

Farm structure surveys and the survey on agricultural production methods

2007/0084(COD) - 26/02/2008

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted a report drafted by Gábor **HARANGOZO** (PES, HU) and amended the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on farm structure surveys and the survey on agricultural production methods and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 571/88. The Committee notes that the next general farm survey in form of a census shall be carried out in 2010 (in some Member States at the end of 2009). In 2013 and 2016 interim-surveys in form of sample surveys must be carried out. Member States need enough time to prepare the surveys, and the amendment aim to reach a compromise between the 'need-to-know' and 'simplification'.

The main amendments are as follows:

- the implementation of the farm structure survey in 2010 and the decennial population census in 2011 would place a heavy burden on the statistical resources of Member States if the periods of fieldwork for these two major surveys overlap. Provision is made for a derogation which allows Member States to implement the farm structure survey in 2009;
- the use of the agricultural holding's location by the Commission should be limited to statistical analyses and should exclude drawing samples and carrying out surveys. The necessary protection of confidentiality of data should be ensured, among other means, by limiting the precision of the location parameters and by appropriate aggregation when publishing statistics;
- it is recognised that the requirements of the satellite recognition and identification of agricultural holdings present significant methodological and technical difficulties in many Member States. Upon the entry into force of the Regulation, the Commission shall provide the necessary technical and advisory assistance in respect of the satellite recognition of agricultural holdings to those Member States which request it;
- the Committee inserted new definitions for 'livestock units' and 'location of the holding';
- if a Member State decides to use an administrative source other than those specified in the proposal, the Member State shall inform the Commission in advance and shall provide details concerning the method to be used and the quality of the data from this administrative source;
- the Committee deleted the clause permitting the Commission to determine additional precision requirements;
- the farm structure survey data shall not be used by the Commission for drawing samples or for carrying out surveys;
- the proposal for an additional survey of some 100 characteristics concerning agricultural production methods in accordance with Article 11 and Annex V, is rejected. The Committee states that it goes beyond the existing Directive (EEC) No 571/88. The substantial increase in the administrative burden for citizens cannot be justified by the additional information obtained which, it is recognised, will be limited. The results of this survey would not be usable, since this one-off survey provides no basis for making projections. It would generate further unnecessary bureaucratic costs;

-in addition to the National Methodological Reports required at the end of each survey, Member States shall provide the Commission with any additional information that may be required concerning organisation and methodology of the survey;

-Member States shall receive a maximum financial contribution of 75% (rather than 50%) from the Community towards the cost of carrying out the surveys defined in the Regulation;

-for the combined costs of the Farm Structure Survey 2010 and the Survey on Agricultural Production Methods, the maximum Community contribution of EUR 0.15 million each for Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia and the Slovak Republic is deleted;

-for the Farm Structure Surveys in 2013 and 2016, the maximum amounts specified in the text shall be reduced by 50% (rather than 60%);

-the financial envelope for the implementation of this programme, including the appropriations necessary for the management, maintenance and development of the database systems used within the Commission to process the data supplied by Member States under the provisions of this Regulation, shall be EUR 58 850 000 (rather than EUR 54.27 million) for the period 2008 – 2013;

-the Committee made some amendments to Annex III (List of farm structure survey characteristics). 'Agricultural production under certified or labelled contractual frameworks (other than organic farming)' and 'other gainful activities (non-farm work on the holding and work outside the holding)' are rejected. These characteristics are difficult to survey because they are so differentiated and in any case only have limited use as information.

-amendments were also made to Annex IV and Annex V. As regards animal housing.

-cattle, the amendment is intended to make it easier for persons included in the survey to answer questions and provides clearer information for those using the data (for a database for emission reporting) than the layout of the Commission proposal. For example: the cubicle housing system used in dairy farming could only be entered under the Commission proposal as 'completely slatted floors' or 'partially slatted floors' or 'other'. This would mean a considerable loss of information. Moreover, those asked would not understand the purpose of such questions.