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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000
on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy**

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I. Introduction

This report concerns the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 for the period 2007–2008.

The objectives of the information measures on the CAP as defined by Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 are:

- helping to explain the CAP as well as to implement and develop it,
- promoting the European Model of Agriculture and helping people understand it,
- providing information for farmers and others living in rural areas,
- raising public awareness of the issues and objectives of the CAP.

Actions fall into two main categories:

- those submitted by third party organisations for co-financing by EAGF which may be annual work programmes and specific measures (grants),
- those at the initiative of the Commission and financed at a rate of 100% by EAGF ("direct actions").

It was decided by the Council (Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 814/2000) that a report on the implementation of the Regulation should be presented to the European Parliament and the Council every two years. This is the third such report. The first report covering the period 2000–2002 was presented in May 2003¹. The second report on the 2003-2006 period appeared in June 2007².

The annexes mentioned in the text are to be found in the accompanying Commission Staff Working Document.

II. Budget

For 2007, the same budget (€6.5 million) as 2006 was made available for information measures under budget line 05 08 06. In 2008, this budget was increased to €7 million.

The breakdown between actions to be taken at the initiative of the Commission and actions to be co-financed (grants) was as follows:

2006: direct actions (€ 700 000) (57%) – grants (€2 800 000) (43%)

¹ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (COM(2003) 235 final of 8.5.2003).

² Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (COM(2007) 324 final of 13.6.2007).

2007: direct actions (€ 900 000) (60%) – grants (€ 600 000) (40%)

2008: direct actions (€ 1 000 000) (57%) – grants (€ 800 000) (43%)

Execution of the budget, in terms of commitments, reached 88% for 2007 and 91% for 2008. This reflects a continuation of the steady uptake of the budget allocated to grants in the reporting period.

III. Breakdown of actions financed (in terms of commitments credits)

The first report on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 for 2000–2002 noted the revision in the implementing rules for grants and the significant improvements to the measures carried out (simplification, increased transparency, better evaluation of the information actions proposed, better definition of the messages to communicate and better dissemination). The second report for 2003–2006 took into consideration the findings of the evaluation of the measures taken under this Regulation carried out within the specific framework of the Commission's evaluation policy for the period 2000–2005³; and described the strategy put in place and the actions taken to implement the European Commission's communication policy of improving the understanding of the citizens about the EU. This strategy was pursued in the 2007–2008 period. Efforts to improve the understanding of the CAP by the general public and rural area stakeholders were increased and intensified. The annual call for proposals for co-financed measures was revised to encourage wider participation by non-agricultural organisations and the implementation of measures reaching a wider audience⁴. Overall, there was more focus on identifying the needs of specific target groups, on better definition of appropriate messages, information actions and dissemination strategies, as well as evaluation and feedback, so as to achieve the objectives of the Regulation.

1. Grants (communication actions taken at the initiative of third party organisations)

In addition to measures including seminars and conferences, in the reporting period, there was a strong emphasis on using the budget line *inter alia* to co-finance information campaigns including TV and radio programmes and audiovisual productions.

The Regulation envisages two kinds of measures, specific information measures and annual work programmes. A specific information measure means information events limited in time and space and implemented on the basis of a single budget. An annual work programme means sets of two to five specific information measures. For 2008, it was decided to retain only specific information measures for co-financing in the annual call for proposals for that year. The aim was to further simplify the grants scheme as well as ensuring the distribution of resources to an increased number of beneficiaries.

The maximum financing rate for the measures referred to above is 50% of eligible costs. However, the rate may be increased to 75% in exceptional cases, as specified in the implementing Regulation, and defined in the call for proposals. In the reporting period, only 2 measures (out of a total of 106) were awarded more than 50%, both in 2008. One concerned seminars organised by an EU level organisation on the role of organic food and farming in the future development of the CAP (68,69%); the other an information campaign on CAP in an EU12 MS (75%). They were deemed of exceptional interest in line with the criteria laid down in the call for proposals which stressed relevance to the general public, high technical quality

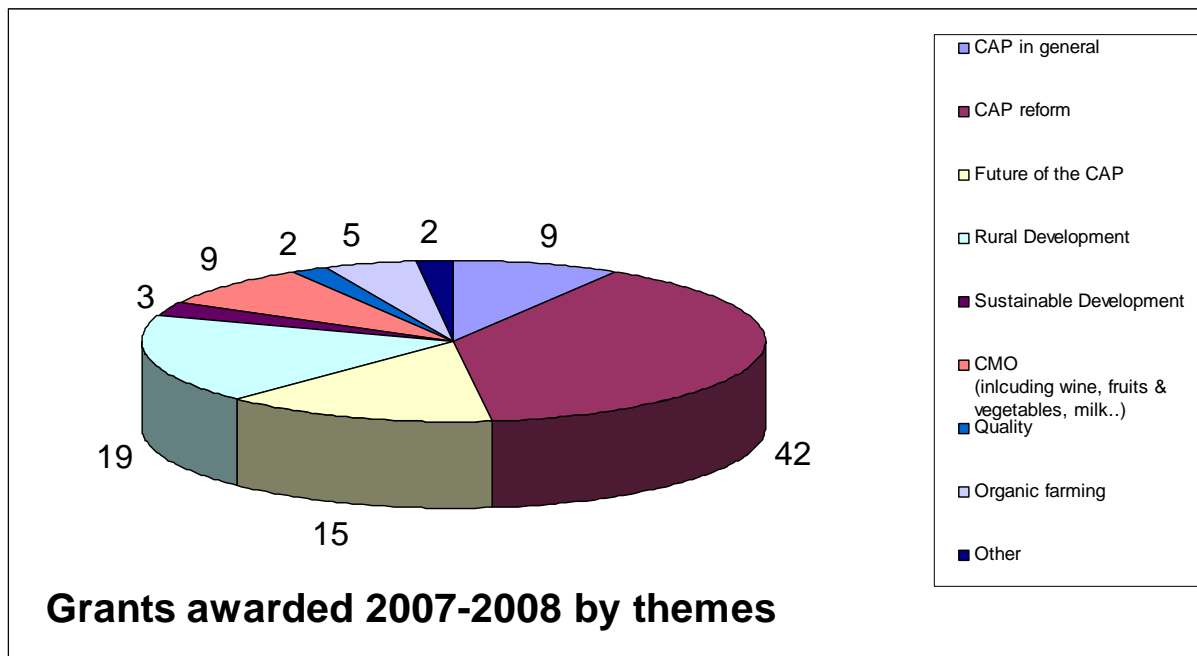
³ European Commission, DG AGRI Contract AGRI 2005/0421, Evaluation of the Information Policy on the Common Agricultural Policy, December 2006.

⁴ OJ C 236, 30.9.2006, p. 71; OJ C 238, 10.10.2007, p. 9.

and cost-efficiency, and the effectiveness of dissemination plans, in terms of guaranteeing the dissemination of the information to the largest possible audience.

Under the 2007 call for proposals, 12 programmes and 27 specific actions were co-financed. It should be noted that each programme contains a number of actions and that the 12 programmes financed contained 32 specific actions bringing the overall total to 59 actions for 2007. In 2008, 47 specific actions were co-financed, making an overall total of 106 actions for the two years. In addition, 3 actions from previous years had to be co-financed again under the 2008 budget as these actions could not be closed in due time in the budgetary years they referred to. Grants were awarded for 62 conferences and seminars, 26 information campaigns, 9 audiovisual productions, 5 publications, 2 participations in fairs, 1 visit and 1 E-learning programme on the CAP.

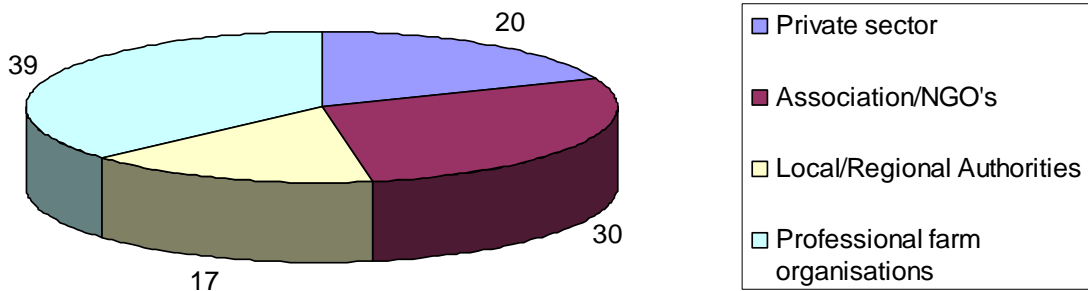
Grants were awarded in the reporting period on the basis of the following themes – CAP in general (9), CAP reform (42), Future of the CAP (15), Rural Development (19), Common Market Organisations, including wine, fruit and vegetables, milk.. (9), Organic farming (5), Sustainable Development (3), Quality (2), Other (2).



In 2007–2008, the rise in the number of audiovisual measures reflected the increased importance given to audiovisual projects in the annual call for proposals due to their potential to reach a bigger audience and the general public. A number of measures also aimed at educating school children about agriculture.

The types of grants beneficiaries were as follows: professional farm organisations (39), non-governmental organisations/associations (30), private sector (20), regional and local authorities (17).

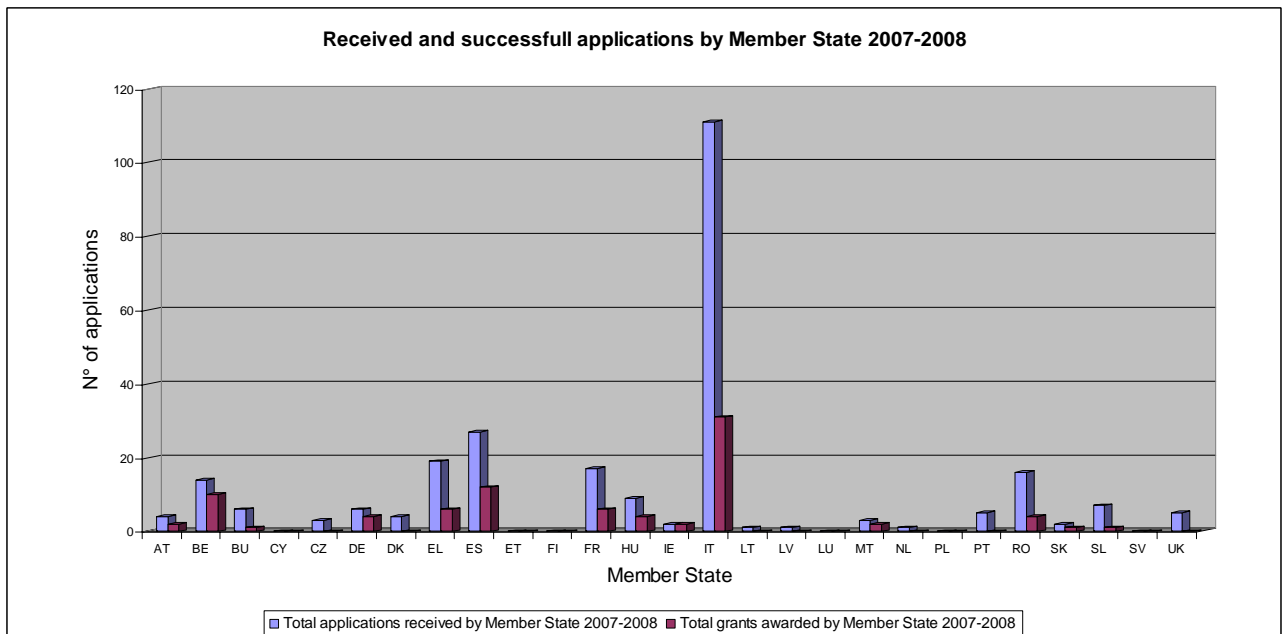
Grants awarded 2007-2008 by type of beneficiary



These included EU level environmental and rural development organisations. In addition, media bodies, universities and national farmers' organisations (often members of EU level bodies) also figured prominently among the lists of beneficiaries. In a part of the co-financed actions, beneficiaries made use of the possibility to involve further organisations as partners in the execution of the projects.

The table below indicates the number of received and successful applications by Member State.

Table I



Annex 1 gives an overview of grants in the reporting period. Details on individual grants are to be found on the Europa website:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants/capinfo/index_en.htm

The calls for proposals encouraged co-financed actions with high-added value, where more than one element of the media could be utilised. As in the past, there was an emphasis on better definition of target audiences and better dissemination of information. Applicants were required to submit a media plan for their proposed projects, including details of project implementation, message delivery and measurement of effectiveness. In the reporting period,

it is important to emphasise that, as in the past, 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 WEB as a dissemination tool.

In 2007-2008, many grants beneficiaries again included EU level socio-professional organisations, whose headquarters are often located in Belgium. An important number of co-financed actions continued to be carried out in Italy, reflecting its ongoing high level of interest. In contrast, the level of interest from the northern part of the EU continued, in general, to be rather low.

It must be added that there was an increase in the number of applications from the new Member States from the previous very low level. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, there was an increased effort by the Commission services to raise awareness of the calls for proposals in those countries. Secondly, in the period, certain information measures were actively encouraged in the new Member States. The Commission services will continue to explore ways to increase this growing awareness of the co-financed actions.

2. Communication actions taken at the initiative of the Commission

In 2007–2008, as in the previous period, a significant number of actions were financed at the initiative of the Commission. These were carried out often with external technical assistance. Some 60% of the budget was earmarked for these measures in 2007 and some 57% for 2008.

Annex II details all communication initiatives by the Commission in 2007–2008 as well as the respective costs.

Conferences

In 2007-2008, there was continued cooperation with the Member States, the European Parliament and other Commission departments, as well as the non-governmental sector, concerning the organisation of conferences. For example, the Commission contributed to the French Presidency conference on food security "Who will feed the World?" on 3 July 2008. Also in July 2008, a conference on the role of the EU in sustainable water usage in agriculture was organised as part of the events programme of the EU pavilion at the Zaragoza International Exhibition "Water and sustainable development".

As in the past, conferences provided a forum for broad consultation and dialogue on EU policy issues. For example, in February 2007, the conference "Food Quality Certification – Adding Value to Farm Produce" brought together in Brussels all interested parties (farmers, producers, processors, distributors) to discuss this theme. It marked an important contribution to the debate on the wider review of agricultural quality policy. In April 2007, young farmers from the EU 27 participated in a "day of dialogue" with the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development on the future of EU agriculture. This event was broadcast live using the web streaming technology.

In October 2008, a high profile event on rural development "Europe's rural areas in action: facing the challenges of tomorrow" took place in Cyprus. Representatives from a wide range of sectors – ministers, farmers, stakeholders and academic experts – exchanged ideas and experience on the challenges facing rural areas in the EU.

Dissemination of proceedings via Internet helped to involve a wider audience in the debate on these issues.

Participation/stands at fairs

The Commission's focus on "going local" continued to influence the organisation of fairs in 2007-2008. Cooperation was intensified with other EU institutions, the Member States, civil society organisations, and other Commission departments in organising appropriate events. Participation in the fairs continued to provide a platform for dialogue with farmers, stakeholders and the general public on the CAP and Rural Development policy issues. Special activities were designed for schoolchildren including on the theme of promoting better nutrition and the promotion of schemes for milk and fruit and vegetables in schools. This emphasis on creating events and messages of relevance to the general public will continue in the future.

Attendance at fairs in the new Member States was stepped up during this period. This was accompanied by efforts to promote dialogue with rural stakeholders and civil society organisations in those countries.

Publications

Publications activity continued to reflect the legislative programme as well as the latest Eurobarometer surveys on communication needs. Reform of the wine CMO, the Health Check of the CAP and quality policy figured prominently, while a series of leaflets was produced on themes of interest to the general public.

In the reporting period, there was further development of publications in electronic format, and also increased use of the information relay network of the European Commission to distribute publications aimed at the general public.

Website

The "Agriculture and Rural Development" website continued to evolve in the reporting period, notably as an important source of specialist information on the CAP and Rural Development.

On 1 October 2008, there was a further significant step towards increased transparency on the CAP: the chapter on beneficiaries of CAP payments which had been launched two years earlier now contains a set of links to Member State websites with information on beneficiaries of CAP payments (EAFRD for payments made in the period 1 January to 15 October 2007) in accordance with Article 44a of Council Regulation (EC) No 1290/2005 as amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 1437/2007⁵ and Commission Regulation (EC) No 259/2008⁶. By 30 April 2009, beneficiaries of EAGF payments will also be covered by the respective Member State websites which will all be accessible via the Commission's portal page.

Five on-line consultations have been undertaken (on the CAP Health Check, the School Fruit Scheme, the future of the "Most Deprived Persons Food Distribution" programme, the review of the Less Favoured Area Scheme and the EU's agricultural product quality policy). The contributions from stakeholders and the general public have been or are being taken into account by the Commission services in the preparation of the respective legislative proposals or other measures.

The e-mail service "Agriculture Newsdigest" which was set up in 2002, is now regularly sent out to more than 17 000 subscribers all over the world. Subscriptions to the "Monitoring Agri-trade Policy (MAP)" newsletters and briefs have risen to 3750.

⁵ OJ L 322, 7.12.2007, p. 1.

⁶ OJ L 76, 19.3.2008, p. 28.

Preparations for an all-new version of the website in the Commission's new corporate design, using web content management technology and offering interactive tools have started in 2008; its launch is scheduled for 2009.

Opinion Polls

DG Agriculture has continued to use the Eurobarometer survey to poll EU citizens' opinion on agriculture, the CAP and rural development. In addition, a qualitative study regarding citizens' attitudes and level of knowledge of agriculture and the CAP was carried out in 15 Member States in 2007. A Stakeholder Mapping and Perception Audit, also conducted in 2007, improved knowledge of those stakeholder organisations in the EU27 which influence the debate on CAP. The results are being used by DG Agriculture and Rural Development in devising its ongoing communication activities.

In addition, the database on media outlets of relevance to agriculture and rural development was also considerably extended.

Visits

In 2007-2008, the visits programme of the DG continued to promote improved understanding of the CAP and Rural Development issues among the wider public, notably stakeholders and students.

There was also a strong focus on developing the initiative concerning dialogue with universities. Contact with universities in the Member States was intensified. The number of presentations on European agricultural and rural development policy in colleges was expanded in this period, and is set to increase in 2009.

IV. The proportion of spending (commitments and payments) between grants at the initiative of third parties and information actions at the initiative of the Commission

	2006		2007		2008	
	Grants	Direct actions	Grants	Direct actions	Grants	Direct actions
Budget foreseen	2 800 000	3 700 000	2 600 000	3 900 000	3 000 000	4 000 000
Commitments (EUR)	2 638 670	3 604 954	2 575 143	3 178 103	2 532 768	3 860 889
%	94%	97 %	99%	81%	84%	97%
Payments (EUR)(**)	1 578 865	2 779 904	1 702 568	2 767 295	(*)	(*)

(*) Figures not yet available – most of the actions are still on going.

(**) In relation to the year of commitment and the following year (n+1 rule).

It is to be noted that the annual payments are always lower than the amounts originally committed. In the case of grants, this can be explained by the fact that firstly, in many cases, 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 at the initiative of the Commission, the differences are smaller and due to the commitments, which take account of all possible foreseeable expenditure which are sometimes finally lower than initially foreseen.

V. Communication campaigns on major issues

Wide-ranging communication campaigns were organised on major issues in the 2007-2008 period as part of the effort to inform the general public on the achievements of CAP reform and the role of Rural Development. This was in line with the priority accorded to communication policy by the European Commission, and the need for dialogue and debate, so as to address the gap between the EU and its citizens. As a result, DG Agriculture and Rural Development increased its communication efforts to reach the general public; this reflected its communication strategy updated in 2006 and its mandate within Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000.

For example, on 4 July 2007, the adoption by the Commission of the wine reform legislative proposals⁷ was marked by press and stakeholder briefings by senior officials in 15 Member States, simultaneously with the press conference of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development in Brussels. These briefings attracted over 250 journalists from specialised and regional media as well as local TV and radio stations. The briefings were attended by more than 500 stakeholders representing a wide range of civil society organisations, NGOs, regional and national governments and institutions. A similar exercise was carried out on 24 January 2007 to coincide with the adoption by the Commission of its proposals⁸ for the reform of the fruit and vegetable regime.

Communication actions on the Health Check of the Common Agricultural Policy were even more wide-ranging. These were developed in two phases, the first relating to the Commission's communication of 20 November 2007⁹, which included stakeholder conferences, on-line consultation, and dialogue on the issues during events and conferences. Special publications and press materials, as well as on-line material accompanied this exercise, including the production of audiovisual material. The second phase relating to the legislative proposals¹⁰ involved a very comprehensive information campaign involving virtually all Member States, on 20 and 21 May 2008. Again senior officials were deployed to present, explain, debate and discuss the legislative proposals with representatives of the socio-professional organisations and the media across the EU. Over one thousand stakeholders and over three hundred and fifty journalists participated in these briefings, with considerable media coverage. This was a major exercise in communication at local level with all interested parties, including by definition, the general public.

The year 2008 also saw the development of communication, educational and awareness-raising activities linked to the School Milk Scheme and the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, as part of the Commission's efforts to improve health and nutrition, as set out in the White Paper on "A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues"¹¹. A WEB campaign, including school events and a photo competition were used mainly to disseminate information in relation to the School Milk Scheme. In December 2008, an important conference brought together governmental and non-governmental bodies, scientists, professional organisations, NGOs and nutritional experts in a major exercise in networking and exchanging information and best practice concerning the promotion of school fruit and vegetable schemes in the EU. *Inter alia*, this provided important guidance for planning future information measures in this field.

⁷ COM (2007) 372 final, 4.7.2007.

⁸ COM(2007) 17 final, 24.1.2007.

⁹ COM (2007) 722 final, 20.11.2007

¹⁰ COM (2008) 306 final, 20.5.2008.

¹¹ COM (2007) 279 final, 30.5.2007.

These intensive communication efforts have helped improve the understanding of both the general public and stakeholders on issues related to agriculture and rural development.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the 2007-2008 period, efforts were intensified to increase the understanding and acceptance of the CAP among the general public, and also to maintain and increase support from stakeholders in agriculture and the rural areas. Increased attention was paid to the local context in designing information measures. Strategic messages were improved and refined. Synergy was increased with the governmental and non-governmental sector, and also between different communication tools. Actions aimed at newer and younger audiences were developed, using the WEB and audiovisual tools. There was a renewed focus on better dissemination of information both for co-financed actions and measures taken at the initiative of the Commission. Key policy developments were accompanied by major information campaigns in the capitals, with high-level briefings of media and stakeholders providing an opportunity for open and frank dialogue on the policy. Overall, this contributed to improving the understanding of both rural area stakeholders and the general public concerning the benefits of the CAP and the role of Rural Development, in line with the objectives of Regulation (EC) No 814/2000.

Annexes:

- Annex I: Tables on grants for 2007–2008
- Annex II: Breakdown of direct actions by the Commission 2007–2008