



Analysis of eco-schemes across the EU

Implementation and design of eco-schemes in comparison with the National Strategic Plans (NSP) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)



The newly introduced eco-schemes (ES) as part of the current funding period 2023 - 2027 of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are the central instrument of the so-called "Green Architecture". Together with conditionality and agri-environmental and climate measures (AECM) under Pillar 2, they are intended to make an effective contribution to the implementation of European and national climate, environmental and nature conservation objectives in and with agriculture. Essentially, they should play a major role in stabilizing ecosystems and the conservation status of widespread habitats and species and in regenerating or restoring them as far as possible. They offer the potential to reach many farmers in the area and thus also make a significant contribution to the implementation of nature, environmental and climate goals. A total of 158 eco-schemes have been designed in the 27 EU Member States, some of which are divided into further sub-measures. The diversity of the various measures in terms of their scope, level of ambition and financial structure is particularly noteworthy. The following section provides an overview and a comparison of the different forms of the public procurement framework.

For this analysis, all 28 strategic plans (Belgium submitted two strategic plans for the regions of Flanders and Wallonia) of the 27 EU Member States were reviewed. In order to obtain an initial overview, a tabular list/table of all the ES and their respective financial resources, designation, planned premium, programming with regard to premium calculation in accordance with Article 31(7)(a) and (b) and timeframe was drawn up. In order to assess their level of ambition and their environmental impact, it was necessary to take a closer look at the support conditions for farmers in each ES (and, where applicable, their various sub-measures). According to their level of ambition and their expected environmental impact, especially in the area of biodiversity, the ES were assessed, classified and graphically presented in connection with their respective budgets. The classification was divided into six classes according to their expected positive environmental impact. The classes range from "1", which is synonymous with ES that are expected to generate a very high and biodiversity-promoting environmental impact; to class "4", which is in need of improvement and will hardly have any environmental impact due to weak funding conditions; to class "6", which represents ES that continue to promote environmentally harmful practices or forms of husbandry.

In addition, the innovation potential of particularly (positively) conspicuous ES and their income-generating design in accordance with Article 31(7)(a) of the CAP Strategic Plan

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Regulation were considered. Furthermore, implicit multi-annual programming of the ES and alternative remuneration models or points models were examined in more detail.

Types of measures

There are four basic models of how the eco-schemes are structured. These basic models can be combined with each other to a certain extent. These basic models are:

a.) Similar to today's greening, there is a uniform set of requirements for all participating farms (corresponding to the crop) that must be met (possibly differentiated by farm type). Only if a farm complies with all conditions will it receive the premium. The subsidy is the same for all farms in the Member State and for each hectare of their eligible area (e.g. CZ, SK). With this model, the outflow of funds is easy to plan in the short and medium term. However, farms that do not meet the requirements will probably not be able to participate in the organic schemes at all.

b.) The farmers can choose from a menu of measures. Each measure is assigned a specific point value or unit amount. Payment under the eco-schemes is only granted if the farm exceeds a certain reference value (sum of points divided by eligible area). In this model, support can be granted in one or more stages. Within a stage, the support is the same for all farms in the Member State and for each hectare of their eligible area in the respective year (e.g.: NL, IE, FR). This model ensures an outflow of funds while at the same time improving manageability through a taxable unit amount, which can be increased if participation is lower than expected.

c.) The eco-schemes offer measures with a one-year commitment period and a fixed premium amount per hectare. The premium amount differs between the measures and support is provided per hectare (e.g: Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal, Denmark, Lithuania, Belgium (Wallonia and Flanders), Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta).

d.) The last variant largely corresponds to variant c), except that a fixed overall budget is provided for the eco-schemes as a whole and not a predetermined amount per measure. The individual measures only receive a point value. The budget is distributed to the farms according to the points registered (e.g.: HU, Poland). Here too, the amount allocated to the farms can be easily adjusted.

While the outflow of funds for variants b) and d) is easy to plan in the short and medium term, the volume of funds for variant c) is difficult to estimate due to the voluntary nature of participation. Depending on the design of the measures, weather conditions or changes in market prices, which have a significant influence on participation in the ES, can lead to major changes in the funding requirements.

The number of programmed eco-schemes varies considerably between the Member States (see Figure 1). The Member States that have chosen a menu approach (FR, IE, NL) are conspicuous. Although these were programmed as one ES, they contain many more sub-measures. In the case of the Netherlands, 22 sub-measures. Hungary has also programmed its points model consisting of 21 sub-measures as one ES. The Czech Republic and Slovakia (marked in yellow) have each created an overall ES and an additional measure. All other countries that have chosen measure type c) have programmed three to sixteen PRS, which may also be broken down into sub-measures.

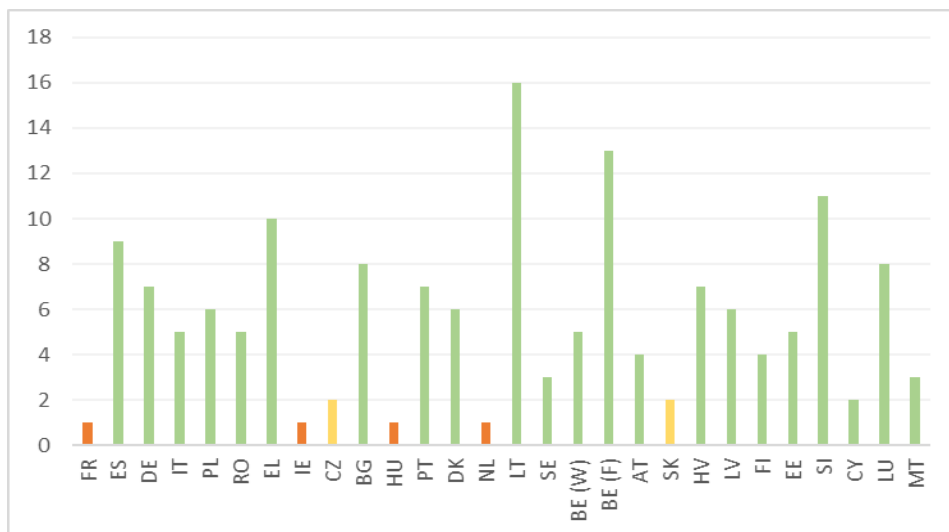


Figure 1: Number of eco-schemes according to the Member States

Effect on income

A central project of the EU Commission was to reward environmental services with an income effect in order to encourage farmers to provide such services and thus achieve the Green Deal objectives in relation to biodiversity. To this end, the definition of agricultural activity in Article 4 of the CAP Regulation has been expanded from the original definition of exclusively private production goods to include the provision of public goods. The new paragraph 7 (a) of Article 31 of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation enables an incentive payment for the first time, in contrast to the previous premium calculation as a compensation payment via 7 (b). This is linked in the premium structure to the costs incurred and profits foregone in relation to the implementation of an EO. 7a, on the other hand, is exempt from this and allows a freer premium structure, as it allows the farmer to free himself from the volatility of the agricultural market. This creates a clear break in the funding logic with regard to the remuneration of ecosystem services through eco-schemes. On the one hand, few schemes are programmed as incentive payments, while most are compensation payments. However, one of the Commission's conditions for the programming and applicability of such eco-schemes under Article 31(7a) is that they must not contain any discriminatory requirements for the specific type of land use, such as arable land, grassland or certain crops, or any production component (see WTO conformity). However, the EU Commission is inconsistent in classifying organic farming under 7a, which does have a production component. A total of 25 ES (out of 15 MS) were programmed as income-generating in accordance with Article 31 (7a). Here too, the range of design and ambition levels is very wide. The vast majority address biodiversity-promoting measures through the provision of unproductive areas or fallow land or buffer strips (ES, IT, DK); the creation of landscape elements (EL, PT, BE (W)) or soil protection through the creation of vegetation cover over the winter or in inter-rows of permanent crops (FI, EL, BE (W)).

The budget earmarked for the public procurement programs under 7a varies greatly (see figure below). The Czech Republic and Slovakia have allocated more than 90% of the total budget earmarked for the ES through their respective total ES (the Czech Republic has allocated 30% of Pillar 1). Greece (EL for short) has a budget of slightly less than 90% in four different ES, while Finland programs the ES for vegetation cover in winter, which accounts for by far the largest share, at over 7a. Other Member States (see figure) have

mostly designed a low-budget ES, which amounts to around 10% of the ES budget. France's menu approach and Hungary's budget-points approach could not be evaluated in this respect for the reason mentioned above.

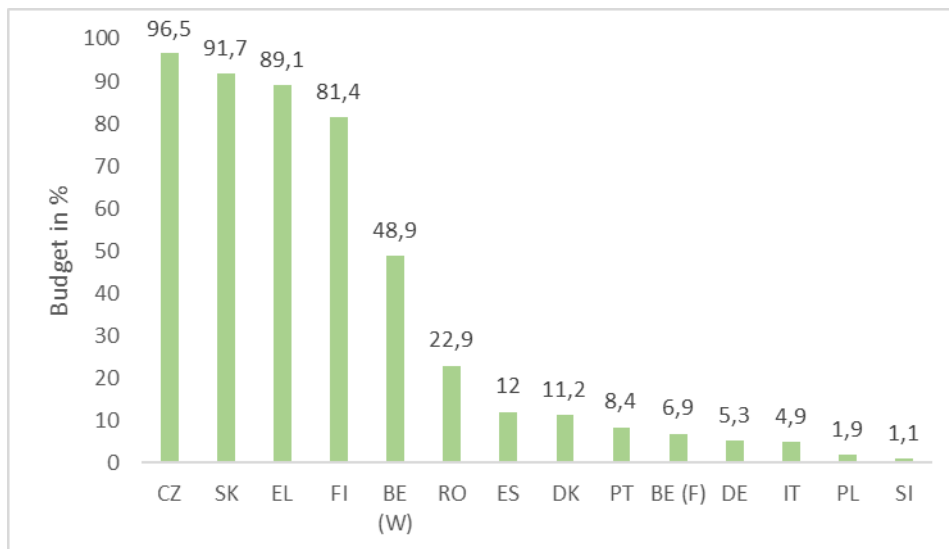


Figure 2: Percentage of budget for eco-schemes program via Article 31 (7) (a)

The two Member States of the Czech Republic and Slovakia are noteworthy in the context of the design under 7 (a). They have each implemented a whole-farm measure in which farmers can generally participate with the entire eligible area of their farm. Within this eco-scheme, the Czech Republic, for example, imposes support conditions on farms with regard to permanent grassland, arable land, permanent crops, the creation of fallow land, agroforestry or buffer strips, but also for certain crops such as wine and hops. In order to receive a payment for the entire farm area, farms must fulfill all the requirements relating to their structure. Although the Czech Republic has designed a thoroughly innovative ES, the level of ambition is low due to weak support conditions with regard to its environmental impact.

Slovakia has formulated the support conditions independently of land use types, for example by promoting the improvement of soil structure through catch crops, mowing times, grazing, greening of permanent crops, the management of agroforestry or non-productive areas. The ES is divided into two sub-measures, depending on whether the farm land is inside or outside protected areas (bird sanctuary), for which farmers can receive €59/ha or €92/ha. Also of interest is the special funding regulation, according to which areas outside protected areas may not be larger than 50 ha and within protected areas may not be larger than 20 ha. In addition, in order to provide targeted support for smaller farms, there are certain funding conditions according to which 1% more unproductive land must be created in ascending order of size (< 10 ha, < 100 ha and > 100 ha). Although the level of ambition in terms of the expected environmental impact can still be improved, it is sufficient.

When and which ES was programmed via Art. 31 (7) (a) does not appear to follow a comprehensible definition or to have been implemented inconsistently. It is not comprehensible how organic farming can be programmed, whereby production components are to be avoided. It is also not clear why France and Hungary were able to program their menu approaches via 7 (a), but Ireland and the Netherlands were not. However, especially against the background of tying all funds to the remuneration of public services, this is a decisive factor for the further development of the CAP from 2028.

Multi-year funding

A better predictability of the outflow of funds from the ES can be achieved through an explicit, or even better through an implicit, multi-annual design. These are measures that promote practices or circumstances that can have a greater ecological impact due to their multi-annual nature and generate better predictability or greater planning security for farms.

A total of 23 ES from 12 Member States were (partially) programmed as explicitly multi-annual. In a few cases (e.g. see Spain), only sub-measures were explicitly designed as multiannual. Most of these measures concern the diversification and expansion of crop rotation on arable land, e.g. LT and BE (F). Others address extensive grazing and the maintenance of organic farming in the case of DK and LT, which are each designed as two- to three-year measures.

The proportion of implicit multi-year funding is significantly higher at 37 eco-schemes. Here, some ES could not be classified as implicit in their entirety, as often only sub-measures are considered as such. As described above, most of them implicitly promote organic farming (BG, PT, DK, NL, SE, EE), the maintenance of existing landscape elements or fallow land (EE, HV, BE (W), DK, PL) or the extensive keeping of roughage animals (ES, PL, IE, BG, PT, BE (W), HV, LV, SI). Poland has introduced degression thresholds in the premium amount depending on livestock numbers in a LU measure dedicated to animal welfare, which conversely can be seen as an implicit incentive to reduce livestock numbers. Furthermore, IT, DK, SK and also Germany promote protected areas such as Natura 2000 areas, areas with particularly high nitrate levels or steep slopes (Spain). In Germany, eco-scheme 1 b) contains an implicit mechanism for promoting fallow land with flower strips, in that no new sowing of a flowering mixture is required in the following year.

There are no other mechanisms that could promote a multi-year approach, such as staggering the premium with a progressive implementation period or a gradual build-up.

Organic farming

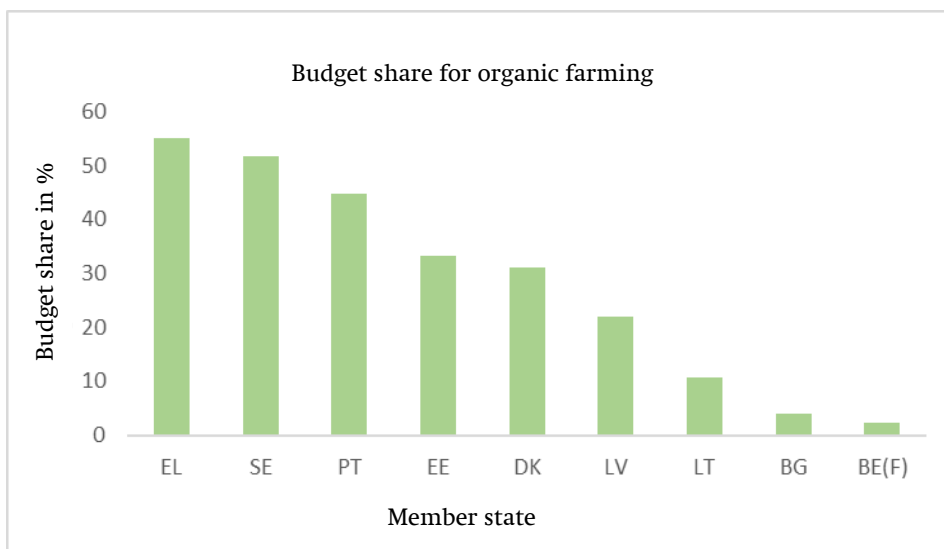


Figure 3: Proportion of the total eco-schemes budget for the promotion of organic farming excluding the Member States that have chosen a menu approach NL, HU and FR

In total, organic farming is being promoted for the first time in 11 Member States (FR, EL, BG, PT, DK, NL, LT, SE, BE (F), LV, EE) via an organic scheme and thus via the 1st pillar. The level of entitlement and the structure of the premiums vary. The premiums of the Member States that promote organic farming without further sub-measures (FR, BG, NL, BE (F) and LV) range from €56/ha (LV) to €356/ha in the case of Bulgaria.

A small majority (EL, PT, DK, LT, SE, EE) have set up organic farming ES according to specific crop groups such as cereals, vegetables/berries and fruit and, in individual cases, specific crops. EE, LT and SE even promote organic potato cultivation through a sub-measure, explicitly linked to a higher premium compared to cereals, for example. The premiums for this special sub-measure range from €300/ha in Estonia to €492/ha in Sweden. The spread of premiums in the countries that have made this subdivision according to crops or types of use is very wide. In Portugal, for example, the premiums for organic farming on permanent grassland range from €78/ha to €742/ha for irrigated fresh fruit. The situation is similar in Estonia, where the premium ranges from €132/ha for field crops to €800/ha for vegetables. In Greece, it ranges from €120/ha for winter cereals to €1,440/ha for table grapes.

Four states (PT, DK, LT, EE) explicitly promote conversion to organic farming through a higher premium. In the cases of PT and EE, this was supplemented by further sub-measures that address the same types of use or crops but provide more generous financial support for conversion to organic farming. The premium in both countries is around 10% compared to maintaining organic farming. Sweden has a maximum two-year conversion premium of €215/ha as a sub-measure, regardless of the crop, which is in addition to the basic subsidy of €117/ha. Sweden also has a further supplement for nitrogen reduction in addition to the basic premium. Also quite interesting: Belgium (Flanders) promotes the maintenance of organic farming depending on the size of the farm. Farmers here receive the maximum rate of €200/ha for up to five hectares; over 75 hectares, €75/ha is paid out. Belgium (Flanders) is also the only Member State that promotes organic farming above 7a.

Expected environmental impact

The level of ambition and the resulting environmental impact (in terms of biodiversity) is very heterogeneous, as is the design of eco-schemes by the Member States themselves.

Protection of biodiversity

Fallow land, flower strips and landscape elements

A total of 22 member states have developed eco-schemes to protect and promote biodiversity. These include dark green measures such as the creation of unproductive areas or fallow land, flowering and buffer strips or landscape elements and their maintenance.

The analysis also showed great variability in the quantity of the budget earmarked for this on the one hand and the design of the measures on the other. In addition to the 16 Member States presented below, France, Ireland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Netherlands have also developed such biodiversity-promoting measures or, as in the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, implemented them in their whole-farm eco-schemes, menu approaches or points models. However, these cannot be evaluated in more detail here, as they are not backed by a measure-specific budget due to their alternative approaches (compared to Germany).

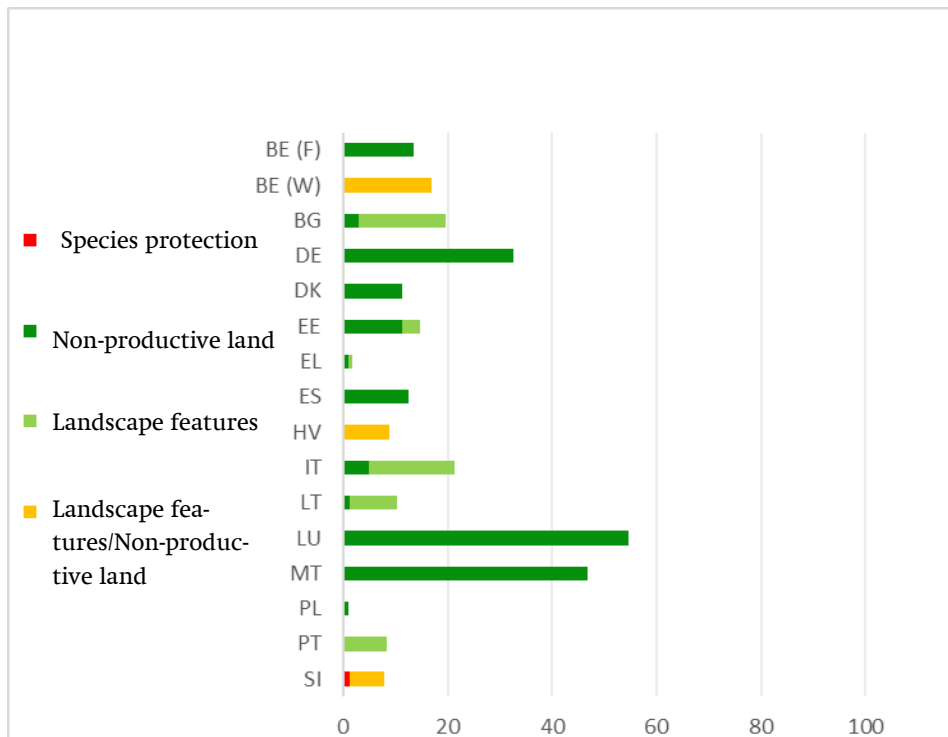


Figure 3: Budget for dark green measures as a proportion of the total budget for eco-schemes according to the Member States (Red: species protection, dark green: non-productive areas, light green: structure elements, yellow: structure elements and non-productive areas)

It is striking that only a fraction of the funds in most Member States flow into so-called dark green measures. Malta and Luxembourg stand out clearly in this analysis. Luxembourg has achieved this through two measures for the creation of unproductive areas on arable land and grassland, which account for over 50% of the ES budget. Both have several sub-measures from which farmers can choose and which are remunerated with up to €1,400/ha. Malta set up a three-year ES on biodiversity areas and fallow land, which account for over 46% of its budget. Due to the comparatively low importance of both countries for the European agricultural market and European agricultural policy, they should be regarded as outliers in this respect and the exceptionally high level of funding.

Germany is the only large agricultural country in the EU that has placed a strong focus on promoting biodiversity and has allocated over 30% of its budget to the creation of fallow land. With around €1.6 billion, the measure for the "provision of land to improve biodiversity" is by far the largest ES, which promotes unproductive land beyond the GAEC requirements of 4% in a not entirely straightforward approach. This provides for a set-aside of at least 1% to a maximum of 6% of the area, whereby farmers can receive €1,300/ha for the first percentage and €500 to €300 for the remaining percentages. If the area is cultivated with flowering areas or strips, an additional €150/ha is paid. The same mechanism applies to the old grass strips, but with €900 in the base and €400 to €200 for each additional percent. Thanks to the exceptionally high budget, around 700,000 hectares should be achieved in all sub-measures combined. However, an initial evaluation by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture showed very low take-up by farmers: Only 20% of the first percent of the ES was used; over 2% of non-productive land only 14%. Only 1% of the flower strips on arable land and in permanent crops were even taken up. Only the ES from Belgium (Flanders) for the creation of buffer strips is comparable to the German ES. It has a similar structure with regard to the distribution of sub-measures, without providing for a graduation for further percentages. The premiums here range from €1,025 to €1,745/ha for buffer strips with flowering mixtures.

Other countries such as Spain, Denmark and Belgium (Wallonia) have also set up ES to promote biodiversity areas. Due to their choice to implement the conditionality regarding set-aside of 3 % as a baseline, an increase to 7 % of unproductive land is promoted. In the case of Belgium (W) and Spain, landscape elements such as hedges, individual trees, rock gardens or walls, ponds and some more are also eligible. Portugal has chosen the same interpretation of conditionality, but with the addition of an unusual mechanism in which the above-mentioned landscape elements are included by a weighting factor according to their biodiversity-promoting services. The area equivalent results from the products of the weighting and conversion factors. This mechanism is certainly innovative, but also complicated to apply and it remains to be seen whether it contributes to sufficient utilization and thus to the planned environmental impact. Estonia, which has set up three ES to promote biodiversity, has developed a comparable mechanism to promote the ecosystem services provided by beneficial organisms through the conservation of landscape elements. A theoretical radius is used as a proxy for the "biodiversity-promoting area of influence" of landscape elements in order to determine their coverage of agricultural land. If the corresponding field is covered by at least 60 % or 90 %, farmers are paid € 20 or € 30/ha respectively. Another unusual but complicated mechanism.

Other Member States such as Greece, Poland and Bulgaria promote landscape features, but these are often expected to have little additional environmental benefit in the context of permanent crops, as in the case of Greece to promote the cultural landscape of olive groves or vineyards. Bulgaria promotes the conservation of agricultural land surrounded by forest, ultimately to preserve hunting grounds.

Reduction of pesticides

Although the reduction in the use of plant protection products (PPPs) does not directly contribute to the promotion of biodiversity, plant protection products in agriculture are the main stressor with regard to the decline in biodiversity, which is why it was decided to include the group of PPPs in the analysis. 13 MS - including Germany - explicitly address the reduction of plant protection products to protect biodiversity: on the one hand by reducing or banning the use of plant protection products themselves, and on the other hand through the targeted promotion of non-chemical synthetic or biological alternatives. In the cases of Italy and Belgium (Flanders), the abandonment of the use of pesticides was explicitly made a condition for funding in the ES for mechanical weed control. Germany also promotes the renunciation of chemical-synthetic PPPs, but only for summer and permanent crops as well as for green fodder plants, which is likely to lead to high deadweight effects, as farmers can estimate their summer crops to be pesticide-free anyway - depending on the weather - by the deadline for registering their ES.

Cyprus and Luxembourg, for example, have subdivided their ES more finely into sub-measures prohibiting the use of herbicides, insecticides or fungicides. Cyprus has designed more specific measures for certain crops, such as wine, or even according to territorial boundaries in permanent crops at altitudes below or above 600 meters. Estonia, Bulgaria and Luxembourg subsidize the renunciation of glyphosate with 15, 65 and 70 €/ha respectively.

Poland, the Netherlands and Luxembourg reward the use of biological pest control through microbial preparations such as fungi, bacteria or viruses in the case of Poland or through the targeted use of beneficial organisms. Luxembourg also promotes the use of synthetic pheromone dispensers in viticulture and fruit growing. Belgium (Wallonia) and Hungary promote the avoidance of certain active substances. Belgium has developed

a list of 20 active substances that are to be substituted, although these are active substances that are already little used.



Figure 4: Overview of eco-schemes with regard to their level of ambition and the respective budget as a function of the total public procurement budget of the 1st pillar (6 classes ranging from environmentally very effective (green) to environmentally harmful (red))

Finally, the conditions for the promotion of ES were evaluated and divided into six classes according to their expected environmental impact, whereby the first three classes, as mentioned at the beginning, further differentiate the "good" class and describe ES that are likely to achieve a high environmental impact. These include non-productive areas, the creation of landscape elements, the promotion of organic farming and, depending on the exact design, extensification measures. This evaluation depends on the uptake by farmers. This shows that the Member States that also promote organic farming in Pillar 1 achieve a comparatively high expected environmental impact. These include Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Portugal and Estonia. Malta and Luxembourg also achieve a good rating due to their ES for non-productive land. Also conspicuous are negatively rated ES, some of which continue to promote environmentally harmful practices. These include, in particular, stabling measures such as those implemented on a large scale in Italy and Romania. Italy, for example, promotes the reduction of antibiotic use by only 20% with a total volume of over €1.4 billion. Romania, for example, promotes the reduction of emissions from cattle farming through the use of feed additives, which is a purely technical approach to reducing an environmentally harmful form of husbandry. Other measures that were assessed as marginally effective are measures that go only slightly beyond GAEC standards, such as extending the minimum soil cover period by two weeks, as is the case in Austria.

Alternative models

Ireland has adopted a menu approach where farmers can choose from 8 measures. Two of these eight must be implemented to qualify for an eco-scheme payment. Two of these eight measures (at least 7% unproductive area, and planting landscape features) include an enhanced option such as planting at least 10% unproductive area or planting double the amount of landscape features. If this is implemented, it is counted as two eco-schemes. The premium is a unit contribution that is decoupled from the area on which the organic scheme was implemented and is allocated to the entire area of the farm. The standard amount is expected to be €77/ha with a participation rate of 85% of farmers. If participation is lower than expected, the amount will be increased accordingly. One of the eight measures, for example, is that farmers can choose to set aside a larger area than under the conditionality for "Space for Nature". Conditionality requires a minimum of 4%. However, Ireland is unique among Member States in including grassland, not just arable land, in this requirement. One eco-scheme is that a farmer can choose to increase this to 7%. This can be "doubled" so that 10% is set aside for nature; this then counts as the two required measures. As 90% of farms already have 10% and 95% of farms have at least 7% "Space for Nature" or unproductive land, farmers are likely to opt for this measure, which will not have an additional positive environmental impact.

A particularly interesting example of the implementation of eco-schemes based on a points system is the Netherlands. They have used the two-year transition phase to develop the implementation of a points system on arable land and grassland in two pilot regions. They have introduced a three-tier points system, divided into bronze, silver and gold with correspondingly graduated unit amounts of €60, €100 and €200/ha. However, the unit amounts are allocated to the entire farm area and paid out. This means that there are farm-specific thresholds that a farm can reach. Farmers can now choose from a total of 22 (sub-) measures (including ES). However, all measures are combined in one POR. It is also possible to implement several ES, if compatible, on the same area, to which another AECM can be added.

In order to qualify for the points system, a certain number of points must be achieved with regard to five protection goals (water, soil & air, biodiversity, climate and landscape) by means of the selected measures. Once this has been achieved, the justification values assigned to the implemented measures are used to calculate the overall value of the implemented management. The three staggered unit amounts result in farm-specific threshold values, but also "limits". Economically minded farmers have no incentive to go significantly beyond the threshold set by the "gold status", as further management is not remunerated. In addition, certain measures such as permanent grassland were calculated using sugar beet as a reference value, which results in an extremely high justification value for the further calculation. Gold status is already achieved with this measure alone - provided the farm has the corresponding area - and the farmer is not willing to implement further measures. This means that light green measures are favored and the environmental impact of the system can be classified as limited.

Both models use unit amounts as a premium and therefore have the important advantage of drastically reducing administration costs both in the planning phase and in the implementation phase. Transaction and implementation costs can thus be reduced to almost a minimum. In addition, the systems appear to be easier to understand and more user-friendly. The equally uncomplicated adjustment of the standard contributions, in the case of Ireland only one and in the case of the Netherlands three standard contributions, means that the funds earmarked by Brussels for ES can be fully utilized and a return flow to the EU can be avoided.

Summary and conclusions

The evaluation and compilation of a tabular overview of all European eco-schemes, including their financial structure and funding conditions, show the great variety of different measures at very different levels.

Nevertheless, despite the focus of some Member States on the protection and promotion of biodiversity, the budget, the scope of measures and ultimately the level of ambition in this respect is low and not very targeted. The expected environmental impact is therefore predominantly low, as too little money is earmarked for biodiversity-promoting measures at just over 10% of the eco-regulation budget. Of course, the uptake of eco-schemes by farmers plays a decisive role in their success. It has not yet been possible to take this into account here, which will have to be investigated in the future.

Furthermore, no strong correlation was identified between the programming of the eco-regulation via Article 31 (7) (a) and the expected high environmental impact of these measures. Above all, this shows a lack of consistency on the part of the EU Commission with regard to clear guidelines for programming such eco-regulations.

Finally, the overview and design of the eco-regulations in many cases suggest an interest-driven rather than evidence-based conception of measures. The Member States - and not only the Eastern European Member States - show little connection between their self-chosen policy priorities and the interventions developed. The intervention logic thus appears to be a black box. In addition, the Member States fail to show how the eco-regulations developed should contribute to the policy priorities and, above all, to what extent. A suitable evaluation system for the success and failure of the measures, as stipulated in Art. 31 Para. 8 of the CAP-SP Regulation, is not mentioned in any strategic plan.

Ultimately, the above summary results in recommendations for adjustments in the current funding period, which can also serve to shape the Common Agricultural Policy from 2027 onwards:

1. Systematic design of eco-schemes based on holistic ecological approaches

On the one hand, this concerns a move away from interest-driven concepts of measures, but on the other hand also a well-thought-out interlinking of the eco-regulations with each other, for example on the basis of agro-ecological principles, so that the sum of all eco-regulations contributes to a whole.

2. Significant expansion of the public service budget and income-related increase in premiums

The budget share of eco-schemes in Pillar 1 must be increased at the expense of area-based direct payments in order to develop a positive, noticeable effect in the agricultural landscape. The premiums must be designed to be income-generating in order to provide a financial incentive in line with the new funding logic. The so-called Austria rule, which allows financial resources to be reallocated to the second pillar at the expense of organic schemes, should also be abolished in order to force member states to have a proportionately similar budget.

3. Ensuring planning security and reducing bureaucracy

In order to increase the uptake of eco-schemes or any environmental services by farmers, long-term planning security beyond CAP funding periods must be created and bureaucratic hurdles reduced at the same time. Ultimately, this can also have a positive impact on the environmental impact of the interventions themselves and the outflow of funds. This is possible above all through

- Result-oriented/based design of eco-schemes using suitable environmental indicators
- Implicit multi-year nature, e.g. through a gradual and/or staggered build-up of the ambition level and the premiums
- Programming a system or type of measure that is easier to administer, see Netherlands, etc.

4. Support system for strategy plan designers

To incorporate deeper and more precise methods to identify specific action needs of Member States and to support strategic plan developers, enabling the link between objectives, outcome indicators and eco-scheme design in a structurally transformative, transparent and evidence-based way.

5. Handbook on available methods and best practice examples

To provide additional support for the policy design process, there is a need for much greater involvement of experienced and progressive practitioners and CAP experts to develop suitable practices, but also for the evaluation of the Member States' strategic plans by the EU Commission.