



Request: Understanding Farmer Uptake: What measures are the most promising to deliver on supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services in the next round of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)?

Final draft synthesis report in review until January 25th

Requesters: IUCN & Swedish Board of Agriculture



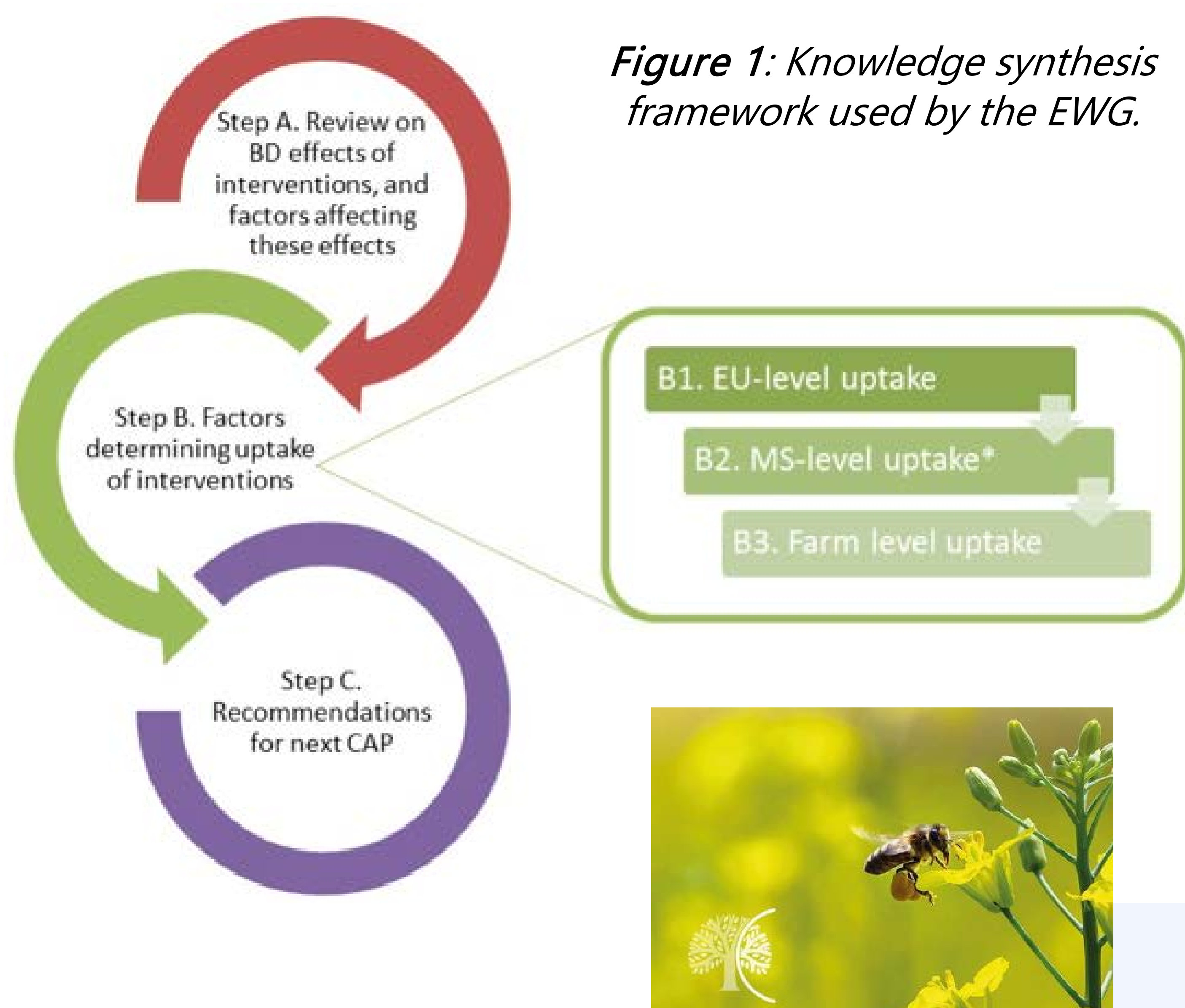
Expert Working Group (EWG): Calum Brown, Eszter K. Kovacs, Yves Zinngrebe, Amaia Albizua, Antonia Galanaki, Ioanna Grammatikopoulou, Iryna Herzon, Doris Marquardt, Davy McCracken, Johanna Olsson, Sergio Villamayor-Tomas

Background

Recent scientific research highlights the urgent need to protect Europe's remaining – and rapidly declining – biological diversity. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the major tools with which Europe's policy-makers can achieve this aim, but one that has so far proved largely ineffective – or even detrimental – to this goal. The EKLIPSE CAP EWG explored the ways in which the Common Agricultural Policy could be made more effective in protecting biodiversity and associated ecosystem services, particularly in terms of implementing effective biodiversity measures, such as Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) by Europe's farmers.

Methodological approaches

The EWG undertook three main strands of research (Fig. 1.). The bulk of the work focused on Step B, in particular a new systematic review of factors affecting farmer's uptake of relevant measures, and a series of interviews with farmers' representatives to further develop our insights and findings.



Main findings:

Analysis of the current situation:

- Some existing measures have well-evidenced substantial benefits for biodiversity, in particular: land lying fallow, agroforestry, landscape elements and buffer strips.
- Other measures provide few benefits for farmland biodiversity if grown within conventional intensively managed farms, e.g. use of catch and cover or nitrogen-fixing crops.
- The measures with fewer benefits for biodiversity are far more commonly applied than those with more benefits. This is partially attributable to the absence of associated management conditions for enhancing biodiversity, allowing technical compliance with agricultural policy to be achieved with little or no beneficial change in management.

How this situation arose :

- Member States further reduced the scope for measures to benefit biodiversity by prioritising ease of administration, consistency with existing agricultural practices and political acceptability over environmental impacts or effectiveness.
- Farmers tended to adopt measures that required the least management change and that were most consistent with agricultural production, and these were usually the measures with the least benefits for biodiversity.

How this situation can be improved

- A wholesale transformation of the CAP from area-based subsidies towards the provision of biodiversity conservation may be required as societal interest. In the absence of such transformation, synergistic adjustments across the CAP are necessary to improve outcomes for biodiversity.
- A clear distinction should be made between measures effective in protecting or enhancing biodiversity, and those that serve other purposes such as nitrogen fixation or soil protection. Subsidies for biodiversity-friendly measures should be restricted to the first group.
- Benefits to biodiversity should be clearly defined, measured and transparently communicated, in order to increase their acceptability, uptake and impact, and to allow robust results-based payments.
- In order to make benefits more tangible, the transparent use of scientific evidence and varied stakeholder perspectives to inform policy-making should be increased.
- Support for implementation of beneficial measures should be complemented with sanctions for non-compliance.
- The rationale for and requirements of measures should be transmitted through place-specific trusted sources rather than political channels.
- Policy changes should proceed concurrently with further research into the benefits of different measures and their applicability in under-researched regions and with other policy goals

