by DG AGRI Fairs visited by DG AGRI	EU Agricultural Outlook Conference Salon International de l’Agriculture (SIA) fair AU EU Ministerial Conference on 21 June 2019	Desk research Interviews Participant observation
Ag-Press network	Journalists’ study trips	Study trips and seminars implemented during the evaluation period	Desk research Interviews Qualitative content analysis
Teachers’ resource pack	Teachers’ resource pack prepared by DG AGRI (usability)	Teachers’ resource pack: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/teachers-pack/index_en">https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/teachers-pack/index_en</a>	Desk research Interviews (usability testing)
Corporate communication	Corporate communication campaigns	Invest EU, rural campaign, EU and Me	Desk research Interviews

Source: Evaluation support study