

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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

**Interim review of the ECLAIR Programme**

Report drafted in compliance with Art. 6 of the Council Decision adopting the ECLAIR Programme (89/160/EEC - O.J. L60/48 of 3.03.89).

## Introduction

Article 6.1 of the Council Decision adopting the ECLAIR programme<sup>1</sup> stated that "in the third year of the programme implementation, the Commission shall undertake a review of the programme and shall report to the European Parliament and the Council on the results thereof, together, if necessary, with any proposals for modification of the content and funding, or for prolongation".

For the purpose of this review, the Commission engaged two independent consultants<sup>2</sup> to carry out an interview survey of 334 ECLAIR participants, 75% of which responded. The report of the consultants has been published as EUR 14471 EN.

Annex II of the ECLAIR Council Decision lists the testable objectives and milestones to be achieved by the Programme. In particular :

The primary short term objective is that the programme should succeed in eliciting proposals, with commitment to co-finance from industry and/or agriculture, for development projects on a scale commensurate with the Community resources proposed. This objective shall be testable in 1991 to 1992 (Objective 1).

By this time, the programme should also have demonstrated its promotion and encouragement of inter-sectoral collaboration across the Member States (Objective 2).

In respect to the scientific implementation (Objective 3), among the criteria for the evaluation of the objectives of the programme are :

- a) that tests of new or modified species or organisms have been conducted and have given grounds to expect that these organisms, or the processes used to produce or modify them, represent progress and could find applications;
- b) that tests have been conducted of new or modified products, techniques or services for use in agriculture, that advantages in terms of precision, effectiveness, or the avoidance of possible adverse side effects have been indicated; and that, as a result of the tests, the products, techniques or services have practical applications;
- c) that tests have been conducted of more precise and effective extraction, transformation and production processes, applying biotechnology and/or other methods to an agricultural output, and that, as a result of the tests, the processes are useful;
- d) that, through the programme, arrangements have been organized between farming and industrial processing industries, and facilities or equipment created, modified or made available, to test one or more crops the technical feasibility of harvesting and using the whole plant; and that corresponding measures of performance have been, or are in course of being, defined to provide a basis for further system improvements and a basis for decision on the replication and diffusion of similar larger scale activities.

It was against these objectives that this review has been conducted.

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<sup>1</sup> O.J. L 60/48 of 3.3.1989

<sup>2</sup> SEPSU and SOCINTEC

Objective 1 :

The call for proposals for the ECLAIR programme was launched in December 1988 with a three month deadline. To ensure the establishment of collaborative linkages between industry and agriculture through research, the active involvement of private institutions in the research consortia was strongly recommended in the call. This was the first time for such a recommendation to be made at the proposal preparation stage in this area. In response to the call, a total of 220 proposals involving 1409 participants were received. 34% of applicants were private organizations, willing to co-finance the projects. The 220 proposals received had a total budget of about 700 Mio ECU and requested funding of 400 Mio ECU.

Following the selection procedure, 25 projects were short-listed for immediate contract negotiation. These formed the "first wave" projects. The 40 most promising of the non-selected proposals were then given a chance to adapt or modify their work programme. The ECLAIR Programme management took an active role in proposing reductions and mergers of complementary or overlapping proposals. As a result, a further 17 projects (from 21 proposals) were selected, forming the "second wave" of ECLAIR projects. The survey of participants conducted for this Interim Review highlights that project consortia put together by the ECLAIR management team are performing as well as the best consortia.

The 42 ECLAIR projects include 346 participants from across the Community (with the exception of Luxembourg who provided no applicants). Participants include industrial and agricultural firms, research institutes and universities. The survey revealed that for 63% of the respondents, ECLAIR was their first experience of a Community research programme. Of the remaining 37%, 14% of those with experience of the earlier biotechnology programmes (BEP, BAP, Biomass, Forest) had transferred results to their ECLAIR project.

The total budget of ECLAIR was 80 Mio ECU, of which approximately 64 Mio ECU were devoted to shared-cost RTD projects and 16 Mio ECU to training/mobility grants, studies, workshops and management of the programme. An additional 61 Mio ECU (i.e. approximately the same amount again) is being contributed by participating organizations.

Objective 2 :

The average number of countries per project is 3.8; the minimum number of countries involved is 2 and the largest number is 9. The pattern of participation across Member States broadly reflects the response to a call for expression of interest launched in preparation of the ECLAIR programme in 1986 (856 respondents). The exceptions to this are France and the United Kingdom. Although only 10% of the original expressions of interest came from France, 26% of the proposals and 28% of the final participants were from France. In contrast, the UK accounted for 26% of the expressions of interest but only 12% of proposals and of final participants. Although Greece, Spain and Portugal collectively accounted for only 10% of the expressions of interest, their final participation rate is 19%. Also noticeable is the low participation rate by Germany which accounts for only 8% of respondents to the call for expression of interest and 6% of the final number of ECLAIR participants.

Private sector organizations account for 42% of all participants in the programme. SMEs represent more than half (52%) of participating private organizations. Public research institutes and universities respectively form 32% and 23% of the total participants. Out of the 42 projects, only five are either wholly public or private sector. All others include organizations from both sectors.

The programme has been successful in encouraging collaboration with 55% of respondents to the programme survey forming new linkages with other organizations for purposes beyond ECLAIR. Some 95% of these are expected to last beyond the duration of the current projects, mostly for further research and development work. A number of respondents reported that through their contacts with partners in other countries, they were making new contacts in the Community as a result. Some participants have submitted proposals to new R&D programmes with one or more of their ECLAIR partners.

### Objective 3 :

Assessed against the scientific objectives of the programme, ECLAIR can be judged a success at this mid-term stage. The survey of participants revealed that 75 participants have tested new or modified species or organisms (3a), while 114 have tested new or modified products or techniques (3b). Of these, 98 are thought to offer increased precision or efficacy. 91 participants have tested more precise and effective extraction, transformation and production processes (3c). Five large projects with a total of 62 partners, represent the joint effort of producers and industrial users of several main crops (wheat, maize, oil plants) for the whole crop harvesting for both food and non-food uses (3d).

145 respondents (59%) have already published at least one paper, 66 of these in a scientific journal and 79 at a conference. 24 respondents (10%) from 15 different projects have applied for a patent and 9 (4%) have made at least one application to the VALUE programme.

Participating in the ECLAIR project has enabled 63% of the respondents to employ at least one additional person while 52% of respondents have hosted at least one ECLAIR trainee. A total of 87 training grants have been awarded within the ECLAIR training scheme with an average duration of 24.5 months.

### **Results**

The need to develop a link between agriculture and industry for a more market-driven agriculture formed the basis, in 1988, for the Commission proposal for the ECLAIR programme. Five years later, with the programme well under way, a remarkable number of achievements are reaching the application stage. The approach of stimulating the inter-sectoral collaboration between farmers and food and non-food industries, to find new uses for traditional agricultural products and new or improved crops for the industrial market, is proving to be among the successful solutions to the issues raised by the reformed Common Agricultural Policy.

Furthermore, we note the following specific points :

#### Demand for research in the agro-industrial sector

Linkages between agricultural production and industry have been achieved but considerable scope remains to enhance these linkages to further encourage a more market-driven agricultural industry in Europe.

Demand for research linkages fostered under the ECLAIR programme is strong across all Member States. Such demand is backed by very significant financial commitment from industrial partners.

ECLAIR has proved an effective mechanism to facilitate the involvement of SMEs in European research. 42% of the programme participants are from the private sector of which more than half are SMEs.

#### Duration of Cooperation

The value of the innovative linkage of traditional agricultural production with biotechnology can be confirmed by the number of new or modified products and techniques being developed as a result of ECLAIR.

Value added of Community involvement in this area is evident by the number of new linkages (55%) and the total number of linkages (95%) which are expected to continue beyond ECLAIR funding. Short-term movement of personnel between participating organizations is playing a significant role in technology transfer within consortia.

At this mid-term point, a number of projects have reached the application stage including the filing of patents. While it is too early to assess the contribution of ECLAIR to European industrial competitiveness in this sector, the signs are encouraging.

### **Conclusions**

The positive results from this mid term review confirm the soundness of the approach adopted in ECLAIR and do not lead the Commission to require any modification in the content and funding of the Programme. Similarly, no request for prolongation is made because agro-industrial research has been incorporated within the Specific Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Programme in the field of Agriculture and Agro-Industry, including Fisheries (1990-1994) of the third Framework Programme which is now being implemented.