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Evaluation of the implementation of France's national strategic plan for the CAP

Part 1 – Deployment of the national strategic plan (NSP)

Summary of the evaluation

02/12/2025



1 Context of the evaluation

The evaluation of the implementation of the **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for the CAP 2023-2027** was conducted for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty (MAFS), which commissioned the evaluation. Various stakeholders participated in steering this evaluation as part of a dedicated working group that monitored all of the work: MAFS (Central administration and Regional Directorate for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry), the Rural Development Observatory (RDO), the Services and Payments Agency (SPA - Payment Agency), the Normandy Region, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, and FranceAgriMer (Payment Agency). This evaluation is part of the national evaluation plan provided for in Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, which organises the evaluation work for the entire 2023-2027 programming period. This plan provides for two stages in the evaluation of the implementation of the NSP: an interim evaluation (in 2025) and a final evaluation at the end of the programming period.

This evaluation corresponds to the first interim exercise, **focusing on the initial deployment of the NSP, and covers the years 2023 and 2024**, i.e. the first two years of effective implementation. This evaluation work makes it possible to analyse the various components of the deployment and implementation of the NSP over the target period (governance, resources deployed, information systems, communication, etc.), both at national and regional level.

The work was carried out over a period of eleven months (January–November 2025) and structured in three phases: **scoping** (January–April), **conducting investigations** (April–September), and **formulating recommendations** (September–October).



2 Objectives, scope and challenges of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- **Examine the conditions and initial results of the first two years (2023–2024) of the NSP's deployment**, both nationally and within a sample of regions, by analysing the main aspects of its implementation (design and management of the deployment, information and communication about the NSP, monitoring and evaluation, information systems, etc.).
- **Draw useful lessons for the continued implementation of the NSP** for the period 2023-2027.



3 Presentation of the evaluation framework

The **evaluation framework** forms the backbone of this work and has guided all of the investigations conducted as part of the mid-term evaluation of the NSP. It was developed and consolidated on the basis of the thematic sheet of the Evaluation Plan, discussions held during the kick-off meeting (WG No. 1), and work carried out during the scoping phase (initial document analysis, interviews with the main stakeholders involved in the implementation of the NSP).

This framework is based on several complementary evaluation criteria:

- **effectiveness**, focusing on the capacity of mechanisms and organisations to achieve their objectives in the first years of implementation.
- **efficiency**, analysing the mobilisation and coordination of human, financial and organisational resources.
- **relevance, consistency and added value of the European Union**, highlighting the adequacy of the interventions and actions implemented in relation to the needs of stakeholders and the objectives of the NSP.

These criteria form the basis of an evaluation questionnaire comprising **nine questions (QE1 to QE9)**, which cover the main aspects of the NSP's deployment and constitute the analytical framework for all the findings presented in the rest of the summary. The evaluation framework is presented below.



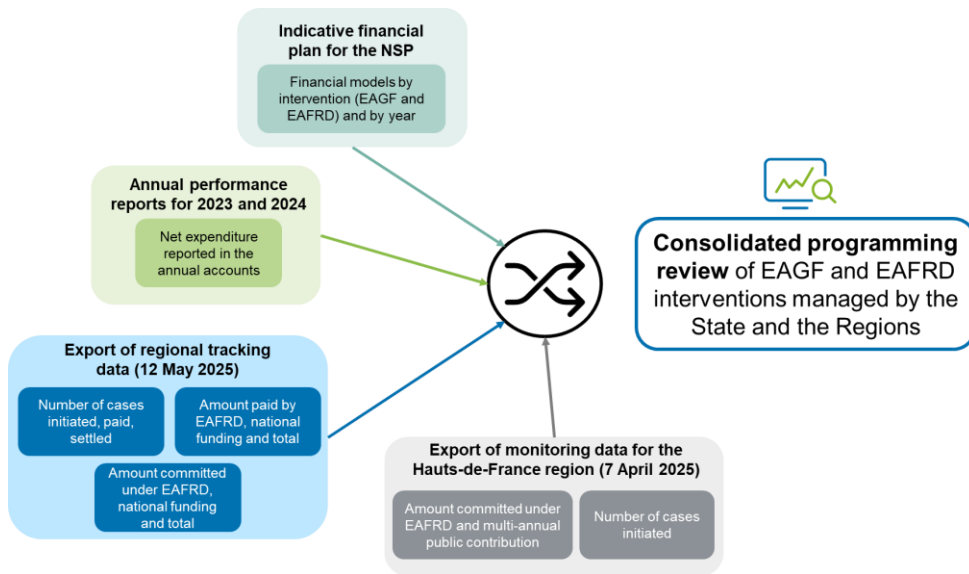
4 Methodological approach and data sources

The evaluation of the implementation of the NSP 2023-2027 is based on a **structured combination of quantitative and qualitative data**, collected and analysed in a complementary manner in order to assess the conditions for the programme's deployment during 2023 and 2024. The methodological approach adopted meets the dual requirements of robustness and feasibility inherent in an interim evaluation, in a context where certain data are not yet fully consolidated at this stage of the programme.

The methodological approach is organised around several guiding principles:

- **Diversification of sources**, to capture the plurality of viewpoints and available data.
- **Complementary methods**, combining quantitative, qualitative and documentary analyses.

- **Triangulation of analyses and results**, to ensure the robustness of conclusions.



This methodological architecture was designed to address the various evaluation questions, shedding light on issues from an operational and organisational perspective as well as from the perspective of beneficiaries, instructors and institutional actors.

Financial and administrative data

The main database used comes from **the physical and financial programming review**, carried out specifically for the evaluation. This review aims to shed light on the dynamics of programming and payment for interventions, to identify measures that are well underway and those experiencing delays, and to provide broader input for evaluative analyses and findings.

Several data sets were used:

- **The indicative financial plan of the NSP**, which establishes the amounts modelled by intervention (EAGF and EAFRD) and by year (for the State and the Regions).
- **The 2023 and 2024 Annual Performance Reports**, which made it possible to retrieve and evaluate consolidated data on the programming and payments of interventions managed by the State (EAGF and EAFRD). The variable "*net expenditure declared in the annual accounts*" was used as a reference to measure payments at the end of 2024.
- **Regional EAFRD data**, essential for understanding implementation in the regions. Given the low level of regional intervention visible in the Annual Performance Reports (data virtually absent in most regions for 2023 and 2024), a consolidated export dated 12 May 2025 provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Sovereignty was used. This file contains, for each region and each intervention, the number of files committed, paid and settled, as well as the corresponding amounts.

- **A specific file for the Hauts-de-France region** (dated 7 April 2025) was used to complete and improve the reliability of the database, given the delays in data entry into Europac tool for this region specifically.

All of this data has been consolidated into **a single database (Excel then PowerBI)**, allowing for a cross-sectional view of the implementation of the NSP: amounts committed and paid, commitment and payment rates, number of beneficiaries, etc.

Qualitative data

The quantitative data was supplemented by:

- **An in-depth documentary analysis** (NSP, technical guides, reports from monitoring and technical committees, regional documents, IT documentation, etc.).
- **20 interviews with the main NSP stakeholders:** Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, payment agencies (the Services and Payments Agency, FranceAgriMer and Corsican Agricultural Development Office), Rural Development Observatory (RDO), National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, Regions, Departmental Directorates for Territories (and the Sea), Regional Directorates for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry, Chambers of Agriculture France, Young Farmers France, Centres for initiatives to promote agriculture and rural areas, National federation for organic farming, Cerfrance, National network for agriculture and rural areas.
- **Two online surveys**, one of **beneficiaries** (301 usable responses) and one of **instructors** (186 usable responses), to document the field experience of beneficiaries and instructors and thus collect quantifiable feedback on key evaluation topics.
- **A regional case study** to collect contextualised information on the implementation of the NSP by the regions. This work focused on **the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region**, and **eight interviews were conducted with a panel of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the NSP at the regional level:** the Region, Regional Directorate for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry, Departmental Directorate for Territories (and the Sea), the Services and Payments Agency,

regional chamber of agriculture, Centres for initiatives to promote agriculture and rural areas and cooperative.

- **A European benchmarking exercise with two other Member States** with configurations comparable to France: **Spain and Germany**. Various topics were specifically targeted as part of this work: **governance and stakeholder mobilisation; resources, training and support mechanisms; and the administrative cost of managing European funds**.

Limitations and shortcomings encountered

Several methodological limitations were identified:

- **The low volume of regional data available in the Annual Performance Reports** limited the possibility of analysing regional programming for 2023-2024, justifying the use of the export from May 2025 (effectively extending beyond the initially set time frame).
- **The lack of an available list of beneficiaries and instructors email addresses** made it impossible to build a contact database for direct transmission of the survey questionnaires to respondents. Instead, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty and local relays were used to **distribute the survey links in a "cascade" manner**.
- Online surveys have **representativeness biases** (volume of respondents, over-representation of certain regions, limited coverage of outermost regions) that should be taken into account when analysing the results.

These limitations were systematically documented and taken into account in the interpretation of the results.



5 Analysis and results

Q1: To what extent has the governance (coordination, comitology, decision-making process, etc.) put in place ensured the effective mobilisation of stakeholders for the efficient deployment of the NSP?

The governance put in place for the 2023-2027 NSP programme is based on a **multi-stakeholder, multi-level architecture**, linking various steering bodies at **national and regional** level. It has enabled **broad stakeholder mobilisation**, facilitated by operational steering that is recognised as effective, thanks in particular to **the cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty and the Services and Payments Agency and the clarification of roles between the State and the Regions**. A quarter of the instructors surveyed identified interdepartmental organisation as a factor that contributed to the programme's successful launch.

However, certain limitations are apparent in the strategic dimension of governance, understood as the ability of bodies to guide choices and promote consultation between stakeholders. Although representative, **the National Monitoring Committee (NMC)** is perceived as **having little decision-making power**, with decisions being made outside the body (in fact, strategic decisions are taken within the framework of a pre-existing political body, the Higher Council for the Orientation and Coordination of the Agricultural and Food Economy). At the regional level, practices vary greatly, with a partnership between the State and the regions that is more or less pronounced depending on the territory, and coordination between the pillars of the CAP that still needs to be strengthened. Relations with **intermediary structures** (Chambers of Agriculture, Cerfrance, etc.) also vary depending on the local context.

There is room for improvement in terms of **strengthening the strategic dimension, the clarity of processes and governance bodies, and the flow of information**, in order to fully consolidate the mobilisation of stakeholders across the country.

Q2: To what extent are the human and financial resources deployed and the support measures provided to the departments responsible for implementing the NSP (training in the management and monitoring of the system, mastery of the new legal framework and information systems, etc.) appropriate for the implementation of the NSP?

The implementation of the NSP has relied on **the significant mobilisation of human resources within state departments, regional authorities and paying agencies**. While many departments have been able to adapt thanks to the commitment of their teams and, in some cases, **temporary reinforcements** (temporary staff, contract workers), staffing stability in some areas remains fragile in a context of overlapping programming periods and the ramp-up of CAP aid programming in France, particularly in departments with small staff numbers or high turnover. The use of temporary reinforcements has made it possible to alleviate short-term pressures, but it has limitations in terms of **sustainability and continuity** to support the programming process.

Support departments have been a key driver in facilitating the adoption of the new regulatory framework and information systems. **The tools and training offered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, the Services and Payments Agency and the Regions** (webinars, support materials, guides, training modules) were widely used and mostly considered useful. However, more than a third of instructors reported that they had not

received any training, and a **persistent need for support** was expressed, particularly with regard to understanding the regulatory framework and the relationship with beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, the survey results show that instructors have a **good level of understanding of the NSP**: more than 70% consider themselves to be familiar with the schemes:

Your understanding of CAP support schemes (eligibility criteria, selection criteria, etc.) is currently...

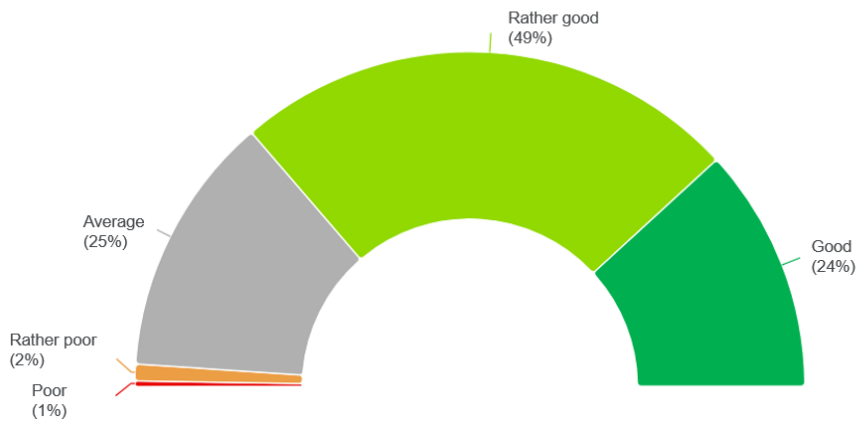


Figure 1 : Graphical representation of the question "Your understanding of CAP support schemes (eligibility criteria, selection criteria, etc.) is currently..." (Source: survey of instructors, July 2025)

These results highlight that the training and information engineering deployed has effectively supported the departments responsible for rolling out the NSP, although there is room for improvement in terms of further expanding the coverage of the actions.

Q3: To what extent have the various stakeholders responsible for rolling out the NSP provided information and communication on the NSP to beneficiaries (access to funding, intervention methods, etc.)?

During the first two years of the NSP's implementation, **information and communication actions** were carried out by all the actors responsible for its deployment, both at national and regional level. These actions resulted in **the production of a variety of educational tools** (fact sheets, notices, webinars, FAQs, public meetings, aid guides) aimed at making the schemes more understandable for beneficiaries. This strategy was widely promoted by the State and its decentralised departments, as well as by the Regions and other local structures.

This strategy was effectively relayed by a **dense network of intermediary structures** (chambers of agriculture, management centres, trade unions, cooperatives) which play a decisive role in translating and disseminating information. This network has enabled **the information to circulate satisfactorily overall**, as confirmed by the

feedback from the majority of beneficiaries surveyed as part of this evaluation, who consider the information to be fairly clear and have been able to identify the aid available.

However, there is still room for improvement in several areas. Some mechanisms are still perceived as **complex** (AECM, conditionality). Furthermore, feedback from the investigating departments reveals areas for concern regarding **the overall clarity of the communication strategy**.

Finally, the evaluation shows that **support** is a decisive lever: nearly half of the beneficiaries sought **assistance from an instructor and/or a third party**, which was considered by most to be very useful or even essential to the completion of their application. This support, which is useful but uneven across regions, also raises the issue of equitable access to aid.

Q4: Have the simplification efforts made during the transposition of the regulatory framework and the development of the mechanisms helped to optimise the roll-out of the NSP?

Simplification is a major objective of the 2023-2027 programming period and has resulted in a series of regulatory and operational changes (at European and national level) aimed at **reducing the burden on beneficiaries** and **streamlining management by the departments**. Several structural measures (right to make mistakes, rationalisation of the number of interventions, dematerialisation, increased use of simplified cost options, adjustments to conditionality rules, development of 3STR, etc.) accompanied the launch of the NSP in a context of new programming, technical constraints and rapid ramp-up.

Some measures have already had a **tangible impact on project leaders** (greater clarity, security and simplification of procedures) and on the departments responsible for assessing applications (streamlining of processes, reduction of certain tasks), even if these effects are **neither systematic nor always consistent across all audiences** (simplification for beneficiaries does not automatically imply simplification for the departments).

However, the simplification remains **largely imperceptible** to many stakeholders at this stage. Nearly half of beneficiaries say they are unaware of the measures introduced, and only 17% believe that they have reduced their administrative burden. Only 31% of instructors say that these measures have had a positive impact, with highlighting the additional workload caused by certain

measures (e.g. the right to make mistakes). It should be noted that a significant proportion of the beneficiaries and instructors surveyed say **they are unable to clearly identify the changes that have been made and assess their effects**. Overall, the simplification efforts are therefore notable, but their effects remain difficult to measure and depend on the level of ownership, requiring hindsight to be fully assessed.

Q5: Have the information systems deployed enabled the implementation of regulatory requirements? Are the human and financial resources devoted to information systems consistent with the effective deployment of the NSP?

The information systems deployed as part of the **2023-2027 NSP** have made it possible to meet European regulatory requirements for data collection, monitoring and transmission, thanks to the gradual deployment of national tools and the gradual interfacing of regional tools. However, the diversity of the solutions developed has led to **interoperability issues**, which have been partially overcome thanks to the joint efforts of the Services and Payments Agency and the Regions. All data has finally been successfully uploaded to "SYNAPSE", enabling the production of the annual performance report.

The implementation of a **new IT architecture** linking heterogeneous tools, combined with developments that sometimes occurred late, led to delays in the launch of the tools. In 2023, **numerous technical malfunctions** increased the workload of instructors and made the processing of files more complex. The **strong mobilisation of teams**, particularly at the Services and Payments Agency, made it possible to meet very tight deadlines but put pressure on departments.

In 2024, although the tools are generally operational, instructors continue to experience significant **difficulties in using** them: 87% of them consider that the information systems have been a source of difficulties, citing technical instability and room for improvement in terms of ergonomics, and nearly half of the agents surveyed feel that the tools are not suited to their operational needs. On the other hand, beneficiaries seem to have a better grasp of how to use the tools: a majority of them say they find it easy to use the online submission platforms, although difficulties remain for certain groups:

If 'yes', how did you find using the platform?"

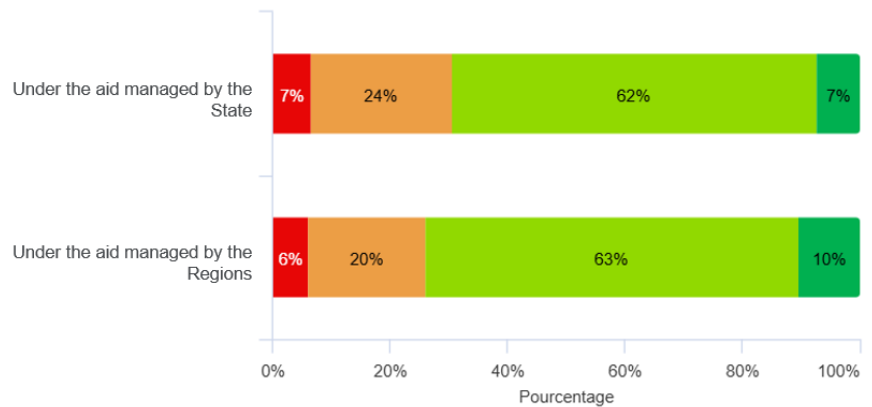


Figure 2: Graphical representation of the question "If 'yes', how did you find using the platform?" (Source: beneficiary survey, July 2025)

This highlights the importance of **consolidating support mechanisms**, both for instructors and beneficiaries, in the context of increasing digitisation.

QE 6: To what extent do the actions carried out under technical assistance (from the NSP and rural development programmes) and the National network for agriculture and rural areas meet the needs of the responsible departments and beneficiaries and are they consistent with the deployment dynamics planned in the NSP?

During the first two years of the 2023-2027 programme, the actions undertaken under **the technical assistance (TA)** of the NSP and the National network for agriculture and rural areas have provided structural support for the programme's implementation dynamics through the financing of a variety of actions: training, development of information systems, regional coordination and dissemination of information tools for beneficiaries and investigating departments.

Technical assistance from the State remains limited at this stage, as the main national tools were developed prior to the NSP. However, **joint technical assistance from the State and the regions** has been heavily utilised, particularly for the development of interoperable information systems and the organisation of training courses for regional managing authorities and local action groups. **The regions** have also been able to mobilise their dedicated technical assistance budget to finance information and communication activities, training, regional coordination and the development of digital tools, thereby contributing directly to the implementation of the NSP at local level. **The National network for agriculture and rural areas** played a **central role in networking, dissemination and education** through workshops,

publications, training and the coordination of schemes (LEADER, EIP), thereby enhancing the visibility of the NSP and the networking of stakeholders.

Overall, the actions implemented under technical assistance and the National network for agriculture and rural areas **meet the needs expressed by the departments and beneficiaries** (useful support for training for the departments, visibility of the schemes through communication, etc.). Technical assistance is therefore a lever that should be fully mobilised to **consolidate the efforts undertaken** by strengthening training, information and communication around the NSP.

Q7: Can the activities/structures/systems developed as part of technical assistance during this deployment phase be capitalised on? If so, would the same results have been achieved without technical assistance?

During the first two years of the 2023-2027 programme, technical assistance (TA) played a key role in the deployment of the NSP. The funds mobilised have been used to **finance a variety of actions and measures**, such as IT tools, training, educational resources, communication and regional coordination activities. These outputs aim to strengthen the capacities of those involved in implementing the NSP in the long term, but also to report on the use of European funds (measuring the achievements and results of the NSP).

The nature of the activities and systems financed confirms their **capitalisable** nature. The investments made in the “Services and Payments Agency” information systems meet the regulatory requirements of the CAP and will be fully mobilisable over the programming period. Similarly, the training modules financed have been designed to meet the ongoing needs expressed by instructors. The activities carried out by the National network for agriculture and rural areas (events, productions, etc.) promote the circulation of information and the development of skills among stakeholders, thus contributing to the emergence of a common culture around rural development.

However, the long-term leverage effect of TA remains to be confirmed. While the measures deployed meet real needs, their sustainability requires **the continued mobilisation of TA for the rest of the programming period**. Continued support for training, communication and information on the NSP will be essential to consolidate the achievements and meet the expectations still expressed by the departments and beneficiaries.

Q8: Have the technical assistance activities organised by the European Commission (e.g.

helpdesk) enabled the effective deployment of the NSP?

The technical assistance activities set up by the European Commission as part of the European CAP network have provided **useful support for the deployment of the NSP in France**, in particular through thematic events, working groups, online resources and specific support on evaluation issues via the helpdesk integrated into the network. This European mechanism provides a structured framework for bringing together national and regional stakeholders, promoting exchanges between Member States and providing a better understanding of European requirements. The documentary productions disseminated, although of varying interest depending on the themes or their general scope, were **widely used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty** and then **shared downstream** with the actors involved in the implementation of the NSP. **The Evaluation Helpdesk** also plays an important role, particularly in providing methodological support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty for conducting evaluation work.

Furthermore, some activities organised by the European network suffer **from a sometimes unclear positioning in terms of target audience** and may appear **less effective** when aimed at a broad non-technical audience. In general, however, the technical assistance activities organised by the European Commission seem to **be less well identified by regional managing authorities in France**, unlike in other countries, which may limit the dissemination of these resources at local level.

Q9: Is the governance system in place in line with European and ministerial commitments on gender equality (e.g. Interministerial Plan for Gender Equality 2023-2027)?

In view of **European and national commitments on gender equality**, and in particular the Interministerial Plan for Equality 2023-2027, the NSP governance system does not provide for an explicit mechanism to ensure gender parity in the composition of its bodies. In particular, the composition of **the National Monitoring Committee (NMC)** is determined by decree on the basis of the positions held, with no specific guidance on gender balance. However, an analysis of the gender distribution among participants at the NMC meeting on 24 October 2024 highlights **a significant representation of women**: 42% among full members and 52% if all participants (including accompanying persons) are included.

In a historically male-dominated sector such as agriculture (even though significant progress has been made in this area), this representation can be considered broadly **consistent with national commitments**, even if it is not

the result of a formalised commitment to gender parity. **The lack of explicit equality criteria in the governance of the NSP** is a point of concern, calling for greater attention to be paid to future appointments or governance reforms.



6 Conclusions and recommendations

The recommendations made at the end of the evaluation are based on **all the investigations carried out** (documentary analysis, physical and financial assessment, national and regional interviews, online surveys, case studies and European benchmarking) and were consolidated during a focus group meeting between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty and several regional managing authorities. They are primarily aimed at strengthening the conditions for implementing the NSP for the rest of the programming period. The recommendations are detailed below:

Recommendations :

1

Strengthen coordination between the State and the regions in the implementation and monitoring of the NSP



Concrete proposals :

- **Facilitate integrated regional governance of the CAP**, either by establishing a regional CAP monitoring committee co-chaired by the Region and the State (Regional Directorates for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry), or by building on existing multi-fund regional monitoring committees, incorporating a specific focus on the CAP across pillars (to be adapted according to regional contexts)
- Take advantage of existing governance by **introducing an integrated coordination space within the system already in place at regional level**, bringing together all the actors involved in the two pillars of the CAP
- **Foster State-Region coordination** by drawing on existing NSP tools to improve the clarity of NSP implementation at both national and regional level, share existing data more effectively and promote a cross-reading of regional dynamics



Targeted actor(s) : Regional stakeholders (regional authorities, government departments, ...)

2

Stabilise human resources and strengthen ongoing training for management departments



Concrete proposals :

- **Improve the organisational stability of teams** by limiting the use of temporary staff and promoting long-term job continuity.



Targeted actor(s) : The services of the regional managing authorities and the regional directorates of the Services and Payments Agency



Concrete proposals :

- **Identify the most urgent training needs and set up a modular training programme** on the key components of the NSP, linking it to existing programmes
- Provide a **'guide for new NSP arrivals'** (already available for civil servants), incorporating the regulatory framework and essential resources, to ensure continuity of skills and make the NSP more accessible to new arrivals
- Continue to promote **the sharing of best practices between regions** and raise awareness and communication around **the actions carried out by European experience-sharing networks** in order to encourage broader participation
- **Maximise the leverage effect of technical assistance (TA)** by targeting high-value-added actions (shared training, facilitation)



Targeted actor(s) : The departments responsible for implementing the NSP in the broadest sense



Recommendations :

3

Strengthen experience sharing and capitalisation around the use of information systems



Concrete proposals :

- **Set up a shared 'IT toolbox'** for all users (including IT working group reports, training materials and webinars, , etc.), **using the existing shared space 'MyASP'** to distribute resources and form a 'sharing community' around IT topics, **regularly sharing information** on new developments/the latest information available on the space and **coordinating the network of 'regional IT representatives'**, who are responsible for relaying information to teams at the local level
- **Optimise existing working groups around IT issues** according to their scope, frequency and topics covered, to ensure that they are known to all and that they meet the needs of participants.



Targeted actor(s) : Actors responsible for IT issues at national and regional level

4

Support regional activities and communication with intermediaries to boost the mobilisation of NSP measures




Concrete proposals :


- **Coordinate actions carried out at national and regional level**, identifying common 'information hubs' and information gathering points (via a NSP communication charter specifying the scope of action of each of the actors involved)
- **Strengthen communication around the structural elements of the programme** (call for proposals calendar, regulatory changes, etc.) with relays and third-party organisations (e.g. development of a digital 'NSP relay kit')
- **Ensure that intermediaries and third-party organisations** are regularly involved in steering and coordination bodies (with a view to sharing programming dynamics, news items, feedback from the field, etc.) and the National network for agriculture and rural areas
- **Leverage innovative digital solutions** (e.g. the 'Aides Agri' state start-up) to raise awareness of existing aid and guide beneficiaries towards the most relevant schemes
- **Optimise the mobilisation of technical assistance** for the implementation of targeted promotional activities, support for the shared production of regional communication tools, and support for the capitalisation of local initiatives and resources




Targeted actor(s) : Regional and national stakeholders



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