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Vocational training in the service of the common agricultural policy

Vocational training: an essential factor for the growth of productivity in agriculture

The adaptation of agriculture in an expanding economy requires more and more technical knowledge on the part of agricultural workers and an increase in their earning capacity, especially for farmers.

Vocational training is therefore particularly important for the realization of the common agricultural policy. This point was made by the Commission in its proposals of 30 June 1960 establishing the general principles of a common agricultural policy, when it said:

"Agricultural productivity largely depends on the standard of the farmers' technical knowledge, and this in turn depends in particular upon an efficient system of research, instruction, vocational training and advisory services.

Young people intending to adopt farming as a career, independent farmers and agricultural wage-earners must be in a position to take full advantage of the opportunities offered, and the appropriate educational and advisory services must be given assistance wherever they are still inadequate."

This view was confirmed at the Conference on the social aspects of the common agricultural policy which was held in Rome in September and October 1961 under the auspices of the Commission and was attended by delegates of trade organizations representing farmers and farm workers. The Working Party on education and cultural life on the land concluded that:

"Vocational training is of capital importance for people employed in agriculture. It helps to increase productivity, leads to an improvement in social conditions on the land, and encourages occupational mobility. In addition, it enhances the dignity of the profession."

Legal basis of Community action

Article 118 of the Treaty of Rome states that "it shall be the aim of the Commission to promote close collaboration between Member States in the social field", particularly in such matters as elementary and advanced vocational training. "For this purpose, the Commission shall act in close contact with the Member States by means of studies, the issuing of opinions and the organization of consultations."

Article 128 runs: "The Council shall, on a proposal of the Commission and after the Economic and Social Committee has been consulted, establish general principles for the implementation of a common policy of vocational training capable of contributing to the harmonious development both of national economies and of the Common Market."

Article 41 lays down that, in order to permit the achievement of the objectives of the common agricultural policy, provision may be made for, inter alia, an effective co-ordination of efforts undertaken in the sphere of vocational training, which may involve projects or institutions financed jointly.

It is clear from these three Articles that efforts to promote vocational training in agriculture must be linked to what is done in other sectors, and that the precise aim of vocational training within the framework of common agricultural policy is to further the objectives listed in Article 39 and, in particular, "to increase agricultural productivity".

Article 41 gives the Commission wider powers than it generally enjoys.

In pursuance of Article 128, the Council adopted, on 2 April 1963, a decision establishing the general principles of a common policy on vocational training. These ten principles, which apply to all sectors of the economy, indicate the general pattern for action that must be taken both at the national and at the Community level. In accordance with the fourth of these principles, a Tripartite Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of the governments, employers' associations and trade unions, was set up to assist the Commission in implementing these principles; its composition and rules of procedure were fixed by the Council. This is the framework within which action has been taken specifically for the agricultural sector.

Prior consultation

In application of the general principles, the Commission worked out two programmes to implement a common training policy, one of a general nature and the other relating to agriculture. In this, it was assisted by government and trade union officials. A series of consultations took place with regard to the programme for vocational training in agriculture. First, it was put before a Working Party of government officials. Then, on 16 and 17 October 1964, the Joint Consultative Committee on social problems relating to agricultural workers, set up by the Commission decision of 17 May 1963, expressed its opinion. Lastly, the Advisory Committee on vocational training studied the programme and gave its opinion on 15 February 1965.

After these consultations, the Commission finally adopted the programme and submitted it to the Council on 11 May 1965; it was also sent to the European Parliament and to the Economic and Social Committee for information.

Action Programme under a common policy on vocational training in agriculture

The programme has two aspects: firstly, it forms part of the general social policy of the Community; secondly, as part of the common agricultural policy, it helps to increase productivity - particularly by improving efficiency through technical progress, to rationalize production, and to bring about optimum utilization of the factors of production, especially manpower.

The programme concerns both independent farmers and wage-earners, young people and adults, men and women. It aims at making adult farm workers more highly skilled and more mobile, and at giving children from rural environments opportunities for general and vocational training equivalent to those available to other children. The necessary measures in

this field will have to be taken either by the Member States or by the Community, or as a result of concerted action between them.

The programme defines the general pattern of action envisaged and the means that should be used. It takes into account the great variety of arrangements for vocational training provided in the Member States, as well as regional differences.

The ten-point programme

The Commission lists ten objectives and considers a number of measures that might be adopted to attain them:

- (1) Short-, medium- and long-term forecasts of supply and demand for labour.

Whether young people intend to go in for farming or wish to leave the land, they cannot be given appropriate guidance unless the prospects for employment in agriculture and the nature of such employment are known. Such knowledge is also needed in order to work out training programmes adapted to the needs of modern agriculture.

- (2) Generalization and improvement of vocational guidance. Vocational guidance cannot be considered in relation to agriculture alone. Each individual must be free to choose his occupation. But those engaged in agriculture must be able to enjoy the same facilities as those who work in other sectors.
- (3) Implementation of special programmes of vocational training and re-training to meet urgent and essential needs.

The first aim of adult training must be to ensure that the most urgent manpower needs are met, including those caused by structural improvements connected with the common agricultural policy.

- (4) Adaptation of facilities for vocational training. Training facilities must be such as to make the most efficient use of the instructors available and to give everybody an opportunity of acquiring the training that they need to fit them for their working

life, according to their aptitude.

- (5) Alignments of levels of training - mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates, etc. - adaptation of training courses.

Not only will adjustments have to be made within each Member State, but training facilities and courses in the different Member States will have to be harmonized, leading to mutual recognition of diplomas.

- (6) Adaptation of training methods - diffusion of appropriate teaching methods and material.

Methods of training will have to be adapted in order to provide more efficient practical instruction.

- (7) Development and improvement of the training of teachers and instructors.

Particular attention will have to be given to the problem of recruiting sufficient qualified teachers.

- (8) Development of vocational training establishments. A network of establishments, suitably located and equipped, will have to be available to provide every kind of training needed by persons engaged in agriculture.

- (9) Development and improvement of facilities for further training, permanent education and the advancement of workers.

Vocational training must be regarded as a continuous process which enables individuals to adapt themselves to new production techniques at every level. This will have to lead on to a real awareness of responsibilities, by which true social progress in agriculture will be assured.

- (10) Adaptation of training facilities to the need for harmonious development of the regions of the EEC.

All the objectives described above must be pursued in the light of the actual needs that arise from the implementation of the common agricultural policy, and particular attention must be paid to the regional effects of the general economic development of the Community.

First proposals and achievements

- (a) The Commission first turned its attention to forward studies of employment. A number of studies were undertaken, beginning with an overall study of employment in the different countries, based on censuses. This was published as Nos. 7 and 8 of the Social Policy series of EEC Studies.

In order the better to meet vocational training needs, this survey was supplemented by a more detailed analysis at regional level. The report by a panel of experts has now been completed and is at present being translated, with a view to publication. The two previous studies will be followed by a third on the probable development of the working population in agriculture in the next few years. Such a study raises difficult problems of method, which are now being considered.

- (b) On 28 July 1965 the Commission submitted to the Council a proposal for a recommendation to the Member States on vocational guidance. This draft has been discussed by the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee. Special attention is devoted to the needs of persons engaged in agriculture.
- (c) On 3 February 1965 the Commission submitted to the Council a draft regulation concerning Community grants towards the training of advisers to staff information services for farmers and farm workers wishing to change their occupation. This has been discussed by the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.
- (d) Lastly, on the same date, the Commission submitted to the Council a draft regulation concerning Community grants towards the re-training of farmers and farm workers wishing to change their occupation within agriculture. This too has been discussed by the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.

The Commission's first proposals are thus designed to improve agricultural structures; their aim is to adjust the supply of manpower more efficiently as regards both numbers and skills.

The work of the advisory and information services should complement vocational guidance and re-training, so that people engaged in agriculture may be in possession of all the relevant facts when they decide upon their future occupation, and may, if necessary, take advantage of the improved facilities for re-training, whether they wish to remain on the land or to move to other sectors.

The draft regulation on vocational re-training will supplement, for agricultural workers, the provisions made by the European Social Fund, and will help to increase the effectiveness of structural investments in the Member States, particularly those financed by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.

Harmonization of the classification of wood in the rough

The Commission has submitted to the Council a draft directive to harmonize the legislation of Member States concerning classification of wood in the rough.

1. Introduction

The aim of classification of wood in the rough is to define forestry products according to measurable criteria. Woods are divided into classes and the characteristics of each class are standardized; this is necessary for trade in wood and industries which use wood.

All timber-growing countries have their own systems of measuring and classifying wood, which are generally adapted to local needs; these are sometimes simple traditional customs, sometimes more complicated regulations or directives. The systems of classification at present used in the EEC countries vary greatly, from a detailed classification compulsory by law to the simplest local practices differing from one part of the country to another.

International timber trade has, however, expanded considerably since the Second World War, and although the Community countries do not produce as much wood as they need, intra-Community trade has increased steadily; at present it exceeds 2.5 million cubic metres a year.

2. Need for a uniform system of measurement and classification

The establishment of the Common Market will stimulate intra-Community trade, particularly in frontier areas that are heavily wooded (Ardennes, Eifel, Vosges, Black Forest, Alps, etc.).

Trade would certainly be facilitated by the adoption of common rules regarding classification; relations between buyers and sellers will improve when wood lots can thus be clearly defined.

Outside the Community, certain steps have already been taken in this field, among which we should mention the publication in 1961 by the European Confederation of Agriculture (Section 5: private and communal

forests) "directives for a European standard classification of woods".

In addition, the Brussels Forestry Conference of June 1959, attended by governmental and non-governmental experts of the six EEC Member States, recommended in its final resolution (point 10) that rules about the marketing of forestry products should be standardized.

Moreover, it is important for the studies required with a view to the co-ordination of the Member States' forestry policies that sufficiently exact and detailed Community forestry statistics should be available. In this connection, a common classification is essential for a strict comparison of the data relating to production, trade, consumption and prices in the six countries.

3. The proposed system of classification

The draft directive, which is based on Article 100 of the Treaty, requires each Member State to introduce in its territory an EEC classification of wood in the rough; the use of this classification may be optional, but the denominations are protected by law. Each Member State is, however, free to rule that all or part of this system shall be compulsory for home-grown timber, but not for timber imported from other Member States; if it were also compulsory for the latter, this would impede intra-Community trade in cases where the EEC classification is not also compulsory in the exporting Member State.

For home-grown timber, the Member States may prescribe the methods of classification given in the annex to the directive.

To sum up, this directive will align the national laws and regulations governing the classification of wood in the rough, introducing a new classification which, although optional, is likely to be widely used because it is a very useful instrument for the expanding trade in wood within the Community.

If the proposed system of classification is adopted within the EEC, it will probably spread to a number of other European countries which are desirous of adopting a standard classification of woods.