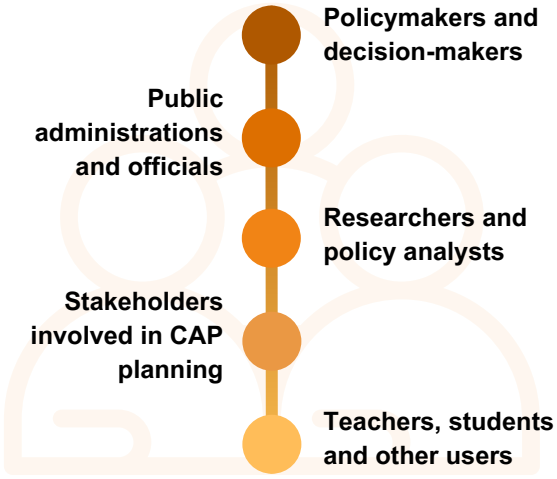
Handbook of Good Practices: Tools to Support CAP Strategic Management

A practical guide to evidence-informed strategic agricultural policymaking

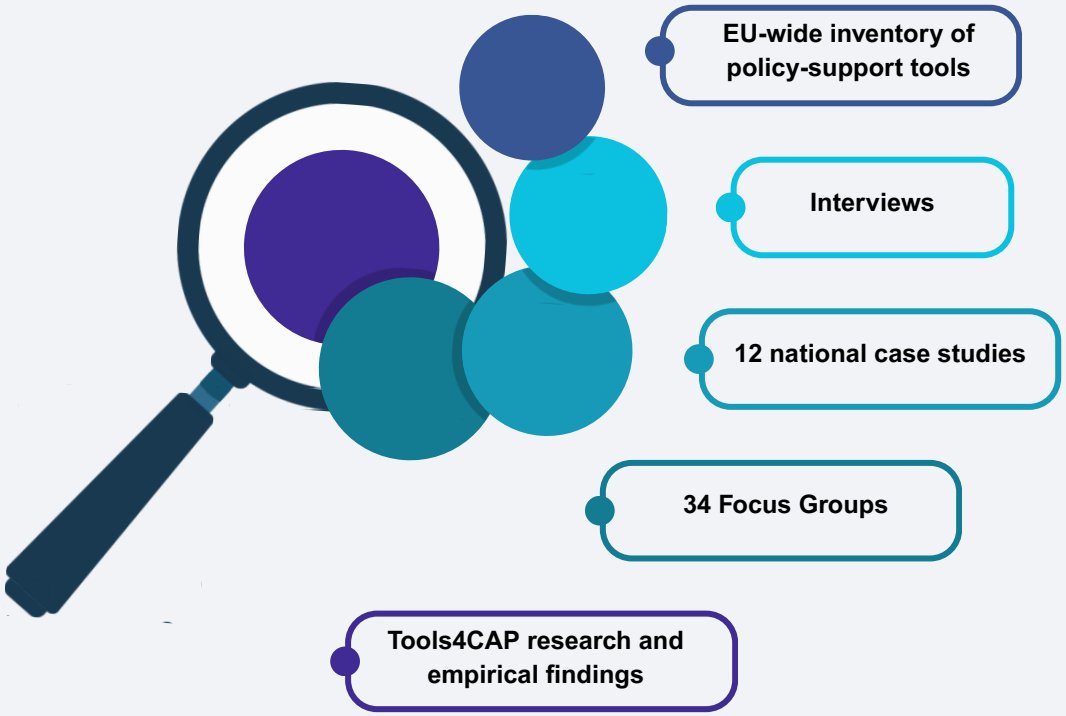
WHAT IS THE HANDBOOK?

- Helps policymakers and public administrations **make better use of evidence** in EU agricultural policy.
- Provides **practical guidance, methods and recommendations** for selecting and combining policy-support tools.
- Supports the **full CAP policy cycle**: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Looks ahead to the **next programming period**, when CAP planning is expected to become more closely connected with broader national and regional planning frameworks.

WHO IS IT FOR?



HOW WAS THE HANDBOOK DEVELOPED?



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WHAT CAN THE HANDBOOK HELP YOU WITH?

Identify and assess needs
Use quantitative, qualitative, spatial and stakeholder evidence to understand policy problems and establish baselines.

Design coherent interventions
Connect needs, objectives, instruments, outputs, results and expected impacts through a clear intervention logic.

Engage stakeholders
Integrate stakeholder knowledge and preferences throughout planning and maintain transparent feedback loops.

Monitor implementation and performance
Combine administrative, geospatial, farm-level and other evidence to track delivery and identify implementation gaps.

Set and prioritise policy objectives
Compare needs and priorities using transparent criteria, participatory approaches and analytical evidence.

Assess policy options and trade-offs
Use modelling, statistical, experimental and participatory methods to compare alternatives and explore economic, environmental and social effects.

Allocate resources strategically
Examine whether financial allocations correspond to identified and prioritised needs and expected results.

Evaluate, learn and adapt
Use evaluation and monitoring evidence to understand results, test assumptions and adjust policy when needed.

HOW IS THE HANDBOOK ORGANISED?

FOUNDATIONS
Understand the principles

- Strategic management
- Intervention logic
- Evidence-informed policymaking
- How political, institutional and administrative conditions shape policy decisions
- CAP strategic planning in the next programming period

METHODS AND TOOLS
Choose the right approach

- Quantitative simulation modelling
- Statistical and experimental methods
- Stakeholder engagement and participatory decision-support tools
- Monitoring and evaluation tools

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE
In the future CAP planning

- Needs assessment
- Prioritisation
- Intervention design
- Policy coherence
- Indicator and target setting
- Resource allocation
- Stakeholder participation
- Monitoring and evaluation

provides the basis for

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KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING

- **Evidence should inform decisions, not replace political judgement**. Policy decisions also reflect public values, institutional constraints, stakeholder preferences and distributional considerations.
- **Start from the policy question, not the tool**. Methods and tools should be selected and combined according to the decision problem, available evidence and institutional context.
- **No single tool is sufficient**. Quantitative, qualitative, participatory, monitoring and evaluation approaches provide different forms of evidence and work best when combined.
- **Connect needs, interventions and expected results**. A clear intervention logic makes causal assumptions explicit and provides the basis for monitoring, evaluation and policy adjustment.
- **Strategic planning is a continuous process**. Planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision are interconnected and should support continuous learning and adaptation.

LOOKING AHEAD: SUPPORTING THE NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD

A broader planning framework	The proposed NRPP framework would place CAP planning within broader national planning covering agricultural, cohesion, social, territorial and other EU co-financed policies.
Stronger coordination requirements	Future CAP planning would require coordination between agricultural priorities and broader national objectives, together with cooperation between authorities and policy areas.
Greater responsibility for strategic choices	A lighter planning framework would increase the importance of a robust diagnosis of needs, transparent prioritisation, coherent intervention design and credible indicators, targets and financial allocations.
Evidence, participation and learning remain central	Whatever the regulatory architecture, effective strategic planning depends on reliable evidence, analytical capacity, institutional coordination, meaningful stakeholder participation and the ability to learn and adjust during implementation.