

# The Maltese National Network

## Terms of Reference of the

## Maltese National Network

Version 1.1

### Preamble

In compliance with Article 126 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans), Malta has established the National CAP Network for Malta through a resolution dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023. This same Network also contributes towards the AKIS ambition as outlined in the same Regulation and Malta's CAP SP, providing a platform to improve synergies and complementarities between the core stakeholders.

Whilst the AKIS is more oriented towards the creation and transfer of knowledge of information, the CAP Network offers a wider platform in which it brings the actors that can contribute to the effective and efficient implementation of the CAP SP. The AKIS and CAP Network focus on different areas which complement one another. In view of Malta's small size and centralised administration, this Network will host both the objectives of the CAP Network as well as the objectives of the AKIS.

These Terms of Reference outline the structure and function of this National Network, in line with sections 4.4 (CAP Network) and sections 8.1 (AKIS) of the Malta CAP SP.

## Terms of Reference

### Article 1: Functions

- (1) Article 126 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/2115 stipulates that Member States shall set up a National Cap Network for the networking of organisations and administrations, advisors, researchers and other innovation actors, and other actors in the field of agriculture and rural development at national level at the latest 12 months after the approval by the Commission of the CAP Strategic Plan. The national CAP networks shall build on the existing networking experience and practices in the Member States.
- (2) The National CAP network shall have the following objectives:
  - a. Increase the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans and, where relevant, in their design;
  - b. Accompany the Member States' administrations in the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans and the transition to a performance-based delivery model;
  - c. Contribute to improving the quality of implementation of CAP Strategic Plans;
  - d. Contribute to the information of the public and potential beneficiaries on the CAP and funding opportunities;
  - e. Foster innovation in agriculture and rural development and support peer-to-peer learning and the inclusion of, and the interaction between, all stakeholders in the knowledge-exchange and knowledge-building process;
  - f. Contribute to monitoring and evaluation capacity and activities;
  - g. Contribute to the dissemination of CAP Strategic Plans results.
- (3) The tasks of the National CAP networks for the achievement of the above objectives shall be as follows:
  - a. Collection, analysis and dissemination of information on actions and good practices implemented or supported under CAP Strategic Plans as well as analysis on developments in agriculture and rural areas relevant to the specific objectives set out in Article 6(1) and (2);
  - b. Contribution to capacity building for Member States administrations and of other actors involved in the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans, including as regards monitoring and evaluation processes;
  - c. Creation of platforms, fora and events to facilitate exchanges of experience between stakeholders and peer-to-peer learning, including where relevant exchanges with networks in third countries;
  - d. Collection of information and facilitation of its dissemination as well as networking of funded structures and projects, such as local action groups referred to in Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, EIP operational groups referred to in Article 127(3) of this Regulation and equivalent structures and projects;
  - e. Support for cooperation projects between EIP operational groups referred to in Article 127(3) of this Regulation, local action groups referred to in Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 or similar local development structures, including transnational cooperation;
  - f. Creation of links to other Union-funded strategies or networks;
  - g. Contribution to the further development of the CAP and preparation of any subsequent CAP Strategic Plan period;
  - h. Contributing to the activities of the European CAP network;

- (4) The AKIS shall focus on the support of generating innovation and exchanging knowledge between advisors, farmers and foresters, researchers, rural networks, national and regional authorities, media, all people involved in education and training, and consumers.
- (5) Successful AKIS strategies should include the four main groups of actions:
  - a. Enhancing knowledge flows and strengthening links between research and practice;
  - b. Strengthening all farm advisory services and fostering their interconnection within the AKIS;
  - c. Enhancing cross-thematic and cross-border interactive innovation;
  - d. Supporting the digital transition in agriculture.

## **Article 2: Structures**

- (1) The Network is composed of the following:
  - a. Chairperson;
  - b. Secretariat is composed of members from the Directorate of Agriculture within the Ministry responsible for agriculture. The roles of the secretariat are defined in Article 6 of these Terms of Reference.
  - c. Members: This network is composed of various representatives that can contribute towards an effective and efficient implementation of the CAP SP agricultural sectors, representatives of other actors active in rural areas, Local action Groups and public entities. The duties of the members are defined in Article 3 of this document.

## **Article 3: Membership**

- (1) The members of this network are those listed in the resolution adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 or their substitute as may be designated.

## **Article 4: Duties of the National Network Members**

- (1) The Network is not a decision making body. It is a consultative forum providing space for knowledge exchange, knowledge flow and innovation;
- (2) The Network members shall:
  - a. Actively participate during Network meetings and its processes;
  - b. Ensure that statements and/or recommendations made are in the interest of the effective and efficient implementation of the CAP SP. Participation in the network shall not be of any personal gain to any participant;
  - c. Bring in for discussion only relevant matters related to the effective and efficient implementation of the CAP SP.

## **Article 5: The Chairperson**

- (1) The Chairperson shall be the Head of the Managing Authority in charge of the implementation of the CAP SP.
- (2) The Chairperson shall chair the Network meetings and facilitate discussions on the issues being discussed;
- (3) The Chairperson may, when deemed necessary, suspend the debate;
- (4) In the event of the Chairperson being unable to attend a meeting, the Chairperson shall delegate these tasks to the next senior ranking member of the Managing Authority;
- (5) The ruling of the Chairperson shall determine any disputes in relation to the interpretation of the terms of reference.

## **Article 6: Secretariat**

- (1) The function of the Secretariat is assigned to the Directorate of Agriculture within the Ministry responsible for agriculture.
- (2) The Secretariat responsibilities include, inter alia:
  - a. Propose actions and concrete ideas including but not limited to meetings and the respective agenda, to the Chairperson;
  - b. Identify and undertake all necessary preparations required in order to convene and set up meetings and activities, including technical and organisational issues and administrative preparations for meetings, as and once meetings are approved by the Chairperson;
  - c. Identify speakers, facilitators, presenters and demonstrators that can animate and contribute towards all activities by the Malta National Network (MNN);
  - d. Prepare and share, any documentation and other material required for all MNN encounters, including material in preparation for, during and post meetings;
  - e. The distribution of documents, media and any other material linked to the scope of the MNN;
  - f. Taking notes of Network meetings, and follow up as necessary in line with Article 9;
  - g. Propose and, following Chairperson approval, implement a biennial working plan;
  - h. Attend meetings both locally and abroad on behalf of the MNN (encompassing both AKIS and CAP Network) as approved by the Chairperson;
  - i. Represent the MNN on local and international fora as directed by the Chairperson;
  - j. At least once annually during an MNN meeting, present to the MNN efforts undertaken both in terms of AKIS as well as CAP Network;
  - k. Maintain a conflict of interest declaration register covering the Chairperson and all members as well as participants/observers in meetings. The conflict of interest template is to be approved by the chairperson;
  - l. Maintain a dedicated communication email address for the scope of the MNN;
  - m. Contribute towards the evaluation of the programme, including but not limited to facilitating evaluation related input by the MNN;

- n. Contribute towards request for feedback as well as reporting to the European CAP Network as well as AKIS at EU Level;
  - o. By 15<sup>th</sup> December every year, provide the Chair with a report listing all activities done by the Secretariat network for the respective calendar year in line with the biennial plan;
  - p. Acting upon and accordingly on any other proposals by the network, as approved by the Chairman.
- (3) Any request for information from members and observers in relation to the Network activity shall be addressed to the secretariat in writing.

#### **Article 7: Meetings**

- (1) On behalf and as approved by the Chairperson, the Secretariat shall summon meetings and shall send the invitations at least fifteen (15) calendar days before the meeting date;
- (2) Members that are unable to attend a specific meeting can nominate a representative to attend on their behalf. In such cases, the member shall notify the Secretariat in writing prior to the meeting;
- (3) The Chairperson may invite experts and other persons to the meetings of the network or parts thereof, to, inter alia, provide information, clarifications, and/or deliver presentations on the issues being discussed;
- (4) Members may also propose to the Chairperson, to invite experts and/or observers and other persons to the meetings of the Network or parts thereof, to provide information, clarifications, and/or deliver presentations on the issues being discussed by the network. In such cases, a request needs to be made to the Secretariat for the Chairperson's approval well in advance of the upcoming meeting. If this request is not received well in advance, the Chairperson reserves the right to reject this request;
- (5) Network meetings are not public.

#### **Article 8: Agenda**

- (1) The Secretariat shall draw up the agenda of the meetings for approval by the Chairperson;
- (2) Upon approval by the Chairperson, the Secretariat may request any of the network members to present and/or provide supporting documentation to aid discussions concerning specific topics;
- (3) The agenda shall be sent to all members at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the date of the meeting. Following the circulation of the agenda, Members shall be allowed three (3) calendar days to notify the Secretariat with a proposed new item to be included under "Other Business". In such cases, the Members should prepare the necessary supporting documentation, such as information sheets and presentations, if required;

- (4) Members wishing to include an Agenda item for discussion should submit the request to the Secretariat well in advance of the upcoming meeting. In such cases and after the Chairperson would have deemed that the proposed item is within the scope of the network, members should prepare the necessary supporting documentation, information sheets and presentations, if required. If this request is not received well in advance, the Chairperson reserves the right to reject this request or include this item under “Other Business”;
- (5) The agenda will determine the logistics in place for the said meeting.

#### **Article 9: Meeting Notes**

- (1) The Secretariat shall take notes of each meeting of the network. These notes will be circulated electronically amongst members in due course

#### **Article 10: Funding**

- (1) Funding allocated for the Network within the CAP SP will be covered through Technical Assistance. Any financial requests are to be prepared by the Secretariat and sent to the Chairperson for approval.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Article 11: Changes to the terms of reference**

- (1) The Chairperson may, from time to time, review and update these Terms of References. Any such changes will be communicated to the network during a meeting of the national Network.

#### **Article 12: Code of Conduct**

- (1) The network members and observers shall guide their activities in compliance with the principles of the Code of Conduct (Annex 1) that is an integral part of this document.

#### **Article 13: Final Provisions**

- (1) These provisions enter into effect upon circulation with the network and shall remain valid until the closure of the CAP SP 23-27, unless otherwise notified by the Chairperson.

### **Annex 1**

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<sup>1</sup> As per section 4.4.1 of the CAP SP, a dedicated indicative budget from the Technical Assistance is allocated to this network.

## **Code of Conduct for the members of the National Network**

The members shall comply with the following rules of conduct:

- (1) Shall act in the interest of the overall CAP SP implementation, according to the established purposes and objectives;
- (2) Shall act in the public interest and shall not act towards obtaining financial benefits or other benefits for themselves or for other persons;
- (3) Shall notify the Secretariat of any conflict of interest situation they might find themselves in relation to a certain topic under debate, before the meeting. In this case, the situation will be assessed by the Chairperson and a decision duly communicated in writing;
- (4) At the end of the meeting, the members are responsible to inform the public authority, institution, NGO, or body they represent, about the main topics discussed and the outcome;
- (5) Shall keep confidentiality of information of which disclosure could affect the legitimate interest of any institution, organisation or person, or the information that if used in a privileged manner could create non-legitimate advantages of any sort.