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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the implementation of Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy

{SWD(2019) 438 final}

I. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns the implementation of information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (CAP) for 2017 and 2018, under Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy[1] (hereinafter 'the Regulation').

Article 45(1) first subparagraph of the Regulation states that information measures financed "shall aim, in particular, to help explain, implement and develop the CAP and to raise public awareness of its content and objectives to reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns, to inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas and to promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it. Article 45(2) last subparagraph states that these measures "shall also contribute to the corporate communication of the Union's political priorities in so far as those priorities are related to the general objectives of this Regulation".

Information measures financed fall into two main categories:

- Those submitted by third party organisations for co-financing under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund - EAGF (grants);
- Those at the initiative of the Commission and financed at a rate of 100% under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund - EAGF (direct actions/public procurement).

According to Article 45(5) of the Regulation, a report on the implementation of the information measures under the Regulation shall be presented to the European Parliament and the Council every two years. This is the eighth such report[2].

In the 2017-2018 period, the Commission intensified its corporate communication activities on the basis of its ten political priorities, with a special emphasis on investment, economic growth and jobs. Resources were pooled from different spending programmes in order to fund communication priorities based on the general objectives of the European Union. During this period, Commission departments, including DG Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), continued to contribute to the execution of this corporate approach. The corporate communication campaigns rolled out in 2017 and 2018 were designed to highlight how the EU delivers, empowers and protects citizens. The focus was also on raising public awareness about current and future challenges and on the need to build a more united, stronger and more democratic union.

This corporate communication approach is central to DG AGRI's communication strategy for the 2016-2020 period. Within this framework, information measures are defined each year in annual action plans.

More information on the direct and indirect actions are to be found in the Commision Staff Working document accompanying this report.

[1] Official Journal of the European Union, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 549.

[2] COM (2003) 235 final of 8.5.2003; COM (2007) 324 final of 13.6.2007; COM (2009) 237 final of 20.5.2009; COM (2011) 294 final of 25.5.2011; COM(2013) 645 final of 20.9.2013;COM(2016) 83 final of 23.2.2016; COM(2017) 777 final of 19.12.2017

II. BUDGET

The budget made available for information measures under budget line 05 08 06 (enhancing public awareness of the CAP) originally foreseen in the financing decision, was EUR 8 million in 2017; and EUR 8 million in 2018. (In addition, in the framework of the Commission corporate communication actions during the period, 8.480.000 EUR were co-delegated from DG AGRI to DG Communication (DG COMM), which is responsible for managing the Commission's corporate campaigns, in 2017 and 8.700.000 EUR in 2018.

The breakdown of the budget earmarked between public procurement (actions taken at the initiative of the Commission) and grants (co-financed actions) was as follows:

2017: public procurement (4.5 million EUR) (56.25%) – Grants (3.5 million EUR) (43.75 %)
2018: public procurement (4 million EUR) (50%) – Grants (4 million EUR) (50%)

Execution of the 2017 measures reached 98.3% in terms of commitments and 90.2% in terms of payments.

Execution of the 2018 measures reached 99.9% in terms of commitments; the figures for payments on 2018 measures were not yet finalised at the time of drafting this report as payments could still be made until 31 December 2019.

III. BREAKDOWN OF ACTIONS FINANCED

The focus of direct and indirect communication actions in 2017 and 2018 was primarily on issues related to the preparation of the reform of the common agricultural policy and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) sectoral legal proposals. There was a concerted effort during this period to raise awareness and engagement on the future of the CAP among stakeholders, policy-makers, and citizens across the EU. In addition, efforts were intensified to further develop synergies with different partners in the field of communication, within the Commission services and with other EU institutions, with the national authorities and other stakeholders.

In 2017, the Commission consulted widely on the simplification and modernisation of the CAP so as to maximise its contribution to the College's ten policy priorities and to the Sustainable Development Goals. A broad public consultation took place in the first half of 2017 which encouraged stakeholders, including non-agricultural actors, to have their say on the future of the CAP[3]. This public consultation generated a big public response, with more than 322 000 contributions. Subsequently, an important stakeholder conference with more than 500 participants was held on 7 July 2017 in Brussels. This facilitated debate on the ideas submitted by governmental and non-governmental organisations and citizens in view of the preparation of the Commission communication on the future of the CAP.

The communication on the "Future of Food and Farming" was adopted on 29 November 2017[4]. Information measures around the Communication (and the subsequent legal proposals) were accompanied by considerable press, social media and audiovisual support. In the following days and months, with the support of DG COMM, the Commision Representations in the Member States, national authorities and stakeholders, DG AGRI embarked on a series

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/cap-modernising/2017_en

[4] COM (2017) 713 final of 29.11.2017

of outreach meetings with the general public and stakeholders at national and regional level. The aim was to discuss the ideas put forward in the Communication on how best to take advantage of the opportunities ahead for European agriculture while addressing current and future challenges, including climate change, price volatility, and the need to support the sector in adapting to a changing environment. Over a five month period, up to 50 events were organised with over 3,300 participants – citizens, stakeholders, senior decision-makers and media – many with an important multiplier effect in their Member State and region. Feedback from participants showed this exercise was useful for policymakers in the context of the preparation of the MFF sectoral legislative proposals on the CAP.

The major policy initiative of 2018 was the adoption on 1 June of the legislative proposals on the future CAP in the framework of the MFF package[5] . In the context of the Commission's overall corporate approach to communicating the future MFF, DG AGRI intensified communication efforts to raise awareness of the legal proposals. This included a series of outreach events led by the Commissioner for Agriculture and rural development, and DG AGRI officials in the Member States. Information efforts were accompanied by a social media campaign and included extensive press, online publication, and audio-visual activity.

The willingness of Commission representatives to engage in consultation and dialogue was very much appreciated by citizens, stakeholders, decision-makers and NGOs. Presentations were frequently followed by very interactive question and answer sessions. Over eighty such events took place in the Member States from June to December 2018. More than 7000 persons participated, many with an important multiplier effect in their Member State and region (Ministers, parliamentarians, MEPs, leading stakeholders, NGOs, officials, senior decision-makers and media).

The exercise helped increase understanding of the Commission's objectives as outlined in the MFF CAP proposals. It furthered the general objectives of the Commission's corporate communication approach, including to listen, and engage in dialogue with civil society and the general public on EU values and the impact of EU actions.

DG AGRI continued during this period to actively contribute to the corporate communication campaigns developed by DG COMM - #InvestEU, #EUandME, EU Protects. It also worked with DG COMM and other DGs on the planning process during this period for the pilot corporate campaign on rural areas, rolled out by DG COMM in 2019.

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[5] Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, COM/2018/392 final - 2018/0216 (COD)

Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013,COM/2018/393 final - 2018/0217 (COD)

Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products, (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, (EU) No 251/2014 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of aromatised wine products, (EU) No 228/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the Union and (EU) No 229/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in favour of the smaller Aegean islands

COM/2018/394 final/2

1. Grants (co-financed information measures taken at the initiative of third party organisations)

Article 45 (information measures) of the Regulation envisages two types of measures to be funded through grants, annual work programmes or other specific measures presented by third parties. Specific information measures refer to information events limited in time and space and implemented on the basis of a single budget. Such events can range from conferences to a comprehensive information campaign covering several types of information activities (such as audiovisual productions, media events, conferences and workshops) carried out in various regions and/or Member States. An annual work programme is a set of two to five specific information measures. For 2017 and 2018, it was decided (as in previous years) to retain only specific information measures for co-financing, with the aim of simplifying the grants scheme and ensuring coherence between the different communication actions.

For 2017, the call for proposals[6] encouraged information actions which aimed to illustrate the CAP's contribution to growth and jobs and viable rural communities; the role of farming and forestry in climate adaptation and mitigation measures; sustainable farming, and improving fairness in the agri-food supply chain. For 2018, the call for proposals[7], in addition, focussed on the CAP's role in fostering innovation and the exchange of knowledge; and also on encouraging young people to take up farming, and fostering healthy eating habits.

For both years, the general public was targeted (in particular young people in urban areas), and farmers and other stakeholders active in rural areas.

The maximum rate of co-financing for the measures referred to above was set at 60% of eligible costs. In 2017, sixteen measures were co-financed. In 2018, twenty measures were co-financed, making a total of 36 co-financed actions (all at a rate of 60%) for the period 2017-2018.

In 2017 and 2018, the following actions were supported:
- Sixteen grants were awarded to media and communications agencies for measures promoting awareness at national level of the importance of agriculture and the rural areas for society as a whole. Often, these actions included pedagogical elements and awareness raising events on food and farming, emphasising the role of EU support and the importance of young farmers for the sector.
- Support was also given to seven actions at national level led by farmers' associations or entities with strong links to the agricultural sector.
- two organisations active in the environmental domain at national level received support for measures related to raising awarenes of issues related respectively to sustainability, and biodiversity.
- Six actions with a significant trans-national element proposed by media companies, and one from an EU level environmental NGO were supported; the main focus of these cross-border measues was to inform EU citizens on the contribution of the CAP to their lives.
- Also at national level, an organisation promoting education related to European citizenship, a county council promoting local traditional agricultural products, and a national association active in water/irrigation issues also received support.

[6] Call for proposals for 2017,Official Journal of the European Union, 2016/C 401/09 of 29.10.2016
[7] Call for proposals for 2018,Official Journal of the European Union, 2017/C 339/07 of 10.10.2017

-Finally, in an innovative concept, a cooperative in the creative field raising awareness of CAP among young people and citizens through musical and artistic events was also co-funded.

Invariably measures included a mix of communication tools (social media, online, print and audiovisual) directed at the farming community, the general public and young people, and often including an educational dimension.

The calls for proposals encouraged grant applicants to seek better definition of target audiences, better dissemination of information, and analysis of the impact of the measures in terms of the numbers of persons reached directly and indirectly. Applicants were required to submit detailed plans for their proposed measures, including project implementation, message delivery and measurement of effectiveness. It is important to emphasise that a considerable number of co-financed actions reached a wider audience beyond the immediate participants, thanks to the multiplier effect of the specialised press and media, as well as increased use of the internet and social media as dissemination tools.

Applications were assessed in the light of rigorous eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria as laid down in the calls for proposals. This was in line with the Financial Regulation[8] and reflected the Commission's aim to achieve equal treatment and fair competition between applicants[9].

The Commission Staff Working Document accompanying this report gives detailed information on the grants awarded during the reporting period, including the number of successful applications per Member State.

2. Direct actions/public procurement (information measures taken at the initiative of the Commission)

In 2017-2018, as in the past, an important number of information measures were carried out at the initiative of the Commission.

a) Media networking

Supporting the media with relevant user-friendly information and briefings on developments in the CAP and rural development continued, as previously, to feature strongly in communication actions. As in the past, this had a very significant multiplier effect, especially since development of social media and internet based communication received a strong boost in this period. Ongoing growth and maintenance of the platform for journalists and professional communicators, www.Ag-Press.eu, and the organisation of study trips and seminars for Ag-Press members continued to foster close contacts and exchanges with both journalists specialising in agricultural issues, and also the non-specialist media. At the end of

[8] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, OJ L193, 30.7.2018

[9] More detailed information on grants are also to be found on the Europa website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants-for-information-measures_en

2018, the Ag-Press network included around 950 journalists. The network continues to be a valuble resource for the Commission, and a useful network for its members. DG AGRI social media activity (via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) expanded considerably and had a rapidly growing audience. This was important in attracting specialists towards the website and the comprehensive information and latest news, and also in reaching the general public.

In the six study trips during 2017 and 2018, groups of journalists had the opportunity to experience often very different farming conditions in regions and Member States other than their own. Issues coverered *inter alia* included competitiveness, sustainability, precision farming, bio-economy, and generational renewal. Meetings with farmers, rural dwellers and business people on the ground helped to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities confronting agriculture in different Member States and regions. Furthermore, during five seminars with the participation of EU policy experts, journalists received in-depth insights into EU policy developments on agro-food trade, CAP and the food chain, quality policy, innovation in the sector; and also the CAP reform proposals with the participation of the Commissioner for Agriculture and rural development and relevant MEPs.

b) Stakeholder networking - conferences

Stakeholders constitute a very important multiplier of information on agricultural and rural development issues. Conferences continued to be an important forum for consultation and dialogue on the future development of policy in the reporting period. As mentioned in Section III, in line with the Commission's policy priorities and emphasis on broad consultation with civil society, engagement with stakeholders - other EU institutions, Member State administrations, the EU level and national socio-professional sector and the academic community - was intensified in the context of the preparation of the MFF sectoral proposals; and also on issues such as addressing unfair trading practices in the food chain.

This focus on future challenges was also central to DG AGRI's annual flagship EU Agricultural Outlook Conferences. Opened by the Commissioner for Agriculture and rural development, the December 2018 edition explored the latest developments on digitisation and innovation in the farming sector. It also addressed cooperation on trade and investment between the EU and Africa. In both 2017 and 2018, the conference put a strong emphasis on the modernisation of the CAP, and on the work undertaken together with the Joint Research Centre on the forecasts for the EU agricultural markets. Participants included EU institutions, governments and international organisations, those involved in the food supply chain, market experts, academics, think tanks and civil society.

An event on the development of plant proteins in the EU was co-organised by the Commission and the Austrian Presidency of the EU in Vienna in November 2018, with the participation of the European Parliament. Around 200 invited experts from the agricultural supply chains for feed and food production, research and advisory networks, and national and regional administrations discussed the main findings of the Commission's report on the development of plant proteins in the European Union; and how the existing and future policy framework could support the further unlocking of potential for plant protein production in the Union[10].

Two round tables on the proposed greening architecture of the new CAP were organised in Brussels in November and December 2018, in cooperation with the International Union for

[10]https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/plants-and-plant-products/plant-products/cereals/development-plant-proteins_en

Conservation of Nature. This facilitated an exchange of views between stakeholders representing the agricultural and environmental sectors on how the legal proposals on the future CAP might be implemented.

The Agricultural Innovation Summit in Lisbon, in October 2017 was another significant landmark. This was a joint initiative between a Portuguese Consortium, the Portuguese Government, the EIP-AGRI network and the European Network for Rural Development. Another important conference on EU agricultural research and innovation took place in May 2018 providing food for thought on how to engage stakeholders in the definition of future European Research and Innovation activities in the sector.

c) General public activities

Participation at fairs

The Commission's emphasis on listening and engaging with citizens and raising public awareness about the EU as a whole, its role and values, remained central to participation at fairs during this period. DG AGRI intensified its actions targetting citizens and stakeholders at nine farm fairs with the theme "from farm to fork, sustainable food for our future". This was often in cooperation with other DGs and services, including DG SANTE, DG MARE and DG RTD, as well as the Commission representations in the Member States. Often the presence of the Commissioner for Agriculture and rural development together with senior Member State representatives at fairs such as the International Green Week in Berlin, and the *Salon de l'Agriculture* in Paris generated intense interest and important media coverage in the national and regional media. Participation was also ensured in agricultural fairs in several other Member States.

Efforts continued to provide attractive and effective communication material and activities for fairs in this period. These were often designed to appeal to families and schoolchildren.

Educational pack for school children

During this period, the educational pack for school children aged between eleven and fifteen years ("edutainment pack") was finalised, promoted and distributed through the Europe Direct Information Centres and the Commission representations in the Member States, with the support of a digital and social media campaign.

The pack aims to explain in an attractive pedagogical format the role of the farmer and farm families, their contribution to society and the challenges they face. Efforts to raise awareness of DG AGRI's educational resources in 2018 resulted in an impressive increase in visits to the relevant DG AGRI webpages.

Social Media

As mentioned above, DG AGRI's social media accounts, which developed considerably in this period, continue to be an important asset when it comes to raising awareness and driving engagement on the topic of the #FutureofCAP amongst stakeholders, policy makers, journalists and citizens. For example, the Instagram account is helping to inform and engage with young, urban audiences on food and food production issues, and therefore highlighting the benefits of the CAP for all citizens.

Overall in this period, increased use of graphic design, visual and audiovisual material boosted the appeal and attractiveness of DG AGRI's communication material for publications, web and social media use.

Publications
In the reporting period, there continued to be a strong focus on the further development of publications in electronic format. As in the past, a number of publications were produced in cooperation with the EU Publications Office, and also the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB). New publications sought to highlight the European culinary heritage, and policy issues including the EU sanitary and phytosanitary rules (in cooperation with DG SANTE). Fact sheets were produced also to explain in particular the legal proposals on the modernisation and simplification of the CAP.

Website
The reporting period saw important changes to the Commission's web presence, designed to make it more user-friendly and relevant for the general public. AGRI web presence activity centred on the digital transformation exercise carried out across the Commission services and the review of web content to improve accessibility and clarity for all users.

The website continued also to be an important source of specialist information on agriculture and rural development. As in the past, it also played a significant role in the process of consulting stakeholders and the general public as to the future direction of policy as regards agriculture and rural areas.

On average, the web trafic increased by 30%.

Visitors
In this period, DG AGRI continued to participate in information sessions with groups of visitors (including stakeholders, students and academics) organised by DG COMM's Visitors Centre. The purpose of these exchanges was to deepen understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing EU agriculture in the context of the future MFF.

Eurobarometer
A special Eurobarometer survey, commissioned by DG AGRI to explore public opinion about agriculture, rural areas and the CAP, was carried out in December 2017 in the EU28. More than nine in ten participants expressed the view that agriculture and rural areas are important for the future. Providing safe, healthy food of high quality should be the main objective of the EU in terms of agricultural and rural policy, with respondents urging more action *inter alia* on the environment and economic growth in rural areas.[11]

[11] https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2161

IV. THE PROPORTION OF SPENDING (COMMITTTMENTS AND PAYMENTS) BETWEEN CO-FINANCED ACTIONS AT THE INITIATIVE OF THIRD PARTIES (GRANTS) AND INFORMATION ACTIONS AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE COMMISSION (PUBLIC PROCUREMENT)[12]

	2017			2018		
	Grants	**Public procurement**	**Total**	**Grants**	**Public procurement**	**Total**
Initial foreseen budget	3.500.000	4.500.000	8.000.000	4.000.000	4.000.000	8.000.000
Commitments in EUR	3.676.801,52 (**)	3.980.580,45 (**)	7.657.381,97	4.008.448,57 (**)	3.893.989,35 (**)	7.902.437,92
% of commitment	105,05%	88,46%	95,72%	100,21%	97,35%	98,78%
Payments in EUR	3.291.910,64	3.734.801,71	7.026.711,35	2.786.752,07 (*)	2.496.542,35 (*)	5.283.294,42
% of disbursement vs commitment	89,53%	93,83%	91,76%	69,52%	64,11%	66,868% (***)

(*) Payments of these actions are ongoing and not yet finalised
(**) cf. Following the amendment of DG AGRI's 2017 and 2018 external communication action plans
(***) Payments for 2018 measures are still ongoing.

Payments are generally lower than the amounts originally committed. In the case of grants, this can be explained by the fact that final costs of the actions are lower than initially foreseen by the beneficiary, and secondly, because not all expenses declared by the beneficiaries can be considered as eligible. In the case of actions taken at the initiative of the Commission, the difference between payments and commitments arises from the fact that, while commitments are fixed, actual expenditure is less than that foreseen due to savings and the use of more cost-effective measures during implementation.

[12] EUR 17.180.000 – codelegated to DG Communication in 2017 and 2018 for Corporate Communication activities is not included in this table

V. CONCLUSION

In the reporting period, the Commission continued to base corporate communication actions on its ten political priorities, focusing on the EU's contribution to jobs and growth, and the tangible benefits delivered by the EU to its citizens.

Information measures carried out in relation to the common agricultural policy and rural development sought to raise awareness on the policy's contribution to economic growth and vibrant rural areas, resource efficiency and climate change mitigation, as well as the provision of food security in the Union.

The period was marked notably by an extensive outreach effort to engage with citizens and stakeholders across the EU on the Commision's reflections and response to future challenges and opportunities for agriculture and rural areas in the EU, in the MFF sectoral proposals.

These communication measures were marked by reinforced cooperation between the Commission services, other EU institutions and the national and regional authorities.