

# The mixed case study approach

Assessing its usefulness as alternative to the CMEF



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## Assessing its usefulness as alternative to the CMEF

Ida J. Terluin  
Petra Berkhout

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**The mixed case study approach; Assessing its usefulness as alternative to the CMEF**

Terluin, I.J. and P. Berkhout

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+31 70 3358330  
publicatie.lei@wur.nl

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# Contents

	<b>Preface</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Samenvatting</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The mixed case study approach</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Comparative analysis of the CMEF and the mixed case study approach</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Testing of the mixed case study approach in the Dutch province of Zeeland</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Testing of the mixed case study approach in the Dutch province of Gelderland.</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Findings on the use of the mixed case study approach</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Recommendations on the use of the mixed case study approach</b>	<b>44</b>
	<b>Literature and websites</b>	<b>45</b>

# Preface

Nowadays, evaluation of EU policies forms an integral of the policy process. For the evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy in the programming period 2007-2013, the European Commission has designed a Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF). The principal objectives of evaluations are to improve decision-making, resource allocation and accountability. As such, evaluations can help policy makers in the formulation and reorientation of policies.

The CMEF forms a comprehensive approach of rural development policy evaluation: data for about 160 indicators have to be collected and analysed and nearly 140 common evaluation questions have to be answered. In broad circles, the heavily quantitative indicator-based CMEF is experienced as a cumbersome requirement of Brussels. In the context of the debate on the simplification of the CAP, many Member States wonder whether a simpler and more popular kind of evaluation framework could be produced, based on explaining the links between causes and effects. Given these concerns of the CMEF, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation launched a project on an alternative evaluation approach of the evaluation of EU rural development policy. Based on a comparative analysis of 22 evaluation methods on the effectiveness of rural development, Terluin and Roza (2010) recommended to use the mixed case study approach as alternative to the CMEF. This method has been tested in the mid-term evaluation of the EU rural development policy 2007-2009 in two Dutch NUTS2 regions. The findings of these testings and the perspectives of the mixed case study approach to serve as an alternative to the CMEF are discussed in the present study.

This study has been financed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (BO-12.11-001-009). We greatly acknowledge the stimulating cooperation and useful comments of Willem Schoustra (LNV-AKV/PD GLB), who supervised this study on behalf of the Ministry and the members of the Steering Committee: Penelope Dubbeldam (National Service for the Implementation of Regulations), Heleen Grooteman (Government Service for Land and Water Management), Kirsten Haanraads (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation), Mart Mensink (Province of Gelderland), Eefke Peeters (National Service for the Implementation of Regulations), Dick Oele (National Service for the Implementation of Regulations), Ilse Oppedijk (Regiebureau) and Aart Vorstenburg (Managing Office for the Rural Development Programme). The information obtained during the interviews in the two case studies in Zeeland

and Gelderland with Wilfried Boonman (PRIOR Adviesgroep), Conny van Huizen (WEA Accountants en Adviseurs), Josje de Koning (Josje de Koning coaching van veranderingsprocessen), Ko de Regt (ZLTO), Boy Saija (Province of Zeeland), Johan Wandel (Province of Zeeland), Maarten Baars (Province of Gelderland, Bureau Rivierengebied), Nicole Bakkum (Recreatiegemeenschap Veluwe), Geert Bruns (LTO-Noord Advies), Mart Mensink (Province of Gelderland), Erik Schenk (Government Service for Land and Water Management) and, Martin Wiltink (Stichting Bevordering Kavelruil Gelderland) was very valuable. We also benefited from the useful comments by the attendees of the two meetings with the provincial stakeholders: Wilfried Boonman (PRIOR Adviesgroep), Gijs van Geffen (Province of Zeeland), Kirsten Haanraads (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation), Josje de Koning (Josje de Koning coaching van veranderingsprocessen), Jeroen van Leijssen (Government Service for Land and Water Management), Jan Maljaars (Province of Zeeland), Mariska van Nieuwenhuizen (Municipality Borsele), Ina Nortier (Participant in measure 311), Marleen Paaijmans (Government Service for Land and Water Management), Piet van der Reest (Province of Zeeland), Bea Tolboom (Municipality Terneuzen), Jos Vaessen (Nationaal Landschap Zeeland), Aart Vorstenburg (Managing Office for the Rural Development Programme), Johan Wandel (Province of Zeeland), Mart Mensink (Province of Gelderland), Ineke Nusselder (Province of Gelderland), Erik Schenk (Government Service for Land and Water Management), and Geke Volkers (Province of Gelderland).



Prof. Dr R.B.M. Huirne  
Managing Director LEI



# Summary

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## *Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF)*

For the evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy in the programming period 2007-2013, the European Commission has designed a Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF). The CMEF forms a comprehensive approach of rural development policy evaluation: data for about 160 indicators have to be collected and analysed and nearly 140 common evaluation questions (CEQs) have to be answered. Concerns on the CMEF refer amongst others to this large amount of indicators and evaluation questions, indicators and questions that bear little relevance to the circumstances of particular Member States or regions, and the emphasis on quantifiable indicators, which describe what has happened and detract attention from the more qualitative diagnosis of how and why it (not) happened.

## *Objective of this study*

Given these concerns on the CMEF, the question arises whether alternative evaluation approaches for the evaluation of EU rural development policy exist. In this study, we report on our findings of the testing of the use of the mixed case study approach for the evaluation of EU rural development policy and give some recommendations about its usefulness as alternative to the CMEF. The mixed case study approach has been tested in the mid-term evaluation of the RDP 2007-2009 in two NUTS2 regions in the Netherlands: the provinces of Zeeland and Gelderland.

## *Comparative analysis of the CMEF and the mixed case study approach*

Three phases can be distinguished in the evaluation approach of the EU Rural Development Policy in the CMEF and the mixed case study approach (Figure S.1). First, an analysis of the context situation is made by using quantitative indicators. In the CMEF, the set of 59 objective and context related baseline indicators is prescribed, some of which are easy to collect and to interpret and others which are difficult to collect and to interpret. On the other hand, in the mixed case study approach indicators are used, which are readily available, which may vary according to the specific situation in the case study region, and which together present a complete picture of the socio-economic and ecological situation of the case study region. Second, information on input, output, result and impact indicators is collected and analysed. The CMEF and the mixed case

study approach employ the same input and output indicators, which are measured at measure level. However, result indicators of the CMEF refer to the axis level, whereas in the mixed case study approach a measure impact indicator is introduced, which replaces the result indicator and which refers to the measure level, as the impact of the policy is mainly experienced at the field, farm or local level rather than at the aggregated regional level. The CMEF and the mixed case study approach use also the same programme impact indicators, which are measured at program and regional level respectively. Finally, a number of questions are dealt with. The CMEF employs a set of common evaluation questions (CEQs), mainly asking 'to what extent ...', whereas the mixed case study approach asks questions on what, why and how it happened in order to get insight into processes in the region, to be answered in in-depth interviews with representatives of different interest groups.

<b>Figure S.1 Schematic overview of the CMEF and the mixed case study approach</b>		
<b>Phase</b>	<b>CMEF</b>	<b>Mixed case study approach</b>
<b>1</b> Data collection and analysis of the context situation, by using	Context/baseline indicators	Secondary data and literature review providing a contextual framework
<b>2</b> Data collection and analysis of quantitative policy indicators, by using	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Input and output indicators at measure level</li> <li>- Result indicators at axis level</li> <li>- Impact indicators at programme level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Input, output, and measure impact indicators at measure level</li> <li>- Programme impact indicators at regional level</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Evaluation questions	CEQs on what has happened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Questions for in-depth interviews on what, how and why it happened</li> <li>- Workshop at which the draft report is discussed with actors involved in the RDP in the case study region</li> </ul>

### *Findings on the use of the mixed case study approach*

From the testing of the mixed case study approach in the NUTS2 regions Zeeland and Gelderland it appeared that:

- Phases 1 and 3 provide useful insights in the context situation of the case study region and processes within the region, such as the cooperation of the actors, the attitude towards the RDP and the difficulties experienced;
- The analysis in phase 2 is hampered by some handicaps:
  - a. Lack of data for the measure impact indicators at measure level. These indicators are not available in an existing monitoring database and could only be collected directly from the participants by the evaluator.
  - b. Lack of data for the programme impact indicators at regional level. These indicators are not available and could only be 'guesstimated' by the evaluator employing statistical techniques, which are often hampered by lack of reliable data and sufficient observations.
- Comparing the testing results in Zeeland and Gelderland with the mid-term evaluation of the RDP in the Netherlands according to the CMEF, it appears that the alternative evaluation in Zeeland and Gelderland reports by and large the same progress in the realisation of the input and output indicators, but that the alternative evaluation also tries to explain this progress in relation to the regional context and to particular projects realised. Moreover, the alternative evaluation includes a qualitative assessment of the achievement of the impact of the RDP, which is lacking in the evaluation of the RDP in the Netherlands according to the CMEF.

These testing results give rise to some considerations with regard to the analysis in phase 2 of the mixed case study approach. Although the lack of data for the measure impact indicators at measure level could be solved by collecting these data, this is time-consuming. Moreover, programme indicators at regional level could be estimated, also involving considerable efforts. It is questionable whether such efforts are worthwhile, especially if a reliable intervention logic of the policy measures has been established before implementing the policy. In addition, qualitative information about the impact of the RDP measures can be required in the in-depth interviews. Our experience was that the stories on what, why and how it happened, as outlined in the interviews, were much more valuable than quantified indicators, as it provided useful insights into processes within the region and revealed which adaptations in the policy would be needed.

*Recommendations on the use of the mixed case study approach*

The testing of the mixed case study approach in the mid-term evaluation of the EU rural development policy 2007-2009 in two case study regions in the Netherlands provided promising results. Concerning the CMEF, the mixed case study approach is based on a limited number of indicators and provided not only answers on the question what has happened, but also why and how it has happened. Given these findings, we recommend to consider using the mixed case study approach with some slight adaptations in the evaluation of the EU rural development policy as an alternative to the CMEF.

Our suggestion implies that monitoring and evaluation of EU rural development policy would be comprised of the following steps:

monitoring the continuous progress of input and output indicators in all EU regions;

evaluating whether the objectives of the rural development policy have been achieved in a few case study regions in each Member State. In the case study analysis, three steps are conducted:

- a. analysis of secondary data providing a contextual framework;
- b. analysis of the progress of the input and output indicators of each RDP measure;
- c. in-depth interviews with actors of different interest groups in order to explore, what, how and why it has happened.

# Samenvatting

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## *Gemeenschappelijk monitoring- en evaluatiekader (CMEF)*

Voor de evaluatie van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid van de EU in de programmaperiode 2007-2013 heeft de Europese Commissie een gemeenschappelijk monitoring- en evaluatiekader (CMEF, Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework) ontwikkeld. Het CMEF is een tamelijk uitgebreide benadering van de evaluatie van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid: er moeten voor zo'n 160 indicatoren gegevens worden verzameld en geanalyseerd en er moeten bijna 140 gemeenschappelijke evaluatievragen (CEO's) worden beantwoord. Twijfels rond het CMEF hebben met name betrekking op de grote hoeveelheid indicatoren en evaluatievragen, op indicatoren en vragen die nauwelijks relevant zijn voor de omstandigheden waarin lidstaten of regio's zich bevinden, en op de nadruk op kwantificeerbare indicatoren die beschrijven wat er gebeurd is en de aandacht afleiden van de meer kwalitatieve diagnose van hoe en waarom iets (niet) is gebeurd.

## *Doel van deze studie*

Gezien deze twijfels rond het CMEF rijst de vraag of er ook alternatieve benaderingen zijn voor de evaluatie van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid. In deze studie rapporteren we onze bevindingen naar aanleiding van tests met het gebruik van de gecombineerde case study-benadering voor de evaluatie van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid voor de EU. Daarnaast geven we enkele aanbevelingen over de bruikbaarheid van deze benadering als alternatief voor het CMEF. De gecombineerde case study-benadering is getest tijdens de tussentijdse evaluatie van het POP 2007-2009 in twee NUTS 2-regio's in Nederland: de provincie Zeeland en Gelderland.

## *Vergelijkende analyse van het CMEF en de gecombineerde case study-benadering*

In principe kunnen er drie fases worden onderscheiden in de evaluatiebenadering van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid in het CMEF en de gecombineerde case study-benadering (figuur S.1). Eerst wordt de contextsituatie geanalyseerd met behulp van kwantitatieve indicatoren. In het CMEF wordt een set van 59 doel- en contextgerelateerde basisindicatoren voorgeschreven, waarvan sommige eenvoudig te verzamelen en te interpreteren zijn en andere lastig te

<b>Figuur S.1 Schematisch overzicht van het CMEF en de gecombineerde case study-benadering</b>		
<b>Fase</b>	<b>CMEF</b>	<b>Gecombineerde case study-benadering</b>
<b>1</b> Verzamelen en analyseren van de contextsituatie met behulp van:	Context-/basisindicatoren	Secundaire gegevens en literatuuronderzoek op basis waarvan een contextueel kader ontstaat
<b>2</b> Verzamelen en analyseren van kwantitatieve beleidsindicatoren met behulp van:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Input- en outputindicatoren op het niveau van de maatregel;</li> <li>- Resultaatindicatoren op het niveau van de as;</li> <li>- Impactindicatoren op het niveau van het programma.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Input-, output- en maatregelimpactindicatoren op het niveau van de maatregel;</li> <li>- Programma-impactindicatoren op regionaal niveau.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Evaluatievragen	CEO's over wat er is gebeurd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vragen voor diepte-interviews over het wat, hoe en waarom van het gebeurde.</li> <li>- Workshop waarin het conceptrapport wordt besproken met actoren die betrokken zijn bij het POP in de case study-regio.</li> </ul>

verzamelen en te interpreteren zijn. In de gecombineerde case study-benadering worden daarentegen indicatoren gebruikt die direct beschikbaar zijn, die afhankelijk van de specifieke situatie in de case study-regio kunnen variëren, en die samen een redelijk compleet beeld bieden van de socio-economische en ecologische situatie in de case study-regio. Tevens wordt informatie over input-, output-, resultaat- en impactindicatoren verzameld en geanalyseerd. Het CMEF en de gecombineerde case study-benadering gaan uit van dezelfde input- en output-indicatoren die op het niveau van de maatregel worden gemeten. De resultaat-indicatoren van het CMEF hebben echter betrekking op het niveau van de as, terwijl er bij de gecombineerde case study-benadering een maatregelimpactindicator wordt geïntroduceerd die de resultaatindicator vervangt en die betrekking heeft op het niveau van de maatregel, aangezien de impact van het beleid vooral wordt ervaren op veld-, bedrijfs- en lokaal niveau en niet op het tamelijk complexe regionale niveau. Het CMEF en de gecombineerde case study-benadering gaan ook uit van dezelfde programma-impactindicatoren, die res-

pectievelijk op programma- en regionaal niveau worden gemeten. Ten slotte moet een aantal vragen worden beantwoord. Het CMEF hanteert een set gemeenschappelijke evaluatievragen (CEO's), die met name vragen naar 'in welke mate ...', terwijl de bij de gecombineerde case study-benadering wordt gevraagd naar het wat, waarom en hoe van het gebeurde om inzicht te krijgen in processen in de regio. Deze vragen worden beantwoord tijdens diepte-interviews met vertegenwoordigers van verschillende belangengroepen.

*Bevindingen met betrekking tot het gebruik van de gecombineerde case study-benadering*

Bij het testen van de gecombineerde case study-benadering in de NUTS 2-regio's Zeeland en Gelderland bleek dat:

- Fase 1 en 3 nuttige inzichten bieden in de contextsituatie van de case study-regio en processen binnen die regio, zoals de samenwerking tussen de verschillende actoren, de houding ten aanzien van het POP en de problemen die zich voordoen;
- De analyse in fase 2 wordt gehinderd door enkele handicaps:
  - a. Een gebrek aan gegevens voor de maatregelimpactindicatoren op het niveau van de maatregel. Deze indicatoren zijn niet beschikbaar in een bestaande monitoringdatabase en kunnen alleen rechtstreeks bij de deelnemers worden verzameld;
  - b. Een gebrek aan gegevens voor de programma-impactindicatoren op regionaal niveau. Deze indicatoren zijn niet beschikbaar en kunnen alleen ruw worden geschat met behulp van statistische technieken, die vaak weinig betrouwbare gegevens en onvoldoende observaties bieden.
- Een vergelijking van de testresultaten in Zeeland en Gelderland tijdens een tussentijdse evaluatie van het POP in Nederland volgens het CMEF, leert dat de alternatieve evaluatie in Zeeland en Gelderland in grote lijnen dezelfde voortgang rapporteert in de realisatie van de input- en outputindicatoren, maar dat met behulp van de alternatieve evaluatie ook wordt geprobeerd de voortgang te verklaren in verhouding tot de regionale context en de specifieke projecten die zijn gerealiseerd. Bovendien omvat de alternatieve evaluatie een kwalitatieve beoordeling van de impact van het POP, wat niet aan bod komt bij de evaluatie van het POP in Nederland volgens het CMEF.

Deze testresultaten leiden tot een aantal overwegingen met betrekking tot de analyse in fase 2 van de gecombineerde case study-benadering. Hoewel het gebrek aan gegevens voor de maatregelimpactindicatoren op het niveau van de maatregel kan worden opgelost door deze gegevens te gaan verzamelen, is dit

een behoorlijk tijdrovende klus. Tevens zouden de programma-indicatoren op regionaal niveau kunnen worden geschat. Dit vereist echter ook aanzienlijke inspanningen. Het is de vraag of dergelijke inspanningen de moeite waard zijn, vooral als er voordat het beleid werd geïmplementeerd een betrouwbare inter-ventiologica van de beleidsmaatregelen is opgesteld. Bovendien kan naar kwalitatieve informatie over de impact van de POP-maatregelen worden gevraagd in de diepte-interviews. Onze ervaring was dat de verhalen uit de interviews over wat er is gebeurd en waarom en hoe het is gebeurd waardevoller waren dan de kwantitatieve indicatoren, omdat deze informatie nuttige inzichten bood in processen in de regio en onthulde welke aanpassingen in het beleid noodzakelijk zouden zijn.

#### *Aanbevelingen met betrekking tot het gebruik van de gecombineerde case study-benadering*

Het testen van de gecombineerde case study-benadering tijdens de tussentijdse evaluatie van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid van de EU 2007-2009 in twee case study-regio's in Nederland leverde veelbelovende resultaten op. Ten opzichte van het CMEF is de gecombineerde case study-benadering gebaseerd op een beperkt aantal indicatoren en biedt deze benadering niet alleen een antwoord op vragen naar wat er is gebeurd, maar ook op vragen naar waarom en hoe het is gebeurd. Gezien deze bevindingen raden we aan te overwegen om de gecombineerde case study-benadering te gebruiken met enkele kleine aanpassingen voor het evalueren van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid van het EU als alternatief voor het CMEF.

Onze suggestie impliceert dat het monitoren en evalueren van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid van de EU uit de volgende stappen zou bestaan:

1. Het monitoren van de continue voortgang van de input- en outputindicatoren in alle EU-regio's;
2. Het evalueren van de mate waarin de doelstellingen van het plattelandsontwikkelingsbeleid zijn bereikt in een paar case study-regio's in elke lidstaat. In de case study-analyse worden drie stappen uitgevoerd:
  1. analyse van secundaire gegevens voor een contextueel kader;
  2. analyse van de voortgang van de input- en outputindicatoren van elke POP-maatregel;
  3. diepte-interviews met actoren van verschillende belangengroepen om te verkennen wat er is gebeurd en hoe en waarom het is gebeurd.



# 1 Introduction

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For the evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy in the programming period 2007-2013, the European Commission has designed a Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF). The principal aims of evaluation may be characterised as supporting decision-making, improving the implementation of policy measures, assisting in resource allocation and enhancing accountability and transparency of public policies (OECD, 1999; EC, 2006). As such, evaluation can be perceived as a feedback mechanism and a learning process.

The CMEF forms a comprehensive approach of rural development policy evaluation. According to the guidelines in the *CMEF handbook* (EC, 2006), data for about 160 indicators (of which 83 output indicators, 12 result indicators, 7 impact indicators, 36 objective related baseline indicators and 23 context related baseline indicators) have to be collected and analysed and nearly 140 common evaluation questions (CEQs) have to be answered. Concerns have been raised about the use of inferior indicators and their linkage to the evaluation questions (Bradley and Hill, 2009). In addition, it has been argued that the emphasis on quantifiable indicators for outputs, results and impacts detracts attention from the diagnosis of cause and effect: it describes what has happened and not how or why (Midmore, 2009). Understanding how policy measures interact with the structure and performance of the local rural economy, other policy impacts and support delivery mechanisms is critical for enabling evaluation to play its full role in improving policy and encouraging institutional learning and adaptation (Dwyer and Hill, 2009). Finally, the extraction of data for the prescribed indicators from statistical data sources may impose heavy demands, which are not always provided for by the programming authorities (Dwyer and Hill, 2009). According to evidence in 20 case studies - conducted in the scope of the EU-wide research project RuDi - programme authorities show a widespread lack of enthusiasm and an indifference towards the CMEF (Dwyer, 2010). Often, the heavily quantitative indicator-based CMEF is experienced as a cumbersome requirement of Brussels and in the context of the debate on the simplification of the CAP, many Member States wonder whether a simpler and more popular kind of evaluation framework could be produced, based on explaining the links between causes and effects (EC, 2009).

Based on a comparative analysis of over 20 evaluating methods of rural development policy measures in order to find ideas for improvement and adaptation of the CMEF, Terluin and Roza (2010) recommended to consider an approach to monitoring and evaluation of the EU rural development policy, in which monitoring is conducted for the whole EU territory and in which evaluation is restricted to a number of case study regions. Such an adapted CMEF could operate as follows:

- monitoring the continuous progress of input and output indicators in all EU regions;
- evaluating whether the objectives of the rural development policy have been achieved in a few case study regions in each Member State. In the case study analysis, the baseline, result and impact indicators could be replaced by a set of location-specific indicators describing the rural economy, whereas the common evaluation questions could be replaced by questions addressing not only what has happened, but also why and how the effect has happened.

This alternative approach can be labelled as the 'mixed case study approach'. To explore the perspectives of the mixed case study approach in the evaluation of EU rural development policy, Terluin and Berkhout (2011a, 2011b) applied this approach in the mid-term evaluation of the RDP 2007-2009 in two case studies in the Netherlands: the provinces of Zeeland and Gelderland.

In this study we report on our findings of the testing of the use of the mixed case study approach for the evaluation of EU rural development policy and give some recommendations about its usefulness as an alternative to the CMEF.

The plan of this study is as follows. In section 2, we briefly discuss the mixed case study approach. In section 3 we make a comparative analysis of the mixed case study approach and the CMEF. In sections 4 and 5 we present our findings on the use of the mixed case study approach in the mid-term evaluation of the RPD 2007-2009 in Zeeland and Gelderland. In section 6, we elaborate on the results of the testing of the mixed case study approach. In the last section, we give some recommendations about its usefulness as an alternative to the CMEF.

## 2 The mixed case study approach

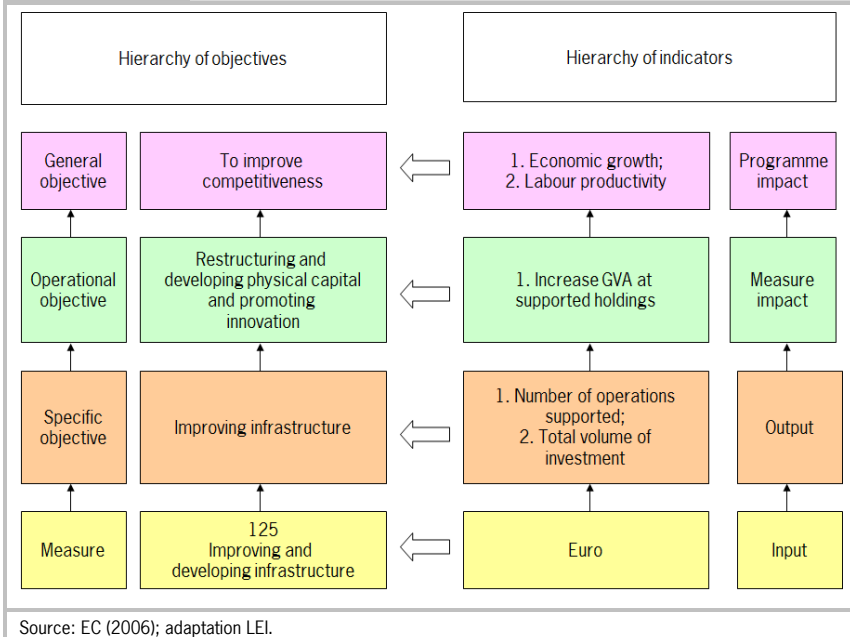
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The mixed case study approach seeks to explain how a policy intervention interacts with the structure and performance of the local economy, other policy impacts and the governance framework which delivers support. The mixed nature of the approach is reflected by using different methods in the various stages of the analysis. By combining evidence from these stages, it is tried to find exploring patterns, which provide support for explanations for causal relationships and which assess relative strengths of each effect. This approach was, for example, used for the ex post evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy 2000-2006 in Wales by Midmore et al. (2008). After conducting an analysis of secondary data of the case study region, providing a contextual framework, they then held in-depth interviews with representatives of different interest groups. As the EU Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 differs to some extent from that in the years 2000-2006, we had to make some slight adaptations to the interview questions; for the remainder we follow the two stages in the evaluation distinguished by Midmore et al.

To structure the design of the mixed case study approach as an alternative approach for the evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy 2007-2013, its testing and reporting, we designed a protocol in which we gave detailed instructions for the various steps in the evaluation:

1. Analysis of the baseline situation in the case study region by means of secondary data.
2. Analysis of the objectives of the EU Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 in the case study region.
3. Analysis of the input and the output indicator for each rural development measure, derived from the monitoring data collected in the scope of the CMEF and analysis of a newly defined measure impact indicator at measure level, in order to gain insight into the quantitative realisation of each measure. In addition, analysis of programme impact indicators at regional level for assessing the impact of the RDP. To illustrate this hierarchy of indicators, we show the set for measure 125 (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1** Intervention logic and hierarchy of indicators of measure 125



4. Questions for in-depth interviews with representatives of the different interest groups, mainly on how and why the measures of the RDP are used. These questions refer, amongst others, to:
- How and why have the target values for the input of each measure (not) been reached?
  - Which other factors have affected the achievement of the targets?
  - Would the activity supported by the measure also have been undertaken without policy support?
  - What is your impression of how the RDP affected (a) regional economic development, (b) the development of the agricultural sector, (c) the development of employment, (d) the development of diversification of economic activities, (e) the environment and the landscape, and (f) the quality of life in the case study region in the evaluated period?
  - What is your impression of the interaction of the RDP with other EU policies in the case study region in the evaluated period?
  - Do the objectives of the RDP fit, in your opinion, into the needs of the case study region?

- Which issues would you like to change in the current RDP?
- 5. A template for writing a report on the evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy in the case study region, including chapters, questions to be addressed and tables to be completed.
- 6. Discussion of the draft report on the evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy at a workshop with involved persons in EU rural development policy in the case study region. The workshop aims to fine-tune the draft results and to support the learning process of the policy evaluation. After the workshop, the report will be finalised.

By using the protocol, we tested the mixed case study approach for the mid-term evaluation of the EU Rural Development Policy 2007-2009 in the NUTS2 region of Zeeland in the Netherlands in the second half of 2010 and in the NUTS2 region of Gelderland in the Netherlands in the first half of 2011.

### 3 Comparative analysis of the CMEF and the mixed case study approach

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Three phases can be distinguished in the evaluation approach of the EU Rural Development Policy in the CMEF (EC, 2006) and the mixed case study approach (Figure 3.1). First, an analysis of the context situation is made by using quantitative indicators. In the CMEF, the set of 59 objective and context-related baseline indicators is prescribed, some of which are easy to collect and to interpret and others which are difficult to collect and to interpret. On the other hand, in the mixed case study approach indicators are used, which are readily available, which may vary according to the specific situation in the case study region, and which together present a complete picture of the socio-economic and ecological situation of the case study region. Second, information on input, output, result and impact indicators is collected and analysed. The CMEF and the mixed case study approach employ the same input and output indicators, which are measured at measure level. However, result indicators of the CMEF refer to the axis level, whereas in the mixed case study approach a measure impact indicator is introduced, which replaces the result indicator and which refers to the measure level, as the impact of the policy is mainly experienced at the field, farm or local level rather than at the aggregated regional level. This measure impact indicator reflects a direct impact of the measure, and is less blurred by other factors than when the impact is measured at a more aggregated level. The CMEF and the mixed case study approach use also the same programme impact indicators, which are measured at programme and regional level respectively. Finally, a number of questions are dealt with. The CMEF employs a set of common evaluation questions (CEQs), mainly asking 'to what extent ...', whereas the mixed case study approach asks questions on what, why and how it happened in order to get insight into processes in the region, to be answered in in-depth interviews with representatives of different interest groups.

<b>Figure 3.1</b>		<b>Schematic overview of the CMEF and the mixed case study approach</b>
<b>Phase</b>	<b>CMEF</b>	<b>Mixed case study approach</b>
<b>1</b> Data collection and analysis of the context situation, by using	Context/baseline indicators	Secondary data and literature review providing a contextual framework
<b>2</b> Data collection and analysis of quantitative policy indicators, by using	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Input and output indicators at measure level</li> <li>– Result indicators at axis level</li> <li>– Impact indicators at programme level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Input, output, and measure impact indicators at measure level</li> <li>– Programme impact indicators at regional level</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Evaluation questions	CEQs on what has happened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Questions for in-depth interviews on what, how and why it happened</li> <li>– Workshop at which the draft report is discussed with actors involved in the RDP in the case study region</li> </ul>

*Delineation of the case study area*

A first step in conducting case studies is to select the unit of analysis (i.e. the case). Given the programmatic approach of the EU rural development policy 2007-2013, in which the various rural policy measures are territorially integrated, the focus in the mixed case study approach of the evaluation of EU rural development policy is on a territorial unit. This unit could reflect the programme area, i.e. the region or Member State for which a Rural Development Programme is defined. In the ideal situation, the case study area reflects a homogenous territorial unit, in which the density of interactions among internal actors exceeds the density of interactions between internal and external actors. In the case of evaluation of rural development policy, homogeneity could be related to rural development characteristics, in particular in the agricultural, ecological and socio-economic field. The difficulty, however, is that units which are homogeneous in a socio-economic or agricultural sense, are not necessarily homoge-

neous in an ecological sense. If a Member State, for which the RDP is defined at national level, is not homogenous in its rural development characteristics, designating case study units at NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 regions might be an interesting option. However, in such cases the national RDP has to be suitable for a regional breakdown. In this way, the mixed case study approach offers the flexibility to choose a territorial unit for a case study that fits into country-specific conditions.

*Generalisation of the findings of the case study regions not aimed at*

A common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalisation (Yin, 1994; Hutjes and Van Buuren, 1996). In this case study approach of the evaluation of EU rural development policy, we do not aim at any analytical or statistical generalisation. So we are not interested in claiming analytical generalisation by arguing that if a theory is replicated in two cases, the theory applies to a larger number of cases with similar characteristics. Neither are we interested in statistical generalisation about the whole population on the base of empirical findings in a sample of case studies. On the contrary, we are simply concerned with the analysis of the achievement of the objectives of rural development policy and identifying factors that encourage or hinder the implementation of rural development policy in the case region. By doing so, we contribute to the principal aims of evaluations, which may be characterised as supporting decision-making, improving the implementation of policy measures, assisting in resource allocation and enhancing accountability and transparency of public policies (OECD, 1999; EC, 2006).

This focus on case study regions instead of generalisation also implies that if the case study approach should be applied in several or all EU Member States, the results of all case studies provide no basis for generalisation at the EU level. Given the emphasis of the EU Commission on the production of programme impact indicators at Member State and EU level, which can be used for showing the performance of EU Rural Development Policy at EU level and for safeguarding its budget in budget negotiations, this lack of generalisation might be regarded as a serious drawback of the mixed case study approach. Although the limited set of impact indicators at EU level as proposed by the CMEF may serve the needs of hurrying policymakers, such indicators embody an illusion. Single indicators can be useful for the evaluation of simple measures with a clear rationale; however, they are not suitable for wide programmes and policies with many objectives, which work in a great variety of contexts (Roy and Millot, 2011). Moreover, at regional and national level evaluators are allowed to use different methods for the calculation of impact indicators (Lukesch and



Schuh, 2010). The aggregation of these indicators to EU level implies that the specific regional or national context, which gives rise to the interpretation of the indicator, will be lost.

## 4 Testing of the mixed case study approach in the Dutch province of Zeeland

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### *Baseline situation in Zeeland*

The NUTS2 region Zeeland is located in the south-western part of the Netherlands and consists of a number of isles and a peninsula. Zeeland is predominantly rural: its population density of 213 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> is well below the national average of 485 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. Since 2000, employment in Zeeland has declined a little, while the Netherlands as a whole experiences a small employment growth. Zeeland is an attractive place for beach recreation, water sport, hiking and biking. About 60% of the farms in Zeeland are involved in arable crops, 10% in fruit production, and 5% in horticulture. These farming types play a main role in the appearance of the landscape. Over 20% of the farms are engaged in multifunctionality, mainly in the area of tourism, the selling of agricultural products and agricultural nature management.

### *Objectives of the RDP in Zeeland*

The Dutch government has chosen to design one RDP 2007-2013 for the whole country without distinguishing separate objectives for the different provinces in the country. Hence the RDP objectives for Zeeland are the same as the national objectives: to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and to improve the vitality and sustainability of the agricultural sector (LNV, 2010). Within the Dutch RDP, there is a division of responsibilities between the national government and the provinces, in which the national government is by and large responsible for axes 1 and 2 and the province for axes 3 and 4. The province has integrated measures 125 and 216 and axes 3 and 4 with other national rural development policies into a 'Multiannual programme for the rural area' (Provincie Zeeland, 2006). This programme describes the goals of the rural development policies in Zeeland, which are complementary to the national objectives for rural development in the RDP. According to this programme, the rural development objectives for Zeeland for the period 2007-2013 are: (1) improving the socio-cultural dynamics (involvement of the citizens); (2) facilitating vital economic dynamics (striking the right balance between a declining agricultural sector and maintaining the quality of the rural area); and (3) maintaining and strengthening the quali-

ty of the natural environment of Zeeland. The majority of rural development measures in this programme for Zeeland is not cofinanced by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the programme also encompasses measures related to water and soil management, two areas that are not entirely within the scope of the EU rural development measures. Disentangling the objectives of the national RDP and the multiannual programme in Zeeland and the contribution of the different measures to these objectives is hardly possible.

*Progress made in the absorption of the EAFRD budget, 2007-2009*

Relating EAFRD expenditure per measure in the period 2007-2009 to the total EAFRD budget available in Zeeland in the period 2007-2013 gives an impression of the progress made in the absorption of the EAFRD budget (Table 4.1). Due to lack of data on the total EAFRD budget for most of the measures of axes 1 and 2, no statements can be made about the progress of these measures. For the remaining measures, it appears that in the years 2007-2009 the uptake of the EAFRD budget was rather moderate for measures 125, 214, 311, 312 and 41, while it was more substantial for measures 313, 321, 322 and 323. This last group of measures focuses on tourism activities, basic services, village renewal and rural heritage, measures which fit rather well into the rural development needs in Zeeland. For a few measures (216, 341, 421 and 431), no budget has been spent in the years 2007-2009. In the interpretation of the uptake of the budget, it should be taken into account that the province could not start with selecting projects for funding on 1 January 2007, but had to wait on approval by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture till March 2008. Despite this initial delay, much progress has been made since. In the autumn of 2010, the province had to close the call for tenders for RDP projects as they had received so many applications for EAFRD funding, that the total EAFRD budget for the whole programming period can easily be spent.

*Assessment of the qualitative contribution of the RDP to the impact indicators*

No quantitative target values for the programme impact indicators for Zeeland have been specified. As a consequence, the achievement of the target values of these indicators cannot be evaluated in quantitative terms. Hence we try to give an impression of the qualitative contribution of the individual RDP measures to the programme impact indicators in the period 2007-2009, based on information collected in the interviews with representatives of the different interest groups, who are involved in the EU Rural Development Policy in Zeeland, such

**Table 4.1 Absorption of the EAFRD budget in Zeeland (2007-2009)**

<b>Measure</b>		<b>Realisation 2007-2009 (euro)</b>	<b>As % of total budget 2007-2013</b>
111	Vocational training and information actions	46,954	n/a
114	Use of advisory services	n/a	n/a
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	293,810	n/a
124	Cooperation for development of new products	n/a	n/a
125	Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry	480,351	10
132	Participation of farmers in food quality schemes	55,788	n/a
212	Payments to farmers in other areas with handicaps	25,380	n/a
214	Agri-environment payments	997,000	28
216	Non-productive investments	0	0
221	First afforestation of agricultural land	n/a	n/a
311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	83,998	12
312	Business creation and development	94,156	19
313	Encouragement of tourism activities	1378,228	39
321	Basic services for the economy and rural population	1172,521	60
322	Village renewal and development	296,690	33
323	Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage	1960,023	47
341	Skills acquisition, animation and implementation of local development strategies	0	0
41	Implementing local development strategies	505,123	13
421	Implementing cooperation projects	0	0
431	Running the local action group	0	0

Source: National Service for the Implementation of Regulations and Government Service for Land and Water Management in the Netherlands; adaptation LEI.

as policymakers of the Province of Zeeland and advisers of the farmers' organisation and accountant services.

*Impact of the RDP on regional economic development in Zeeland*

Most interviewees believed the rural development projects were helpful in maintaining the current economic growth. The many signs found in the province which read 'This project has been realised by EU funds', were interpreted as evidence that the projects undertaken in the scope of the RDP stimulate economic activity. According to the interviewees, especially the increasing number of tour-

ists - attracted by all kinds of supported tourist services - enhance economic growth. However, the exact contribution of the RDP projects is difficult to estimate, as economic growth in Zeeland is largely determined by macro-economic factors rather than by the moderate RDP funds.

*Impact of the RDP on the development of the agricultural sector in Zeeland*

As most of the measures of axes 1 and 2 are implemented by the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations (DR) without provincial intervention, the interviewed persons had no information about the contribution of these measures to the development of the agricultural sector. However, it is supposed that agri-environmental measures might act as a useful income source for a number of farmers. In addition, the reconstruction of dams on Duiveland has improved the accessibility of farms and farm land for a number of agricultural holdings in the province.

*Impact of the RDP on the development of employment*

Although quantitative data are lacking, the interviewees indicated that the projects conducted in the scope of the various RDP measures positively affect employment in various ways. Some measures create direct employment or maintain present employment opportunities, such as diversification into non-agricultural activities or the construction of multifunctional centres, which usually require a manager for running the centre (Table 4.2). Projects in the scope of other measures, such as the construction of hiking and biking roads and the restoration of farms yards/barns create temporary employment during the construction phase. These projects boost the attractiveness of the province for tourists. Their increasing number may induce indirect employment.

*Impact of the RDP on the development of diversification of economic activities*

In the years 2007-2009 only one project, called 'Recreatie op maat met trekpaarden' has been carried out in the scope of measure 311. This project contributes to diversification of economic activities on farms, and fits in a long tradition of tourism on farms in Zeeland. It appears that the RDP is not used for new types of diversification on farms, but merely contributes to enhancing already existing types of diversification.

*Impact of the RDP on the environment and the countryside*

According to the interviewed persons, the landscape has become more attractive due to the creation of arable strips, flower strips and hedge rows under the terms of the agri-environmental measure (214), the construction of tourism

<b>Table 4.2</b>		<b>RDP measures contributing to employment growth in Zeeland (2007-2009)</b>	
<b>Impact on employment</b>	<b>RDP measure</b>		
1. Maintenance of jobs or creation of new jobs	311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	
	312	Business creation and development	
	321	Basic services for the economy and rural population	
2. Creation of indirect employment	313	Encouragement of tourism activities	
	323	Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage	
	413	Implementing local development strategies: quality of life	
3. Creation of employment during construction phase	312	Business creation and development	
	313	Encouragement of tourism activities	
	321	Basic services for the economy and rural population	
	322	Village renewal and development	
	323	Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage	
	413	Implementing local development strategies: quality of life	

infrastructure under the terms of measure (313) on the encouragement of tourist activities, and the upgrading of farms yards, barns and other rural heritage under the terms of measure (323). Measures to enhance the landscape fit into the tourist tradition of Zeeland: tourist entrepreneurs inside and outside the agricultural sector are keen to participate in such measures as it might make their business more attractive to tourists, which may result in more income.

#### *Impact of the RDP on the quality of life*

The interviewed persons also indicated that quality of life has been positively affected by the RDP, especially by measures (321) and (322). Due to multifunctional centres, a bundle of basic services can be supplied to the local actors, which often means an upturn in a long-lasting decline in their supply. In addition, such centres act as a kind of market place, where local actors meet each other, which attracts other activities as well and at which new ideas for cooperation may arise. The measure of village renewal makes villages a more attractive place to live in, and also implies close cooperation between local actors as they are often involved in projects in village renewal. It has to be emphasised that improving the quality of life responds to one of the rural development needs in Zeeland.

### *Interaction of the RDP with other EU policies*

There is hardly any interaction between the RDP and other EU policies. Whenever possible, EAFRD funding is combined with national policies. Hence many rural development projects are supported by EAFRD funds, national cofinancing and other national funds from, for instance, water boards.

### *Aiming at visibility of supported projects*

It seems that the absence of data on impact indicators is not experienced as problematic. It could be argued that the measurement of impact indicators in quantitative terms is difficult, since some impacts are only temporary, indirect or only visible in the long run. However, the Province of Zeeland is very keen on selecting those projects for funding, which are visible to the public, such as multifunctional centres, hiking roads, restored farm yards, and village renewal. By means of visibility, the impact of the project can be demonstrated in qualitative terms: 'Zeeland has become more beautiful due to the RDP projects' as one of the interviewees indicated.

### *Axis 3 as the core of the RDP in Zeeland*

Axis 3 appears to form the core of the RDP in Zeeland. The interviewed persons enthusiastically told about the projects realised in the scope of this axis, the cooperation among local actors in the design and realisation phase of projects, the cooperation of farmers in the restoration of farm yards and barns, the easy communication with the provincial civil servants and other actors involved in the province, the role of the province in bundling small projects together, and the direct and visible impact of the projects on the attractiveness of the landscape and the viability of the countryside. On the one hand, the popularity of axis 3 might have some negative reasons: the measures in axes 1 and 2 are largely out of the scope of the province, whereas the Local Action Groups (LAGs) in axis 4 do not participate in bottom-up processes of rural development as outlined in the LEADER approach; their role is restricted to act as a participant in the selection process of submitted projects for funding under axis 3. This is also reflected in the uptake of measures in axis 4: the only measure that has been used so far was measure (413), which was spent on projects which could have been submitted in measure (313) or (323) as well. On the other hand, the popularity of axis 3 can be explained in a more positive way because it responds to a number of widely experienced rural development needs in Zeeland: its long tourist tradition results in a consciousness among local actors that tourist infrastructure and landscape are in permanent need of upgrading

and renewal, whereas the measures on basic services (321) and village renewal (322) are welcomed as responses to the erosion of the supply of basic services and the deteriorating quality of life in the rural parts of the province.

#### *Factors influencing the implementation of the RDP in Zeeland*

The following factors encourage the implementation of the RDP in Zeeland:

1. The active attitude of the civil servants of the Province of Zeeland in attracting, linking and promoting projects of the RDP;
2. The measures of axis 3 fit well into the rural development needs of Zeeland;
3. The presence of active civil servants seems to be a crucial factor for the participation of municipalities in the RDP: the more active civil servants in a municipality, the more it participates in RDP projects.
4. The integration of the RDP in other national rural policies, such as ILG.

Factors hampering the implementation of the RDP:

1. The impression arises that there are two separate RDPs in Zeeland: one RDP consisting of axes 1 and 2 (exclusive measures 125 and 216) implemented by the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations, and another RDP consisting of axes 3 and 4 plus measures (125) and (216) implemented by the Province of Zeeland. Although the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations put forward that they widely communicate on the RDP measures, actors in Zeeland experience the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations as a national oriented and inaccessible body. This results in a weak communication between them and the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations. Hence, the projects of the different parts are not integrated with each other, which implies that a programmatic approach of the RDP is out of the question;
2. Individual farmers in particular, who want to participate in axis 1, suffer from the big distance with the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations. They experience difficulties in finding information about how and when to apply for axis 1 support. Moreover, some measures such as 121, are less suitable for the arable oriented agricultural sector in Zeeland;
3. The administrative burden of projects is large due to EU requirements. Both at the national/provincial level, at which projects have to be selected and subjected to administrative control, and at the level of the applicant, who has to complete many forms before, during and after the project, this administrative burden is experienced as quite extensive and time consuming. As a result, small projects are often not selected for EAFRD funding by the province; or the province bundles small projects into a bigger project so control



costs are charged for only one project, whereas applicants may abandon the submission of projects for EAFRD funding;

4. The requirement of 50% national cofinancing for each project hampers the realisation of projects, which fit into the objectives of the RDP, but for which it is difficult to find national cofinancing. Although it seems theoretically possible to avoid the requirement of 50% national cofinancing, this option collides with practical requirements;
5. Although the call for projects for measures in axes 3 and 4 was permanently open until the autumn of 2010, projects are not assessed at a continuous basis, but at several times a year, varying per measure. Especially, for those measures, for which applications are only assessed twice a year (at June 15 and December 1) this is experienced as a barrier.

#### *EAFRD funding usually no decisive factor for conducting a project*

Actors in Zeeland participate in rural development measures as it brings in financial means. Moreover, banks are more eager to finance a project once EAFRD funding has been granted. Often EAFRD funding is one among various financial sources used for financing projects, especially in axis 3. According to the interviewees, most of the supported projects would also have been conducted without EAFRD funding, but likely in a slower pace, in a more sober way or at a smaller scale. However, this does not apply to the measures on agri-environmental payments (214), on encouragement of tourism activities (313), and on basic services (321). Participation in measure (214) is dependent on EAFRD support: agricultural nature management results in income loss and could raise extra costs, which have to be compensated. With regard to measures (313) and (321), some of the submitted projects would not have been carried out without EAFRD support.

#### *Recommendations*

Recommendations to improve the implementation of the RDP in Zeeland:

1. The rather complicated division of tasks between the national government and the province in defining objectives of the policy and implementing the policy hampers a programmatic approach of the RDP. Shifting all tasks to one government level could be a solution.
2. The inaccessibility of the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations, which individual farmers experience with regard to the implementation of most of the measures of axis 1 provoked the wish to involve the province in the communication about how and when to apply for support, for example, by a provincial ticket shop.

3. The requirement of 50% national cofinancing for each project is not always feasible. Revising cofinancing criteria and permitting the selection of projects with EAFRD and private funding only could be an option.
4. The participation in measures of axis 1 is discouraged because the calls for tender are only periodically opened for six weeks at unknown times. Participation and preparation of projects would be enforced if these calls for tender were announced in advance. Although the call for tenders for projects in axes 3 and 4 was permanently open until the autumn of 2010, projects are only assessed at several times a year. Assessing these projects on a more regular basis would be helpful.
5. In the calls for tender for axis 1, the number of the RDP measure to which the call refers, is not always mentioned. For those wishing to apply to the tender, it is sometimes difficult to guess to which measure the tender refers. This can easily be solved by mentioning the number of the RDP measure in the tender.
6. Due to EU and national requirements, the administrative burden of projects is quite extensive and time consuming. It could be considered to reduce this administrative burden.
7. The restriction of the support for young farmers in the scope of measure (121) to farmers below the age of 40 can act as a handicap for financial reasons. To improve the uptake, one could skip the maximum age and to prolong the use of this measure to a period of, for example, seven years after the moment the farm has been taken over.

## 5 Testing of the mixed case study approach in the Dutch province of Gelderland.

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### *Baseline situation in Gelderland*

Gelderland is a NUTS2 region in the central eastern part of the Netherlands. It is a popular region for tourism: its relatively large forest areas attract many bikers and hikers. Gelderland's capital city Arnhem is a main transport hub with Germany. The population in Gelderland amounted to about 2 million in 2009. Within the Netherlands, Gelderland is considered as an urbanised region: its population density of 398 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> is slightly below the national population density. During the last decades, Gelderland experienced a moderate employment growth, which lagged a little behind the growth rate in the Netherlands as a whole. In 2009, there were over 12,000 farms in Gelderland (Table 3.9). During the last decade, the decrease in the number of farms amounted to almost 3% p.a., which was similar to the national average, and to that in the 1990s. Nearly half of the farms in Gelderland are involved in grazing and fattening livestock. About 13% of the farms in Gelderland are engaged in other gainful activities at the farm, such as agricultural land management, selling and tourism.

### *Objectives of the RDP in Gelderland*

The Dutch government has chosen to design one RDP 2007-2013 for the whole country without distinguishing separate objectives for the different provinces in the country. Hence the RDP objectives for Gelderland are the same as the national objectives: to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and to improve the vitality and sustainability of the agricultural sector (LNV, 2010). Within the Dutch RDP, there is a division of responsibilities between the national government and the provinces, in which the national government is by and large responsible for axes 1 and 2 and the province for axes 3 and 4. The province has integrated measures 125 and 216 and axes 3 and 4 with other national rural development policies into a 'Multiannual programme for a vital Gelderland (PMJP)' (Provincie Gelderland, 2006). This programme describes the goals of the rural development policies in Gelderland, which are complementary to the national objectives for rural development in the RDP. According to this program, the rural development objectives for Gelderland for the period 2007-2013 are:

- a. to improve the quality of the surroundings for nature, recreation and landscape;
- b. to improve the quality of the environment.

These objectives address the rural needs in Gelderland, which refer to the quality of the environment, which suffers among other things from the relatively large number of intensive livestock farms, and to the upgrading of the tourist infrastructure in order to remain attractive for tourists.

#### *Selection of RDP measures from the RDP menu*

In Gelderland, only 13 RDP measures have been selected from the RDP menu. The majority of these measures refer to axes 1 and 2; in axis 3 measures 311 (diversification into non-agricultural activities) and 313 (encouragement of tourist activities) have been selected and in axis 4 measures 41 (implementing local development strategies) and 421 (implementing cooperation projects).

#### *Progress made in the absorption of the EAFRD budget, 2007-2009*

Relating EAFRD expenditure per measure in the period 2007-2009 to the total EAFRD budget available in Gelderland in the period 2007-2013 gives an impression of the progress made in the absorption of the EAFRD budget (Table 5.1). Due to lack of data on the total EAFRD budget for most of the measures of axes 1 and 2, no statements can be made about the progress of these measures. For the remaining measures, it appears that in the years 2007-2009 the uptake of the EAFRD budget was moderate for measures 125, 311 and 41 (about 20-30%), while it was more substantial for measure 313 (over 90%). Measure 313 focuses on the encouragement of tourist activities, which fits well into the rural development needs of Gelderland. For two measures (216 and 421), no budget has been spent in the years 2007-2009. It should be noted that although only one-fifth of the budget of measure 125 has been spent in 2007-2009, already half of the target value for the number of ha with improved agricultural structure has been achieved. In the interpretation of the uptake of the budget, it should be taken into account that the province could not start with selecting projects for funding at January 1, 2007, but had to wait on approval by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in the spring of 2008. Despite this initial delay, much progress has been made since. Many project proposals have been submitted. Half of the budget of measure 311 has been shifted to the budget of measure 313, which makes it easier to absorb the

**Table 5.1 Absorption of the EAFRD budget in Gelderland (2007-2009)**

<b>Measure</b>		<b>Realisation 2007-2009 (euro)</b>	<b>As % of total budget 2007-2013</b>
111	Vocational training and information actions	1,587,285	n/a
114	Use of advisory services	n/a	n/a
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	1,787,012	n/a
124	Cooperation for development of new products	n/a	n/a
125	Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry	1,767,952	21
132	Participation of farmers in food quality schemes	342,473	n/a
212	Payments to farmers in other areas with handicaps	649,305	n/a
214	Agri-environment payments	6,253,000	n/a
216	Non-productive investments	0	0
221	First afforestation of agricultural land	n/a	n/a
311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	771,554	19
313	Encouragement of tourist activities	7,565,923	94
41	Implementing local development strategies	1,090,645	31
421	Implementing cooperation projects	0	0

Source: National Payment Service and Government Service for Land and Water Management in the Netherlands; adaptation LEI.

remaining budget for measure 311 and which reliefs the congestion of applications for measure 313.

*Assessment of the qualitative contribution of the RDP to the impact indicators*

No quantitative target values for the programme impact indicators for Gelderland have been specified. As a consequence, the achievement of the target values of these indicators cannot be evaluated in quantitative terms. Hence we try to give an impression of the qualitative contribution of the individual RDP measures to the programme impact indicators in the period 2007-2009, based on information collected in the interviews with representatives of the different interest groups, who are involved in the EU Rural Development Policy in Gelderland, such as policymakers of the Province of Gelderland and advisers of the farmers' organisation, accountant services and tourist organisations.

#### *Impact of the RDP on regional economic development in Gelderland*

Most interviewees were of the opinion that the improvements in recreational infrastructure coupled with diversification at farms contributed to economic growth. Such a combination attracts tourists, as it is attractive to go from one place to another, with opportunities on the way for pleasure and spending the night. In this case, economic growth is induced by higher tourist spending in Gelderland. Re-allotment of parcels is considered by the interviewees as a means to prevent a further decline of economic growth at farms. However, the exact contribution of the RDP projects is difficult to estimate, as economic growth in Gelderland is largely determined by macro-economic factors rather than by the moderate RDP funds.

#### *Impact of the RDP on the development of the agricultural sector in Gelderland*

As most of the measures of axes 1 and 2 are implemented by the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations (DR) without provincial intervention, the interviewed persons had no information about the contribution of these measures to the development of the agricultural sector. However, it was put forward that the air washers at the intensive livestock farms contributed to sustainable production and that other investments in the scope of measure 121 increase the dynamics in the agricultural sector. Re-allotment of parcels under measure 125 is thought to improve the agricultural structures.

#### *Impact of the RDP on the development of employment*

Although quantitative data are lacking, the interviewees indicated that especially the projects conducted in the scope of the two measures in axis 3 affect employment in various ways. Measure 311 on diversification into non-agricultural activities on farms maintained present employment opportunities or might have even resulted in employment creation. Measure 313 on encouragement of tourism activities mainly contributed to the creation of employment during the construction phase. In addition, the projects under these measures boost the attractiveness of the province for tourists. The increasing number of tourists may induce indirect employment.

#### *Impact of the RDP on the development of diversification of economic activities*

The province of Gelderland has decided to target the financial means in axis 3 on two measures: measure 311 on diversification into non-agricultural activities on farms and measure 313 on encouragement of tourism activities. The interviewees indicated that diversification of economic activities on farms has been strengthened by the RDP, especially with regard to tourism on farms. They put

forward that this diversification mainly maintains employment opportunities on farms and that by doing so, the outflow of labour from the agricultural sector can be slowed down to some extent. In addition, the diversification also helps to improve the image of the agricultural sector, as city-dwellers visit farms and adopt their view on the sector.

#### *Impact of the RDP on the environment and the countryside*

As a result of the implementation of the agri-environmental measures at national level, the interviewed persons hardly had any information on their impact in Gelderland. On the other hand, according to the interviewees the air washers on intensive livestock farms supported under measure 121 contributed to a cleaner air. This measure addresses one of the key rural development problems in Gelderland: the deterioration of the environment by intensive livestock farms.

#### *Impact of the RDP on the quality of life*

The interviewed persons also indicated that quality of life has been positively affected by the RDP in various ways: the air washers contributed to a cleaner air, the diversification on farms provides new incentives for rural areas, and the attractiveness of rural areas for both tourists and local actors is increased by biking and hiking roads.

#### *Interaction of the RDP with other EU policies*

There is hardly any interaction between the RDP and other EU policies. Whenever possible, EAFRD funding is combined with national policies. Hence many rural development projects are supported by EAFRD funds, national cofinancing and other national funds from, for instance, water boards.

#### *Factors influencing the implementation of the RDP in Gelderland*

The following factors encourage the implementation of the RDP in Gelderland:

1. The RDP provides financial funds for some widely felt rural development needs: the need to improve the quality of the environment, which suffers among other things from the relatively large number of intensive livestock farms, and the need to upgrade the tourist infrastructure in order to remain attractive for tourists. Measure 121 is especially used for financial support for investments in air washers in intensive livestock stables, which farmers have to install anyhow due to environmental legislation. Measures in axis 3 are used for the upgrading of the tourist infrastructure. Under measure 313 many biking and hiking roads are constructed, which would not have been the case without financial support.

2. RDP measures that are already being implemented for a longer time are well-known to actors. This encourages the uptake. For example, measure 125 on improving and developing infrastructure can be used for the re-allotment of parcels. The instrument of re-allotment of parcels has been applied for many years in the Netherlands and the instrument is therefore well-known. Since 2007 parcel re-allotment is part of the Rural Development Programme; before it was part of the national land consolidation act.

Factors hampering the implementation of the RDP in Gelderland:

1. The rather complex division of responsibilities between the national government, the province, the National Service for the Implementation of Regulations (DR), and the Government Service for Land and Water Management (DLG) within the RDP reduces its decisiveness, as the national government has to approve a number of the decisions of the other involved bodies. This can be very time-consuming, which delays the implementation process.
2. The impression arises that there is a lack of enthusiasm on the RDP among policy makers and local actors in Gelderland. This is related to the fact that the RDP is considered as a financing instrument with funds for several measures instead of a programmatic approach to rural development in which local actors are mobilised.
3. The total EAFRD budget for the RDP 2007-2013 in Gelderland of 30 million euro is small compared to the national and provincial funds for rural development policy.
4. The administrative burden of projects, especially once a project has been selected for funding, is quite extensive and time consuming. This burden is a reason why actors do not submit projects for EAFRD funding.

*EAFRD funding usually no decisive factor for conducting a project*

Actors in Gelderland participate in rural development measures as it brings in financial means. Moreover, banks are more eager to finance a project once EAFRD funding has been granted. Whether projects would also have been conducted without EAFRD support depends - according to the interviewees - on the type of the project and the financial situation of the applicant. It is likely that projects under measure 125 (infrastructure related to agriculture), the construction and maintenance of biking and hiking paths under measure 313 (encouragement of tourism activities) and the projects under measure 41 (implementing local development strategies) would not have been undertaken without EAFRD support. Participation in measure 214 (agri-environment payments) is also dependent on EAFRD support: agricultural nature management results in income



loss and could raise extra costs, which have to be compensated. On the other hand, most of the supported projects under measure 121 (modernisation of agricultural holdings) and measure 311 (diversification into non-agricultural activities) would also have been conducted without EAFRD funding, possibly at a slower pace, in a more sober way or at a smaller scale.

### *Recommendations*

Recommendations to improve the implementation of the RDP in Gelderland:

1. The emphasis on quantitative result and impact indicators in the monitoring and evaluating process, which are difficult to collect and to interpret, caused the interviewees to use another way to show the impact of the RDP measures. Currently, DLG is working on a website at which pictures are presented of completed projects. This provides evidence of the impact of the RDP measures which is more easy to understand than the prescribed CMEF indicators. Exploring whether the quantitative indicators could be substituted by a website with pictures of completed projects is recommended.
2. The three fixed dates (15 January, 15 May and 15 September) at which progress reports have to be submitted at DLG result in a peak in the work load at DLG and - in case the applicant receives support for several projects - for the applicant as well. Moreover, requests for payments to DLG, which applicants tend to submit together with the progress report, cannot quickly be dealt with as DLG is involved in checking the progress reports. Submitting progress reports at certain intervals after the date of approval of the project is recommended. This spreads the workload of submitting and checking progress reports over the whole year.
3. Currently, neither the Province of Gelderland nor DLG can act as an applicant for support from the RDP measures in axis 1. If, for example, the Province of Gelderland wants to conduct a project on re-allotment of parcels under measure 125, they have to ask a third party to act as a submitter of the project. Extending the list of potential applicants in axis 1 to the Province of Gelderland as well might be a solution to this.
4. In supported projects, only the cost price of labour can be reimbursed. This might be sufficient for entrepreneurs, but if the applicant is a foundation reimbursing the cost price implies that a loss arises as general costs are not covered. Reimbursing both the cost price of labour and the general costs in supported projects could offer a solution.
5. Currently, both the Province of Gelderland, DLG and DR are involved in the granting of support to applicants. This gives rise to the impression that too many parties are involved in this activity. To achieve more efficiency, it is

suggested that the Province of Gelderland drops this activity and concentrates itself on the policy design and the fixing of budgets for each measure, while DLG and DR focus on the granting of support to applicants.

6. The administrative burden is high, both for applicants and the payment services DR and DLG. It could be considered to reduce this administrative burden.

## 6 Findings on the use of the mixed case study approach

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From the testing of the mixed case study approach in the NUTS2 regions Zeeland and Gelderland (Terluin and Berkhout, 2011a and 2011b) it appeared that:

- Phases 1 and 3 provide useful insights into the context situation of the case study region and processes within the region, such as the cooperation of the actors, the attitude towards the RDP and the difficulties experienced;
- In phase 3 we conducted six in-depth interviews of about 1,5 hours with actors involved in the EU rural development policy in the region, representing different interest groups. We tried to select actors for the interviews who had a broad overview of the RDP. Such a small number of interviews already yielded sufficient insight in the performance of the RDP in the region;
- For the workshop in phase 3, we invited both the interviewed persons and other actors involved in the EU rural development policy in the case study region. It appeared that during the workshop results were fine-tuned, useful comments were given and unsettled questions were solved.
- The analysis in phase 2 is hampered by three handicaps:
  - a. Lack of target values for the input and output indicators at regional level for measures in axes 1 and 2 (with the exception of measure 125 and 216). This is due to the fairly complex way the Dutch RDP has been organised and implemented, and the division of responsibilities between the national government and the provinces. As a result, the progress of most of the RDP measures in axes 1 and 2 could not be calculated at the regional level.
  - b. Lack of data for the measure impact indicators at measure level. These indicators are not available in an existing monitoring database and could only be collected directly from the participants by the evaluator.
  - c. Lack of data for the programme impact indicators at regional level. These indicators are not available and could only be 'guesstimated' by the evaluator employing statistical techniques, which are often hampered by lack of reliable data and sufficient observations.
- Comparing the testing results in Zeeland and Gelderland with the mid term evaluation of the RDP in the Netherlands according to the CMEF (Ecorys, 2010), it appears that the alternative evaluation in Zeeland and Gelderland reports by and large the same progress in the realisation of the input and

output indicators, but that the alternative evaluation also tries to explain this progress in relation to the regional context and to particular projects realised. Moreover, the alternative evaluation includes a qualitative assessment of the achievement of the impact of the RDP, which is lacking in the evaluation of the RDP in the Netherlands according to the CMEF. Apart from data on CMEF input and output indicators, an internet survey among RDP participants and 20 interviews with key persons were used to collect information for the evaluation of the RDP in the Netherlands.

These testing results give rise to some considerations with regard to the analysis in phase 2:

1. The mixed case study approach evaluates the EU rural development policy in a case study region. For a proper evaluation, it assumes that target values for input and output indicators are defined for the case study region to explore the progress of each RDP measure. The problem of lacking data for some target values in the Netherlands has a country-specific origin and might not be apparent in other Member States. Moreover, the problem can be overcome if policymakers would be prepared to define target values at regional level.
2. The lack of data for the measure impact indicators at measure level could be solved by collecting these data; however, this is time-consuming. Moreover, programme indicators at regional level could be estimated, involving also considerable efforts. It is questionable whether such efforts are worthwhile, especially if a reliable intervention logic of the policy measures has been established before implementing the policy. In addition, qualitative information about the impact of the RDP measures can be required in the in-depth interviews. Our experience was that the stories on what, why and how it happened, as outlined in the interviews, were much more valuable than quantified indicators, as it provided useful insights into processes within the region and revealed which adaptations in the policy would be needed.

## 7 Recommendations on the use of the mixed case study approach

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The testing of the mixed case study approach in the mid-term evaluation of the EU rural development policy 2007-2009 in two case study regions in the Netherlands provided promising results. Concerning the CMEF, the mixed case study approach is based on a limited number of indicators and provided not only answers on the question what has happened, but also why and how it has happened. Given these findings, we recommend to consider using the mixed case study approach in the evaluation of the EU rural development policy as an alternative to the CMEF.

The testing of the mixed case study approach in the two case study regions in the Netherlands gave also rise to some slight adaptations of the method: we propose to skip the collection of the measure impact and programme impact indicators as its estimation involves considerable efforts and often suffers from lack of reliable data and sufficient observations. Moreover, by means of in-depth interviews valuable qualitative information on the impact of the RDP in the case study region is collected.

Our suggestion implies that monitoring and evaluation of EU rural development policy would be comprised of the following steps:

1. monitoring the continuous progress of input and output indicators in all EU regions;
2. evaluating whether the objectives of the rural development policy have been achieved in a few case study regions in each Member State. In the case study analysis, three steps are conducted:
  - a. analysis of secondary data providing a contextual framework;
  - b. analysis of the progress of the input and output indicators of each RDP measure;
  - c. in-depth interviews with actors of different interest groups in order to explore, what, how and why it has happened.

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