



**Independent Evaluation Service of the Rural Development Programme  
2014-2020 of the Campania Region under the European Agricultural  
Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)**

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**Monothematic Report 2021: The management actions promoted by  
Measure 14 of the RDP for the improvement of animal welfare: evaluation  
of the results achieved and identification of potential adjustments and  
innovations**

***NON-TECHNICAL SYNTHESIS***

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## Introduction

This document presents the results of the Thematic Evaluation aimed at analysing the implementation and effectiveness of the measures promoted by Measure 14 of the 2014-2020 RDP for the improvement of animal welfare on livestock farms. This Measure, with its own technical and implementation specificities, represents a line of intervention that, in continuity with the previous programming period, is of strategic importance in Campania, given the importance, potential but also the critical elements that characterize the regional livestock sector.

The Thematic Evaluation responds to a specific cognitive need expressed by the Campania Region and, although it is an activity with technical and methodological autonomy (in terms of operational objectives, activities carried out and products supplied), it is fully integrated in the broader process of ongoing Evaluation of the RDP, contributing to reinforce its quality, relevance and hopefully usefulness in supporting the regional programming function.

In this context, the specific task, agreed with the MA of the RDP, was to develop analysis profiles whose results would serve two main purposes:

- 1) evaluate the effectiveness of the Measure in relation to the objectives assigned to it by the RDP on the basis of the first elements emerged from the implementation process;
- 2) identify and describe potential improvements/adaptations to the intervention strategy and related implementation tools of the Measure, which can already be adopted in the two-year extension phase (2021-22) of the current RDP and/or to be used in the construction at regional level of the agricultural policy for the 2023-27 programming period.

Within these general aims, the specific objectives agreed with the Region are expressed through the following "evaluation questions":

- 1) To what extent have potential beneficiaries (livestock farmers) participated in the actions and lines of action differentiated according to species and types of livestock farming that make up Measure 14? And with which territorial differentiation, if any?
- 2) Which main factors, internal or external to the RDP, economic, technical or other, have influenced - positively or negatively - the participation of regional farmers in Measure 14?
- 3) To what extent have the commitments made by farmers in participating in Measure 14 changed previous management practices? And with what organisational, technical and economic repercussions?
- 4) Did the adhesion to Measure 14 also favour/determine the realisation, in agricultural enterprises, of farm investments or other actions aimed at animal welfare? With the support of other RDP measures? Which ones?
- 5) To what extent have the commitments adopted as a result of participation in Measure 14 favoured the improvement, compared with the previous situation, of the animal welfare conditions, their state of health, the biosecurity conditions of the farm, the quality and/or quantity of production?
- 6) To what extent have the above improvements led to positive economic effects in terms of the selling price of farm produce and/or the differentiation of marketing channels in the beneficiary farms?
- 7) What adjustments and innovations should be introduced in the near future in the actions for the improvement of animal welfare in livestock farming in order to improve their effectiveness, efficiency and usefulness in relation to present needs?

The analyses necessary to attempt a reasoned "answer" to the aforementioned questions entailed the creation of an adequate information base made up of a set of quantitative (e.g. statistics,

monitoring data, etc.) and qualitative elements (judgments, perceptions, evaluations of entrepreneurs and Experts) largely of "primary" nature, i.e. acquired directly and for the first time by the Assessment Group through specific survey activities.

It should be noted that the adjustments made to plan the activities have been the result of a constant and constructive dialogue between the Evaluation Group, the MA and the regional coordination structures for the monitoring and evaluation of the Programme.

The integration - or, we could say, the "reunification" - of the results of the various survey and activities are distinctly illustrated in the following paragraphs, each one dedicated to one of the evaluation questions. A synoptic framework follows and concludes the document, in which the main conclusions of the Evaluation are associated with some recommendations, i.e. proposals for the improvement of Measure 14 in terms of Programme contents and/or implementation methods, often in the form of hypotheses or work areas, from which further in-depth analyses, comparisons and reflections may be developed.

### **Work steps and tools**

Analyses to provide a reasoned answer to the evaluation questions entail the creation and processing of an adequate information base made up of an articulated set of both quantitative (e.g. statistics, monitoring data, etc.) and qualitative elements (judgements, perceptions, evaluations of entrepreneurs, "witnesses", operators and experts). In order to meet the necessary cognitive needs, the Independent Evaluator (IE) has therefore adopted a mix of methods and techniques, which has resulted in a multi-step survey in line with what was envisaged in the Technical Offer phase and reconfirmed in the Annual Evaluation Plan.

The work carried out can be summarised in 4 main phases:

- analysis of the interventions and beneficiaries of Measure 14 by processing secondary data,
- presentation of the interventions implemented with Measure 14 and definition of sources/methods for the evaluation of their effects, through the contribution and judgement of Experts,
- sample surveys on farms participating in the measure (including a farm case study) and counterfactual analysis,
- overall interpretation of the results of the analyses carried out and formulation of proposals for improvement, through the contribution and judgement of Experts.

### **Participation in Measure 14**

With reference to the year 2020, a total of 419 livestock farms participated in at least one Action of Measure 14, with 106,191 LU, corresponding to 25% of the total regional value. The types of livestock farming mainly involved are dairy buffaloes (with 95,200 LUs, 40% of the regional consistency), followed by dairy cattle (9,153 LUs, 29%), both mainly in the plain-hill areas of Caserta and Salerno, while the participation of the other productive sectors foreseen by the Measure, such as sheep and goats and beef cattle, mainly located in the internal hilly-mountainous areas, was marginal.

Considering the adherence to the Actions in which the M14 is divided, it emerges the absolute prevalence of Action C (health prevention), with almost exclusively managerial commitments, which involves 51% of the applications, followed by Action A (increase of outdoor spaces) with 27%, which involves the achievement of structural requirements; the adherences to Action B (prolongation of natural breastfeeding) are less numerous, involving 20% of the total companies.

## **Factors that influenced - positively or negatively - the participation of regional farmers in Measure 14**

While the main incentive factor for all enterprises was the opportunity to receive payment for the 5-year commitment, the differences in participation levels between areas and types of farming are to be found, first and foremost, in their characteristics and skills/knowledge and in the characteristics of the relevant supply chains.

The larger company size and technical-managerial evolution, the more consolidated chain relations, the constant interlocution with professional consultants (veterinarians, zootechnical technicians) able to inform and guide, are among the main factors that have favored the prevalent participation in the Measure of dairy buffalo farms in the plain areas. Expected result and in continuity with what occurred in the previous programming period with Measure 215.

On the other hand, the weakness of the above-mentioned factors 'explain', to a large extent, the scarce participation of sheep and goat farms, which are mainly extensive, mostly located in more marginal and mountainous areas, with structural and organisational limits and with more discontinuous relations with advisory and technical assistance services. However, these farms have great potential for improvement in terms of animal welfare and health conditions, which should have been supported by more information, animation and advice on the advantages of joining the measure: in addition to the immediate benefit of the annual payment, the positive effects in terms of productivity and production quality, development of the company and improvement of its management skills. This "message" was communicated above all on buffalo farms, thanks also to the role played by professional technicians.

A further external factor, "horizontal" to the different sectors, is the persistence of a scarce valorisation on the Animal Welfare market: except in specific cases, there is no diversification of raw material prices according to the quality levels reached on this requirement. On the contrary, the increase in the price of buffalo milk in the last years, following the growth in the demand for mozzarella, has pushed many breeders to increase the number of animals, a factor that has therefore reduced the interest in Action A of Measure 14.

In addition, there are other aspects or constraints 'internal' to the RDP, which, although of lesser importance, may have discouraged greater participation: the complexity of using the AGEA portal to submit applications; the lack of procedures 'contextualised' to the most marginal and disadvantaged areas and to the weakest types of farming; the insufficient differentiation of commitments according to the different zootechnical realities existing in Campania.

Finally, as a further conditioning factor, the uncertainty of payments in the first years of implementation of the Measure (from 2017 to 2019) was pointed out in the Experts' meeting, which penalised especially the adhesion to Action A that, unlike the others, requires in many farm cases a structural adaptation of the farm.

## **The managerial, technical and economic consequences of participation in M14 and the role of the RDP**

The joint treatment of and 'answer' to the above questions is justified by the logical connection and mutual causality between the issues they raise.

The evaluations and opinions provided by the interviewed entrepreneurs do not show significant changes in the management practices after the adhesion to the Measure, especially when this is limited (as it happens in the majority of cases) to Action C, related to the adoption of reinforced sanitary prophylaxis norms, and secondarily to Action B. More significant modifications in the management of the animals and in the general organisation of the farm occur in the (less numerous)

farms that have adhered to Action A concerning the achievement of minimum outdoor space. In this last case, the farms have often had to sustain some investments to realize the necessary enlargement of the spaces, also resorting to the support of the Measure 4.1.1. In general, however, there is not a high participation of Measure 14 beneficiaries in other RDP 2014-20 intervention lines. Less than half (40%) of the farms involved in the direct survey, have also adhered to other Measures of the Programme, mainly supporting investments for the modernisation of the breeding structures and equipment (Measures 4.1.1, 4.1.2) or aimed at the reduction of greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions (Measure 4.1.3). Even less the adhesion to the "surface" Measures, such as M10, M11, M12, M13, with priority environmental purpose.

### **The effect of Measure 14 on the improvement, compared to the previous situation, of the welfare conditions of the animals, their state of health, the quality and/or quantity of the productions**

The entrepreneurs involved in the sample survey offer an overall positive evaluation of the commitments foreseen by the Measure in improving animal welfare and their health status. In particular, for the commitment related to the minimum outdoor space (Action A) the improvement is judged as "high" by 92% of the interviewed farmers; percentage that reaches 88% for the reinforcement of sanitary prevention (Action C) but decreases to 53% in the continuation of natural lactation (Action B).

The perception of a "high" increase in productivity per animal is reported, also in this case, mainly for Action A (85%) and secondarily for the other two Actions, with judgments of "low" effect for this criterion exceeding 30% of the responses. The distribution by classes of effectiveness of the commitments in terms of improving the quality of production is more balanced, with judgments of "high" effect varying from 69% for Action A, to 56% for Action C, to 41% for Action B.

Compared to the above-mentioned evaluations of the interviewed entrepreneurs, the judgement offered by the Experts in the two meetings regarding the effectiveness of the Measure in improving BA is more articulated and overall less "optimistic". While acknowledging the important role played by the Measure in raising awareness among farmers on the issue of "animal welfare" and in introducing new management approaches, its limits were also highlighted, on the basis of which programmatic adjustment actions should be developed. The commitments introduced, although potentially competing with the "animal welfare" objective, determine, first of all, a reduced overall quantitative impact, especially in some sectors or types of farming (e.g. sheep and goats, beef cattle) due to their low level of diffusion. This is a consequence of the factors limiting participation mentioned above.

There is also a lack of a clear, shared and in-depth definition of the concept (or requirement) of 'animal welfare' and of the potential causal links between proposed improvements, animal welfare and farm productivity. These links are not always direct and 'automatic' but much more complex and depend on the overall structural and management conditions of the farm.

The opportunity to define and then apply methods/tools for evaluating commitments, in terms of their effectiveness with respect to animal welfare objectives (which are not completely identified with those of greater productivity) and able to justify public economic support to the community, is therefore underlined. Furthermore, the usefulness of transferring the use of such methods and tools to the farmer, to support his management and progressive improvement activities.

### **The role of Measure 14 for better market positioning**

The positive causal link between the improvement of animal welfare determined by the measure and the achievement of a higher valorisation, also in economic terms (price) of the raw material (milk) or differentiation of the marketing channels, even if it represents an important potentiality, does not

emerge in a clear and relevant way from the sample survey carried out. Such positive effects are reported only in a limited number of entrepreneurs, mainly where processing and direct sale are carried out on the farm while, among those who give milk to dairies, some only report the achievement of a relative priority requirement, especially in periods of market crisis.

### Prospects for the future

Among the proposals formulated and shared by the Experts during the two meetings - including the suggestions made by the entrepreneurs in the direct survey - the use of animal welfare assessment systems, able to provide comparative analyses between farms and over time, is a priority. Among these, the advantages of the ClassyFarm system were discussed, which has already been used in Campania for some years (e.g. in the periodic checks carried out by the ASL-area C) and is a new reference for the National Animal Welfare Quality System (SQNBA).

It should be borne in mind that the ante and post evaluation (at the adoption of new management practices) of the BA level would allow the measure to make a substantial qualitative progress, avoiding its role as a mere economic support tool and instead enhancing its potential to effectively affect animal welfare conditions on farms.

Other proposals for improvement concern the strengthening of animation and information activities (especially towards the types of breeding and areas that are currently less involved) and a greater differentiation of commitments by territory and level of breeding intensity. This is in response to the highlighted criticality related to the low participation to the Measure of the sheep and goat and beef farms operating in the most internal and disadvantaged areas.

Finally, it is suggested to differentiate the support between the first introduction and the maintenance of the BA commitments undertaken under Measure 14; this is in awareness of the differences in the respective breeding conditions, in terms of burdens and possible margins for further improvement.

### Summary of main conclusions and recommendations - logbook

Themes/scope of analysis	Conclusions	Recommendations
<b>Participation of farmers in Measure 14 and other RDP measures</b>	<p>Compared to the regional zootechnical panorama, there was a relatively <b>high participation of dairy buffalo farms, and secondarily of dairy cattle farms</b>, located in the plain areas of the provinces of Caserta and Salerno, of medium-large size, more structured and advanced from a technical and management point of view, in contact with professional consultants who mostly informed and oriented the farmer to adhere to the measure. The <b>highest adhesion occurs for Action C</b> (advanced sanitary prophylaxis) followed by B (natural lactation, in buffaloes), while the adhesion to A (minimum spaces) is relatively lower, as it requires adequate structural conditions and determines more profound variations in herd management methods.</p> <p><b>The participation of beef cattle or buffaloes is much lower and that of sheep, goats and poultry is marginal.</b></p> <p>smaller, structurally and technologically weaker.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significantly strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the <b>animation and information activities</b> on the opportunities of the "animal welfare" measure, in particular towards small and medium-sized farms, operating in hilly-mountainous areas, with beef cattle or buffalo or sheep and goats;</li> <li>• Introduce <b>more differentiation of commitments</b> according to territories, types of farming and their degree of intensity; in this perspective, consider differentiating support between first introduction or maintenance of animal welfare commitments;</li> <li>• reinforcing the animal welfare objective in regional rules and instruments aimed at qualifying and enhancing livestock production (e.g. in</li> </ul>

Themes/scope of analysis	Conclusions	Recommendations
	<p>This "dualism" in the participation in the Measure is, in part, the consequence of the <b>scarce development or effectiveness of animation and information activities</b> towards the above-mentioned weaker sectors or territorial areas or company types, less informed breeders and not in connection with the advisory and innovation centres.</p> <p>Among the factors conditioning participation, there are both attitudinal aspects (e.g. age) of the entrepreneur and his perception of the advantages/disadvantages of participating in the measure, and <b>objective limitations of a structural nature of the company</b> (in particular for participation in action A) and the technical and financial cost of interventions to overcome them.</p> <p>The farm survey does not show a high participation of Measure 14 beneficiaries in <b>other Measures of the RDP 2014-20</b>, which in fact involve less than half (40%) of the farms. The opportunity of the support offered by the RDP for tangible or intangible investments to support the adhesion to Measure 14 (in particular to Action A) or in general for the introduction of practices or systems to improve animal welfare is generally not "taken".</p>	<p>the production specifications for Vitellone IGP);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote (without imposing) at farm level the <b>complementarity between Measure 14 and other RDP Measures</b> that can help to achieve the structural conditions and the training requirements necessary to adopt the management commitments on animal welfare or foster cooperation within the supply chain and with the research world on this issue. This is done, for example, through the adoption of priority criteria and the coordination of the implementation methods and times of the Measures (e.g. chronogram for the issuing of Calls for Proposals),</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluation of the effects and effectiveness of Measure 14</b></p>	<p>The results of the farm surveys <b>do not show relevant changes</b> in the management of the animals and in the organisation of the farm following the adhesion to the Measure, especially to Action C (the most participated). More changes occur with the adhesion to Action B and especially to Action A, related to the minimum outdoor space, which, however, involved the smallest share of buffalo and dairy cattle farms.</p> <p>The evaluation of the majority of the entrepreneurs on the <b>effectiveness of the commitments in favouring animal welfare and health conditions</b> is overall positive, especially for Actions A (minimum space) and C (reinforced sanitary prevention). The share of the entrepreneurs who judge the positive effects of the commitments of the measure on the <b>productivity per animal</b> and on the <b>quality of the production as "high"</b> is lower, around 50%. However, there are not significant examples of price valorisation of the production obtained from breeding systems in which animal welfare is improved.</p> <p>The Experts' judgement on the Measure is more articulated and overall more critical. It is acknowledged <b>the "educational" role played</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to improve the effectiveness of the Measure in relation to the animal welfare objective by assessing the technical-administrative feasibility and the opportunity of <b>extending the type of actions or commitments</b> to other areas of potential improvement, e.g. related to indoor space and environmental conditions of the farm (temperature, humidity, etc.) and to feeding;</li> <li>• introduce, make operational and disseminate <b>tools for the evaluation of</b> animal welfare conditions and biosecurity of the farm, such as <b>ClassyFarm</b>, already in use in Campania, containing objective and comparable parameters relating to the level of implementation of management and structural improvement measures and their effects on animals (ABM =</li> </ul>



Themes/scope of analysis	Conclusions	Recommendations
	<p><b>by the Measure</b> in increasing the awareness, among the beneficiary farmers, of the "animal welfare" issue and in introducing new management approaches. However, this effect still affects a limited number of farms, especially in some sectors or territories (reduced regional impact). It is also noted the lack of a clear, shared and operational <b>definition of the concept of "animal welfare"</b> and of the potential causal links between the proposed actions, animal welfare and farm productivity, as well as the lack of use, in the Measure, of <b>methods/tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the commitments</b> with respect to the animal welfare objectives. This evaluation is necessary both to justify the public economic support to the community and to inform and guide the farmers in their management activities and in the processes of progressive improvement and business development.</p>	<p><i>Animal Based Measures</i>), as well as a reference tool for the new National Quality System for Animal Welfare (SQNBA). <i>ClassyFarm</i> could be applied in the phase of presentation of support applications, to verify eligibility criteria, guide the selection of the most suitable commitments and estimate ex-ante their effectiveness (i.e. the improvement potentially achievable).</p>