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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Accompanying the document

Strategy for Agricultural Statistics 2020 and beyond and subsequent potential legislative scenarios

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Executive Summary Sheet

Impact assessment on a strategy for Agricultural Statistics 2020 and beyond and subsequent potential legislative scenarios

A. Need for action

Why? What is the problem being addressed?

Globalisation, climate and social change are changing world agriculture. In reaction, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other related EU policies are changing as well. This creates **new data needs** for agricultural statistics which are currently not fulfilled due to rigid legislation and **incoherence** between data collections. Furthermore, official statistics are also changing due to technological progress and new data sources while resources continue to be cut. This puts pressure on agricultural statistics legislation to adapt to achieve higher cost-efficiency and **reduce the burden of data collection**.

If these problems are not solved, the evidence basis of the CAP and other EU policies would be endangered, limiting the EU's ability to act in areas of crucial importance for all EU citizens. The stakeholders affected most directly by this initiative are Commission policy DGs like AGRI, ENV, CLIMA and SANTE, and National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) in EU Member States.

What is this initiative expected to achieve?

The initiative aims at renewed legislation to serve new data needs flexibly, make agricultural statistics more harmonised and coherent, and address the burden of providing data by

- Producing high-quality statistics that meet users' needs efficiently and effectively
- Increasing the flexibility and reaction speed of the agricultural statistics system
- Improving the integration between agricultural, forestry, land use and environmental statistics
- Developing a responsive and responsible governance structure for agricultural statistics
- Improving the harmonisation and coherence of European agricultural statistics and
- Producing more statistics while lowering the burden on respondents by exploring alternative data sources and efficiency improvement techniques.

What is the value added of action at the EU level?

Harmonised EU policies such as the CAP, a policy using almost 40% of the EU budget, need ipso facto high-quality data comparable across Member States to target policy interventions most efficiently, effectively and fairly. This can only be ensured by common and coordinated action in the European Statistical System (ESS).

B. Solutions

What legislative and non-legislative policy options have been considered? Is there a preferred choice or not? Why?

Four main options have been considered:

1. Baseline – No EU action on structural data of agriculture: This option would leave the collection of the data to Member States, resulting in a patchwork of different approaches and qualities.
2. Prolongation of the FSS Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008: This option would continue the status quo.
3. Single legal framework for all agricultural statistics: This option would integrate all agricultural statistics data collection in a single new framework regulation.
4. Two-step integration of agricultural statistics: This option would preserve the advantages of option 3 while increasing flexibility and reducing time pressure by creating two new framework regulations stepwise.

The preferred choice is option 4, as it offers the best chance to achieve the objectives.

Who supports which option?

Following extensive consultations, a large majority of EU agricultural statistics stakeholders supports option 4. Ideally, most stakeholders would support option 3, but this is not seen as feasible to be achieved until 2020. A small minority of stakeholders prefers option 2 due to its lower initial costs.

C. Impacts of the preferred option**What are the benefits of the preferred option (if any, otherwise main ones)?**

Statistical legislation is primarily administrative legislation affecting data users (mainly policy DGs), data producers (NSIs), and data respondents (farmers), so its direct economic, social and environmental effects are limited. As to other relevant impacts:

Option	Objectives	Cost/ Efficiency	EU goals	Risks	Indirect impacts	Stakeholders	Total
Option 1	Very neg.	Negative	Very neg.	Very neg.	Very neg.	Negative	Very neg.
Option 2	Negative	Negative	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Negative	Negative
Option 3	Positive	Positive	Very pos.	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive
Option 4	Positive	Positive	Very pos.	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

What are the costs of the preferred option (if any, otherwise main ones)?

The main direct costs for stakeholders relate to adapting to new statistical and technical systems. In the mid to long term, these actions are expected to lead to a slightly lower burden and to cost savings by surveying almost a fifth fewer holdings (representing about 56 million € savings out of total estimated costs of 320 million € for the agricultural census year 2010, with short-term adaptation costs estimated at around 26 million €). The costs of statistics must also be weighed against the cost of not having statistics, or only having low-quality statistics. Options 3 and 4 are thus cheaper than option 2 which continues the status quo. Option 1 is also likely cheaper than option 2, but regresses on the status quo.

How will businesses, SMEs and micro-enterprises be affected?

A majority of agricultural holdings in the EU are very small. Data on these holdings is necessary for agricultural policy design, implementation and monitoring, and rural development. Therefore, these holdings cannot be exempt from the surveys. But the initiative aims to reduce this burden with appropriate thresholds, targeted samples etc., and technological developments and new data sources will be used according to the principle "collect once, use many times".

Will there be significant impacts on national budgets and administrations?

An EU financial contribution to national agricultural statistics data collections is expected to continue comparably to the present, and national expenditures should also reach a similar level as today. When fully realised, burden and cost reduction actions as well as the expected decline in the number of agricultural holdings (based on observed trends) could lead to reduced costs. In general, statistics are a comparatively cheap public service that pays for itself through many important and versatile uses.

Will there be other significant impacts?

Agricultural statistics can have significant indirect impacts on areas such as food security, climate change, tourism and EU foreign policy by enabling better evidence-based policy design, implementation and monitoring based on high-quality data comparable across countries. But these impacts are hard to foresee and to measure. The direct impacts of statistical legislation are low.

D. Follow up**When will the policy be reviewed?**

Annual compliance assessments, continuous exchanges with stakeholders and triennial monitoring reports based on several key performance indicators will serve to review the policy. The second triennial monitoring report will be replaced by a retrospective evaluation.