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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND  
THE COUNCIL**

**on the implementation of Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European  
Parliament and of the Council on information measures relating to the common  
agricultural policy**

{SWD(2017) 459 final}

## I. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns the implementation of information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (CAP) for 2015 and 2016, under Article 45 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy<sup>1</sup>(hereinafter 'the Regulation').

Article 45(1) first subparagraph of the Regulation states that information measures financed "shall aim, in particular, to help explain, implement and develop the CAP and to raise public awareness of its content and objectives to reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns, to inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas and to promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it. Article 45(2) last subparagraph states that these measures "shall also contribute to the corporate communication of the Union's political priorities in so far as those priorities are related to the general objectives of this Regulation".

Information measures financed fall into two main categories:

- Those submitted by third party organisations for co-financing under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund - EAGF (grants);
- Those at the initiative of the Commission and financed at a rate of 100% under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund - EAGF (direct actions/public procurement).

According to Article 45(5) of the Regulation, a report on the implementation of the information measures under the Regulation shall be presented to the European Parliament and the Council every two years. This is the seventh such report<sup>2</sup>.

In the 2015-2016 period, the Commission continued to develop its corporate communication activities on the basis of its ten political priorities, with a special emphasis on investment, economic growth and jobs. Resources were pooled from different spending programmes in order to fund communication priorities based on the general objectives of the European Union. In 2015 (as in 2014), Commission departments, including DG Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), contributed to the execution of this joint approach. From the end of 2015 and throughout 2016, efforts were intensified to inform stakeholders and a wider audience about the tangible benefits delivered by the EU for citizens. The focus was on raising public awareness about the EU as a whole, its role, values, political priorities and its work to address current challenges.

This corporate approach to communication activity is central to DG AGRI's external communication strategy for the 2016-2020 period. Within the framework of this strategy, specific information measures for each year are defined in annual action plans. In designing its information measures for the 2015-2016 period, DG AGRI also took into consideration the recommendations of the external evaluation of information measures on the CAP, of June 2015<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 549.

<sup>2</sup> COM (2003) 235 final of 8.5.2003; COM (2007) 324 final of 13.6.2007; COM (2009) 237 final of 20.5.2009; COM (2011) 294 final of 25.5.2011; COM(2013) 645 final of 20.9.2013; COM(2016) 83 final of 23.2.2016.

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/evaluation/market-and-income-reports/information-policy-2015\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/evaluation/market-and-income-reports/information-policy-2015_en.htm)

The annexes mentioned in the text are to be found in the Commission Staff Working document accompanying this report.

## **II. BUDGET**

The budget made available for information measures under budget line 05 08 06, originally foreseen in the financing decision, was EUR 8 million in 2015; and EUR 8 million in 2016 (including the 4 million EUR contribution of DG AGRI to the Commission's corporate communication campaign). The provisional breakdown between public procurement (actions taken at the initiative of the Commission) and grants (co-financed actions) was as follows:

2015: public procurement (5 million EUR) ( 62.5% ) – Grants (3 million EUR) (37.5 %)  
2016: public procurement (1.5 million EUR) (18.75%) – Grants (2.5 million EUR) (31.25%)  
– 4 million EUR co-delegated to DG Communication (DG COMM) for the corporate communication campaign (50%).

Execution of the 2015 measures reached 91,18 % in terms of commitments and 88,60% in terms of payments.

Execution of the 2016 measures reached 98,29 % in terms of commitments; the figures for payments on 2016 measures were not yet finalised at the time of drafting this report as payments could still be made until 31 December 2017.

Key results and progress towards the achievement of the objectives of the Commission in relation to communication, and specifically on the corporate communication actions, are to be found in the annual activity report for 2016 of DG COMM<sup>4</sup>.

## **III. BREAKDOWN OF ACTIONS FINANCED**

The reform of the common agricultural policy agreed in 2013 entered into force on 1 January 2015. There was a strong emphasis in the reporting period on information measures to raise public understanding of the reformed CAP and its contribution to meeting the challenges identified in the Commission's Europe 2020 strategy, in terms of a more competitive and sustainable policy for agriculture and rural development. Efforts were made to disseminate information on the contribution of the policy to employment in the agro-food sector, delivering environmental benefits, boosting knowledge and innovation, and promoting resource efficiency.

The EU agricultural sector faced major challenges in the period during which the reform was being negotiated. Farm price volatility and market uncertainty, combined with geopolitical developments, prompted a vigorous public debate about the economic prospects facing agriculture and rural areas. Challenges, such as the role of the sector in addressing climate change, together with its ability to take advantage of new opportunities, for example, in the areas of health, trade or the bio-economy needed to be further considered. Addressing the future challenges confronting the sector were therefore also central to the development of information measures on the CAP during this period.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file\\_import/aar-comm-2016\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/aar-comm-2016_en_0.pdf) (pages 24ff)

Efforts were intensified to further develop synergies with different partners in the field of communication on agriculture and rural development, including stakeholders. DG AGRI continued to deepen cooperation with other Commission departments, the Commission representations in the EU Member States, other EU institutions, as well as networks like the Europe Direct Information Centres and European Network for Rural Development.

Concerning the monitoring and evaluation of information measures, DG AGRI took into account the findings of the external evaluation that procedures and practices related to the definition of objectives, and monitoring the results and evaluation of impacts of implemented communication actions should be improved. In this regard, procedures concerning the planning and evaluation of information measures were reviewed, and guidelines for the evaluation of communication actions were updated in 2015.

### **1. Grants (co-financed information measures taken at the initiative of third party organisations)**

Article 45 (information measures) of the Regulation envisages two types of measures to be funded through grants, annual work programmes or other specific measures presented by third parties. Specific information measures refer to information events limited in time and space and implemented on the basis of a single budget. An annual work programme is a set of two to five specific information measures. For 2015 and 2016, it was decided (as in previous years) to retain only specific information measures for co-financing, with the aim of simplifying the grants scheme and ensuring coherence between the different communication actions.

For 2015, the call for proposals aimed to provide information on the reformed CAP and its three core elements, food safety, sustainable management of natural resources, and the development of rural areas<sup>5</sup>. For 2016, it encouraged information actions on the challenges ahead for agriculture, including sustainable development and the modernisation of Europe's agriculture and the wider rural economy<sup>6</sup>. The Commission's political guidelines were central in the process of defining the calls for proposals for the grants:

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/juncker-political-guidelines-speech\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/juncker-political-guidelines-speech_en_0.pdf)

For both years, the general public was targeted (in particular young people in urban areas), and farmers and others active in rural areas.

The maximum rate of financing for the measures referred to above was set at 50% of eligible costs. In 2015, fifteen measures were co-financed, at a 50% rate. Under the 2016 call, eighteen measures were financed, making a total of 33 co-financed actions for the period 2015-2016. Grants were awarded for measures such as information campaigns with a significant trans-national and multi-media element, and measures highlighting sustainability with a strong EU networking focus. Other awareness raising measures run at national or local level were often identified strongly with the agricultural development needs on the ground. Measures focussed on young people and the general public used the latest on-line and social media tools to connect with the target audience.

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<sup>5</sup> Call for proposals for 2015, Official Journal of the European Union, 2014/C 383/06 of 29.10.2014

<sup>6</sup> Call for proposals for 2016, Official Journal of the European Union, 2015/C 351/09 of 23.10.2015

Projects were implemented by national farmer and rural associations; non-governmental organisations at national and EU level active on environmental, on rural development and on organic farming issues; media organisations operating at regional, national, European and global level; local and national public authorities.

The Commission Staff Working Document accompanying this report gives more detailed information on the grants awarded during the reporting period, including the number of successful applications per Member State.

The calls for proposals encouraged grant applicants to seek better definition of target audiences, better dissemination of information, and analysis of the impact of the measures in terms of the numbers of persons reached directly and indirectly. Applicants were required to submit detailed plans for their proposed measures, including project implementation, message delivery and measurement of effectiveness. In the reporting period, it is important to emphasise that a considerable number of co-financed actions reached a wider audience beyond the immediate participants, thanks to the multiplier effect of the specialised press and media, as well as increased use of the internet and social media as dissemination tools.

Applications were assessed in the light of rigorous eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria as laid down in the calls for proposals. This was in line with the Financial Regulation and reflected the Commission's aim to achieve equal treatment and fair competition between applicants<sup>7</sup>.

## **2. Direct actions/public procurement (information measures taken at the initiative of the Commission)**

In 2015-2016, as in the past, an important number of information measures were carried out at the initiative of the Commission.

### **a) Media networking**

Supporting the media with information and briefings on developments in the CAP and rural development continued to be a very important part of communication actions, with a very significant multiplier effect. Social media and internet based communication continued to grow in importance in this period. There was a sustained effort to disseminate to the media relevant user-friendly information on the policy. Ongoing development and maintenance of the platform for journalists, AG-Press.eu, the organisation of study trips for AG-Press members, and media networking events continued to foster close contacts and exchanges with both journalists specialising in agricultural issues, and also the non-specialist media. The DG AGRI social media tools (Facebook, Twitter) were further developed and had a rapidly growing audience during this time. They continue to be an important tool both in attracting specialists towards the website and the comprehensive information and latest news available there, and also in reaching the general public. Overall, media networking activity contributed to increasing awareness and understanding of journalists on issues related to agriculture and rural development throughout the EU.

The AG-Press network, which now includes over 800 active journalists, is a useful tool for the Commission, and network for its members.

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<sup>7</sup> More detailed information on grants are also to be found on the Europa website: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants-for-information-measures\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants-for-information-measures_en)

During nine study trips, groups of journalists had the opportunity to experience often very different farming conditions in other regions and Member States. Typically, these "learning on the ground" exercises include briefings on innovation on farms, generational renewal, alternative enterprises, climate mitigation measures *inter alia*. Exchanges with producers and rural entrepreneurs helped to promote awareness of the challenges and opportunities confronting farmers across the European Union. The AG-Press annual network event, which took place in January 2016 with a high level expert programme, including participation of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, also facilitated a shared understanding of the CAP.

## **b) Stakeholder networking - conferences**

Stakeholders – farmers, cooperatives, the food sector, environmentalists, those active in rural areas, amongst others – constitute a very important multiplier of information on agricultural and rural development issues.

In the reporting period, conferences continued to be an important forum for dialogue on the implementation and future development of policy. In line with the Commission's policy priorities and emphasis on broad consultation with civil society, there was a sustained effort to engage on major policy priorities with other EU institutions, Member State administrations, the EU level and national socio-professional sector and the academic and research community.

DG AGRI continued the practice begun in 2014 of presenting to a wider audience its work undertaken together with the Joint Research Centre on the medium term prospects for the EU agricultural markets. The scope of its 2015 "EU Agricultural Outlook Conference" was broadened to include the challenges facing agriculture in the EU and globally. This event included an important political dimension with high-level panels focusing on issues, such as sustainability and the food chain. The 2016 edition of the Outlook conference continued this broader high level format with representatives from the EU institutions, and governments, international organisations and stakeholders exchanging views and perspectives on issues related to climate change and resource availability. Senior political representation from the EU and third countries at the Outlook conferences in this period helped generate considerable media coverage of the issues.

The "Cork 2.0 Conference on Rural Development" was another major event in this period. Some three hundred EU stakeholders, together with senior representatives from international organisations, discussed and reassessed the situation of rural areas and the associated policy implications for the next 20 years. The conference adopted a declaration, "A better life in rural areas", which outlined a common vision for the future of rural areas, including strengthening rural value chains and investing in rural vitality and viability by increasing access to transformative innovation and technologies. This strategic vision for the future of rural areas was an important contribution to the Commission's ongoing reflection on the simplification and modernisation of the CAP

In addition, in a series of workshops, experts from both the public and private sectors engaged in a reflection exercise with a view to identifying the main elements that should underpin a healthy development of the sheep sector in the Union in the future.

### **c) General public activities**

#### ***Participation at fairs***

The Commission's emphasis on improving the awareness of the general public about the CAP and the EU in general remained central to participation at fairs. Actions continued to target citizens and stakeholders, and provide a forum for dialogue with farmers, civil society and the general public on policy issues. Information measures often highlighted successful rural development projects, as well as organising informative and educational activities designed to appeal to families and schoolchildren. Cooperation intensified with other DGs and the Commission representations in the Member States. For example, DG AGRI together with the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) organised common stands with the theme "From farm to fork" at the larger fairs such as "Grüne Woche" in Berlin or "Salon International de l'Agriculture" in Paris.

#### ***Educational pack for school children***

The educational pack for school children aged between eleven and fifteen years ("edutainment pack") was developed in the reporting period, and distributed in early 2017 through the Europe Direct Information Centres and the Commission representations in the Member States, with the support of a digital and social media campaign. The aim is to explain in an attractive pedagogical format the role of the farmer and farm families, their contribution to society and the challenges they face.

### **d) Horizontal activities**

#### ***World Exhibition Milano 2015 (Expo)***

The World Expo 2015 took place in Milan from 1 May to 31 October 2015 on the theme "Feeding the Planet: Energy for Life". This was an important focus of DG AGRI communication activity in 2015. This edition of Expo was a major platform for global political discussions and policy initiatives on food and sustainability. For the EU as a key player in this global debate, it was an opportunity to work towards fruitful collaboration on these issues with other stakeholders, both public and private. With 147 countries and international organisations participating, over 21 million visitors, and hundreds of millions more reached via the Internet, this was a very valuable forum for communication on the issues with European and third country nationals. The EU participation had three major objectives – communicating key EU achievements in the area of food and sustainability, providing a platform for future policy development, and playing an educative role by raising awareness on issues such as combating food waste and encouraging healthier food choices.

The EU presence at EXPO included the Commission, the European Parliament and other institutions, as well as a very significant stakeholder involvement. In cooperation with the Joint Research Centre, which coordinated the EU participation, and other Commission departments, DG AGRI played a key role in highlighting policy issues related to the future of agricultural policy and rural development. More than twenty events - seminars, conferences, workshops, awareness raising actions for visitors - were organised by DG AGRI. These covered, inter alia, food security and agricultural sustainability, research and innovation, food safety and food quality, rural development, and food related global challenges. They generated important stakeholder contributions to the discussions on future

challenges for policy-makers. DG AGRI participated also in other related events during EXPO notably the work of the Scientific Committee, and its definition of recommendations for the future on research and innovation in global food and nutrition security.

There were over 650,000 visitors to the EU pavilion. Visitor appreciation of the pavilion's central exhibit, an animated story revolving around bread, science and agriculture, was high at 90%, while a further 74% stated they would now like to learn more on EU policies concerning food and sustainability.

Communication actions targeted the media, with social media activity deployed before and during the Expo. The important high level political representation at EXPO (Heads of State and Ministers, Members of the European Parliament including the President, EU Commissioners together with President Juncker) generated media interest about EXPO and helped boost the dissemination of information on its main activities.

### ***Publications***

In the reporting period, there continued to be a strong focus on the further development of publications in electronic format. As in the past, a number of publications were produced in cooperation with the EU Publications Office, and also the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB). Some were aimed at schoolchildren, and at highlighting the School schemes. They proved very popular as promotional material at fairs and events. In addition, publications focussed on policy issues such as the contribution of food and farming to economic growth and jobs, and on agricultural market safety nets.

Publication of the important report of the Agricultural Markets Task Force, "Improving Market Outcomes: enhancing the position of farmers in the supply chain" took place in November 2016.

### ***Eurobarometer***

A special quantitative Eurobarometer survey on agriculture and the CAP was conducted in the last quarter of 2015. The results, published in January 2016, show that agriculture and rural areas are important for Europeans and that a majority of people support the guiding principles and aims of the CAP. At the same time, it indicated that 30% of Europeans are unaware of the policy associated with it, the CAP. DG AGRI when designing specific information measures keeps these results under review.

### ***Website***

The "Agriculture and Rural Development" website continued to develop in the reporting period, notably as an important source of specialist information on agriculture and rural development. It also played a significant role in the process of consulting stakeholders and the general public as to the future direction of agricultural policy. The reporting period saw important changes to the Commission's web presence, designed to make it more user-friendly and relevant for the general public. The ongoing Digital Transformation process includes the adaptation of the web content and its incorporation within the Commission's new web architecture by the end of 2017 so as to provide information better corresponding to end user needs. DG AGRI participated actively in this process in 2015-2016 with a reinforced web team, which ensured the successful migration from the Documentum to the Drupal platform.



## Visitors

In the reporting period, DG AGRI continued to participate in information sessions with groups of visitors, comprising principally farmers, farmers' representatives, students, regional and local representatives, journalists and academics. The purpose of the visits was to explain and deepen understanding of the CAP, including rural development, and also to raise awareness of the broader challenges and opportunities facing agriculture in the future. This communication activity was carried out in close cooperation with DG COMM's visitor centre.

#### IV. THE PROPORTION OF SPENDING (COMMITMENTS AND PAYMENTS) BETWEEN CO-FINANCED ACTIONS AT THE INITIATIVE OF THIRD PARTIES (GRANTS) AND INFORMATION ACTIONS AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE COMMISSION (PUBLIC PROCUREMENT)<sup>8</sup>

	2015			2016		
	Grants	Public procurement	Total	Grants	Public procurement	Total
<b>Initial foreseen budget</b>	3.000.000	5.000.000	8.000.000	2.500.000	1.580.900 (**)	4.000.000,
<b>Commitments in EUR</b>	2.759.449	4.535.172	7.294.621	2.419.099 (**)	1.512.640 (**)	3.931.739 (**)
<b>% of commitment</b>	91,98%	90,70 %	91,18 %	96,76%	95,7%	98,29 %
<b>Payments (**) in EUR</b>	2.323.802	4.139.141	6.462.943	(*)	890.638 (***)	890.638 (***)
<b>% of disbursement vs commitment</b>	84,21 %	91,27%	88,60%	(*)	58,88 %	22,65 %

(\*) None of the actions are paid yet.

(\*\*) cf. Following the amendment of DG AGRI's 2016 external communication action plan.

(\*\*\*) The figures for payments on 2016 measures were not yet finalised.

Payments are generally lower than the amounts originally committed. In the case of grants, this can be explained by the fact that final costs of the actions are lower than initially foreseen by the beneficiary, and secondly, because not all expenses declared by the beneficiaries can be considered as eligible. In the case of actions taken at the initiative of the Commission, the difference between payments and commitments arises from the fact that, while commitments are fixed, actual expenditure is less than that foreseen due to savings and the use of more cost-effective measures during implementation.

<sup>8</sup> EUR 4.000.000 – codelegated to DG Comm in 2016 for Corporate Communication activities not included in this table

## **V. CONCLUSION**

In the reporting period, the Commission continued to develop its corporate communication actions based on its ten political priorities emphasising the tangible benefits delivered by the EU to its citizens. Information measures carried out in relation to the common agricultural policy and rural development sought to highlight the achievements of the CAP in terms of providing a steady supply of healthy food and its contribution to economic growth and vibrant rural areas. In parallel, critical issues for the future such as resource efficiency, generational renewal, and the role of agriculture in addressing the challenge of climate change were also central to communication actions. Efforts were reinforced also to engage with civil society and a broad range of stakeholders, and to promote stronger cooperation in carrying out information actions both within the Commission services, and with other EU institutions and Member States.