



The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Technical Assistance measure of the IPARD Programme 2021-2027



Ex-post evaluation of the IPARD Programme 2014-2020 Republic of North Macedonia (IPARDMA/06/20204)

PRESENTATION OF THE FINAL REPORT



Skopje, December 10th, 2025

Content

- I. Introduction
- II. Methodological approach
- III. Results / Findings
- IV. Conclusions and Recommendations



INTRODUCTION

The evaluation team

Morten Kvistgaard (DK)

Aleksandra Martinovska-Stojcheska

Ana Kotevska

Ana Simonovska

Emelj Tuna

Vasko Hadzievski

Maja Hranilovic, Ecorys Hrvatska d.o.o

Vedrana Knezevic, Ecorys Hrvatska d.o.o

The IPARD II Programme objectives

1. Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture and primary food-processing, while progressively aligning with the Union standards
2. Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry
3. Promoting balanced territorial development in rural areas
4. Transfer of knowledge
5. Strengthening public administrative capacity in implementation of rural development programmes

IPARD II programme total investments

Measure	EU support, accomplished, EUR	National support, accomplished, EUR	Private co-funding, accomplished, EUR	Total expenditures, accomplished, EUR
M1	17,217,775	5,737,823	20,123,212	43,078,810
M3	22,421,706	7,508,933	29,930,639	59,861,278
M7	11,103,752	3,052,261	10,970,881	25,126,894
M9	279,302	49,288	0	328,590
Total	51,022,535	16,348,305	61,024,732	128,395,572

What we have



What we want





A lot of wine
for export



Less
is
more
for
the
local
market





**Wood processing
for export**



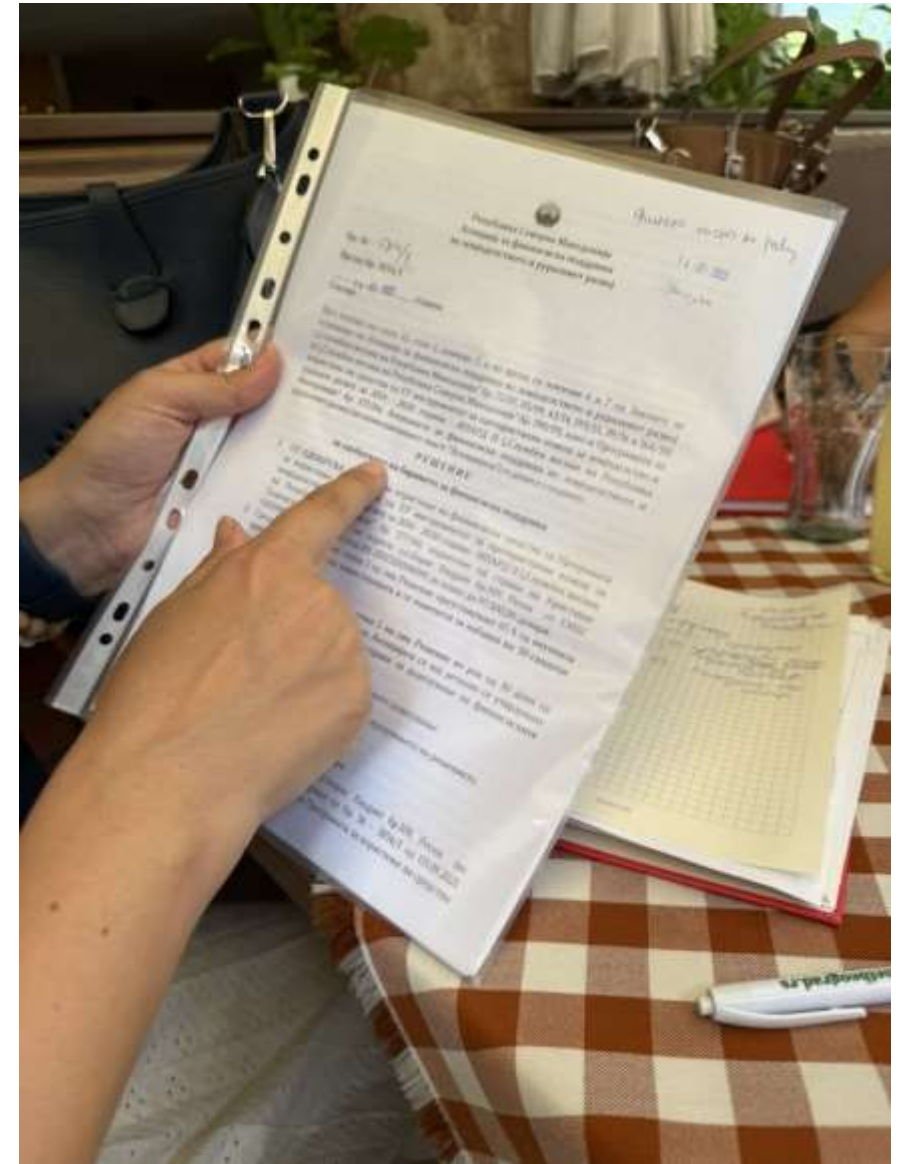
**Meat processing
for the national market**





Honey
and a
sustainable
holistic living

Let's see,
if we get
there
?!



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Mix-method approach

Purpose

- to **assess the performance** of the IPARD II Programme against its **stated objectives**, and
- to generate **evidence-based conclusions** and **recommendations** for the design and implementation of future rural development policies and instruments.

Evaluation design

structured around the **intervention logic of the IPARD II Programme** and the evaluation matrix (evaluation question, judgment criteria, indicators)

<i>Desk research</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documents review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder interviews• In-depth interviews of applicants (cases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beneficiary survey• Control survey

Documents review

Provided by the IPARD Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency:

- IPARD II Programme & its subsequent modifications
- Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs)
- monitoring data & performance indicators
- previous evaluations & audit reports

+ other relevant national & EU policy documents

Stakeholder interviews

Semi-structured interview - around key themes:

- **Relevance**
- **Coherence** (internal and external)
- **Effectiveness**
- **Sustainability and environ. impact**
- **Socio-economic impact**
- **Efficiency** of programme administration

Total of **10 stakeholder interviews** (8 face-to-face in May 2025, and 2 via phone in October 2025).

Plus, **6 interviews** with representatives of key IPARD related institutions as part of the inception phase

In-depth interviews (cases)

12 in-depth face-to-face interviews (9 beneficiaries and 3 rejected applicants)

- selected from the population of surveyed beneficiaries,
- mix of farm modernization, processing, and diversification projects,
- in diverse regions (Skopje, Polog, Southeast, and Vardar region).

Beneficiary survey

Control survey

Target

Successful applicants with completed projects

Unsuccessful applicants with rejected, cancelled or withdrawn projects

Sampling

Stratified random sampling across 4 key dimensions: measure, sector, subsector & call

Random sampling with proportional allocation per measure

Data collection

mid-August to mid-October 2025

mid-September to mid-October 2025

Sample size

204 respondents

84 respondents

Margin of error

5.8% (M1, M3) - 8.0% (M7)

10.5%

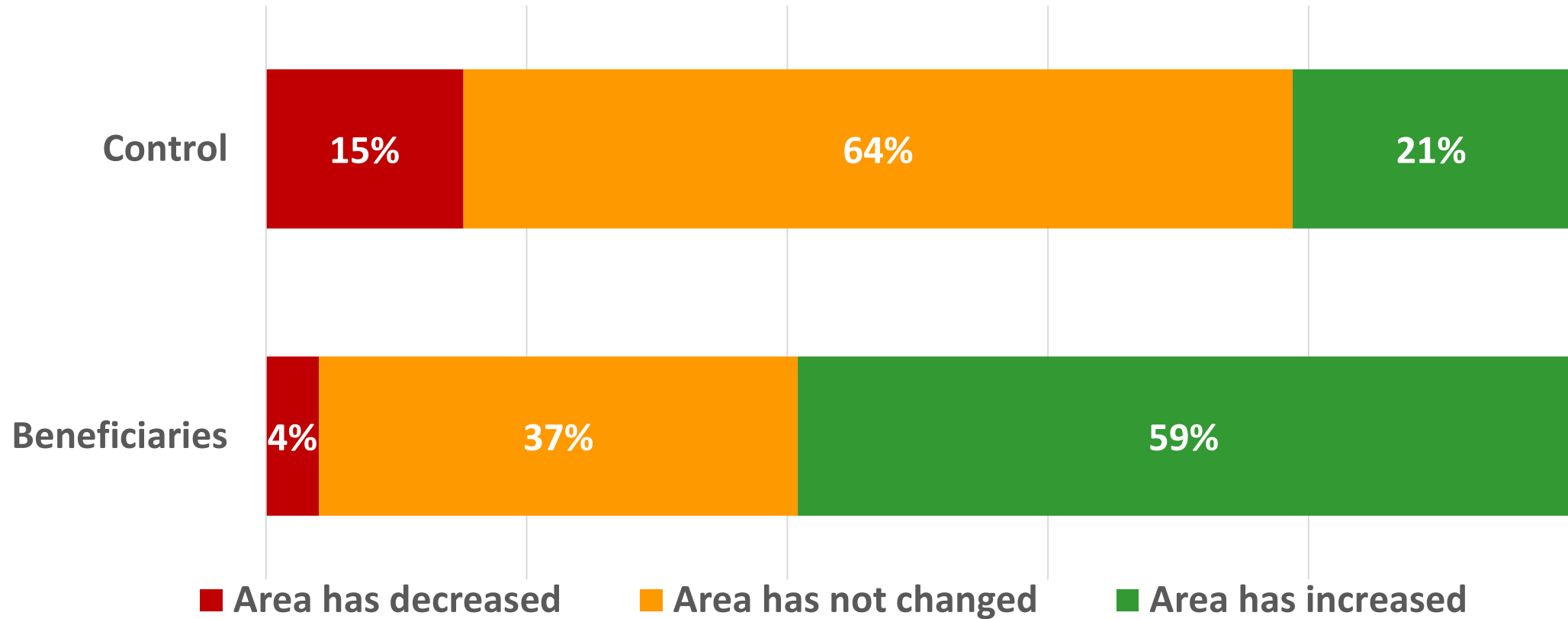
Total contacted

319 = 204 surveyed +78 inaccessible + 37 rejected to answer

208 = 84 surveyed +49 inaccessible +75 rejected to answer

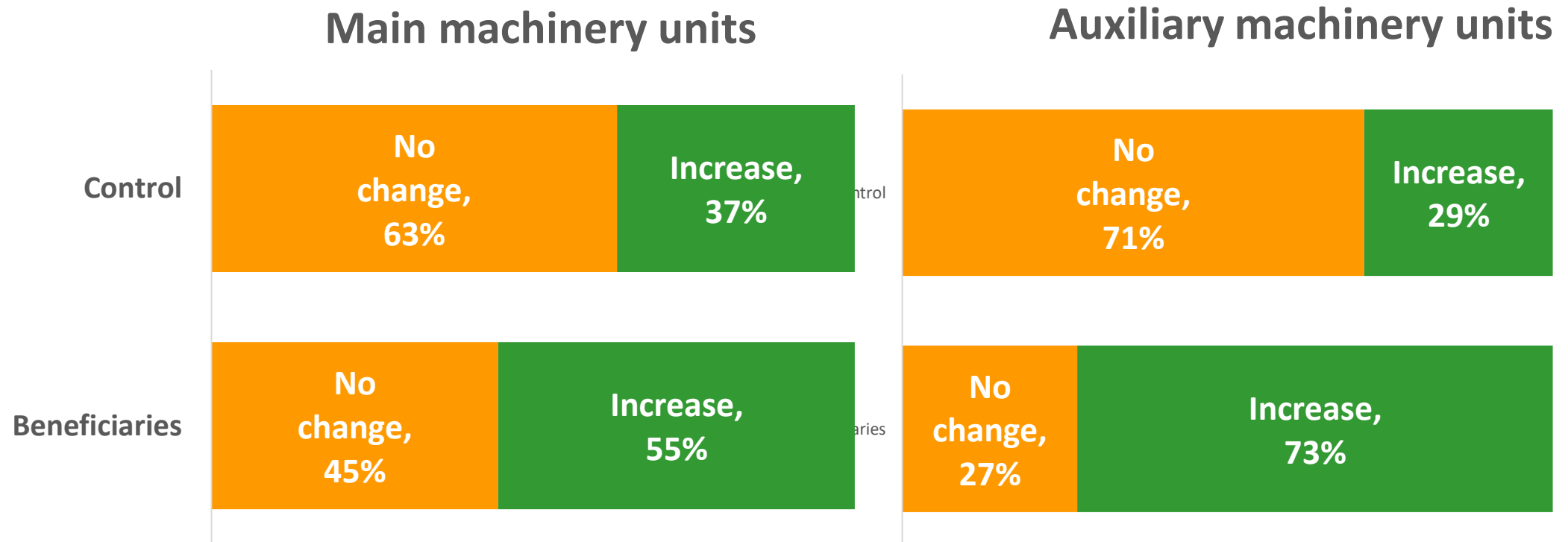
RESULTS / FINDINGS

M1 - Change in cultivated area before and after IPARD II



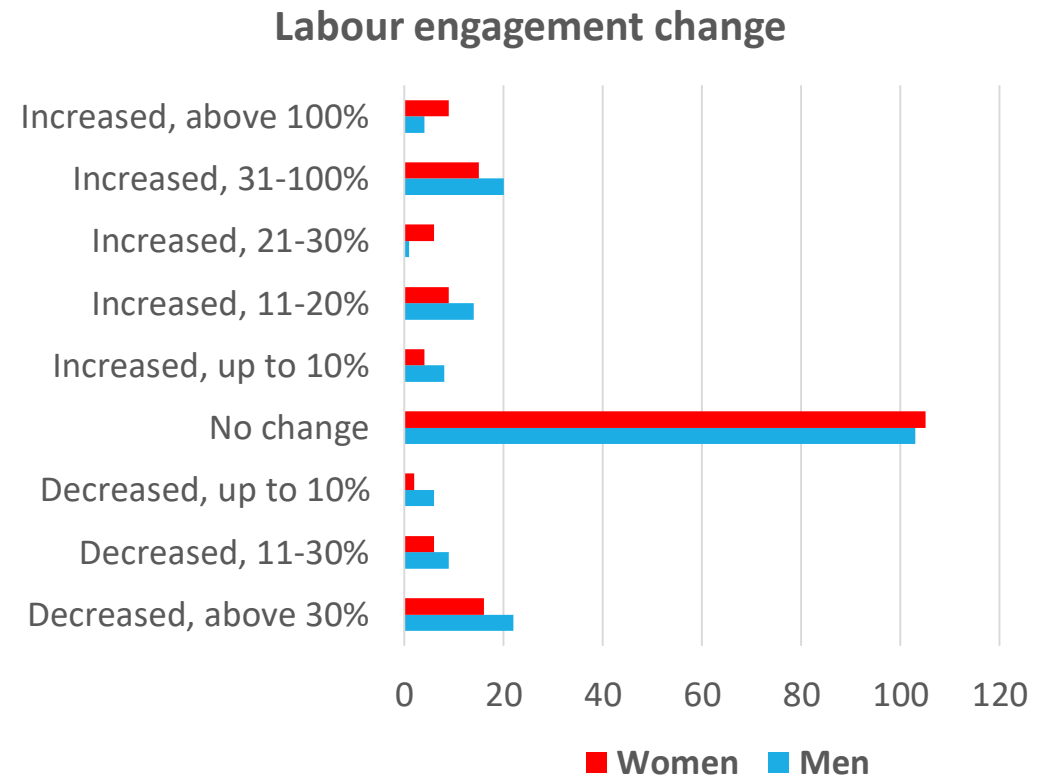
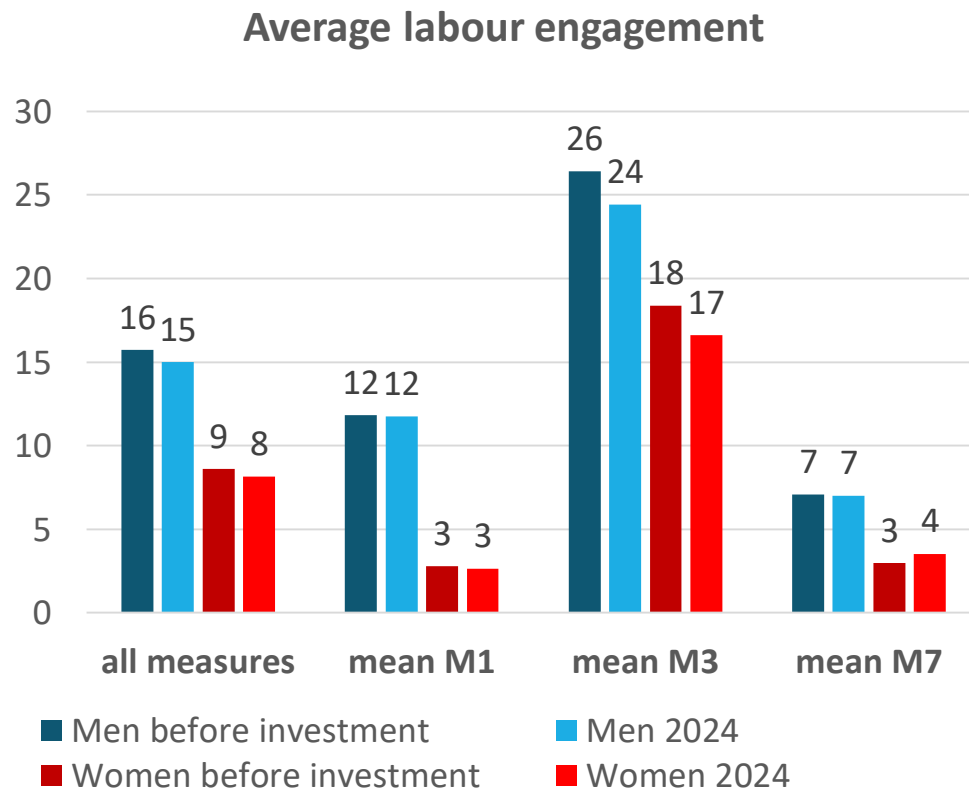
(Survey 2025)

M1 - Change in number of machinery units before and after IPARD II



(Survey 2025)

Change in beneficiaries' labour Full time equivalent (FTE) before and after IPARD II



(Survey 2025)

Heat map of financial performance - surveyed beneficiaries

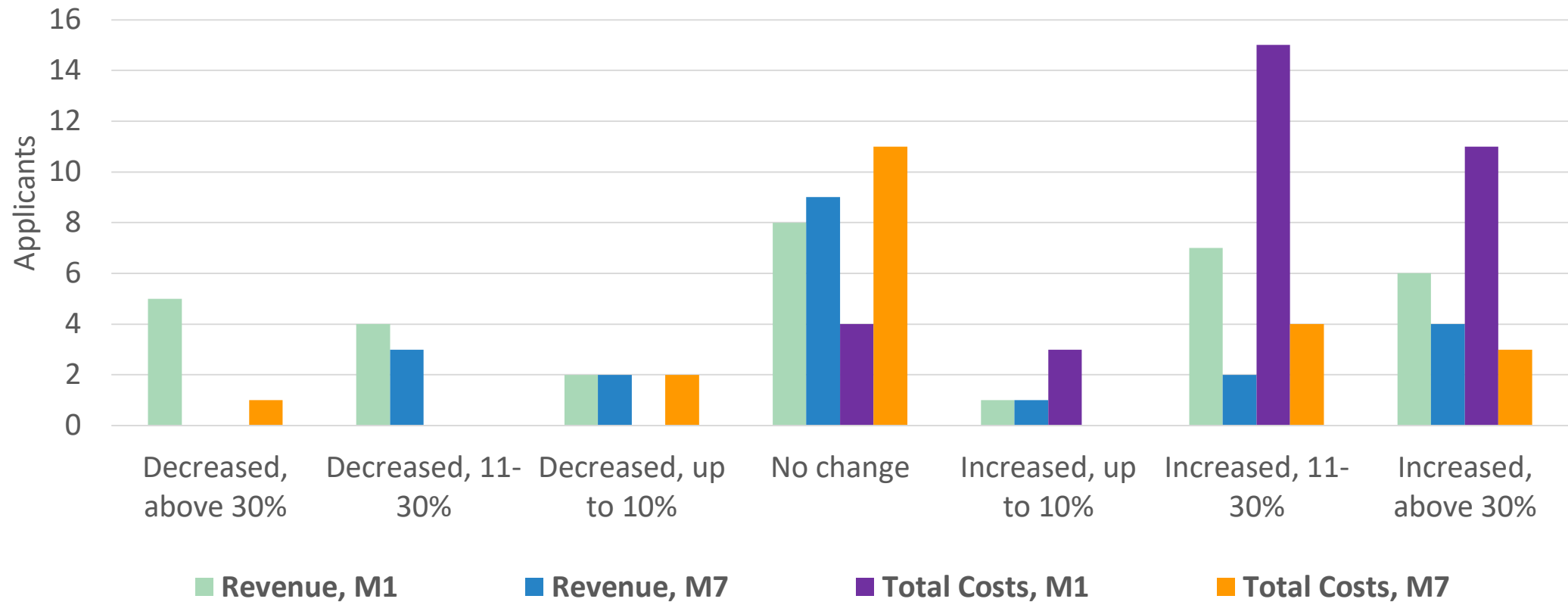
All measures	Turnover	Direct costs	Gross value	Indirect costs	Net value
Decreased, above 30%	4%	6%	14%	20%	15%
Decreased, 11-30%	6%	4%	6%	3%	6%
Decreased, up to 10%	2%	3%	4%	1%	5%
No change	6%	8%	4%	37%	2%
Increased, up to 10%	3%	3%	6%	4%	6%
Increased, 11-20%	6%	9%	6%	2%	6%
Increased, 21-30%	7%	5%	4%	5%	3%
Increased, 31-100%	41%	39%	28%	19%	26%
Increased, above 100%	24%	22%	29%	9%	31%

M1	Turnover	Direct costs	Gross value	Indirect costs	Net margin
Decreased, above 30%	6%	3%	17%	14%	17%
Decreased, 11-30%	5%	4%	6%	2%	5%
Decreased, up to 10%	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%
No change	10%	11%	7%	42%	5%
Increased, up to 10%	2%	0%	4%	3%	5%
Increased, 11-20%	2%	5%	3%	2%	5%
Increased, 21-30%	5%	5%	6%	6%	5%
Increased, 31-100%	45%	45%	29%	22%	26%
Increased, above 100%	25%	24%	28%	9%	32%

M3	Turnover	Direct costs	Gross value	Indirect costs	Net margin
Decreased, above 30%	2%	8%	16%	27%	16%
Decreased, 11-30%	9%	4%	10%	9%	10%
Decreased, up to 10%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No change	2%	4%	0%	27%	0%
Increased, up to 10%	5%	10%	12%	9%	12%
Increased, 11-20%	14%	19%	8%	5%	8%
Increased, 21-30%	12%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Increased, 31-100%	30%	29%	27%	14%	27%
Increased, above 100%	19%	23%	24%	5%	24%

M7	Turnover	Direct costs	Gross value	Indirect costs	Net margin
Decreased, above 30%	3%	15%	7%	40%	10%
Decreased, 11-30%	3%	4%	0%	0%	3%
Decreased, up to 10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No change	3%	7%	3%	30%	0%
Increased, up to 10%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Increased, 11-20%	3%	4%	10%	0%	10%
Increased, 21-30%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Increased, 31-100%	52%	44%	30%	10%	30%
Increased, above 100%	32%	19%	50%	20%	47%

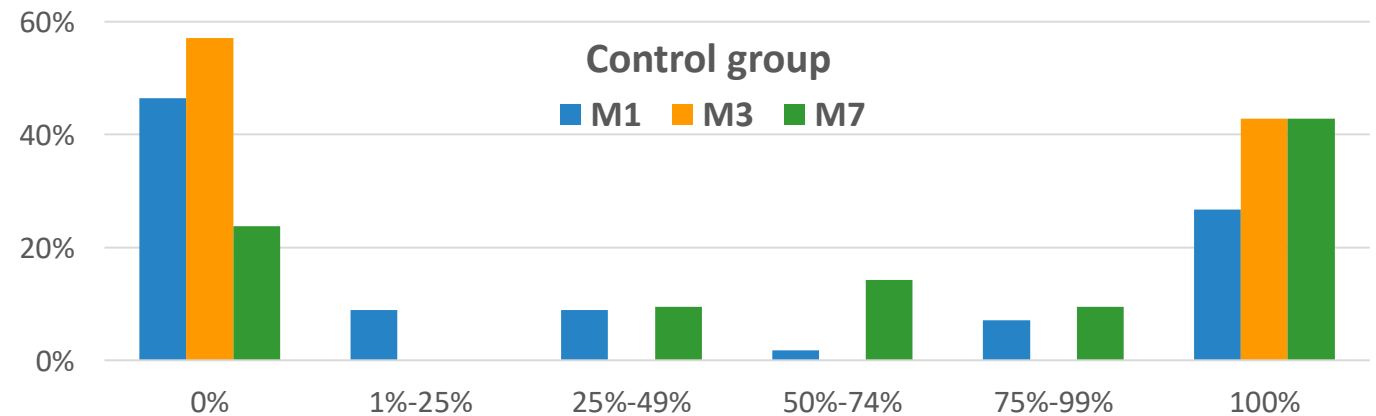
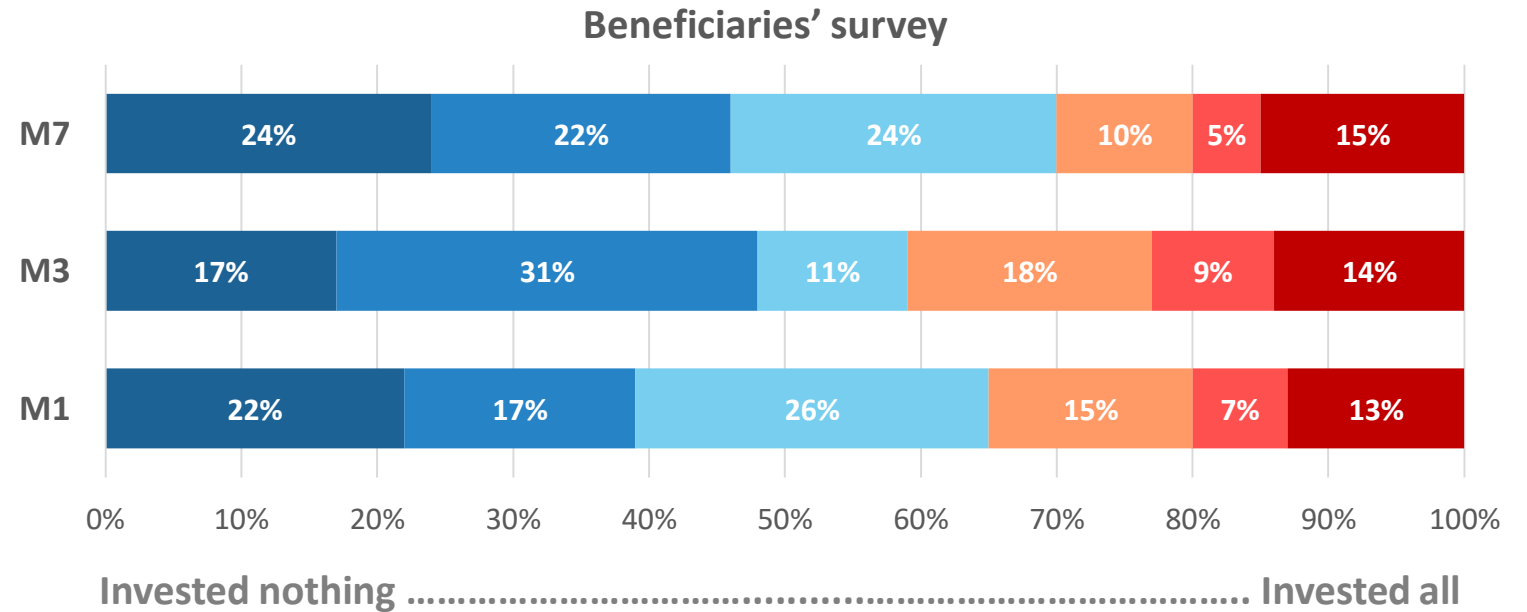
Self-assessment on selected performance indicators, rejected (control) survey



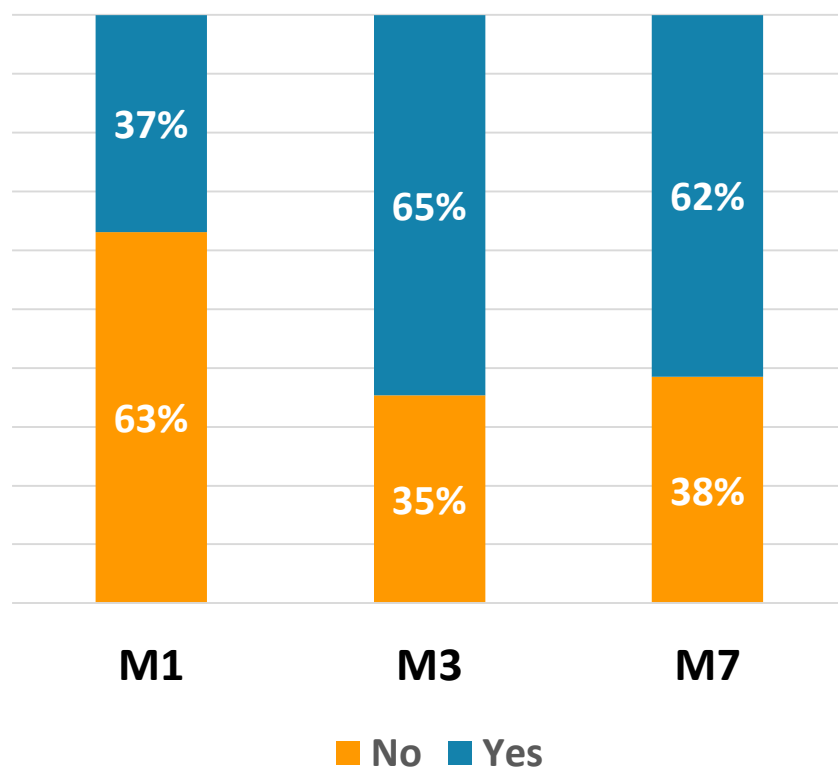
Estimated deadweight

Indicating the share of the investment, which would have been accomplished of the beneficiary also if there was not public support to the investment.

Share of the investment that would have made also without the IPARD II grant



Beneficiaries - investments other than IPARD II

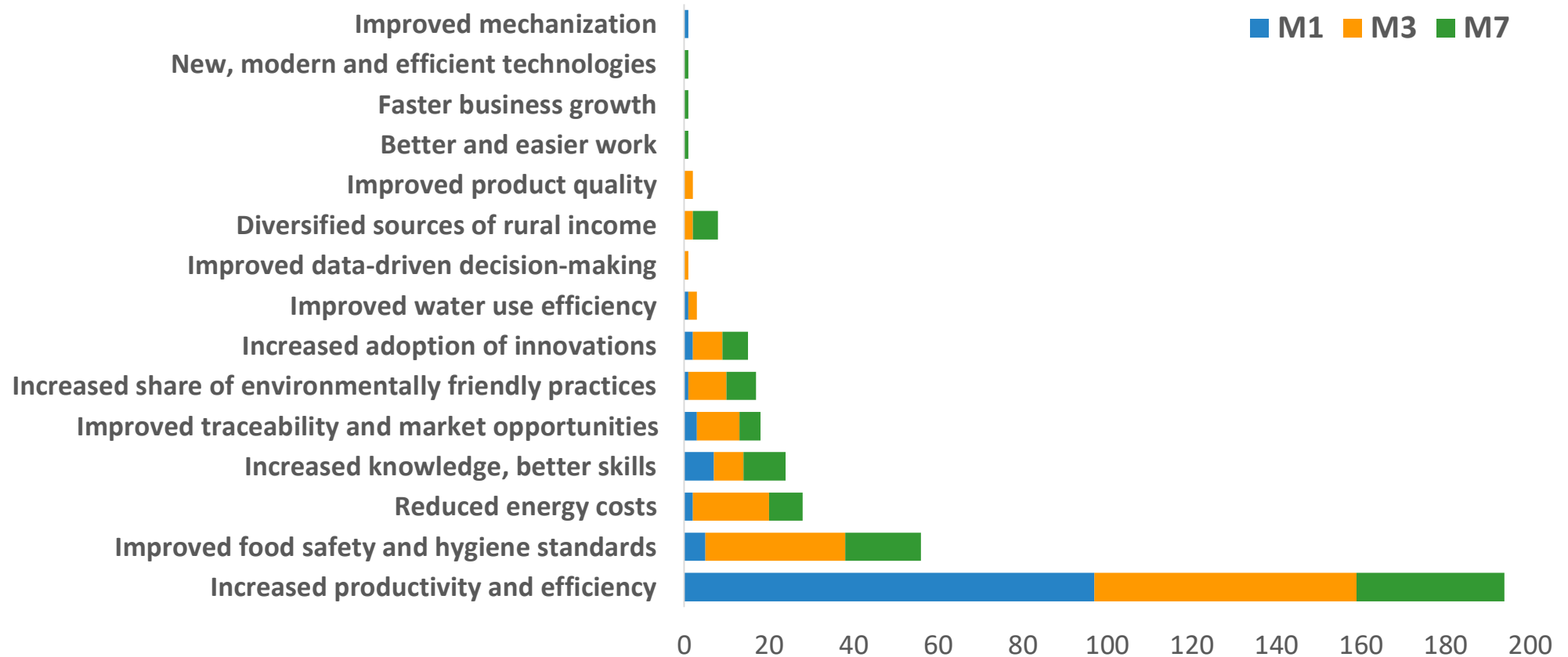


M1 - additional farm machinery and equipment (ploughs, seeders, sprayers, irrigation systems, auxiliary tools for crop and orchard maintenance)

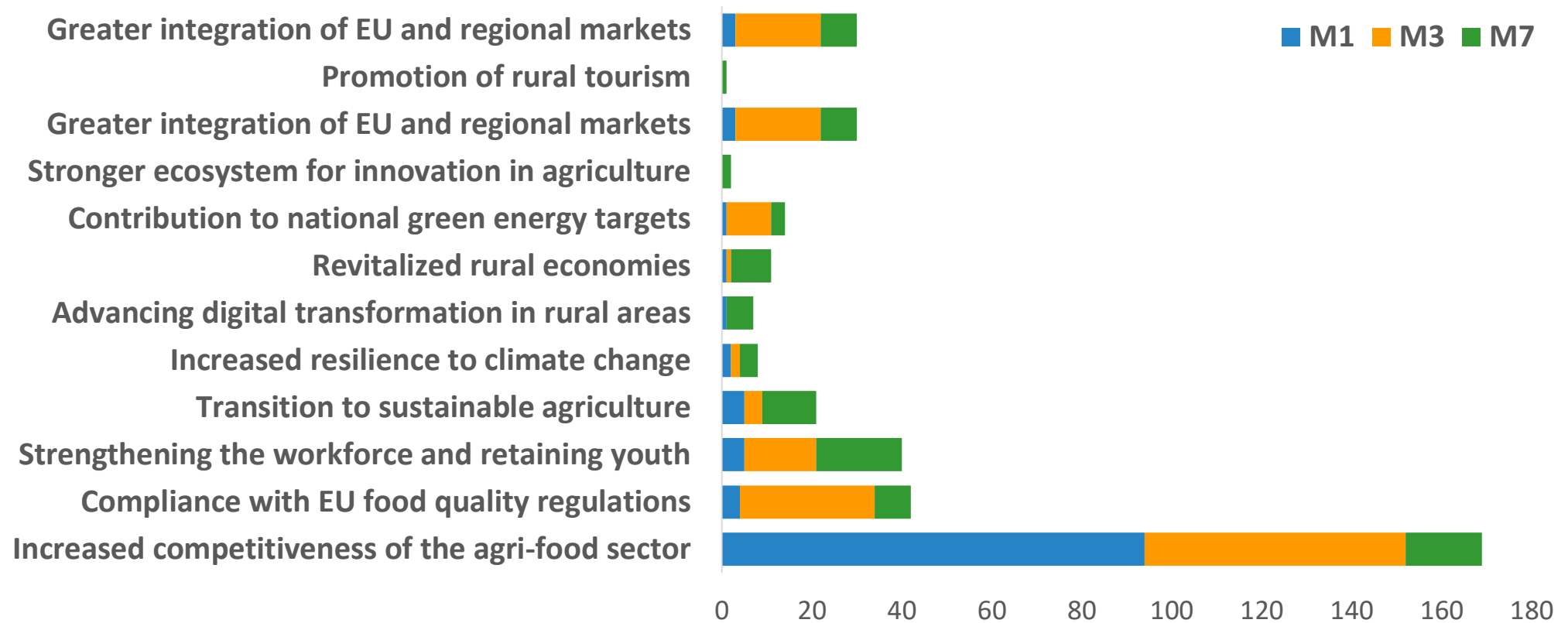
M3 - construction and improvement of facilities (production halls, storage and warehouse spaces and refrigeration units), modernization and technological upgrades (installing photovoltaic systems, bottling and packaging machines, computer and software equipment), transport vehicles. Land purchase was also noted by two beneficiaries in M3.

M7 - beekeeping equipment, branding or marketing initiatives, investments in tourism facilities, infrastructure works like fencing, terracing, and water connections.

Main outcome of IPARD II investments

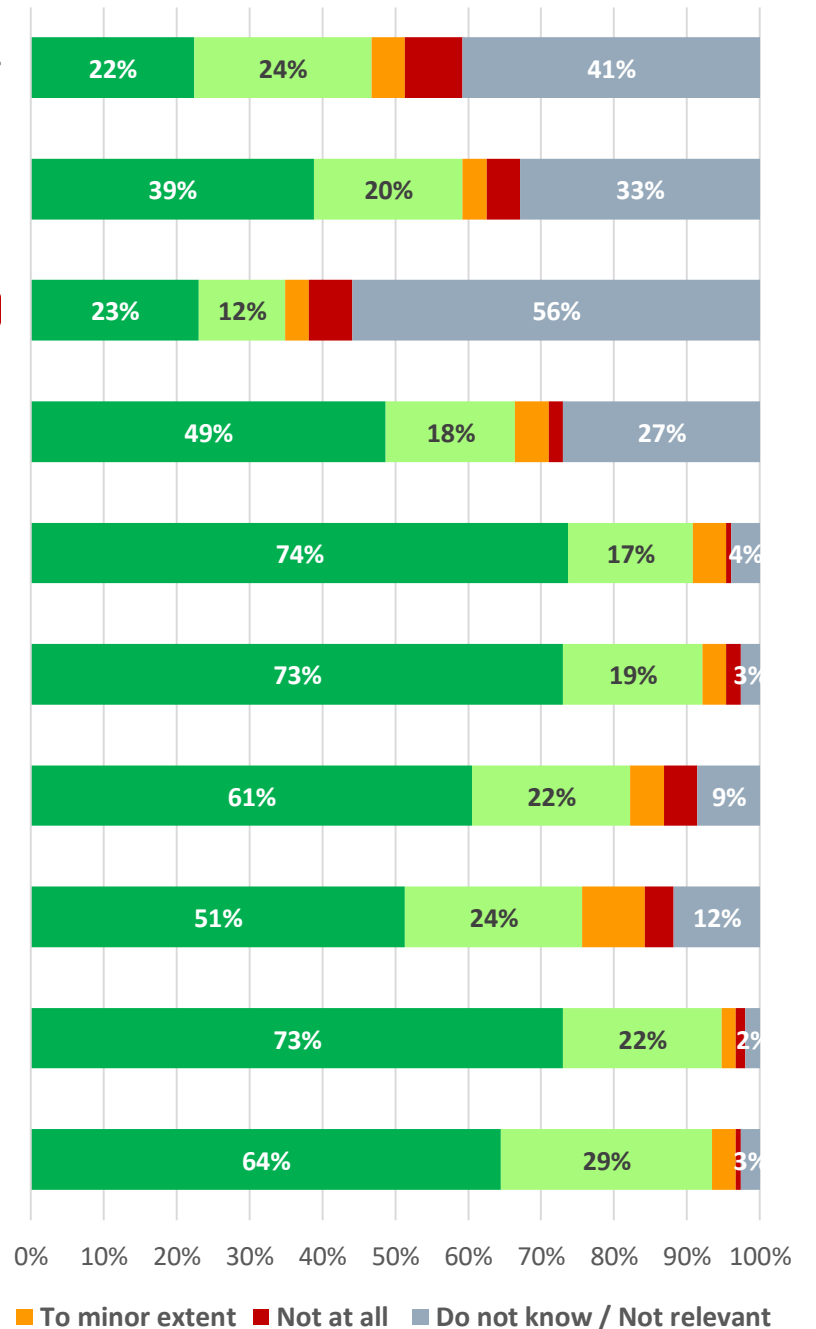


Main impact of IPARD II investments

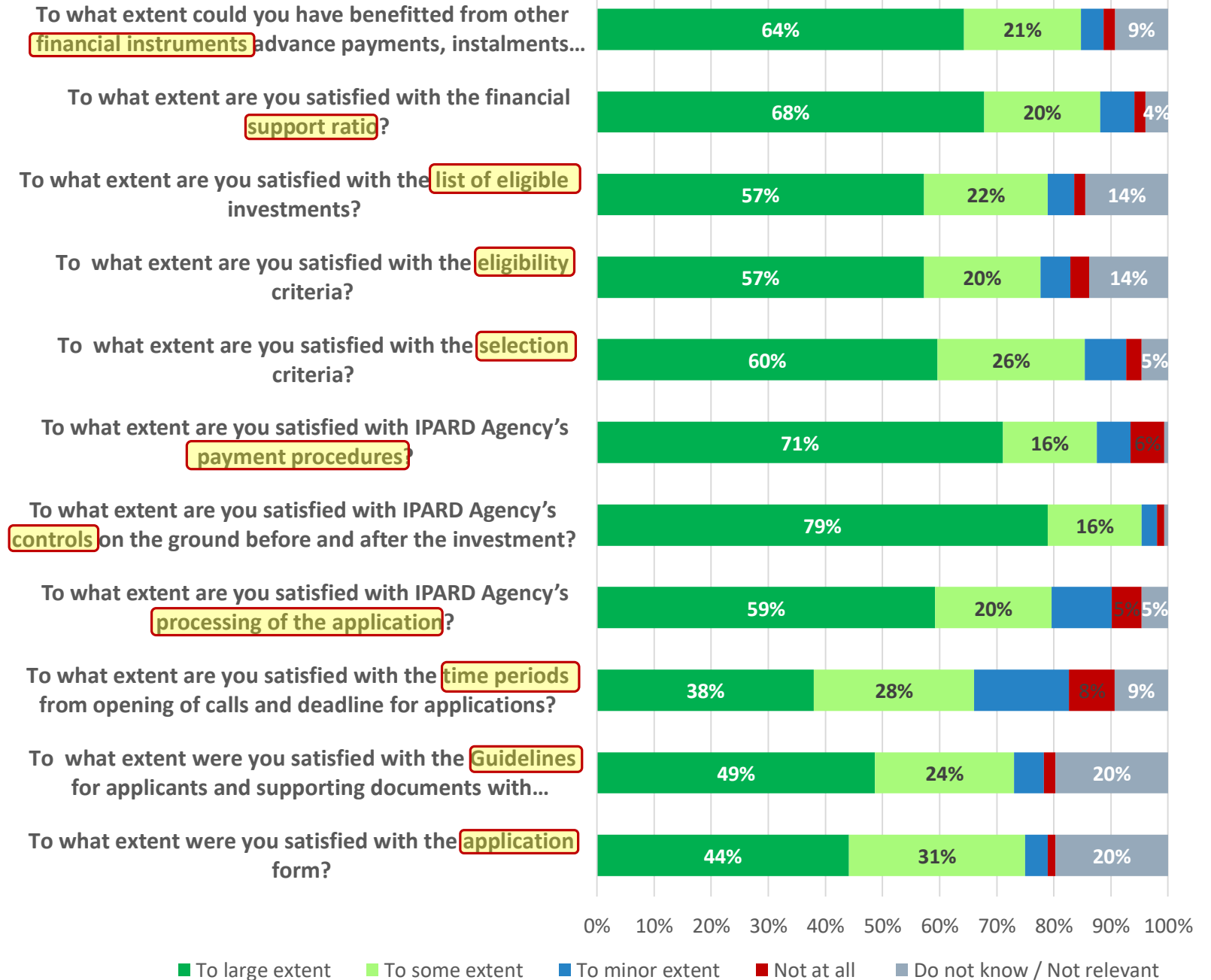


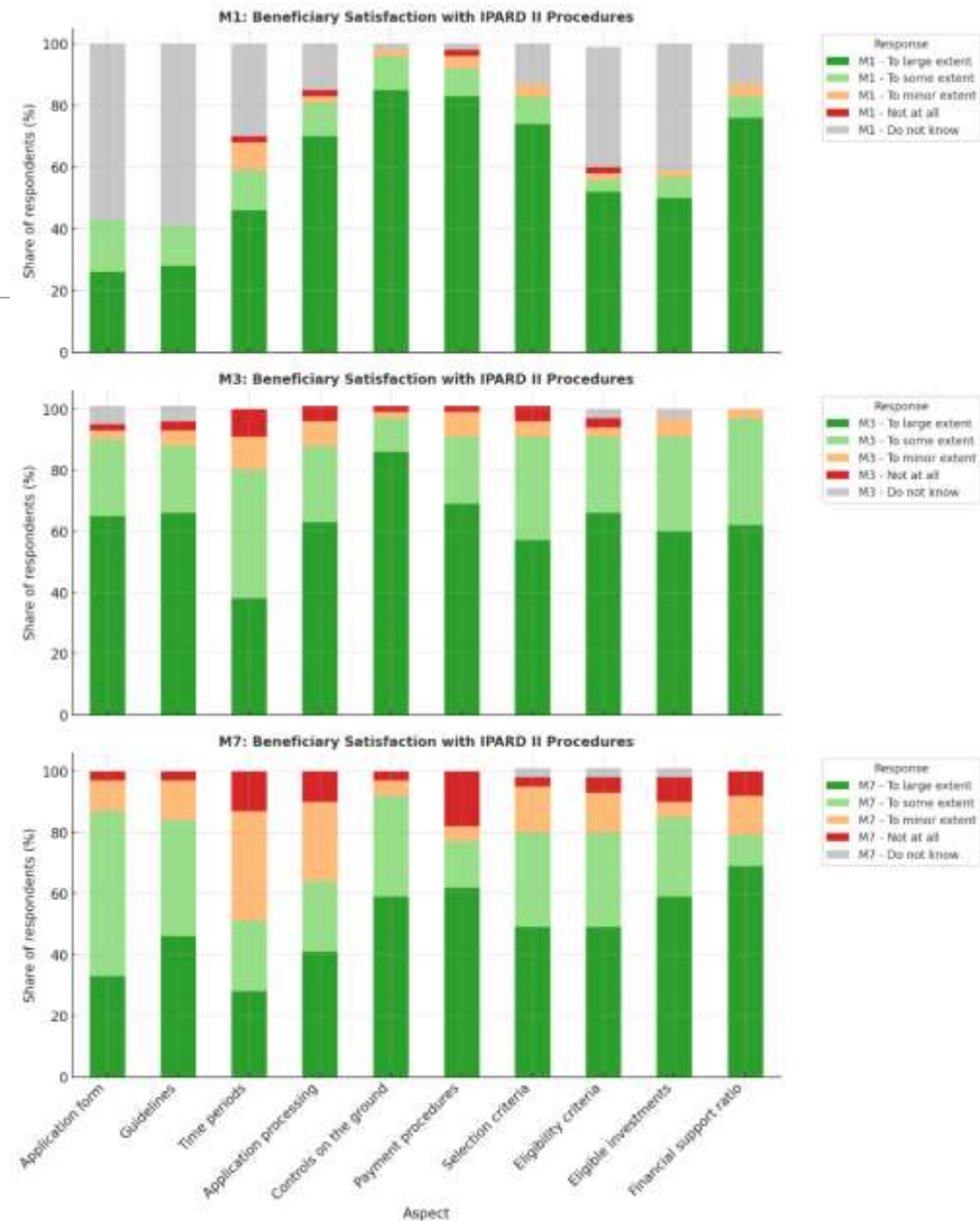
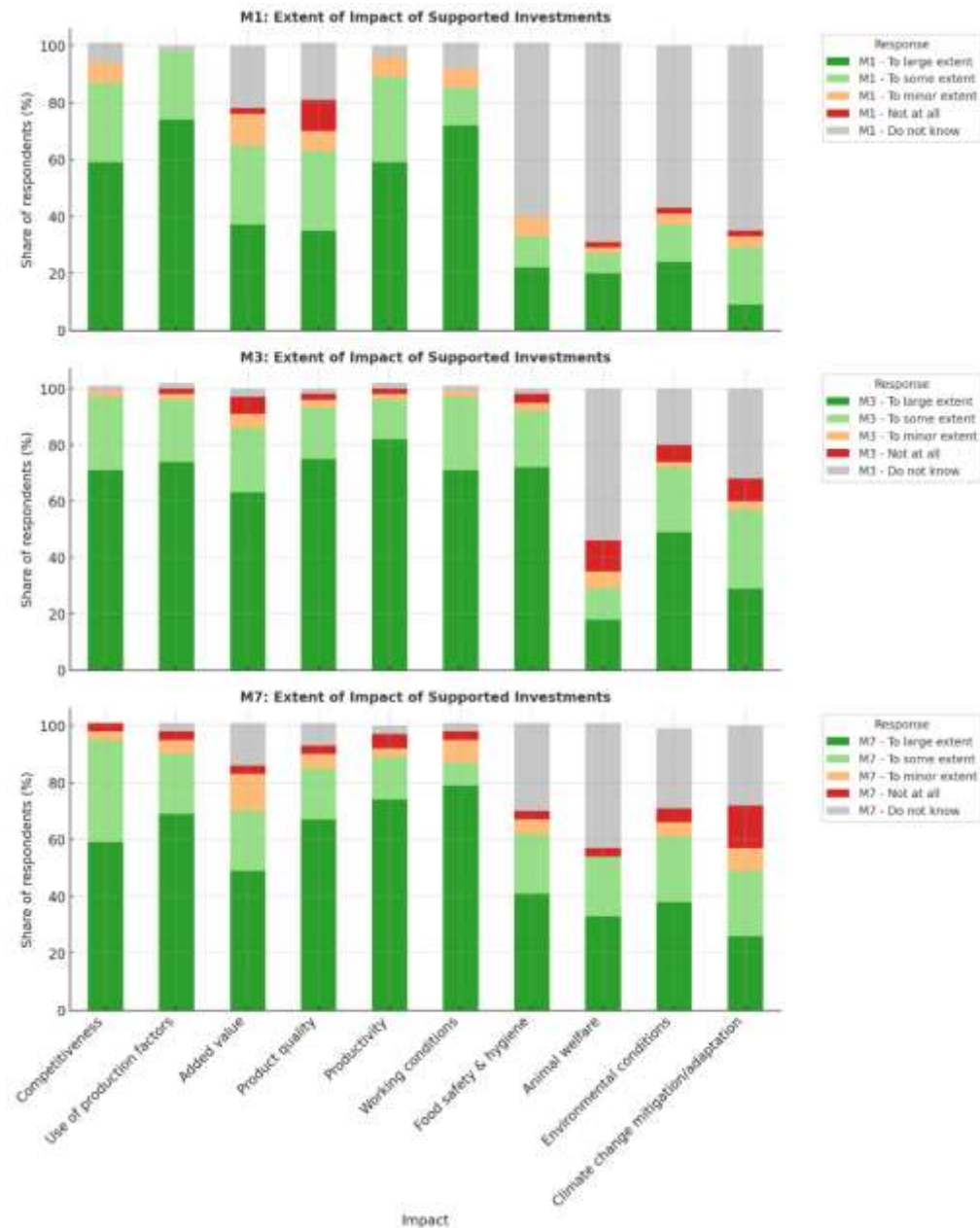
Questions linked to programme-level impact of IPARD II investments

- To what extent has the investment contributed to **climate change** mitigation and/or adaptation on your farm/company?
- To what extent has the investment improved the **environmental conditions** on your farm/company?
- To what extent have the supported investments improved production conditions in terms of **animal welfare** in compliance with EU standards?
- To what extent has the investment improved the food **safety and hygiene** conditions on your farm/in your company?
- To what extent have the supported investments improved **working conditions** in compliance with EU standards?
- To what extent has the investment increased the **productivity** of the production?
- To what extent have the supported investments improved the quality of your products in compliance with **EU standards**?
- To what extent have the supported investments helped to increase the **added value** of agricultural and fishery products through improved and rationalized...
- To what extent have the supported investments contributed to a better use of **production factors** on your holding/company?
- To what extent have supported investments contributed to improving your **competitiveness**?



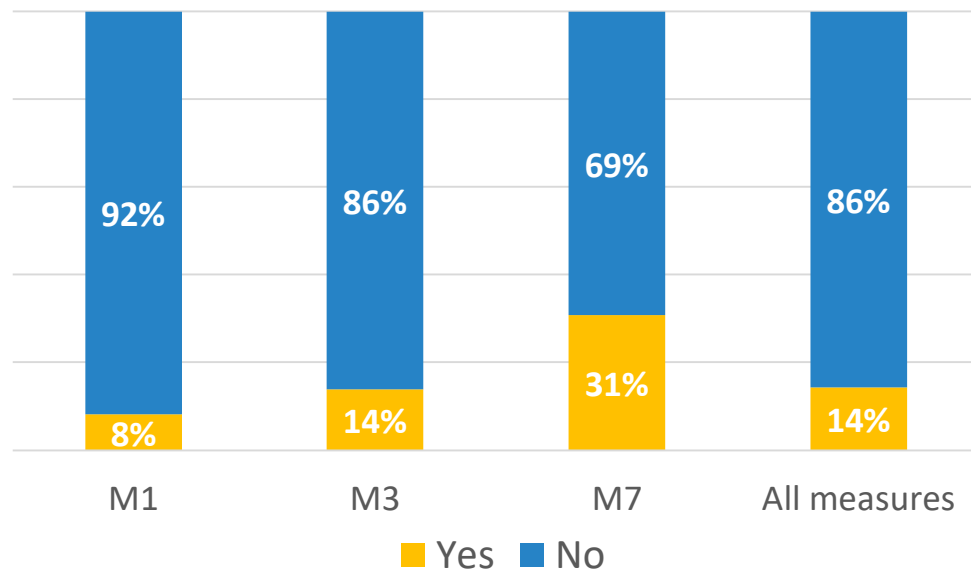
Questions linked to IPARD II programme design, administration & procedures



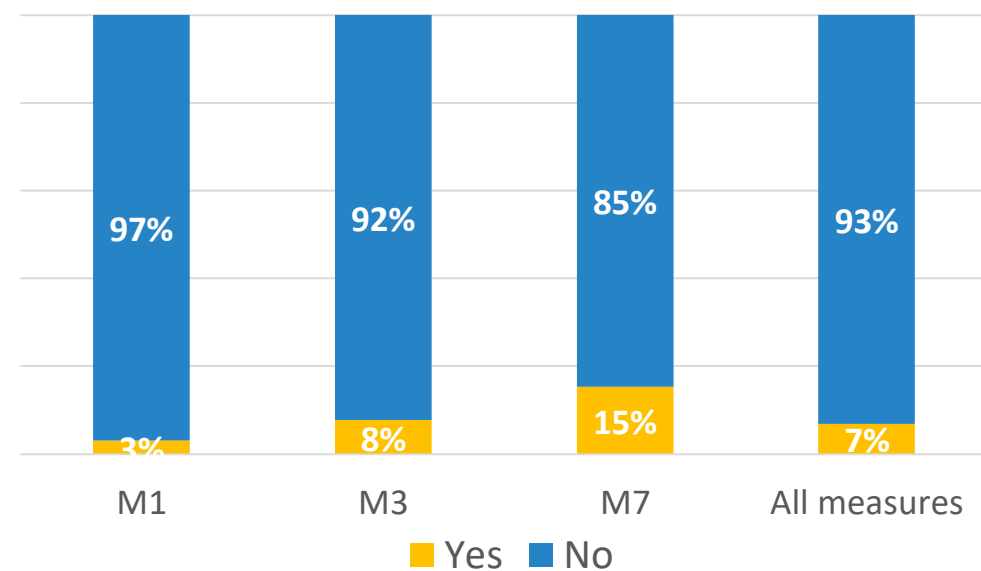


Clarification required from IPARD Agency from beneficiaries

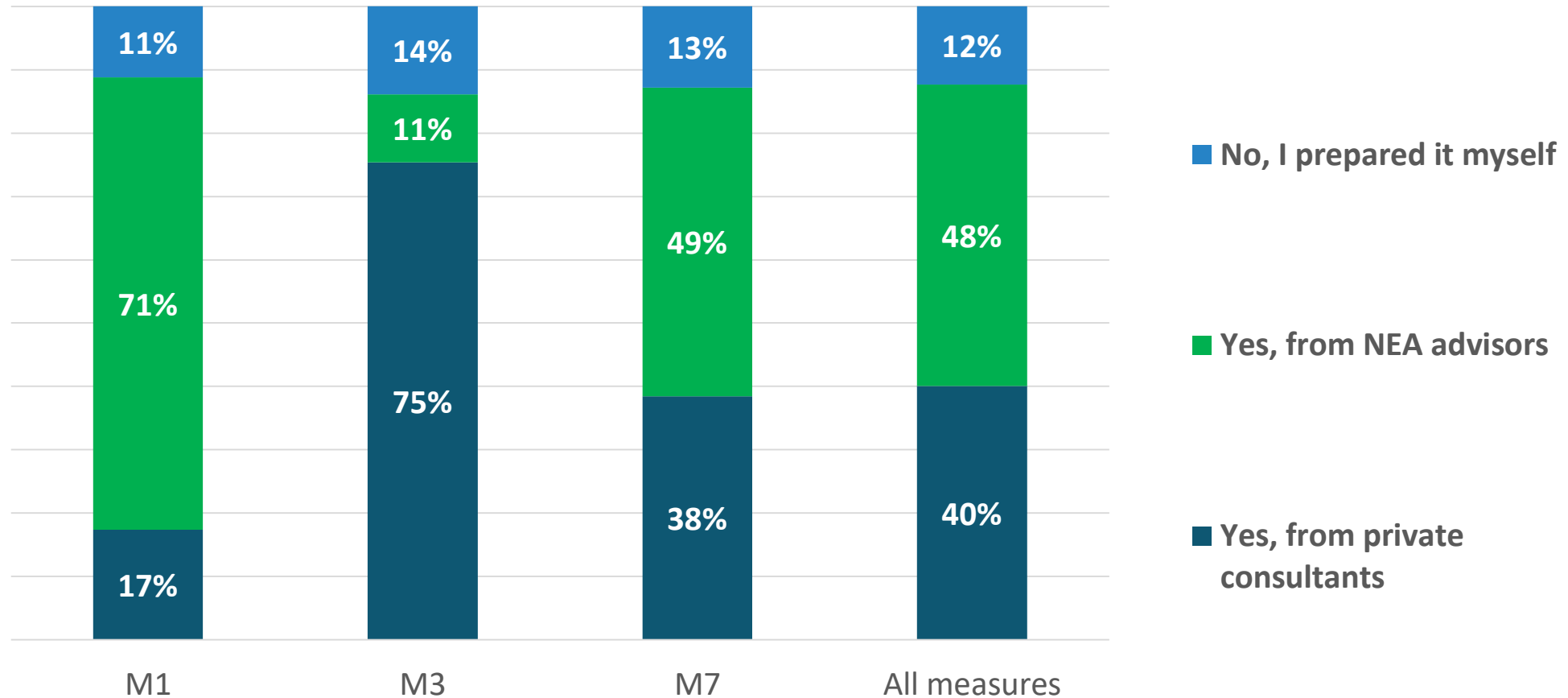
Did you require clarification from PA for any of the documents required for the application phase?



Did you require clarification from PA for documents required for contracting and payment phase?



Assistance received in preparation of IPARD II application



Unfair or unethical situations

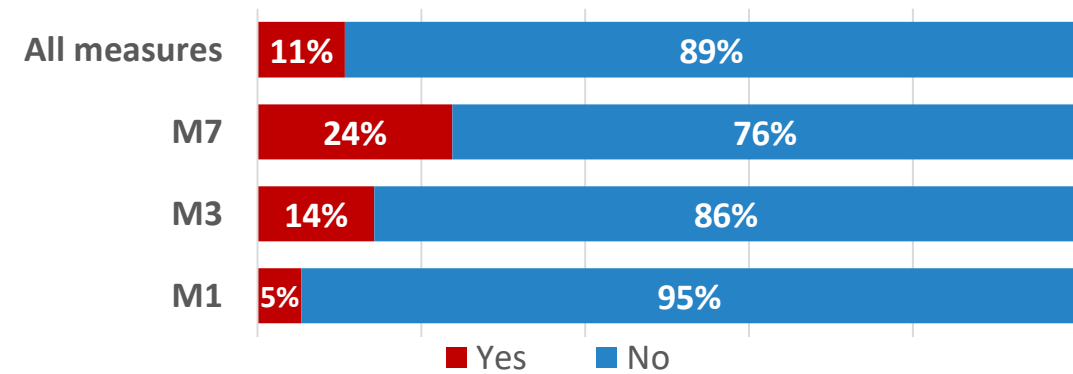
Whether beneficiaries encountered unfair situation

Only **two out of 204 respondents** reported situations they viewed as inappropriate or procedurally irregular.

• **Case 1 (M3 beneficiary):** Before applying, both a private consultant and an NEA advisor confirmed that equipment from outside the EU up to EUR 100,000 was acceptable. During the payment phase, this equipment was declared ineligible, leading to partial payment rejection. Applicant perceived this as **non-transparent, inconsistent rule interpretation**, and **ineffective guidance** between advisory and implementing institutions.

• **Case 2 (M7 beneficiary):** Application was initially rejected for what the respondent viewed as **trivial reasons**. After **personal intervention by an acquaintance**, the decision was reversed and approved. These cases highlight concerns about **transparency, consistency, and fairness** in the IPARD administrative process.

Whether rejected or withdrawn applicants encountered unfair situation



- **Procedural irregularities** noted, including lost or unrequested documents and unclear or incomplete rejection explanations.
- Reports of perceived “**unequal treatment**”: some applicants rejected for minor omissions while others seem to be approved with lower merit.
- Use of strong terms like “**criminal**” or “**mafia-like behaviour**” indicating frustration and perceived injustice.
- One case of being contacted via **private phone** to “negotiate” approval - seen as highly inappropriate and unprofessional.

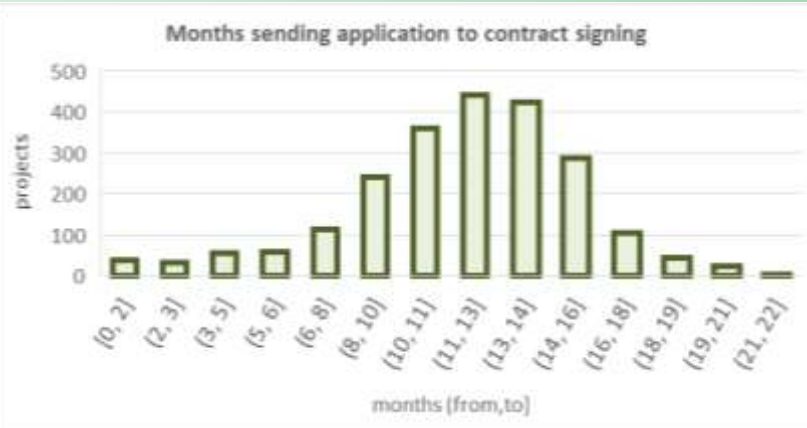
Duration and processing times of project applications - beneficiaries

sending application

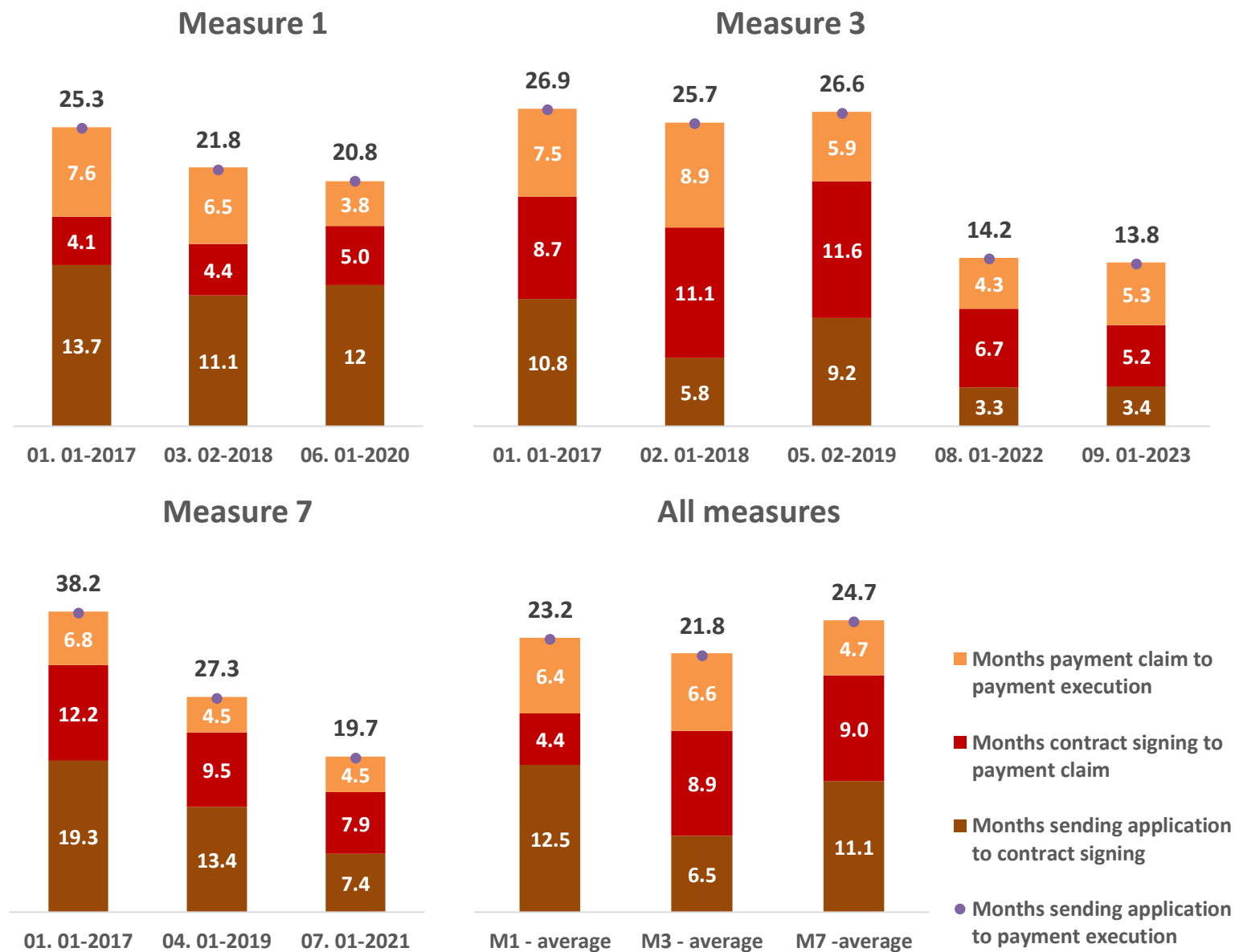
contract signing

payment claim

payment execution

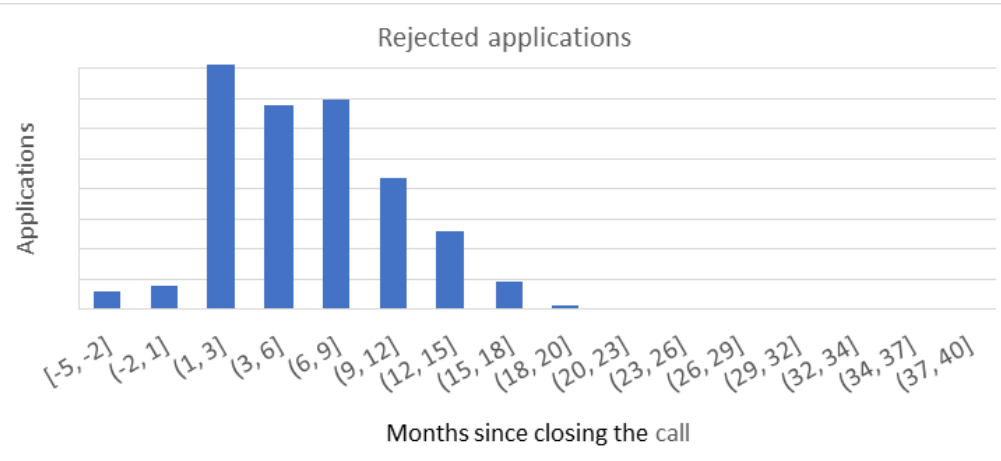


Average duration of key process stages from application submission to payment execution

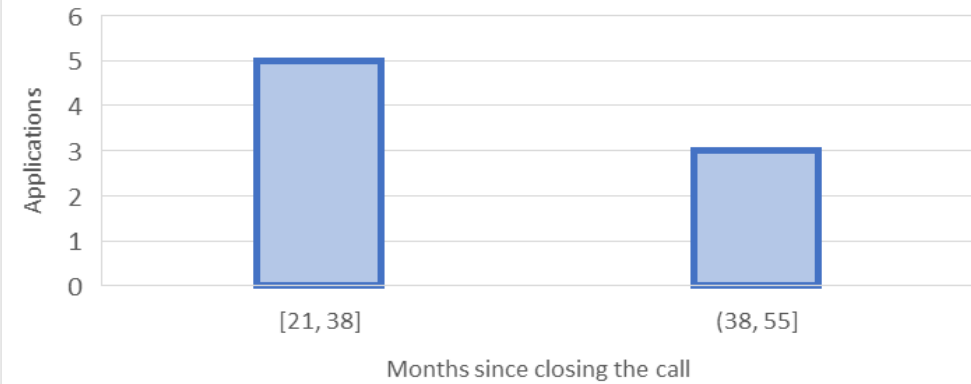


Duration and processing times of project applications – control group

Rejected at
application phase

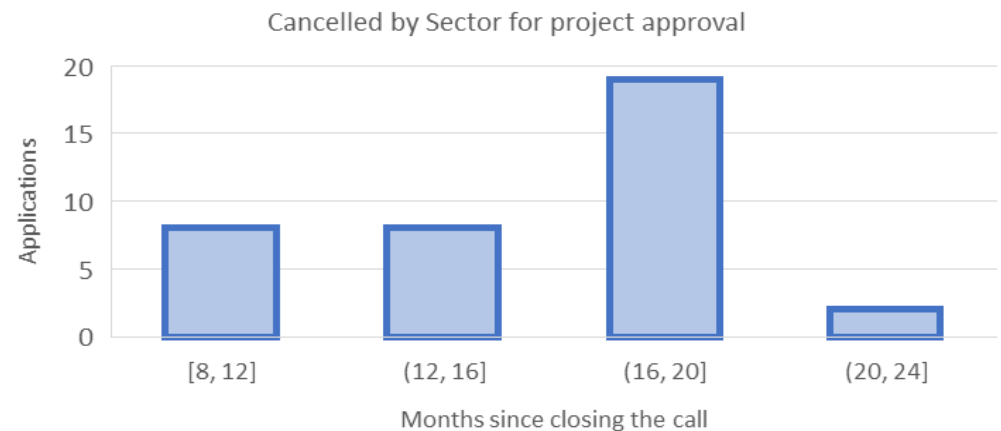


Cancelled by Sector for authorization of payments

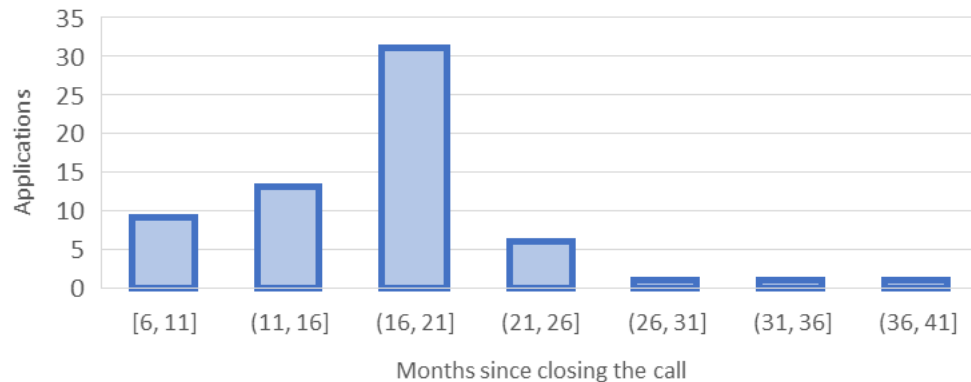


Rejected at
payment phase

Rejected at
approval phase



Cancelled by applicant



Cancelled by
applicant

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Main conclusions

1. The evaluation confirms the importance rural investment programmes (such as IPARD) to sustain growth, competitiveness, and modernization of the agri-food sector in North Macedonia
2. The relevance of the programme is high
3. Needs (some of them!) are addressed with the measures implemented
4. Postponed measures leave important needs unaddressed
5. The implementations has been weak

Effectiveness and effects

- High satisfaction with the design of the measures
- The technical effectiveness is 59%
- The financial effectiveness is 90%

The economic results and impacts are summarized here:

1. 76 million EUR in generated revenues (profit): 1.13 EUR per 1 EUR (public support) invested.
2. 1,000 jobs (annual jobs)
3. Leverage effects: 5 million EUR equal to 9% of the private co-funding.
4. The multiplier effects: 78 million EUR.
5. Total direct and indirect revenue generation: 122 million EUR after a deadweight loss of 100 million EUR or 40% = 1.8 EUR per 1 EUR in public support.

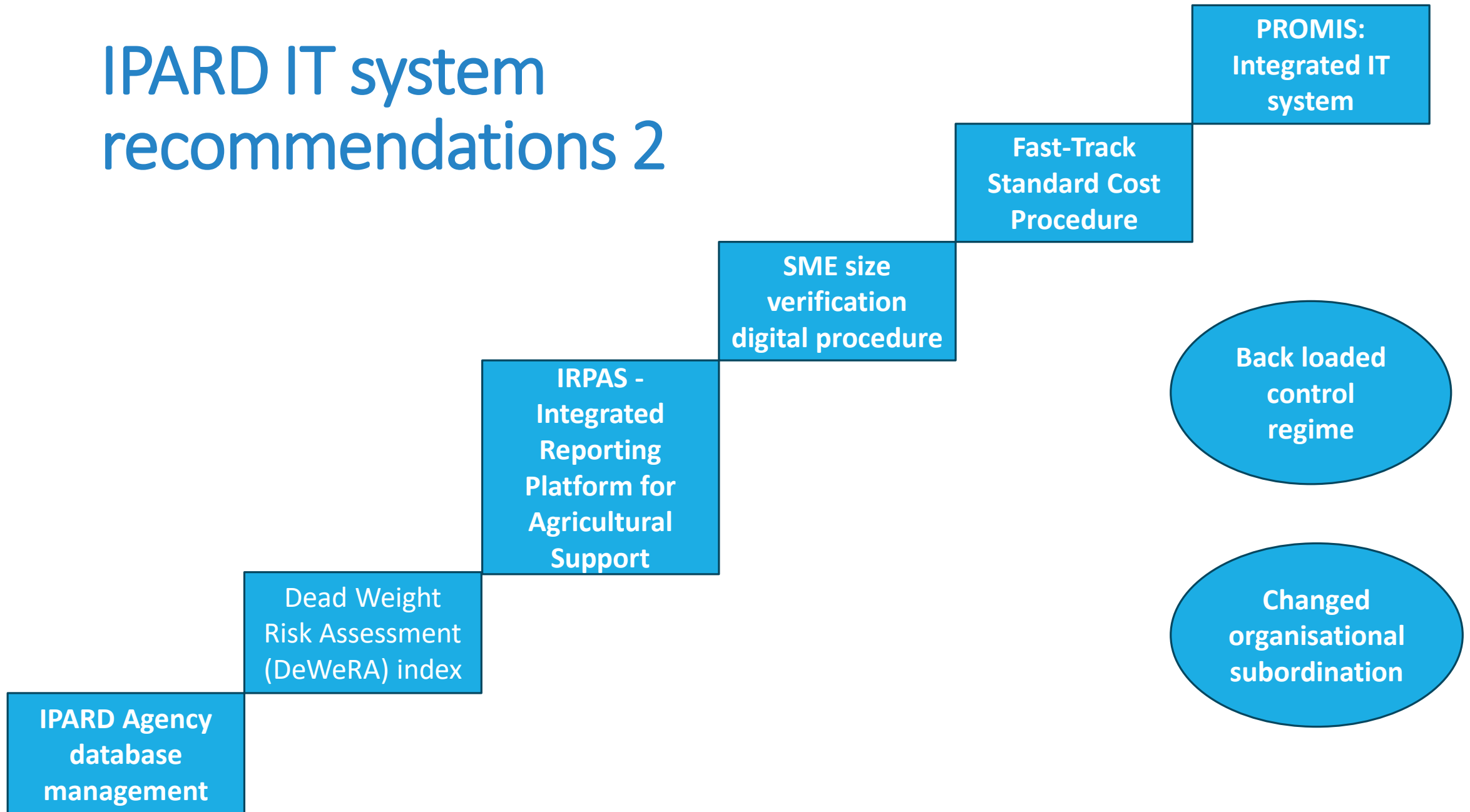
Programme implementation

1. The administration of the programme is not effective and efficient
2. The average time and resources spent on project application processing is 355 days and for processing of payment claims 191 days
3. The administrative costs are 8,155 EUR/project
4. = 26% of total public support
5. The efficiency of the IPARD Agency administration is low due to ineffective paper-based system and lack of IT systems
6. The Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) reporting system is inappropriate

Main recommendations 1

- 1. Strengthen advisory and technical support systems**
- 2. Deliver regular targeted capacity-building programmes for advisory staff and other stakeholders**
- 3. Improved and continued information campaigns**
- 4. Financial instruments**
- 5. Strengthen internal analytical capacity of IPARD Managing Authority for evidence-based decision-making and timely programme adjustments**
- 6. Retention policy and overall continuous capacity building of staff at the IPARD Agency**

IPARD IT system recommendations 2



Do not wait to get started!

Thank you for your attention!

Time for questions and comments!