

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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Brussels, 29 September 1976.

Report by the Commission to the European Parliament
and to the Council
on the experience gained from the Member States surveys
and forecasts of cattle production.

(submitted by the Commission to the Council pursuant
to Article 10 of the Council Directive of 15 May 1973 (73/132/EEC))

COM(76) 502 final.

Communication from the Commission to the Council and to
the European Parliament

Council Directive (73/132/EEC) of 15 May 1973 on the statistical surveys of the cattle population was supplemented by the procedure of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics as a result of Commission Decision (73/262/EEC) of 24 July 1973 establishing various provisions for carrying out such surveys.

The Commission feels that the experience gained over the period 1973-75 was insufficient for satisfactory harmonization of statistics to be achieved in the sector concerned, especially statistics linked to the concepts of 'production' and 'potential supplies' contained in articles 6 and 7 of the Council Directive.

On 12 March 1976 the Commission (Doc. COM (76) 134 of 26 March 1976) recommended to the Council that the surveys and the joint experiment be continued over the period 1976-78, which would justify the maintenance of flat-rate financing for three years by the Community. By its decision of 29.6.1976 the Council approved the continuation of the survey but sanctioned Community financing only for the first of the three years.

The Commission will shortly submit a draft supplementary directive amending or making more explicit certain articles of the original Directive in the interests of improved harmonization at Community level of the work in this field.

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- Summary -

Council Directive (73/132/EEC)¹⁾ of 15 May 1973 concerns statistical surveys of supplies by the Member States of the cattle population, forecasts of cattle for slaughter and statistics of slaughterings.

By means of the procedure of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics²⁾, the basic Directive was supplemented by a Commission Decision³⁾ (73/132/EEC) of 24 July 1973 establishing provisions for statistical surveys of the cattle population, with special reference to articles 3, 5, 6 and 7.

The 1973-75 experimental period enabled the nine Member States to make rapid progress in harmonizing survey methods and data. Thanks to the excellent collaboration of the Member States, reliable information on the livestock situation and on short-term production prospects should henceforth be available six weeks after the survey month.

- Given the economic importance and the complexity of the sector covered by the Directive and the completion of the initial experimental period, the Commission will shortly submit a draft supplementary directive amending or amplifying Articles 4, 5 and 6 of the original Directive.

- The Commission would like the Council to extend the three year joint experiment to cover the period 1976-78. This would permit full harmonization of the joint statistics, especially those relating to production (Article 7) and potential supplies (Article 6). The extension of the experimental period would justify the maintenance of Community flat-rate financing in 1977 and 1978, which has already been taken into account in the work programme of the Statistical Office of the European Communities.

- In addition, the Commission will prepare a draft Council Directive with a view to the carrying out of an intermediate survey of the cattle population in May-June, which should be incorporated in the work programme of SOEC and the Member States and which could be carried out in the medium term.

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The Directive adopted by the Council on 15 May 1973 (73/132/EEC)¹⁾ provides in Article 10 that :

'The Commission shall submit to the European Parliament and to the Council every three years and for the first time in 1976 a report on the experience gained from the surveys and the forward estimates provided for in this Directive'.

It is pursuant to this provision that the Commission is presenting this report on the experience gained during the period 1973-75.

The purpose of the Directive is to put at the Commission's disposal, so that the latter can discharge effectively the task entrusted to it, the necessary uniform statistics on trends in the cattle population and in the production of beef and veal in the Member States, and also to enable the Commission to make short-term forecasts of beef and veal supplies.

By means of the procedure of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics²⁾, the basic Directive was supplemented by Commission Decision (73/262/EEC) of 24 July 1973³⁾ establishing various provisions for statistical surveys of the cattle population, with special reference to Articles 3, 5, 6 and 7.

Article 1

Since the Directive came into force, the Member States have in fact conducted a 'December' survey, beginning in December 1973.

The reference day of the survey varies from country to country; these differences in date are due in the main to the particular characteristics of the various national statistical survey programmes.

The Commission considers that these differences do not detract from a clear picture of the cattle population situation in 'December', provided that a late reference date does not cause a delay in the forwarding of the results.

1) OJ N° L 153 of 9 June 1973, p. 25.

2) OJ N° L 179 of 7 August 1972, p. 1.

3) OJ N° L 253 of 10 September 1973, p. 5.

Article 2

Article 2 defines the term "cattle" (Paragraph 1) and the minimum scope of the survey (Paragraph 2). Naturally, Member States whose surveys have a wider (see Paragraph 3) are to supply the additional data.

The operation of Article 2 calls for no special remarks consequent upon to the experience gained since 1973.

Article 3

Article 3 of the Directive, dealing with the categories of animals to be recorded in the surveys of cattle population, was supplemented by Annex I to the Commission Decision (73/262/EEC) of 24 July 1973. The Commission feels that there is no reason to reconsider the various definitions of the categories before having some sort of perspective from the series of data used to interpret the survey results for the purposes of establishing short-term supply forecasts.

The content of the national questionnaires was examined at the beginning of the observation period. The findings of this examination were published in a Commission document¹⁾.

Article 4

Article 4 deals with the conduct of the survey as regards the statistical methods to be used. Commission requirements in this respect must above all be adapted to the national characteristics on the basis of which the statistical departments concerned endeavour to implement the Directive. The manner in which the survey is conducted is this necessarily specific to each Member State.

Since the Directive came into force, the Working Party on Animal Products Statistics has met annually to deal with the survey methods and the various arrangements made by the Member States to improve the acceptability of the results²⁾.

1) EUROSTAT - D/TE/120, February 1974.

2) EUROSTAT - D/TE/119, February 1974, conspectus of methods used in surveys of the cattle population.

Selection by computer of samples from the last available census enables - theoretically at least - the statistical departments concerned to calculate and, if necessary, to trace the trends of errors in each sample survey on the basis of criteria which are specifically linked to the objectives of the survey. However, this work, which is of relatively minor importance and very often appended to the general working scheme, rarely produces results and is occasionally slow to be implemented.

Being unable to improve her survey sample, Italy requests an extension until the 1979 survey of the derogation granted to her under the second sub-paragraph of Article 4.

Under paragraph 4 the Member States are to take appropriate measures to limit errors of observation, for example by means of questionnaires filled out by a network of specialized interviewers, supplementary questions permitting the replies already given by the farmer to be cross-checked, visits to the farm and systematic counting of animals present by the interviewer, etc. Only two countries (Germany and Belgium) carry out a periodic check on errors of observation.

Article 5

Notification of the survey results, Article 5

The Member States are required to notify the Commission of the provisional results of the surveys without regional sub-division not later than six weeks after the reference month of the survey; by way of special exception, Italy is given eight weeks in which to do this.

Experience has shown that this time-limit is respected, but cannot be reduced to under six weeks since it is very seldom possible to reduce the time required for the data-processing operations involved.

Paragraph 2, 3 and 4 provide to notification of the final results, with regional sub-division, not later than ten weeks after the reference month. As a general rule, the final results are computer-processed, which leaves very little possibility of intervention by the statistical departments

if the work sequence is not completed within the prescribed time. Experience shows that the Commission tends to receive these results in April-May rather than by 15 March in the case of the surveys conducted in December, which means that the regional results (numbers and structure) can be published only in the spring following the reference year.

The size of the sample used in the smaller countries for the December surveys is totally insufficient to allow for the publication of reliable results at regional level; moreover, in view of the cost of a survey on the one hand and the work-schedules of the statistical departments on the other, there is no justification for compelling them to carry out a census in December. The Commission therefore feels that there is good reason for maintaining beyond 1975 paragraph 4 as it stands, on condition that the other national survey be conducted in the course of the reference years 1977, 1979, etc.

Transitional measures to facilitate the immediate implementation of the Directive were not necessary; paragraph 5 of this Article was not therefore applied.

Article 6

Estimates of potential supplies, Article 6

In this Article, the Commission seeks to centralise the forecasts made by the Member States on the basis of the survey results. As the basic statistics used by the Member States still show a considerable lack of uniformity (cf. the report on the operation of Article 7), the forecasts made, although 'adapted' to national requirements, can not yet be integrated automatically at Community level.

It is essential for each Member State to retain its own method of making short-term estimates of supplies, even if the Commission has had a 'EUROSTAT' model since the end of the first period of operation. National departments are, in fact, in a better position to integrate into their short-term forecasts any supplementary information available which the statistical departments of the Commission are unaware of or which they would not be able to use effectively in the Community model. In 1975, EUROSTAT produced a document ¹⁾ summarising the national forecasting models.

1) EUROSTAT - D/TE/154 - January 1976.

"Potential supplies of cattle for slaughter" is too restrictive a concept at Community level and should be interpreted as "potential supplies of cattle", a more general concept which can thus be harmonized and perfectly integrated into the annual surveys. A proposal to this effect will be made by the Commission in its draft supplementary directive. The forecasts of potential supplies have been forwarded by all the Member States as from the December 1975 survey on the basis of the calendar year.

Paragraph 2 of Article 6 requires estimates of potential supplies to be drawn up for four categories of cattle. This objective has not yet been fully achieved; however, figures for potential supplies broken down into two categories, 'Full-grown cattle' and 'Calves' are already available.

Paragraph 3, dealing with the deadlines for forwarding the estimates, calls for no special remarks. Thanks to the excellent collaboration of the national statistical experts, the Commission is generally informed as to the new situation six weeks after the survey month.

Summing up, the experience gained since the first joint survey in December 1973 shows that the objectives set in Article 6 have not been fully attained. The Commission feels that the joint experiment should be extended for a further three years before Article 6 is modified or made more specific. To do this earlier might be too ambitious, at least as far as the breakdown of potential supplies into four categories is concerned. Nevertheless, over the next few years, the Commission could request Member States to estimate the potential supply of cattle twice yearly, in February and in September. The forecasts would refer to an 18-month period and would be broken down on a half-yearly basis. With this in mind, the Commission intends to study a project for an intermediate survey to be conducted in May-June within the framework of a Council Directive.

Article 7

Monthly statistics of slaughtering, Article 7

Complete harmonization has not yet been achieved in this very complex field on account of the state of the national statistics available. There are a large number of data or series on 'cattle production', but denominations which are apparently common cover data which vary considerably from country to country within the Community. For example, according to the scope of the survey or the stage considered in the production process, cattle production in Italy in 1974 has for the following items indices of 100, 142, 138 and 155 respectively : total production from pure-bred livestock; total production for all animals fattened in Italy; production recorded at slaughter houses; and, finally, total so-called 'adjusted' or 'real' production. in total slaughtering on national territory.

In addition, the situation can be further complicated in some Member States by the system of processing foreign trade data by stages, whence the utilization of provisional, and then final, results in the basic data. Thus, because of the progressive combination of incomplete data, the specialized literature contains a considerable number of series liable to mislead any reader not aware of the way in which the figures are prepared.

The deadlines for forwarding data, (Article 7(4)) are in conformity with the Directive in the case of Luxembourg, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland; Germany, France, the Netherlands and Denmark require six to eight weeks, while Italy requires approximately ten weeks. The data are, in fact, forwarded to the Commission as soon as they have been prepared by the national statistical departments, so that in future, which the quality of the data will improve, no change can be expected in the length of the forwarding period.

Article 8

Article 8 gives details of the procedure for adapting external trade statistics to the aims of the Directive. All trade in live animals is recorded globally, and there is no separate breakdown of the figures to give the sex of the animals and their destination.

For national purposes, some Member States add supplementary sub-divisions to the existing NIMEXE headings. However, the experience so far obtained seems to indicate that a diversification of NIMEXE is not essential for adequate and satisfactory harmonization of cattle statistics.

Article 9

Article 9 makes provision for technical improvements by means of the procedure of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics. Shortly after the Council Directive came into force, this "Committee" procedure was used, the result being Council Decision 73/262/EEC of 24 July 1973 establishing provisions for statistical surveys of the cattle population, with special reference to Articles 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the Directive. The Commission considers it necessary to continue the harmonization of statistics in this sector, especially as regards monthly production statistics (Article 7), and will submit technical modifications, where necessary, only after the joint experiment has been extended for three further years, i.e. 1976-78.

Article 10

Pursuant to Article 10, the Commission has prepared the present report for submission in the course of 1976 to the European Parliament and to the Council.

At the end of this first three-year period (1973-75), the Commission considers that the experience gained has not been sufficient to achieve complete harmonization of statistics in the cattle sector.

The Commission hopes that a further period of three years (1976-78) will be devoted to continuing the work of harmonization; this would justify the maintenance of the Community's financial participation after 31 December 1975.

Article 11

Financing

The expenditure provided for by the Directive for conducting the surveys and processing the statistics was borne for the years 1973-75 by the budget of the European Communities.

The amount of this expenditure was set at a fixed annual total of 1 612 000 UA for three years. Settlement in respect of contracts relating to 1975 will be made in the course of 1976. The breakdown by Member State for each year has been as follows :

- Federal Republic of Germany	- 252 000 UA
- France	- 340 000 UA
- Italy	- 439 000 UA
- Netherlands	- 113 000 UA
- Belgium	- 103 000 UA
- Luxembourg	- 13 000 UA
- United Kingdom	- 153 000 UA
- Ireland	- 104 000 UA
- Denmark	- 95 000 UA

