Towards an operational framework for farm sustainability assessment and payment allocation under the CAP

Introduction
European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) moved from production to income support and protecting the environment (e.g. AEMs). Global challenges (ecological, social, economic) requires a fundamental overhaul of the CAP to a holistic, consistent, efficient and fair mechanism rooted in sustainability.

Methods
- Literature review and expert interviews: Identify SATs, develop direct payment framework.
- Qualitative classification, rating and comparison: Rate SATs and assessment framework variants.

Results
- Total of 66 SATs identified (brackets = # tools):
  - Most common goal of supply chain management (32) in international context (26)
  - Majority (26) covered 2 sustainability dimensions; 2 tools covered all dimensions (SAFA and SMART)
  - Main use (28) of semi-quantitative (ordinal-scaled) indicators
  - Several tools (e.g. SMART, RISE, COSA) show promise for assessments, but require development (Fig. 1)
- Using selected criteria (Tab. 1), a sustainability direct payment framework was developed by interviewed experts (Fig. 2)

Objectives
1. Classify farm Sustainability Assessment Tools (SATs; incl. certifications and regulatory checks) by the SAFA sustainability framework
2. Assess the potential to harmonize SATs to agri-political goals and regulatory control mechanisms
3. Propose an SAT-based evaluation framework to distribute direct payments

References

Figure 1: Example of results from a SMART assessment in terms of goal achievement across 21 sustainability themes

Figure 2: Proposed evaluation scheme developed in a participatory workshop with project members and experts.

Conclusions
- The building blocks for a SAT to guide the distribution of direct payments are present but require further development to harmonize with regulations and to fit within an appropriate assessment framework.
- This would place farm assessments alongside consultation extension services and reward farms with both existing achievements and future improvements according to a sustainability management plan.