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**Second progress report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the
Council**

**on the implementation of Council Decision 96/411/EC on the improvement of
Community agricultural statistics**

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1. SUMMARY

1. This report refers to the implementation of Council Decision 96/411/EC¹, as amended by Council Decision 2298/2000/CE² of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 September 2000, on the improvement of Community agricultural statistics, best known as TAPAS³.
2. Paragraphs 2 and 3 describe the general framework in which the TAPAS actions are carried out, namely the ones that are consequence of the changes in Common Agriculture Policy.
3. Paragraph 4 of this report summarises the actions undertaken during the period 1996-2002 in terms of the following three categories:
 - a) lightening of workload,
 - b) improvement,
 - c) new applications.
4. The progress with individual actions is described in detail in Paragraph 5. The summary tables in Annexes 1 to 3 supplement the information presented in the body of the report.
5. Paragraph 6 (Conclusions) introduces considerations of a general nature. The result is a positive assessment of the work carried out and the explanation of the arguments in favour of the continuation of the adaptation efforts of Community Statistical System. Thus the report recommends the continuation of the TAPAS actions during the period 2003-2007.

2. INTRODUCTION

This report was drawn up in accordance with Article 11 of the Council Decision of 25 June 1996 (96/411/EC) on improving Community agricultural statistics, which stipulated that the Commission should present it to the European Parliament and the Council before 1 November 2002 after having consulted the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics. Its aim is to take stock of the situation concerning the implementation of the Decision and to put forward "if necessary proposals for its extension". The current presentation of this report has been

¹ O.J. N° L 162, of 1.7.1996, p.14.

² O.J. N° L 263, of 18.10.2000, p.1.

³ "Technical Action Plan for Agricultural Statistics".

dictated by experience acquired during the adoption of Decision 2298/2000/EC. This report is presented in accordance with this decision. It aims to give an overall view on the situation of the different actions carried out in the framework of the Council decision, a first evaluation of the achievements and some orientations for the future. The adoption process and the in-depth discussions this necessitates in the different institutions and bodies compel the Commission to make an early start on putting forward its proposals.

Following a presentation of the general framework, particularly concerning the main trends in the development of the CAP, the report will seek to evaluate the results already achieved and come up with proposed guidelines for future action. The present report is taking into account in its evaluation all the technical action plans carried out since the beginning, including the ones that have been analysed in the previous report. This is because the annual plans are very often carried on in a multi-annual period and it is much more pertinent to make the evaluation on all the actions. In addition the evaluation of all the work carried out can give a better idea on the advantages and the eventual weaknesses of the action referred to.

Decision 96/411/EC, the first version of which was approved by the Council on 25 June 1996, was the product of detailed analytical work conducted by the European institutions, national decision-makers and agricultural statisticians. The aim of this Decision is to make Community agricultural statistics respond better to the information requirements resulting from the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. To this end, provision has been made for the Member States to take all the measures necessary to adapt their national systems of agricultural statistics, taking account of the areas indicated in Annexes I and II of the Decision and the objectives, characteristics and criteria indicated in Annex 3 of this Decision. The actions to be carried out each year by the Member State in order to achieve these objectives are set out in technical action plans. These annual plans are drawn up by the Commission, after receiving the opinion of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics. Participation in the actions provided for in the action plans is voluntary.

The Community provides a financial contribution to the expenses incurred by each Member State in adapting the national systems or in carrying out preparatory work relating to new or increasing requirements provided for under the technical action plan. This contribution is limited in time. It is aimed at facilitating experimentation with, or implementation of, collection methods and systems meeting the statistical information requirements indicated in the technical action plan. Once the plan has been implemented, Member States should, in principle, be in a position to transmit regularly to the Commission the requisite information according to the methods and systems put in place.

3. THE CAP AND STATISTICS

Under the review of Community agricultural statistics undertaken in the mid-1990s, two main types of development were identified as requiring attention. This means, first of all, that information needs to be available to the user more quickly, which entails shorter deadlines for "delivering" data to Eurostat, all the Member States (MS) observing the deadlines set, and less time taken by Eurostat to process the information received whilst maintaining at least minimum common standards of reliability and harmonisation. These aspects formed the specific focus of the first TAPAS annual action plans which succeeded in substantially improving the situation, not just by slashing the time which elapsed before information became available, but also by reinstating the collection and dissemination of information which had not been gathered for some time.

The second aspect identified at this point as ripe for review was the thematic coverage of the information to be collected, processed and disseminated. The topics selected dealt on the one hand with environmental aspects (agri-environmental indicators and sustainable development indicators, arising from the need to incorporate the environmental dimension into the CAP, as into other Community policies), and on the other with the breakdown of information on "rural areas". Although the latter covers thematic areas which extend well beyond the field of agriculture, this document will only look at statistical information on agriculture related to rural development, the "second pillar of the CAP". The TAPAS annual action plans have helped strengthen the EU/MS partnership and, as a result, have led to effective action in making the most urgent changes to Community agricultural statistics. There is, however, still a long way to go in dealing with these latter aspects. Incorporating the environmental dimension into agricultural statistics requires further painstaking work on structural statistics, agricultural accounts and specific data collection programmes. Work on synthesising the data still needs to be developed in order to produce the agri-environmental indicators, the sustainable development indicators and, more generally, the full range of information on the 'countryside' which will meet users' needs. This work means that TAPAS will be needed for some years to come, as the priority changes will not be made if no such tool exists. One of the main objectives of the recent plans has been to improve the quality of certain types of priority information rather than to extend the scope of Community agricultural statistics. Efforts now need to be made in this field.

Aims such as expanding the scope of agricultural statistics do, however, entail a substantial re-organisation of the statistical apparatus in the Member States, against a backdrop of not just limited but constantly diminishing resources. Despite the steady gains in efficiency, there are limits to human resources in particular which have to be borne in mind when decisions are taken on this type of work. New priorities have to be set, and if necessary the methodologies for collecting/processing certain statistics have to be ditched and/or changed more or less radically (which may or may not have implications regarding the "coverage" of the information to be provided). For example, solutions such as the better design of samples to make surveys less expensive without detracting from their reliability or else "radical" changes to the methodology for collecting certain information: replacing samples by panels of experts, reducing the frequency of surveys, etc. Another approach is that of planning to further simplify the information hitherto supplied to Eurostat, by for example restricting the number of variables for certain surveys. This type of solution has already been developed as part of the TAPAS programme, with significant simplifications having been made to the statistical operations which form part of the "acquis communautaire" when the Council decision was approved. This made it possible to free up the resources required to implement the action plans approved up until now. These efforts will not stop the Commission presenting, if justified, similar proposals to facilitate any necessary adaptations of the statistical systems which would reduce the burden on MS.

4. THE TAPAS TECHNICAL ACTION PLANS

Decision 96/411/EC was applied by means of annual "technical action plans" compiled by the Commission and carried out in cooperation with the MS. Since 1996, five decisions, with the same number of annual plans, have been published in the OJ. Their main components are presented in Annex 1.

The other element of the basic decision, lightening the workload for the national statistical services, has been the subject of various decisions amending the legislation in question so as

to facilitate the reorganisation of the statistical operations involved. Annex 2 contains the legal provisions adopted to this effect.

There now follows an overview of the main adaptations to the system of Community agricultural statistics introduced by TAPAS.

4.1. Lightening the burden

The following fields have been involved (see too Annex 2) :

- Farm structure surveys: simplification and restructuring of the list of characteristics;
- Vineyard surveys: application of a more flexible approach regarding, in particular, the date of the basic survey and the use of data from the vineyard register;
- Orchard surveys: optional transmission of certain data and greater flexibility regarding various methodological aspects;
- Livestock surveys: application of the "agriflex" concept, i.e. adapting the frequency and timetable of the surveys to take account of herd size in each Member State;
- Pig surveys: derogations granted to certain Member States regarding the number of surveys and the flexibility of the survey dates;
- Milk statistics: elimination of weekly statistics; elimination of casein statistics; reduction of certain annual statistics and simplification of statistics on the structure of dairies.

4.2. Improvements

These actions related to:

- Statistics on the production of fruit and vegetables: improvements to the methodology and rapid transmission of production data for certain fruits and vegetables;
- Supply balances for agricultural products and animal feed balances.

4.3. New applications

The Commission provided a financial contribution to the development work undertaken by Member States in the following areas:

- Early estimates of sowings of cereals and main crops
- Protein content of milk products
- Estimates of meat production
- Use of pesticides
- Agri-environmental indicators
- Environmental aspects of agricultural accounts.

Below is a summary progress report on these various actions. Annex 3 contains summary tables for each action.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

Under the four annual action plans (TAPAS 1996-97, TAPAS 1998, TAPAS 1999 and TAPAS 2001) so far adopted by the Commission, the Community budget has allocated over 3.8 million euros to work on improving Community agricultural statistics. With TAPAS 2002, the final annual action plan to date, a further one million euros will be allocated to this work. These amounts do, however, only represent one part of the actual expenditure, as the total financial resources have been much greater with the real cost of most of the actions exceeding, in a large number of cases, the Community stake. In actual fact, the amounts allocated by the MS to cover the difference between the total cost of the actions and the contribution from the Community budget is generally in excess of this contribution. The catalytic effect of the latter has confirmed its considerable importance in the implementation of actions to adapt agricultural statistics.

The difficulties encountered in implementing the budget for the first three plans led the Commission to propose changes in the management process for TAPAS actions in 1999 when the implementation period was extended. This involved replacing the method of setting the budgets available to the MS in advance with an interactive consultation process which led to firm commitments made by the Commission and the MS. This change, which was welcomed by the EP and the Council, should lead to even more convincing results in the current actions plans (TAPAS 2001 and 2002) and more significant budgetary implementation rates. The progress thus far with TAPAS 2001, the first annual action plan to be developed within this new framework, and reasonable projections for TAPAS 2002, would seem to suggest that these objectives will be met in full.

The implementation of the two series of annual plans - the first on the basis of the 1996 Council Decision (TAPAS annual action plans for 1996-97, 1998 and 1999) and the second following the substantial amendments introduced by the EP and the Council in 2000 (those for 2001 and 2002) - has not, however, been problem-free. In addition to the normal problems encountered when starting up new operations, there was also the very short implementation period and the late publication of the decisions providing the framework for the annual action plans. This is the specific reason why the 1996 and 1997 plans had to be combined and the 2000 plan deferred. Despite these difficulties, substantial progress has been made, as detailed below, in terms of: ¹⁾ harmonisation and the consistency of the results sent to Eurostat by the MS, ²⁾ the reduction in the time taken to make data available, ³⁾ the uniformity of the results transmitted, ⁴⁾ statistical coverage, ⁵⁾ shorter transmission deadlines and especially ⁶⁾ their adaptation to users' needs, particularly the needs of the Community institutions.

5.1. Early estimates of sowings

There is very widespread recognition of the need to have, at Community level, estimates of winter and spring sowings for the main crops and, more particularly, for cereals and oil seeds at a very early stage. Reliable, and above all early, information is necessary for the proper management of agricultural markets and for drawing up reliable budgetary forecasts. Prior to the application of TAPAS Decision, this information was only available for the European Union as a whole at a very late stage.

In order to bridge this gap, a TAPAS action was launched under the first part of the 1996/1997 action plan. The vast majority of Member States participated in this action, with 14 Member States presenting an action under this action plan. The remaining Member State, Luxembourg, although not presenting an action, nevertheless provided early estimate data within the deadlines. In order to consolidate the tools put in place during this first action plan, it was decided to extend Community support under the 1998 action plan.

The appended table gives an overall view of the actions undertaken in this context. It can be seen that most Member States implemented traditional statistical investigations with interviews of a restricted sample of farmers. Only one Member State made use of regional panels. Another carried out interviews of branch experts.

Comparing the TAPAS figures of February and May 1997 with the official data of October 1997 reveals entirely satisfactory results concerning the main survey crops (soft wheat, barley, maize, rape, sunflower), for 12 out of the 14 countries which participated in the action. In relation to the traditional data, figures are now available at least five months earlier.

In 1998, these positive results were achieved for all of the 14 Member States which took part in the action. Since then, this information has been regularly updated by all 15 MS within the agreed deadlines.

5.2. Improvement and rapid transmission of statistics in the area of fruit and vegetables

The statistical information available at Community level in the area of fruit and vegetables was not sufficiently adapted to the requirements for managing this market. This situation was due, in part, to the special features of this sector, the multiplicity and diversity of the products it covers, the perishable nature of most of these products, the direct marketing of a good part of production, and the high number of small holdings, etc.

In order to improve the quality and early availability of the statistical information in this sector, a TAPAS action was launched under the 1996/97 action plan, with the following objectives as summarised below:

- (1) Supply of data by Member States which provided no production estimates or which provided it several years later;
- (2) Shortening of the deadlines for the transmission of production data by the Member States;
- (3) Improving the reliability of area statistics.

Since 1997, 11 countries have completed actions to improve the quality or accelerate the transmission of data concerning fruit or vegetables. 5 of these countries have proposed separate actions for fruit and for vegetables, 3 countries have focused on fruit and 3 on vegetables. In total, 19 actions have been undertaken. Of these 19 projects, 12 concerned adaptations of existing surveys of holdings (9 of which were supplemented in part by the use of other sources of information such as interviews with trade organisations), 4 concerned panels and one concerned remote sensing. In 4 cases, administrative sources were used, which also made it possible to reduce the burden on respondents. This annual action plan allowed 11 countries to improve their methods of estimation, provide more complete results and shorten their data delivery times.

The disparity of the methods proposed and tried out, the different ranges of products surveyed in the various countries and the need to carry out several surveys during the same agricultural year in the Mediterranean countries and other factors suggested that the development of this TAPAS action be spread out over a period of 3 plans. The actions in the last of these (TAPAS 1999) have just been completed and the results achieved can be described as remarkable. This plan has helped the seven countries which took part to improve the reliability of their results. The objectives set have been attained in all the participating countries.

The more visible results of these three annual actions have been: the completion rate for the database, which is now much greater than it was before the action was implemented, the early dispatch of the data and the availability of the results. The improvement in the completion rate in particular has been extraordinary since it is now close to covering all production (the few data still lacking concern countries where production is low). Despite the considerable improvements made, Eurostat is continuing its efforts to further improve the situation and achieve as full a completion rate as possible.

5.3. Supply and animal feed balances

Supply balances constitute an essential instrument in the management of agricultural markets under the Common Agricultural Policy. Numerous decisions with a direct, non-negligible impact on the market (like, for example, the activation of certain market support measures) are taken on the basis of the forecast balances drawn up by the Commission for the whole of the European Union for the current year, or the following year, on the basis of the information which it has available.

These balances are very onerous and complex statistical operations conducted on the basis of “gentlemen's agreements”. Their importance in terms of instruments for monitoring the market for each product varies depending on the situation in that market (tense or balanced). Given the current situation of diminishing human and financial resources which characterises most national administrations, if the markets are in balance, especially over long periods, it tends to become less of a priority to update some of these balances. One of the aims of the TAPAS actions launched since the implementation of this programme has been to counteract this trend by developing more operational methodologies and procedures for updating them. These objectives can be summarised as follows:

- (1) balances concerning vegetable and animal products:
 - updating or drawing up supply balances,
 - work and surveys for a better assessment of certain items in the balance (stocks, consumption, etc);
- (2) animal feed balances:
 - updating or drawing up animal feed balances,
 - better knowledge of supplies and consumption of market products for animal feed,
 - methodological work for a better assessment of certain items in the balance (e.g. stocks, conversion coefficients, diversification of sources used, etc.).

The complexity of the subjects covered suggested that these actions needed to be spread over a period of several years. The proposals for action by the MS in the 1996/1997, 1998, 1999

and 2001 technical action plans aimed to introduce structures which could guarantee that the balances were drawn up in good time and to improve the less reliable items in the balance.

Eight MS benefited from, and completed, the actions on the supply balances for vegetable products. This contributed towards a significant increase in the response rate for these balances: +14% in one year (from July 1999 to July 2000). This action enabled one group of countries to resume work on processing and providing this type of information and helped another meet the deadlines for transmitting the information and eliminate very late responses. Beneficial effects on supply balances other than those directly concerned, and on other statistical work (accounts, agri-industrial statistics, etc.), were also recorded.

As regards annual feed balances, the actions proposed by the Member States were aimed essentially at understanding the items in the resources side of the balance (estimates of wholesale feed production, surveys of the manufacture or sale of concentrated feed, etc) and the sections of the balances in which progress was slowest and which were therefore less reliable (e.g. stocks, conversion coefficients). Some Member States which did not have or no longer had the resources to calculate an animal feed balance proposed putting (back) in place a method derived from Eurostat's instructions for drawing up this animal feed balance which was adapted to the national structures. Some of these "new" animal feed balances have already been transmitted to Eurostat. In addition, the "demand" side of the balances has been studied in detail using different sources: experts, bibliography, surveys, etc. It was therefore possible to conduct work on the many types of feed which make up this section of the balance, and the sources for the data used have been documented. With regard to demand, detailed calculation systems have been provided and the respective national data taken into consideration. In addition, animal feeds have been broken down by the different animal species on the basis of the composition of animal feeds, the legislation on these feeds and indications of the relevant technical standards. It should be stressed that major difficulties arose during this work, and the basic regional data, for example, often turned out to be insufficient. Furthermore, estimates often have to be made for some data, e.g. for the "supply" side of the balance and the breakdown of feeds among the different animal species, and for the parameters defining these.

The work on the animal feed balances should continue in the future. In order to gain more information on supply, particularly the different forms of use, a system will need to be developed for the further collection of data on output from grassland. The conversion coefficients used should also be examined to look at their stability and the potential "demand" by animals, in order to determine the precise consumption of fodder by the different species.

In the 1999 action plan, most of the work focused on the poultrymeat and animal feed balances. Two MS developed activities on the wheat balance and the potato balance and another presented an action to improve the processing of external trade data, which is therefore of interest to balances in general. A total of eight countries took part in this action, for which the total amount allocated by the Commission was € 123 000.

Most of the changes made to the processes of calculating the data in the balances under TAPAS 1999 have been of a methodological nature. They include improvements which are of general interest, such as the Finnish work on the system of processing import and export data. Most, however, relate to improvements achieved through a better methodology for estimates (wheat balance in Italy, animal feed balance in Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands) and a better coverage of the basic data (the same countries as before plus Sweden for the potato balance). This better coverage is sometimes based on new surveys of farms or other operators in the respective sectors.

The implementation of TAPAS 2001 has enabled eleven projects to be carried out. €200 000 will be spent by the European Commission to support this work. Eight countries are taking part, some in more than one project.

In the field of animal production, some countries are working on improving poultry meat balances (Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal). The aim of the studies under way is to improve the methods used to estimate and collect all the information needed to calculate the various headings of the poultry meat balances. It will also then be possible to send Eurostat the monthly data on poultry slaughterings. In Austria, the work is intended to improve the milk balance, with certain changes being made through the use of administrative data instead of surveys.

As regards crop balances, four projects are under way. Austria is conducting a survey of crop production, the purpose of which is to improve the quality of data and reduce the time taken to make data available to users. The quality of the data is being verified and the costs of producing these statistics reduced. Sweden is working on improving the potato balance. The main object of this action is to ask farmers about the use of the previous winter's harvested potatoes (fodder, seeds, sold for human consumption, sold to the processing industry, stored on the holding or unusable). This project will result in an improvement in the quality of this balance. The action being carried out by the UK will improve the quality of UK cereal balances by examining their components, by means of surveys of agricultural holdings and other operators in the sector. This is a follow-up to the TAPAS action submitted (and completed) in 1998 that was restricted to cereals used for fodder on agricultural holdings in England and Wales. Spain and Austria are also working on reviewing the procedures for estimating their animal feed balances. Belgium will improve the quality of supply balances, particularly for the "external trade" and "domestic use" headings.

5.4. Improvements in meat production forecasts

In order to ensure the proper management of meat markets and draw up budgetary estimates, it is essential to have, at regular intervals, reliable statistical information on livestock trends and forecasts of gross domestic production for the various types of meat. For some time now, the experts responsible for drawing up these forecasts in the Member States have come up against increased difficulties in obtaining the necessary basic information in this area. At the request of certain Member States, a study was initiated into the manner in which the production forecasts were carried out, in particular from the results of the livestock surveys.

The Commission considered that it would be useful to improve this situation through actions carried out in all Member States. These actions should enable, according to the terms of the various Council Directives involved, a reliable estimate of gross domestic production in the various Member States of the European Union. The forecasts should be drawn up on the basis of all the available information (livestock, prices, slaughterings, artificial inseminations, etc).

The Commission wished to effect an improvement in the following areas:

- incorporation of sources of information other than livestock surveys,
- boosting of existing surveys,
- refinement of the forecasting methodology
- taking account of trends in consumption

In order to achieve these objectives, Member States proposed various actions, including:

- (1) the use of administrative data from national and Community sources,
- (2) improving existing models,
- (3) the analysis of data from previous years in order to develop an econometric model for estimating and forecasting livestock, slaughterings, external trade figures and, finally, gross domestic production,
- (4) replacing some of the livestock surveys by estimates based on data from other sources, particularly data on slaughterings and those from trade associations
- (5) searches for correlations between economic data and data on slaughtering.

For the first TAPAS action plan, nine Member States presented proposals for actions on animal production forecasts: 6 focused on livestock, especially gross domestic production in the pig, beef and sheep/goat sectors, the other three on the pig sector. The implementation reports for these actions were validated in 1999. Three countries have introduced projects for TAPAS 2001: Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The Community financial contribution was € 44 000. The importance of the poultry rearing sector in Spain calls for sound statistics, so much effort has to be invested in improving Spanish statistics on the production of poultrymeat and eggs. In the Netherlands, the aim is to evaluate the various sources and harmonise the data in order to improve production forecasts. The British project has two main objectives: firstly to study the possibility of using administrative data to improve quality and reduce the time taken to supply results on livestock, and secondly to reduce the number of surveys of farmers.

These projects have enabled the MS participating in this action to calculate animal production forecasts which are more complete, more reliable and better harmonised. These forecasts demand a detailed knowledge of the stock and related trends (births, deaths and other movements of cattle). They have also made it possible to rationalise the cost of producing these statistics and to provide this information within shorter deadlines.

5.5. Protein content of milk products

In view of the increasing importance of the protein component of milk, it is becoming more and more essential to have statistical information on the protein content of the various milk products. Council Directive 96/16/EC therefore stipulated that, in the three years following the entry into force of the Directive, Member States should carry out pilot surveys or studies aimed at analysing the scope for extending the annual statistical information to cover the protein content of the main milk products, the aim being to decide whether this new information should be included in the tables for transmitting annual data.

The Commission considered it important to support the national statistical institutes in putting in place a system for collecting statistical information on the protein content of milk products by financing a part of the costs deemed necessary to supplement the existing data, particularly through methodological work aimed at collecting the missing data.

Four Member States did not wish to take part in the TAPAS action plan, but provided the annual results on protein content requested under Article 4(2) of Directive 96/16/EC. The 11 countries which did participate in the action pointed out that there were numerous difficulties, ranging from technical problems in measuring the survey variables to protecting the manufacturing secrets of companies processing milk products.

The results sent by 6 Member States between December 1998 and January 1999 featured in a summary report (*Methods of Calculation and Estimation of Protein Content in Milk Products*

– *Years 1997-1998*) which demonstrated the feasibility of this type of estimate. Data on protein in the main milk products will be supplied regularly by the MS under a *gentleman's agreement* reached at the meeting of the milk statistics committee on 20-21 November 2000.

5.6. Use of pesticides

One of the objectives of the EU's fifth action plan for the environment is to reduce the impact of pesticides with a view to conserving natural resources and promoting sustainable agriculture. The agri-environmental measures in the CAP (Council Regulation No 2078/92) have been designed to promote a reduction in the use of pesticides by farmers by compensating them for any loss of income attributable to lower levels of inputs, particularly of pesticides. In order to gauge the effectiveness of these measures and achieve the above-mentioned objectives, it is essential that detailed information is obtained on the use of pesticides. Parallel research is under way at EU level with a view to providing the criteria for classifying pesticides according to the impact they may have on the environment. This classification will, nevertheless, be of little value if basic data on the use of different active substances are not available.

One key factor when examining the list of pesticides - under the terms of Council Directive 91/414/EEC of 15 July 1991 - is the availability of information on the need, which can be more or less pressing in agronomic terms, to use different pesticides. If the data on the use of these products suggest that farmers cannot remain competitive without using a specific pesticide and if no viable alternative is available, this should be taken into consideration as part of the examination. Reliable data on use are therefore very important in conducting this assessment. Information which reveals that a given pesticide is hardly used, or that safer or more effective alternatives exist, may speed up the process of removing it from the list of authorised products.

The Commission would therefore like to encourage the Member States to take measures to continue the collection of data on the use of pesticides. Given that the list of chemical substances used and crops treated is very large, the MS can carry out this work on a small scale, which will enable them to accumulate experience in improving the method and requisite organisational structure for this data collection.

1999 saw the start-up of statistical work at Community level on the use of pesticides in agriculture. This initial TAPAS funding was allocated to countries which were prepared to start collecting these data or were willing to embark upon methodological work with a view to collecting the data at a later date. Ten countries volunteered to take part in this action, generating a total of €170 000 of Community funding. The work was broad and varied. Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden tested collection procedures which could be used systematically. Finland carried out a study of potential information sources. Several countries carried out pilot surveys (Austria, Portugal) or preparatory work (Spain). Other carried out sample surveys (Belgium, Italy). The implementation reports for this work show that different procedures and methods of collecting the information were used in different Member States. Some of the solutions tried out are of general interest and could be used by other Member States. The issues and the different experiences encountered were presented at a seminar held at Eurostat on 20 February 2001.

The TAPAS 2001 annual action plan enabled Member States which had started work in 1999 to consolidate or expand this work to other regions or crops, or to exploit new sources. It also enabled other Member States to start collecting this information. The different actions cover methodological studies and data collection (see above) at country and/or regional level. Ten

countries have expressed a wish to continue to take part in this action. The Community contribution earmarked for these projects is €209 000. New pilot surveys on the use of pesticides for certain crops are under way in Greece and Belgium, and in Spain for fruit and vegetables. In Portugal, the data collected under the previous action will be validated in order to evaluate the possibility of carrying out wider-ranging surveys. Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands are investigating methods of collecting regional data. Estimation methods based on sales data are being tested and refined by Germany and Sweden. The possibility of making better use of existing databases is being looked into by Italy.

The number of countries taking part in the work is very encouraging, as is the quality of the work being done. The introduction of a new statistical information system is always a slow and costly process. The contribution of the "technical action plan for the development of agricultural statistics" has demonstrated, by making this work possible, the importance of this tool in making the necessary changes to national statistical systems. The involvement of a large number of Member States (11 out of 15) and the quality of work carried out to date augurs well.

5.7. Agri-environmental indicators

This theme which is new to the 2001 action plan is linked to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the EP entitled "Statistical Information needed for Indicators to monitor the Integration of Environmental concerns into the Common Agricultural Policy" (COM(2001) 144).

The Commission therefore supports proposals put forward by the Member States in this field. Nine projects from eight countries were selected, with the Community committing € 318 000 as its contribution. Once this work has been completed, much sought-after information will be available on the use of fertilisers (B, DK, E, P), landscape studies (D, E) and the compilation of indicators measuring the impact of agricultural activity on the environment (I, NL, UK).

The 2002 action plan selected ten projects submitted by nine countries. The Community contribution amounts to over three hundred thousand euros. The actions selected focus mainly on the use of mineral or organic fertilisers. There are also plans to improve understanding of the practices used in more natural farming techniques (organic farming, rational farming, integrated crop protection, etc.). Finally, pilot studies on changes in farmland will be introduced: these will seek to determine new rural structure indicators based on the length of hedges or separating walls. A number of projects cover the production of information at regional level.

Interesting though they may be, these new statistical operations are very difficult to evaluate. This is pioneering work in fields which have barely been touched and which require new methodologies, so the results are by no means a foregone conclusion. The more frequently stated objective in the proposals put forward is to establish new statistics, and this generally involves introducing new methods which are suited to the data to be collected. The actions concerning the use of fertilisers are more easily assessed than researches and analyses into the environmental impact, the landscape or the sustainability of agriculture. The MS have, however, accepted the high level of priority accorded by the Commission to this work. Whilst the variety of the proposals does not yet match the broad range of needs expressed, the quality of them suggests that the initial results will be promising.

5.8. Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting

Under this heading, which was introduced in the 2001 Tapas action plan, the Commission hoped to encourage the Member States to incorporate components of environmental interest into existing economic accounting for agriculture and forestry. One of the topics to be considered when compiling agricultural and forestry accounts was to be subsidies received in respect of actions within the framework of environmental services. This action is being implemented as part of the macroeconomic follow-up to support policies aimed at promoting sustainable development.

It is appropriate, at the outset, to define a harmonised methodology by clearly setting out the objectives and concepts of agricultural accounting and then studying the best method of implementation in each country. Practical applications will then be carried out in order to consider the actual weight of these environmental components. At the same time, more targeted pilot studies will be carried out in some countries.

Eight countries put their names forward to start work in 2001 and 2002. This work concentrates on subsidies, identifying in particular those which are closely linked to the environment and sustainable development, but also other aspects such as the compilation of agri-environmental indicators on the basis of agricultural accounts or pilot studies at regional level. One country (I) decided against starting work, whilst the seven others (B, DK, E, F, NL, A and UK) agreed to carry out the planned work. Of these, two countries (B and A) are carrying out in-depth studies of the classification of environmental aspects, and one country (E) is carrying out a case study of a Spanish region (Sierra de Aljibe, Cadiz).

This work, which is still under way, will allow the Member States concerned to improve coverage of the results of agricultural accounts. The information generated by the agricultural accounts will thus be more exhaustive, and will include financial resources provided by the State for agricultural holdings to invest in the environment and the share of production factors involved in carrying out work to meet environmental requirements. This work will also help with harmonising the concepts used as a basis for calculating the different agricultural accounts, calculating new statistical indicators on the environmental aspects of farming and measuring the impact of the remuneration of "environmental activities" on the income of agricultural holdings.

5.9. Rural development

The integrated development of rural areas is becoming an ever greater concern of sectoral policy, including agricultural policy. After the regulation of markets in agricultural products, rural development is the second most important aspect of the CAP. This generates new needs in terms of statistical data, and particularly the availability of information on aspects of farming that were previously less prominent.

These new requirements are for more detail in terms of the territorial breakdown of data normally collected at national level. They also concern territorial divisions that often differ from the administrative divisions used for most regional statistics. Requirements also extend to information on the non-farming component of the income of holdings and families, particularly activities that supplement farming activity and the community services provided by farmers.

This new area of development of agricultural statistics has been spread across a number of TAPAS proposals for 2002. Around 150 thousand euros will be allocated to this field by the

Community budget. The work proposed by the Member States has a pioneering aspect that should be emphasised and encouraged. It is also very diversified from a thematic point of view, ranging from income to the quantification of community services and studies aimed at the more targeted use of existing structural information.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Four annual action plans have been approved by the Commission since 1996. A fifth is currently being drawn up for implementation in 2002. This plan will be the last unless the period of implementation for Decision 96/411/EC is extended beyond 2002. The Community system of agricultural statistics will face key challenges over the coming years (enlargement, incorporation of the environmental dimension into the Common Agricultural Policy, consideration of the "multifunctional" role of agriculture, continuation of multilateral trade negotiations, dwindling resources allocated to agricultural statistics in the Member States, technological development of new data collection tools, etc.). In addition, the process of adapting the national statistical systems to the needs arising from the reform of the CAP is far from complete. As a result, TAPAS should continue for some years yet. This would make it easier to effect the anticipated changes in the systems of agricultural statistics so that they provide a better response to users' needs, particularly those of political decision-makers.

In order to improve the access to the results and to facilitate the methodological developments achieved in the framework of the TAPAS actions, the Commission will continue the realisation of dissemination actions (workshops, publication of reports, etc.).

Nevertheless, when such decisions on renewal are taken, it is important to examine which improvements or adaptations would be desirable, in the light of experience gained and bearing in mind current developments in the Common Agricultural Policy.

It is the Commission's view that all deliberations on the future of TAPAS should take the following considerations into account:

6.1. Guidelines

- Any forthcoming Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on extending TAPAS should cover the period from 2003 to 2007, i.e. a five-year period, so that this action can fit into the Community Statistical Programme scheduled for the same period;
- The extension of TAPAS not only meets the needs for adaptation of the current Community statistical system, but also takes on a specific interest for the Candidate Countries considering the next enlargement of the European Union;
- The adaptations introduced in 2000 into Council Decision 96/411/EC seem to meet the sought aims of simplification and effectiveness. Thus it is not necessary to envisage new substantial amendments of the basic decision;
- The voluntary nature of participation by the Member States in the various actions should not be called into question;

6.2. Optimisation of resources

- The financial resources available at Community level will be relatively limited. They should therefore be concentrated, as far as possible, on those actions and Member States with the most pressing needs;
- Even if there were to be a reorientation towards a more targeted use of TAPAS resources at Member State level, all the projects financed in this context should retain a definite Community interest;
- With regard to pilot projects to try out new techniques or develop more effective means of meeting statistical information requirements, coverage should be limited, if necessary, to a few Member States or a single MS in order to rationalise the use of available resources.

6.3. Work programming and assessment

- The above points would suggest that the planning of TAPAS actions should continue to be carried out between the Commission and the Member States through the Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics;
- In this regard, specialised working parties in Eurostat should play an important role in the follow up of actions undertaken and in the assessment of the results obtained;
- The Commission should, however, keep their competencies with regard to the choice of the projects to be adopted and the evaluation of the results transmitted.

ANNEX 1

1996-2002 TAPAS actions - Legal framework

Year	Part(s)	Decision /OJ	Actions
1996/97	1 + 2	97/19/EC (16 December 1996) L 6 of 10/01/1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Early estimate of sowings.– Improvement and rapid transmission of statistics in the area of fruit and vegetables.
1996/97	3	97/599/EC (30 July 1997) L 240 of 2/09/1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Supply balances.– Improving the forecasts of meat production.– Protein content of milk products: methodological studies to meet the request to supply regular statistics on this topic.
1998	1	98/186/EC (25 February 1998) L 70 of 10/03/1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Early estimate of sowings.– Improvement and rapid transmission of statistics in the area of fruit and vegetables.– Supply balances.
1999	1	1999/41/EC (21 December 1998) L 11 of 16/01/1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Improvement and rapid transmission of statistics in the area of fruit and vegetables.– Supply balances.– Use of pesticides.
2001	1	2001/147/EC (12 February 2001) L 55 of 24/02/2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Supply balances.– Use of pesticides.– Animal production forecasts.– Agri-environmental indicators.

			– Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting.
2002	1	Decision pending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Physical data – Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting – Agri-environmental indicators – Use of pesticides – Rural development

ANNEX 2

Lightening the burden in agricultural statistics

Area	Basic legal act	OJ	Amendments to legal act	OJ
Structural surveys	Council Regulation (EEC) No 571/88	L 56 of 2/3/1988	Commission Decision (EC) No 377/98	L 168 of 13/6/1998
Wine-growing areas	Council Regulation (EEC) No 357/79	L 54 of 5/3/1979	Council Regulation (EC) No 2329/98	L 291 of 30 /10/1998
Fruit trees	Council Directive (EEC) No 625/76	L 218 of 11/8/1976	(4)	
Animal surveys	Council Directives (EEC) No 23/93 (EEC) No 24/93 (EEC) No 25/93 (EC) No 77/97	L 149 of 21/6/1993 L 010 of 16/01/1998	Commission Decisions: (EC) No 94/432 (EC) No 94/433 (EC) No 94/434 (EC) No 95/380 (EC) No 98/718 (EC) No 99/47 (EC) No 99/547 (EC) No 2000/380 (EC) No 2000/554	L 179 of 13/07/1994 L 228 of 23/09/1995 L 342 of 17/12/1998 L 015 of 20/01/1999 L 209 of 7/08/1999 L 139 of 10/06/2000 L 235 of 19/09/2000
Milk statistics	Council Directive (EC) No 16/96 Council Decision (EC) No 582/98	L 078 of 28/03/1996 L 281 of 17/10/1998	Commission Decisions: (EC) No 97/80 (EC) No 98/325 (EC) No 99/309	L 24 of 25/01/1997 L 142 of 14/05/1998 L 119 of 7/05/1999

⁴ Legal procedure under way

ANNEX 3

Community expenditure under the Annual Action Plans

Annual action plans	TAPAS 1996/97	TAPAS 1998	TAPAS 1999	TAPAS 2001	TAPAS 2002 ⁵
Early estimate of sowings	500 000 428 880 85.8%	500 000 298 474 59.7%			
Statistics in the area of fruit and vegetables	450 000 383 106 85.1%	450 000 294 156 65.4%	245 000 148 000 60.4%		
Supply balances	800 000 328 661 41.1%	500 000 335 000 67.0%	250 000 123 000 49.2%	253 000 200 000 79.1%	
Meat production forecasts	300 000 179 800 59.9%			44 000 44 000 100.0%	
Protein content of milk products	225 000 162 490 72.2%				
Use of pesticides			255 000 199 610 78.3%	209 000 209 000 100.0%	145.000
Agri-environmental indicators				338 000 318 000 94.1%	282.500
Environmental aspects of agricultural accounting				115 000 87 000 75.7%	52.000
Physical data					253.500
Rural development					202.500
Total allocated	2 275 000	1 450 000	750 000	959 000	935.500
Total paid	1 482 937	927 630	439 400 ⁶	858 000 ⁶	
%	65.2%	64.0%	58.6%	89.5%	

⁵ Predicted values (currently being discussed with the MS, to be followed, in principle, by the Commission's approval).

⁶ This value includes amounts which may not ultimately be paid, but which correspond to actions being implemented.