

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 21.11.2007
COM(2007) 732 final

THIRD PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the implementation of Council Decision 96/411/EC on improving Community agricultural statistics

1. INTRODUCTION

This report was drawn up in accordance with Article 11 of the Council Decision 96/411/EC of 25 June 1996 on improving Community agricultural statistics[1]. The purpose of Decision 96/411/EC, as laid down in Article 1 thereof, was to induce Member States, within the limits imposed by available resources, to take appropriate measures to adapt their national systems of agricultural statistics.

The Community provides a financial contribution to the expenses incurred by each Member State in adapting the national systems or in carrying out preparatory work relating to new or increasing requirements provided for under the Technical Action Plan. This contribution is limited in time. It is aimed at facilitating experimentation with, or implementation of, collection methods and systems meeting the statistical information requirements indicated in the Technical Action Plan.

This report follows the previous report (COM(2002) 79 final of 13.2.2002) which covered the action plans for the years 1996 to 2001.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TAPAS[2] TECHNICAL ACTION PLANS

Six technical action plans were defined by Commission Decisions 2003/304/EC[3], 2004/366/EC[4], 2004/637/EC[5], 2005/197/EC[6], 2006/127/EC[7] and 2007/84/EC[8]. The various areas of work covered by the Technical Action Plans are as follows: physical aspects of European agriculture; environmental aspects of agricultural accounting; agri-environmental indicators, including the use of pesticides; rural development; farm statistical registers; small units surveys, i.e. surveys on small farms; statistics on the structure of farms; and organic farming.

The corresponding Community budget is outlined in Annexes 1 and 3, the number of action plans by work area and Member State are listed in Annex 2 and the individual actions are listed in Annex 4 of this report.

2.1. Data on the physical aspects of European agriculture

This was a continuation of the work done in previous years (see Second Progress Report, COM(2002) 79). The actions were undertaken to improve data on areas, production and use of crops, and particularly the balances; data on livestock populations, production and use of animal products, and particularly the meat balances; development of feed balances by improving the estimation methods, and achieving better consistency between supply balances and the feed balance. In all, 37 actions were carried out in 16 Member States, which resulted

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1 OJ L 162, 1.7.1996, p. 14. Decision as last amended by Decision No 787/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 138, 30.4.2004, p. 12).

2 **T**echnical **A**ction **P**lan for **A**gricultural **S**tatistics.

3 OJ L 110, 3.5.2003, p. 15.

4 OJ L 114, 21.4.2004, p. 32.

5 OJ L 291, 14.9.2004, p. 14.

6 OJ L 65, 11.3.2005, p. 30.

7 OJ L 51, 22.2.2006, p. 19.

8 OJ L 35, 8.2.2007, p. 18.

in a significant improvement in the completeness of the corresponding datasets, especially concerning the ten Member States which acceded to the European Union in May 2004.

2.2. Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting

One action was carried out, following the actions realised under the previous programme, to test the feasibility of introducing into the Economic Accounts for Agriculture (EAA) methodology certain concepts and definitions that enable environmental elements to be dealt with as services in total production, subsidies or taxes. Although the results were interesting, they did not lead to a major change in the methods or results of the regular statistics in the area.

2.3. Agri-environmental indicators

Agri-environmental indicators were the subject of actions to improve existing indicators such as regional-level information on yields of certain crops, and data on the sale or consumption of mineral fertilisers. They also covered the establishment of landscape indicators such as the lengths of hedges or walls or the areas used at regional level outside the utilised agricultural area (pasture, alpine meadow, etc.); the effects of structural characteristics on the operation of holdings; and data on cultivation practices. The actions concerning the use of pesticides continued the collection and processing of data plus improvement in the quality and speed of transmission by using a variety of methods and sources. Actions on nutrient balances are foreseen in the context of the 2007 annual plan.

Concerning agri-environmental indicators, 26 actions were completed, are underway or planned, involving 10 Member States. The actions proved useful in raising awareness and launching work in the corresponding Working Party. The actions were a starting point for the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning statistics on plant protection products[9] and for the fertiliser surveys which might be carried out in the future.

2.4. Rural development

Rural development is a growing area in agricultural statistics, involving a more detailed territorial breakdown of information normally collected at national level, and territorial breakdowns that differ from the administrative regions used for the production of regional statistics. A wide range of subjects was covered, including non-agricultural income of farms and families (particularly from activities that are complementary to agricultural activity and community services provided by farmers), living conditions in rural regions, and the contribution of agriculture as a support for other economic and cultural activities.

Concerning rural development, 31 actions were completed, are under way or planned, involving a total of 14 Member States.

2.5. Farm statistical registers

Farm statistical registers provide the framework for the collection of data from agricultural holdings. They serve as a sampling frame for statistical surveys, and as a source of basic administrative information on holdings, and have the potential to link up with other data

[9] COM(2006) 778 final of 11.12.2006. Ref: 2006/0258 (COD).

sources. Good registers can provide up-to-date information on the numbers and types of agricultural holding and can reduce the statistical burden on respondents by exploiting links to existing data collections

The 14 actions undertaken by Member States under the TAPAS 2005 and 2006 action plans involved:

(i) improvement and automation of the register-updating procedures;

(ii) development of links with other relevant data sources such as the Business Register and animal registers; and

(iii) improvement of the quality and coverage of national farm registers.

2.6. Small units surveys

Six Member States took part in the TAPAS 2005 and 2006 action plans aimed at studying the coverage of small agricultural holdings. The work involved examining the different categories and characteristics of smallholdings, obtained from different sources, and identifying which types of smallholding should be recorded in the national farm register.

2.7. Statistics on the structure of farms

In 2003, before joining the European Union, the 10 prospective Member States carried out a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, but they were not obliged to transmit the individual data to Eurostat. The second phase of the TAPAS 2004 action plan enabled them to prepare such transmission and to consolidate those statistics. It also made possible methodological work and the implementation of Community typology of agricultural farms. The timely transmission and quality of the 2005 farm structure survey results can be seen as a fruitful consequence of the TAPAS actions.

2.8. Organic farming

A further 15 actions on organic farming are planned for 2007. They include actions to establish or improve statistics on the production, processing and consumption of organic products, their balance sheets and prices.

3. EVALUATION

A discussion in the Standing Committee for Agricultural Statistics (SCAS) in March 2007 led to the following conclusions:

- Most of the actions now completed have yielded useful results.
- Almost all SCAS members appreciated the exchange of experience between the beneficiaries of the TAPAS action plans, as well as the long-term vision of the statistical developments needed.
- On the other hand, some SCAS members raised concern about the effectiveness of TAPAS, and questioned the Community interest of the actions carried out. Certain Members are against prolonging TAPAS or have severe reservations.

- The administrative burden (in terms of contract work and legislation) was also mentioned as being out of proportion to the budget used.

- Launching studies through TAPAS was also considered to be quite a long process, taking about one year longer than through the normal grant policy.

The Commission is of the opinion that the need to adapt the statistical system to new needs will remain, as well as the need to financially support such adaptation by the Member States. However, funding the actions through normal EU grants would be an efficient alternative to the TAPAS procedure.

ANNEX 1

Community expenditure under the Annual Action Plans
(authorised amounts *and commitments)*

Annual action plans	**2003–2007**	**TAPAS 2003**	**TAPAS 2004 Phase I**	**TAPAS 2004 Phase II**	**TAPAS 2005**	**TAPAS 2006**	**TAPAS 2007**
Number of actions	**135**	**38**	**22**	**24**	**16**	**8**	**27**
Agri-environmental indicators	**731 400** ***711 400*** ***26 actions***	487 000 *467 000* *18 actions*	244 400 *244 400* *8 actions*				
Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting	**25 000** ***25 000*** ***1 action***	25 000 *25 000* *1 action*					
Data on physical aspects of European agriculture	**740 125** ***702 369*** ***37 actions***	177 000 *143 500* *10 actions*	206 979 *206 970* *7 actions*	356146 *351 889* *20 actions*			
Rural development	**1 094 217** ***1 039 211*** ***32 actions***	285 500 *230 500* *9 actions*	137 000 *137 000* *7 actions*			211 520 *211 514* *4 actions*	460 197 *12 actions*
Statistics on farm structure	**113 850** ***113 850*** ***4 actions***			113 850 *113 850* *4 actions*			
Farm registers	**1 818 849** ***1 818 849*** ***14 actions***				1 682 849 *1 682 849* *11 actions*	136 000 *136 000* *3 actions*	
Small units	**225 183** ***225 132*** ***6 actions***				215 183 *215 132* *5 actions*	10 000 *10 000* *1 actions*	
Organic farming	**594 895** ***15 actions***						594 895 *15 actions*
Total allocated	**5 343 519**	974 500	588 379	469 996	1 898 032	357 520	1 055 092
Total commitment In %	***5 230 706*** ***97.9 %***	*866 000* *88.9 %*	*588 379* *100 %*	*465 749* *99.1 %*	*1 897 981* *100 %*	*357 514* *100 %*	1 055 092 *100 %*

ANNEX 2

TAPAS 2003–2007
Number of action plans by work area and Member State

COUNTRY	Agri-environmental indicators	Data on physical aspects of European agriculture + EAA	Rural development	Statistics on farm structure	Farm registers	Small units	Organic farming	Total
BE	2	1	4	0	0	0	1	**8**
CZ	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	**3**
DK	3	4	2	0	0	1	3	**13**
DE	5	1	5	0	1	0	0	**12**
EE	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	**6**
EL	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	**1**
ES	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	**5**
FR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
IE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
IT	3	4	2	0	1	0	3	**13**
CY	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	**1**
LV	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	**5**
LT	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	**4**
LU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
HU	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	**6**
MT	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	**3**
NL	3	0	4	0	1	0	0	**8**
AT	2	3	2	0	1	0	0	**8**
PL	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	**2**
PT	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	**4**
SI	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	**3**
SK	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	**6**
FI	1	5	1	0	1	0	1	**9**
SE	5	1	3	0	1	0	1	**11**
UK	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	**4**
Total	**26**	**38**	**32**	**4**	**14**	**6**	**15**	**135**

ANNEX 3

TAPAS 2003–2007

Amounts committed by work area and Member State

COUNTRY	Agri-environmental indicators	Data on physical aspects of European agriculture + EAA	Rural development	Statistics on farm structure	Farm registers	Small units	Organic farming	Total	%
BE	90 000	25 000	160 548	0	0	0	37 627	**313 175**	*5.9*
CZ	0	40 000	0	0	60 000	0	0	**100 000**	*1.9*
DK	29 000	72 000	28 000	0	0	10 000	55 000	**194 000**	*3.6*
DE	201 000	20 000	192 500	0	243 000	0	0	**656 500**	*12.3*
EE	0	29 700	19 343	13 950	53 856	0	14 650	**131 499**	*2.5*
EL	0	0	0	0	0	0	144 000	**144 000**	*2.7*
ES	12 000	73 729	24 000	0	0	0	0	**109 729**	*2.1*
FR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	*0.0*
IE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	*0.0*
IT	127 500	126 000	103 968	0	311 440	0	200 337	**869 245**	*16.3*
CY	0	0	0	0	42 000	0	0	**42 000**	*0.8*
LV	0	21 096	0	0	64 069	18 083	16 284	**119 532**	*2.2*
LT	0	14 000	0	0	0	9 000	31 000	**54 000**	*1.0*
LU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	*0.0*
HU	0	30 500	58 361	0	0	29 700	34 597	**153 158**	*2.9*
MT	0	28 600	29 283	0	0	0	0	**57 883**	*1.1*
NL	85 000	0	110 000	0	60 000	0	0	**255 000**	*4.8*
AT	55 000	43 500	91 214	0	446 639	0	0	**636 353**	*11.9*
PL	0	0	0	54 000	45 000	0	0	**99 000**	*1.9*
PT	0	33 500	30 000	0	175 845	0	0	**239 345**	*4.5*
SI	0	11 250	0	9 900	0	113 400	0	**134 550**	*2.5*
SK	0	38 000	0	36 000	54 000	45 000	7 200	**180 200**	*3.4*
FI	31 500	138 250	27 000	0	36 000	0	43 400	**276 150**	*5.2*
SE	77 000	20 000	55 000	0	40 000	0	10 800	**202 800**	*3.8*
UK	23 400	0	165 000	0	187 000	0	0	**375 400**	*7.0*
Total	**731 400**	**765 125**	**1 094 217**	**113 850**	**1 818 849**	**225 183**	**594 895**	**5 343 519**	*100.0*
%	*13.7*	*14.3*	*20.5*	*2.1*	*34.0*	*4.2*	*11.1*	*100.0*	

ANNEX 4

List of actions by work area, year and Member State

Physical aspects of European Agriculture

These actions continue those undertaken under the previous plans (see Second Progress Report, COM(2002) 79). They were limited to the annual plans for 2003 and 2004 (both Phases I and II) and covered the following thirty-seven actions:

2003

DK: Improvement of meat balances
DK: Improvement of fodder balance
IT: Improvement of fodder balance
AT: Improvement of fodder balance
AT: Flower and vegetable production
AT: Improvement of wine production forecasts
PT: New methods for livestock survey
PT: Production of flowers
FI: Advance estimates of cereal area and output
SE: Internet-based cereals data collection

2004 Phase I

DK: Fruit and vegetables statistics
ES: Fruit and vegetables production in greenhouses
ES: Usefulness of data contained in SIMOGAN system
FI: Horticulture statistics
FI: Electronic data transmission
FI: Data collection using sample surveys
FI: Improvement of milk and milk product statistics

2004 Phase II

CZ: Monthly dairy statistics
CZ: Statistics on fruit production
DK: Use of bovine register for livestock statistics
DE: Use of bovine register for cattle population
EE: Monthly dairy statistics
EE: Pilot survey on fruit tree plantations
IT: Improvement of statistics on poultry meat
IT: Improvement of statistics on areas of secondary vegetable production
IT: Administrative sources for cattle and buffaloes
LV: Dairy statistics
LV: Statistics on the production of fruit and vegetables
LT: Monthly dairy statistics
LT: Statistics on the production of vegetables
HU: Monthly statistics on milk products
HU: Pilot survey on the production of vegetables
MT: Milk of small ruminants
MT: Statistics on the production of fruit and vegetables
SI: Administrative sources in livestock statistics
SK: Monthly statistics on milk products

SK: Statistics on the production of fruit and vegetables

Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting

This action continues those undertaken under the previous plans (see Second Progress Report, COM(2002) 79). It was pursued in the annual plan for 2003:

2003

BE: Environmental aspects of economic accounts for agriculture

Agri-environmental indicators

These actions continue those undertaken under the previous plans (see Second Progress Report, COM(2002) 79). They were pursued in the annual plans for 2003 and 2004 (Phase I), and covered the following twenty-six actions:

2003

BE: Development of agri-environmental indicators
DK: Correlation between variables in the first pesticide use survey
DE: Biodiversity in agricultural landscapes
DE: Organic fertiliser
ES: Development of soil indicators
IT: Analysis of data requirements and availability for agri-environmental indicators
IT: Pesticide and fertiliser use in orchards
NL: Use of renewable energy in agriculture
NL: Organic farming and the market, price of organic products
NL: Collection and analysis of pesticide use statistics
AT: Harmonisation of AEIs and SDIs
AT: Collection and evaluation of pesticide use statistics in agriculture and forestry
FI: Development of an AEI statistical system
SE: Agricultural energy consumption
SE: Agricultural diversification
SE: Agricultural marginalisation
SE: Agricultural land in protected areas
SE: Development of statistics on quantities of active substances used on different crops

2004 Phase I

BE: Agri-environmental indicators Nos 9, 10 and 11
DK: Survey on sources of energy use in the agricultural sector
DK: Investigation of the apparent mismatch of pesticide use data with total sales data
DE: Agri-environmental indicators Nos 26 and 28
DE: Management of fertiliser application
DE: Use of pesticides in wine-growing
IT: Improved statistics on food pesticide residues
UK: Development and validation of an indicator of improvement in agricultural practice

Rural development

These actions continue those undertaken under the previous plans (see Second Progress Report, COM(2002) 79). They were pursued in the annual plans for 2003 and 2004 (Phase I), continued in the plans for 2006 and 2007, and covered the following thirty-two actions:

2003

BE: Activities of undertakings with reduced agricultural output
DE: Methodological aspects of multifunctionality
DE: Economic accounts for forestry
IT: Multifunctionality of agricultural holdings
NL: Rural development, recreation in agricultural holdings
AT: Regional accounts for agriculture
PT: Rural development indicators
FI: Creation of a rural development statistical database
UK: Study of rural development and agricultural activity

2004 Phase I

BE: Improvement of the territorial breakdown of data
ES: Sources and methods for the acquisition of data on intermediate consumption
ES: Consumption of animal feedingstuffs by livestock
NL: Importance of agri-tourism
NL: Rural nature and landscape conservation by farmers
SE: Improved division into rural and urban areas
SE: Improvement of FADN concerning rural development

2006

BE: Competitiveness indicators and agri-environmental indicators
DE: Evaluation of measures of axes 1 and 2 of the revised RD regulation
HU: Developing new indicators
AT: Description of rural areas and their development: geodata infrastructure

2007

BE: Nutrient balance for nitrogen
DK: Nutrient balances at regional level
DK: Estimation of prices of agricultural land
DE: Assessment of unutilised forest growth
DE: Scale-dependent nutrient balances
EE: Nutrient balances
IT: Rural areas and Internet access
HU: National and regional nitrogen and phosphorus balances
MT: National and regional nitrogen balance
NL: Regional mineral balances
SE: Regional nutrient balances, Eurostat/OECD method
UK: Regional nutrient balances, soil estimates

Statistics on the structure of farms

These actions were limited to the 2004 plan (Phase II) and covered the following four actions:

2004 Phase II

EE: Processing and validation of the individual data from the 2003 survey
PL: Development of the "2002" standard gross margins
SI: Development of the "2000" standard gross margins
SK: Development of the "2002" standard gross margins

Farm statistical registers

These actions began with the 2005 plan, were continued in 2006, and covered the following fourteen actions:

2005

CZ: Updating of the farm register from administrative data sources
DE: Integration of the farm business register into the national business register and CAP
EE: Survey of changes in the activity of holdings after the agricultural census 2001
IT: Setting up of the farm statistical register and updating of methodologies
CY: Farm register updating
LV: Improvement of the quality of the statistical farm register
AT: New conception of a holding and business register for agriculture and forestry
PL: Updating of farm register
PT: Updating the agricultural sample base
SK: Improvement and updating of the farm statistical register
UK: Farm statistical register development and maintenance

2006

NL: Connecting the farm register to the business register
FI: Coordination of the agricultural and horticultural registers with the business register
SE: Comparison between the business register and the farm register

Surveys of small farms (small units surveys)

These actions began with the 2005 plan, were continued in 2006, and covered the following six actions:

2005

LV: Sample survey of small units
LT: Improvement of statistics on small statistical units
HU: Small units in agriculture
SI: Coverage of small statistical units in agriculture
SK: Small units survey

2006

DK: Small agricultural units

Organic farming

This field was introduced with the 2007 plan, and the following fifteen actions are planned:

2007

BE: Production, processing, consumption, balance sheet for organic products
DK: Organic animal production
DK: Direct sale of organic crop production
DK: Estimation of organic crop production
EE: Organic production of products of animal origin
GR: Integration and evaluation of organic production data from various sources
IT: Wholesale prices of organic products
IT: Consumer prices of organic products
IT: Structure, activities, agricultural practices of organic farming, multi-domain context
LV: Collection system on organic farming
LT: Organic production of agricultural products
HU: Organic production, trade and consumption

SK: Growing of organic products; manufacture, sales and utilisation of organic products
FI: Organic cereals in the food chain
SE: Data on organic products