

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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Report on experience acquired during the first survey
carried out by the Member States of the enlarged Com-
munity in 1977 in order to determine the production
potential of plantations of certain species of fruit
trees

Submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament
and the Council in conformity with Article 8 of Council
Directive 76/625/EEC of 20 July 1976, as amended by
Article 1 of Council Directive 77/159/EEC of 14 February
1977

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Under the provisions of Article 8 of Council Directive 76/625/EEC of 20 July 1976¹⁾, as amended by Article 1 of Council Directive 77/159/EEC of 14 February 1977²⁾, the Commission is required to submit to the European Parliament and the Council a report on experience acquired during the first survey in the enlarged Community.
2. This report summarises the experience gained from the first survey conducted in 1977 and mentions where applicable various proposals made by Member States for modifications to the statistical characteristics surveyed.

II. OBJECTIVE

3. The objective of the Directive is to provide the Commission with information on the production potential of plantations of dessert apples, dessert pears, peaches and oranges, and with medium-term estimates of production and supply on the markets.

III. THE 1977 SURVEY

a) Date of the survey (Article 1(1))

4. Five Member States conducted their surveys in the spring of 1977 i.e. the March-May period. The other countries carried out their surveys somewhat later for methodological reasons (F.R. Germany - April to July 1977; France - mid-May to mid-September 1977, Luxembourg - autumn/winter 1977/78; Ireland - July 1977).

b) Scope of the survey (Article 1(2))

5. The survey covered all undertakings planted with dessert apples, dessert pears, peaches and oranges, in pure or mixed stand, provided that the area covered at least 1500 square metres and that the fruit produced were entirely or mainly intended for sale. However, this provision of the Directive sometimes led to an excessive amount of work for very little result. (For example, in the United Kingdom, 40 % of the holdings surveyed only accounted for 4 % of the area).

c) Type of survey (Article 1(3))

6. A random sample survey was conducted in France, Italy and the Hessen and Rheinland-Pfalz Länder of Germany. A complete enumeration of holdings was made in the other German Länder and all other Member States.

1) OJ N° L 218, 11.2.76, p. 10

2) OJ N° L 48, 19.2.77, p. 31

d) Characteristics surveyed (Article 2)

(i) Variety of fruit

7. Member States were required to show separately enough varieties of each species to account for at least 80 % of the total area of the species. In addition, all varieties representing 3 % or more of the total area of the species were to be shown. A very detailed breakdown by variety was provided and, in the case of apples and pears, specified varieties counted for over 90 % of the total area in most countries.

(ii) Age of trees

8. On the basis of experience acquired from the previous surveys conducted between 1972 and 1974, the age-class boundaries for the 1977 survey were revised for peaches to take account of their relatively short life-span, and for oranges to take account of their longer life-span. The boundaries for apples and pears remained unchanged.
9. Two Member States questioned the need for data to be subdivided into the individual ages 0,1,2,3 and 4 years. The Netherlands drew attention to the likely errors in the data for such small classes and proposed that the area of trees less than 5 years old should be sub-divided into no more than two age-classes.

(iii) Density of plantation

10. The density class boundaries for peaches and oranges were also changed for the 1977 survey on the basis of experience acquired from the previous surveys. The boundaries for apples and pears, which were left unchanged, gave a satisfactory breakdown of the area although in Italy and Luxembourg there was a marked concentration of the area under apples in the lowest density class (less than 400 trees per hectare), while in Belgium the area under apples and pears was concentrated in the "800-1599 trees per hectare" class.

e) Sampling errors (Article 3)

11. The sampling errors reported by Member States using sampling techniques for their survey were within the 3 % limit laid down in the Directive with the exception of oranges in Italy, where the error was approximately 3,6 %.

f) Submission of results (Article 4(1))

12. Only three Member States were able to submit their results by the deadline date of 1 April 1978. In fact, the last results were not received until over

8 months later. To make matters worse, EUROSTAT encountered serious delays in the processing of the survey data because of technical problems caused by the installation of a new computer in the computer centre, and a shortage of experienced staff there to give EUROSTAT the necessary advice and assistance. Consequently, the results were not published until November 1979, more than two years after the surveys were carried out.

13. Steps are being taken by EUROSTAT to ensure that such processing delays do not recur in the future, but there still remains the problem of the late submission of the data by Member States. If delays are inevitable under the present survey systems used by Member States it may be necessary to consider postponing the deadline date specified in the Directive. However, any postponement can only have a detrimental affect on the usefulness of the data since up-to-date statistics are essential for policy purposes.

IV. THE RESULTS SUPPLIED AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE (Article 7)

14. Because of changes in definitions and/or the coverage of the surveys, a detailed comparison between the results of the 1977 and previous surveys could not be made for certain countries. Where comparisons could be made, however, a number of discrepancies appeared which were thought to be mainly due to observation errors. (For example, the area of trees aged 5-9 years in 1977 was sometimes greater than the corresponding area of trees aged 0-4 years in 1972).
15. Sampling errors were within acceptable limits in those Member States using sampling techniques (F.R.Germany, France and Italy).

V. CALCULATION OF MEDIUM-TERM FORECASTS OF PRODUCTION POTENTIAL

16. As stated in paragraph 3 above, the objective of the Directive is to provide information on the production potential of certain species of orchard fruit. On the basis of the 1977 survey results, medium-term forecasts to 1982 have been made for the major varieties of each species in each Member State. These results will be examined by the "Vegetable Products Statistics" (Orchard Fruit Surveys) Working Party to consider the possibility of making medium-term forecasts based on the quinquennial surveys and the intermediate annual estimates of areas of fruit trees cleared and newly planted (required under Articles 5 and 6 of the Directive).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

17. On the whole no major difficulties were experienced by Member States, but the execution of their surveys involved a considerable expenditure on their part of time, effort & money.
18. Various suggestions have been put forward by Member States based on their experience from the 1977 survey. The suggestions have been discussed in detail in a meeting of the "Vegetable Products Statistics" (Orchard Fruit Surveys) Working Party. As a result of these discussions it will be necessary for the Commission to propose amendments to the basic Directive, and possibly to the implementing Decisions¹⁾ as well, in readiness for the next survey to be conducted in 1982.

1) Commission Decision 76/306/EEC of 1 October 1976 (OJ N° L 285 of 16.10.76, p.34)
Commission Decision 77/144/EEC of 22 December 1976 (OJ N° L 47 of 13.2.77, p. 52)

