

21. Landscape Features in the new CAP

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The European Agroforestry Federation is an NGO (Transparency Register [913270437706-82](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency-register/913270437706-82)), which aims “to promote the adoption of agroforestry practices across Europe by supporting efforts to develop awareness, education, research, policy making and investments which foster the use of trees on farms”. It has a network of 31 affiliated entities in 23 countries.

EURAF and ELO have collated the selection of Landscape Features made by Member States in their Strategic Plans for 2023-2027. All MS except FI and SE implement at least one of the options for hedges, trees in groups, trees in line, isolated trees and Forest margins, but the rules for tree crown size and block size differ considerably, and are often not clearly specified. Agroforestry was one of the Ecological Focus Area options in the previous CAP, although little used by MS. If it is to make a significant contribution to the rural economy and to GHG sequestration before 2030 then greater clarity is needed for farmers that existing managed and pruned lines of trees in silvoarable or pastoral systems will not detract from basic payments (BISS) in the new CAP, and that new agroforestry plantations, made with Pillar I or Pillar II assistance will qualify for continuing BISS payments. EURAF stresses that national IACS/LPIS databases are most appropriate for estimation of the area of Landscape Features (Figure 1), and looks for clarity from MS on the size and density of small tree-blocks which are permitted on farms, without changing their designation from “agricultural” to “forest” land.

Figure 1 - The Land Parcel Identification System is already used by MS to identify landscape features using orthophotos with pixel resolution better than 40cm (Luketić, Milenov and Devos, 2015). The Commission plans to replace the LPIS in Impact Indicator 21 with the “broad-brush” LUCAS system where 1 sampling point covers 4km² !!



1 Introduction

The EU [Biodiversity Strategy](#) for 2030 contained a commitment to “bring back at least 10% of agricultural area under **high-diversity landscape features**. These include, inter alia, buffer strips, rotational or non-rotational fallow land, hedges, non-productive trees, terrace walls, and ponds”. The CAP [Strategic Plan Regulation](#) (2021/2115) lists the Landscape Feature elements which Member States can select and allows them to add other elements “provided that they are not predominant and do not significantly hamper the performance of agricultural activity” (Article 4.4a). The CAP Strategic Plan Regulation confirms (Article 31.4.e) that Ecoschemes can be used for the “creation of landscape features or non-productive areas”. Impact Indicator I.21 is titled “Measuring the share of agricultural land covered with landscape features”. Result Indicator R.34 (which is reported annually) is worded “Preserving Landscape Features - share of utilised agricultural area under supported commitments for managing landscape features, including hedgerows and trees”. There is also a Landscape Feature Context Indicator (C.21) listed in the CAP Regulation, but this is identical to I.21.

The Commission’s Implementing Regulation ([L/458/463](#)) (Article 3.1 viii) confirms that for GAEC8 Member States should select “landscape features and non productive areas” from the following indicative list: “**land lying fallow, hedgerows, individual or groups of trees, trees rows, field margins, patches, buffer strips, ditches, streams, small ponds, small wetlands, stonewalls, cairns, terraces, cultural features, other**”, and “for each type of landscape feature and non-productive areas selected by Member States they should indicate the minimum size and weighting factors or conversion factors used for the calculation of the minimum share of landscape features and non-productive areas in arable land according to their contribution to the biodiversity objective, where applicable”.

In addition, MS are asked to list “**landscape concerned by the standard on the retention of landscape features**” Thus, two types of LF measurement must be provided by Member States: a) the GAEC-8 area of selected Landscape Features and

non-productive features contributing to the area threshold for arable land - calculated using conversion and weighting factors (i.e. contributing to the 3% or 4% depending on farmer and national choices); b) the total area of all selected Landscape Features and Non-productive Area elements on the total agricultural area (irrespective of weighting factors) which have been flagged for retention. The indicators mentioned for this are Impact Indicator 21 (I.21)¹, and Result Indicator 34 (R.34)².

However, the drive for increased subsidiarity has led to a more complicated and less coordinated GAEC-8 system than was the case with GAEC-7 and Ecological Focus Areas in CAP 2014-2022, and the proposed move to reporting using “sample-based” LUCAS/COPERNICUS data will lose the link to farm-scale data provided by IACS/LPIS. Furthermore, the JRC-MARS unit is no longer involved in monitoring the Landscape Feature data collected by Member States in LPIS, and no supervision of member-states methodologies remains in place.

2 Summary of Conditions in CAP Strategic Plans 2023-2028

Details of planned Landscape Features and non-productive areas for 2023-2027 are contained in Section 3.10.4 of each plan (Table 1) and some preliminary conclusions are:

- Some MS implementing the 7% option also include details of N-fixing-crop and catch-crop conditions, others don't.
- A majority of MS specify a maximum block size for “trees in groups/copses” which is either smaller or larger than the block size defined in their national legislation for “forest land”. These differences will complicate the administration of national IACS/LPIS systems and GHG reporting.
- Around half member states have some missing multiplication or weighting factors
- Of the 20 MS who recognise hedges, 5 do not give details of permitted width, length and gaps
- Of the 21 MS who recognise trees in line, 7 do not give details of crown size or permitted gaps.
- Of the 19 MS who recognise isolated trees, 11 do not give details of permitted crown size
- Non-productive forest edges are recognised in only 7 MS, but it was not a category in the CAP SP template

Member States have to prepare draft revised National Energy and Climate Plans ([NECPs](#)) by June 2023 ([guidelines](#)), and are expected to revise their CAP Strategic Plans within 6 months of entry into force of new and relevant EU legislation. The Revised LULUCF regulation will be approved by June 2023. It places many additional demands on MS, and it is *possible* that revised CAP Strategic Plans will be expected before the end of 2023. **It is hoped that MS will take this opportunity to clarify the gaps and inconsistencies listed in Table 1.**

3. Comparison with Landscape Features and Ecological Focus Areas in the CAP 2014-2022

Two recent EU Joint Research Centre reports on CAP Landscape Features are available, including recommendations for methodological improvements (Czucz, Baruth, Angileri, *et al.*, 2022; Czucz, Baruth, Terres, *et al.*, 2022). Many other reviews of the limited success of Greening Measures in the previous CAP have also been published (European Commission, 2016; European Court of Auditors, 2017). EURAF reviewed the implementation of Landscape Features by Member States in 2016 (Table 2) and concluded:

- Hectares of agroforestry were included as an Ecological Focus Areas but guidelines to MS restricted use of this EFA only to arable land which had already been included in Pillar II agroforestry planting schemes (Measure 222 or 8.2) - leading to an artificially small recording of this element.
- Areas of Afforestation and Short Rotation Coppice could be recorded anywhere on a farm - not just on arable land - in contrast to the restrictive approach for agroforestry
- Minimum and maximum size thresholds of landscape feature elements were not always provided by Member States: sometimes they were defined nationally and sometimes the EFA Regulation thresholds were quoted.

¹ Impact Indicator I.21 (*agricultural land covered by landscape features*) is described in the PMEF [Impact/Context](#) Indicators fiche. It consists of two sub indicators: a) *share of agricultural land covered with landscape features* and b) an *elaborated index of landscape elements structure*. This is said to be “under development”. Data for I.21 will be derived from Copernicus LMS and LUCAS, “**fed with LPIS/IACS data**”. **It is very unclear how this will be done, and coordinated across Europe.** Impact indicators are generally only calculated at the end of a CAP commitment period, so they are not used to monitor the success of specific measures.

² Methodology for R.34 (*preservation of landscape features*) is described in the PMEF [Result Indicator](#) fiche. It appears to have **no relation to landscape features in the context of GAEC-8** and is composed of “all schemes for climate, environment and animal welfare (Article 31)”, “environmental, climate-related and other management commitments (Article 70)” and “sectoral types of interventions (e.g. actions under restructuring and conversion of vineyards). This has radically changed the interpretation of “landscape feature” used in the previous CAP.

- Catch crops and N-fixing crops were much more popular as greening measures - this was confirmed by the ECA report's conclusions that only 2% of the final greening area comprised Landscape Features.
 - The mixing of productive and non-productive elements in greening EFA made the system difficult to implement.
- The JRC MARS Unit worked hard to exchange best practice on the recording and reporting of Greening Elements in the separate Ecological Focus Area layer (Sagris *et al.*, 2013)

Table 1. Elements of Landscape Features and Non-Productive Areas (including numbers of sub-elements) selected in the CAP Strategic Plans of Member States. For details see [this spreadsheet](#).

Country	AT	BEF	BEW	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HU	HR	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SE	SK	SI	Sum
01 Buffer Strips	1	1	1	1				1								1	1			1	1	1			1		1	1	13
02 Cairns	1						1			1	1							1	1	1									8
03 Cultural Features	1		5					1	1	1	1			1			1						1						13
04 Ditches			1			1			1	1			1		1	1	1	1			1		3	1	1	1			16
05 Field Margins (# types)		1	3	1	2	7	1	1	1		1		1	2		7	1	1	4	1		4		1	1	2	1		44
06.1 Hedges or woody strips	1	1	1	1			1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	20
06.2 Trees in Line		1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1	1		1	1		1	2	1	1		1	1	21
06.3 Trees in Groups/ Copses	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	2	1	1		1	1	24
06.4 Isolated Trees		1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	19
06.5 Forest Edge Strips - non prod		1	1	1					1		1				1	1													7
07 Fallow Land	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1			2		2	1	2		3			30
07.1 Cover or catch crops (7% option)		-	-			1		-	-	-	-		1	1				-				-	-	-					3
07.2 N-Fixing Crops (7% option)		-	-			1		1	-	-	-		1	1				-				-	-	-			-		4
08 Others			1			2	1	1		2							1	1				4	1	1					15
09 Small Ponds	1	1	1							1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1		1	1	1				1	15
10 Small Wetlands						1	1			1									1	1	1	1	1						8
11 Traditional Stone Walls	1						1		1	1	1		1		1	1	1			1	1		1					1	13
12 Streams										1											1	1							3
13 Terraces						1	1			1	1			1			1				1							y	7
Total elements / sub-elements active	8	8	19	8	4	18	11	6	11	13	14	1	11	12	8	16	12	8	11	11	6	21	10	10	8	5	6	7	283
4% Option	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	28
3% Option	y			y	y				y	y	y							y	y			y		y					13
7% Option		y	y	y					y	y	y							y					y	y	y	y		y	15
LULUCF Regulation - threshold of "forest land" (ha)	0.05	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.3	0.05	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.3	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.1	1	0.5	0.1	1	0.25	0.5	0.3	0.25	
Strategic Plan - max LF copse/grove size (ha)	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	-	?	0.2	?	?	?	0.3	-	0.5	0.5	?	-	0.3		0.3	0.5	-	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.9	-	?	0.5	
Details of hedge width and permitted gaps?	y	y	y	y			y		y		y		y	y	y		y	y	y			y			y				15
Details of permitted crown size of trees in line?		y	y	y			y		y				y	y	y				y				y	y	y	y		y	14
Details of crown size of isolated trees?		y	y											y	y							y	y					y	8

RED shows where the definition of "copse/grove" on agricultural land differs from the national definition the minimum size threshold for a forest block. In many countries the size threshold is not given or copses/groves are not recognised as Landscape Features

Table 2. Landscape Features & Ecological Focus Areas selected by MS in CAP 2014-22 (Lawson *et al.*, 2016 [link](#))

Country	AT	BEF	BEW	BG	CY	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UKE	UKN	UKS	UKW	Sum	
01 Buffer Strips		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y		Y		Y				Y	Y	Y	Y	19	
03 Other Landscape Features	G					Y	G	G		G					Y	Y			G	G		GS		GS			G			G			12	
04 Ditches	G	A	G	A		G	G	G	G	G	A		A	G	GS				A			AG		A						G			17	
05 Field Margins		A	G	AG		A		AG					A		A	A		A	A	A	A	A		A		GS		A			A		17	
06.1 Hedges or woody strips		A	G	A			G	G	G				A	G	GS			S	A			A	A					G	G		A		16	
06.2 Trees in Line		G	A		G		G	G	G	AG			A	G	GS			S	A	A		A	A		A		GS						16	
06.3 Trees in Groups/ Copses		A	G	A		G		G	G	A	AG		A	G	A	A		S	G	A		A	A		A		GS						18	
06.4 Isolated Trees			G	A		G		G					A	G	GS			S	AG	A		AG		A		GS							13	
06.5 Forest Edge Strips - non prod		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y					Y	Y	Y			Y	Y			Y											11	
07 Fallow Land	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	30
07.1 Cover or catch crops	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	21
07.2 N-Fixing Crops	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	31
09 Ponds	G	A	G	A									A	G	GS	A		S	G			AG		A									12	
08 Other																																	0	
9 Small Ponds																																		0
10 Small wetlands																																		0
11 Traditional Stone Walls	G						G	G					A	G	GS														G		A		8	
12 Streams																																		0
13 Terraces				Y			Y						Y		Y			Y					Y		Y									8
x - Afforested areas		Y			Y	Y		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y	Y					Y		Y		15	
x - Forest Edge Strips - productive		Y			Y								Y	Y	Y			Y	Y			Y											7	
x - Hectares of Agroforestry (ha)		YY	Y		Y			Y				YY	YY		YY			Y	YY			YY							YY				11	
x - Short rotation coppice	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	22
Total EFA Elements Active	8	14	14	14	6	13	6	17	8	11	6	4	18	13	18	8	2	15	18	7	4	15	5	13	3	10	4	5	5	9	5	6		

4 References

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