Proposal for a Council Decision on improving Community agricultural statistics

(95/C 336/04)

COM(95) 472 final — 95/0250(CNS)

(Submitted by the Commission on 17 October 1995)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 43 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament,

Having regard to the framework programme for priority actions in the field of statistical information 1993 to 1997 [1], and in particular its Article 4 (a) thereof,

Whereas this 1993 to 1997 framework programme foresees a better utilization of the resources devoted to agricultural statistics by the implementation of the results of a 'screening' operation carried out under the previous statistical programme [2];

Whereas this 'screening' has identified the main features of the changes required to Community agricultural statistics;

Whereas these features include the main areas where economies may be obtained and where there are new reinforced needs; whereas these changes should conform to agreed general principles;

Whereas the national adaptations have to be coordinated and monitored at Community level, in order to ensure that:

(i) data remain adequately reliable at country level and adequately comparable between countries;

(ii) the changes to Council legislation which may be necessary can be identified, prepared and proposed by the Commission in good time and in addition that Commission decisions implementing details of Council legislation are also taken in good time;

(iii) methodological studies by different Member States into efficient ways of meeting the new information needs are complementary and comprehensive;

(iv) the scheduling of national activities take good account of the collective Community interest;

(v) the community financial resources facilitating this programme are used in the most efficient way.

Whereas the best means to achieve this coordination is within a formal structure which allows the technical constraints and preferences to be considered collectively and choices made which reconcile national and community interests; whereas the broad conclusion of this collective choice must be taken into account in the forward planning of statistics submitted each year for examination by the Statistical Programme Committee;

Whereas a financial contribution from the Community to Member States is necessary under carefully defined conditions to facilitate the changes required;

Whereas to achieve the desired economies, changes may be necessary in the technical implementation of certain surveys; such changes should be permitted subject to appropriate safeguards;

Whereas the collection and primary processing by Member States of agricultural statistics needed for Community purposes and the coordination of this work as well as the secondary processing, storage and dissemination of the data concerned by the services of the Commission, governed where appropriate by legal acts of the Council, is fully in accord with the principles of subsidiarity,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Purpose

In order to improve the way Community agricultural statistics meet current information needs following the reform of the common agricultural policy, Member

(1) Council Decision 93/464/EEC (OJ No L 219, 28. 8. 1993).

(2) Council resolution of 19 June 1989 (OJ No C 161, 26. 6. 1989).

States shall adapt their national agricultural statistics in the work areas set out in Annexes I and II hereto, to the objectives, characteristics and criteria given in Annex III.

Article 2

Role of Commission

The Commission shall contribute to this process by (a) establishing in conjunction with Member States (i) common work scheduling and (ii) general frameworks for methodological studies, (b) checking data quality and comparability, (c) identifying and implementing community level actions which are important for the purpose of this decision.

Article 3

Time frame and procedure

A first phase of improvements to Community agricultural statistics shall be carried out during the period 1995 to 1997. It shall be coordinated by the Commission through technical action plans as provided for in Article 4 hereto.

Article 4

Technical action plans for agricultural statistics

1. A technical action plan for agricultural statistics shall be decided by the Commission each year in accordance with the procedure in Article 10. These plans shall cover the actions to be carried out by the Member States pursuant to Article 1 hereto. They shall use available resources in such a way as to make the greatest improvement to the cost-efficiency of Community agricultural statistics, in meeting the requirements of Community law, informal agreements and new information needs.

2. Each annual technical action plan shall include a detailed statement of activity for the next year and an indicative timetable for the following two years. It shall take account of:

(i) the existing obligations for the years in question, e.g. the list and periodicity of Community surveys to be carried out by the Member States and other data to be provided to the Commission;

(ii) written input from Member States as provided for in Article 5. (b) and (c) hereof,

(iii) the resources required for each of the actions under consideration and the resources available.

Article 5

Member State reports

Member States shall submit each year (year n) before 31 March:

(a) a succinct report on the execution of the actions agreed for the previous year, (year n — 1);

(b) a description of the actions proposed for the following year (year n + 1);

(c) notification of any relevant major activities planned or foreseen in the two years thereafter (years n + 2 and n + 3) which are relevant to the purposes of this Decision.

The description shall cover the changes proposed for immediate action and any preparatory work needed, difficulties foreseen and proposals for overcoming them, the implications for national and Community resources and proposals for improvements at Community level. Actions for which Community financial support is sought shall be identified.

Article 6

Financial provisions

1. The Community shall contribute to the costs of adapting national agricultural statistical systems or of preparatory work related to new or reinforced needs.

2. The amount of the contribution for Member States shall be decided each year by the Commission in conjunction with the technical action plan and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 10.

3. The contribution shall be made available to Member States each year after submission and approval by the Commission of the annual report on the execution of the actions agreed for the previous year. The Commission shall carry out any on-the-spot checks it judges necessary.

Article 7

Flexibility

Where necessary to meet the purposes of this Decision, the Commission may approve a Member State's request to adapt one or more of the following features of the surveys listed in Annex 4: regions covered, territorial sub-divisions, definitions, survey methodology, survey

date, list of characteristics and size classes, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 10.

Article 8

Adapting to changing circumstances

The Commission may add new items to Annex I (areas in which potential economies have been identified) or Annex II (areas where there are new or reinforced needs) in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 10.

Article 9

Role of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics

The Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics (SCAS) [1] shall meet at least once a year to discuss the following:

(i) the reports made by the Member States on the execution of the programme;

(ii) the actions proposed by the Member States for the following year and the outlook for the two years thereafter;

(iii) the technical action plan for the following year;

(iv) the Community financial contribution provided for in Article 6 hereto.

[1] Instituted by Council Decision 72/279/EEC of 31 July 1972.

Article 10

Necessary measures for the implementation

The Commission shall adopt the necessary measures for the implementation of this Decision. The Commission shall be assisted by the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics, hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'.

The representative of the Commission shall submit to the Committee a draft of the measures to be taken. The Committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter, if necessary by taking a vote.

The opinion shall be recorded in the minutes; in addition, each Member State shall have the right to ask to have its position recorded in the minutes.

The Commission shall take the utmost account of the opinion delivered by the Committee. It shall inform the Committee of the manner in which its opinion has been taken into account.

Article 11

Report

Before 1 December 1997 the Commission, having consulted the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics, shall make a report on the operation of this Decision to the European Parliament and to the Council accompanied if necessary by proposals for its renewal.

Article 12

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

ANNEX I

AREAS IN WHICH POTENTIAL ECONOMIES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED [1]

1. Fam structure surveys: less frequency, reduction of typology and of the questionnaire.

2. Survey on the area under vines: elimination of several tables; possible integration into the structure survey.

3. Survey on fruit trees: possible elimination of intermediate surveys.

[1] In the review of agricultural statistics carried out under the statistical programme of the European Communities 1989 to 1992.

4. Farm income index: elimination of the first desegregated estimates in October, less detail.

5. Total income of agricultural households: greater flexibility in frequency and in target concepts.

6. Animal surveys: to apply the agriflex concept, i.e. to adapt the frequency of the surveys to the importance of livestock in each country.

7. Slaughterings: meat production to concentrate investigations on industrial slaughtering.

8. Dairy statistics: to eliminate weekly satistics; to eliminate statistics on casein, to reduce annual and dairy structure statistics.

9. Eggs and hatcheries: to eliminate statistics on eggs in incubators and on layer chickens.

10. Animal feeding stuffs: reduced frequency of surveys (every five years) for the effective establishment of a fodder balance sheet (supply and demand).

ANNEX II

AREAS WHERE THERE ARE NEW OR REINFORCED NEEDS (1)

Topics

1. Rapid estimates of sowings and planting intentions at the beginning of the winter for principal crops.

2. Estimates on the volume of stocks of principal products (*inter alia* cereals, oil seeds, meats).

3. Statistically reliable data on poultry and egg production.

4. Statistically reliable data on fruit and vegetable production.

5. Estimates of the consumption of principal products: animal consumption of cereal and oil seed cakes: and wine consumption.

6. Inclusion in the structure survey of questions about other gainful employment and of breakdown according to target regions.

7. Publication of harmonized Community forestry statistics.

8. Agriculture price statistics: new selection of the absolute agricultural price series taking into account the technical progress and economic changes.

Methodology

9. Improved and new methods to allow Member States to meet more efficiently existing and new information needs, e.g. light surveys, administrative data, panels, remote sensing.

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(1) Identified in the review of agricultural statistics carried out under the statistical programme of the European Communities 1989 to 1992. *NB:* Any new statistical obligations will be the subject of separate Council legal instruments.

ANNEX III

OBJECTIVES, CHARACTERISTICS AND CRITERIA

Constant improvement

1. The Community agricultural statistics (CAS) will steadily increase in cost efficiency and in completeness in meeting Community and other needs for agricultural statistical information.

Positive comparability checking

2. The CAS will incorporate continuing quality checking to ensure that data are adequate for the needs to which they are put. In particular Member States may be required to inform the Commission and other Member States about the statistical methods used and their suitability.

Response burden

3. The CAS will impose the smallest burden of response consistent with meeting needs for information.

Integration of agriculture and other statistics

4. The improvement to CAS will facilitate (a) drawing on statistics from other areas, (b) contributing data to general statistical systems, (c) use of the agricultural statistics apparatus to collect statistical information required by other areas.

Complementarity between Community and national levels

5. National agricultural statistics systems may collect and deliver to the Commission data not formally provided for at the Community level and certain applications developed directly at Community level (for example Eurofarm, SPEL) may be used to provide to Member States information which is not available at the national level.

Concentrate on the most important

6. The amount of information each Member State supplies may vary according to the importance of the phenomenon covered regionally, nationally and at Community level.

Most efficient national approach

7. Member States may collect basic data by the statistical method which is most efficient in providing data of the definition, timeliness and accuracy required (subject to 2). The use of administrative data as input into agricultural statistics is not excluded.

Optimization

8. The detailed Community requirements as set out in various Community legal instruments and informal agreements do not in themselves constitute an optimized structure. Each Member State optimizes in its own way, how its national system of agricultural statistics meets the Community requirements. The Community requirements shall not unnecessarily impede national optimization.

ANNEX IV

COUNCIL REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Directive 72/280/EEC OJ No L 179, 7. 8. 1972, p. 2	Council Directive of 31 July 1972 on the statistical surveys to be made by Member States on milk and milk products
Directive 76/625/EEC OJ No L 218, 11. 8. 1976, p. 10	Council Directive of 20 July 1976 concerning statistical surveys to be carried out by the Member States in order to determine the production potential of plantations of certain species of fruit trees
Directive 93/23/EEC OJ No L 149, 21. 6. 1993, p. 1	Council Directive of 1 June 1993 on the statistical surveys to be carried out on pig production
Directive 93/24/EEC OJ No L 149, 21. 6. 1993, p. 5	Council Directive of 1 June 1993 on the statistical surveys to be carried out on bovine animal production
Directive 93/25/EEC OJ No L 149, 21. 6. 1993, p. 10	Council Directive of 1 June 1993 on the statistical surveys to be carried out on sheep and goat stocks
Regulation (EEC) No 3768/85 OJ No L 362, 31. 12. 1985, p. 8	Council Regulation (EEC) No 3768/85 of 20 December 1985 adapting, on account of the accession of Spain and Portugal, certain agricultural acts as regards the voting procedure of the Committees
Regulation (EEC) No 571/88 OJ No L 56, 2. 3. 1988, p. 1	Council Regulation (EEC) No 571/88 of 29 February 1988 on the organization of Community surveys on the structure of agricultural holdings between 1988 and 1997
Regulation (EEC) No 837/90 OJ No L 88, 3. 4. 1990, p. 1	Council Regulation (EEC) No 837/90 of 26 March 1990 concerning statistical information to be supplied by the Member States on cereals production
Regulation (EEC) No 959/93 OJ No L 98, 24. 4. 1993, p. 1	Council Regulation (EEC) No 959/93 of 5 April 1993 concerning statistical information to be supplied by Member States on crop products other than cereals