



European Commission
Directorate-general for Agriculture

Newsletter

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What do Europe's citizens think about the CAP?

A broad-ranging debate has opened up on the future direction of the common agricultural policy (CAP), provoked in part by the recent BSE and foot-and-mouth crises. The mid-term review of the CAP is scheduled for 2002 and a dialogue on this has already begun⁽¹⁾.

Consumer expectations will be an important consideration in the discussions. In order to assess public perception of the policy, two Eurobarometer opinion polls were carried out among farmers and the general public in October and November 2000. The surveys revealed a widespread interest in agricultural issues and a wish for more information on them.

Whilst 92 % of the general public think that agriculture is important, only 50 % had heard about the common agricultural policy. Both farmers and the general public were asked to rate the importance of a list of 12 policy objectives, including food safety, environmental protection, the improvement of rural life, the protection of farm incomes and the competitiveness of European agriculture on international markets. Whilst a clear majority of people thought that all the objectives were important (ratings varied between 76 and 97 %), the levels of satisfaction with how they were being met ranged between 16 and 57 %. The protection of farm incomes and small farms was seen as badly served, by both farmers and the general public. Food safety and environmental protection were considered to be the top priorities by those surveyed.

Both groups supported the change in direction resulting from the reform process, whereby production subsidies and intervention were reduced in favour of direct payments to farmers. However, 63 % of the farmers who were questioned feel that the CAP is unfavourable to them, with the notable exception of Danish and Irish farmers. Only 46 % of the farmers interviewed rely on agriculture alone for their family income; 59 % of farmers and 46 % of the general public thought that agricultural funding should be increased. The national variations ranged from Denmark, where 13 % of people held this view, to Greece, where 76 % were dissatisfied with the funding.

An acute need for information

The survey revealed an acute need for information on the international aspects of agricultural policy. With respect to the proposed enlargement of the Union, half of the respondents in both groups had heard something about it, but only 20 % of farmers and 10 % of the general public felt that they were well informed on the subject. Perhaps as a result, a majority of both groups felt that the consequences for Europe would be negative. When asked about the trade discussions with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), 65 % of farmers and 77 % of the general public had heard nothing about them, with only a very small proportion of either group stating that they were well informed on the subject.

As well as polling people on their attitudes towards the CAP, the survey also asked questions about the information sources that people use to inform themselves. Not surprisingly, most people receive their information from television (85 % of the general public, 66 % of farmers). There were some differences between the two groups in relation to press sources: farmers rely nearly as much on the specialised agricultural press (64 %) as on television, whereas the public prefer the general press (61 %). On average, 10 % use the Internet as an information source, although the national variations were significant, ranging from 27 % of Austrian farmers to 2 % of Greek farmers. There were marked age, gender and educational biases among the general public, with younger, well-educated males twice as likely to use the Internet as the European average. Among farmers, younger members, and those with large farms, use this resource more than other groups.

The results⁽²⁾ of the surveys into attitudes towards the CAP, which were conducted by EOS Gallup in the 15 Member States, have just been announced. They were commissioned as part of an evaluation of the Directorate-General for Agriculture's information activities on the CAP, following the adoption of a regulation⁽³⁾ in 2000. The surveys were carried out between 27 September and 2 November by telephone on 16 000 members of the general public and on 3 500 farmers. In order to assess the effect of the BSE and foot-and-mouth disease crises on public attitudes towards the CAP, another poll will be organised shortly. The results are expected during the summer.

(1) See Newsletter No 32.

(2) The full report is available on the web site of the Directorate-General for Agriculture (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/index.htm>).

(3) Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 — see also Newsletter No 22.

Franz Fischler visits India

Commissioner Fischler's visit to India ⁽¹⁾ from 12 to 18 April provided an opportunity to take stock of the situation with regard to the continuation of the WTO multilateral negotiations and the development of bilateral relations. Although their agricultural systems differ widely, Europe and India recognise that a key objective of any agricultural policy must be to consolidate the essential role agriculture plays in society, both in the economy and in food production, and in maintaining a viable rural community. They have many common interests to defend at the WTO negotiating table. The negotiating mandate is set out in Article 20 of the Uruguay Round agreement on agriculture: (1) the progressive reform of agricultural trade; (2) the promotion of non-trade concerns, and, in particular, rural development which India and the Community both see as a priority; (3) special and differential treatment for the developing countries. In its comprehensive proposal to the WTO (see *Newsletter* No 29), the Community suggested that the wealthiest countries should provide significant trade preferences to developing countries on a stable and predictable basis and increase aid.

The Community supports India's proposal that internal support measures to combat poverty, secure food supplies and promote rural development in the developing countries should be exempt from further tariff reduction obligations. One point on which they differ, however, is India's suggestion that developing countries should remain outside any further liberalisation of world agricultural trade. Given that trade creates prosperity, the Community view is that a more open trading system would benefit India with its enormous export potential.

Bilateral relations should develop on a complementary rather than a competitive basis in view of the specific character of a large number of Indian products on the European market. Stressing that sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) are not intended to restrict access to the Community market, the Community is prepared to help India on SPS. The Commission proposed a programme to that end in January 2001 and a common EC/India initiative was adopted in February.

(1) For more information, see MEMO/01/136 on the RAPID web site (<<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/welcome.htm>>).

In addition, at 6 p.m. on 6 June, Commissioner Fischler and Commissioner Byrne (Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection) will take part in an electronic forum on **product quality**. For how to take part, see the following web site (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/chat/index_en.htm>).

In brief

□ Special market measures for beef

Following the vote in the Management Committee for Beef and Veal on 16 March ⁽¹⁾, the Commission formally adopted the new special market measure (special purchase scheme, see *Newsletter* No 32) for bovine animals of more than 30 months old for which no outlet can be found. The new arrangement will be applicable immediately, on the conditions laid down, in those Member States that have decided not to take part in the purchase for destruction scheme (see *Newsletter* No 29) because they have sufficient testing capacity. The other Member States will be able to apply it on a voluntary basis and at the same time participate in the purchase for destruction scheme until 30 June 2001, when testing will become compulsory.

(1) Press Release IP/01/407 on the RAPID web site.

Full information on **health measures to combat BSE and foot-and-mouth disease** is available on the 'Food safety' web site of the Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/index_en.html>).

□ Sapard: all the agreements have now been signed

On 26 March ⁽²⁾, Commissioner Franz Fischler signed the multi-annual financing agreement with Slovakia under the special accession programme for agriculture and rural development (Sapard) plus the annual agreement fixing the allocation for 2000. The transfer of funding can start and management of the aid handed over once the parties have notified each other of the completion of the formalities necessary for the conclusion of the agreements, the national Sapard management agency has been set up and accredited by the competent Slovak authority, and the Commission has examined the agency's structures and procedures. Slovakia thus completes the list of 10 applicant countries in central and eastern Europe preparing to manage in a fully decentralised manner, and for the first time in non-member countries, European aid totalling EUR 520 million a year over seven years, intended to prepare them to participate in the common agricultural policy and the single market.

(2) Press Release IP/01/441 and MEMO/01/106 on the RAPID web site.



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