EU CAP NETWORK



# Assessment of generational renewal strategies across EU Member States

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# List of acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AKIS | Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems |
| CAP | Common Agricultural Policy |
| CEJA | Conseil Européen des Jeunes Agriculteurs – European Council of Young Farmers |
| CMEF | Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework |
| CSP | CAP Strategic Plan |
| DG AGRI | Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development |
| EAFRD | European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development |
| EBAF | European Board on Agri-food |
| ENRD | European Network for Rural Development |
| FI | Financial instruments |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation |
| GR | Generational renewal |
| JRC | Joint Research Centre of the European Commission |
| MA | Managing Authority |
| PMEF | Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework |
| RDP | Rural Development Programme |
| RQ | Research question |
| UAA | Utilised agricultural area |
| YF | Young farmer |

**2023-2027 CAP interventions**

| | |
|---|---|
| BISS | Basic income support for sustainability |
| CIS | Coupled income support |
| CIS-YF | Complementary income support for young farmers |
| CRISS | Complementary redistributive income support for sustainability |
| COOP | Cooperation |
| Eco-schemes | Schemes for the climate, the environment and animal welfare |
| AECM | Agro-environmental, climate and other management commitments |
| INVEST | Investments and investments in irrigation |
| KNOW | Knowledge exchange and dissemination of information |
| INSTAL | Setting-up of young farmers and new farmers and rural business start-up |
| ANC | Natural or other area-specific constraints |
| ASD | Area-specific disadvantages resulting from certain mandatory requirements |

# European Union country codes listed in accordance with the official protocol

| Member State | Country codes | Member State | Country codes | Member State | Country codes | Member State | Country codes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | (BE) | Greece | (EL) | Lithuania | (LT) | Portugal | (PT) |
| Bulgaria | (BG) | Spain | (ES) | Luxembourg | (LU) | Romania | (RO) |
| Czechia | (CZ) | France | (FR) | Hungary | (HU) | Slovenia | (SI) |
| Denmark | (DK) | Croatia | (HR) | Malta | (MT) | Slovakia | (SK) |
| Germany | (DE) | Italy | (IT) | Netherlands | (NL) | Finland | (FI) |
| Estonia | (EE) | Cyprus | (CY) | Austria | (AT) | Sweden | (SE) |
| Ireland | (IE) | Latvia | (LV) | Poland | (PL) | | |

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# 1. Introduction

The study aims to assess generational renewal (GR) strategies across Member States, which comprise the implementation of CAP interventions and national/regional policy instruments, in order to identify successful strategies that can be promoted as good practices to be replicated across Member States, including those supporting female successors.

The contents of the report are organised according to the following chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the objectives of the study and Chapter 3 illustrates the context. Chapter 4 describes the methodological approach, including a brief assessment of the study limitations. Chapter 5 presents the study findings and answers to the four research questions. The last Chapter discusses the overall conclusions of the study.

The report is complemented by two annexes. Annex I presents the descriptive statistics of the survey of young farmers conducted within the scope of the study. Annex II contains an inventory of national and regional policy instruments supporting generational renewal in agriculture across the 27 Member States.

# 2. Objectives of the study

The overall aim of the present study is to support DG AGRI in the assessment of the strategies adopted for generational renewal by the EU Member States under CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) and through other national and regional policy instruments.

The present study has three main objectives, specifically:

1. To **outline the most recent GR trends** across the EU and **identify the major barriers hindering generational renewal** across Member States, including **those feeding the gender divide** in agriculture.
2. To **build a comprehensive inventory and typology of policy instruments** by extending and complementing the mapping exercise carried out in 2023[1], in relation to GR strategies implemented by the Member States, including a mapping of the available instruments to facilitate women's access to agriculture.
3. To **identify and analyse successful strategies** implemented to foster GR **that can be promoted as recommendable practices** to be replicated across Member States, **highlighting good practices in supporting female successors**.

The first objective aims to provide an in-depth understanding of GR trends and identify the main barriers to GR across all EU-27 Member States. Understanding the different barriers hindering GR helps clarify the diversity of policy needs and the rationale behind the strategies set out by individual Member States.

The rationale behind the second objective primarily stems from the recognition of the lack of a comprehensive inventory of national policy instruments implemented by the Member States and, therefore, the need to gain more systematic and complete information, thus achieving a better understanding of implemented GR strategies.

The third objective addresses the need to facilitate the adoption of successful approaches across Member States by highlighting promising strategies and good practices. The analysis to satisfy this objective thus aims to assess the potential effectiveness of different GR strategies *vis-à-vis* the different types of barriers, to help identify good practices that can be replicated across Member States.

[1] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, *Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans, Assessment of joint efforts for 2023-2027*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2762/71556.

# 3. Context analysis

This chapter outlines the context of the study including analysis of the elements that define the GR challenge for the farming sector across Member States and the regulatory framework addressing it under the CAP. The last section of the chapter provides definitions of the key concepts involved in the analysis.

## 3.1. The generational renewal challenge in EU agriculture

Generational turnover in agriculture is a growing challenge across Europe, reflecting significant demographic and structural changes that have important implications for the continuity of the farming sector and, potentially, for food security. Between 2005 and 2016, the agricultural sector experienced a net loss of 4.5 million farmers, driven, among other factors, by an ageing population and a limited influx of younger individuals into the profession [2]. As of 2020, nearly one-third of farm managers were aged 65 or older, and only 12% were under 40, only a slight improvement from 11% in 2016 [3]. The 'young farmer problem' is particularly pronounced in smaller farms, especially in Southern Europe, where structural disadvantages exacerbate the difficulties of generational renewal. Compounding this issue is the stark gender disparity, as women represent only 1.5% of farm managers aged 25-34, compared to 12.5% of women aged over 65 [4].

Gender balance is regarded as a relevant and urgent issue by the European Commission, as highlighted by the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 [5]. In the agricultural sector, the gender gap is particularly pronounced. In 2020, only 23% of farmers were female [6]. Among young farmers (under 39 years old), the figure is even more striking, with the percentage dropping to 19.5% [7] (see also the analysis in Section 5.1.3.1). Therefore, the gender component in the analysis of generational renewal is particularly important to consider.

The extent of the GR challenge should be assessed within the broader context of demographic and sectoral trends. According to recent work analysing farm succession in relation to ensuring resilience of the farming sector, the assessment of the 'young farmer problem' requires an understanding of its different components, such as the ageing of the farmer population, structural changes of the agricultural sector and farm succession [8]. The number of farms in the EU has been declining at an annual rate of 3.7%, while the average farm size has increased by 3.8% per year [9]. This trend reflects a shift towards larger and more specialised farms focused on cereal cropping and grazing livestock, often at the expense of more diversified and smaller-scale agricultural systems. By 2040, the number of farms across the EU is projected to decrease significantly, continuing the current trends. From around 10.3 million farms in 2016, estimates suggest a sharp drop to approximately 3.9 million farms [10], marking a steep decrease by 62%. This projection would translate into an average loss of more than 267 000 farms annually, roughly 700 every day.

The future of farming is likely to be shaped by distinct farm/farmer profiles, including adaptive and diversified farmers, who are expected to emerge primarily from family-run or small-to-medium-sized farms, farm businesses focusing on niche markets and regenerative practices [11]. At the same time, intensive and specialised farms are expected to thrive, leveraging technological innovations and enhanced production capabilities.

Family farms, which today account for 92% of all EU agricultural holdings and are responsible for a significant proportion of food production [12], are therefore at the centre of these transformations. These are the types of farms that are already abandoning the business, will probably abandon it, or will need to expand and specialise in order to survive.

Farm succession, defined as the transfer of managerial control of farm business assets, plays an important role in generational renewal [13]. The issue of farm succession has been mostly investigated in relation to family farms to assess the extent to which the continuity of farming is ensured by farmers' descendants. However, this framing may have some limitations. The EU enlargement from 2004 onwards has seen an increase in the number of large-sized corporate and cooperative farms, typical of post-communist countries (e.g. East Germany, Czechia and Slovakia). These farms also face a GR challenge that may be in some respects more difficult than for family farms, due to difficulties in transferring large business shares and management to new owners, and in securing employment.

[2] European Parliament, *The future of the European farming model*, Research for AGRI Committee, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels, 2022. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_ATA(2022)699621.

[3] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, *Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans, Assessment of joint efforts for 2023-2027*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2762/71556.

[4] Ibid.

[5] European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, COM(2020) 152 final, 5 March 2020, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en.

[6] Source: Eurostat.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Pitson, C., Bijttebier, J., Appel, F., Balmann, A, How Much Farm Succession is Needed to Ensure Resilience of Farming Systems?, *EuroChoices*, 2020, 19: 37-44, https://doi.org/10.1111/1746-692X.12283.

[9] Neuenfeldt, S., Gocht, A., Heckelei, T., Ciaian, P., *Explaining farm structural change in the European agriculture: a novel analytical framework*, European Review of Agricultural Economics, Volume 46, pp. 713-768, 2018.https://academic.oup.com/erae/article/46/5/713/5183522.

[10] European Parliament, *The future of the European farming model*, 2022.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] See footnote 8 for Pitson, C. *et al.* (2020).

Finally, despite the attention that the GR challenge attracts, some literature contests whether Europe is truly facing a farm succession crisis (Lobley et al., 2010; Matthews, 2018). The prevalent idea is that GR is needed to ensure that farming systems can fulfil their essential function, i.e. the provision of private and public goods, now and in the future. However, an optimum or minimum level of farm succession has never been established. It is also argued that young farmers are an important source of new knowledge as they are more likely to manage sustainably and modernise their farms (further details in Section 3.1.1).

The literature also points to the fact that GR does not represent a challenge for all Member States [14]. Indeed, the official statistics highlight considerable country differences in young farmer numbers, suggesting, for instance, that there is no shortage of young farmers at the national level in France, Finland, Austria, Czechia and Poland. Conversely, the shortage of young farmers is more pronounced in countries with a large presence of small-sized farms, for instance, in Portugal, Italy, Romania and Greece (see Section 5.1.3.2 for analysis under the first research question).

The authors of the same above-mentioned study [15] argue that 'there is insufficient evidence to adequately inform debates about the role of young people in European agriculture', and propose 'a research agenda which includes more consistent conceptualisation of the 'young farmer problem,' targeted research on the role of young people in agricultural innovations, assessment of regional differences within countries and identification of farm succession processes in new EU Member States'.

This clearly supports the objectives of the present study, to which the gender equality component is also added.

### 3.1.1. Why is generational renewal in agriculture a problem?

It is acknowledged that GR in agriculture produces several positive effects. For example, it can contribute to boosting investments, innovation and technological adaptations on the farm, revitalisation of rural areas, increasing adoption of sustainability and climate-adaptation practices, diversification and new market opportunities and contrast land abandonment [16]. The decline in GR can, therefore, hinder these processes.

The GR challenge has far-reaching implications for rural vitality and the agricultural sector at large. As economies and societies evolve, rural areas often struggle to retain their vibrancy, facing depopulation and economic stagnation. The disparity in income potential between agriculture and other sectors drives younger individuals to seek opportunities in urban industries, exacerbating the dual crises of rural depopulation and an ageing farming workforce. These trends jeopardise the sustainability and resilience of rural communities, as well as the agricultural sector's ability to adapt to modern challenges [17]. The shrinking number of young farmers also contributes to intensifying structural issues within the agricultural sector. Younger farmers, who typically operate larger and more efficient farms, often possess advanced education and training that equip them to implement innovative and sustainable practices [18]. Their propensity to invest in modernisation and technological advancements can further enhance productivity and competitiveness.

Moreover, land use patterns reflect the consequences of these demographic shifts. The abandonment of agricultural land, particularly in remote or less accessible regions, poses ecological risks such as disrupted ecosystems and accelerated soil erosion, especially in mountainous areas. Between 2000 and 2018, 11 million hectares of utilised agricultural area (UAA) were lost [19]. Furthermore, projections suggest that by 2030, the EU could lose an additional four million hectares and therefore see a significant increase in unused farmland, threatening food security, regional equity and agricultural output [20]. The economic viability of rural areas suffers as farm closures, driven by the absence of successors, reduce employment opportunities and weaken local economies. This lack of GR also hinders farm transfers, which are essential for driving structural improvements and efficiency in agriculture [21]. Without younger successors, many farms face liquidation, leaving rural economies with fewer job opportunities and a reduced capacity to meet strategic objectives like food security, environmental sustainability and global competitiveness.

This analysis is further developed under the first research question (see Section 5.1.3).

[14] Zagata L., Sutherland L-A., *Deconstructing the 'young farmer problem in Europe': Towards a research agenda,* Journal of Rural Studies, Volume 38, April 2015, Pages 39-51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.01.003.

[15] Ibid.

[16] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, *Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal, local development and jobs in rural areas*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2762/364362.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Dudek, M., Pawłowska, A., *Can succession improve the economic situation of family farms in the short term? Evidence from Poland based on panel data*, *Land Use Policy*, Volume 112, 2022.

[19] European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, *The challenge of land abandonment after 2020 and options for mitigating measures*, Requested by the AGRI committee, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, 2021, p.28, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2020)652238.

[20] Perpiña Castillo, C., Jacobs-Crisioni, C., Diogo, V., Lavalle, C., *Modelling agricultural land abandonment in a fine spatial resolution multi-level land-use model: An application for the EU*, Environmental Modelling & Software, Volume 136, 2021.

[21] See footnote 18 for Dudek, M., Pawłowska, A., (2022).

## 3.2. Regulatory framework for generational renewal in EU agriculture

Generational renewal policies are implemented both under the CAP and at national or regional level based on instruments and legislation designed by the Member States, in addition to the CAP instruments. This section aims to provide an overview of the development of CAP instruments targeting GR over the programming periods and a synthetic description of the main types of national policy instruments adopted across the Member States.

The focus is primarily on policy instruments intended to address GR; other CAP instruments that may have secondary or spill-over effects (e.g. direct payments) are not considered, unless they have elements targeting young farmers.

### 3.2.1. CAP support to generational renewal over the years

Support for young farmers (under 40 years of age) was first introduced in 1981 to the CAP in Council Directive 81/528/EEC on the modernisation of farms and, from the mid-1990s, reforms like the Cork Declaration and Agenda 2000 focused on GR and rural vitality. National level schemes have been implemented since the 1960s, with early retirement systems established at European level in the CAP reform of 1992, through Regulation (EEC) Nº. 2079/92. After 2000, the CAP adopted a two-pillar system, with Pillar II targeting rural development, including services and employment for young people.

Under the 2007-2013 CAP, Measure 112 specifically focused on the establishment of new farms. By 2013, more than 126 000 young farmers had received support under this measure accounting for 75.8% of the reference target for 2007-2013, set up within the Commission's Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (ENRD, 2014) [22]. This result was achieved with a budget of EUR 4.82 billion (EUR 2.84 billion from the EAFRD and EUR 1.98 billion from national budgets) (ENRD, 2014).

Under the 2007-2013 CAP, Member States provided financial support to young farmers, with additional aid if the applicant was female or for farms in less favoured areas. The shift towards rural development spending contributed to more positive impacts on rural vitality and jobs [23].

### 3.2.2. Support for generational renewal under the 2014-2020 CAP

The 2013 CAP reform renewed emphasis on support for young farmers and promoting GR in agriculture. At the time, placing young farmers at the heart of the CAP was considered one of the greatest achievements of the reform [24]. The 2013 reform prioritised GR with measures such as the business start-up aid, the young farmer scheme (starting from 2015), investment support and advisory services for young farmers. The 2014-2020 CAP goals also expanded to address rural jobs, growth and balanced territorial development, focusing on supporting young farmers and rural communities.

Under Pillar I, the creation of an obligatory supplement for young farmers within direct payments provisions from 2015 (payment based on hectares of agricultural land) emphasises the commitment to fostering GR in agriculture.

Under Pillar II, the following key instruments were designed in the Rural Development Programmes (RDP):

- Business start-up aid for young farmers granted on the basis of a business plan for an EU contribution of up to EUR 70 000.
- Higher support rate for investments in physical assets (plus 20%).
- Obligation for farm advisory services to provide specific advice to farmers setting up for the first time.

Member States were also given flexibility in allocating funding and the possibility to design a thematic sub-programme specifically addressing the needs of young farmers (implemented only by Hungary).

Under Pillar II, 7% of the EUR 100 billion rural development envelope for 2014-2020 was allocated to Focus Area 2B to facilitate GR and the entry of skilled farmers into the agricultural sector. Within this focus area, expenditure targeting young farmers was allocated as follows: (i) EUR 5.4 billion for installation grants (sub-measure 6.1); (ii) EUR 1.2 billion for investments; (iii) EUR 185 million for training, information and advisory services; and (iv) EUR 18 million for cooperation. The installation grant was implemented by three-quarters of the RDPs. The target for the 2014-2020 programming period was to support 176 000 young farmers with the installation grant [25]. By the end of 2022, almost 160 000 young farmers (or 90% of the target) had benefited from this support [26] (see also RQ4, 5.4.3.3).

At the same time, the early retirement scheme, recognised to be unsuccessful in increasing real intergenerational transfer, was discontinued [27]. This measure was also criticised by the European Court of Auditors, among others, for being cost-inefficient [28].

[22] ENRD, *Measure 112 - Setting up of Young Farmers* (2014).
[23] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, written by CCRI, OIR and ADE S.A., *Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal, local development and jobs in rural areas*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, p.40, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2762/364362.
[24] Ibid.
[25] European Commission, Staff Working Document 'Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal, local development and jobs in rural areas', SWD (2021) 78 final.
[26] EU CAP Network, Monitoring data summary – Rural development Priority 2 (P2), 2022, https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/publications/monitoring-data-summary-rural-development-priority-2-p2-2022_en#section--resources.
[27] Zagata L., Sutherland L-A., *Deconstructing the 'young farmer problem in Europe': Towards a research agenda*, Journal of Rural Studies, Volume 38, April 2015, Pages 39-51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.01.003.
[28] European Court of Auditors, *Special report Nº. 10/2017: EU support to young farmers should be better targeted to foster effective generational renewal*, 29/06/2017, https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?did=41529.

### 3.2.3. Support for generational renewal under the 2023-2027 CAP

GR remains a key priority of the current CAP [29]. Under the current programming, Specific Objective 7 (SO7) 'Attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas' seeks to attract and support young and new farmers while promoting sustainable business growth in rural areas.

Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 sets the basis for addressing generational renewal during the 2023-2027 programming period. To identify the specific definition of 'young farmer', Recital 20 provides that a 'framework definition of 'young farmer' with the essential elements should be set out at Union level' [30]. Article 4(6) of the Regulation sets the basic criteria for the definition of: (a) an upper age limit set between 35 years and 40 years [31]; (b) the conditions for being 'head of the holding'; and (c) the appropriate training or skills required, which are determined by Member States.

Member States must allocate at least 3% of their direct payment envelope to support young farmers. Direct support can come from the **complementary income support for young farmers** (CIS-YF, Article 30, Regulation (EU) 2021/2115) and/or from the EAFRD through the **setting-up aid** (INSTAL, Article 75).

Member States can also design other interventions specifically targeting GR such as **investment support** (INVEST) with specific incentives for young farmers, such as higher support rates (Article 73(4), Regulation (EU) 2021/2115) or allowing financial instruments to support land purchase without restrictions (Article 73(3), Regulation (EU) 2021/2115). These interventions can also promote new non-agricultural businesses in rural areas and modernise farms run by young farmers. Moreover, investment support that allows higher rates for young farmers can contribute to the 3% financial allocation requirement. When using investment support, up to 50% of the expenditure on investments can count towards the 3% minimum allocation [32]. **Cooperation support** (COOP) can also encourage inter-generational collaboration and farm transfers (Article 77(6), Regulation (EU) 2021/2115), while **knowledge, advisory, and training support** (KNOW) can focus on GR and skill development for young farmers (Article 78, Regulation (EU) 2021/2115). Additionally, EIP Operational Groups (Article 127, Regulation (EU) 2021/2115) can promote the design of innovative projects by young farmers.

At EU level, the planned support corresponds to EUR 8.5 billion of total public expenditure (EUR 6.8 billion of EU contribution), made up of EUR 3.4 billion financial allocation for income support, EUR 4.9 billion for setting up and EUR 160 million for investments. Around 380 000 young farmers are expected to receive aid through those different forms. Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Spain have allocated additional national financing for a total of EUR 217 million, which can be used for the setting up of young farmers, among other interventions [33].

In view of the next CAP programming period, the *Strategic Dialogue* has recently presented a report [34] which calls on the European Commission to develop an action plan with the aim of supporting GR in food systems through a dedicated strategy. This plan, developed with input from the European Board on Agri-food (EBAF) [35] and aligned with the new EU Multiannual Financial Framework, should take into account key recommendations, among others, those made by the European Parliament report on 'Generational renewal in EU farms' [36]. The plan is supposed to outline a roadmap across various EU policies to address barriers to GR, with Member States required to create their own plans by 2027. Key priorities include land mobility schemes, loan packages for young farmers and lifelong learning for farming professions.

### 3.2.4. National policy approaches to support generational renewal in agriculture

In addition to the CAP instruments fostering GR, most Member States have in place national/regional policy instruments and legislation aimed at promoting or facilitating access to young farmers in the agricultural sector. These national instruments can play an important role in addressing specific GR barriers and the extent to which CAP and national instruments are complementary or used in synergy deserves to be analysed more in detail.

Evidence from the literature highlights the need for complementary policies at both the EU level (e.g. through the cohesion fund and/or the regional development fund) and at national level that could help improve the overall socioeconomic conditions of rural areas (and especially the marginal ones) and attract young people to live there. In this sense, better infrastructure, availability and quality of services, broadband connection and recreational activities could attract more funding [37]. This would entail a more holistic approach with farm and non-farm GR strategies working together towards the same goal.

The *Mapping study* identified the national policy instruments and legislation that are mentioned by the Member States in their CAP Strategic Plans (CSP), which could complement CSP interventions in addressing the identified GR needs. However, the mapping of national GR policies, as they emerge from the contents of CSPs, might be incomplete. Therefore, there is a need to extend this mapping exercise, which is undertaken in the present study under Research Question 3 (RQ3).

[29] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Unit A.3 (2024): Assessing generational renewal in CAP Strategic Plans. Report of the Good Practice Workshop 14-15 March 2024. Zagreb, Croatia, https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/publications/assessing-generational-renewal-cap-strategic-plans_en.

[30] Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 (CSP regulation).

[31] All Member States have set the upper age limit at 40 years except for Luxembourg where the young farmer should not exceed 39 years.

[32] Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, Article 95(2).

[33] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Approved 28 CAP Strategic Plans (2023-2027). Summary overview for 27 Member States, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans_en#documents.

[34] Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, *A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe*, 09/2024, pp. 76-77.

[35] New platform announced on 5 December 2024 and launched on 24 January 2025, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue, EBAF – European Commission.

[36] OJ C, C/2024/2658, 29.4.2024, ELI. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/2658/oj.

[37] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, *Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal, local development and jobs in rural areas*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019.

## 3.3. Definition of key concepts for the assessment of generational renewal strategies

Definitions of key concepts in relation to generational renewal include the following:

- **Generational renewal strategy**: a combination of policy instruments from EU and national legislation, based on an intervention logic that establishes the role, complementarity and synergies of different instruments in addressing different barriers to GR in order to effectively support GR.
- **Farm succession**: transfer of managerial control of farm business assets [38].
- **Successor** [39]: is the new farmer (regardless of age) that effectively takes over the farm management. The potential successor is the person identified to be the candidate to take over the farm, although not necessarily in the active process of succeeding. The willing successor is the potential successor who is actively moving towards taking over the farm. A successor can move towards succession from within the family farm (family farm successor) or from outside a family farm (new entrant).
- **New and young farmer**: definitions are provided in Regulation (EU) 2115/2021, Article 4(6). A young farmer is defined as an individual having an upper age between 35 and 40 years old, although all Member States have set the age threshold at 40 years old (39 years old in Luxembourg). Therefore, we refer to young farmers as individuals who are 40 years old or younger. The new farmer is an individual other than the young farmer, hence an individual being 41 years old or older.
- **Barriers to generational renewal**: all constraints and socio-demographic, economic, institutional, environmental and/or geographic factors, originated at different levels of the society, that make it impossible or pose a challenge to potential successors to take over the farm, and/or to incumbent farmers to hand over the farm, hence threatening the continuity of farms.
- **Promising approach**: an approach that proves to be relevant to address the key barriers to GR, potentially effective above average (compared to other approaches) and that brings some level of novelty.
- **Good practice**: an element of the promising strategy (e.g. a tool, combination of tools, design feature of a tool, etc.) that contributes to the effectiveness of the strategy and that merits attention as one that could benefit and be potentially replicated elsewhere.
- **Typology of policy instruments**: classification of policy instruments into categories based on their operative functioning, that is to say, on the type of support brought to the beneficiaries. For example, it is possible to distinguish between aids to investments, guarantees to loans and favourable tax regimes.
- **Complementarity between policy instruments**: complementarity exists when two or more instruments contribute to addressing the same barrier but targeting different aspects (e.g. a general guarantee on loan interests could complement a partial grant on specific investments), or when they address the same aspects but are meant for different audiences (i.e. to increase the coverage of beneficiaries, e.g. if an additional payment is provided to farmers that cannot benefit from CIS-YF). Similarly, **synergies** exist when the joint effect of two or more instruments is bigger than the sum of their isolated effects. For example, the support rate of a payment might be increased if the beneficiaries also implement an investment grant (the beneficiaries are pushed to take up multiple instruments and have more integrated strategies).
- **Overlapping policy instruments**: if two or more instruments address the very same barrier and related aspects for the very same audience, then it is likely that there is an overlap.
- **Negative synergy** or antagonism: it means that two (or more) instruments counteract their individual effects. It may occur whenever the access to a policy instrument is limited by the access to another instrument (i.e. if the instruments are technically or legally mutually exclusive). For example, access to a policy instrument could be denied to those who have already benefited from another instrument. Negative synergies may also occur when one instrument contributes to overcoming a barrier while another aggravates the barrier. For instance, a favourable retirement scheme might promote incumbents' handover to offspring, but the regulations make family donations/inheritance very expensive and/or conflicting. There exists also the case of surrogates, when two policy instruments can substitute one another (but are not complementary).

[38] See footnote 8 for Pitson, C. *et al.*, 2020.

[39] Chiswell H.M., 2014. *The importance of next generation farmers: a conceptual framework to bring the potential successor into focus*, Geography Compass, 8 (5) (2014), pp. 300-31 2. Fischer H., Burton R.J.F. *Understanding farm succession as socially constructed endogenous cycles*, Social. Rural., 54 (2014) (2014), pp. 417-438; and Bertolozzi-Caredio D., Bardaji I., Coopmans I., Soriano B., Garrido A. *Key steps and dynamics of family farm succession in marginal extensive livestock farming*. J. Rural Stud., 76 (2020), pp. 131-141.

# 4. Methodological approach

This chapter illustrates the methodological approach to the study, including a description of the research questions addressing the study objectives, the methods used for data collection, data sources, the case study approach and the identified limitations of methodology and data.

## 4.1. Research questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the assessment is based on answers to the following research questions (presented in Chapter 5):

- RQ1 – What are the most recent GR trends across the EU and which Member States suffer the most severe GR challenges?
- RQ2 – What are the key barriers hindering GR overall and for female successors, and how do they differ across Member States?
- RQ3 – What CAP and national policy instruments are set out by Member States to support GR?
  - RQ3.1 – What types of policy instruments – both national and CAP – are used by the Member States to address the different barriers to GR, including the instruments set out to support female successors?
  - RQ3.2 – What is the rationale behind the GR strategies adopted by the Member States, and how do the chosen policy instruments complement or substitute each other?
- RQ4 – Considering both CAP interventions and national/regional instruments fostering GR, to what extent can the proposed strategies address the identified barriers to GR, including the gender gap?
  - RQ4.1 – What are the most promising good practices emerging from the study (i.e. in relation to specific barriers to GR) that could be replicated across Member States and, conversely, what are the potential areas of improvement?

The first two research questions, RQ1 and RQ2, address Objective 1 described above. Research questions RQ3 and RQ4 address objectives 2 and 3, respectively.

## 4.2. Scope and levels of analysis

The study covers the 2023-2027 CAP programming period. In addition, it considers the previous CAP programming periods as relevant in terms of historical trends in GR, farm demographics and structural evolution of the agricultural sector, as well as the development of EU GR policy instruments/strategies over time.

The geographical scope of the study is the entire EU-27, with some more in-depth analysis carried out at case study level. Specifically:

- National level covering all 27 Member States and 28 CAP Strategic Plans. Analysis at this level aims at examining the most recent GR trends, drawing a comprehensive mapping of national/regional policy instruments implemented to support GR and gaining further understanding of both national instruments and CAP interventions, which GR barriers they address and the way they may complement each other.
- Case study level covering a selection of Member States (see Section 4.3) to allow for a more in-depth assessment of the way in which policy instruments/strategies address the identified GR barriers, the possible complementarity or synergies of different CAP/national policy instruments, the potential effectiveness of such policy approaches and the identification of promising approaches to be recommended as good practices across Member States.

## 4.3. Selected case studies

Eleven Member States were selected as case studies based on the following criteria:

- Degree of severity of the generational renewal problem classified as 'high', 'moderate' or 'low' based on farm statistics and information sourced from the *Mapping study* (for further details in Section 5.1.3 – answer to RQ1).
- Generational renewal strategy adopted by Member States through the designed CSP interventions, ensuring that all novelties of the 2023-2027 CAP are covered (as compared to the previous CAP) and relevant gender-oriented strategies are included.
- Geographical coverage in order to represent all different areas of the EU as well as Member States adopting a regionalised approach.
- Different types of national policies and legislation fostering generational renewal, based on information available in CSPs.

Selected case studies include Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Portugal. The table below summarises elements of interest in case studies' CSPs.

**Table 1. Selected case studies**

| | | Elements of interest in the CAP Strategic Plans | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | CIS-YF | | INSTAL | | | | INVEST | | | COOP | | KNOW |
| Member State | Severity of GR problem | CIS-YF | INSTAL | Applies lump sum | Targets female successors | New farmers targeted | Specific farms targeted | Female gender is a preferential condition | Provides support through FI to YF | Provides support through FI for YF, with YF being prioritised | Exception available for YF, allowing to finance land purchase with a rate > 10% of expenditure | Highest support rate increase for YF | Support targets farm succession | Provides support through FI | Support specifically addresses GR |
| BG | High | X | X | | | X | | | X | | | | | | |
| CZ | Low | X | X | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| EE | High | X | X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | |
| IE | Moderate | X | | | | | | | | | | | X | | |
| ES | Moderate | X | X | | X | X | | X | X | | | | X | X | |
| FR | Low | X | X | X | | X | | | X | X | | | X | | |
| HU | High | X | X | | | | X | X | | | | | X | | |
| MT | Moderate | X | X | | | | | | | | | X | | | X |
| NL | Moderate | X | X | X | | | | | | | | | X | | |
| AT | Low | X | X | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PT | Moderate | | X | | | | X | X | | X | | | | | X |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), based on CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) and Mapping study [40]

[40] See footnote 1.

## 4.4. Data collection

Data were collected using different methods and tools:

- **Documentary research** at EU and national level across the EU-27.
- **Interviews** with Managing Authorities (MA) and other national stakeholders in all 27 Member States.
- **Focus groups** in the 11 case study Member States.
- Questionnaire-based **survey of young farmers** and aspiring new farmers in all 27 Member States.

The table below provides an overview of data sources and data collection tools used, linking them to the study's objectives, research questions and levels of analysis.

**Table 2. Summary of data sources by research question and level of analysis**

| Objective | Research Question | Level of analysis | Data sources/tools |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | RQ1 | EU-27 | › Documentary research<br>› Interviews with MAs and national stakeholders<br>› Official data/statistics at EU/national level |
| | RQ2 | EU-27 | › Documentary research<br>› Interviews with MAs and national stakeholders<br>› Official data/statistics at EU/national level<br>› Survey of CAP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries |
| 2 | RQ3 | EU-27 | › Documentary research<br>› Interviews with MAs and national stakeholders<br>› Focus groups with key informants |
| | RQ3.1 | EU-27 | › Documentary research<br>› Interviews with MAs and national stakeholders |
| | RQ3.2 | EU-27<br>Case studies | › Documentary research<br>› Interviews with MAs and national stakeholders<br>› Survey of CAP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries<br>› Focus groups with key informants |
| 3 | RQ4<br>RQ4.1 | EU-27<br>Case studies | › Documentary research<br>› Interviews with MAs and national stakeholders<br>› Official data/statistics at EU/national level<br>› Survey of CAP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries<br>› Focus groups with key informants |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025)

### 4.4.1. Documentary research

Documentary research was used to gather evidence that could contribute to answering the research questions, including information from the following sources:

- **Official statistics and other secondary data** from EU and national data sources. Eurostat represents the main source of data about farm structures, demographics and trends, barriers to GR (access to land, access to capital, access to knowledge, attractiveness of rural areas, workforce availability, etc.), complemented with statistics sourced from DG AGRI, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) and other sources.
- **CAP Strategic Plans** and the ***Mapping study***. Information collected from these sources was used in the analysis under all research questions (predominantly RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3).
- **National legislation and policy documents** relating, for instance, to fiscal measures, policies facilitating access to land, access to credit, etc. (specifically for RQ3 and RQ4).
- **Scientific literature, studies and evaluations** at EU and national level (feeding analysis for all research questions).

At EU level, documentary research was conducted by the study team, while supported by the Evaluation Helpdesk geographic experts who collected documents and information at national level (and regional, where appropriate) across all 27 Member States (28 CSPs). The data collection was guided by structured guidelines.

It should be noted that the contribution of documentary research to answering RQ3 and RQ4 is somewhat limited, as the existing literature on aspects such as relevance, complementarity and effectiveness of GR policy instruments is quite limited in the EU. Therefore, the analysis for these two research questions largely relies on data collected in the field through interviews, focus groups and the young farmer survey, as detailed in the following sections of this chapter.

### 4.4.2. In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted at national level in all 27 Member States aimed at gathering relevant information on **barriers to generational renewal** (with a focus on barriers for female successors), on **national/regional policy instruments targeting or facilitating generational renewal** and the **instruments' rationale and potential effectiveness**. The collected information feeds the analysis to answer RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4, partly also RQ1.

Interviews at national level were directed at key informants, namely CSP Managing Authorities and other experts and stakeholders, including for instance representatives of national farmers' and young farmers' organisations, national CAP networks, researchers/evaluators, providers of advisory and training services to young farmers.

A minimum of two or three interviews were carried out in each Member State, resulting in 160 stakeholders being interviewed in total. The study team carried out an additional interview with representatives of CEJA (*Conseil Européen des Jeunes Agriculteurs* – European Council of Young Farmers) for an overview of the most pressing GR issues across the EU.

### 4.4.3. Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted in all 11 case study Member States: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Portugal. Helpdesk geographic experts conducted one focus group in each Member State involving participants (on average five to seven) selected among key informants such as evaluators/researchers, advisors, cooperatives/farmers organisations, chambers of agriculture, national CAP networks, regional Managing Authorities (where relevant) and other stakeholders.

The objective of the focus groups was to gather in-depth information on the **relevance, complementarity and effectiveness of the policy instruments** (CAP and national/regional) targeting GR.

The focus group approach involved the use of a structured guide and concrete tools for data gathering (i.e. matrices, rating) and a step-by-step approach for:

1. Understanding the context and underlying causes of GR trends.
2. Against the identified context, analysing the instruments put in place and their relevance for addressing the identified barriers.
3. Discussing the joint effects (synergies, complementarities) of the policy instruments.
4. Analysing the expected effectiveness of the policy instruments and discussing the underlying factors of the success of each instrument to identify potential good practices.

Focus groups have seen the participation of 80 experts and stakeholders. In France, Spain and Portugal, the focus groups have also involved some regional MAs.

### 4.4.4. Survey of young farmers, CAP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries

The survey targeted both beneficiaries (i.e. young and new farmers that have already benefitted from one or more policy instruments and those actively approaching succession) and potential beneficiaries (i.e. including those already working in agriculture and those not yet involved in farming, both in case they are potentially interested in becoming a farm manager and in case they have not yet considered doing so). While research most commonly focuses on actual beneficiaries (i.e. explained by the ease of identifying them and collecting data), the present survey sought to gather additional information from potential beneficiaries to complement the views of current or past beneficiaries of policy support.

The survey aimed at collecting both qualitative and quantitative information, including perceptions and preferences. The questionnaire was structured in different sections aiming to collect: 1) general respondents' information, 2) perceptions of challenges in accessing the farming sector, 3) knowledge of and preference for different types of policy support (CAP and national/regional), 4) perceived accessibility and uptake of the various policy instruments (CAP and national/regional), and 5) suggestions for improving policy instruments. The gender equality aspect was also addressed throughout the questionnaire.

The data gathered through the survey primarily informs the analysis required to answer RQ4 – assessing the (potential) effectiveness of the policy instruments currently in use (both those implemented under CSPs and the national/regional ones) and identifying promising good practices. However, some survey data are also used in the analysis under RQ2, RQ3.1 and RQ3.2 – barriers addressed by the different policy instruments and possible complementarities between such instruments.

When preparing the survey, contact was made with MAs and other stakeholders (i.e. mainly young farmer organisations) across all Member States to obtain young farmers' contacts so that they could be invited to participate in the survey. Due to issues of compliance with personal data protection rules and privacy legislation, it was only possible to obtain such contacts in very few Member States. The survey was therefore publicised as widely as possible across the EU-27 with the support of the EU CAP Network, CEJA, MAs, young farmers organisations and National CAP Networks across most Member States.

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire (EU Survey). It was launched on 24 February and closed on 2 April 2025, collecting a total of **1 103 completed questionnaires** across most Member States. Responses are skewed towards the Member States where the survey was best publicised. France, Hungary, Spain, Romania and Czechia record the largest number of respondents each (between 100 and 200), while Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria and Portugal each register between 10 and 50 responses. The remaining Member States account only for a small number of participants (less than 10 each), apart from Cyprus, Sweden and Slovenia, where the survey did not receive any response.

In terms of **gender distribution**, just over two-thirds of survey respondents (724) are male and the remaining 30% are female. Such a distribution appears to be aligned with the overall distribution of farm managers by gender in the EU (Eurostat, 2020). The majority of survey participants are **actual beneficiaries** (77%), while the remaining 23% are **potential beneficiaries**. Detailed survey statistics are presented in Annex I.

Finally, it should be mentioned that some survey participants reported an age that was too high (up to 68 years old) to be considered part of the target sample. For this reason, responses from farmers over the age of 50 [41], amounting to 49 respondents, were excluded from the analysis. The **corrected total number of survey responses is therefore 1 054**.

## 4.5. Limitations of methodology and data

The limitations in relation to data collection are mainly associated with the common challenges usually encountered when gathering primary data in the field, including response bias and self-selection bias. A significant part of the assessment has relied on a survey of young farmers (i.e. beneficiaries of CAP and/or national support and potential beneficiaries), interviews and focus groups. Surveys, in particular, are typically subject to: (a) risk of a low response rate, (b) non-objective, perception-based measurements, (c) subjective bias, and (d) sampling self-selection bias. While these limitations are challenging to overcome, mitigation measures were taken by seeking to maximise the survey population and minimise biased or subjective responses through the precise design of survey questions.

The survey was initially planned for only the 11 case study Member States. The specific difficulty in organising the survey lay primarily in identifying the target respondents, both current and potential beneficiaries of CAP support and/or national support. Obtaining contacts proved to be impossible, with the only exception of Hungary, Portugal and Czechia, due to restrictions imposed by privacy and data protection legislation applied at national level (i.e. based on GDPR rules). As a solution, the survey was publicised through multiple channels, also extending the data collection to all 27 Member States so as to maximise the number of responses (see Section 4.4.4). Synergies with the EU CAP Network *'Thematic Group on Gen Z: Leading Generational Renewal in farming'* [42] were also developed in order to find potential survey respondents. The survey was overall successful and collected over 1 000 responses. However, the unavailability of contact lists for target respondents not only has made it impossible to determine the survey response rate, both overall and by Member State, but it has also resulted in an unbalanced survey sample across Member States (see Section 4.4.4 and Annex I).

Bias mitigation was sought by including potential beneficiaries in the survey to provide a more balanced perspective and through triangulation of survey data with information collected via documentary research, interviews and focus groups to enhance reliability.

Farm census for 2023 (i.e. Farm Structure Survey – Eurostat) were not yet publicly available at the time of the study, although in some Member States 2023 data are available from national statistics. This means that it was not possible to provide an update across the whole EU-27 of 2020 census farm statistics, some of which were already presented in the *Mapping study*.

Further challenges were encountered in carrying out the study. It was difficult to establish the degree of comprehensiveness of data sources at both EU and national levels to support complete research on GR. For example, it was not known whether all barriers to GR are adequately documented across Member States, making the assessment challenging. To address this challenge, the methodology has combined secondary data with extensive primary data collection, engaging various categories of stakeholders at national level across the whole EU-27 and in case studies. This approach was aimed at bridging possible information gaps, capturing diverse perspectives and types of knowledge.

[41] This cut-off age was based on the assumption that respondents up to 50 years old could have been beneficiaries of measures targeted to young farmers in the 2014-2020(2022) CAP programming period.

[42] EU CAP Network, *Thematic Group on Gen Z: Leading Generational Renewal in Farming*, https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/thematic-groups-cap-implementation/thematic-group-gen-z-leading-generational-renewal-farming_en.

At the same time, the scope of the study was very broad due to different elements, namely: (a) the high number of relevant aspects directly or indirectly connected to GR; (b) coverage of the whole EU-27 with each Member State employing a sometimes very large number of different national/regional policies addressing GR; (c) significant variation in GR barriers and the types of policy instruments promoting GR across Member States. This has resulted in a very large amount of highly heterogeneous information being collected across Member States, which has posed some challenges to effectively summarise findings. Moreover, the list of policy instruments presented in the inventory (Annex II) may not be exhaustive, as there are no means to assess its completeness.

Finally, some complexity was encountered in assessing the potential effectiveness of policy instruments and, consequently, in identifying successful or promising approaches to improve GR. Potential effectiveness was assessed in terms of the ability of policy instruments (both CAP and national/regional) to address GR barriers rather than effectiveness in reaching set objectives and quantified targets (e.g. number of beneficiaries financed by CAP interventions). This assessment was essentially qualitative and based on subjective judgements of different stakeholders collected through interviews, focus groups and the young farmers survey. Triangulation of information from the different sources was used to validate findings. However, one of the difficulties was found in assessing the (potential) effectiveness of national/regional policy instruments, which very often do not rely on systematic monitoring and assessment against set targets. For CAP interventions promoting GR, implementation under the 2023-2027 programming is still at a relatively early stage to be able to assess their effectiveness. Moreover, the novelty of certain policy instruments introduced under the 2023-2027 CAP suggests that results and impact may be expected only in the mid- to long-term.

# 5. Analysis and findings

This chapter presents the analysis carried out to answer the four research questions, discussing findings and drawing conclusions.

## 5.1. RQ1 – What are the most recent GR trends across the EU and which Member States suffer the most severe GR challenges?

### 5.1.1. Description of RQ1

The first research question aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of current GR trends across the EU and identifying those Member States where the GR problem is most severe. The extent of the problem clearly has important implications for the continuity of the farming sector, current and future, and also for the type and design of policy instruments to address it.

There is consensus that farm demographics alone (e.g. CMEF indicators C10.2, C.14 and I.23) [43] might not be very robust indicators because broader structural and demographic drivers can affect GR trends in the agricultural sector (Matthews, 2018; EC, 2019). Besides farm demographics, other dynamics can be linked to trends in GR. For example, the evolution of farms and young farmer numbers is closely related to overall agricultural employment trends, among other factors.

The scientific literature offers ample evidence on the 'young farmer problem' in relation to the broader issue of the ageing farming population as well as to the future structure and practices of farming. GR is of paramount importance not only to maintain the number of farms or productive hectares, but also to have better farms. Various studies suggest that although the farmer's age should not be used as the sole indicator of farm performance or management practices, age can play an important role in farm business decision-making [44]. Other studies have found that age can have an effect on orientation towards sustainable and efficient agriculture, uptake of organic farming and other practices. Based on existing research [45], evidence suggests that generational renewal can have an effect on employment and rural (de)population, land use and abandonment – especially in marginal and mountainous areas – sustainability, farm innovativeness, competitiveness and performance.

It is therefore important to assess the broad range of factors influencing GR to gain a thorough understanding of the state of GR and its consequences as both are relevant in the context of policy addressing the issue. Assessing the degree of severity of the GR problem across Member States also represents a basis on which further analysis is developed under the other research questions.

[43] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Unit A.3, *Use of Factors of Success in Evaluation*, 2023, https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/publications/use-factors-success-evaluation_en.

[44] Zagata L., Sutherland L-A., *Deconstructing the 'young farmer problem in Europe': Towards a research agenda*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Volume 38, April 2015, Pages 39-51, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.01.003.

[45] European Commission, 2019, Dudek, M., Pawłowska, A., 2022; European Parliament, 2021; OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers N°. 209, *The Evolving Profile of New Entrants in Agriculture and the Role of Digital Technologies*, 2024, The evolving profile of new entrants in agriculture and the role of digital technologies | OECD.

## 5.1.2. Analytical approach

Much of the information relating to GR trends is generally available from the official agricultural statistics and CMEF/PMEF context and impact indicators [46]. The analysis to answer RQ1 is mostly based on these indicators (sourced from Eurostat and the Commission) and related trends, complemented with an analysis of information collected through documentary research and interviews across all Member States. Such information was instrumental specifically for:

- assessing the degree of severity of the GR problem across the EU-27;
- gaining further insights in relation to the contributing factors; and
- assessing possible differences in the severity of the problem for different agricultural sectors, different regions and areas, and gender differences in the impact of the GR challenge.

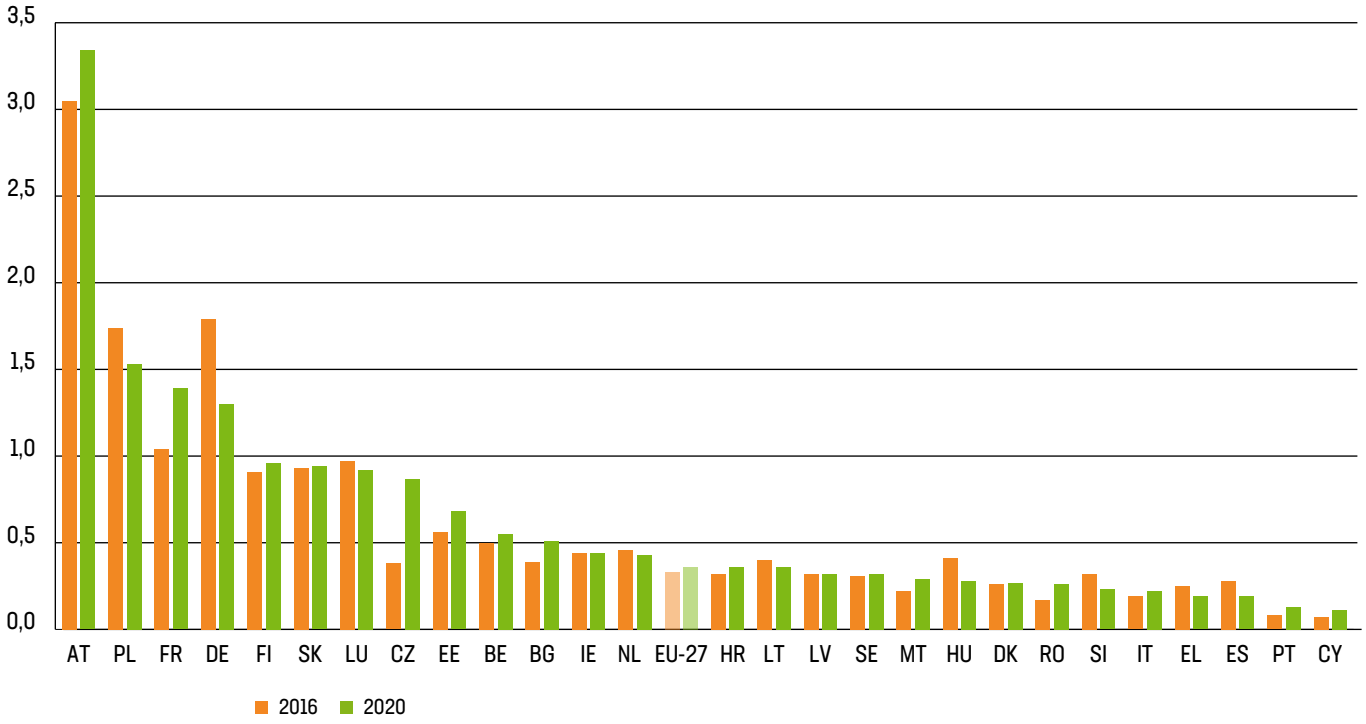
## 5.1.3. Presentation of findings

### 5.1.3.1. Trends in generational renewal in agriculture

#### Age structure of farm managers

The graph below presents the ratio of farm managers under 40 to those over 65 across Member States in 2016 and 2020. A higher ratio indicates a younger agricultural workforce (e.g. in Austria, there are three young farmers for each >65 years old farmer), while a lower ratio suggests an ageing sector with fewer young replacements. The data reveal significant differences across countries, with only a few showing a more favourable balance between younger and older farm managers.

**Figure 1. Ratio of farm managers <40 years old to farm managers >65 years old in 2016 and 2020**




Source: Context Indicator C23: Age structure of farm managers European Commission | Agri-food data portal

Austria shows the highest ratio in both years, demonstrating a strong presence of younger farm managers compared to the elderly. Other countries with relatively high ratios include Poland, Germany and France, though Germany and Poland saw a decline in the share of younger farm managers in 2020. In all other Member States, the ratios of younger/older farm managers are consistently below one. Southern European countries like Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Cyprus have consistently low ratios, suggesting a more pronounced ageing trend in their agricultural sectors.

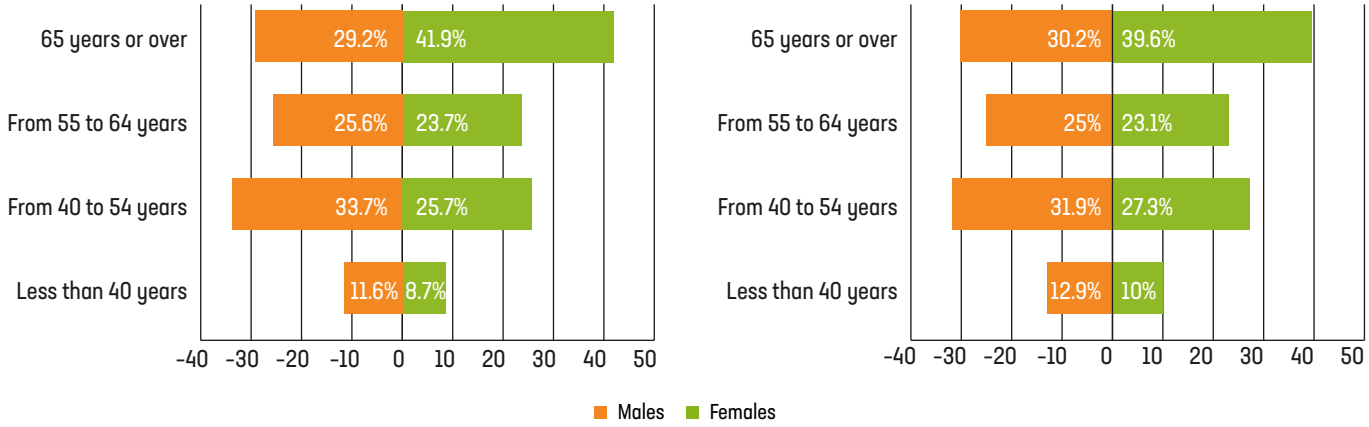
When comparing 2016 and 2020, the general trend is mixed. Some countries, in particular Austria, Czechia and France, saw an increase in the ratio, indicating a relative improvement in generational turnover. However, in several other Member States, particularly those in the lower half of the graph, the ratio remains stagnant or has slightly declined, highlighting ongoing challenges in attracting younger generations to farming.

[46] C10.2 - Number and share of farm managers by age group and by level of agricultural training; C.14 - Age structure of farm managers; I.23 - Number of new young farm managers (by gender).

## Age structure of farm managers by gender

The two graphs below illustrate the distribution of farm managers across different age groups in 2016 and 2020 for the EU as a whole, broken down by gender. The data clearly show a much smaller share of younger farm managers (under 40 years) compared to the older age groups in both years, though a small increase is recorded in the share of farmers <40 from 2016 to 2020.

### Figure 2. Age groups of farm managers in 2016 (left) and in 2020 (right), EU-27 by gender



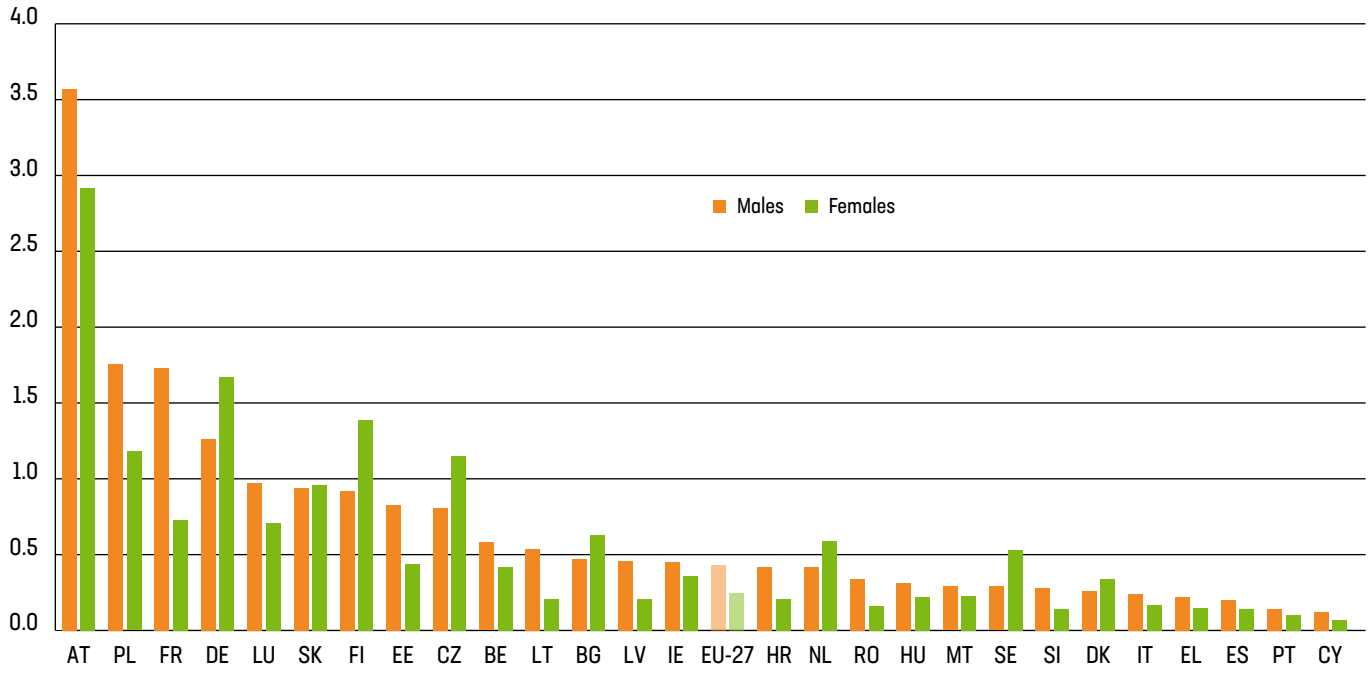

Source: Eurostat – Farm Structure Survey [ef_m_farmang] Farm indicators by age and sex of the manager, economic size of the farm, utilised agricultural area and NUTS 2 region

Examining gender differences, male farm managers consistently outnumber female ones across all age groups, except in the >65 age group. In both age groups, the largest gender gap is found in the 40-54 age group, where men represent a significantly larger share. It is interesting to observe that the share of female farm managers has increased in the younger age groups (<40 and 40-54 year olds) while it has decreased in the older age groups, suggesting a somewhat narrowing gender gap.

Comparing 2016 and 2020, some shifts in the age distribution are observed. The proportion of farm managers aged 65 and over has slightly decreased, suggesting a slow generational turnover. At the same time, there is a minor increase in the share of younger farm managers, especially males under 40. These trends indicate a gradual renewal of the agricultural workforce, although older individuals still dominate the sector.

Regarding gender distribution of farm managers, the most recent available data (2020) indicate significant differences across the Member States, as shown in the graph below.

### Figure 3. Ratio of farm managers <40 to farm managers >65 in 2020, by gender




Source: Eurostat – Farm Structure Survey [ef_m_farmang]
Farm indicators by age and sex of the manager, economic size of the farm, utilised agricultural area and NUTS 2 region

In most countries, the ratio of male farm managers is higher than that of females, indicating that younger men are more likely to enter farming compared to younger women. This is particularly evident in Austria, France and Poland, where generational renewal is clearly stronger among men.

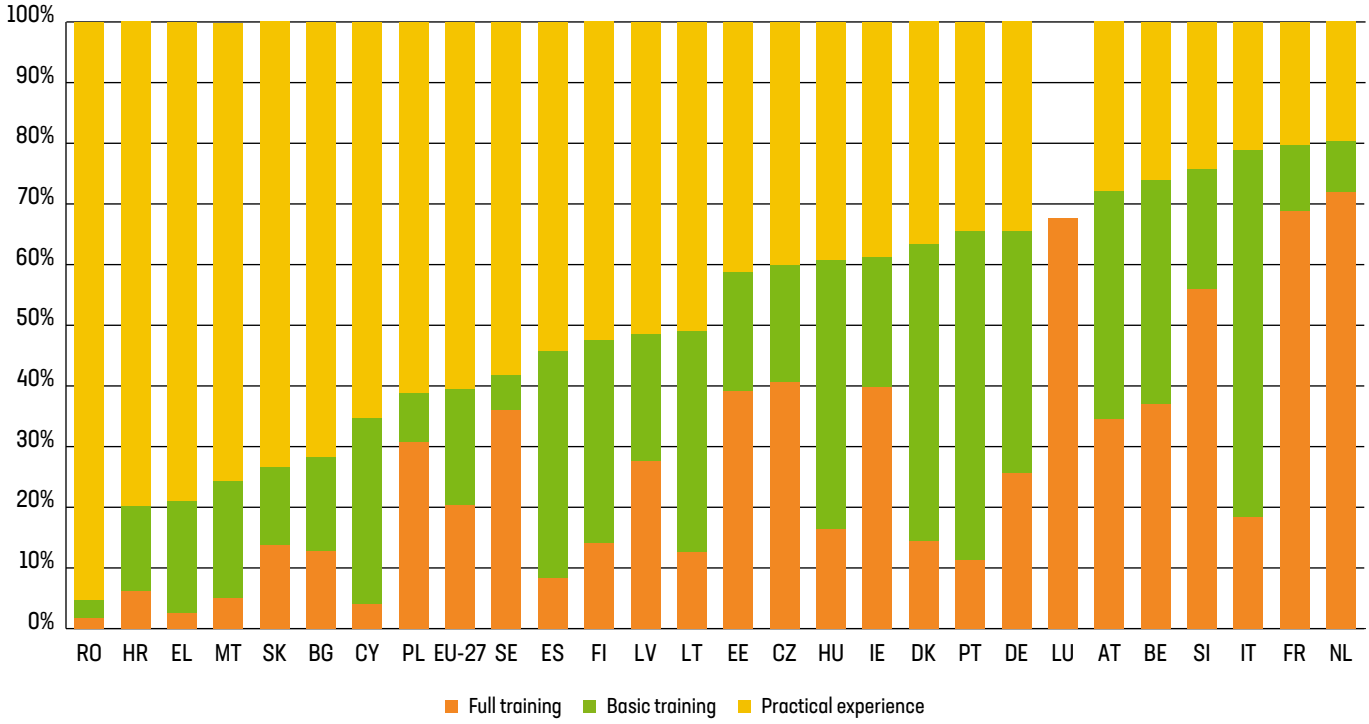
However, there are exceptions where the female ratio surpasses the male one. In countries like Germany, Finland and Czechia (but also Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Sweden), young female farm managers appear to be emerging at a higher rate than their male counterparts. This suggests that, while women remain underrepresented in farming overall, certain countries are seeing a relatively stronger generational renewal among female farm managers.

In contrast, in many southern European countries (e.g. Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus), the ratio remains very low for both genders, with minimal differences between men and women. This indicates an ageing farming sector where neither male nor female young farmers are replacing older generations at a significant rate.

### Levels of agricultural training

In 2020, the majority of young farmers under 40 years old in many European countries relied primarily on practical experience rather than formal agricultural training (the EU average is around 60%), as shown in the following graph.

**Figure 4. Agricultural training of young farmers (under 40 years old) in 2020**

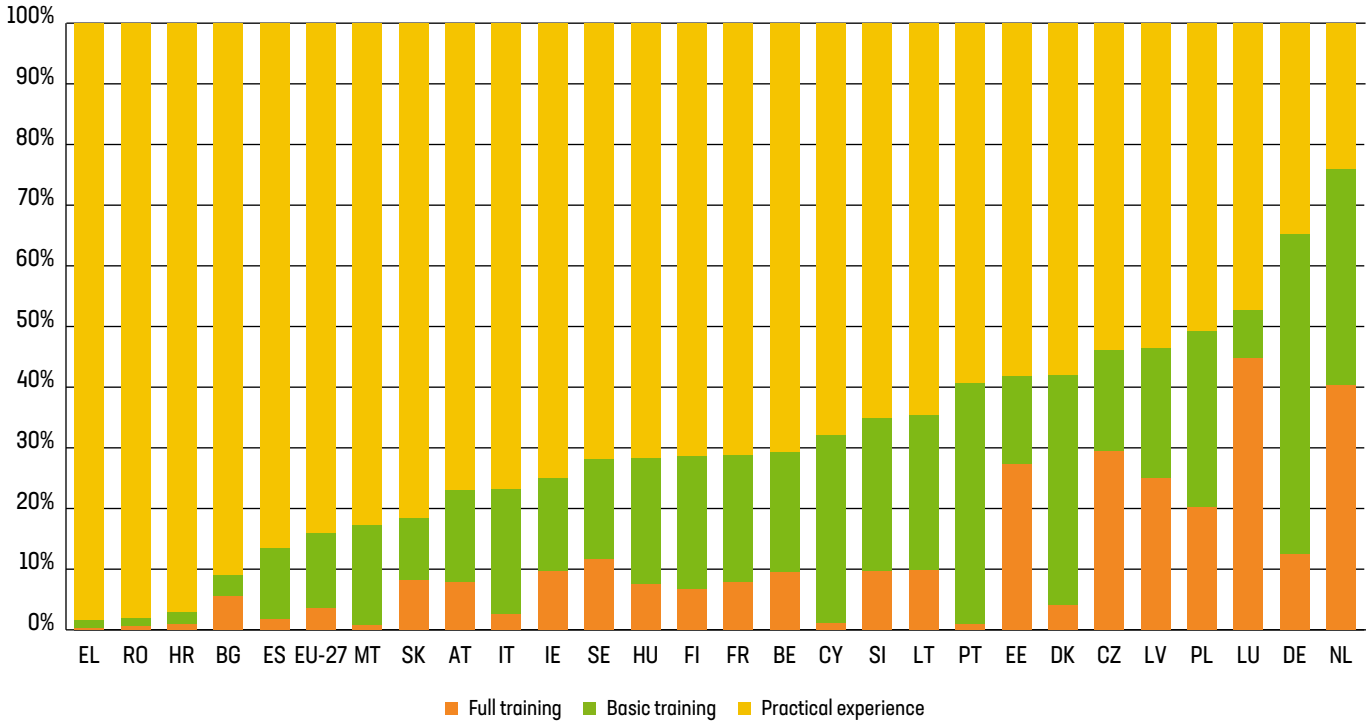



Source: Context Indicator C24 Agricultural training of farm managers European Commission | Agri-food data portal

NB: Data for the percentage of practical experience and basic training in Luxembourg is not available.

Romania, Croatia, Greece and Malta exhibit the highest reliance on practical experience, with minimal participation in formal education. In contrast, countries such as Austria and Belgium have a more balanced distribution, with a significant proportion of farmers receiving full or basic training. Conversely, the Netherlands, France, Slovenia and Luxembourg show a relatively high percentage of young farmers with full agricultural training. The variation in training levels across countries suggests differing approaches to agricultural education and potential disparities in access to formal training opportunities.

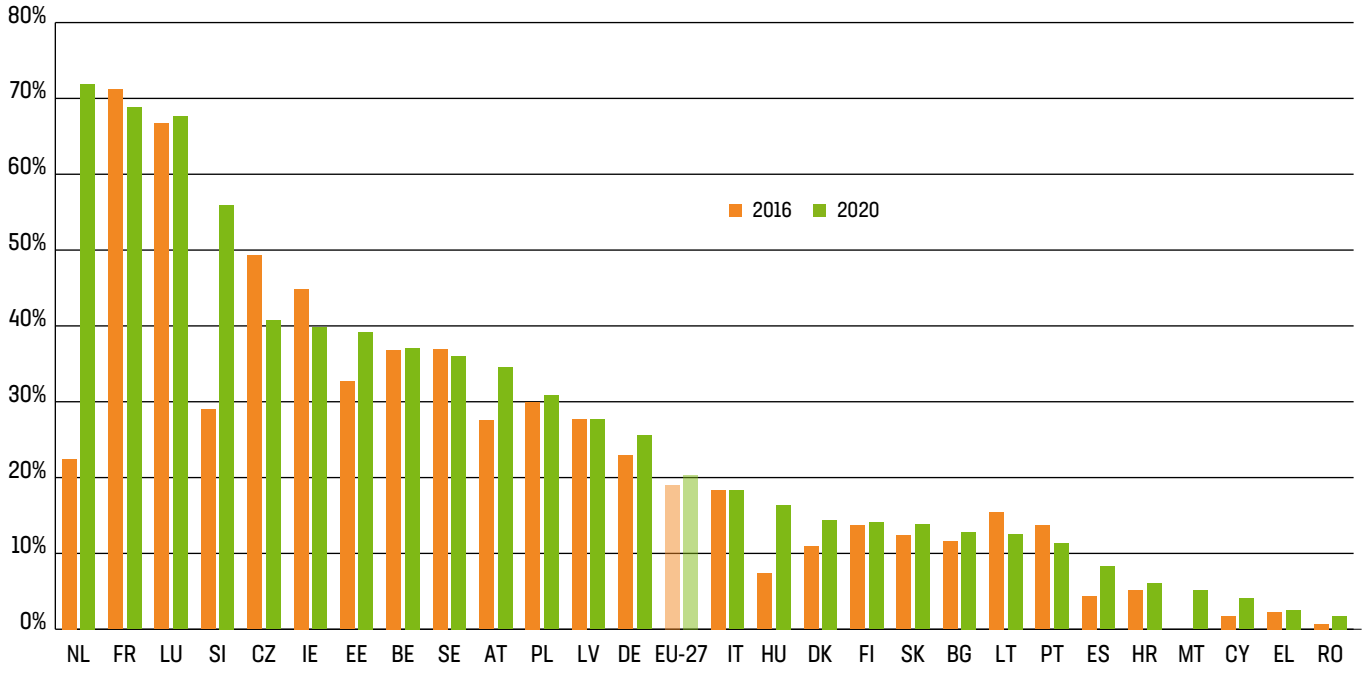
## Figure 5. Agricultural training of older farmers (over 65 years old) in 2020




Source: Context Indicator C24 Agricultural training of farm managers European Commission | Agri-food data portal

As shown in the figure above, older farmers over 65 years old predominantly rely on practical experience, with countries like Greece, Romania and Croatia showing near-total dependence on informal learning. Compared to younger farmers, the share of those with full or basic training is significantly lower across almost all Member States. The Netherlands and Luxembourg stand out, showing higher levels of advanced training among older farmers, though still lower than among younger farmers. The overall trend suggests a generational shift, with younger farmers receiving higher education, particularly in countries like Austria, Belgium and France, where the difference between the two age groups is more pronounced.

## Figure 6. Share of young farmers (<40 years old) with full agricultural training in 2016 and 2020




Source: Context Indicator C24 Agricultural training of farm managers European Commission | Agri-food data portal

NB: The data for Malta in 2016 is not available.

The figure above shows that in most EU countries, the share of young farmers with full agricultural training has remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2020 in many Member States, while it has significantly increased in others (NL, SI, EE, AT, HU) and decreased in a few (CZ, IE, LT, PT). The Netherlands, France and Luxembourg continue to lead with the highest proportions of fully trained young farmers, maintaining levels above 60%. In contrast, Spain, Croatia, Malta, Cyprus, Greece and Romania remain at the bottom (<10% young farmers with full agricultural training), showing small improvements and a persistently low share of formally trained young farmers. Therefore, while formal training is well established in certain regions, others still rely heavily on informal learning and practical experience.

A strengthened 'young farmer' definition under the 2023-2027 CAP, compared to the previous CAP period [47], is expected to contribute to increasing the level of education among young farmers.

### Trends in agricultural employment

The table below presents key data on employment, with a focus on the agricultural sector. The figures shown represent the percentage change in the employment rate (left) and the percentage change in the number of workers employed in agriculture (right) between 2014 and 2023. These variations are provided for two age groups: 15-64 and 15-39, the latter representing farmers under 40 years old.

Subsequently, using a colour gradient from red to green, the study illustrates the percentage point differences between the variations observed in the two age groups. In the 'Difference' columns, green shades indicate that younger workers/farmers experienced a more favourable change compared to the whole occupied population, whereas red shades signify the opposite.

**Table 3. Change in overall employment rates and employment in agriculture between 2014 and 2023, by age group (%)**

| Member State | Employment rates all sectors | | | Employed in agriculture | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % change 2014-2023 | | Difference (% points) | % change 2014-2023 | | Difference (% points) |
| | Age 15-64 | Age 15-39 | | Age 15-64 | Age 15-39 | |
| **EU-27** | 10.3% | 8.3% | -2.1% | -31.8% | -28.3% | 3.5% |
| **Belgium** | 7.6% | 4.7% | -2.9% | -11.4% | -5.3% | 6.1% |
| **Bulgaria** | 15.9% | 6.5% | -9.4% | -22.0% | -20.7% | 1.3% |
| **Czechia** | 8.8% | -2.1% | -10.9% | -7.2% | 4.4% | 11.6% |
| **Denmark** | 7.7% | 7.0% | -0.7% | -24.1% | -22.1% | 2.0% |
| **Germany** | 4.6% | 5.7% | 1.1% | -20.7% | -2.7% | 17.9% |
| **Estonia** | 9.5% | 9.2% | -0.3% | -37.8% | -30.0% | 7.7% |
| **Ireland** | 17.3% | 12.9% | -4.4% | -33.5% | -22.3% | 11.1% |
| **Greece** | 25.1% | 16.3% | -8.8% | -17.1% | 0.3% | 17.5% |
| **Spain** | 16.6% | 9.0% | -7.6% | -17.5% | -9.6% | 7.9% |
| **France** | 7.4% | 7.4% | 0.0% | -15.9% | -0.7% | 15.2% |
| **Croatia** | 20.7% | 16.1% | -4.6% | -51.8% | -41.0% | 10.8% |
| **Italy** | 10.4% | 9.3% | -1.1% | 2.8% | 6.3% | 3.5% |
| **Cyprus** | 21.1% | 19.9% | -1.2% | -48.5% | -48.2% | 0.3% |
| **Latvia** | 7.7% | 3.4% | -4.3% | -3.9% | 5.4% | 9.3% |

[47] Article 4(6)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 introduces 'the appropriate training or skills required, as determined by Member States' as an obligatory element, whereas In the previous CAP period (2014-2020), there was an obligation to have 'adequate occupational skills and competence' only for the support under the 2nd pillar (Regulation (EU) 1305/2013), while under direct payments it was facultative (Article 50(3) of Regulation (EU) N°. 1307/2013).

| Member State | Employment rates all sectors | | | Employed in agriculture | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % change 2014-2023 | | Difference (% points) | % change 2014-2023 | | Difference (% points) |
| | Age 15-64 | Age 15-39 | | Age 15-64 | Age 15-39 | |
| **Lithuania** | 11.4% | 14.1% | 2.7% | -45.7% | -53.1% | -7.4% |
| **Luxembourg** | 5.6% | 8.3% | 2.8% | -40.8% | -17.2% | 23.6% |
| **Hungary** | 21.2% | 12.2% | -9.0% | -3.0% | 10.9% | 13.9% |
| **Malta** | 21.8% | 15.4% | -6.3% | -14.8% | -17.8% | -3.0% |
| **Netherlands** | 12.7% | 13.5% | 0.8% | -10.8% | -3.0% | 7.8% |
| **Austria** | 4.2% | 3.8% | -0.4% | -36.3% | -26.5% | 9.8% |
| **Poland** | 17.3% | 11.2% | -6.2% | -32.5% | -24.0% | 8.5% |
| **Portugal** | 15.7% | 8.3% | -7.3% | -55.7% | -20.8% | 34.9% |
| **Romania** | 3.3% | -6.4% | -9.6% | -56.4% | -50.3% | 6.0% |
| **Slovenia** | 13.5% | 8.6% | -4.9% | -58.0% | -62.5% | -4.5% |
| **Slovakia** | 18.0% | 12.9% | -5.1% | -34.8% | -2.8% | 32.0% |
| **Finland** | 7.7% | 6.9% | -0.8% | -30.0% | -25.1% | 4.9% |
| **Sweden** | 3.3% | 4.8% | 1.4% | -24.4% | -17.5% | 6.8% |

Sources: Eurostat - Labour force survey [lfsq_ergan] Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship and European Commission | Agri-food data portal - Context Indicator C13 Employment by economic activity

NB: Regarding the percentages of workers employed in agriculture in Luxembourg and in Malta, the most recent data available are from 2022, rather than 2023.

The data indicate that between 2014 and 2023, the employment rate (all sectors) increased in all Member States. However, when considering the rate among young workers, the EU-27 data reveal a generally lower growth compared to the overall working-age population. At national level, there are significant variations: in Czechia and Romania, the youth employment rate declined, contrary to the trend observed for the total working-age population, suggesting a worsening employment situation for young people. At the other end of the spectrum, Luxembourg and Lithuania stand out with youth employment growing at an even faster pace than in other age groups.

Turning to the agricultural sector, it is evident that the proportion of workers employed in agriculture relative to the total workforce has declined sharply, with an average EU-wide reduction of over 30%. Although the decrease is slightly less pronounced for the 15-39 age group, it remains severe. At Member State level, Cyprus, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia registered the most significant declines among young farmers, exceeding 45%. In Slovenia, the drop among young farmers was particularly striking, surpassing 60%.

To sum up, while employment rates have increased overall across the EU, youth employment has generally increased at a slower pace except in a few Member States (Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden), with some countries experiencing setbacks (i.e. Romania and Czechia). Specifically, the agricultural sector has seen a marked reduction in its workforce, affecting both the overall and the young population employed in the sector, the latter to a slightly lesser extent. In a handful of Member States, the share of young farmers has increased between 2014 and 2023, namely Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Czechia.

### Population trends and depopulation of rural areas

The following table shows that at EU-27 level, between 2014 and 2023, the proportion of the population residing in cities remained unchanged. However, nearly 14% of the population effectively relocated from rural to semi-urban areas and, to a lesser extent, to urban areas, highlighting a general trend of rural depopulation.

## Table 4. Change in the population by degree of urbanisation, 2014-2023 (%)

| Member State | Cities | Towns and suburbs | Rural areas |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EU-27** | 0.0% | 12.6% | -12.8% |
| Belgium | 3.8% | 4.5% | -20.0% |
| Bulgaria | 13.2% | -7.2% | -10.2% |
| Czechia | -3.5% | 5.8% | -2.1% |
| Denmark | 4.1% | 52.9% | -27.2% |
| Germany | 11.6% | -2.2% | -13.8% |
| Estonia | 2.6% | 28.7% | -13.6% |
| Ireland | 0.6% | 19.0% | -10.4% |
| Greece | 10.0% | 25.5% | -26.0% |
| Spain | 6.5% | 43.6% | -49.8% |
| France | -19.0% | 50.5% | -4.0% |
| Croatia | 28.7% | 10.9% | -21.7% |
| Italy | -18.4% | 13.4% | 16.1% |
| Cyprus | 17.8% | -5.3% | -28.7% |
| Latvia | -0.5% | 126.8% | -25.8% |
| Lithuania | 0.5% | 44.8% | -10.5% |
| Luxembourg | 29.7% | 32.8% | -33.3% |
| Hungary | 18.4% | 9.0% | -20.7% |
| Malta | -46.2% | 373.1% | 1 300.0% |
| Netherlands | 26.4% | -19.2% | -28.6% |
| Austria | 6.0% | 4.4% | -7.4% |
| Poland | 3.3% | -2.9% | -0.9% |
| Portugal | 5.6% | 6.0% | -15.1% |
| Romania | -5.8% | 54.5% | -16.0% |
| Slovenia | -0.5% | -0.5% | 0.7% |
| Slovakia | -13.6% | -12.3% | 18.2% |
| Finland | 17.8% | -8.1% | -11.0% |
| Sweden | 17.0% | 11.4% | -34.2% |

Source: Eurostat - EU-SILC [ilc_lvho01] Distribution of population by degree of urbanisation, dwelling type and income group

NB: The most recent available data for Latvia are for the year 2021.

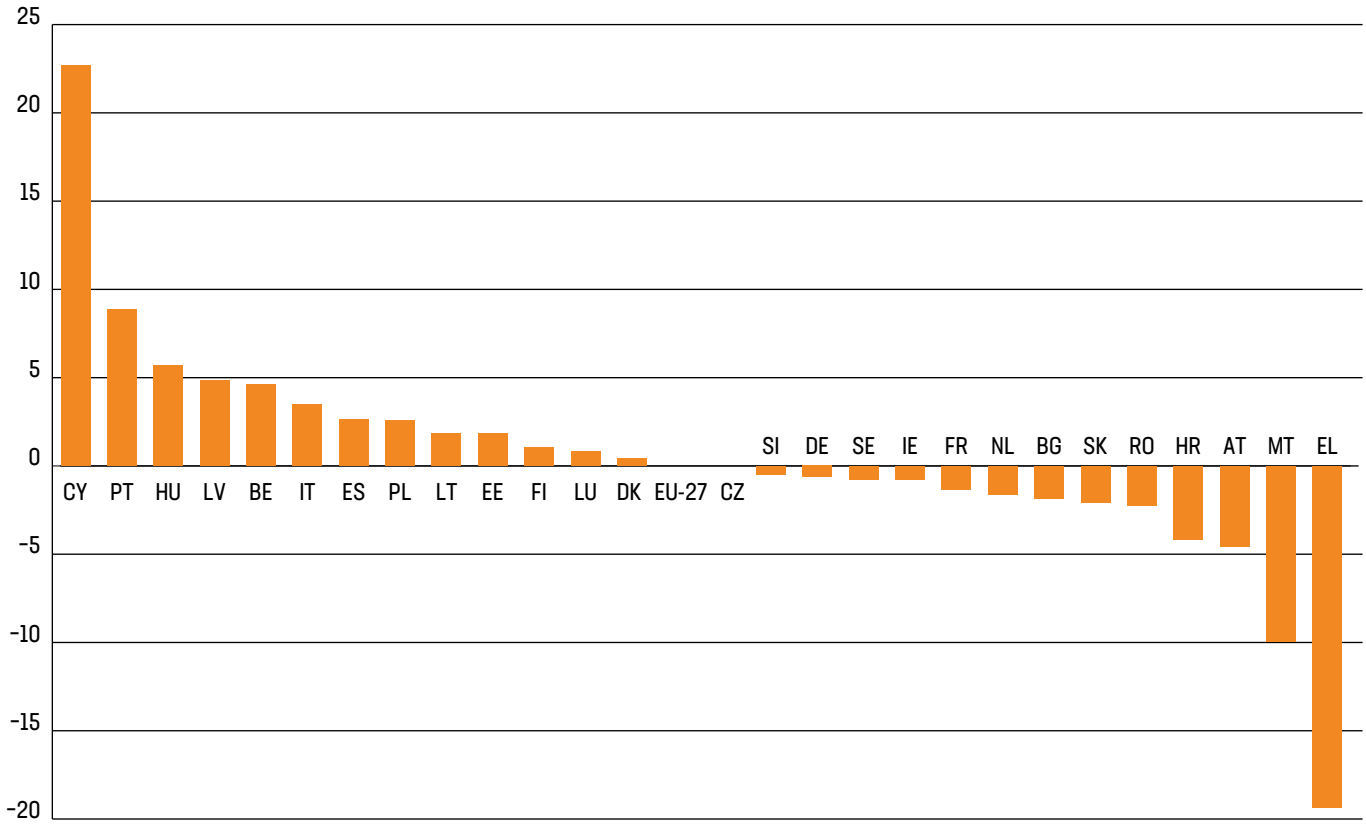
The redistribution to cities or semi-urban areas varies quite significantly across Member States and the overarching trend of rural depopulation persists. It is particularly pronounced in countries such as Spain, where the decline has reached nearly 50%, as well as in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Greece and in smaller countries such as Luxembourg, Cyprus and Latvia.

Malta, Italy and, to a lesser extent, Slovenia are the only countries where the proportion of the population living in rural areas appears to have increased. However, for Malta and Italy, the indicated variations may be due to a change in the classification of the different areas in the official statistics.

### Land use and abandonment

The analysis of land use and land abandonment is essential when examining GR trends in agriculture because it directly influences the availability of land for younger or new farmers.

**Figure 7. Percentage change of utilised agricultural area between 2013 and 2020 by Member State**




Source: Eurostat – Farm Structure survey [ef_lus_main] Main farm land use by NUTS 2 region

Following a marked decrease in utilised agricultural area (UAA) between 2000 and 2012 (approximately -7%) [48], the area remained generally stable at EU level until 2020. Between 2013 and 2020, the Member States with the largest increases were Cyprus (+22.7%), Portugal (+8.9%) and Hungary (+5.7%), while those with the most significant decreases were Greece (-19.4%) and Malta (-9.9%). Despite this apparently positive recent trend, land abandonment remains an important challenge in the EU, especially in several Member States and types of areas. Indeed, 13 out of 27 Member States [49] have around 50% of their agricultural areas designated as moderate to high risk for abandonment, corresponding to a total of around 56 million hectares (ha) [50].

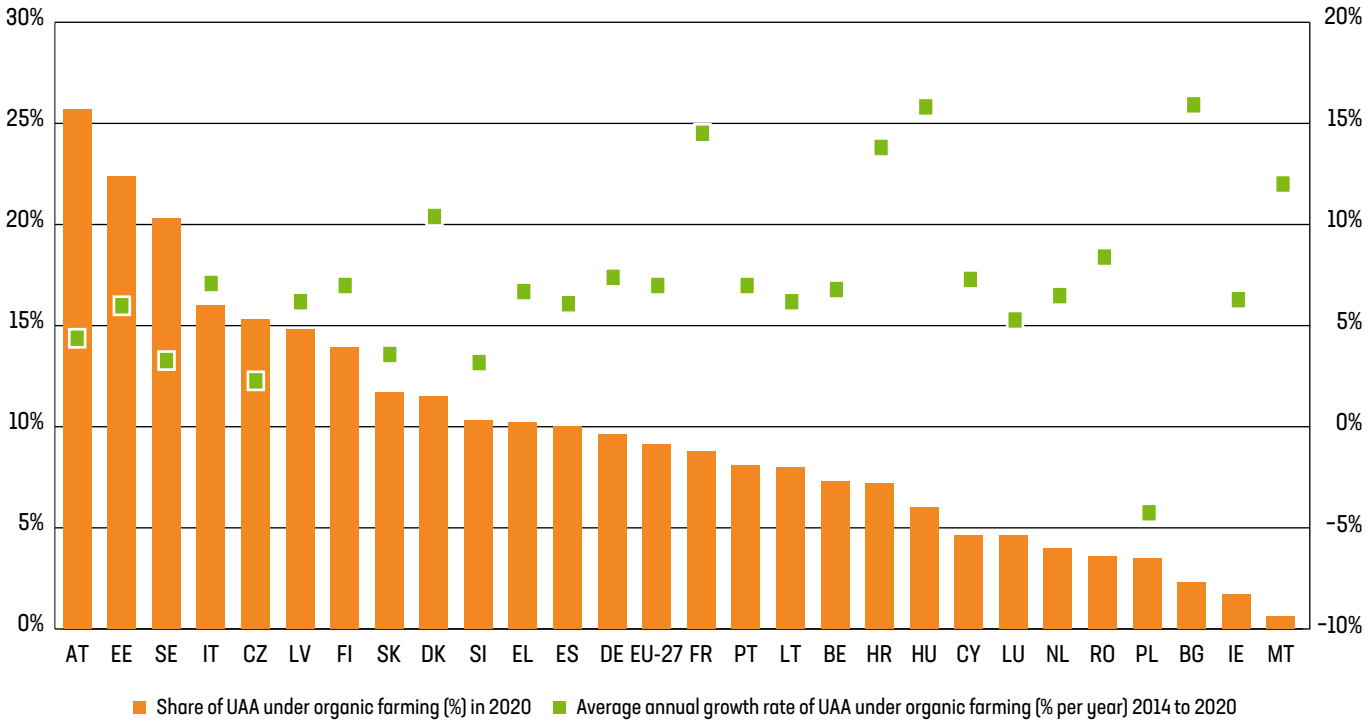
### Sustainability

Sustainability and generational renewal are increasingly intertwined priorities in EU agricultural policy, particularly under the CAP and the Green Deal. The transition towards more sustainable farming systems is expected to be driven in part by young farmers and new entrants, who are generally more open to innovation, environmentally conscious practices and long-term investment in resource efficiency. In this context, it is essential to explore whether and how the structural renewal of the farming population is associated with sustainability trends across Member States.

[48] European Parliament, written by ÖIR GmbH, BAB, University of Ljubljana et al., *The future of the European farming model*, Research for AGRI Committee, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels, 2022.
[49] AT, CY, DK, EE, EL, FI, IT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI.
[50] European Parliament, *The challenge of land abandonment after 2020 and options for mitigating measures*, Requested by the AGRI committee, Study in Focus, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, 2021.

A first valuable indicator is the share of UAA under organic farming. Young farmers are generally more likely to engage in organic or sustainable farming models due to their values, openness to innovation and responsiveness to market demand [51], therefore the indicator can help identify where younger generations may be more engaged in sustainable agriculture, especially if growth in organic farming coincides with higher rates of young farm holders (see next figure).

**Figure 8. Share of UAA under organic farming in 2020 and its average annual growth rate from 2014 to 2020, by Member State**




Source: Context Indicator C19: Agricultural area under organic farming European Commission | Agri-food data portal

The Member States with the highest shares of organic farming as a percentage of total UAA are the Netherlands (25.7%), Estonia (22.4%) and Sweden (20.3%). Conversely, those at the bottom of the ranking are Bulgaria (2.3%), Ireland (1.7%), and Malta (0.8%). Between 2014 and 2020, all Member States recorded a growth in organic farming, with the sole exception of Poland, which experienced a decline by 4.2%. If we correlate these data with the young-to-old farmers ratio, a correlation index of 0.41 emerges, which indicates that, **in general, countries with a higher percentage of land under organic farming tend to have a higher share of young farmers relative to older ones.**

Another indicator to consider is input intensity, which reflects the environmental pressure of farming systems [52]. Lower input intensity is generally associated with more sustainable practices, though productivity trade-offs may exist. High input intensity farms, while potentially more productive, often come with increased risks of environmental degradation (e.g. soil depletion, water contamination).

Young farmers may either adopt low-input systems (in organic, diversified or small-scale production) or high-input systems (in large, tech-driven enterprises). EU statistics [53] show that, on average across the EU, a slightly larger share of UAA is managed by farms with medium input intensity per hectare (37.6%). The analysis of the correlation between these data and the young-to-old farmers ratio, however, does not reveal any significant relationships.

Average input expenditure per hectare (constant input prices) [54], representing the average cost of inputs used (such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, fuel, labour, machinery, etc.) per hectare of agricultural land [55], is another indicator that can be considered. Given that younger farmers tend to invest more in inputs and technology [56], an increase in real input expenditure per hectare might represent a positive effect of generational renewal. However, the correlation analysis between these data [57] and the ratio of younger to older farmers does not indicate any meaningful associations.

[51] European Commission, Communication (COM) 141 final/2 of 14 April 2021 from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an action plan for the development of organic production.

[52] Bonari, E., Debolini, M., Marraccini, E., Ruiz-Martinez, I., *Indicators of Agricultural Intensity and Intensification: A Review of the Literature*, Italian Journal of Agronomy, Volume 10, Issue 2, 2015.

[53] Context Indicator C33: Farming intensity European Commission | Agri-food data portal.

[54] Context Indicator C33: Farming intensity European Commission | Agri-food data portal.

[55] Eurostat, *Utilised agricultural area (UAA) managed by low-, medium- and high-input farms (aei_ps_inp)*, Reference metadata, accessed on 15 April 2025, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/aei_ps_inp_esms.htm?utm.

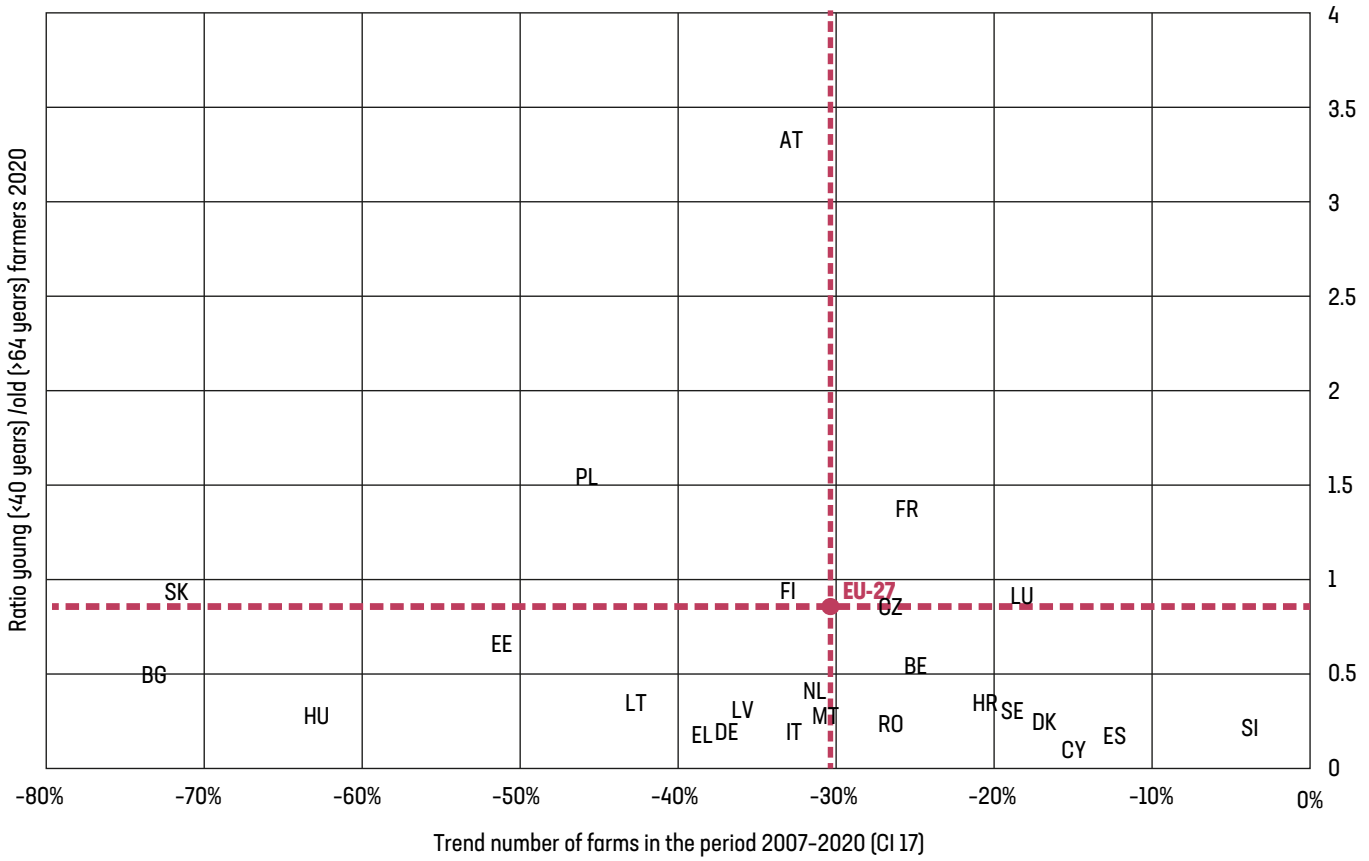
[56] European Parliament, *Report of 03 October 2023 on generational renewal in the EU farms of the future*, Procedure 2022/2182(INI). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0283_EN.html.

[57] Using 2020 data for consistency in the comparison.

#### 5.1.3.2. Severity of the generational renewal problem across Member States

By examining the trends in total number of farms combined with the ratio younger/older farmers (see figure below), it is evident that all countries have experienced a decline in the number of farms between 2007-2020. At the same time, the ratio of younger to older farmers remains below one in most cases, reinforcing the concern about an ageing farming population and emphasising the need to address the GR issue.

**Figure 9. Trends in total number of farms in the period 2007-2020 (CI17) and ratio young/old farmers in 2020, by Member State**




Source: European Commission, Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans, Assessment of joint efforts for 2023-2027, 2023, p. 590.

The Member States experiencing the smallest decline in the number of farms are Slovenia, Spain and Cyprus, although they are also among those with the lowest young-to-old farmer ratio. In contrast, countries such as Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Estonia have witnessed a substantial decrease in farm numbers (-50% to -70%) over a period of thirteen years.

Based on the analysis presented in the *Mapping study* (figure above), Austria, France, Finland, Luxembourg and Czechia appear to be in a more favourable GR position compared to all other Member States, as they display a share of young farmers higher than the EU average and a decrease in the number of farms close to the EU-27 average. At the same time, the GR problem appears to be particularly critical in four Member States (Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania) that record both a young farmer share lower and a decline in the number of farms higher than the EU average. The remaining Member States stand in the middle: Poland and Slovakia show a significant decline in total number of farms but their share of young farmers is higher compared to the EU average; Italy, the Netherlands, Malta and Romania show a decline in farm numbers close to EU average but with a low share of young farmers; in the remaining Member States, GR appears to be fairly critical. Overall, the data suggest a worrying trend across the EU as not only is the number of farms shrinking, but the proportion of young farm managers remains insufficient to ensure GR in most countries.

To complement the information on trends and the severity of the GR challenge gathered through documentary research, the first question in interviews with national stakeholders asked for their perception of the gravity of the GR issue [58]. Different individuals were interviewed in each Member State, therefore, the table that follows presents average scores. However, it is important to note that only a small number of individuals were interviewed per Member State. As a result, some of these averages may be based on as few as two or three responses.

[58] Collecting answers on a scale 1='To no extent' to 5='To a very large extent'.

Moreover, we have compared the judgements of interviewed stakeholders (i.e. second column in the following table) with a categorisation of Member States into three groups according to 'low-moderate-high' severity (i.e. third column in the table) based on analysis carried out in the *Mapping study* [59].

### Table 5. Degree of severity of the generational renewal problem by Member State

| Member State | Average score on the severity of the GR problem (interviews[NB]) | Degree of severity of the GR problem (*Mapping study*) |
|---|---|---|
| Belgium-Wallonia | 5.0 | Moderate |
| Bulgaria | 5.0 | Moderate |
| Cyprus | 5.0 | High |
| France | 5.0 | Low |
| Greece | 5.0 | High |
| Ireland | 5.0 | Moderate |
| Italy | 5.0 | High |
| Malta | 5.0 | High |
| Spain | 5.0 | High |
| Netherlands | 4.7 | Moderate |
| Slovenia | 4.7 | High |
| Belgium-Flanders | 4.5 | Moderate |
| Czechia | 4.5 | Moderate |
| Slovakia | 4.5 | Low |
| Latvia | 4.4 | High |
| Croatia | 4.0 | High |
| Estonia | 4.0 | Moderate |
| Lithuania | 4.0 | High |
| Poland | 4.0 | Low |
| Portugal | 4.0 | High |
| Romania | 4.0 | High |
| Sweden | 4.0 | High |
| Germany | 3.7 | Low |
| Hungary | 3.7 | High |
| Denmark | 3.5 | High |
| Luxembourg | 3.3 | Low |
| Austria | 3.0 | Low |
| Finland | 3.0 | Low |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of interview data and categorisation from the Mapping study

NB: Q1 of the interviews to national stakeholders: score from 1 to 5, where 1 is 'To no extent' and 5 is 'To a very large extent'.

[59] The following parameters were used for the categorisation: ratio of younger farm managers (<40 years old) over older ones (>65 years old), trends in total number of farms compared to the ratio young/old farmers (see Figure 9 above), percentage of young farmers (under 35 years old) with full agricultural training, access to finance.

It should be highlighted that no interview respondent from any Member State provided an assessment of 'to no extent' or 'to little extent' (scores 1 and 2), demonstrating that the GR issue is widely perceived as a relevant problem across the EU. That being said, there are differences in how the severity of the phenomenon is perceived. In Member States such as Austria and Finland, it is generally considered a problem 'to some extent' (score 3), whereas in as many as nine Member States [60], all respondents assessed it as a problem 'to a very large extent' (score 5).

As shown in the table above, discrepancies exist between the severity assessment presented in the *Mapping study* and the responses provided by interviewees, which may also be influenced by statistical data to some extent. These differences may also be explained by the limited number of interview responses per Member State and by the fact that, despite some nuances, GR is broadly recognised as a concern across the EU. Moreover, the categorisation based on the *Mapping study* uses 2020 data, whereas interviews were carried out five years later. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the severity of the GR issue may also have changed over time.

### Most affected farm types and sectors

Interviews with national stakeholders also provided insights into the most affected farm types, sectors and regions, as well as gender disparities within each Member State. Overall, labour-intensive sectors seem to be generally less attractive due to difficult working conditions, while income instability (common in farm types with seasonal or irregular returns) further deters succession. Small farms, in particular, are often viewed as economically unsustainable and unappealing to successors, especially when they lack the scale needed for modernisation or competitiveness.

**Livestock farming emerges as one of the sectors most exposed to generational renewal issues**. Countries such as France, Romania, Latvia, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia note persistent difficulties in cattle, sheep and pig farming due to low profitability, labour demands and declining interest among younger generations. In France and Romania, the dairy and beef sectors are specifically mentioned for low pay and harsh working conditions, while in Latvia and Bulgaria, young farmers prefer less intensive systems such as beef grazing or crop farming. Similarly, in Slovenia and Malta, livestock is viewed as a demanding and high-risk sector. Dairy farms, while sometimes benefiting from steady income, still face structural barriers. In Ireland, the sector is seen as more viable than others, but not immune to succession problems. In Germany and Belgium-Flanders, milk production is among the sectors with higher succession rates, but this is often contingent upon family transfer and existing capital. Where capital is unavailable or the successor is from outside the family, the high cost of entry limits renewal.

**Horticulture and fruit production also face barriers**, especially where profitability is limited or support structures are lacking. In France and Slovenia, these sectors are underfunded, exposed to climate and pest risks and often depend on fragmented land and manual labour. In Germany and Spain, horticulture is further constrained by skilled labour shortages and fluctuating market trends. However, **in countries such as Estonia and Portugal, horticulture is more accessible to young or first-generation farmers due to lower land requirements** and the possibility of operating on a small scale, particularly in greenhouse or organic production.

**Crop farming presents a mixed picture**. In Latvia and Poland, arable farming is seen as more manageable due to mechanisation and seasonal labour availability. Estonia and Denmark, however, report barriers linked to land access and liquidity, with income typically arriving only once per year, making financial planning more difficult. In France and Spain, field crops have experienced a decline, particularly where farms remain small or operate in marginal land conditions.

**Small-scale and subsistence farms are widely acknowledged to be more vulnerable to generational decline**. In countries like Romania, Slovakia and Croatia, succession is often postponed until the owner's death, leading to fragmented ownership and reduced investment. Many of these farms lack modern equipment or profitability, making them unattractive to younger generations. In contrast, larger or diversified farms, especially those involved in mixed systems, tend to have better prospects for succession, as they offer more stable income and room for adaptation.

Some sectors, such as beekeeping, perennial crops and reindeer farming, are highlighted as particularly fragile due to either market vulnerability or low interest among successors. In France and Latvia, beekeeping is seen as being at risk due to climate pressure and import competition. In Sweden, reindeer herding faces challenges linked to land access and a lack of generational interest, while in Spain, orchards and perennial crop farms suffer from delayed retirement and land being held by elderly farmers.

**In some cases, younger farmers are gravitating towards niche or alternative farming systems**. In Lithuania, young entrants are increasingly drawn to vegetable and fruit production, to align production with national food security goals. In Portugal and France, organic and quality production schemes, particularly in horticulture and orchards, are attracting new generations; however, these systems still require targeted support to become viable career paths.

### Most affected regions

Several Member States report that **generational renewal mostly affects regions which tend to share certain common characteristics such as demographic decline, ageing rural populations and high rates of youth emigration**. These are often remote, mountainous or marginal areas with poor infrastructure, limited access to services and markets and a concentration of small-scale farms. In these areas, generational transition can be further complicated by fragmentation of land ownership, legal or cultural delays in succession and low profitability, especially in sectors requiring continuous on-farm labour or significant financial investment.

In Romania, France, Slovenia, Greece and Cyprus, mountainous areas and other areas facing natural constraints are identified as particularly vulnerable due to depopulation, land abandonment, lack of services and infrastructure, and the specificity of agricultural activity, which must be adapted to topography and climate.

[60] BE-W, BG, CY, FR, EL, IE, IT, MT, ES.

In Sweden, the northern regions are associated with difficulties linked to dependency on dairy farming, limited availability of land and challenges in obtaining loans and credit. Respondents mentioned that investment returns are considered lower in the north, compared to the south, where more support seems to be available. In Croatia, Slavonia is considered the most affected region, due to delays in succession that are often resolved only after the owner's death, leading to fragmentation of farmland among multiple co-owners. Other Member States highlight economic and demographic issues in specific regions. In Latvia, the Latgale region is noted for having the highest proportion of elderly farmers and a tradition of dividing property among heirs, which leads to smaller-sized farms. While it also has a number of young farmers engaged in mixed and grazing systems, successors often do not farm the land themselves. In Bulgaria, the north-west and north-central regions are identified as the most affected, due to depopulation and economic difficulties. In Slovakia, eastern regions are reported to have higher production costs and less market access than the western regions, leading to fewer young entrants.

In Germany, differences are reported between western and eastern regions. In the east, farms organised as cooperatives are described as less accessible to new entrants and selling to investors is reported as a common practice. In the west, succession is more often managed through competition among neighbouring farms. Austria notes that structurally weak and rural regions, often in mountainous areas experiencing youth emigration, face more challenges with succession. These areas are frequently dominated by small farms with an ageing ownership structure. In contrast, larger and diversified farms in more economically dynamic regions report better conditions for transition.

Other Member States also refer to general regional patterns. In Italy, data show that the share of young agricultural businesses has increased slightly in the north and centre but decreased in the south, where the largest demographic decline is also recorded. In Ireland, eastern regions where land is more profitable tend to face fewer succession challenges, while northern and western areas, with more livestock and less tillage, are considered more problematic. In Portugal, regions with smaller farm sizes, such as Minho and Douro, are considered less attractive to young farmers due to land prices, while Trás-os-Montes witnesses more youth activity and less abandonment. In France, the north-east and Mediterranean regions are considered more attractive, while the mountainous area of the Massif Central is highlighted for its higher abandonment and lower installation rates.

### Gender differences in the impact of the generational renewal challenge

Generational renewal in EU agriculture also reveals **differences in how male and female successors experience access to land, ownership and support**, although these vary considerably across Member States. In many countries, traditional inheritance patterns continue to favour sons over daughters, especially in more conservative or rural regions. In Croatia, succession commonly passes to male heirs, and the same is reported in Poland, where farms are typically overtaken by male successors. Similar customs are noted in Slovenia and Ireland, where cultural bias remains a strong influence on farm succession. In other countries, such as Latvia and Estonia, women are underrepresented in farm management roles, partly due to perceptions of farming as physically demanding and more suited to men.

Access to credit and land is also identified as a barrier in some Member States. In Czechia and Belgium-Wallonia, women reportedly face greater difficulty in obtaining loans or collateral. This is echoed in Malta and Germany, where financial independence and recognition of women as primary operators remain limited. In some of these cases, women are actively involved in farm work or administration but are not formally recognised as farm managers, which in turn restricts their eligibility for support. The lack of childcare infrastructure and the challenge of combining family responsibilities with farm work are mentioned in Germany as further limiting factors.

Despite these patterns, several countries report no significant gender-based differences in GR. In Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal and Luxembourg, respondents state that female and male successors face the same structural barriers, and that support is generally available to both groups under the same conditions. Some of these countries are seeing an increase in female participation, even if the sector remains male-dominated overall. In Romania, nearly 40% of young farmers supported under a national programme were women. In Lithuania, official data suggests that almost half of farm managers are women, although they operate a smaller share of total agricultural land.

A few Member States note changes in the nature of women's involvement in agriculture. In France, women are increasingly entering sectors such as cattle, goat farming and medicinal plant production, often outside traditional expectations. In Spain, although women are less likely to inherit farms, they are more present among new entrants and tend to manage smaller holdings with shorter-term financing. In Sweden, women are becoming more active in small-scale and horticultural farming. In the Netherlands, gender imbalance is reportedly diminishing among younger generations, with women participating equally in advisory and support programmes.

#### 5.1.3.3. Main causes of the generational renewal problem

Following the general question on the severity of the GR problem (i.e. responses summarised in Table 5 above), interviewed national stakeholders were asked to identify what they consider the main contributing factors to the problem, with reference also to demographic trends.

Interview responses presented several overarching themes:

- One of the most prominent identified challenges is the **demographic impact of an ageing farming population** (mentioned in 26 out of 28 CSPs), with many Member States reporting a high proportion of farm managers over 65 and a limited number of young farmers under 40. This demographic trend has been exacerbated by rural depopulation and the shift of younger generations towards urban areas in search of better employment opportunities, social infrastructure and quality of life.
- **Economic factors** also play a crucial role in discouraging young people from entering the sector (20 CSPs). The high capital investment required for farm start-ups, coupled with unstable market prices, rising input costs and competition from large agribusinesses, makes farming a financially precarious career choice. This category also includes access to finance, as many young farmers struggle to secure loans due to a lack of credit history or collateral and subsidies or grants are often insufficient or difficult to access due to bureaucratic complexity.

- The perception of farming as an **unattractive career** (16 CSPs) further limits GR. Agriculture is often seen as physically demanding, low-paying and socially undervalued compared to other professions. The demanding nature of farming, particularly in livestock sectors, with long hours and little free time, makes it less appealing to younger generations who seek a better work-life balance.
- **Access to land** is another major factor (15 CSPs). Rising land prices, land speculation and consolidation of smaller farms into larger holdings were reported, making it difficult for new entrants to acquire land. In some regions, the lack of a transparent or regulated land market further complicates the situation [61]. In addition, leasing arrangements, which dominate agricultural land use in many countries, do not always favour young farmers.
- **Family succession** remains an issue in many countries (10 CSPs), as older farmers delay handing over farms due to financial security concerns or a lack of willing successors. In cases where no family member is available to take over, external succession is often difficult due to legal and financial constraints.
- Another key theme that emerged from several Member States is **rural infrastructure deficits** (mentioned in nine CSPs). Limited access to education, healthcare, digital connectivity and social services in rural areas makes farming less appealing to young people and their families.
- Lastly, among the most cited themes, the impact of **regulatory and policy uncertainty and complexity** (mentioned in six CSPs) emerged. Stakeholders across the EU cite concerns about constantly changing environmental regulations, administrative burden and the unpredictability of future agricultural policies, which create a sense of instability and hinder long-term planning.

Other topics mentioned less frequently included climate change, the increase in farm size, access to knowledge and the issue of 'city farmers' (farmers who reside in urban areas but maintain agricultural properties).

For the purposes of the analysis, the information presented in the above paragraphs constitutes an introduction to the analysis of barriers under the following RQ2.

### 5.1.4. Conclusions of RQ1

The first research question examined current GR trends across the EU to identify those Member States where the GR problem is most severe and its main causes.

The findings of the analysis are overall in line with the situation outlined in the context analysis of the GR challenge in EU agriculture (presented in Chapter 3). Despite modest signs of progress in certain Member States, **the generational renewal challenge in agriculture remains of significant concern**. The proportion of young farmers under the age of 40 continues to lag well behind that of older farm managers and the ratio of younger to older farmers remains below one in the majority of EU countries. While Austria, Czechia and France exhibit relative improvement, southern and eastern Member States continue to face a pronounced demographic imbalance. Gender disparities persist, with male farm managers still overwhelmingly predominant, although recently there has been some improvement in the participation of younger women.

**Training levels among young farmers** show encouraging trends in some western and northern Member States, but remain critically low in others, particularly in southern and eastern EU regions, where reliance on informal, experience-based knowledge prevails. This divergence in training undermines the potential for innovation and sustainable practices among the next generation of farmers.

**Trends in agricultural employment may further worsen the generational renewal challenge,** due to the sharp decline in the sector's workforce, especially among the young. While overall employment rates across the EU have improved, young people's participation in agriculture has fallen, with certain countries such as Slovenia, Lithuania and Romania experiencing severe reductions. These dynamics are intrinsically linked to broader rural depopulation trends, with a widespread shift away from rural areas.

In terms of land use, although the UAA has stabilised in recent years, **the land abandonment risk remains a critical issue**, undermining opportunities for new entrants and exacerbating the ageing of the sector.

The **severity of the generational renewal problem** is acknowledged across all Member States, as reflected in both statistical indicators and stakeholder perceptions. While countries such as Austria, Finland and Luxembourg are perceived to be, and appear statistically, in a comparatively favourable position, others face acute challenges. In particular, Spain, Malta, Italy, Greece and Cyprus show a weaker position, with both the proportion of young farmers and the number of farms having declined sharply.

Furthermore, **the generational renewal issue appears to be most problematic in labour-intensive, low-profitability sectors,** particularly in livestock farming and small-scale operations. **Remote, mountainous and economically marginal regions**, such as mountainous areas in Romania, northern Sweden and parts of Latvia, **suffer the most**, with demographic decline, poor infrastructure and fragmented land ownership intensifying the challenges. **Gender disparities persist**, as traditional inheritance patterns often favour men, with women facing greater barriers to access land, credit and formal farm management roles as noted in countries like Croatia and Germany. However, some Member States, including Romania and Lithuania, report growing female participation, particularly in new or alternative farming sectors, and younger generations show signs of reducing gender imbalance.

The underlying causes of the GR problem, as identified by national stakeholders, are complex and interrelated. Demographic changes, economic constraints, limited access to land and finance, inadequate rural infrastructure and the declining attractiveness of farming as a profession all contribute to the sector's difficulty in attracting and retaining younger generations. Family succession is becoming increasingly problematic, while regulatory uncertainty further discourages potential new entrants. The analysis in RQ2 explores these issues in greater depth.

[61] Vranken, L., E. Tabeau, P. Roebeling, P. Ciaian with contributions from country experts, *Agricultural land market regulations in the EU Member States*, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC126310.

## 5.2. RQ2 – What are the key barriers hindering generational renewal overall and for female successors, and how do they differ across Member States?

### 5.2.1. Description of RQ2

Research Question 2 (RQ2) aims to identify the **existing barriers to generational renewal** in the Member States across multiple dimensions, including economic, social, institutional, sectoral, regional, and personal and familial spheres. Understanding the different barriers hindering GR can help clarify the diversity of policy needs and the rationale behind the strategies set out by the Member States.

The factors hindering GR can differ significantly among Member States [62]. As highlighted in the literature, the main identified key challenges for young farmers include access to land, financing and advisory services [63]. A comprehensive country-specific assessment of GR issues and barriers is considered necessary to improve the understanding of the Member States' rationale behind their GR strategies and choices of policy instruments. The assessment of GR barriers thus serves as a basis to analyse the different types of instruments addressing different GR barriers (see RQ3.1) and the overall intervention logic underpinning Member States' choices of different policy strategies (see RQ3.2). Analysis of GR barriers is also later used as the basis for assessing the potential effectiveness of policy instruments, as well as to spot potential areas of improvement and good practices to be replicated across Member States (see RQ4).

### 5.2.2. Analytical approach

The analysis is based on information from various sources, including available literature, official statistics (Eurostat and other sources), information collected in the field through documentary research and interviews with MAs and other national stakeholders across all EU Member States, as well as the young farmers' survey.

The analysis to answer RQ2 takes as the starting point the needs assessed by the Member States in their CSPs in connection with SO7 [64] and integrates the information collected on the field.

### 5.2.3. Presentation of findings

#### 5.2.3.1. Main barriers to generational renewal in agriculture

The *Mapping study* examined the needs identified by the Member States in their CSPs in relation to SO7. The identified needs were classified according to main themes. The classification enabled the identification of two broad horizontal clusters and five more specific clusters. Horizontal needs include a general 'need of promoting generational renewal' expressed in 21 CSPs and the 'need for improving the regulatory framework and policy support' (including administrative burden and taxation) expressed in 12 CSPs [65].

The more specific needs were clustered around the following themes representing different types of barriers:

- Need for improving **access to financial resources**, including access to investment funds on favourable terms, facilitated access to credit and improved taxation (expressed in 14 CSPs).
- Need for improving **access to land** for both young farmers and new farmers (11 CSPs).
- Need for **strengthening farms' competitiveness and profitability**, for instance through investments and modernisation (14 CSPs).
- Need for **improving attractiveness of rural areas and farming**, including quality of life and working conditions (15 CSPs).
- Need for **boosting education, intergenerational knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship** (17 CSPs).

Interviews with MAs and other national stakeholders across the EU-27 under the present study allowed for the gathering of further information about GR barriers in each Member State. MAs and other stakeholders were asked to indicate the main barriers to GR in their country, based on a given list. The information gathered was complemented with evidence collected through documentary research at national level. The following figure shows the main GR barriers indicated across the Member States.

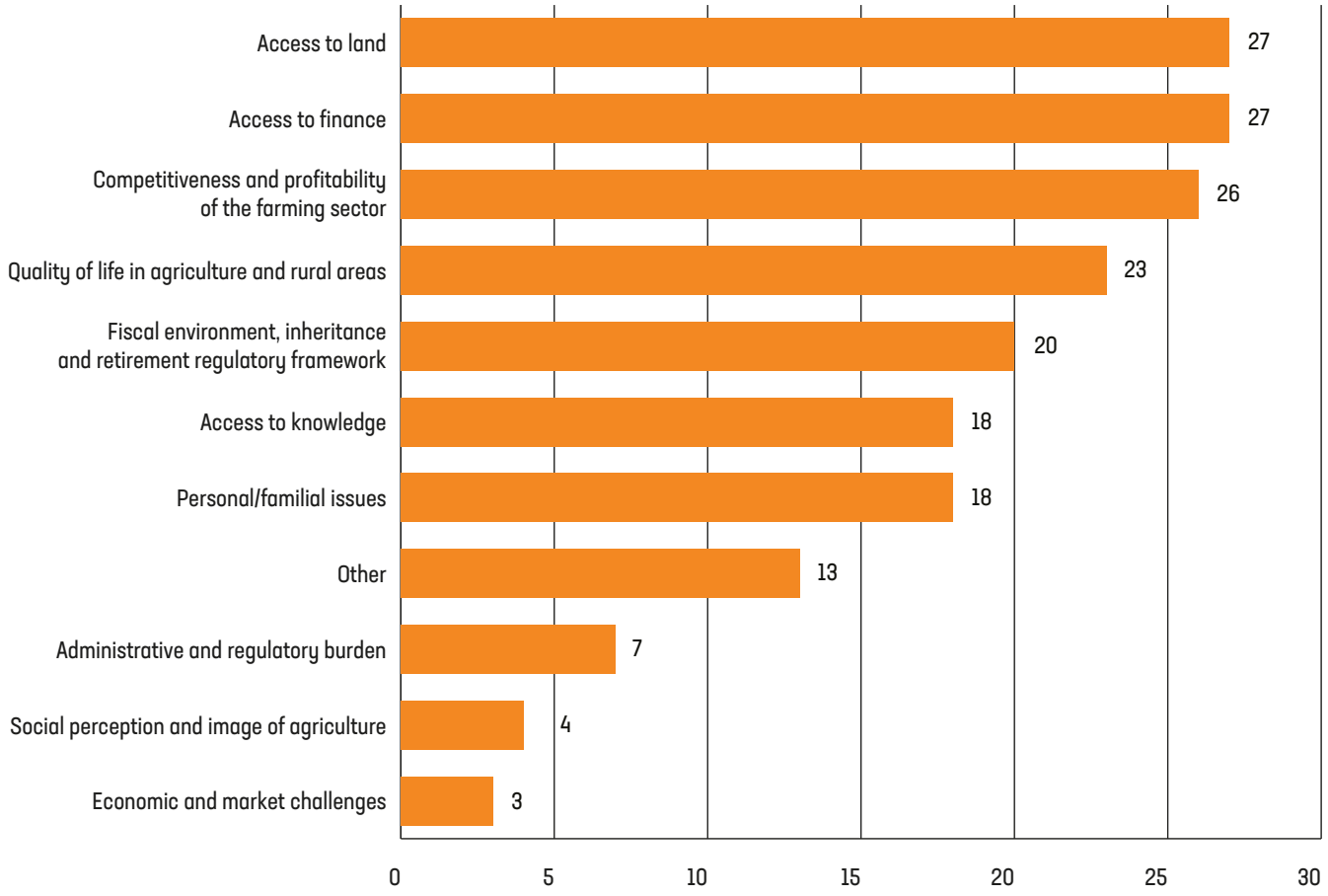
[62] Coopmans, I., Dessein J., Accatino F., Antonioli F., Bertolozzi-Caredio, D. et al., *Understanding farm generational renewal and its influencing factors in Europe*, Journal of Rural Studies, 86, 2021, 398-409, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.06.023.

[63] European Commission, *Recommendations to the Member States as regards their strategic plan for the Common Agricultural Policy*, Brussels, 18.12.2020, COM(2020) 846 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0846.

[64] As part of the SWOT analysis the Member States were asked to undertake (Regulation EU 2021/2115, Article 95(1)).

[65] European Commission, *Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans*, 2023, Section 9.3.1.1.

**Figure 10. Distribution of main barriers to generational renewal identified by national stakeholders**




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of documentary research and interviews (the maximum number per barrier is 28, multiple choice allowed for each Member State)

The findings of interviews and documentary research in the Member States are overall consistent with the needs analysis of the *Mapping study* and clearly show that **access to land**, **access to finance**, **competitiveness and profitability of the farming sector** are considered as main barriers to GR in all or most Member States. However, the information collected from MAs and country-specific documentary research offers further detail compared to the information included in CSPs. For instance, **quality of life in agriculture**, **tax environment and retirement policy**, **access to knowledge** and **personal/familial issues** are also mentioned in the majority of Member States as shown in the figure above. These findings clearly indicate a **broad presence of generational renewal barriers across the EU**.

Among the less mentioned barriers, '**administrative and regulatory burden**' is indicated in Belgium-Wallonia, Czechia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Sweden as an important barrier. Administrative complexity and burdensome standards can hinder young people from setting up or staying in farming since many young farmers struggle to 'navigate the bureaucratic system'. A not-so-positive '**social perception and image of agriculture**' is mentioned as a barrier by interviewees in Belgium-Wallonia, Czechia, Spain, Luxembourg and Finland. **Economic and market challenges** are indicated in Bulgaria, Malta and Poland. The following table provides a summary overview of the types of barriers identified through interviews and documentary research in each Member State.

**Table 6. Main barriers to generational renewal identified by national stakeholders in interviews by Member State**

| Member State | Identified barriers | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Access to land for young farmers and new farmers, including land prices | Access to finance, including access to investment funds on favourable terms, facilitated access to credit and improved taxation | Fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory framework | Competitiveness and profitability of the farming sector: income prospects and income gaps | Quality of life in agriculture and rural areas, including working conditions and infrastructure | Access to knowledge, including advisory services, education, intergenerational knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship | Personal/ familial issues (e.g. familial conflicts, educational aspirations, etc.) | Other |
| Belgium-Flanders | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Belgium-Wallonia | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Bulgaria | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Czechia | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Denmark | X | X | | | | | | X |
| Germany | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Estonia | X | X | | X | X | X | | |
| Ireland | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Greece | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Spain | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| France | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Croatia | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Italy | X | X | | X | X | | | |

| Member State | Identified barriers | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Access to land for young farmers and new farmers, including land prices | Access to finance, including access to investment funds on favourable terms, facilitated access to credit and improved taxation | Fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory framework | Competitiveness and profitability of the farming sector: income prospects and income gaps | Quality of life in agriculture and rural areas, including working conditions and infrastructure | Access to knowledge, including advisory services, education, intergenerational knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship | Personal/ familial issues (e.g. familial conflicts, educational aspirations, etc.) | Other |
| Cyprus | | X | | X | X | | | |
| Latvia | X | X | | X | | | X | |
| Lithuania | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Luxembourg | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Hungary | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Malta | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Netherlands | X | X | X | X | | X | | |
| Austria | X | | | X | | | X | |
| Poland | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Portugal | X | X | X | X | | | | X |
| Romania | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Slovenia | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Slovakia | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Finland | X | X | X | X | X | | | X |
| Sweden | X | X | | X | | | X | X |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of documentary research and interviews data

Some further barriers were mentioned under the category 'Other', for instance factors such as 'lack of a culture of transmission and extra-family succession' (Belgium-Wallonia, Spain, France), 'lack of openness to women' (France), 'availability of farm labour' (Portugal), climate change (Poland), geopolitical concerns (Poland, Romania), 'lobbying of farmers' associations in favour of older farmers or large size farms', which can hinder policy changes more oriented towards young farmers and GR (Lithuania). Finally, the 2024 Green Denmark agreement [66] is indicated as a new policy, possibly restricting access to agricultural land.

#### 5.2.3.2. Barriers to generational renewal: severity and causative factors

Analysis here is mostly based on information collected through interviews in Member States, complemented where possible by evidence found in literature.

##### Access to land for young farmers and new farmers, including land prices

In interviews, **access to land is consistently reported as one of the most severe barriers to young farmers entering agriculture** across virtually all Member States. The problem is longstanding and worsening over time, largely due to rising land prices, decreasing land availability and structural characteristics of the farming sector. In most countries, both land purchase and rental markets are very difficult to access for young entrants, particularly those without family farming backgrounds or inherited land.

**High land prices** and **limited land availability** are mentioned in interviews as common causes of difficult access to land for young and new farmers. Most Member States report high and/or rising land prices as a significant barrier (BG, CZ, DK, FI, HU, LV, MT, PT). This makes entry into farming financially unviable without external capital or inheritance. At the same time, in many instances, land availability is shrinking due to urbanisation, changes to environmental zoning, sometimes jointly with speculative purchases by non-agricultural investors or large agri-businesses.

In recent years, **arable land prices have experienced significant increases across most EU countries**, albeit with different magnitudes and growth rates, reflecting different market and regional economic conditions [67]. In 2023, the highest arable land prices were recorded for Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Spain [68]. In Malta, prices are much higher than in other Member States, reflecting the limited availability of agricultural land and the pressure for alternative uses. Between 2017 and 2022, the highest increases were observed in Romania (average annual growth rate 31%), Czechia (14.8%), Estonia (14.7%) and Ireland (13.8%). This dynamic price growth may indicate the growing attractiveness of agricultural markets and/or increased investment activity. Conversely, France and Spain presented relatively stable prices, probably indicating market maturity without major shifts in demand and supply of agricultural land. Similarly, Member States such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg show overall price stability at high levels, probably influenced by limited land availability, mature land markets and established regulatory frameworks [69].

**Inequality between inheritors and newcomers** is also reported in most Member States as a hindrance, with young people inheriting family farms being significantly less affected by barriers to accessing land, whereas new entrants face severe disadvantages due to their lack of land ties. Moreover, financial institutions often require collateral that young farmers cannot provide, particularly when they lack family assets.

**Land fragmentation** is reported to be particularly problematic in countries like Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Italy and Finland, where small and often dispersed plots make the takeover of farming operations by young farmers more problematic. Fragmentation hinders farming viability, making mechanisation and planning difficult, driving up costs and bringing inefficiency. Some countries have adopted measures to prevent excessive land fragmentation (e.g. Bulgaria, Spain and Slovakia) [70].

**Policies regulating land transfer and land lease** can worsen access to land as they are often complex, opaque or not youth-friendly (e.g. Slovenia, Croatia, Malta). In some cases, leases are informal, short-term or insecure, discouraging investment. Landlords, particularly older ones, may refuse to lease or prefer passive ownership (e.g. Malta, Romania) [71]. National policies frequently favour existing farms, large-scale operations or intra-family transfers (e.g. France, Hungary). Slovakia and Bulgaria highlight land speculation and the dominance of large agri-businesses as severe issues. In addition, some countries have legal frameworks prioritising neighbours or locals in land purchases, which limits access for non-resident young farmers (i.e. Hungary, Lithuania).

A recent report published by the JRC [72] illustrates **agricultural land market regulations** across 22 Member States, highlighting considerable heterogeneity in policy approaches. In general, the **'new' Member States have more heavily regulated markets** (but also including France and Spain among the 'old' Member States). For instance, Croatia, Hungary, Poland and Romania have strict regulations in place and many of them are specifically protecting farmland owners, particularly small- and medium-sized farms. The **least regulated land markets** are found in Denmark, Ireland and Finland. Among the regulations likely to affect GR, some countries allocate **pre-emptive rights to family relatives** (e.g. CZ, PL, RO, SI). Some countries give pre-emptive rights to neighbouring farmers (BG, LT, HU, IT, AT, RO, SI) and others to adjacent landowners (EE, ES). In some Member States (HR, HU, PL, RO, SI), **land acquisition is conditional on agricultural experience by the acquirer**.

[66] Denmark's 2024 Green Tripartite Agreement represents a major effort to transform the nation's agricultural practices and enhance environmental sustainability. This comprehensive plan introduces several key initiatives, e.g. introduction of a carbon tax on agriculture, major land use changes for environmental restorations and reduction of nitrogen pollution (Council for Green Transition, 2024). In the interviews, this agreement has been reported to create instability, raising concerns that it may increase difficulties in accessing land.

[67] Wasilewski A., Gospodarowicz M., Wasilewska A. *Agricultural Land Price Dynamics in Europe: Convergence, Divergence, and Policy Impacts Across EU Member States*, Sustainability, 2024, *16*(24), 10982, https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/24/10982.

[68] Eurostat, *Agricultural land prices and rents – statistics*, Statistics Explained, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Agricultural_land_prices_and_rents_-_statistics.

[69] Vranken, L., Tabeau E., Roebeling P., Ciaian P., 2021.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Both countries report having started implementing policy reforms and land reallocation schemes to prioritise young farmers.

[72] See footnote 61 for Vranken, L., Tabeau E., Roebeling P., Ciaian P., (2021).

Some Member States highlight **regional and sectoral differences**. In particular, Sweden, Finland and Italy show strong regional disparities. For instance, northern Sweden suffers more due to the difficult topography, while southern Sweden supports more accessible small-scale operations like horticulture. Crop farming, especially in Denmark, France and Latvia, is often more affected due to larger land requirements, while access to land is sometimes easier for horticulture or mixed farming.

**Gender inequality** is particularly noted in Romania, Malta and Slovenia, where women often lack formal land rights or are not taken seriously by institutions or sellers.

In nearly every case, interviewed stakeholders noted that **access to land has worsened over time**, driven by speculation, urban pressure, climate change and environmental constraints reducing available arable land.

### Access to finance, including access to investment funds on favourable terms and facilitated access to credit

**Access to finance is described as a high or very high barrier** in the vast majority of Member States. It is **particularly problematic for new entrants without a family farming background**, who face excessive entry costs and lack collateral, credit history or track record necessary to secure financing. This problem is particularly felt in Slovakia, Romania, Malta, Bulgaria and Portugal, where land ownership is a precondition for credit, as many young or new farmers often do not own or inherit land or assets. Stakeholders interviewed in Germany, Czechia, Ireland and Spain also point out that young entrants inheriting farms face significantly fewer financing barriers than first-generation farmers.

Setting up a viable farm requires a **significant capital investment** (land, buildings, machinery, livestock, etc.). Countries such as France, Spain, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands highlight how capital intensification has made farming less financially accessible. Moreover, the **perception of agriculture as a risky sector** deters many commercial banks from lending, especially in Cyprus, Malta, Sweden, Latvia and Slovenia. Therefore, young farmers face loan rejections, high interest rates or unfavourable conditions due to their perceived risk profile.

The **financing gap in agriculture**[73] is estimated to have increased by 33% between 2017 and 2022, from EUR 46.6 billion to EUR 62.3 billion[74]. The widening of the gap is attributed to the combined effect of an increase in the average loan size in all farm size groups and changes in the distribution of the farm population, namely, the decline in the number of small- and medium-sized farms and an increase of large farms. In 2022, Romania, Italy, Poland, France and Spain showed the largest financing gaps, while the smallest gaps were found in Estonia, Slovenia, Belgium, Sweden, Czechia and Latvia.

Interviews in Bulgaria, Slovenia, Czechia, Lithuania and Portugal also highlighted that **public support can be ineffective or difficult to access**. While many countries have state-backed loans in addition to CAP grants and other EU-funded schemes, these often fail to reach all intended beneficiaries. Bureaucratic difficulties, overly strict criteria or insufficient aid amounts were the most frequently given reasons.

**Regional differences are reported in some Member States**. In Portugal, **access** to finance varies significantly across regions. Lisbon has better credit access than the Algarve or the northern regions of the country. In Sweden, difficulties are more pronounced in northern regions and among female farmers. Interviews in Romania, Croatia and Malta also highlight the presence of **gender disparities**, with women being seen as less credible borrowers.

**Sectoral disparities** are highlighted in Croatia, Bulgaria and Czechia. Specifically, livestock farming often requires more upfront capital than crops, thus young farmers in this sector are more affected. On the other hand, permanent crops or niche crops (e.g. essential oils in Bulgaria) sometimes attract more support for younger entrants due to targeted funding schemes.

In many countries, the situation has worsened over time, especially following economic crises or due to strict banking regulations and rising farm input costs. In Cyprus, access to finance collapsed following the 2013 crisis due to the failure of cooperative banks. Spain also experienced a decline in access to financing following the 2008 crisis.

Interviews also highlighted **some favourable systems for access to finance**, for instance, the extensive support programmes through soft loans, grants and the supportive legal framework of Hungary (e.g. Act CXXIII of 2020). Denmark also stands out positively due to its mortgage credit system, state-backed start-up loans and the risk-sharing mechanism of the Export and Investment Fund of Denmark (EIFO), a state-owned financial institution.

### Fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory framework

The severity of the barrier posed by the **fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory framework** to young people's entry into agriculture varies considerably across Member States, though both recurring themes and divergent national experiences can be observed.

In several countries – Belgium (both Flanders and Wallonia), France, Malta, Romania and Slovenia – **the fiscal environment is perceived as a highly severe barrier**, especially due to its complexities. France, Malta and Romania in particular highlight issues hindering the smooth transfer of farms across generations. In France, the taxation system is primarily oriented towards transmission within the family and insufficiently oriented towards non-family farm installation. Many other countries, such as Germany, Ireland, Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary and Luxembourg, report **medium to moderately high severity**, suggesting that while the barrier is notable, it is not insurmountable. These countries often face specific challenges tied to complex inheritance rules or retirement insecurity, but they may also have partial mitigating frameworks in place. In contrast, in Greece, Portugal, Lithuania and Spain, the **fiscal environment is either of moderate severity** or **not perceived as a significant barrier**.

[73] Defined as 'the unmet financing demand from economically viable farms' and calculated based on the total number of farms, the share of financially viable farms with unmet demand for finance and the average loan size.

[74] fi-compass, *Financing gap in the agriculture and agri-food sectors in the EU*, European Investment Bank, Luxembourg, 2023.

Other recurrent problems include the following:

- **Inheritance laws** are widely seen as complex and outdated, often hindering the intergenerational transfer of land or farm businesses.
- **Taxation**, especially on land transfers or capital gains, places a heavy burden on young or new farmers. The lack of tax reliefs (e.g. in Slovenia and Malta) adds to the financial strain.
- **Retirement insecurity** is a persistent theme. In countries like Ireland, Slovenia and Croatia, older farmers often continue working because pensions are too low or non-existent, blocking access for the younger generation.
- **Bureaucracy and administrative burdens** (e.g. in Germany, Portugal and Romania) are noted as excessive, especially in contexts where digitalisation efforts have unintentionally made things more difficult for traditional farmers.
- Another shared challenge is the **lack of succession planning** and inadequate information on inheritance or retirement options, which is particularly noted in Ireland and France.

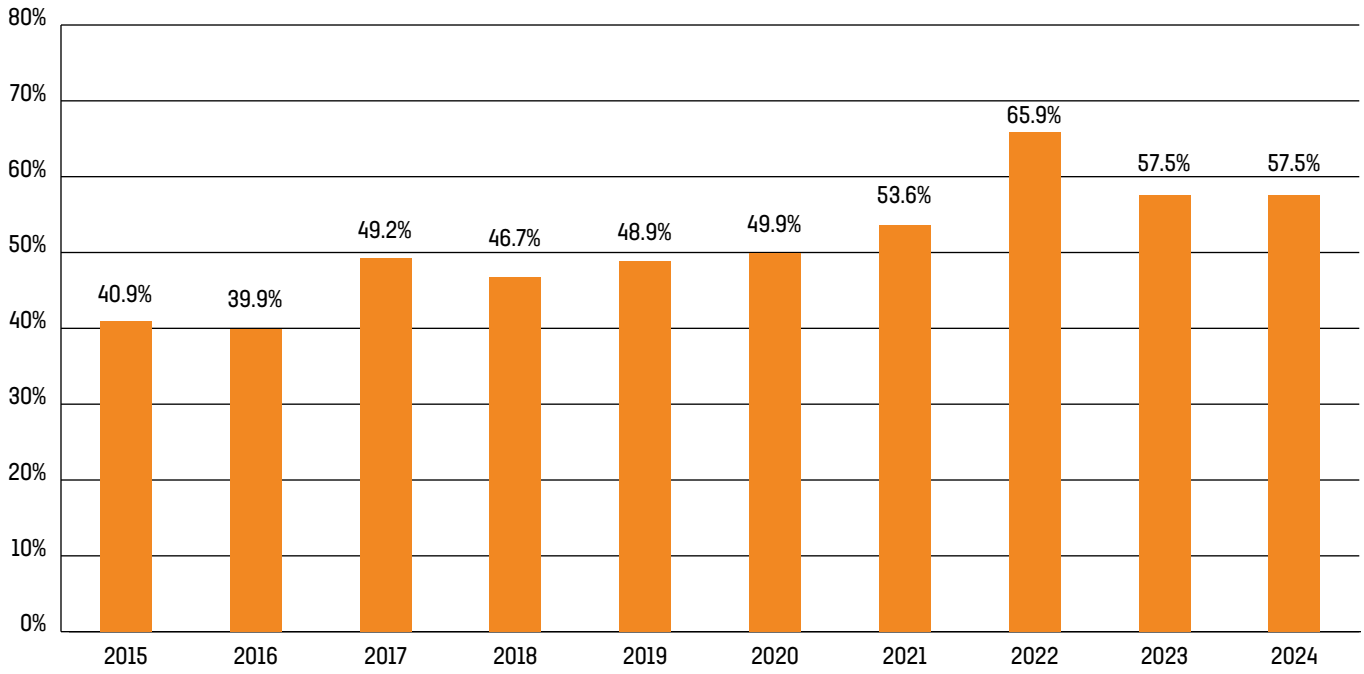
Finally, some distinctive national traits stand out:

- **Romania** faces a particularly acute situation where new digital fiscal policies (e-invoicing, e-transport) have reportedly led to a **30% land abandonment rate** in the south-east region. The situation is worsened by the lack of clear inheritance and retirement frameworks, making farm transfer highly cumbersome.
- **France** stands out for the **divide between supply and demand in farm transfers**, especially for those from non-agricultural backgrounds. Its tax system heavily favours intra-family transfers, making entry harder for outsiders.
- In **Slovenia**, the fiscal environment is closely tied to **social and environmental recognition** of agriculture. Low pensions and expected policy changes (i.e. higher VAT on fertilisers) threaten to expand the problem.
- In **Lithuania,** interviewees suggest increasing the threshold to register for VAT to support younger farmers and smaller farms.
- In **Spain** and **Portugal,** the fiscal environment is **not seen as a specific barrier to agriculture,** with conditions perceived as similar to general economic conditions in other sectors. In **Portugal**, it is noted that the obligation to start making monthly payments to the social security system immediately on starting an economic activity creates an immediate burden that young farmers are not always able to handle.

### Competitiveness and profitability of the farming sector: income prospects and income gap

The comparison between agricultural income (i.e. C26 – agricultural entrepreneurial income) and average wages in the whole economy at EU level shows a progressive narrowing of the income gap. In 2015 agricultural income was on average around 40% of the average wages in the whole economy, while in 2024 the ratio increased to 57.5%, as shown in the figure below. This trend suggests a progressive reduction of the income gap between agriculture and the whole economy, which however still persists. Average EU figures are the result of diverse situations across the EU and although in most Member States a larger or smaller agricultural income gap exists, in a few Member States the opposite is observed (i.e. Czechia, Spain, Greece and Cyprus) according to Eurostat statistics.

**Figure 11. Family farm income compared to the average wages in the whole economy, EU-27 average (%)**




Source: C26 Agricultural entrepreneurial income European Commission | Agri-food data portal

Interviews with national stakeholders across Member States show a broad consensus that **low profitability and competitiveness of the farming sector represent a significant barrier** to young people entering agriculture. While the severity of the issue and specific contributing factors vary by country, several commonalities emerge, alongside some country-specific differences. In the majority of Member States, the barrier is described as **high or very high**. Countries such as Belgium (both Flanders and Wallonia), Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia and Spain report this as a critical or worsening issue. Even in countries where the severity is deemed moderate (e.g. France, Finland and Sweden), the problem is still acknowledged as a constraint, especially in certain sectors like livestock or in specific regions.

Recurring causes mentioned across countries include:

- **Low and volatile income**: agricultural income is widely reported to be below national income averages and influenced by seasonal or market-related fluctuations.
- **High input and operational costs**: rising costs of fertilisers, energy, labour, land and water (exacerbated by climate change) diminish profit margins.
- **Market pressures and competition**: exposure to international competition (e.g. cheap imports), low bargaining power in the supply chain and limited access to retail chains are common complaints.
- **Small farm size and lack of economies of scale**: smaller holdings, particularly common among young or new farmers, struggle to compete and are more vulnerable to income instability.
- **High initial investment requirements**: new entrants face large capital costs with limited access to finance or favourable loans, making it hard to modernise or expand operations.
- **Regulatory burden**: increased environmental regulations, particularly around emissions and land use, are perceived as increasing costs and uncertainty, especially in Ireland and the Netherlands.
- **Livestock farming as a vulnerable sector**: livestock is consistently identified as the least profitable sector, due to higher labour intensity, regulatory burden and market instability.

Some **differences** in how Member States experience this barrier are noteworthy:

- **Germany and Sweden** perceive the barrier as **relatively low or limited**. In Germany, the issue is more about young people's interest being diverted to better-paid sectors, while in Sweden, profitability challenges are seen as regionally specific (mainly affecting the north).
- In **Portugal**, while profitability concerns are real, some interviewees suggest that **new technologies and niche markets** (e.g. red fruits, olive groves) **offer promising opportunities**. The Azores were mentioned as having profitable areas, like milk production.
- **Estonia** and **Slovenia** stress **access to land** and **small average farm sizes** as structural obstacles undermining competitiveness, rather than profitability alone.
- **Italy** illustrates a **cultural shift** towards more lucrative crops such as tropical fruits, reflecting a certain entrepreneurial adaptation among younger farmers.
- **Finland and France** report **sector-specific variability**, with livestock and fruit/vegetable producers under more pressure than arable farms.

### Access to knowledge, including education, intergenerational knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship

Overall, **access to knowledge represents a moderately severe barrier** to young entrants in agriculture in the EU. In many Member States, **the issue is not the outright absence of support structures but rather limited accessibility**, **underutilisation or inadequate tailoring of services to young farmers' specific needs**. In Member States, such as Estonia and Slovenia, the barrier is perceived as significant, particularly due to knowledge gaps in entrepreneurship and modern technologies, while in Greece, it is considered a critical impediment. In contrast, relatively effective knowledge systems are reported in Ireland and Hungary. Crucially, service fragmentation, the scarcity of specialised advisors or a lack of recognition of existing services reduce their value and effectiveness, thus limiting young people's capacity to enter and thrive in the agricultural sector.

The barrier does not affect all actors uniformly. Experts consistently highlight that **farmers without a family background in agriculture are at a marked disadvantage, as they cannot rely on informal knowledge transfer**. Similarly, smallholders and new entrants face greater difficulties compared to those in well-established farming operations. In countries like France and Czechia, disparities stem from structural issues, such as unequal access to syndicate-based resources or tailored training, while in Malta and Croatia, social factors, including gender, influence access and participation in training opportunities. Moreover, differences across agricultural sectors and regions exacerbate the unevenness of the barrier, with certain subsectors like livestock or organic farming facing specific training deficits. These observations indicate that while in some Member States equality in service provision is reported, actual access and benefit remain highly contingent on background, sector and regional infrastructure.

**Access to knowledge is largely viewed as a longstanding issue across the EU**, with only gradual improvements noted. In many Member States, the problem has persisted despite policy and programme interventions, as seen in Czechia, Estonia and Romania. Some improvements have been reported due to EU-funded programmes and digitalisation efforts, such as in Spain following the shift to online training during the COVID-19 pandemic, or in Slovenia, where EU and national funding have recently enhanced access to education and advisory services. However, in several cases, including Romania, Malta and Poland, the quality and uptake of training remain problematic. An additional factor is the growing pressure from technological advances and sustainability requirements, which have intensified the need for specialised knowledge. Thus, while there is evidence of positive change in some countries, particularly through structured educational reforms and advisory systems, the pace and reach of these changes remain uneven.

### Quality of life in agriculture and rural areas

The barrier related to quality of life in agriculture and rural areas emerges as a significant and multifaceted issue that negatively impacts young people's willingness to enter or remain in the agricultural sector.

The **impact of poor quality of life and inadequate rural infrastructure is widely acknowledged as a serious obstacle to GR in agriculture**. In many Member States, **this barrier is rated as moderate to high in severity**, with some describing it as a major problem (e.g. Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia). Key issues include outdated infrastructure, lack of essential services such as childcare, healthcare and education and the physical demands of farming, particularly in the livestock sector. Although some regions enjoy relatively better conditions (e.g. Central Bohemia in Czechia), the overall perception is that inadequate living standards, difficult working conditions and limited socioeconomic opportunities deter young people from choosing or continuing a farming career. Moreover, rural depopulation and social isolation exacerbate the unattractiveness of the profession, especially when compared to urban jobs which offer more stability, better income and work-life balance.

**While this barrier is broadly felt, the impact is not uniform across all demographic and geographic groups**. Many experts emphasise that women are disproportionately affected, largely due to social expectations around childcare and limited rural services that could support a good work-life balance. **Female successors often encounter additional barriers**, including physical labour expectations and a lack of support. Territorial disparities are also highlighted, with remote or mountainous areas facing more pronounced deficits in infrastructure and services. In countries such as Czechia, Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia, young families and new entrants without inherited farms are among the most vulnerable. Although some national contexts note that all young farmers are affected (e.g. Belgium-Wallonia, Latvia), there is broad consensus that structural and social factors exacerbate the challenge for certain groups.

**This barrier is widely recognised as a long-standing issue and its perceived severity has either remained stable or increased in recent years**. Interviews in Estonia, Czechia and France indicate that although national and EU programmes aim to address rural inequalities, progress has been insufficient and regional disparities persist. In some areas, worsening demographic trends are exacerbating the impact. In countries like Slovenia, rising mental health concerns and increasing work pressure on young farmers are aggravating the situation. Nevertheless, a few cases note improvements due to targeted CAP investments (e.g. Spain), suggesting that while the issue is deep-rooted, it is not always a severe barrier.

### Personal, cultural and familial issues

Across the EU, **personal and familial issues as barriers to agricultural succession exhibit varying degrees of severity**. In countries such as Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia and Slovenia, these issues are regarded as significant or even severe. **Common challenges include emotional attachment to the farm, intergenerational conflict, a lack of succession planning and divergent aspirations between generations**. Family dynamics, such as inheritance conflicts, emotional ties and generational differences, can strongly influence farm succession, particularly on family-run farms (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Croatia). In response, Austria has introduced support initiatives like the 'Quality of Life on the Farm' programme to help manage these challenges. Latvia and Slovenia indicate the highest severity, with particular emphasis on emotional burdens, the low social prestige of farming and the stress associated with multigenerational cohabitation. These factors frequently discourage young people from pursuing careers in agriculture.

By contrast, in Member States such as Bulgaria and Spain, familial issues pose minimal obstacles, whereas in others, including France, Lithuania and Sweden, they exert a moderate influence. In Malta and Luxembourg, these barriers are reported as high or significant, often due to parental discouragement and economic uncertainty.

In some Member States, gender plays a notable role. In Ireland and Malta, **women face added barriers due to social expectations and underrepresentation as farm holders**. Spain also points to greater social scrutiny of women, although they may be more open to resolving family conflicts constructively. While countries such as Bulgaria, Poland and Slovenia suggest that the barrier affects all actors equally, others highlight distinctions based on family structure, regional agricultural traditions or the type of farm. For example, large farms or those in areas where farming has not been a historically dominant sector of the local economy and cultural identity (e.g. Luxembourg and Slovakia) may face more complex succession processes.

**Most Member States report personal and familial issues as persistent or historically embedded barriers** [75]. In some cases, personal and familial issues are becoming increasingly significant, influenced by changing career aspirations among younger generations and rising urban migration (CZ, HR, LT, MT). In Germany and Luxembourg, these challenges are described as more recent developments, with Luxembourg anticipating an increase in familial conflicts. In France, a long-term structural shift away from the traditional family farm model is strongly perceived. This shift is marked by a sharp decline in family labour and an increasing reliance on external workers, pluriactivity and non-family farm installations. On the contrary, Slovenia reports some positive trends, including improved educational opportunities and better farm conditions, which may stabilise or slightly reduce the impact of these barriers.

[75] AT, BE-W, BG, HR, LV, MT, PL, SE, SK, SI.

## Box 1. Conflicting information collected through documentary research and interviews

Interview responses indicate **no major conflicts** between information collected through documentary research and interviews, with differences primarily in emphasis rather than contradiction.

In the few cases where differences emerged, perceptions of barriers vary, particularly in terms of severity. Documentary sources tended to present agricultural challenges as more severe than what emerged from interview responses. Gender was debated, with some dismissing it while others highlighting rural social biases against female farmers. Views on advisory services and agricultural education also differ, with policymakers seeing them as sufficient, while young farmers and rural youth organisations call for more tailored support. The attractiveness of the agricultural sector was another area of divergence, with some interviewees viewing access to land and finance as the main obstacles, while others viewed them as part of a broader set of barriers. Similarly, there was no outright contradiction regarding the public perception of agriculture, but some stakeholders believed society had a generally positive view, whereas young farmers' associations felt that agriculture was misunderstood and undervalued.

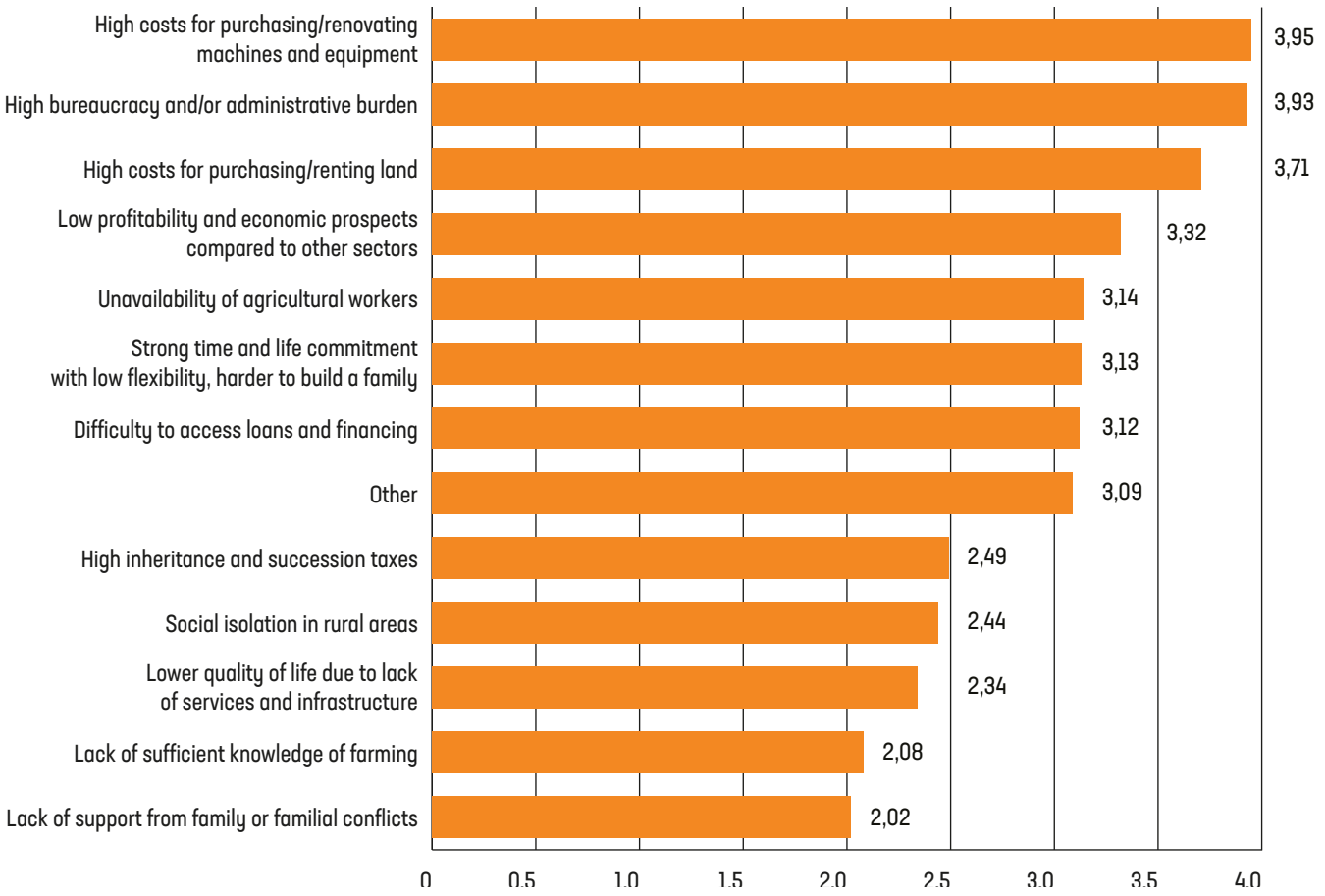
Overall, rather than conflicting information, differences arose due to contrasting perspectives, with documentary research providing a broader overview and interviews adding personal experiences and nuanced views.

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of documentary research and interview data

#### 5.2.3.3. Young farmers' perceptions of barriers to entering agriculture

One of the aims of the young farmer survey was to identify the challenges that young farmers perceive as most significant. The following chart presents a synthetic indicator, ranging from 1 to 5, which shows the average score assigned by respondents for each barrier to entering the agricultural sector. A score of 1 indicates that the barrier is not present or poses no problem, whereas a score of 5 denotes a key issue of major concern.

**Figure 12. Survey respondents' perceptions of the extent to which various barriers influenced their decision to enter agriculture and effectively take over a farm**




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°=1 040 (excluding blank responses), where 1 means 'not a challenge at all', 2 means 'to a very limited extent/low influence', 3 means 'to some extent', 4 means 'to a large extent' and 5 means 'to a very large extent, key problem'

The most significant challenges identified are the initial costs of machinery and equipment, bureaucratic procedures and administrative burden and the cost of land, all with an average rating close to 4 out of 5. Conversely, the challenges perceived as least problematic relate to the family context and a lack of sector-specific knowledge, both of which scored an average of approximately 2 out of 5.

### Box 2. Barriers under the category 'Other'

A total of 287 respondents provided a score for the category 'Other', along with additional information. Their responses highlight several recurring themes that extend beyond the other barriers presented. A major issue stressed is **structural difficulty in accessing land**, not just due to high costs but also because of systemic obstacles such as the concentration of land among large farms, lack of transparency in allocation (e.g. SAFER in France), and policies that favour established farmers over newcomers or those without family ties in agriculture.

**Housing access** was also frequently mentioned. Young farmers often face the need to purchase both farmland and a nearby residence, creating a double financial burden that makes entry into farming even more difficult.

Many respondents expressed frustration at the **lack of support for alternative or sustainable farming models**, especially small-scale or organic farms. These are seen as undervalued or unsupported by subsidy systems, which are perceived as favouring intensive practices.

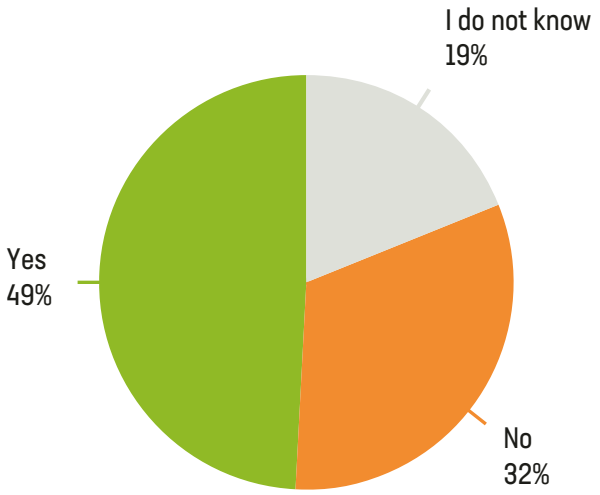
**Climate-related challenges** are a common concern, including droughts, extreme weather, water scarcity and loss of biodiversity. These are often linked with a perceived lack of adequate public or policy response. Similarly, **policy instability and bureaucratic overload** are frequently cited: farmers report navigating excessive paperwork, inconsistent regulations and complex or delayed subsidy systems.

Other themes include **market pressures**, such as unfair competition from non-EU imports, lack of consumer awareness about food production costs, and limited market demand for sustainable products. **Social integration** also arose, particularly for those without a farming background, who described difficulties in being accepted or supported by the agricultural community. A few respondents raised **gender-based challenges** or reflected on the **mental and emotional toll of farming**, especially in contexts of low income, uncertainty and isolation.

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data

In addition to examining cross-cutting barriers, the survey also explored respondents' perceptions of the specific challenges that young female farmers may face in comparison to their male counterparts.

**Figure 13. Survey respondents' perceptions of whether women face greater challenges entering agriculture compared to men**




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=1 048 (excluding blank responses)

Half of the respondents to the question stated that women face greater challenges than men when entering the agricultural sector. Approximately one third believed this was not the case, while the remaining fifth were unsure. It is also worth examining how responses varied according to the gender of the respondent, as shown in the table below.

**Table 7. Breakdown by gender of the respondents' perceptions of whether women face greater challenges entering agriculture compared to men**

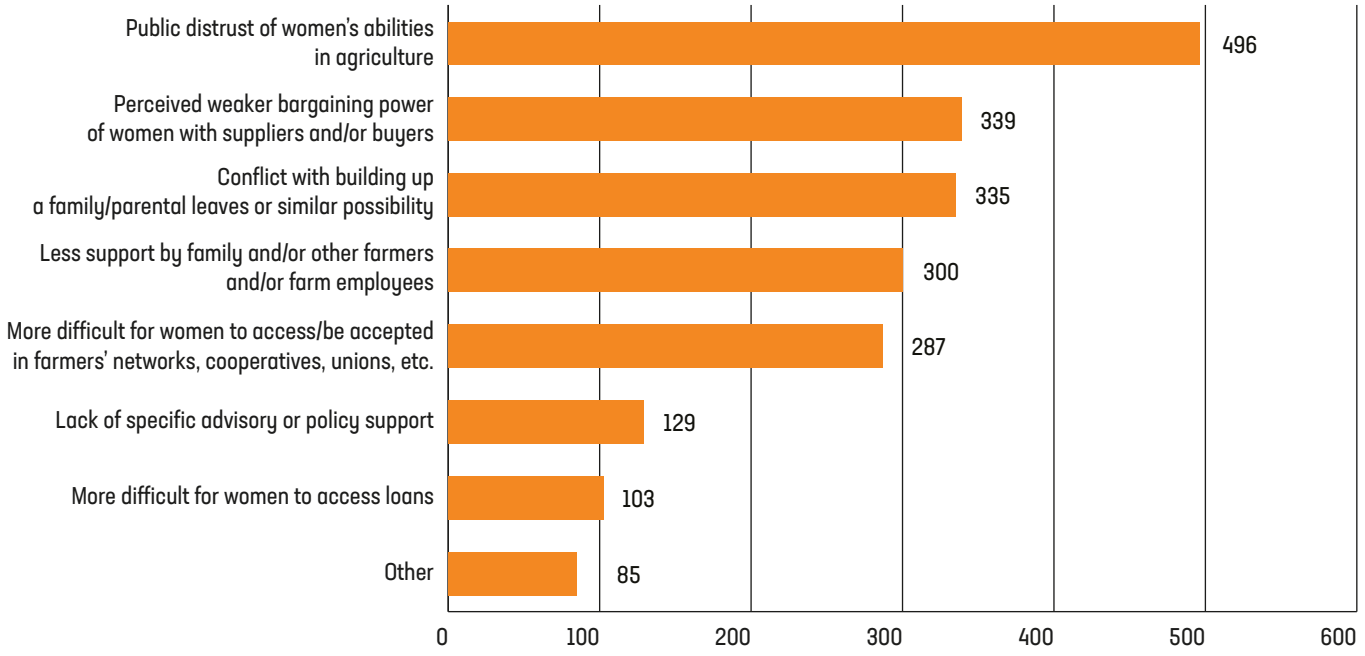
| | Yes | No | I do not know |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Male respondents** | 39% | 38% | 23% |
| **Female respondents** | 72% | 18% | 9% |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=1 048 (excluding blank responses)

It is interesting to note that nearly three in four female respondents believe that women face greater challenges than men. In contrast, among male respondents, the proportion of those who agree and those who disagree is virtually identical, indicating a division of opinion on the matter. Furthermore, nearly one in four male respondents do not have an opinion, a significantly higher percentage than female respondents.

Furthermore, the survey asked respondents to select which they believe are the specific challenges faced by women entering the agricultural sector.

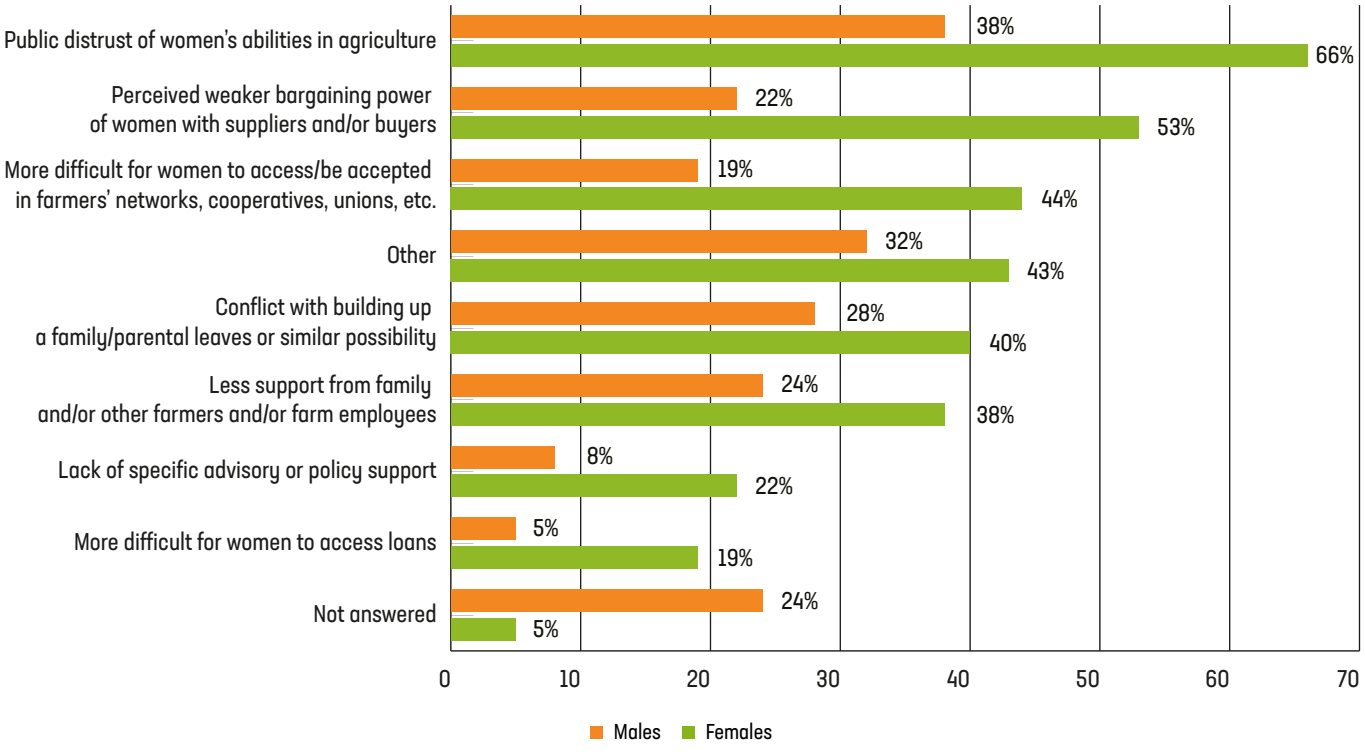
## Figure 14. Survey responses on challenges faced by women entering agriculture




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=863 (excluding blank responses), multiple choice allowed

The results highlight that the primary issue is the prevailing negative perception of women's abilities in agriculture, selected by 57% of respondents to the question. This is followed by the prejudice regarding their comparatively weaker bargaining power, cited by 39% of respondents. Both concerns are closely linked to persistent negative stereotypes associated with female farmers. In third place emerges the challenge of balancing a professional career with choices related to family. As for the answers under 'Other', some see no gender-based barriers, while others highlight physical demands, unsuitable equipment, lack of confidence and persistent gender stereotypes. Social roles, such as balancing family and farm work and male-dominated environments, are also perceived as hurdles. Conversely, a few respondents note that current policies may even favour women.

## Figure 15. Survey responses by gender on challenges faced by women entering agriculture




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=863 (excluding blank responses), multiple choice allowed

Examining the differing responses between male and female respondents, it is evident that women, overall, responded more (95% of them) and selected a greater number of options. This suggests that they possibly perceive gender issues as particularly significant. Compared to men, women were more likely to highlight the importance of the difficulties they face in being accepted into various farmer organisations. Conversely, a quarter of the male respondents did not provide an answer to the question.

### 5.2.4. Conclusions of RQ2

The analysis of barriers to GR in agriculture across the EU highlights both shared challenges and nationally specific dynamics. No Member State is free from GR challenges and seven major barriers recur throughout: access to land, access to finance, low competitiveness and profitability of farming, regulatory and fiscal constraints, inadequate access to knowledge, poor quality of life in farming and rural areas and personal/familial issues. While the nature and intensity of these barriers vary, their broad presence suggests significant obstacles facing young and new farmers across the EU.

A strong commonality exists in the critical nature of **access to land**, which is **widely considered the most severe barrier**. Rising land prices, shrinking availability due to urbanisation or speculation, together with regulatory frameworks favouring large or family farms, systematically disadvantage new entrants. This is a significant problem in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and Italy, where land fragmentation intensifies inefficiency and operational difficulty. Though inheritance eases access for some, those without family ties to agriculture are heavily penalised. Notably, **gender inequality** is perceived as particularly pronounced in countries like Malta, Romania and Slovenia, where women struggle to assert their rights in land transactions and in accessing funding.

Closely linked is the barrier of **access to finance**, which is especially acute for young farmers without inherited land or collateral. Therefore, **having a family farming background is key to facing lower barriers in accessing financial resources and land**. High start-up costs, perceived sectoral risks and rigid banking practices often result in loan rejections or unfavourable terms. Countries such as Slovakia, Portugal and Cyprus highlight how financial institutions and subsidy systems alike tend to favour established farmers. Meanwhile, countries like Hungary and Denmark stand out for offering more accessible support mechanisms, illustrating that policy design can ease entry if effectively tailored.

The **low profitability and competitiveness of the farming sector** present another widespread concern. Volatile income, high operational costs, market pressures and environmental regulations deter young people from viewing agriculture as a viable career. This is a particularly acute issue in Belgium, Italy and Spain, though even countries like France and Sweden, which report more moderate impacts, acknowledge sectoral vulnerabilities, particularly in livestock.

**Barriers stemming from the fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement frameworks** are more uneven across countries. In France, Romania and Slovenia, tax complexity and restrictive inheritance rules significantly hinder farm transfers. Conversely, in Spain and Greece, fiscal factors are seen as less burdensome or not specific to agriculture. Retirement insecurity – prompting older farmers to remain active – emerges as a persistent, though not generalised, constraint on succession.

The **quality of life in rural areas**, encompassing infrastructure, services and work-life balance, further influences GR patterns. Poor access to healthcare, childcare and transport makes rural life unattractive, particularly for women and young families. Countries like Lithuania and Slovenia report this barrier as severe, whereas others acknowledge it as a deterrent that exacerbates other challenges rather than a standalone obstacle.

**Access to knowledge and advisory support** is a moderately severe but structurally important barrier. While services exist in most Member States, they are often poorly tailored, fragmented or insufficiently targeted to the needs of new entrants. Farmers without family farming backgrounds or those in newer sectors, such as organic farming, tend to be more disadvantaged, with countries like Estonia and Greece highlighting knowledge deficits in entrepreneurship and sustainability.

**Personal and familial issues**, including intergenerational conflict, emotional attachment and social expectations, appear to largely depend on context. In countries like Austria, Latvia and Slovenia, these are seen as major obstacles, while in Bulgaria and Spain they are of minor concern. **Gender again plays a role**, with women facing additional pressure around physical expectations, social acceptance and familial responsibilities, especially in Malta, Ireland and Luxembourg.

**The young farmers' survey provides an additional perspective at the individual level on GR barriers**. The highest-rated challenges relate to the cost of equipment, bureaucratic procedures and administrative burden and the cost of land. In contrast, familial context and lack of sector-specific knowledge were rated as less significant. Gender disparities were also confirmed by the survey. Half of the respondents believed that women face greater challenges than men in entering the sector, with female respondents nearly twice as likely to affirm this opinion.

## 5.3. RQ3 - What CAP and national policy instruments are set out by Member States to support generational renewal?

### 5.3.1. Description of RQ3

The third research question addresses the second objective of the study (see Chapter 2) and is subdivided into two sub-questions:

- *RQ3.1 - What types of policy instruments - both national and CAP - are used by the Member States to address the different barriers to GR, including the instruments set out to support female successors?*
- *RQ3.2 - What is the rationale behind the GR strategies adopted by the Member States, and how do the chosen policy instruments complement or substitute each other?*

The first objective of RQ3 is to compile a comprehensive inventory of national and regional policies and legislative instruments that Member States have adopted to support GR. The inventory of national instruments aims to expand the listing of national policy instruments addressing GR mentioned in CSPs, as outlined in the *Mapping study* [76]. While exhaustive information on CAP interventions targeting GR is present in CSPs, one of the conclusions of the *Mapping study* highlighted the need to build a more comprehensive representation of national instruments [77] to better assess the rationale, functioning and effectiveness of GR strategies across the Member States.

### 5.3.2. Analytical approach

The main aim of sub-question RQ3.1 is to identify which policy instruments, both under CSPs and national/regional ones, are implemented targeting specific GR barriers at national/regional level across the EU-27 Member States. The analysis focuses on the instruments' typology and design elements. It also aims to assess the extent to which instruments have been designed to support gender balance under the assumption that gender equality may not be significantly addressed through CAP interventions because of the existence of other national/regional instruments.

Taking as a starting point the findings of RQ3.1, the second sub-question (RQ3.2) aims to: (a) assess the rationale and relevance of GR strategies in addressing the identified GR barriers across the Member States, and (b) understand whether CAP interventions and national/regional policy instruments act in synergy and to what extent they may be complementary. The analysis of relevance and complementarity aims to provide insights into the rationale behind GR strategies adopted by Member States useful for the identification of good practices under RQ4.

The analysis covers all 27 Member States, with additional insights provided by the 11 case studies, based on information collected through documentary research, interviews with MAs and other national/regional stakeholders, focus groups in case study Member States and the survey of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

### 5.3.3. Presentation of findings

#### 5.3.3.1. Typology and design of policy instruments addressing generational renewal barriers

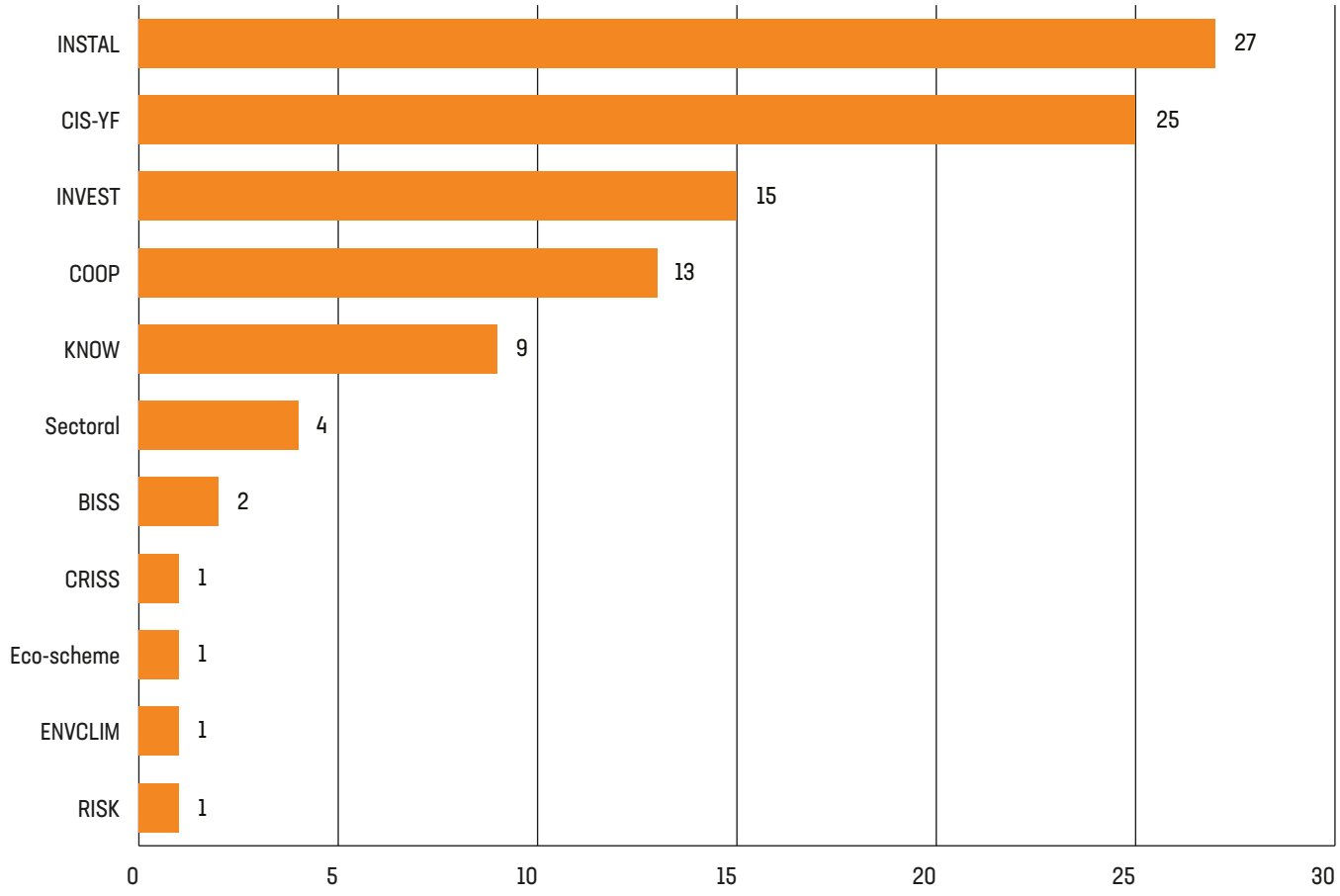
This part of the assessment answers the first part of RQ3 (RQ3.1) and specifically by (a) analysing CAP interventions and national/regional policy instruments addressing the GR issue across the Member States and (b) building an inventory of national/regional policy instruments. The analysis is almost entirely based on information collected through documentary research and interviews with national stakeholders across all Member States, complemented by relevant information from case study focus groups.

**CAP interventions targeting young farmers and generational renewal**

The CSPs under Regulation (EU) 2115/2021 define several interventions to address GR in agriculture (see Section 3.2.3). These interventions (CIS-YF, INSTAL, COOP, INVEST and KNOW) vary in their implementation, as Member States have chosen a mix of interventions on the basis of their own particular circumstances and needs, as highlighted in the SWOT analysis they were required to perform [78]. The *Mapping study* offers a comprehensive analysis of CAP interventions designed in CSPs contributing to SO7. In terms of **typology of interventions**, INSTAL is the most frequently used intervention by all Member States except Ireland, followed by CIS-YF, which is not implemented by Portugal and Denmark. INVEST and COOP are also extensively used in relation to SO7 and, to a lesser extent, KNOW.

[76] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, *Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans, Assessment of joint efforts for 2023-2027*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2762/71556.
[77] Indeed, only fragmented information can be obtained from CSPs and from the literature.
[78] Regulation (EU) 2115/2021, Article 95(1).

**Figure 16. Number of interventions linked to SO7 in CSPs**

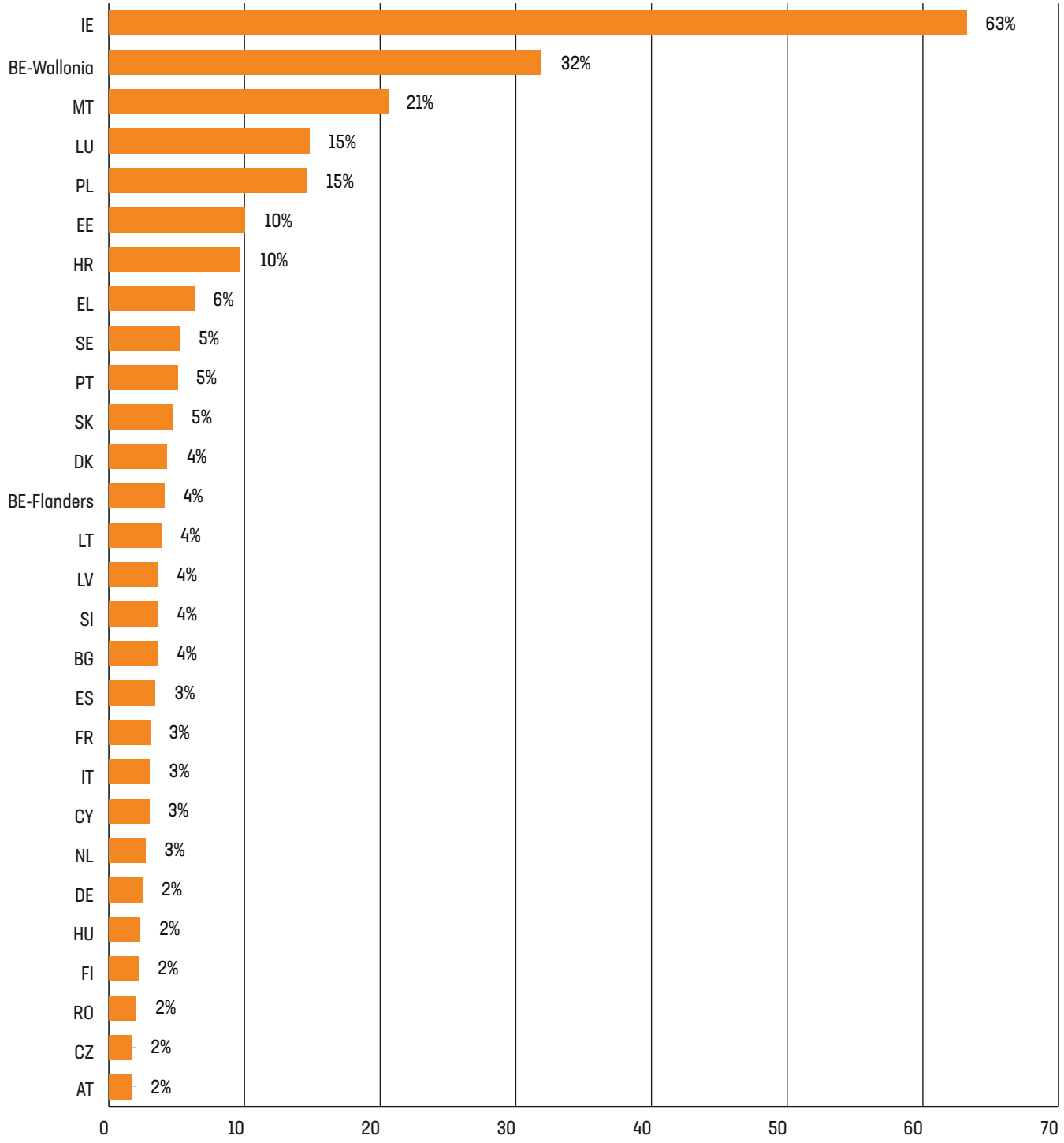



Source: European Commission, Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans, Assessment of joint efforts for 2023-2027

Consistent with the number of interventions, over 25% of the CAP's total financial allocation to SO7 is directed towards setting up young farmers and rural business start-ups (INSTAL), whereas about 17% is allocated to the CIS-YF and 15% to INVEST. A relatively high share, 21%, of financial resources is allocated to basic income support (BISS), due to the specific choices of Ireland and Belgium-Wallonia (see following paragraphs for an explanation).

The figure below shows the percentage share of the total CSP financial allocation for 2023-2027 to interventions linked to SO7 by each Member State (including both EU and national funds). These shares provide an indication of the relative importance Member States have placed on interventions contributing to SO7.

**Figure 17. Share of total CSP financial allocation for interventions linked to SO7 by Member State (%)**




Source: European Commission, Mapping and Analysis of CAP Strategic Plans, Assessment of joint efforts for 2023-2027

Ireland and Belgium-Wallonia are the only two CSPs where more than 30% of the total allocation is dedicated to SO7, as these are the only two CSPs that link basic income support for sustainability (BISS) to SO7. Ireland allocates the largest share of its CSP financial resources to SO7 despite being the only Member State not programming INSTAL.

Malta, Luxembourg, Poland, Estonia and Croatia allocate between 10% and 20% of their resources to interventions linked to SO7.

The remaining Member States allocate less than 7% of their total financial resources, with the lowest allocations planned in Austria, Czechia, Romania, Finland, Hungary and Germany (less than 3%). Thus, the importance that the Member States attach to the GR challenge in farming is shown by the fact that 22 Member States allocate more than the minimum required amount to the support for young farmers [79].

[79] European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Approved 28 CAP Strategic Plans (2023-2027). Summary overview for 27 Member States, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans_en.

The following paragraphs provide some further detail as to the **design choices of the different interventions** across Member States.

**CIS-YF** typically takes the form of an annual decoupled payment per eligible hectare and can last up to five years. France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg use a lump sum payment instead. While most interventions are nationally scoped, Belgium's CSPs are regional and France and Italy include regional components. **Spain is unique in including a gender component in this instrument**, awarding an additional 15% to female farmers. Most Member States impose a cap on the number of hectares supported, which varies considerably, from 25 hectares in Greece to 300 in Hungary, suggesting different strategies to target small or medium-sized farms. Luxembourg allows for support to be allocated to more than one young person per farm.

**INSTAL** [80] is the most common intervention, planned by all Member States except Ireland. The aid is paid as a lump sum to support young farmers and, in some countries, rural businesses and new farmers. Notably, France, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain extend INSTAL to new farmers. France, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece, Lithuania and Latvia also offer financial instruments through INSTAL. The minimum support duration varies from two to four years in Latvia to five years (e.g. Austria, Spain, Portugal). Eligibility often requires education, skills or experience conditions, with Slovenia being the only country to formally integrate knowledge transfer (KNOW) as a condition. The **support rates** for setting up a farm business in some CSPs vary based on the scope or sector of farming activities [81]. **Gender is a priority criterion implemented for INSTAL in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Hungary and Czechia**. Farm size thresholds, both minimum and maximum, vary widely; for instance, Austria has a low entry bar of three hectares and EUR 8 000 in economic size, while Finland sets a ceiling of EUR 2 million and 10 employees.

**COOP** interventions are specifically targeted **to support farm succession in five Member States**: France, the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland and Hungary. In Spain, such interventions are implemented by five autonomous communities. Most notably, Ireland, that does not use INSTAL, relies heavily on COOP (with four distinct measures) [82] alongside INVEST. Only the Netherlands and Hungary specifically target young farmers with eligibility criteria in COOP interventions.

**INVEST** is included in 15 CSPs [83] to support young and new farmers through grants and in 12 Member States also through financial instruments. Among the latter Member States, Portugal, France, Croatia, Lithuania and Estonia prioritise young farmers through eligibility criteria. Poland, Croatia, and Estonia apply a special exemption allowing land purchase to exceed 10% of the supported investment, an otherwise standard threshold. Ireland specifically targets young farmers and women under the 'Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme' (TAMS). INVEST support rates are capped at 65% according to the CSP regulation, but can be increased to 80% for young farmers. All Member States prioritising young farmers provide an increased support rate for them, except Italy where the maximum standard support rate is already set at 80%. Eight CSPs implement the maximum 80% support rate for young farmers (BE-F, CY, FR, HR, IT, LT, MT, RO), while Latvia, Malta and Belgium-Flanders show the largest increases (e.g. Latvia raises support from 30% to 70%). The lowest maximal support rate for young farmers is planned by Belgium-Wallonia, Sweden, Austria, Czechia and Finland (between 30% and 50%), which are also the CSPs applying the lowest increase (between 5% and 10%) for young farmers compared to the standard support rates. This approach seems justified in Member States like Austria, Czechia, Belgium-Wallonia and Finland, where the severity of the GR problem is reportedly low to moderate.

**KNOW** interventions are directly linked to GR in Slovakia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Latvia. Fifteen CSPs overall target young and new farmers with KNOW, using both knowledge transfer and advisory services. However, some countries opt for just one modality, e.g. Germany and Bulgaria provide only training, while Croatia provides only advisory services. Slovenia stands out as the only Member State requiring a combination of INSTAL and KNOW, though many other Member States set training and skills as eligibility criteria for INSTAL. In Lithuania, the 'Training and skills acquisition' intervention gives priority to new farmers (irrespective of age). Portugal has included a new intervention for specialised technical support under KNOW. This intervention is integrated into the national AKIS, which makes it possible to provide continuous support to farmers for the implementation of other specific CSP interventions, such as those concerning biodiversity, landscape, irrigation and also young farmers.

Compared to the other Member States, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Slovenia present a more integrated approach (e.g. combining different types of support and in some cases also addressing gender). For instance, Portugal combines several COOP interventions with a focus on knowledge and training in addition to support through investments. Ireland concentrates aid through basic income support, a wide variety of cooperation interventions and support to investments.

In addition to the types of interventions and respective financial allocations, **design choices**, **definitions** and **requirements** are important elements influencing the way in which CAP interventions address GR and the extent to which support for young farmers is prioritised. These elements encompass the interventions' **target groups**, **farm size thresholds** (physical or economic) to access funding under CIS-YF and INSTAL, the minimum duration of the installation, the **eligibility criteria** and **preferential conditions**. These conditions can include requirements concerning the farmers' experience, skills and training or preferential provisions for specific groups, e.g. female farmers.

[80] Often referred to as 'installation aid' (from 2014-2020 CAP) or as 'start-up aid' by stakeholders. In the present study, these terms are often used interchangeably but always refer to the current INSTAL intervention.

[81] For example, in Slovenia, the support rate is higher for organic farms and for farms internalising the processing of specific crops and livestock products, whereas in Greece support is higher in mountainous and disadvantaged areas (i.e. ANC), as well as for livestock. Portugal provides higher support for a combination of a larger farm area (higher investment planned) and being a young farmer and in Hungary the support is higher if the minimum instalment period is extended and forest area is not reduced. Finland also provides higher support based on the expected income and Denmark gives differentiated support to full-time and part-time farmers.

[82] EIP, LEADER and early-stage support for producer organisations are designed in the CSP under COOP interventions to contribute to SO7, in addition to the collaborative farming grant specifically targeted at generational renewal.

[83] BE-Wallonia, BG, DE, DK, EE, ES, HR, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK.

According to Article 4 of Regulation (EU) 2115/2021, Member States must provide a **definition of young farmer** in their CSP and, optionally, also a definition of new farmer. The definition of the young farmer should include: (i) an upper age limit set between 35 years and 40 years; (ii) the conditions for being 'head of the holding'; and (iii) the appropriate training or skills required. Such definitions are key for setting eligibility criteria for the different interventions. As previously mentioned, all Member States have set the upper age of young farmers at 40 years, except Luxembourg where the young farmer can be a maximum of 39 years old.

Interviews in Austria report a positive effect of the **standardisation of eligibility requirements** comprising the definition of 'young farmer', i.e. age, conditions proving ability to manage a farm and minimum professional qualifications. Standardisation has allowed for the simplification of the funding process by levelling out the existing differences between CAP measures under the first and second pillar in the previous programming period.

Information collected through interviews across Member States suggests that the **definition of active farmer** can also address the GR issue. For instance, in Belgium-Flanders the definition of 'active farmer' has been strengthened to decrease the number of retired farmers being supported by CAP, thus promoting transmission of farms to younger holders. Similarly, in France, the introduction of the notion of 'legal retirement age' in the definition of 'active farmer' makes it now impossible to combine retirement and CAP aid from the age of 67, again favouring farm transmission.

All CSPs establish criteria defining the **appropriate training and skills** in order to ensure that young farmers possess the necessary ability to manage a farm. These criteria include formal education, training, skills and professional experience. Most Member States have set two or more criteria, except Malta, Ireland, Austria, Slovenia, Latvia and Belgium-Flanders, which rely on a single criterion. This suggests a clear objective among many Member States to strive for a class of skilled new young farmers who will be well positioned to promote modernisation, innovation and sustainable practices, possibly resulting in improved competitiveness and profitability of farming businesses. In some cases, criteria are combined, generating multiple requirements. For example, Slovakia, Romania, the Netherlands, Croatia, Finland and Belgium-Wallonia combine professional experience and training within the definition of young farmer. Only a few Member States (Czechia, Spain, Finland and Latvia) provide the possibility to comply with training and skills criteria following an aid application.

### National and regional policy instruments to promote generational renewal or support young farmers

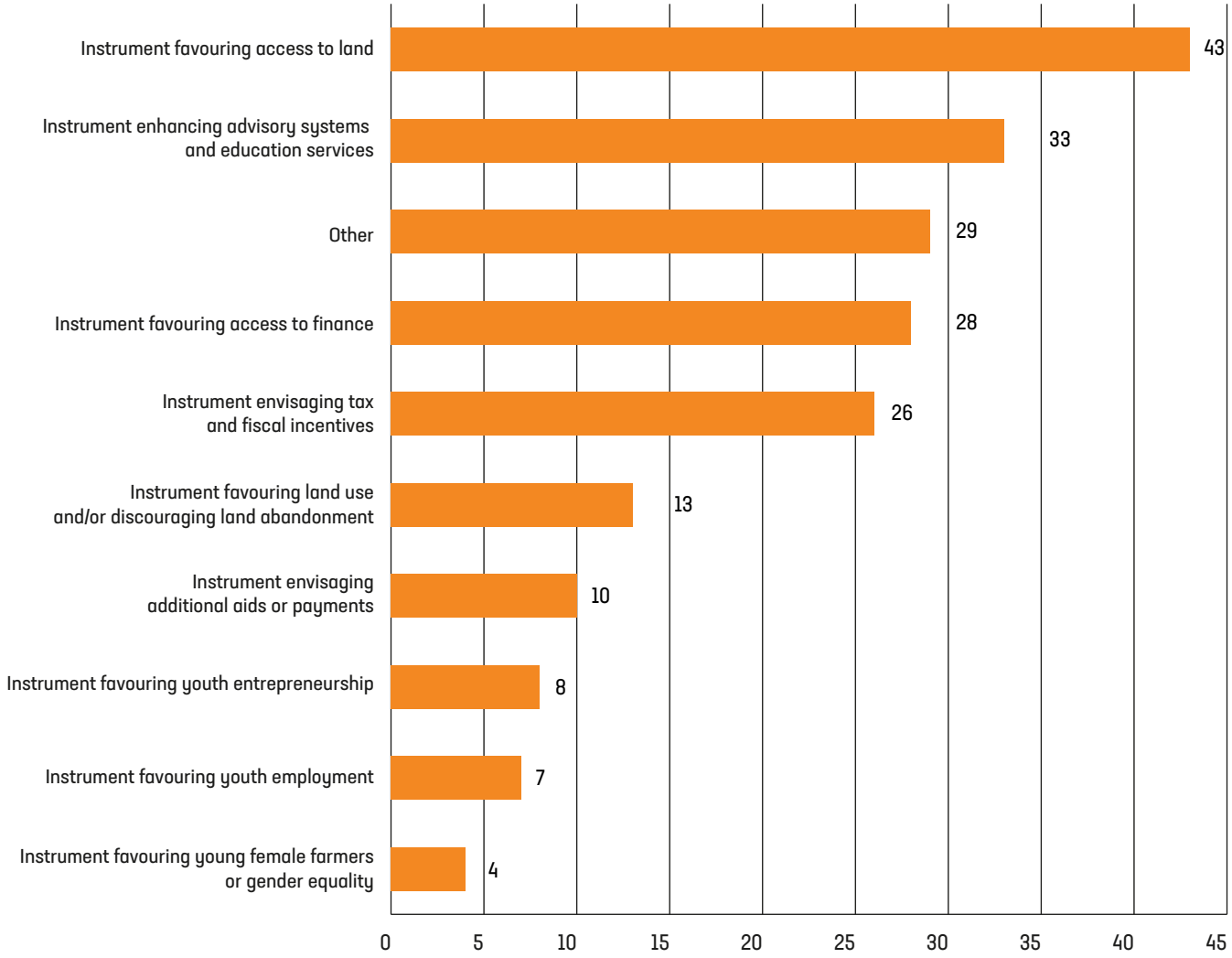
Based on information collected through documentary research [84] and interviews with national stakeholders across all EU-27 Member States, 198 relevant national policy instruments were identified. In certain regionalised Member States, such as Spain, Portugal, France and Germany, the research has also made it possible to identify a number of regional instruments, thereby further extending the list.

A detailed **inventory of identified national and regional policy instruments** targeting, or potentially facilitating, generational renewal is presented in Annex II. **The inventory includes all policy instruments that may contribute in some way to improving generational renewal or supporting young farmers**. This scope covers both instruments specifically designed for young farmers or those approaching retirement to facilitate succession, as well as broader instruments that, while not explicitly targeting these groups, may still have a positive impact on them, e.g. an instrument promoting entrepreneurship, even if not exclusively focused on the agricultural sector or young individuals, may still benefit young farmers or facilitate their access to the farming sector.

The predominant types of implemented instruments are those facilitating **access to land and enhancing advisory systems and education services**, as shown in the figure below.

[84] Taking as the starting point relevant information contained in CSPs as highlighted in the *Mapping study*.

**Figure 18. Distribution of types of national/regional policy instruments promoting generational renewal or supporting young farmers**




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of documentary research and interview data

NB: The total number of instruments is 198; however, three instruments were assigned to two categories, resulting in a grand total of 201 in the graph.

Of the total 198 national/regional policy instruments identified, as many as 115 were classified as directly targeted at young farmers and/or generational renewal. The following table provides a summary overview of **the 115 policy instruments specifically aimed at young farmers or at generational renewal in agriculture** (see instruments highlighted in green in the inventory in Annex II).

**Table 8. Number of national and regional policy instruments specifically promoting generational renewal or supporting young farmers**

| Member State | Policy instruments | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Favouring access to land | Favouring access to finance | Enhancing advisory systems and education services | Envisaging tax and fiscal incentives | Envisaging additional aids or payments | Favouring youth employment | Favouring youth entrepreneurship | Favouring land use and/or discouraging land abandonment | Favouring young female farmers or gender equality | Other |
| Belgium-Flanders | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | |
| Belgium-Wallonia | | | 5 | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Bulgaria | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | |
| Czechia | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | | 1 | | |
| Denmark | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Germany | 3 | 2 | | | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Estonia | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | |
| Ireland | 4 | | | 2 | | | | 1 | | |
| Greece | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Spain | 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | | | | 3 | | 3 |
| France | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Croatia | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Italy | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | |
| Cyprus | | | | | | | | | | |

| Member State | Policy instruments | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Favouring access to land | Favouring access to finance | Enhancing advisory systems and education services | Envisaging tax and fiscal incentives | Envisaging additional aids or payments | Favouring youth employment | Favouring youth entrepreneurship | Favouring land use and/or discouraging land abandonment | Favouring young female farmers or gender equality | Other |
| Latvia | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Lithuania | | | | | | | | | | |
| Luxembourg | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| Hungary | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Malta | | | | 2 | | | | | 1 | |
| Netherlands | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Austria | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | 1 |
| Poland | 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| Portugal | 3 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| Romania | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Slovenia | 1 | 3 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Slovakia | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Finland | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| Sweden | | | | | | | | | | |
| **TOTAL** | **32** | **15** | **20** | **19** | **5** | **1** | **5** | **9** | **2** | **10** |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of documentary research and interview data

NB: The total number of targeted instruments is 115; however, three instruments were assigned to two categories, resulting in a total of 118.

At the level of individual Member States, Spain stands out with as many as 22 national or regional policy instruments specifically targeted at GR in agriculture, followed by Germany with 13 identified policy instruments and France with 12. Three Member States (Cyprus, Latvia, Sweden) appear to lack any national or regional policy instrument of this kind.

The most common specific instruments are those that facilitate **access to land**, followed by those that **provide education, training and advisory services** and those that offer **tax and fiscal incentives**.

Under the 'Other' category, there is a diverse range of policy instruments. In Belgium-Wallonia, an observatory monitors the status of young farmers annually. Denmark's Green Agreement established an expert committee to explore ways to improve conditions for new entrants. Germany operates online farm exchange platforms, value networks and agricultural colleges as informal tools to foster engagement and knowledge sharing. Spain has introduced legal reforms and regional strategies, such as Catalonia's multi-pillar plan addressing barriers like land access and profitability, and Navarra's '*Lurberri* programme', which includes financial incentives, mentoring and land banks. Hungary's 'Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture on the support of young farmers' outlines income support criteria for young farmers under the CAP, while Austria focuses on awareness-raising and strategy development, with initiatives like the 'VISION 2028+' strategy and a network of young 'farmfluencers' promoting farming through social media.

The following box illustrates national instruments supporting gender equality.

### Box 3. Focus on instruments designed to support gender equality

Among the instruments, four are specifically aimed at supporting women farmers or promoting gender equality in agriculture; it is worth highlighting them.

- **Coaching programme for women** (Germany): Launched in September 2024 by the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG) in cooperation with the Agricultural Pension Bank, this initiative encourages women to take on leadership roles in the agricultural sector. It provides funding of up to EUR 1 800 per participant for individual or group coaching sessions. While the programme strengthens entrepreneurial skills, resilience and awareness of legal and financial safeguards, it is designed as an individual capacity-building measure and does not aim at structural reform of rural advisory systems, insurance schemes or infrastructure provision.
- **Rural women's challenge programme** (Spain): This initiative supports women entrepreneurs in agriculture through subsidies, training, advisory services and leadership promotion. It offers online courses on business planning and marketing, fosters peer networks and raises visibility for women's projects via digital platforms.
- **Action plan for empowering women 2021-2030** (Hungary): Part of the national gender equality strategy, the plan sets out goals to reduce gender gaps in employment, pay and pensions, and to promote work-life balance through coordinated actions by government and other public institutions.
- **Empowering women in agriculture** (Malta): From October to December 2024, it offered a six-month mentorship programme for female agrifood entrepreneurs. It included tailored training, legal and financial guidance, international networking and a final planting competition. The programme supports professional development, work-life balance, access to business growth tools and networks.

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025)

#### 5.3.3.2. Relevance of policy instruments addressing generational renewal barriers (RQ3.2)

##### Assessing the relevance of CSP interventions

The relevance of various policy instruments in addressing specific GR barriers is assessed across the whole EU-27 based on information collected through interviews with MAs and other national stakeholders in the Member States and the young farmer survey. Further analysis covers the 11 case study Member States based on data collected through focus groups. The analysis of the relevance of policy instruments (both CAP and national/regional instruments) specifically refer to the barriers previously illustrated under RQ2 [85] (see 5.2.3.1 and 5.2.3.2).

Interviews with national stakeholders in Member States confirm the **central role played by the CAP in addressing the GR challenge**, with many clearly stating that for years they have relied first and foremost on CAP measures to promote the access of young farmers to the agricultural sector.

**CAP interventions** are generally viewed across all Member States as **mostly relevant in addressing barriers relating to access to finance** and to the **competitiveness and profitability of farming,** largely through funding provided by start-up aid (INSTAL) and the complementary direct payment (CIS-YF), but also through increased investment support under the INVEST intervention (i.e. most Member States as previously described in Section 5.3.3.1). Furthermore, eco-schemes together with investment support are mentioned by national stakeholders in Germany and Czechia as relevant for improving the long-term sustainability of farming by promoting environmentally sustainable practices.

[85] Namely access to land for young farmers and new farmers, including land prices; access to finance, including access to investment funds on favourable terms and facilitated access to credit; fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory framework; competitiveness and profitability of the farming sector (income prospects and income gap); access to knowledge; quality of life in agriculture and rural areas; personal, cultural and familial issues; other.

In general, CAP interventions are not considered particularly relevant in addressing the **access to land** barrier, with possibly the exception of Member States where an exemption is applied to INVEST, allowing land purchase to exceed 10% of the supported investment.

The relevance of interventions supporting knowledge exchange and dissemination of information (KNOW) is also widely acknowledged across the Member States. KNOW interventions also seem to be key in addressing other types of barriers including **competitiveness of farming businesses**. Indeed, training, advisory services and knowledge exchange programmes help young farmers develop essential business skills needed to manage competitive and sustainable farms (Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia). In some Member States, advisory and training offers for young farmers address professional, entrepreneurial and personal development issues, in some cases also including psychosocial support services such as the 'Farmers support hotline' and the 'Quality of life on farms' project, both implemented under Austria's CSP. In this case, KNOW instruments can be relevant in addressing challenges related to the **quality of life in agriculture and rural areas** and **personal issues and familial conflicts**.

Planning for **farm succession** is, in some cases, addressed through KNOW interventions (e.g. Germany and Greece) and COOP interventions such as support for collaborative farming in Ireland and cooperation for succession in Spain.

In a few Member States, LEADER is considered relevant in addressing the barrier related to **quality of life in agriculture and rural areas** (EE, EL, PL, PT, RO, SK)**.** Slovakia and Poland use LEADER programmes to foster local development and improve infrastructure to enhance rural living conditions. Portugal's rural development support through LEADER ensures investment in infrastructure and community services, which helps raise the quality of life in rural areas. In Greece, the implementation of the LEADER approach has always involved preferential selection criteria for investment projects of young people and women.

**The relevance of CAP support in addressing different generational renewal barriers is generally recognised across the Member States**, based on the overall success and uptake. It is a shared view of interviewed national stakeholders that the GR challenge would be much worse without CAP support. However, **direct income support and investment support, while providing a relevant financial incentive for young farmers, they offer short-term financial respite but not necessarily a long-term solution** and, while measures implemented with EU funds help slow down the decline in the number of young farmers, they do not increase the proportion of young people in the sector (Estonia). It is also reported that the number of applications (INSTAL) is often much higher than the approved budget, thus limiting the scope and relevance of the intervention (Croatia). Furthermore, direct payments indirectly influence land markets by affecting land rental prices, though they do not directly enhance farm succession (Latvia).

Interviewees in Slovenia stress the need for a more holistic approach by which improvements are necessary in educational systems, taxation, access to agricultural land, social affairs, promotion of the farmer as a profession and promotion of local food i.e. all areas that can help make it easier for young people to decide to take up farming. Interviewees in Czechia add that for GR to succeed, national and CAP interventions must work together effectively. While CAP provides the financial foundation, national policies must address structural barriers such as land concentration and obstacles to farm succession.

### Assessing the relevance of national and regional policy instruments

Based on interviews with national experts across Member States, the following analysis focuses on the **relevance of national and regional policy instruments in addressing barriers to generational renewal** in agriculture. The analysis is again structured around the identified key barriers (see footnote 85).

**Access to land is a major barrier addressed by a variety of national and regional instruments, though often with limited scope and relevance**. Several countries, such as France (SAFER – Société d'aménagement foncier et d'établissement rural) [86], Germany (Bodenverwertungs und verwaltungs GmbH and BioBoden Genossenschaft), Ireland (land transfer tax exemptions) and Slovakia (Slovak Land Fund) have implemented land market regulations that prioritise young farmers in the leasing or transfer of land. These mechanisms aim to counteract land concentration and speculative investments. In Austria, land transfer laws regulate acquisition to ensure cultivation continuity, while Italy's Banca nazionale delle terre agricole (i.e. land bank) matches land supply and demand. However, in many cases, including Czechia and Slovenia, implementation is slow or insufficiently tailored to young farmers' needs and land remains expensive or administratively difficult to access. Portugal and the Netherlands similarly acknowledge that access to land is structurally problematic and inadequately addressed, with only some regional initiatives attempting to intervene. Regional land exchange programmes in Belgium-Wallonia and Hungary's land traffic act also contribute modestly, with fragmentation and bureaucratic hurdles persisting.

**Access to finance is relatively better supported by national instruments, though coverage and targeting vary**. Countries like France and Ireland offer preferential loan schemes, fiscal incentives or regional guarantee funds specifically aimed at young farmers. In Czechia, the support and guarantee fund for farmers and forestry (PGRLF) provides crucial financing to new entrants. Germany's Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank, Hungary's Széchenyi credit programmes and Slovenia's regional development fund also offer concessional loans or financial backing. Italy's Generazione Terra and Più Impres*a* initiatives are specifically aimed at youth business development, while Bulgaria and Portugal mention only general youth-focused credit lines not tailored to agriculture. The Export and Investment Fund of Denmark (EIFO) and financial support mechanisms in Malta also indirectly benefit young farmers by including start-ups and green transition businesses. However, despite a range of tools, gaps remain in uptake or visibility, particularly in Ireland and Portugal, where limited incentives or low awareness are believed to hinder use by younger generations.

**The fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory frameworks are other areas where several countries have made relevant legal adjustments.** Austria's tax, pension and inheritance laws contain specific provisions to ease farm transfer. Ireland provides stamp duty exemptions and capital acquisition tax reliefs for land succession, while Czechia offers income tax exemptions on farm succession to reduce intergenerational transfer costs. Hungary and Luxembourg have similarly embedded farm succession in their legal frameworks, with Luxembourg also reimbursing indirect taxes on property transfers. Malta removes the inheritance tax on cultivated land to prevent land abandonment and facilitate generational transfer. In Germany and Slovenia, tax incentives exist but are limited to specific investment or employment situations. Overall, fiscal measures reduce transaction costs and legal hurdles, which can be crucial in incentivising older farmers to retire and hand over the farm, though enforcement and accessibility vary.

[86] Land development and rural settlement.

When addressing **competitiveness and profitability of farming**, national instruments often focus on investment support and cost-sharing. In Finland, the Nordic Aid supports farms in less favourable regions, while France provides regional subsidies for building renovation and access to sector-specific plans. Germany and Hungary have incubator or innovation programmes aimed at improving entrepreneurship among young farmers. Austria supports farm investment loans and consolidation loans for over-indebted farmers. In Italy and Portugal, market-based strategies are considered relevant, including cooperativism and regional food branding. Despite these measures, competitiveness is more often supported by CAP interventions and relatively few national instruments focus on enhancing profitability for new entrants.

Improving the **quality of life in agriculture and rural areas receives some attention at national level, though not systematically**. Germany stands out due to its comprehensive agricultural social insurance system, administered by the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG), which provides health, accident, pension and long-term care coverage for farmers. In addition, public engagement initiatives such as "Lernort Bauernhof" promote agriculture as a profession and strengthen societal awareness of farming. In Luxembourg, the replacement service under the agrarian act helps ease the workload for farmers, improving their work-life balance, while Malta's rural housing allowances and female empowerment programmes aim to enhance attractiveness and gender balance in rural communities. However, many other countries offer few or no targeted measures in this area.

**Access to knowledge is addressed unevenly, though some countries provide robust frameworks**. Estonia's internship programme is a good example of practical, experiential training for young people, enhancing skills and sector familiarity. Austria and France invest significantly in agricultural education and advisory services, often embedded within their chamber of agriculture or regional agencies. Belgium-Wallonia's GoFerme and related initiatives, though fragmented and hampered by administrative complexity, attempt to build capacity and transfer advisory knowledge. Germany and Slovenia also promote educational programmes and business advisory support. Hungary supports knowledge transfer through its 'village economist network', while Malta's AgriKonsulta advisory services are designed to promote sustainable practices. Yet, several Member States, such as Croatia and Bulgaria, provide only general youth training that is not tailored to agriculture and advisory services are often under-resourced or inconsistently available, particularly in more remote areas.

Lastly, **personal and familial issues**, including intergenerational conflict and the emotional dynamics of farm transfer, **are seldom addressed explicitly but are acknowledged in some national frameworks**. Austria's awareness-raising and communication campaigns on succession, as well as mentoring services in Germany, are notable efforts to address the interpersonal dimensions of GR. Hungary's family farm legislation aims to simplify intra-family succession, while Slovenia's second action plan for young farmers stresses the importance of social support and cultural recognition of farming as a viable career path. Often, familial reluctance or lack of successors is treated as a private matter rather than a public policy challenge, leaving young farmers without structured personal and relational support.

### Case study insights on the relevance of national/regional policy instruments

Focus group participants in the 11 case study Member States were asked to discuss and then formally assess the relevance of national and regional policy instruments in addressing specific barriers to GR in their country. Specifically, they were asked to allocate a rating score for each instrument and barrier, ranging from '1=the instrument CANNOT be used to address the barrier'; '2=the instrument can be used to address the barrier but has SOME LIMITS'; '3=the instrument CAN be used to address the barrier'. Focus group discussions were conducted in a way to arrive at consensus i.e. a shared assessment of relevance among participants. In the few cases where consensus was not achieved, an average relevance score was calculated.

It must be noted that the list of the main identified GR barriers [87] was given to focus group moderators to be used as the starting point for the 'relevance' discussion. Based on the discussion, the list of barriers was modified or expanded to accommodate different barriers mentioned by focus group participants in specific Member States. Although a perfectly homogenous comparison is not possible, the analysis was still able to identify the main commonalities and differences across case studies as described in the following paragraphs.

**National instruments favouring access to land, access to finance and those involving fiscal incentives and addressing inheritance and retirement show the highest overall relevance.**

Policy **instruments favouring access to land** consistently received the highest relevance scores. In particular, land transfer laws and instruments related to easing land purchase in Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Ireland and Portugal (e.g. 'Land transfer laws' in Austria, 'Land mobility service' in Ireland, 'Land exchange' in Portugal, 'Support for land purchase' in Czechia and 'Law on the ownership and use of agricultural land' in Bulgaria) all received top ratings for their relevance in addressing the 'access to land' barrier. This finding is not surprising and it aligns well with the widely shared view that easing access to land is the most critical GR challenge.

Similarly, **instruments envisaging fiscal incentives and addressing inheritance and retirement** – particularly in Ireland and Austria – were deemed highly relevant. For example, Ireland's tax relief schemes, such as the 'Stamp duty exemption' and 'Agricultural relief from capital acquisition tax', were consistently scored as highly relevant for both land access and fiscal barriers. Austria's legal framework instruments (i.e. pension law, inheritance law, tax law) were also rated as highly relevant, confirming that generational change can be facilitated by favourable fiscal conditions.

**Instruments targeting access to finance** also emerged as particularly relevant, especially in countries with structured credit programmes. For instance, Czechia's PGRLF – the land purchase support programme – and Hungary's loan and guarantee schemes were both scored as highly relevant in addressing issues related to access to land and to finance. Fiscal instruments were also rated as highly relevant in Ireland, particularly in addressing barriers related to land access and competitiveness of farming. In Estonia and Malta, on the other hand, such instruments appear to be less relevant.

**Instruments aimed at enhancing education, training and advisory** received mixed assessments across case studies. In Hungary, the advisory services network and vocational support scored well on knowledge and finance-related barriers. In contrast, similar tools in France and the Netherlands were often rated as only marginally relevant (score 1).

Austria stands out for its comprehensive and high-scoring framework of legal instruments that cover land, tax, inheritance and pensions. All these tools were rated highly relevant (score 3) across barriers related to access to land and finance, taxation systems and low profitability of the farming sector. Similarly, Ireland exhibits a strong fiscal approach, with multiple tax-based incentives effectively supporting both land transfer and financial barriers.

Spain combines different national and regional tools such as land banks, GR strategies and cooperative land management with relatively high relevance scores (often 2 and 3) across a broad range of social and structural barriers. Policies implemented in Portugal, while showing high relevance scores for land access (e.g. RICTA – the incentive scheme for the purchase of agricultural land and land exchange), demonstrate limited relevance in most other areas such as farm profitability, access to knowledge or gender, where most instruments score 1.

In some countries, for instance Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Czechia and Austria, the findings show a **relatively high relevance of education and training programmes in addressing barriers related not only to access to knowledge but also to quality of life in agriculture and rural areas** (score 2 or 3).

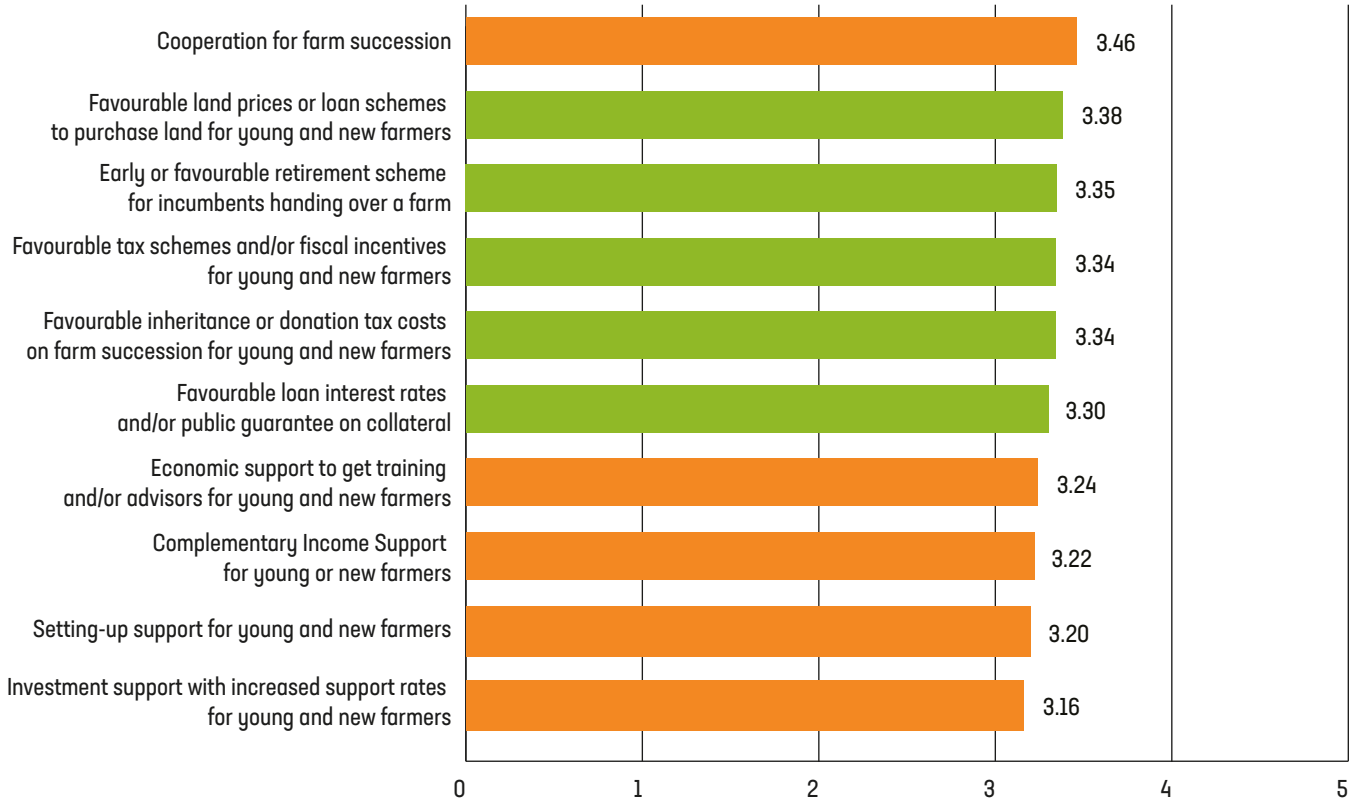
Among **instruments with low overall relevance**, the analysis highlights more generic instruments, for instance employment support initiatives such as the 'Youth employment+' in Bulgaria and initiatives supporting employment and entrepreneurship in Czechia. In both cases, the instruments are not specifically targeted at GR in agriculture. Similarly, information portals and observatories, especially in Spain and France, were often rated as not relevant (score of 1), likely due to limited visibility, scope or uptake.

In the countries where they were mentioned in focus group discussions (i.e. BG, CZ, EE, FR, HU, NL and PT), **gender-related barriers are among the least addressed**. Most instruments, even those with stated gender components, rarely scored above two, indicating a gap between policy intentions and impact.

### Young farmers' assessment of the relevance of policy instruments addressing generational renewal barriers

This part of the analysis focuses on the assessment of the relevance of different types of policy instruments addressing GR barriers for young farmers already benefiting from support and those who are potential beneficiaries, based on information collected through the young farmers' survey. This analysis aims to complement and complete the relevance assessment.

**Figure 19. Extent to which actual beneficiaries find adopted policy instruments useful and relevant for farm takeover and management**




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, Nº.=662 (excluding blank responses). Synthetic indicator where 1 means 'no use/irrelevant', 2 means 'to a limited extent, marginal help', 3 means 'to some extent', 4 means 'to a large extent/very helpful' and 5 means 'to a very large extent/necessary'

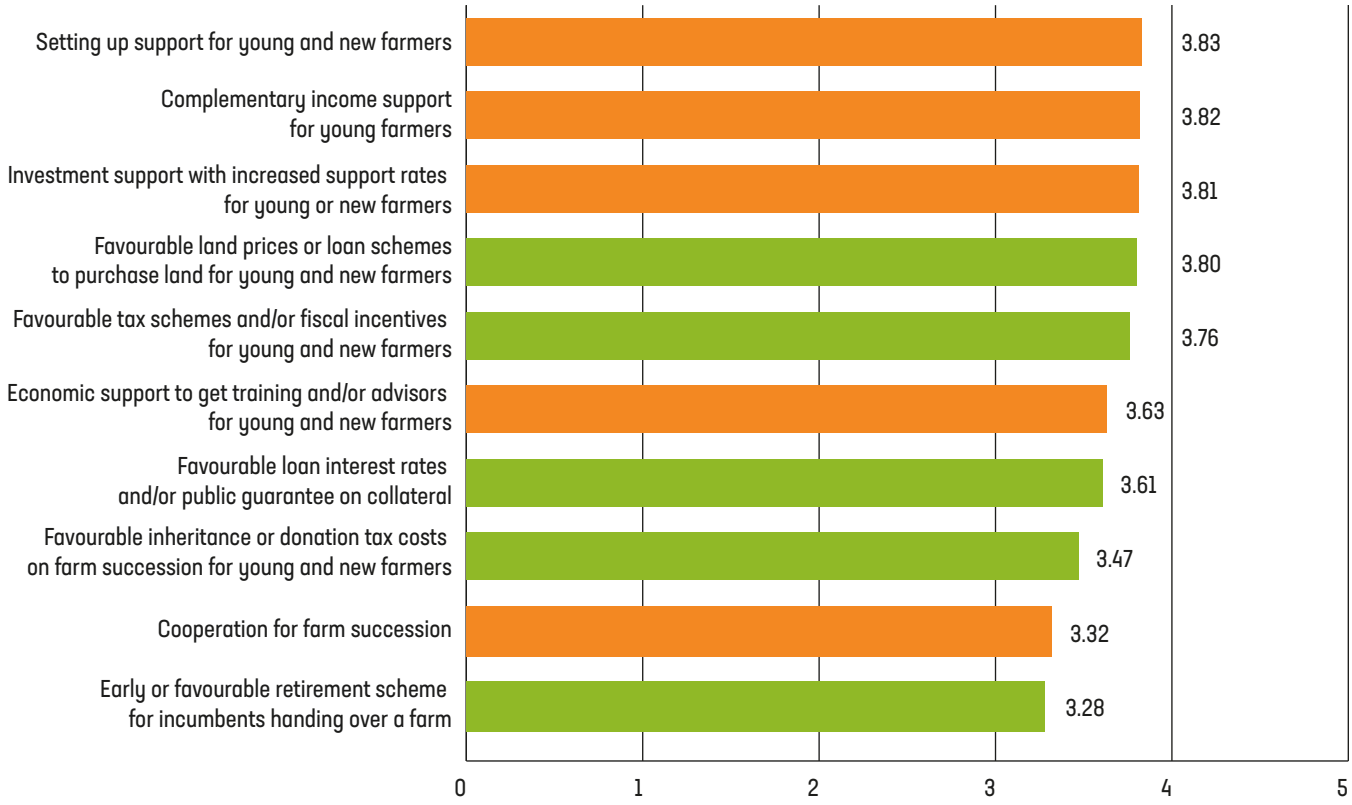
NB: The types of instruments in orange are associated with CAP instruments (not exclusively, but for the most part), while those in green are linked to national instruments [88].

[88] In the survey, a distinction between CAP instruments and national/regional instruments was not made, both because their presence varies from one Member State to another and because it was assumed that a significant proportion of respondents may not be able to clearly identify the source of the funding (e.g. in some instances CAP payments are considered as national or regional payments by farmers), potentially leading to confusion.

From the analysis of respondents' perceptions of the types of policy instruments that support GR (five of which are primarily associated with CAP instruments, and five with national or regional instruments), whether they are actual or potential beneficiaries, several key findings emerge:

- For both actual and potential beneficiaries (Figures 19 and 20), variations in the ratings assigned to individual instruments are minimal (ranging between 0.30 and 0.55 points between the highest and lowest-rated instruments), indicating a fairly uniform perception of relevance across the different instruments.
- For both groups, all instruments fall within the 3 to 4 range on the rating scale; they are therefore classified as relevant 'to some extent' to 'to a large extent'. This suggests that all instruments are perceived as reasonably relevant.
- Potential beneficiaries tended to assign slightly higher scores than actual beneficiaries and, in particular, to instruments associated with the CAP.
- No significant differences appear to emerge between instruments associated with the CAP and those associated with national or regional policies.

**Figure 20. Extent to which potential beneficiaries find policy instruments useful and relevant for farm succession and entry into agriculture**




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=231 (excluding blank responses). Synthetic indicator where 1 means 'no use/irrelevant', 2 means 'to a limited extent, marginal help', 3 means 'to some extent', 4 means 'to a large extent/very helpful' and 5 means 'to a very large extent/necessary'

NB: The types of instruments in orange are associated with CAP instruments (not exclusively, but for the most part), while those in green are linked to national instruments.

#### 5.3.3.3. Complementarity of policy instruments addressing generational renewal barriers

The final part of the analysis under RQ3.2 focuses on the logic of intervention underpinning GR strategies, aiming to identify complementarities between the various instruments (CAP and national) and possible synergies. The analysis is based on information collected through interviews with MAs and other national stakeholders across the EU-27 and focus groups in case study Member States.

Overall, the findings reveal that while many Member States have structured complementarities between policy instruments, both within and outside the CAP, the depth and effectiveness of synergies vary considerably.

**A common positive pattern emerges from countries where CAP instruments are explicitly designed to work jointly**, either through linked eligibility conditions, coordinated timing of calls or shared strategic goals. Countries such as Estonia, Portugal and Slovenia demonstrate more comprehensive and integrated support frameworks, where financial aid, training and advisory services are designed to work together. Good synergies between CAP interventions are however reported in other Member States [89]. Estonia provides a good example of a highly integrated approach. Financial instruments, grants and advisory services are aligned to support young farmers comprehensively, with specific provisions like higher support rates for young farmers and combined eligibility rules that ease entry into farming. Here, complementarity appears to be operationally effective, targeting both the financial and knowledge-based barriers to GR. Portugal shows how carefully structured CAP interventions, such as linking start-up aid with advisory services and investment support, can reduce financial risks and enhance the viability of farm start-ups.

The findings suggest a **high level of complementarity between CAP and national/regional instruments in some Member States**, particularly Czechia, Ireland, Hungary and Austria, as well as to some extent in Belgium-Wallonia, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovakia.

**Ireland** provides a relatively coherent support framework where income support measures, tax incentives and investment grants collectively facilitate land access, business development and income stabilisation for young farmers. In Ireland, the complementarity particularly focuses on succession planning. A number of measures in both the CSP and national strategies, such as the tax credit under the succession partnership scheme and support for collaborative farming, are aimed at providing support for succession planning. This is further strengthened through the provision of services such as the land mobility service offered by Macra [90], which provides information to both young and older farmers to facilitate succession planning.

In **Austria**, participants in interviews and the focus group unanimously agree on the very strong complementarity between instruments inside and outside the CAP with regard to almost all the identified barriers. This complementarity has grown historically, even if it was not intentionally planned from the outset. While not designed as a cohesive package, the combination of regulatory national tools and CAP financing instruments results in a relatively well-rounded support system. The historically evolved instruments outside the CAP are not subject to systematic performance monitoring. However, agricultural interest groups closely monitor whether the instruments are fulfilling their purpose and whether they need to be adapted. National stakeholders emphasise that the overall positive development in Austria regarding GR cannot be explained by individual instruments. Rather, it is about the interaction of the various instruments across all areas. The most important condition for young farmers is the fundamental willingness and commitment to agriculture. The one challenge that many instruments are aimed at, but which nevertheless cannot be adequately addressed, is the poor profitability and low incomes in agriculture.

**Czechia** stands out for its system of complementarities (real and potential). National and CAP instruments could, and in some cases do, work together across several key barriers – land access, succession, financial constraints, administrative burdens and gender disparities. The Czech case is especially instructive because it not only asserts complementarity but also critically assesses where synergies are real, potential or undermined by bureaucratic or structural obstacles. For instance, the land purchase support programme (PGRLF) complements CAP start-up aid by filling the gap in funding for land acquisition. Tax exemptions for farm succession and the start-up aid also work together to promote GR. Despite this logical structure, the synergies seem to remain largely theoretical due to administrative barriers and a lack of systematic coordination. Advisory services are intended to mitigate administrative complexity, but their underutilisation and lack of national cohesion limit their effectiveness.

In **Hungary**, recent legislation strengthens the synergy between national laws on farm transfer and CAP measures for young farmers. CAP support is closely aligned with laws governing farm succession, land traffic and family farming. Advisory services and training requirements further complement financial support, although practical outcomes depend or will depend on effective implementation.

In **Belgium-Wallonia**, CAP interventions primarily provide direct income support to farmers, while regional funding focuses on advisory services, such as training for farm succession. The design aims at ensuring complementarity between funding flows.

**Germany**, at least in certain regions like Saxony-Anhalt, achieves effective alignment of internship premiums with start-up grants, demonstrating that synergy is possible when instruments are carefully harmonised.

In **Denmark**, national financial instruments such as EIFO-backed loans complement CAP support schemes by enabling young farmers to secure mortgages despite strict collateral requirements.

In **Slovakia**, synergies also exist between CAP direct payments, national loan guarantees and investment support. These are complemented by advisory services that help farmers navigate funding opportunities. However, complex administrative procedures continue to limit access to these types of support, thus calling for a more streamlined system.

**Portugal** also relies on a combination of CAP interventions and regional policies to support young farmers. Start-up aid, addressing the financial challenges faced by young farmers, is complemented by the RICTA programme in the Azores and land exchange initiatives in mainland Portugal, which aim to ease land access by providing financial incentives for land acquisition. In the Azores in particular, various schemes operate to ease access to land (RICTA), access to finance (Agroacrescenta) and support for training of young farmers (FORJAGRI), albeit they are not specifically designed in a complementary manner.

**Slovenia** shows strong complementarities between generational knowledge transfer schemes and young farmer support measures. Investment grants are complemented by training in business management, environmental practices and digitalisation.

[89] BE-F, CY, EL, HR, LT, LV, PL, SE.
[90] Irish young farmers organisation.

Nevertheless, challenges remain in accessing favourable loans due to the financial solvency demands placed on young farmers.

**Malta**'s approach combines CAP grants, business planning support through Agri Connect and inheritance tax reductions. Although these instruments address key barriers such as access to land and finance, the system is still considered fragmented, lacking specific measures to support women in agriculture or a fully integrated strategy for GR.

A **lower level of complementarity among policy instruments** is observed in Member States like Bulgaria, Italy, the Netherlands and Finland, where complementarities often remain nominal or underdeveloped, constrained by fragmented planning or administrative barriers. A recurring challenge across Member States is the complexity of administrative processes, which often limits the practical synergy of theoretically complementary instruments. As an example, focus group participants in Bulgaria indicated that CAP interventions operate largely independently, with little coordination beyond what is mandated in programme documents. Similarly, in the Netherlands, while CAP instruments show internal coherence, national measures do not complement them and tend to operate independently. This means that opportunities to integrate financial and personal support for farm takeovers remain underdeveloped.

In some cases, complementarity seems to be undermined by bureaucratic burdens and complexity, particularly in terms of access to credit and land. Croatia exemplifies this tension and although different CAP interventions are formally linked, young farmers often struggle to obtain the co-financing required to access investment support. The synergy is structurally possible but remains unrealised due to gaps in financial viability and accessibility. Similarly, in Slovenia, the practical burden of pre-financing and limited access to affordable loans erodes the effectiveness of this complementarity.

Unintended policy consequences are evident in Italy, caused by the limited synergistic effect of its policies, which are often designed in isolation or poorly communicated. Moreover, entitlement systems may foster complacency, reducing the incentive for integrated policy uptake. Sweden provides a similar cautionary note; while it recognises certain complementarities, parts of its CAP support system (like payments for passive farming) may inadvertently disincentivise active and innovative agricultural engagement by younger generations.

Some Member States are caught in a **tension between regionalisation and national coherence**, which complicates efforts at creating integrated support systems. France and Spain, for example, face challenges rooted in their decentralised governance structures. In France, the multiplicity of regional tools leads to uneven access to support and administrative complexity, while in Spain, despite efforts to design a unified CSP, fragmentation persists. Focus group participants from both countries stress the need for improved data sharing, regular call schedules and better alignment across levels of governance to overcome these issues. Spain demonstrates varying levels of coordination across regions. Some areas, like Andalusia and Catalonia, have managed to synchronise calls for installation and investment support, improving access for young farmers. However, overall coordination remains limited, with bureaucratic complexity often hindering the full exploitation of potential synergies. France shows both strengths and weaknesses. While the variety of regional measures allows tailored responses to local needs, the lack of a unified system results in administrative complexity and limited visibility of available support. This undermines the potential for synergy, despite some efforts to coordinate interventions at the regional level. In Germany, despite overall effective regional coordination, at the national level, parallel schemes and issues around state aid regulations complicate the funding environment, reducing the transparency and effectiveness of synergies.

A last point raised by stakeholders concerns how Member States address what they define as the 'soft' aspects of farm succession, i.e. personal relationships, mentoring and mental wellbeing, which are rarely integrated into financial or legal frameworks. Stakeholders in both the Netherlands and Spain emphasise the importance of considering these non-material aspects in a more holistic approach to GR. The lack of attention to these aspects represents a missed opportunity for policy design, particularly given their influence on the success of intergenerational transfers and the long-term sustainability of farming.

### 5.3.4. Conclusions of RQ3

**CAP instruments remain central to the GR policy mix across all Member States**, with the setting-up aid (INSTAL), complementary income support for young farmers (CIS-YF), investment support (INVEST), cooperation measures (COOP) and knowledge exchange (KNOW) as core interventions. **Setting up aid and income support to young farmers, complemented by investment support, are considered crucial** in reducing financial barriers to entry and addressing competitiveness-related issues, while also contributing to knowledge acquisition and adoption of sustainable practices. Cooperation measures and knowledge exchange interventions are consistently less integrated in GR approaches across the Member States.

**National and regional instruments exhibit a very broad diversity**, with the most common types facilitating access to land, enhancing advisory services and offering fiscal incentives. Countries like Spain, Germany, Austria, France and Ireland display particularly rich national portfolios of instruments, addressing not only structural barriers such as access to land and finance but also issues related to training and succession planning. Despite this variety, **relatively few instruments are designed specifically to support female successors**. Gender-targeted approaches remain marginal, with only a handful of countries, such as Malta, Germany, Spain and Hungary, developing programmes explicitly aimed at empowering women in agriculture.

In terms of **relevance of CAP instruments**, INSTAL and CIS-YF are considered by interviewed national stakeholders as particularly relevant in addressing access to finance and supporting the initial phases of farm establishment. This finding is also confirmed by young farmers' survey responses. KNOW interventions are also widely acknowledged for their relevance in improving knowledge acquisition and enhancing the entrepreneurial capacity of young farmers, especially when tailored to specific farming contexts, as seen in Slovenia and Lithuania.

**National and regional policy instruments are considered most relevant in areas not covered by the CAP**, suggesting possible complementarity in policy strategies. Notably, access to land, fiscal frameworks for succession, legal conditions for retirement and inheritance are addressed through national policies.

The analysis confirms that **financial incentives remain necessary but insufficient on their own**. While CAP funding helps mitigate short-term financial constraints, especially through INSTAL and INVEST, it does not automatically lead to increased generational turnover in agriculture. Structural barriers, such as land concentration, low profitability and administrative complexity, persist in limiting the potential of these interventions. Moreover, psychosocial and interpersonal factors, such as intergenerational conflicts and the lack of perceived attractiveness of farming, are seldom addressed, despite their recognised impact on succession decisions.

In terms of **complementarity**, the findings reveal a mixed picture. In Member States such as Austria, Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia and Portugal, CAP and national instruments have been designed or evolved to work together, either through harmonised eligibility criteria, coordinated implementation schedules or shared strategic goals. For example, Slovenia combines INVEST with KNOW to jointly support the financial and knowledge needs of new entrants, while Portugal links land access schemes with advisory and financial services. Ireland's coordination between CAP support and national tax incentives for succession illustrates how effective alignment can enhance both uptake and impact.

However, **in many Member States, complementarities remain underdeveloped or largely theoretical**, often hindered by bureaucratic complexity, lack of inter-institutional coordination or regional fragmentation. Czechia presents a case where a theoretically coherent policy architecture exists, but administrative burdens limit the realisation of synergies in practice. In contrast, in Bulgaria and the Netherlands, national instruments are reported to function independently from CAP measures, undermining their potential cumulative effects. Furthermore, in France and Spain, regional differentiation contributes to fragmentation, reducing the visibility and accessibility of available support for young farmers.

**A gap is evident in the treatment of gender** and **gender-related barriers are among the least addressed across Member States**. While some interventions include gender-sensitive components, these often fail to translate into meaningful prioritisation or improved outcomes for female successors. Instruments explicitly aimed at supporting women in agriculture (e.g. Germany's coaching programme or Spain's rural women's challenge) remain marginal and rarely feature in mainstream GR strategies.

## 5.4. RQ4 – Considering both CAP interventions and national/regional instruments fostering GR, to what extent can the proposed strategies address the identified barriers to GR, including the gender gap?

### 5.4.1. Description of RQ4

The fourth research question addresses Objective 3 of the study: To identify and analyse successful strategies implemented to foster generational renewal that can be promoted as recommendable practices to be replicated across Member States, highlighting good practices supporting female successors.

The research question includes a sub-question:

- *RQ4.1 – What are the most promising good practices emerging from the study (i.e. in relation to specific barriers to GR) that could be replicated across Member States and, conversely, what are the potential areas of improvement?*

RQ4 and RQ4.1 aim to assess the potential effectiveness of the policy instruments adopted by Member States in addressing the identified barriers to GR and, based on this assessment, to identify promising approaches that can be recommended as good practices across Member States.

### 5.4.2. Analytical approach

The analysis is based on various sources, notably documentary research, the young farmers' survey, interviews with MAs and other national stakeholders across all Member States and focus groups in the context of case studies.

The analysis to answer RQ4 and RQ4.1 is based on four criteria:

- Accessibility: assessing the extent to which (potential) beneficiaries can easily access the policy instruments.
- Preference: assessing the level of interest/willingness of (potential) beneficiaries to adopt the instruments.
- Effectiveness: assessing the extent to which GR barriers are addressed by the instruments.
- Novelty: assessing the extent to which there are new elements in existing instruments or new instruments to address GR barriers.

The presentation of findings is structured along these criteria. Based on the findings, the analysis culminates in the identification of good practices that could be replicated across Member States. Finally, a number of improvements suggested by Member States are presented in relation to the design and content of interventions.

### 5.4.3. Presentation of findings

#### 5.4.3.1. Accessibility

**Accessibility of an instrument refers to the administrative and technical accessibility by the beneficiaries.** Regardless of its design or financial allocation, a policy instrument cannot be effective if the target audience cannot easily access it. The more accessible an instrument is, the more farmers can benefit from it and, therefore, the larger its potential effect.

##### Level of (potential) beneficiaries' knowledge of the instruments

According to survey results, **beneficiaries learn about instruments/policies available in their respective Member States mainly through advisors and neighbouring farmers**, followed by information received through social media, farmers' unions and public administration. A smaller number of beneficiaries report learning about instruments through other media and cooperatives/producer groups.

Despite the variety of information sources, survey results indicate that **beneficiaries generally lack in-depth knowledge of the instruments available in their country**. The instruments they know most about are those already included in the CSPs, although the level of knowledge is rated on average 3 out of 5, notably (in order of expressed knowledge):

- Complementary income support for young farmers (CIS-YF).
- Setting up support for young and new farmers (INSTAL).
- Investment support with increased support rates for young or new farmers (INVEST).
- Support to get training and/or advisors for young and new farmers (KNOW).

A second group of instruments is known to a lesser extent (level of knowledge rated on average 2 out of 5) and relates to cooperation for farm succession, financial support to purchase land, fiscal incentives and guarantees on collateral.

Finally, beneficiaries are on average not aware of the existence of any early or favourable retirement schemes or any favourable inheritance or donation tax implications in their countries (level of knowledge rated on average less than 2 out of 5, with the most frequent answer being 1 out of 5). The main reason for this low awareness is the fact that such schemes were only implemented in two Member States (Germany, Portugal/Azores) in the context of access to land or access to finance instruments.

The majority of actual and potential beneficiaries are not aware of any other instruments available in their respective countries to support young and new farmers taking over a farm or entering agriculture, except in eight Member States (FR, DE, HU, IE, LU, PT, RO, ES). In these cases, beneficiaries are aware of various types of instruments, including tax and land access incentives and in some cases support for investments and modernisation. France and Spain stand out for the large number of instruments identified by (potential) beneficiaries. The table below offers details.

**Table 9. Awareness of other instruments available in the country**

| Member States | Instruments |
|---|---|
| France | There is a large number of instruments or initiatives supporting young farmers, including grants, access to land, favourable loans, investment subsidies, support for entrepreneurs, support for training, mentoring/tutoring or advice including for career change, tax exemptions or tax credits, facilitation of equipment purchases or property rentals and facilitation of access to resources such as irrigation water. |
| Germany | Some farming associations offer programmes that try to bring retiring farmers and interested young farmers to the table. |
| Hungary | Five types of instruments, comprising farm transfer support, land access incentives, advisory services and mentoring, financial instruments and tax incentives. |
| Ireland | The Irish Land Observatory facilitates generational renewal. |
| Luxembourg | Support for young farmers includes advice, various types of bonuses for initial installation complemented with additional support for the first years or with internships. |
| Portugal | Tax regimes for young people in general and installation and investment projects in agricultural holdings. |
| Romania | State support to help young farmers rent land (state property), max 50 ha. |
| Spain | As in France, there are also numerous instruments or initiatives supporting young farmers, including support from local and regional governments, such as financial support for installation, for farm modernisation including for digital modernisation, for marketing, for specific crops, information on tax exemptions, financial instruments, training, support to purchase land, access to water rights and irrigation support. |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=447 (excluding blank responses)

The **majority of beneficiaries are not aware of whether any instruments specifically support female successors**. In a couple of Member States, beneficiaries are aware of extra points given to female applicants (Czechia, Lithuania), whereas in some cases they consider that instruments do not differentiate between men and women (Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania). The exceptions are France and Spain, with dedicated support for young female farmers. In France, there are specific trainings for women, credits, specific loans and bank guarantees for women and maternity leave support. In Spain, while formal mechanisms exist to support female successors, mainly through extra points and financial bonuses, many young farmers perceive these as insufficient or poorly implemented, with calls for more meaningful and structural support rather than symbolic incentives.

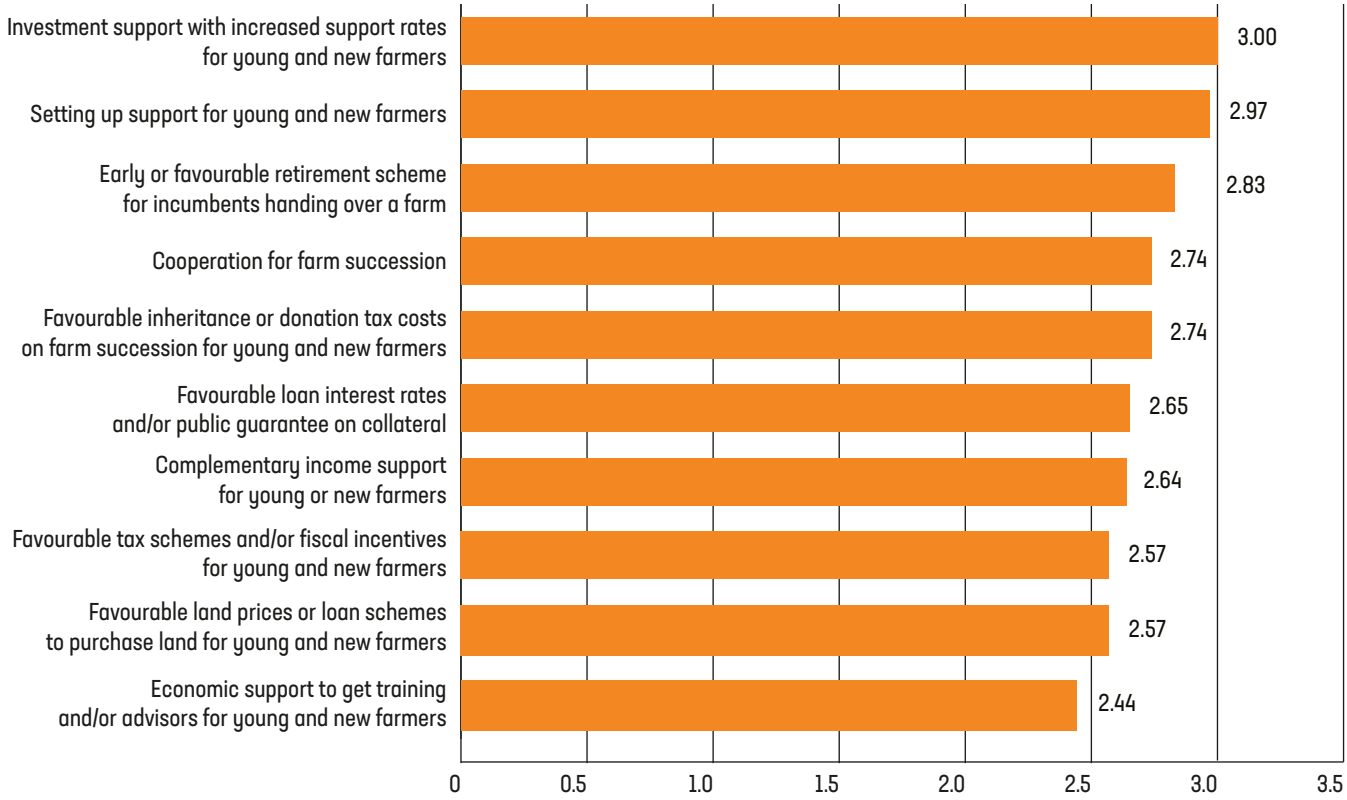
### Perceived difficulties in accessing the instruments

According to the survey, **most beneficiary respondents perceived some degree of difficulty, though only slight or moderate**, in applying for and accessing funding provided by policy instruments targeting young farmers. A smaller percentage felt that it was very or extremely difficult to access the instruments and an even smaller percentage did not find any difficulty at all. The instruments for which the highest shares of respondents perceive moderate or extreme difficulty are:

- Investment support with increased support rates for young and new farmers.
- Setting up support for young and new farmers.
- Early or favourable retirement scheme for incumbents handing over a farm.

At the same time, the instrument 'Economic support to get training and/or advisors for young and new farmers' was the one perceived by most respondents to have slight or no difficulties at all in applying for and accessing funding.

## Figure 21. Perceived difficulty in accessing instruments

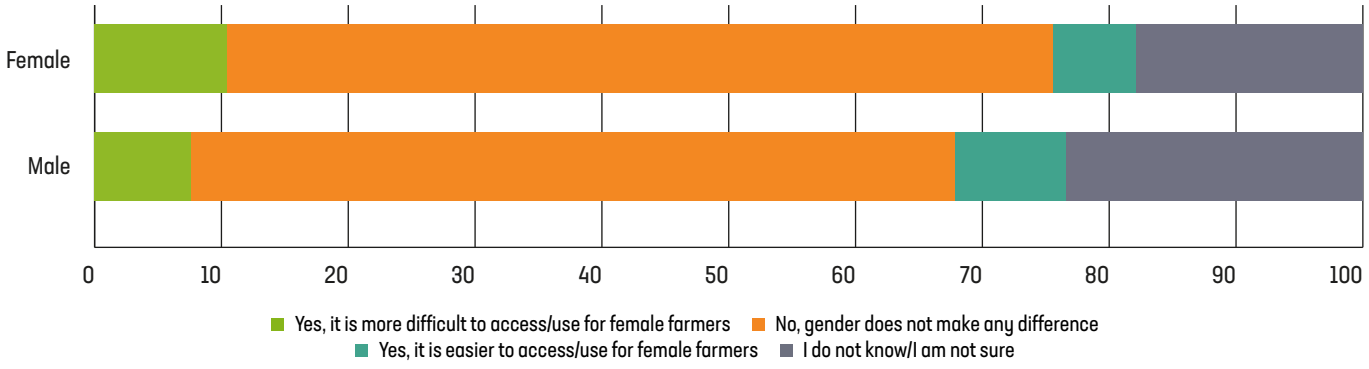



Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=664 responses (excluding blank responses). Average score for each instrument, where 1: not difficult at all, 2: slightly difficult, 3: moderately difficult, 4: very difficult, 5: extremely difficult

**Gender does not generally appear to make a difference** according to the majority of beneficiary respondents, irrespective of whether they are male or female. Among beneficiaries, 1 290 responses [91] indicated no gender difference, while only 175 said it was harder for women and a similar number said it was easier, particularly regarding set-up support. A notable number (449) had no opinion or lacked knowledge. Non-beneficiaries showed similar patterns, with 1 226 seeing no gender difference and 197 saying it is harder for women. However, among non-beneficiaries, more men than women believe gender makes no difference (see figures below).

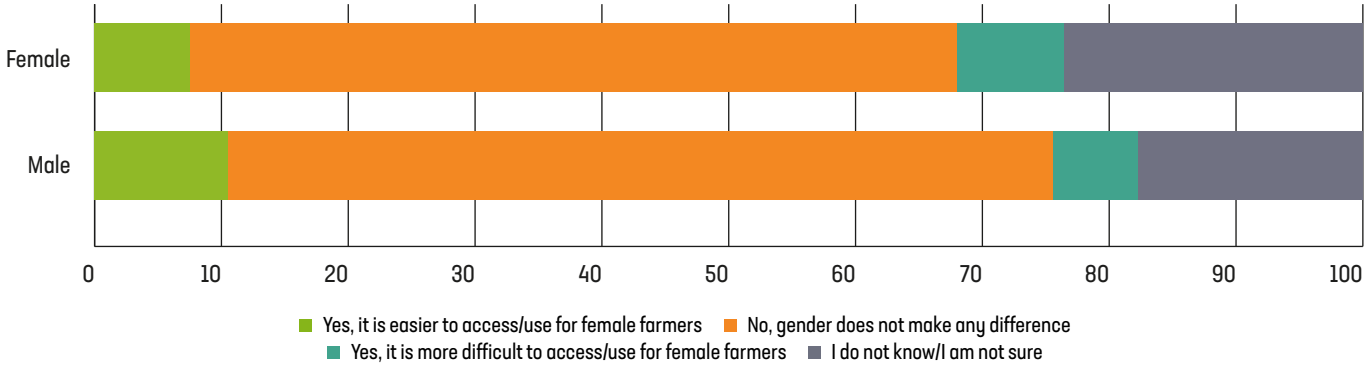
[91] Cumulative number as survey participants' responses were collected separately for each of the 10 policy instruments shown in Figure 21.

## Figure 22. The importance of gender in accessing instruments (beneficiaries)




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data. Answers from beneficiary respondents. N°.=654 (excluding blank responses)

## Figure 23. The importance of gender in accessing instruments (potential beneficiaries)




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data. Answers from non-beneficiary respondents. N°.=203 (excluding blank responses)

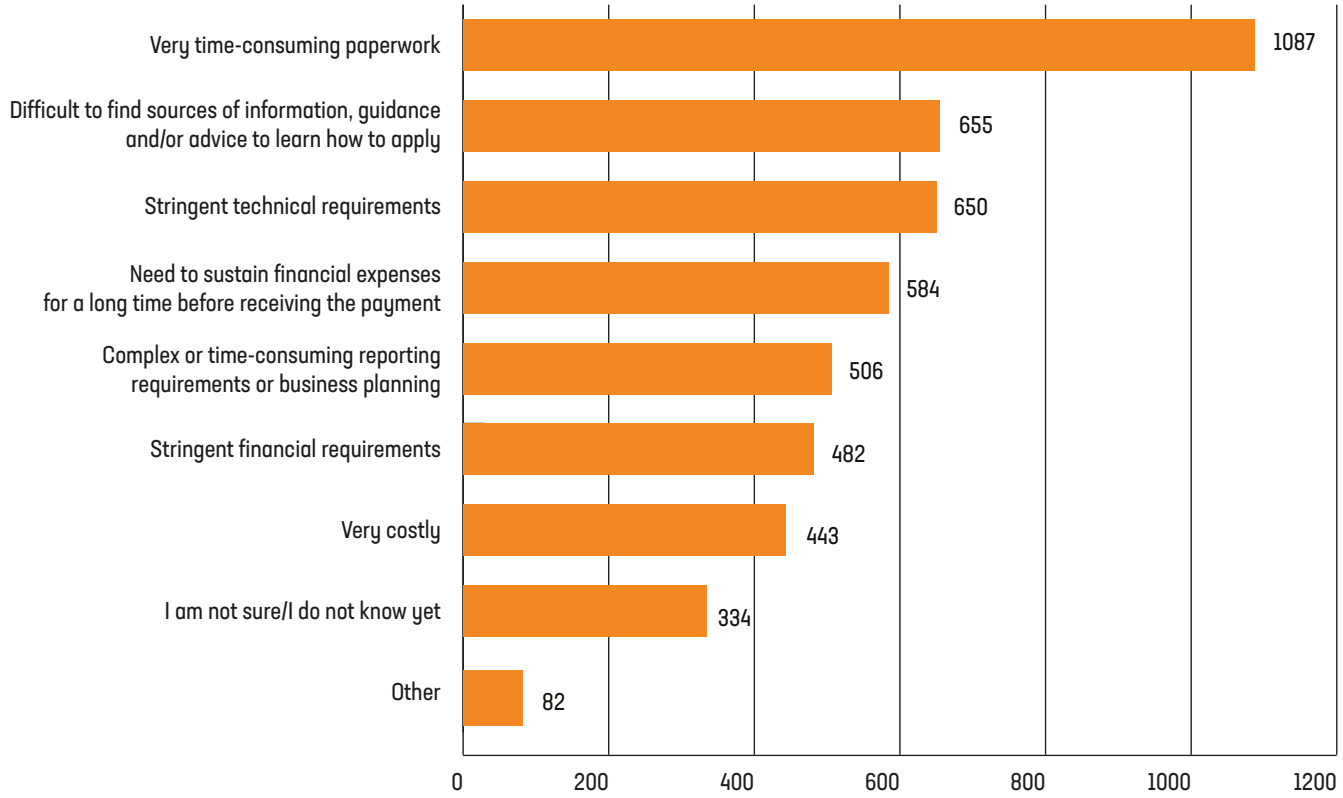
The interviews and case studies have identified only **four national instruments with preferential conditions for female farmers**. These include Malta's empowering women in agriculture programme, exclusive to female entrepreneurs; Spain's national strategy to meet the demographic challenge and rural women's challenge programme, both promoting female participation in agriculture; Germany's coaching programme for women, encouraging women in management roles; Hungary's action plan for empowering women 2021-2030, part of the national gender equality strategy [92].

The **main constraint that made it difficult to access generational renewal instruments is the very time consuming paperwork** (see Figure 24 listing the constraints from most to least cited). This is followed, in order of importance, by:

- The difficulty in finding sources of information, guidance and/or advice to learn how to apply (particularly for tax/fiscal incentives, economic support for training/advice and CIS-YF).
- Stringent technical requirements (particularly for investment support, CIS-YF, set-up support and inheritance costs).
- The need to sustain financial expenses for a long time before receiving the payments (especially for investment support, CIS-YF and set-up support).
- Complex or time-consuming reporting requirements or business planning (especially for set-up support), stringent financial requirements (especially for favourable loan interest rates) and high costs (especially for inheritance) were mentioned as constraints to a lesser degree in comparison to the rest of the constraints.

[92] See previous Box 3 and the Inventory of national and regional policy instruments in Annex II.

## Figure 24. Constraints for accessing existing instruments




Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data. N°.= 651 (excluding blank responses), multiple choice allowed

The most cited difficulties or constraints for young farmers to access policy instruments identified in interviews and case studies confirm, complement and expand some of the survey findings.

**Administrative complexity and bureaucracy are the most cited constraints** (BG, BE-Wallonia, CZ, DE, FR, ES, IE, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK). This is directly linked to the most common survey findings of very time-consuming paperwork and also to the difficulties in finding information/guidance on how to apply or the complex and time-consuming reporting requirements. Interviews and case studies confirm that bureaucratic complexity is a major deterrent to accessing CAP or national support for young farmers due to complex application procedures, slow approval and disbursement processes, especially when disbursement takes place through numerous structures, as well as high reporting and compliance burdens.

**Lack of or insufficient training and advisory support** are cited as constraints by several Member States (CZ, EE, ES, IE, LT, LV, PL, SK). The survey identified specific challenges, including inadequate or underutilised advisory services, lack of structured mentoring for transferring knowledge to new entrants, structured guidance or modern skills, while training and education often lack focus on technology and business, which are key knowledge assets for young farmers. Some of these constraints exacerbate others; for instance, underutilised advisory services may be responsible for low awareness of tax exemptions or credit/loan schemes, which would help overcome the constraints to access financing.

**The design of interventions, when characterised by unclear or restrictive eligibility criteria,** also appears to hinder access to instruments in several Member States (BG, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, LV, MT, SK). This constraint expands on the survey findings of stringent technical and financial requirements. Strict or rigid eligibility criteria are cited in general, while specific restrictive criteria include the requirement to be registered as an active farmer before applying for installation support or the 35% investment requirement (Bulgaria), the requirement to own 51% of a farm without taking into account the operational reality (Germany, Denmark), the age cap at 35 for some instruments (Ireland) or 40 (France, Latvia). The need for co-financing limits access to INSTAL and CIS-YF support (Czechia). Regional differences in setting criteria may also limit access (France, Spain). The current financial set-up or the active farmer definition favours larger over smaller farmers, which creates the risk that large corporations dominate land acquisition, pushing out smaller younger farmers (France, Latvia, Poland). Finally, in some cases, the design of interventions does not provide incentives for older farmers to retire or the interventions are not coupled with others that provide such incentives (Czechia, Finland, Hungary).

**Gender inequality constraints** are finally cited by a few Member States (Czechia, Germany, Ireland). Although gender does not appear to make a difference in accessing GR instruments for most survey respondents, the interviews and case studies shed some light on why this is considered an issue. Notably, access to GR instruments for young women farmers is limited due to a lack of targeted land access or credit programmes, low technical knowledge among women, legal barriers, as well as low awareness and cultural barriers discouraging women from leading farms and, as a consequence, they are discouraged from accessing the instruments. A key message in relation to gender is that **generational renewal instruments can become more easily accessible to female farmers if they include facilitating conditions** such as targeted support, specific advice to women helping them overcome financial and technical issues and targeted awareness raising on the possibilities offered by the instruments.

#### 5.4.3.2. Preference - Level of interest/willingness to adopt the instruments

Preference for an instrument refers to the (potential) beneficiaries' interest in and need for the instruments for overcoming their challenges to succession. The higher the beneficiaries' preference or need for the instrument is, the larger its potential effect. Preference can be expressed in two ways:

a) In terms of uptake, i.e. the actual adoption of the instrument by beneficiaries in the target audience. The effect of an instrument is proportional to the size of the target audience actually benefiting from it. The larger the number of adopters, the larger the potential effect of the instrument.

b) In terms of intention to use, i.e. planning to use in the future or willingness to use even if not considered yet. High intention to use also indicates high preference and potentially also larger effects.

The preference for instruments appears to be related to awareness i.e. the instruments that survey respondents are most aware of are also the ones they have used most frequently (highest uptake) or intend to use in the future (highest intention).

**Table 10. Preference for generational renewal instruments (% of respondents)**

| Has the instrument been used? | CIS-YF | COOP for farm succession | Investment support with increased support rates for young and new farmers | Economic support to get training and/or advisors for young and new farmers | Setting up support for young and new farmers | Favourable land prices or loan schemes to purchase land | Favourable tax schemes and/or fiscal incentives | Favourable loan interest rates and/or public guarantee on collateral | Early or favourable retirement scheme | Favourable inheritance or donation tax costs on farm succession |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Already used | 45% | 9% | 27% | 20% | 31% | 3% | 11% | 9% | 1% | 5% |
| Going to use in the near future | 15% | 8% | 21% | 15% | 19% | 10% | 12% | 12% | 7% | 9% |
| Considered, but I decided not to use | 2% | 5% | 5% | 7% | 6% | 5% | 4% | 9% | 6% | 5% |
| Would like to use but have not considered yet | 10% | 16% | 22% | 19% | 16% | 21% | 18% | 19% | 16% | 17% |
| Not applicable/ Don't know this instrument | 23% | 55% | 20% | 32% | 22% | 53% | 47% | 44% | 63% | 56% |
| No answer | 5% | 7% | 6% | 7% | 6% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 9% |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=777 (excluding blank responses)

The table above indicates the following:

- Complementary income support for young farmers (payment per hectare or lump sum) (CIS-YF), which is **the instrument with the highest rates of awareness, is also the one with the highest uptake**, i.e. used by 45% of survey respondents on average across countries. When adding the intention to use it in the near future (15%), this indicates a preference of 60% for this instrument. **The average preference for CIS-YF goes up to 70%** when taking into account also respondents who are interested in using it but have not yet considered it. In some Member States, this instrument is already used by more than 50% of respondents (Hungary, Czechia, Croatia, Lithuania), the ratio going up to 100% for Greece, Estonia, the Netherlands, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta, but with only one or two respondents from these countries. Almost one-third of respondents in Luxembourg would like to use it but have not yet considered doing so.

- Setting up support for young and new farmers (grant payment or financial instruments), second in terms of awareness, is the next most used instrument (uptake by an average 31% of survey respondents), while another 19% plan to use it in the near future, indicating a preference of 50% for this support. When taking into account that some respondents would like to use it but have not yet considered it, then **the preference for setting up support goes up to 66% of respondents**. Setting up support has already been used by around 40% or more of survey respondents in some Member States (France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium-Wallonia), the ratio going up to 100% for Greece, Estonia and Lithuania (however, only one or two respondents from these countries). In Luxembourg, despite a low usage rate (15%), when considering the future intention, as many as 90% of respondents are interested in using setting up support.

- Investment support with increased support rates for young or new farmers is third in terms of awareness and also in terms of preference, with an average of 27% of survey respondents having used it and another 21% planning to use it in the near future. When taking into account those who would like to use it but have not yet considered it, **the average preference for investment support for young farmers goes up to 70%**, as much as the intended preference for CIS-YF. This instrument has already been used by around 40% of respondents in some Member States (FR, BG, PT, BE-W, BE-F), while around 30% are planning to use it in the near future in Spain, Belgium-Wallonia and Ireland. Luxembourg is again a case where, despite low usage (20%), the overall preference goes up to 100% when considering those who plan to use it (55%) and those who would like to use it but have not considered it yet (25%).

- Economic support to access training and/or advisory support for young and new farmers is fourth in terms of awareness and in terms of average uptake (20% of survey respondents). When taking into account those who would like to use it but have not yet considered it, **the average preference for economic support for training/advice increases to 42%**. Overall, one-third of respondents are either not aware of this type of instrument or the instrument type is not applicable to them. The instrument is used by more than 40% of respondents only in France, while in a few Member States it is used by between 20% and 30% of respondents (ES, AT, PT, LV, IE, BE-F). It is intended to be used in the near future by 20% to 30% of respondents in Spain, Bulgaria and Latvia, bringing the overall preference for Spain and Latvia to 45%. Economic support for training and advice is unknown or not applicable for more than half of the respondents in Czechia, Belgium-Wallonia and for 30% to 40% of respondents in France, Hungary, Croatia, Portugal, Latvia and Ireland. Therefore, Latvia stands out as the Member State with relatively high intended preference; however, with one-third of respondents citing limited knowledge of this instrument.

- All other instruments are not known or not applicable to an average of around half of the respondents. This is likely because such schemes are present in only some Member States. The least known are early retirement schemes (63% of respondents) and favourable inheritance/donation tax costs (56%). However, three instruments (access to land, tax/fiscal incentives and favourable loan interest rates) stand out for their potential future use in some Member States. Despite current low uptake (1-11%), these tools show potential for growth, as indicated by concrete examples of use among respondents in these Member States (see table below). Luxembourg, Ireland and Belgium-Flanders stand out for having a higher intention to use these instruments in the near future or higher preference for these instruments even if they have not considered using them yet.

**Table 11. Instruments with high intention to use in the future and evidence of uptake in some Member States**

| Instrument | Intention to use (survey) | Uptake (interviews) |
|---|---|---|
| Favourable land prices or loan schemes to purchase land for young and new farmers | › 15-20% of respondents intend to use them (HU, RO, LU, LV, IE).<br>› 30-40% would like to use them but have not considered it yet (LU, IE). | › 1 053 young farmers were given land as a result of law provisions (EL).<br>› The Succession Farm Partnership credit involved 174 partnerships (IE).<br>› The Land Mobility Service (exchanging of land parcels in order to bring land closer together) facilitated 962 known arrangements since 2015 (IE).<br>› The Loan with partial repayment of capital for the purchase of agricultural land by young farmers was used by 385 young farmers during 2022-2024 (PL).<br>› The incentive scheme for the purchase of agricultural land (RICTA) in the Azores favoured 317 beneficiaries since 2008 (PT).<br>› Early retirement scheme in the Azores favoured 102 beneficiaries since 2020, of which 22 were female farmers (PT). |
| Favourable tax schemes and/or fiscal incentives for young and new farmers | › 25% of respondents intend to use them in the near future (LU, BE-F).<br>› 40% intend to use them in the near future (IE).<br>› 40% would like to use them but have not considered it yet (IE). | › Applicants of Stock Relief for Young Trained Farmers increased by 45% from 280 to 405 (94% male, 6% female) (IE).<br>› A total of 871 guarantees were granted in the period 2017-2023 under the Business Takeover Scheme (NL). |
| Favourable loan interest rates and/or public guarantee on collateral | › 20-35% of respondents intend to use them in the near future (PT, LU, LV, IE, BE-F).<br>› 25-30% are interested but have not considered yet (BE-F, LU).<br>› 60% interested but have not considered yet (IE). | › 782 young farmers (21,5% of total beneficiaries of the schemes) benefited from credit lines from 2019 to 2024 (PT).<br>› Various favourable loan instruments benefited between 36 and 89 young farmers during 2022-2024 (SI). |

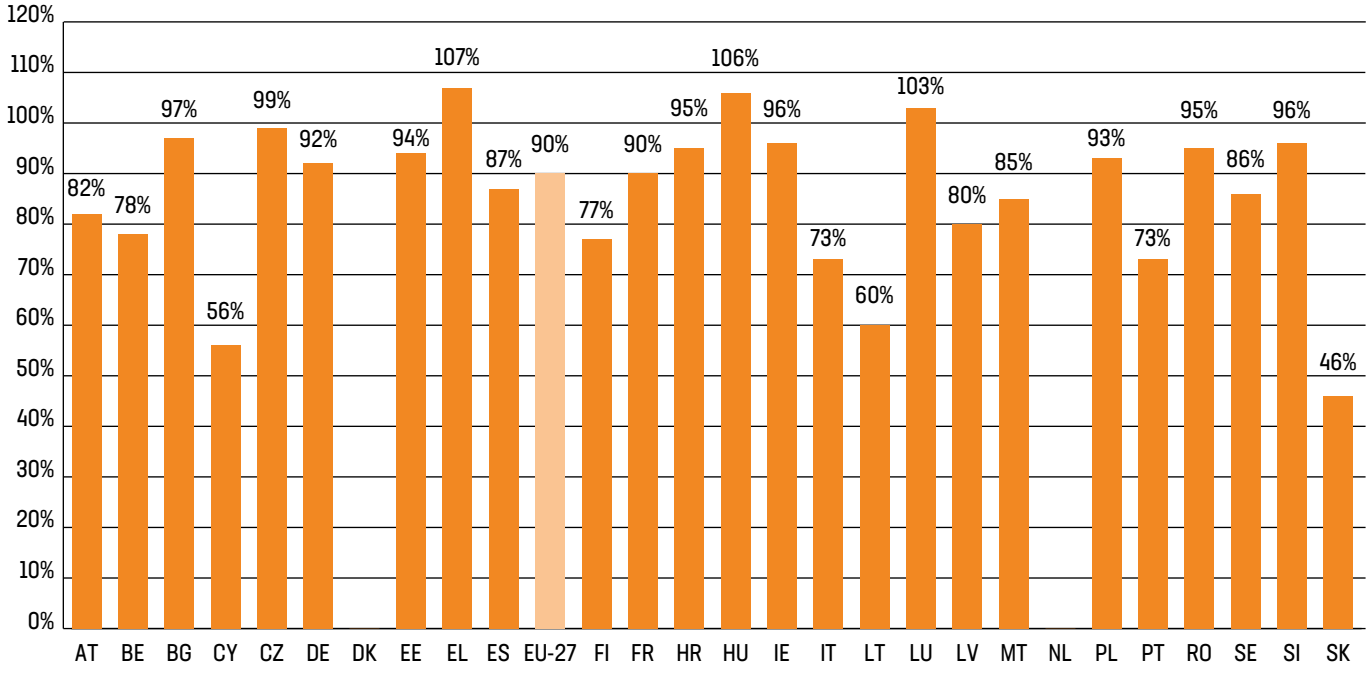
Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of survey data, N°.=777 and interview data

#### 5.4.3.3. Effectiveness

Effectiveness looks at the extent to which GR barriers have been addressed by the implemented instruments. Implementation of the current programming period is still at the early stages and there is no evidence yet related to the achievement of targets. There is, however, one GR instrument implemented under 2014-2020 RDPs, the installation of young farmers (i.e. Measure 6.1), for which data exists covering its performance over the period. This instrument was one of the highly used ones in that period, where progress towards the target indicator stood at 90% at the end of 2022 [93].

[93] Target Indicator T5: Percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP-supported business development plan/ investments for young farmers (%). Source: EU CAP Network, RDPs 2014-2020: Monitoring data – EU Overview. Situation at the end of 2022. https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/publications/rdps-2014-2020-monitoring-data-eu-overview-2022_en.

**Figure 25. Progress achieved on Common Target T5 (Focus Area 2B) by Member State at the end of 2022**




Source: Annual Implementation Reports 2022 (AIR), EU CAP Network, Monitoring data summary – Rural development Priority 2 (P2) – 2022

NB: Denmark and the Netherlands did not implement the RDP business start-up aid for young farmers.

All Member States have achieved progress rates exceeding 70%, except Slovakia, Cyprus and Lithuania. Greece, Hungary and Luxembourg had already surpassed the set target value by the end of 2022.

Concerning the current programming period, despite the lack of concrete data at this stage, there is some evidence from interviews and case studies on the extent to which GR instruments address certain barriers related to access to finance, access to land, fiscal barriers and quality of life in rural areas. This evidence is analysed below.

### Assessing the effectiveness of instruments to address financial barriers

**Access to finance** is a barrier that has been addressed in practice up to now mainly by CAP instruments, notably, CIS-YF, INSTAL and INVEST (see also Section 5.4.3.2), while there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of national instruments offering favourable credit/loan conditions.

**CIS-YF directly addresses financial barriers to** GR by providing young farmers with income support that improves financial stability in the early stages of farm development. It is the most widely used instrument up to now according to interviews, with low perceived access barriers. Evidence from Czechia, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia shows that CIS-YF helps young farmers enter the sector and stabilise their income, making farming more accessible, therefore **improving the income prospects** of young farmers.

**INSTAL** helps young farmers **overcome start-up costs** by offering grants, often substantial, to finance investments in equipment and infrastructure. In Czechia, grants up to EUR 82 000 ease entry costs, although collateral requirements can limit complementary financing. In Estonia, the support has enabled strategic investment in modernisation. Due to its popularity in the Netherlands, funds will be shifted towards this intervention to support more farmers. Portugal highlights it as a particularly easily accessible and relevant tool. In Austria, the 'Perspective Agriculture' initiative (i.e. partly funded under the CSP) supports non-family farm takeovers through a mediation portal, addressing both financial and structural barriers (further details in Annex II – Inventory of national and regional instruments).

**INVEST with increased rates for young farmers addresses barriers related to access to finance for investment** by offering higher aid rates and additional eligibility points to young farmers. In Hungary, over 1 000 young farmers received support [94]. In Lithuania, 61% of approved applications for investment support during the first call were from young farmers. Ireland's Women Farmers Capital Investment Scheme encourages both investment and female participation. In the Netherlands, investment support fosters new agricultural business models aiming to respond to future developments in the agricultural sector, while in Spain, Catalonia has established differentiated unit amounts for young farmers, while other autonomous regions use selection criteria for positive discrimination in favour of young farmers.

[94] Data refer to the 2014-2022 period.

There is no evidence so far of the effectiveness of national policy instruments addressing financial barriers, except in Austria, where access to finance is generally well-regulated and favourable credit conditions exist within family transfers, secured through land ownership.

### Assessing the effectiveness of instruments to address land access barriers

Where evidence exists on implementation, **national instruments facilitating access to land** have generally been quite effective in addressing land access barriers.

In **Italy**, the Generazione Terra programme, which covers 100% of land purchase costs, has proven highly effective. It exhausted its resources in 2024, reflecting the very high demand. Between 2016 and 2023, it facilitated the transfer of approximately 8 000 hectares to young farmers. The initiative supports both new business start-ups and the expansion of existing agricultural operations. Success stories include cooperatives established on municipal land, promoting innovation, biodiversity and organic farming.

In **Czechia**, the PGRLF [95] loan schemes ease the burden of financing land purchases by offering favourable interest rate subsidies to small and medium-sized enterprises, with preferential conditions for young farmers. In parallel, the state land office's land consolidation initiative has played an important role in improving the usability of agricultural land by addressing fragmentation and reducing the risk of abandonment.

In **Spain**, land access is a concern in the national efforts to support GR. A focus group on access to land was established through a sectoral conference involving all Spanish regions, with the goal of developing a roadmap to enhance regional land bank systems. These land banks aim to prevent land abandonment and support youth entry into agriculture. Additionally, cooperative-based land management initiatives offer another pathway for addressing land access barriers.

In **France**, the land storage solution offered by SAFER, the land agency, an initiative about delaying land purchases for 2-10 years while the project leader completes training and develops the project, has proven highly effective, particularly for new farmers (especially those not from an agricultural background).

### Assessing the effectiveness of instruments to address knowledge barriers

Training and advisory services, offered primarily through the **CAP's 'Knowledge exchange and dissemination of information' interventions (KNOW)**, aim to address knowledge-related barriers to GR. Where such interventions are used, notably AKIS, advisory support and training, there is evidence that they address access to knowledge barriers**.** They have proved effective in helping farmers acquire expertise, adopt sustainable practices and adapt to market demands.

In **Austria**, advisory services are highly developed, offering support on funding access, legal and social issues and even psychosocial counselling related to farm succession. Events and networking opportunities through the 'agricultural perspectives' association [96] foster peer exchange, while a farm matching tool links new entrants with opportunities. **Belgium-Wallonia** and **Flanders** finance accessible post-school training centres, with growing youth participation. In **Estonia**, advisory services have facilitated the adoption of precision agriculture and an internship programme helps bridge the gap between education and practice. **Hungary** shows steadily improving education levels among farm managers, largely due to the qualification criteria prescribed for nearly all national support schemes [97]. **Luxembourg** offers lump sum support for internships abroad, encouraging international learning and peer exchange. **Spain** has launched several promising initiatives, including the CULTIVA programme and a network of agricultural test areas, both enabling practical knowledge transfer between generations. A new national training strategy, to be launched in 2025, will consolidate training pathways, offering clearer guidance for agricultural careers.

### Assessing the effectiveness of instruments to address fiscal barriers

There is some evidence that **national measures** facilitate succession and overcome barriers related to the fiscal environment, already analysed under relevance (RQ3). **Czechia, Ireland** and **Malta** offer such measures, in the form of tax relief or income tax exemptions for farm succession. At the same time, **Austria's** well-developed social security, tax, pension and inheritance systems indicate that young farmers do not have to incur significant debts to purchase their parents' farm or compensate siblings.

### Assessing the effectiveness of instruments to address quality of life barriers

LEADER aims at creating an attractive rural environment for young entrepreneurs. For instance, in **Estonia,** local projects have improved rural infrastructure or promoted agritourism, making rural areas more appealing for settlement and business development. In combination with AKIS, they indirectly encourage young people to see agriculture as a viable and attractive career option. In **Czechia**, while not directly targeted at young farmers, LEADER has successfully provided diversification opportunities (e.g. agritourism, direct sales) that enhance farm viability. In the **Netherlands**, the AKIS vouchers have proven their effectiveness over the years and are indispensable for many farmers to obtain the right advice and guidance for their business development.

#### 5.4.3.4. Novelty – Main novelties introduced by CSPs under the 2023-2027 period

Novelty examines the extent to which new elements are introduced into existing policy instruments or developed to address GR barriers.

The analysis here focuses on the main novelties introduced to CAP interventions targeting GR and young farmers under CSPs. The analysis is based on information gathered through documentary research and interviews [98] with MAs and other national stakeholders in all Member States.

[95] A financial institution that provides financial support to farmers and foresters.
[96] See also above, addressing financial barriers with the INSTAL intervention.
[97] The focus group participants stated that there is statistical data supporting this finding.
[98] In interviews, national stakeholders were asked to illustrate the main novelties introduced by the CSPs in terms of new tools or new design features of previously existing tools (Q4 of the interviews with national stakeholders).

First, some Member States have introduced **better targeted financial support for young farmers**, particularly through higher direct payments per hectare, increased grants and lump sum payments for farm takeovers, new investment support schemes often providing higher co-financing rates for young farmers and improved access to financial instruments, such as soft loans and government-backed credit schemes. The shift to upfront capital under the new INSTAL intervention, rather than multi-year disbursements, reduces liquidity constraints. For example, **Lithuania** increased installation support and introduced soft loans, while **Czechia** and **Ireland** offer additional support for women farmers under INSTAL and INVEST, respectively.

Second, several Member States have **simplified and harmonised eligibility criteria**. **Austria** and **Spain**, for instance, standardised the definition of 'young farmer' [99] and business plan requirements across interventions, streamlining access and reducing administrative burden.

Third, there is an increased focus on **training, advisory services and knowledge transfer**. New initiatives such as **Slovenia's** farm succession mentorship programme and **Croatia's** emphasis on practical advice reflect a shift toward more targeted, skill-based support. **Slovakia** also launched free state-funded advisory services to complement the CAP-funded KNOW programme.

Fourth, **regionalisation and flexibility in implementation** have allowed for local tailoring of instruments. In **France**, regions manage the young farmers' installation grant (INSTAL) and experiment with regional pilot schemes, like the Bourgogne initiative to support customised farm succession plans. **Spain** expanded the use of financial instruments across ten regions, up from just three previously, thus enhancing regional financial access.

Finally, some Member States have introduced unique elements in certain interventions. **Belgium-Wallonia** removed the requirement for farms to increase their standard gross production during the business plan period, therefore allowing young farmers greater flexibility in structuring their early business phases without immediate pressure for expansion. **Hungary** reintroduced a COOP measure to facilitate farm transfer, simplifying legislation and increasing support, while **Ireland** expanded collaborative farming grants under COOP. **Germany** introduced a hectare premium for young farmers on the first 80 hectares under CIS-YF. It is also worth mentioning **Denmark's** 'Green Agreement' and **Ireland's** GR task group, which highlight broader, cross-cutting efforts to align land use policy and GR.

#### 5.4.3.5. Most promising good practices emerging from the study that could be replicated across Member States

Based on the analysis conducted under RQ3 and RQ4, it is possible to identify promising strategies that can be recommended as good practices across the Member States. Good practices are promising approaches or strategies characterised by the use of a novel policy instrument, the innovative design features of previously existing instruments, the combination of highly complementary/synergic instruments. Therefore, good practices are not intended solely as policy instruments, but also as the way policy instruments can be combined, designed and enforced.

There are some methodological challenges to take into account:

- Not all Member States or all instruments present examples of good practice. However, as implementation progresses, more information will become available to further assess effectiveness.
- Good practices do not cover all instruments, only those for which participants in interviews and case studies provided information.
- In some cases, the information provided is rather generic, stating that an instrument works well without further details provided. Again, this may change as implementation progresses and more evidence becomes available.

##### Good practices identified in individual instruments

Individual instruments that can serve as examples for others are found in the context of INSTAL, INVEST and KNOW in Austria, Ireland, Estonia, Luxembourg and Spain.

**A mediation portal encourages installation support by people outside the family (Austria)**. The agricultural perspectives initiative (Verein Perspektive Landwirtschaft) supports the takeover of farms by people outside the family through a mediation portal, in combination with networking support offered by the agricultural perspective association. The association is financed through a combination of membership fees, CAP subsidies, donations and crowdfunding campaigns. Each year, the association supports approximately 300 interested individuals.

**Encouraging women to obtain investment support (Ireland)**. The Women Farmers Capital Investment Scheme (WFCIS) under the CSP, allows eligible women farmers to receive a 60% grant with an individual funding ceiling of EUR 90 000. The ceiling is increased for eligible registered farm partnerships to EUR 160 000. In some cases, it supports the recognition of female farmers as they are incentivised to join partnerships.

**Hands-on experience through internships helps to better prepare young farmers (Estonia and Luxembourg).** In Estonia, the internship support programme in the context of the KNOW intervention motivates agricultural enterprises to host students, ensuring high-quality training in real work environments. For example, students participating in internships gain hands-on experience with modern farming techniques, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical experience and enhancing their readiness to enter the sector. In Luxembourg, the introduction of a lump sum payment for an internship abroad is seen by young farmers as a real advantage, as it enables them to see other farms and production models applied in other Member States. Meetings and discussions between young farmers after the internships, enabling an exchange of good and bad practices observed elsewhere. The non-compulsory nature of the internship is also very important as it introduces flexibility and is positive for those who would not otherwise be able to afford it.

**Direct land management by cooperatives may help solve access to land barriers (Spain).** The direct management of land by cooperatives is a national instrument, consisting of a simple procedure for a territorial-based grouping around the cooperative, which becomes the manager and assumes the risk, giving guarantees to the transferring member and generating direct employment for young people. It is based on the assumption that GR

[99] In fact, Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 (recital (20)) requires the harmonisation of YF definition under both pillars for the sake of consistency when addressing the objective of generational renewal. In the previous CAP period (2014+), there were separate YF definitions under Regulation (EU) 1305/2013 and Regulation (EU) 1307/2013.

can be achieved in many ways, not just by replacing an older farmer with a younger one. This cooperative mechanism addresses the challenge of generational change by keeping land under cultivation and offering paid work to young people who are unable or unwilling to access land of a sufficient size to make a living from it.

### Good practice identified in strategic approaches/combinations of instruments

One of the aspects that works particularly well is the combination of different support types (see also the complementarity analysis under RQ 3.2 in Section 5.3.3.3). Each type of support is intended to compensate for the limitations of the others, creating a balanced and comprehensive assistance system, sometimes in the context of a broader national strategy. Good practices in this respect have been identified in Austria, Ireland, Hungary and Spain.

**A supportive strategic environment makes it easier for young farmers to decide to continue farm operations (Austria).** The interaction of the various instruments from all areas (five CAP instruments and nine national instruments) is the main reason for the overall positive development in Austria with regard to GR. The nine national policy instruments include different regulations (tax, inheritance, social security and pension law, land transfer law) whose combination creates a supportive environment in terms of fiscal incentives, access to finance and access to land. In addition, Austria's agricultural education system (agricultural and forestry school and education system), together with CAP support in relation to advisory and training programmes for young farmers, offers a broad basis of practical training and advisory services. All this is complemented with CAP financial subsidies for young farmers through installation support, establishment premiums, complementary income support, higher subsidy rates for investment projects and extensive support measures e.g. the agri-environmental programme and compensatory allowance, with positive indirect effect on young farmers.

**Engaging stakeholders in dialogue can facilitate the participation of women in farming (Ireland).** The National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture, in the context of the CSP, was launched in early 2024, with the scope to examine gender equality in farming and the wider agri-food sector, as well as approaches on how to increase the visibility and status of women in agriculture. A 12-point action plan was developed, focusing on awareness, inclusion and systemic change. Key recommendations include promoting agriculture as a career for women through school campaigns and local events, ensuring greater inclusivity in education and training and encouraging female succession through tax reforms. The plan also calls for reviewing eligibility criteria, improving gender data collection, addressing barriers in administrative and taxation systems and recognising female leadership in the sector. Additionally, it proposes a dedicated 'Women in Agriculture' space on the DAFM [100] website and highlights women's role in promoting sustainability across social, environmental and economic dimensions.

**Combining the use of legal instruments and interventions may provide incentives to both older and younger farmers (Hungary).** The act and implementing decree on the transfer of agricultural farms, INSTAL support and farm transfer cooperation are combined successfully in Hungary. It is completely new that both the farm transferee and farm transferor receive financial support. Thus, there is a significantly greater incentive for older farmers to hand over the entire holding. In addition, the entire process is supported from legal and administrative perspectives.

**Successful training programmes for young farmers can be consolidated into a national training strategy for more effective delivery (Spain)**. Two training programmes in Spain have favoured the interchange of knowledge between old and young farmers. First, CULTIVA provides training placements for young farmers and livestock farmers on model farms across the country. Second, the 'Network of agricultural test spaces' has developed agricultural test areas as programmes to support the gradual incorporation of new entrants into the agricultural sector through structured governance involving all relevant actors. The success of these and other programmes has led the national government to develop a national training strategy in 2025, which presents a comprehensive and structured overview of all existing training pathways leading to employment in the agricultural sector. Developed jointly by the ministries of agriculture and education, the measure aims to consolidate and organise available training options to provide clearer guidance for individuals seeking careers in agriculture. Although it is not exclusively for young people, it is considered to play an important role in generational change.

#### 5.4.3.6. Suggestions for improvement of GR policy

The findings suggest that despite the identified good practices, significant room for improvement remains to better address GR barriers. Based on interviews, case studies and documentary research, **eight key areas for improvement were identified**. For each key area, examples of Member States that suggest these improvements are provided.

### Improvements in the design of interventions

Improving definitions and eligibility criteria is essential. Revising the definition of 'active farmer' and harmonising the age limit (typically 40 years old) could enhance access (e.g. Belgium-Wallonia, Slovakia, Poland). INSTAL could better target sustainable and innovative projects and link support to qualifications (Italy, Luxembourg, Poland). CIS-YF could be improved by extending the period of supplementary income support or revising some requirements (Belgium-Wallonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria). Some Member States suggest introducing follow-up support or accompanying measures to ensure long-term sustainability of farms (Estonia, Portugal) and ensuring continuity and synergies in policy planning, for instance, by combining national and CAP measures over time (Hungary, Greece, Spain). National-level coordination (e.g. a GR observatory suggested by France) or participation of young people in boards of local action groups in the context of LEADER (suggested by Spain) could also strengthen GR efforts.

[100] The Irish MA of the CAP Strategic Plan.

### Address access to land

Access to land remains a critical barrier. Suggestions for improvement include protecting agricultural land from speculation (Belgium-Wallonia, Lithuania), offering state land leases for young farmers (Czechia, Italy, Slovakia) and facilitating affordable land purchases through soft loans.

### Reduce bureaucracy and simplify procedures

Complex administrative processes are a common obstacle. Improvements should focus on simplifying application and approval procedures, accelerating payments (especially for investment support) and creating unified digital platforms for CAP and national funding applications (Slovakia, Czechia, Ireland).

### Address access to finance and fiscal barriers

Improved access to finance through state-backed credit guarantees, subsidised loans and financial instruments is widely supported (CZ, FR, DE, HR, LV, RO, PT). Other ideas include integrating premiums into farm equity and offering preferential credit. Tax relief and simpler inheritance rules could ease succession (Belgium-Wallonia, France, Slovakia).

### Strengthen advice and training

Training should begin early and balance technical, business and digital skills (Slovenia, Czechia, Latvia). Advisory services should be better funded and targeted e.g. mentoring programmes or personalised consulting (Czechia, Lithuania). Central advisory portals can also raise awareness (Slovakia).

### Promote the attractiveness of farming

Poor rural services can deter young people from entering agriculture. Proposals call for improved healthcare, childcare and social services (Bulgaria, Spain, Latvia) and communication campaigns to enhance the image of farming (France, Luxembourg, Ireland). Initiatives like farm visit programmes and social media outreach are also suggested.

### Address gender-related barriers

Though not seen as a major access issue by all, many women perceive gender as a barrier. Suggested actions include tailored funding under INSTAL (Greece), prioritising land leasing and credit schemes for women (Czechia), and incorporating gender needs into training and leadership initiatives (Belgium-Wallonia).

### Adopt more holistic policy approaches

The need for a more holistic approach is another suggested improvement emerging from interviews with MAs and national stakeholders in some Member States. Simultaneous improvements would be desirable in all areas that can contribute to making farming a more desirable career e.g. educational systems, taxation, access to agricultural land, social affairs and promotion of the farmer profession (Slovenia). Furthermore, for GR to succeed, national and CAP interventions should work in synergy, with CAP providing financial support and national policies addressing structural barriers (Czechia). Interviews in the Netherlands and Spain emphasise the importance of including non-material aspects, e.g. personal relationships, mentoring and mental wellbeing, in a more holistic approach to GR, since these greatly influence the success and sustainability of intergenerational transfers. These suggestions appear to be aligned with the proposal of the *Strategic Dialogue* of outlining a roadmap across EU policies to address GR barriers, with Member States creating their own plans (see Section 3.2.3) [101].

## 5.4.4. Conclusions of RQ4

CAP interventions and national/regional instruments address the identified barriers to GR, including the gender gap, when they are known to (potential) beneficiaries, and are also sufficiently funded, clearly targeted and easily accessible.

In terms of **awareness**, the survey reveals that **beneficiaries are moderately aware of instruments supporting generational renewal in their Member State**, mostly through advisors and neighbouring farmers. They know more about CSP instruments and less about other national instruments. There are exceptions in eight Member States where beneficiaries are aware of a variety of non-CAP instruments. Gender does not seem to be a key component of known instruments, except in France and Spain where dedicated support to female successors exists.

Going beyond mere awareness and examining the constraints that influence the **accessibility** to GR instruments, there is a **moderate degree of difficulty in accessing most instruments**, with slightly larger difficulties identified for support to young farmers through investment, setting-up aid, CIS-YF and early/favourable retirement schemes. Gender does not appear to be a factor that increases difficulties in accessing GR instruments. There are several reasons why access is perceived as difficult, of which administrative complexity and bureaucracy stand out as the most frequently mentioned. Other constraints include weaknesses in the design of interventions, insufficient provision of advisory support and training.

[101] OJ C, C/2024/2658, 29.4.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/2658/oj.

In relation to **preference**, i.e. the extent to which beneficiaries prefer to use certain policy instruments, **there seems to be a correlation between knowledge of an instrument and preference for it**. Three CAP interventions – CIS-YF, setting up aid and investment support for young farmers – are the ones most widely known and used by survey respondents. Even where awareness is low, many young farmers express an intention to use instruments related to land access, favourable loans, and fiscal incentives. Preferences are particularly strong for measures that offer flexibility, simplicity and financial security during the critical start-up phase. Notably, young farmers also express interest in training and advisory support when these services are tailored to their needs, practical and accessible.

**Generational renewal instruments are most effective when they offer sufficient and continuous funding to meet demand, are tailored to national or regional contexts and are combined with complementary measures such as mentoring and advisory services**. For example, Italy's land access scheme (Generazione Terra) succeeds due to full financing (100% of land purchase costs), while Ireland's targeted investment support combines financial support with a gender-focused design. **Despite these successes, persistent barriers remain.** Land access continues to be constrained by high prices and limited availability, and access to finance is hindered by co-financing requirements and lack of collateral. Succession planning is often unsupported due to the absence of structured tools for early retirement or tools facilitating non-family transfers. These areas require stronger and better coordinated policy responses.

**Innovation also contributes to effective delivery of generational renewal instruments**, including, for instance, simplified eligibility for young farmers, targeted support for women, increased focus on training, advisory services and knowledge transfer, as well as regionalised implementation.

**Identified good practices demonstrate that effective generational renewal relies on how instruments are designed and combined**. Austria, Ireland, Estonia, Luxembourg, Spain and Hungary offer promising examples. These include Austria's mediation portal for non-family succession, Ireland's targeted investment support for women and Spain's cooperative land management model to improve land access. Strategic policy combinations can also play a key role. Austria's integrated legal, financial and training framework supports young farmers across multiple fronts. Ireland's National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture and Hungary's dual support for successors and retiring farmers show how policy alignment can remove barriers. Spain's national training strategy builds on successful regional programmes.

**Suggestions for improving generational renewal policies** include simplifying procedures, increasing financial allocations, improving access to land and credit and enhancing training and advisory services. They also recommend investing in rural infrastructure, promoting the image of farming and addressing gender gaps through tailored support and representation. Finally, the need for holistic policy approaches is stressed, involving the combination of national and CAP instruments but also synergies between different policy areas (education, social, etc.).

# 6. Overall conclusions

The overall aim of the study was to assess GR strategies across the Member States, comprising implementation of CAP interventions and national and/or regional policy instruments, in order to identify successful strategies that can be promoted as good practices to be replicated across Member States, including those supporting female successors.

The study covered the whole EU-27. The analysis was carried out at an overall EU level and at national level across all Member States, with an in-depth analysis of some aspects at case study level. At EU and national level, the analysis was based on information collected through documentary research, interviews with MAs and other national stakeholders in all Member States, and an EU-wide survey of young farmers (beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of policy support). At case study level, the analysis was complemented with information collected through 11 focus groups (i.e. one in each case study Member State).

The first part of the study focused on assessing the extent and severity of the GR challenge in agriculture across the EU (RQ1). Subsequently, it investigated the main barriers hindering GR in agriculture (RQ2). Under the third research question, the analysis focused on CAP and national/regional policy instruments adopted across Member States with the aim of determining their relevance in addressing the identified GR barriers, their complementarity and possible synergies (RQ3). Finally, the study aimed at assessing the potential effectiveness of the policy instruments adopted by Member States in addressing the identified GR barriers and, on this basis, identifying promising approaches that can be recommended as good practices across the Member States (RQ4).

## 6.1. Extent and severity of the generational renewal problem in the EU

The analysis under the first research question (RQ1) confirms the **persistence of a serious generational renewal problem in agriculture across the EU**. The problem is closely linked to continued ageing farming population trends, with only modest improvements in the presence of younger farm managers in some Member States such as Austria, Poland, Germany and France. In contrast, most Member States show <1 ratio of farm managers under 40 compared to those over 65, especially in southern Europe (e.g. Portugal, Italy, Greece), reflecting a limited replacement of older generations. Between 2016 and 2020, only a few countries – such as Austria, Czechia and France – saw an improvement in the young-to-old ratio. **Gender disparities also persist**, with male farm managers consistently outnumbering female ones across age groups. Only in a handful of Member States, like Germany, Finland and Czechia, have young women started to enter farming at higher rates than their male peers. Conversely, female and male ratios remain low in southern European countries.

**The level of agricultural training among young farmers remains uneven**, despite some Member States showing an increase in formal training among young farmers between 2016 and 2020 (Hungary, Austria and Slovenia). While countries such as the Netherlands, France and Luxembourg have over 60% of young farmers fully trained, others like Greece, Romania and Malta report less than 10%, as they rely primarily on practical experience. **Employment trends** are also likely to further exacerbate the GR problem due to a sharp EU-wide decline in agricultural labour, particularly affecting the young, *vis-à-vis* an increase in overall employment rates throughout the EU. **Rural depopulation further worsens the situation**, with countries like Spain, Sweden and Greece witnessing significant population declines in rural areas. **Land abandonment** also remains a key concern, with 13 Member States having roughly half their agricultural area at moderate to high risk of abandonment.

The **severity of the generational renewal challenge in agriculture is overall high and widespread across the EU**, driven by the combined effects of an ageing farming population, structural weaknesses in rural economies and limited attractiveness of the farming profession. Although Member States such as Austria, France and Czechia show relatively more favourable conditions with higher shares of young farmers and a moderate decline in farm numbers, most Member States experience a dual challenge of falling farm numbers and insufficient generational replacement. Interview data reinforce these findings, with stakeholders in most Member States rating the severity of the GR problem as high or very high.

**Some differences emerge across farming sectors**. Labour-intensive and low-return sectors, such as livestock farming, are most severely affected due to harsh working conditions and income instability, as seen in France, Romania and Latvia. Horticulture and fruit production also face challenges, especially where structural support is limited. Small-scale and subsistence farms, more common in Eastern and Southern Europe, are indicated as particularly vulnerable to succession failure.

Geographically, **the problem is most acute in remote, mountainous and economically disadvantaged regions** (Greece, Romania, Sweden). These areas often experience depopulation, insufficient infrastructure and high costs of production. Conversely, economically dynamic or better-connected regions, particularly in western Austria, eastern Ireland and northern Portugal, tend to attract more young entrants.

**Gender disparities** are again highlighted across much of the EU, particularly where inheritance customs favour male descendants and structural barriers hinder women's formal land ownership and access to finance. Countries such as Poland, Croatia and Ireland report cultural biases, while in Czechia and Malta, women face difficulties in securing credit. Nonetheless, some Member States, including Romania, Lithuania and the Netherlands, report increasing female participation, with young women often drawn to small-scale, organic or niche production.

According to interviewed national stakeholders, the main causes of the GR problem are demographic ageing, economic insecurity, limited access to land and finance, negative perceptions of farming and poor rural infrastructures. These challenges are worsened by regulatory complexity and perceived policy uncertainty, which collectively reduce the attractiveness and viability of farming for new generations.

## 6.2. Main barriers to generational renewal in agriculture and their severity

Analysis under RQ2, largely based on documentary research and interviews with MAs and stakeholders in all Member States, highlights several recurring barriers to GR across the EU, which are illustrated in the following paragraphs.

**Access to land** is the most frequently reported barrier and **emerges as the most severe constraint**, due to high land prices, limited land availability and regulatory frameworks that favour large or family-owned farms. According to most interviewed stakeholders, **access to land has worsened over time**, driven by speculation, urban pressure, climate change and environmental constraints that reduce the available arable land. Land fragmentation is reported as a significant problem in Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Finland, while informal lease practices in Malta and Romania discourage investment. The shrinking availability of agricultural land due to urbanisation and market concentration is indicated as negatively affecting access to land in Malta, Hungary and the Netherlands.

Findings suggest that **inheritance or a family farming background provides a significant advantage**. Indeed, legislation often favours intra-family transfers (FR, HU CZ, FR, HU, PL, RO, SI). In addition, some prioritise neighbours or locals, which limits access for non-resident young farmers (Hungary, Lithuania). While some countries have developed solutions (land banks, youth-targeted lease schemes, fiscal incentives), most rely heavily on inherited land structures, which leave young newcomers at a disadvantage.

Some Member States highlight **regional differences** (Italy, Finland and Sweden) and **sectoral differences**. Crop farming is more affected due to larger land requirements (Denmark, France, Latvia), while access to land is sometimes easier for horticulture or mixed farming. **Gender inequality** is particularly noted in Romania, Malta, Croatia and Slovenia, where women lack formal land rights or are not taken seriously by institutions or sellers.

**Access to finance is a similarly severe barrier across the EU, especially for first-generation farmers** (CZ, DE, ES, IE). Newcomers without inherited land face high start-up costs and struggle to obtain loans in Slovakia, Romania, Malta, Bulgaria and Portugal, where land ownership is a precondition for credit. Capital intensiveness (EL, ES, FR, IT, NL) and perceived risk of farming activity further hinder lending (CY, LV, MT, SE). Although countries like Hungary and Denmark have introduced favourable schemes, bureaucratic hurdles and restrictive criteria remain common. Financing disparities also vary regionally and by sector, with livestock and permanent crops requiring higher investments.

The **fiscal and regulatory environment** – including inheritance laws, retirement policies and tax incentives – varies widely in its impact, but is notably most problematic in France, Malta and Romania, where complex regulations and inadequate retirement frameworks hinder generational transfer. Retirement insecurity keeps older farmers active longer, further delaying generational transition, while bureaucratic complexity and lack of succession planning also contribute to the problem. Other countries such as Germany, Ireland, Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary and Luxembourg rate this barrier as having **medium to moderately high severity.** In contrast, in countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal, the barrier is not perceived as substantial. This barrier tends to affect all actors equally, but its impact is often exacerbated for those without family ties to existing farms or those from underrepresented groups, such as women.

**The competitiveness and profitability of the farming sector** remain a challenge, especially in smaller farms and labour-intensive sectors like livestock. Some Member States, including Belgium, Italy and Spain, report this as a major obstacle. Low profitability and competitiveness are widely recognised as structural barriers. Despite a gradual narrowing of the income gap between agriculture and other sectors of the economy, young farmers still face lower and more volatile incomes. At the same time, input costs and regulatory compliance are high. Member States, such as Cyprus, Lithuania and Romania, report worsening profitability, while countries like Sweden and Germany note some regional or sectoral disparities. More tailored support is needed, including improved access to finance, stable market integration and sector-specific policy adjustments.

**Access to knowledge is a moderately severe barrier**. While advisory services exist, they are often fragmented or poorly adapted to young entrants' needs. Therefore, the issue is rather one of limited accessibility, underutilisation or inadequate tailoring of knowledge exchange services. Countries such as Estonia, Greece and Slovenia report knowledge gaps in entrepreneurship and sustainable practices, while Ireland and Hungary show more robust knowledge and advisory systems. Interviews highlight that those without family backgrounds in farming are particularly disadvantaged, as they cannot rely on informal knowledge transfer.

The **quality of life in rural areas is widely seen as a long-standing and worsening issue**. Limited infrastructure, poor services and physical isolation make rural living unattractive, particularly for young people, women and young families. Slovenia, Lithuania and Germany highlight the impact of inadequate childcare, healthcare and transportation on work-life balance. Regional disparities persist, with remote and mountainous areas being especially affected.

Interviews highlight that although all young farmers are affected, structural and social factors can exacerbate the challenge for certain groups. **Young families and new entrants without inherited farms are reported among the most vulnerable** in Czechia, Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia. Various stakeholders emphasise that **women are significantly more affected,** largely due to social expectations related to childcare and limited rural services that should support work-life balance. Territorial disparities are also highlighted, mostly affecting remote or mountainous areas, where the lack of services and infrastructure is more pronounced.

Interviews in Estonia, Czechia and France indicate that although there are national and EU programmes aimed at addressing rural inequalities, progress has been insufficient and regional disparities persist, also linked to worsening demographic trends (e.g. rural depopulation and ageing farming population). Interviews in Slovenia report rising mental health concerns and increasing work pressure on young farmers. In contrast, in a few cases, improvements are mentioned, due to targeted CAP investments (e.g. Spain).

**Personal and familial issues**, though context-dependent, **remain significant in many countries**. Emotional ties to land, different generational aspirations and lack of communication are common obstacles, particularly in Austria, Latvia and Slovenia. In countries like Bulgaria and Spain, these issues are reportedly less severe. **Gender again plays a role**. In Ireland, Luxembourg and Malta, social expectations around women's roles constrain succession.

Some common elements emerge from the analysis of GR barriers, in particular a difference in the **severity of certain barriers for young farmers with a family farming background versus newcomers** who seem to be at a disadvantage in accessing land, financial resources and knowledge.

**Gender inequalities** are also commonly mentioned in many Member States in conjunction with different barriers and were confirmed by the young farmers' survey. Half of the respondents believe that women face greater challenges than men in entering the farming sector, with female respondents much more likely to share this view. Key perceived challenges for women include negative stereotypes, weaker bargaining power and difficulties balancing family and farm responsibilities.

## 6.3. Relevance and complementarity of CAP and national/regional policy instruments in addressing generational renewal barriers

Based on the recognised need to gain a better knowledge and understanding of policy instruments adopted at national or regional level to address GR, the first objective of the third research question (RQ3) was to **create an inventory of national/regional policies and legislative instruments** that the Member States adopt to support GR. Subsequently, the analysis focused on assessing the **relevance of generational renewal strategies**, including CAP and national/regional policy instruments, **in addressing the identified barriers, as well as possible complementarities** and synergies between the different types of instruments. The analysis also aimed at assessing the extent to which the various policy instruments have been designed to support gender balance.

The relevance of national/regional policy instruments was assessed based on information collected through interviews in the Member States, case study focus groups and the young farmers' survey.

The **CAP clearly remains a cornerstone of support for young farmers across all Member States**. As clearly stated by interviewed MAs and national stakeholders, Member States significantly or mostly rely on CAP interventions to support GR. **CSP interventions** – i.e. INSTAL, CIS-YF, INVEST, COOP and KNOW – **are generally considered relevant in addressing financial and competitiveness-related barriers**, with some **also contributing to knowledge acquisition** by addressing professional, entrepreneurial and personal development of young farmers. **Farm succession planning is addressed by fewer Member States** through KNOW interventions (Germany and Greece) and COOP support for collaborative farming in Ireland and for farm succession in Spain.

Some interviewed stakeholders point to **issues potentially limiting relevance of CAP support** (and its effectiveness). Specifically:

- while direct income support and investment support provide relevant financial incentives in the short term, effects in the longer term are more unclear; and
- while support seems to mostly help slow down the decline in young farmers' numbers, it does not help increase the proportion of young people in the agricultural sector.

**Access to land is addressed by a variety of national and regional instruments, though often with limited scope and relevance**. National and regional policy instruments facilitating land access – such as land banks, regulatory controls on land markets and preferential leasing mechanisms – are relevant tools in various Member States (e.g. FR, DE, IE, IT, AT, SK), confirming land access as the most critical barrier to GR. In contrast, some Member States criticise instruments as being insufficiently tailored to young farmers or not effectively implemented (BE-Wallonia, CZ, NL, PT and SI).

**Access to finance appears to be relatively better supported by national instruments, although coverage and targeting vary**. Notable examples of relevant instruments, such as preferential loan schemes and guarantee funds, aimed at young and new farmers are highlighted in France, Ireland, Czechia, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. Other Member States have more general support initiatives in place that can benefit youth business development (Bulgaria, Denmark, Malta, Portugal). However, despite a range of tools, some gaps remain in uptake or visibility, particularly in Ireland and Portugal, where limited incentives or low awareness hinder use among younger generations.

**The fiscal environment, inheritance and retirement regulatory framework is another area where several countries have made relevant legal adjustments.** Indeed, several Member States offer a combination of tax exemptions, retirement and inheritance laws and other instruments (e.g. AT, CZ, IE, HU, LU, MT) to reduce transaction costs and legal hurdles. These measures can be crucial in incentivising older farmers to retire, thus facilitating farm transmission. Austria and Ireland, in particular, offer noteworthy examples of combined targeted tax reliefs and succession incentives.

National and regional instruments addressing **competitiveness and profitability** often focus on supporting investments for modernisation (Austria, France), innovation (Germany, Hungary) and market-based strategies or cooperativism (Italy, Portugal). Despite these measures, competitiveness is more often supported by CAP interventions, and relatively few national instruments are targeted at enhancing profitability for new entrants.

**Improving the quality of life in agriculture and rural areas receives some attention at national level, though not systematically**. Only a few Member States seem to have dedicated programmes focusing on career support, social insurance and care systems (Germany, Luxembourg, Slovenia). Malta's rural housing allowances, female empowerment programmes to enhance attractiveness and gender balance in rural communities are noteworthy. However, many other Member States offer few or no targeted measures in this area.

**Access to knowledge is addressed unevenly across the EU.** Some Member States provide well-structured support and invest significantly in agricultural education and advisory support (DE, EE, FR, HU, MT, AT). However, several others provide only general youth training not tailored to agriculture, reporting that advisory services are often under-resourced or fragmented, particularly in more remote areas. **Personal and familial issues**, including intergenerational conflict and the emotional dynamics of farm transfer, are seldom addressed explicitly but are acknowledged in some national frameworks (e.g. DE, HU, AT, SI).

Focus group assessments across 11 case study Member States reinforce interview findings, highlighting **land access and fiscal instruments as the most relevant policy types**. Barriers such as access to knowledge, quality of life in rural areas and gender inequality are addressed with varying success, as testified by lower relevance ratings of the related national instruments.

The survey of young farmers overall supports the previous findings, as both CAP and national instruments are viewed as broadly relevant, with little differentiation between CAP and national tools. Potential beneficiaries tend to rate instruments more positively, possibly reflecting unmet expectations.

Despite the variety, **only a few national instruments are designed specifically to support female successors**. Gender-sensitive approaches remain marginal, with only a handful of countries, such as Malta, Germany, Spain and Hungary, which have adopted programmes explicitly aimed at empowering women in agriculture.

In terms of **complementarity**, the findings reveal that while many Member States have structured complementarities between policy instruments, both within and outside the CAP, the depth and effectiveness of synergies vary considerably. **A common positive pattern emerges in Member States where CAP instruments are explicitly designed to work jointly**, either through linked eligibility conditions, coordinated timing of calls or shared strategic goals. Estonia, Portugal and Slovenia demonstrate more comprehensive and integrated support frameworks, where financial aid, training and advisory services are designed to work together. Good synergies between CAP interventions are, however, reported in many other Member States (BE-F, CY, EE, EL, HR, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE).

A **high level of complementarity between CAP and national/regional instruments emerges in some Member States**, in particular, Czechia, Ireland, Hungary and Austria, but to some extent also Belgium-Wallonia, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovakia, through the implementation of different types of instruments. However, in some cases (e.g. Czechia) the synergies seem to remain largely theoretical due to administrative barriers and a lack of systematic coordination. A **lower level of complementarity of policy instruments** emerges in Member States like Bulgaria, Italy, the Netherlands and Finland, where complementarities often remain nominal or underdeveloped, again constrained by fragmented planning or administrative barriers. **The complexity of administrative processes seems to be a recurring challenge across Member States, often limiting the practical synergy of theoretically complementary instruments.**

In some Member States, the **tension between regional and national coherence** hinders efforts at creating integrated support systems. France and Spain, for example, face challenges rooted in their decentralised governance structures, resulting in uneven access to support across regions and administrative complexity.

Across the board, **one of the most under-addressed areas is the interpersonal and emotional dimension of generational renewal**. Despite its recognised importance, few Member States have embedded support for the 'soft' aspects of farm succession, such as mentoring, intergenerational mediation or mental wellbeing, into their policy frameworks. Findings suggest that further efforts may be necessary across these domains. The lack of attention to such aspects may be a missed opportunity for effective policy design, particularly given their influence on the success of intergenerational transfers and the long-term sustainability of farming.

## 6.4. Effectiveness of policy instruments, good practices and persisting problems

Considering both CAP interventions and national/regional instruments that foster GR, their potential effectiveness in addressing the identified barriers to GR is moderate, while CAP instruments are better integrated and used by beneficiaries compared to national instruments.

First, when analysing preference, i.e. the interest in and need for instruments to overcome challenges to succession, the proposed strategies – comprising both CAP interventions and national/regional policy instruments – demonstrate **a moderate potential to address the identified generational renewal barriers**. Instruments such as CIS-YF, INSTAL and INVEST are the most widely known and used across Member States, indicating that they are relatively well-integrated into national strategies and have tangible uptake and interest from beneficiaries. These CAP instruments demonstrate **high levels of preference**, with up to 70% of survey respondents either having used them, planning to use them or expressing an intention to use them. This strong interest suggests that these tools are aligned with young and new farmers' needs, especially regarding initial financial support.

Second, despite this alignment, the potential effectiveness of these strategies is **limited by several accessibility constraints**. Survey and case study findings consistently highlight **administrative complexity** (e.g. burdensome paperwork, slow disbursement processes) and **inadequate advisory and training support** as major issues across the EU. Furthermore, **restrictive eligibility criteria**, such as rigid age limits [102] or land ownership requirements, limit the reach of many instruments. These factors contribute to **only moderate levels of accessibility**, meaning that even theoretically effective instruments are often difficult for potential beneficiaries to access in practice. These barriers are particularly acute in **instruments beyond the core CAP tools**, such as tax incentives, land access schemes and early retirement support, which **remain largely unknown or underutilised** by the majority of respondents (with exceptions in eight Member States where beneficiaries are aware of a variety of other instruments).

Third, **gender is not widely seen as a major barrier, but challenges persist** in some Member States, such as limited access to land, credit and training for women. Only a few countries (France, Spain, Germany, Italy) offer dedicated support and overall strategies lack systematic efforts to address gender inequality.

[102] Although set at 40, France and Latvia consider it arbitrary, while in Ireland the age limit is set at 35 for some national instruments.

In relation to actual effectiveness, i.e. the extent to which barriers to GR have been addressed by the implemented instruments, the most effective approaches to fostering GR have proven to be **those that directly address key barriers, such as access to finance, land, knowledge and the income gap**. Instruments like CIS-YF, INSTAL, and investment support have demonstrated concrete results due to their high uptake, strategic financial design and in some cases, simplified application procedures. Where available, structured training and advisory services, as well as land access schemes, have also proven effective. However, the impact of other instruments, such as early retirement schemes, favourable credit and fiscal incentives, remains limited due to low awareness, low uptake or administrative complexity. **Effectiveness is the highest where policies are targeted, well-resourced and supported by an enabling implementation environment**.

Novelty in the content and delivery of existing instruments also contributes to more effectively addressing GR barriers. The analysis shows that the 2023-2027 programming period has introduced several innovative elements that enhance the potential for GR. **Notable innovations include simplified eligibility for young farmers, targeted support for women, increased focus on training, advisory services and knowledge transfer, use of the COOP intervention for succession and regionalised implementation of schemes that were not regionalised before.**

Finally, the analysis has revealed several promising **good practices** that could be replicated across Member States. They underline that effective GR depends on how instruments are designed and combined. Good practices include: **combining multiple forms of support to create a coherent and flexible aid system; delivering targeted, practical training and advisory services; offering tools that facilitate non-family succession; and enabling land management by cooperatives to address land access barriers.** Strategic policy combinations or a combination of policy and legal instruments place GR in a comprehensive and structured overall context, aligned with farmers' needs and adaptable to national and regional contexts (summarised examples in the table below).

### Table 12. Summary of identified good practices

| Good practices | Description and examples |
|---|---|
| **Individual instruments** | |
| Facilitate installation of young/new farmers outside the family | A mediation portal links farmers with successors outside the family (AT). |
| Encourage women to obtain investment support | Higher grants for women and individual funding ceiling which increases if women join farm partnerships (IE). |
| Improve the skills of young people through internships | High quality training in real work environments, financial support for internships abroad to learn from other experiences (EE, LU). |
| Address land access barriers through cooperative land management | Land management by cooperatives that assume the risk and guarantee employment in agriculture for young people who cannot afford the land (ES). |
| **Combined instruments** | |
| Incentivise young farmers through a supportive strategic environment | Combination of various national and CAP policy instruments addressing multiple barriers (access to land, access to finance, social security and tax issues, access to knowledge, etc.) under a common strategic framework (AT). |
| Facilitate the participation of women in agriculture through stakeholder engagement | A national dialogue on women in agriculture brought together various stakeholders who committed to a common action plan that promotes the role of women in agriculture (IE). |
| Incentivise both young and old to facilitate transfer | Combination of legal instruments and INSTAL so that both transferee and transferor receive support gives incentives to older farmers to hand over the farm (HU). |
| Consolidate training programmes into a national training strategy | Successful national training programmes have been incorporated into a national training strategy that provides a structured and comprehensive framework for careers in agriculture (ES). |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of interviews and focus groups data

## 6.5. Suggestions for improvement of GR policy

The analysis has allowed for the identification of eight key areas where improvements are needed to more effectively address GR challenges in EU agriculture. Suggested improvements mostly relate to the design of interventions, as summarised in the following table.

**Table 13. Summary of suggestions to improve effectiveness in addressing generational renewal barriers or access constraints**

| Barriers to GR or constraints to access | Specific content of barriers (identified in RQ2) or access constraints (identified in RQ4) | Description of suggested improvements |
|---|---|---|
| **Barriers to GR** | | |
| Access to land (barrier) | High land prices, limited land availability and land speculation.<br><br>Land leases are informal or insecure.<br><br>New entrants or non-family members face more severe barriers than young people inheriting farms as they lack land ties. | Proposals include introducing land-use safeguards, leasing schemes and prioritisation for young/new farmers.<br><br>Suggestions by: BE-W, BE-F, CZ, DE, LT, MT, IT, SK. |
| Access to finance | Excessive entry costs, lack of collateral or credit history.<br><br>Perceived high risk of agriculture deters banks from lending. | More state-backed loans, guarantees and grants for upfront costs are needed to overcome financial barriers, particularly for new and young farmers lacking collateral.<br><br>Suggestions by: CY, CZ, FR, DE, HR, LV, RO, PT, SE, LU, SI. |
| Fiscal environment | Taxation especially on land transfers or capital gains.<br><br>Complex inheritance rules and systems insufficiently oriented towards non-family farm installation. | Introduce fiscal incentives, such as tax reliefs, simplification of tax and inheritance regulations.<br><br>Suggestions by: BE-W, CZ, FR, PL, SI, SK. |
| Strengthening training and advisory services | Limited accessibility, underutilisation, or inadequate tailoring of services to young farmers' specific needs. | There is a need for timely, targeted and participatory training, improved advisory infrastructure and structured mentoring programmes.<br><br>Suggestions by: BE-W, CZ, EL, FR, SI, ES, LV, LT, SK. |
| Attractiveness of farming and rural life | Outdated infrastructure, lack of essential services.<br><br>Unattractiveness of agriculture, especially compared to urban jobs. | Investment in rural infrastructure and services (e.g. childcare, healthcare) and public campaigns to improve farming image are recommended to increase the sector's appeal.<br><br>Suggestions by: BG, CZ, ES, FR, IE, LV, LU, PL, SK, SI, SE. |
| Addressing gender barriers | Greater social scrutiny for women, underrepresentation as farm holders. | Actions are needed to support women's access to land and credit, adapt training to their needs and promote their role in agriculture through representation, role models and dedicated working groups.<br><br>Suggestions by: BE-W, CZ, EL. |

| Barriers to GR or constraints to access | Specific content of barriers (identified in RQ2) or access constraints (identified in RQ4) | Description of suggested improvements |
|---|---|---|
| **Constraints to access policy instruments** | | |
| Design and targeting of interventions | Constraints to access interventions due to strict technical requirements. | Revisions are needed in eligibility criteria (e.g. age caps, co-financing requirements) and definitions (e.g. active farmer) to improve inclusiveness and access, especially for new and small farms. |
| Bureaucratic burden | Constraints to access support, due to very time-consuming paperwork. | Administrative complexity is a widespread constraint. Simplifying application, approval and disbursement procedures and creating digital platforms are seen as necessary improvements. |

Source: EU CAP Network supported by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2025), elaboration of interviews and focus groups data

In summary, the findings suggest that despite the presence of good practices, substantial gaps remain. Firstly, **the design of CAP interventions should be refined**, particularly through clearer eligibility criteria, adjusted definitions (e.g. 'active farmer'), and better-targeted support schemes, such as linking grants to sustainability and qualifications. Secondly, **access to land** remains a major barrier, with recommendations including state land leases and protection from speculation. **Bureaucratic complexity** is also a concern, warranting streamlined application processes and integrated digital systems. **Access to finance** must be improved via subsidised loans, state guarantees and simplified succession rules. Furthermore, **advisory and training services** should be strengthened through early education, digital skills and personalised guidance. The **attractiveness of farming** must be promoted by enhancing rural infrastructure and public perceptions. **Gender-related obstacles** should be addressed with tailored funding and inclusive training. Finally, a holistic policy approach is needed, integrating CAP support with national measures across education, social policy and mental wellbeing in addition to those targeting access to land, finance and fiscal incentives.

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