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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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**PART ONE    MEASURES UNDER COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) NO 814/2000**

**I.    Introduction**

This report concerns the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 for the years 2003–2006.

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 EAGGF which can be either programmes or specific measures,
- those at the initiative of the Commission and financed at a rate of 100% by EAGGF ("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 second such report. The first report covering the 2000–2002 period was presented in May 2003<sup>1</sup>.

The development of the implementing measures which laid down the detailed rules for the application of Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 and, in particular, those relating to grants awarded to third parties, were described in the report of May 2003. In the meantime, there has been a further minor technical change to the implementing rules<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 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)

<sup>2</sup> Commission Regulation (EC) No 1820/2004 of 20 October 2004 amending Regulation (EC) No 2208/2002 laying down detailed rules for applying Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (OJ L 320, 21.10.2004, p. 14)

This present report to the European Parliament and Council was originally scheduled for presentation in December 2005. It was held over in order to allow completion 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 2000–2005, and to enable the Commission to take into consideration the findings of this evaluation<sup>3</sup>. The full text as well as the summary is to be found on the Europa website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/cap\\_info/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/cap_info/index_en.htm)

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

## **II. Budget**

For the period 2003–2006, EUR 6.5 million was made available annually for information measures under line B1-382 (as it was known in 2003), and following changes in nomenclature line 05 08 06 for the budgetary years 2004–2006.

The breakdown between actions taken by the Commission and actions taken by third party organisations (grants) was as follows:

2003: direct actions (2 500 000) (38%) – grants (4 000 000) (62%),  
2004: direct actions (2 500 000) (38%) – grants (4 000 000) (62%),  
2005: direct actions (3 000 000) (46%) – grants (3 500 000) (54%),  
2006: direct actions (3 700 000) (57%) – grants (2 800 000) (43%).

However, with the exception of 2006 which saw a marked increase in uptake, the yearly budgets were significantly under-spent (execution reached 64% in 2003, 51% in 2004, 61% in 2005, and 98% in 2006; see details in Table 2 under point IV). The limited uptake of the funding possibilities was due mainly to under-spending of the budget allocated to grants. Since many grant applications contained errors or were of poor quality, only a small part of the projects met all of the requirements (eligibility, exclusion, selection, and award criteria).

In order to improve uptake of the budget allocated to grants, and following a review of the most frequently made errors by applicants, calls for proposals 2005/C 252/06<sup>4</sup> concerning co-financed actions under the 2006 exercise, and 2006/C 236/07<sup>5</sup> concerning co-financed actions under the 2007 exercise have been further streamlined, and the wording clarified in order to help applicants avoid such errors. The success of these efforts is reflected in the very considerably increased uptake of the budget allocated to grants in the 2006 exercise.

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

The first report on Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 described how in the 2000–2002 period, the Commission had gradually improved the rules governing measures carried out. It noted also the revision of the implementing rules in Commission Regulation (EC)

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

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 252, 12.10.2005, p. 28

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 236, 30.9.2006, p. 71

No 2208/2002 which guided grants activity in the 2003–2006 period<sup>6</sup>. This introduced significant improvements in the scheme: simplification, increased transparency, better evaluation of the information actions proposed, better definition of the messages to communicate and better dissemination. The annual call for proposals was progressively refined and developed, in response to the new political climate in which the CAP operated. There was a strong focus on informing farmers and the wider public about the changes in political direction, in particular the reform of 2003 and subsequent related reforms.

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

In the reporting period, the Commission has made use of the budget line to co-finance a series of measures including seminars, conferences, publications, exchange visits, as well as other activities, all of which have helped – both directly and indirectly – to improve the level of understanding of the CAP among the citizens of the EU.

Two kinds of measures are allowed, specific information measures and annual work programmes. A specific information measure is an independent and self-contained information event of short duration, organised on the basis of a single budget. Examples of a specific measure in the reporting period are one conference, or one seminar, etc. An annual work programme is a set of two to five specific information measures.

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.

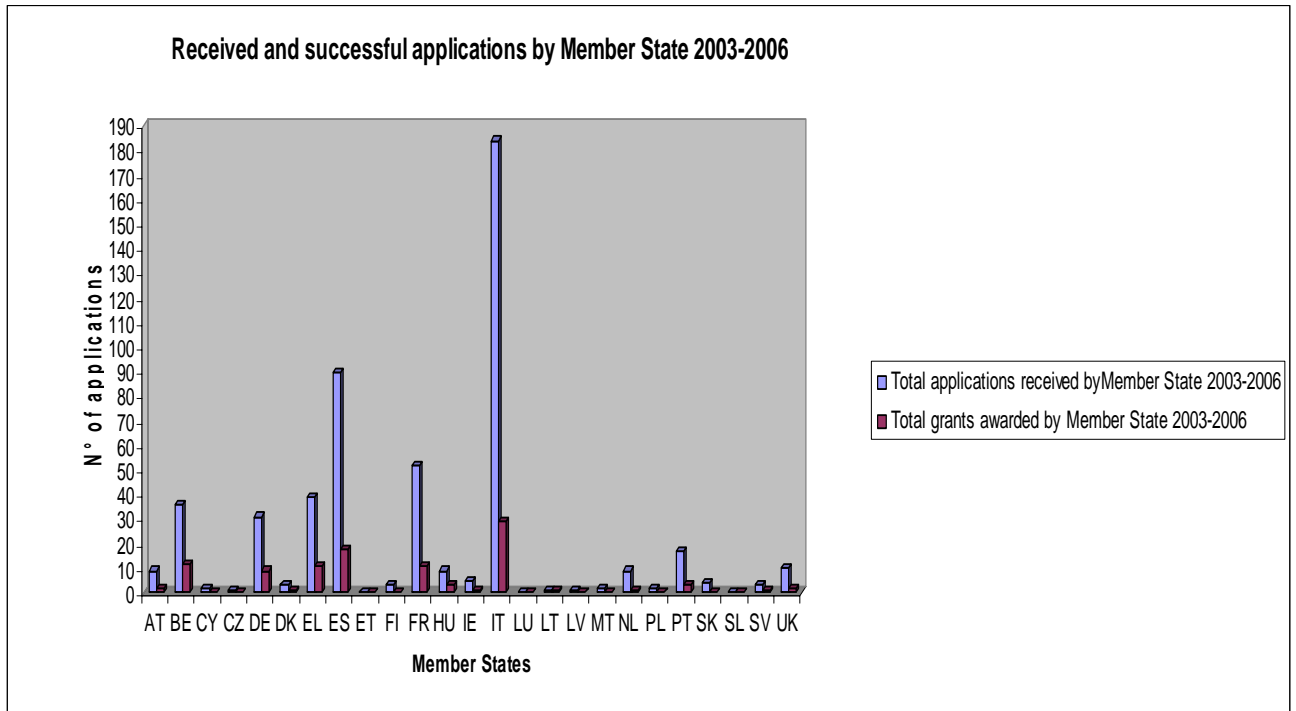
In the reporting period, 35 programmes and 70 specific actions were co-financed. It has to be noted that each programme contains a number of actions and that the 35 programmes financed contained 99 specific actions bringing the overall total to 169 actions for the four years. Grants were awarded to 121 conferences and seminars, 11 visits, 22 publications, 11 audiovisual productions and four Web portals.

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

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<sup>6</sup> Commission Regulation (EC) No 2208/2002 of 12 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for applying Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (OJ L 337, 13.12.2002, p. 21).

**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](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants/capinfo/index_en.htm)

It is important to emphasise that a considerable number of the actions co-financed reached a wider audience beyond the immediate participants thanks to the multiplier effect of the specialised press and media. This reflects the increased emphasis in recent years in the calls for proposals on better dissemination of messages and the need for applicants to define media plans, including target audiences.

As in the past, many grants beneficiaries were located in Belgium, where the most prominent EU level socio-professional organisations (including COPA-COGECA, AEFPR, CEJA) have their headquarters. An important number of such measures were also implemented in Italy, and Spain. This reflects the ongoing high level of applications from these countries.

In 2003–2006, there continued to be relatively few applications from the northern part of the EU-15. Since enlargement, the number of applications from the new Member States has been very low. The Commission services are reflecting on the possible reasons for this situation, and will explore what further channels beyond publication of the annual call for proposals in the Official Journal of the European Communities and on the Europa Website, it might be appropriate to use in order to achieve greater publicity for the calls for proposals. In this context, particular attention will be paid to the specificities of the new Member States.

In 2003–2006, grants were awarded inter alia to seminars and conferences on the CAP and implementation of CAP reform, WTO and rural development. These included a number of conferences exploring themes involving agriculture and the wider society, as well as enlargement.

Individual bodies which were successful in obtaining grants in this period include EU level environmental and rural development organisations such as WWF and EUROMONTANA. In addition to traditional beneficiaries such as COPA-COGECA and CEJA, inter alia also regional and local authorities in the Member States, media organisations, and national farmers' organisations (often members of EU level bodies) were successful, as were some academic bodies. 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.

As mentioned earlier, in the 2003–2006 period, procedures for assessing and evaluating grants were improved. Requirements concerning *ex-ante* and *ex-post* evaluations were further refined in the annual calls for proposals. It should be recalled also that the obligations of beneficiaries concerning the auto-evaluation of their actions form part of the individual grant agreements concluded between the Commission and the beneficiaries. Grants were awarded after a rigorous selection procedure. Currently, the communication strategy of the DG aims to strengthen its capacity to measure and assess the impact of its information actions. Reports on the implementation of grants are and will in the future also be analysed with a view to assessing the overall impact achieved. This is also in line with the findings of the external evaluation, and the objectives of the Regulation.

## **2. Communication actions taken at the initiative of the Commission**

In 2003–2006, as in the previous period, there was a significant number of actions financed at the initiative of the Commission, which were carried out often with external technical assistance. Some 38% of the budget was earmarked for these measures in 2003 and 2004, and this increased to 46% in 2005 and 57% for 2006.

Annex II details all communication initiatives by the Commission in 2003–2006 as well as the respective costs

### ***Conferences/seminars***

The organisation of conferences and seminars continued to be a key activity. This category includes activities such as hearings, seminars for specific groups (journalists, consumer organisations, etc.), EU and international conferences.

In 2003–2006, there was an increasingly strong orientation from the Commission on deepening dialogue with stakeholders across the range of EU policies. Consequently, there was a renewed emphasis on involving a broad range of civil society organisations in conferences and seminars.

Co-operation with other institutions was intensified, as for example, in the conference on young farmers jointly organised by the Commission and European Parliament in January 2005; as well as the conference on "Co-existence of genetically modified, conventional and organic crops – freedom of choice" from 4–6 April 2006 in Vienna, which was organised jointly with the Austrian presidency of the EU. There was also a strong focus on preparing for enlargement.

### ***Participation/stands at fairs***

This focus on civil society, and involving all interested bodies; the emphasis of the Commission from 2005 on "going local" , increasingly influenced in these years the organisation of the Commission's regular participation in major annual fairs such as the *Salon international de l'Agriculture* in Paris and the *Internationale Grüne Woche* in Berlin, and fairs in general

The frequent presence of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, other Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament, as well as other senior political leaders at national and regional level, served to raise the media profile of the Commission's participation at the fairs.

Fairs will remain an important tool in reaching the general public. The focus on seeking synergies, and devising appropriate messages and activities aimed at the general public, will continue as recommended also in the external evaluation.

### ***Publications***

A range of one-off and regular publications were produced. CAP reform, rural development and WTO figured prominently, as in the past.

At present, the DG is carrying out a review of these publications in line with the recommendations of the evaluation. In future, it aims to develop more on-line publications, including also the provision of material that can be tailored to meet local needs; this should contribute inter alia towards meeting linguistic needs at local level.

### ***Website***

The "Agriculture and Rural Development" website has developed rapidly in the reporting period, notably as an important source of specialist information on the CAP and Rural Development. The recent evaluation found that the website is widely used among key stakeholder organisations as a source of information.

There has also been a significant step towards increased transparency on the CAP: a chapter has been published which guides the interested public to Member State websites with information on beneficiaries of CAP payments.

Also noteworthy is the launch in early 2007 of Commissioner Fischer Boel's web log which uses a new fast-growing means of communication. The e-mail service "Agriculture Newsdigest" which was set up in 2002, is now regularly sent out to more than 14 000 subscribers all over the world.

Clearly the website as a communication tool has considerable potential to develop, and also to reach new and younger audiences among the general public. The current communication strategy of the DG envisages further development of internet based communication, notably using interactive tools.

### *Opinion Polls*

DG Agriculture has continued to poll regularly EU citizens' opinion on the CAP and rural development. It has recently reviewed its questions in the Eurobarometer survey so as to improve its capacity to measure awareness, and knowledge of the policy, and also to allow it to define different target groups among the general public. This is also in line with the recommendations of the external evaluation.

### *Visits*

Due of its potential to reach the wider public, greater publicity is being given to the visits programme of the DG, both on the Internet and among interested colleges and universities. This also reflects the recommendations of the external evaluation.



**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**

**Table 2**

**Budget line 05.0806: Commitments and payments 2003–2006**

	2003		2004		2005		2006		2003–2006	
	Grants	Direct actions	Grants	Direct actions	Grants	Direct actions	Grants	Direct actions	Grants	Direct actions
<b>Commitments (EUR)</b>	1 553 637	2 607 034	1 301 959	1 985 118	1 469 239	2 516 837	2 638 670	3 718 078	6 963 505,11	10 827 067
<b>%</b>	37,34%	62,66%	39,61%	60,39%	36,86%	63,14%	41,51%	58,49%	39,14%	60,86%
<b>Payments (EUR)(**)</b>	878 241	1 987 242	754 847	1 453 768	1 199 728	2 122 589	(*)	(*)		

(\*) 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 of maximum possible amounts.

## **V. Lessons from the evaluation period**

The evaluation report reviewed the developments in the implementation of information actions under Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 in the 2000–2005 period, and gave guidance for improvements in the future.

In the reporting period 2003–2006, efforts to reach the general public were stepped up with a recognisable increase in professionalism in terms of devising appropriate messages and material. Participation at fairs, an important tool for reaching the general public, increased and was also notably more professional from 2002 onwards.

In terms of dissemination, it was noted above 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. However, the challenge of reaching this group (as well as rural area stakeholders) in a systematic way within the context of “the very limited financial resources available to date” was acknowledged. Overall interest from the general public was low. This is reflected in grants activity where very few projects involved organisations outside the world of agriculture even though the general public was clearly identified as a target group by calls for proposals. It must be added that towards the end of the reporting period, uptake by non-agricultural organisations was on the increase. At the same time, it was felt that greater clarity about the needs of specific target groups and the creation of appropriate dissemination strategies could have helped improve effectiveness in terms of reaching the general public. This is addressed in Part Two of the report which reviews the current communication strategy concerning the CAP.

As regards targeting rural area stakeholders, the evaluation noted that some actions such as conferences and some aspects of the website were particularly effective. Dialogue with civil society was deepened. Co-operation with governmental and non-governmental organisations was stepped up leading to greater synergies. The increasingly important role of the website, and its considerable potential in terms of achieving the objectives of the Regulation by reaching newer and younger audiences was already noted. The evaluation also gave guidance on improving effectiveness in terms of this target group. It concluded that more focus on dissemination and suitability for the local context, on reaching the rural community as a whole rather than just the farming sector, on the role of the stakeholders as effective information relays, and on disseminating best practice under grants activity would improve the effectiveness of the policy in terms of reaching this target group.

These points are addressed also in the next section. Overall, the recent external evaluation recommended that in a context of limited human and financial resources, there needed to be better definition of target groups, their needs and appropriate dissemination strategies in order to reach more effectively both the general public and rural area stakeholders, and fulfil the objectives of the Regulation.

## **PART TWO    CURRENT CONTEXT – COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR CAP**

The Commission has made communication policy a priority in recent years. The objective is to improve the way it communicates in order to address the gap between the EU and its citizens. The Commission's emphasis in the Action Plan on Communicating Europe on listening, on dialogue and debate, on partnership now guides all communication activity<sup>7</sup>. In this context, DG Agriculture and Rural Development has reviewed its information activities, and updated its communication strategy in 2006 within the mandate of Council Regulation No 814/2000. It seeks to build on the experience and achievements of the past so as to address the particular challenges linked to communicating the CAP in the future. The CAP is recognised for providing safe and healthy food, protecting the environment and animal welfare. However, many outdated perceptions remain which colour negatively current opinions of the policy. This results in the achievements of the CAP reform and the role of Rural Development not being visible for the general public. The benefits to society of the CAP supporting the farmers in their multifunctional role are not fully understood. The intention is to address this dearth of information by increasing communication efforts to reach the general public. As the CAP is becoming a policy with a much wider agenda in response to demands of citizens at large, even more prominence will be given in the future to reaching beyond agricultural stakeholders.

In line with the recommendations of the evaluation report, the communication strategy includes:

- identifying target groups for information activities among the general public and the stakeholders;
- clearly defined objectives and messages;
- increasing synergy among communication tools and with other actors at EU, national, regional and local level;
- systematic monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

The objectives are:

- to increase understanding and acceptance of the CAP among the general public;
- to maintain and increase support from stakeholders in agriculture and the rural areas.

Key policy developments will be accompanied by communication plans developed on the basis of the communication strategy. For instance, the adoption of the Commission Communication on the reform of the common market organisation for wine in June 2006 and the adoption of the Commission reform proposal of the common market organisation for fruit and vegetables in January 2007 were marked by particularly broad-ranging and intensive information exercises reflecting the Commission's focus on listening and going local. They involved high level briefings for media and stakeholders in the most concerned producer and consumer Member States, providing participants with a presentation of the proposal and information material in the local language. The briefings generated lively discussions and were very well received as an opportunity for an open and frank dialogue. This will serve as a model for future actions on priority issues.

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<sup>7</sup> Communication to the Commission "Action Plan to Improve Communicating Europe by the Commission" (SEC(2005) 985) of 20 July 2005.

The Commission's focus on "going local" also of course applies to grants. The call for proposals has been adapted in order to encourage more projects involving the general public, to ensure the definition of priority target groups and more effective targeting and dissemination of messages to meet the needs of these groups and the local context. Similarly, reporting obligations for grants have been reinforced with the aim of achieving better assessment of the impact achieved. As mentioned above, this is in line with the findings of the evaluation.

## CONCLUSION

The external evaluation noted that the objectives established for the information policy on CAP within the context of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 were relevant to the needs of the target groups, both in the case of actions carried out by the Commission and co-financed measures carried out by third parties. There is a continuing need to address the dearth of information on the CAP both among rural stakeholders and the general public.

The evaluation noted the particular challenges linked to communicating the CAP. The policy has changed fundamentally over the last fifteen years, but perception of it by the general public has not. Opinion polls suggest there is support for the CAP objectives but that we need to raise awareness of the CAP and to show that it addresses concerns expressed by citizens.

In a context of limited resources (described in the evaluation as "small by any standards") as compared with the task of reaching the general public, DG Agriculture and Rural Development will focus its efforts in relation to its ultimate target groups (farmers and the general public). As outlined above, it has in 2006 reviewed and updated its communication strategy, in the context of the objectives laid down in the Council Regulation, and in the light of the Commission's renewed commitment to improving communication with EU citizens. In this regard, it has updated a list of key strategic messages and is developing appropriate dissemination strategies aimed at priority target sub-groups.

Developing positive synergies between EU and national communication strategies would contribute greatly to the effectiveness of our communication activities on the CAP. We must build on already successful examples of cooperation and partnership. Improving public understanding of the CAP is a vital and urgent task. Member States have a key role in creating partnerships to explain the concrete benefits of the policy, to encourage debate and dialogue at national, regional and local level. In this regard, the Commission would invite the Member States to participate fully in information measures in general and under Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 in particular. This is in line with current communication policy which emphasises the key role of the Member States in the process of informing the citizen on European Union issues.

### Annexes:

- Annex I: Tables on grants for 2003–2006
- Annex II: Breakdown of direct actions by the Commission 2003–2006
- Annex III: List of abbreviations.