

Promotion measures and information provision for agricultural products: what strategy for promoting the tastes of Europe

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PURPOSE: to provide a few preliminary guidelines for reforming the promotion measures and information provision for agricultural products.

BACKGROUND: in 2010 **the European Union was the world's second exporter of agricultural products** for a total value of EUR 91 billion, right after the United States (EUR 92 billion), and the biggest importer (EUR 84 billion). The share of finished and processed products in European exports has increased continuously over the years. The food chain represents 6% of European gross domestic product (GDP). More specifically, within European manufacturing industry, the food industry is the biggest employer with 4.2 million jobs (13.5%) and a turnover of EUR 954 billion (12.9%).

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is seeking to improve the organisation of the production, sustainability and quality of agricultural products. In this context, offering excellent products that meet stringent standards remains a priority but is no longer sufficient for durably **securing a good position on the market**.

The European Union, which has extremely diverse, high-quality production and guarantees a high level of health security, has all the resources necessary to benefit from the projected growth of world demand as long as it highlights its strengths through a **better targeted and more ambitious promotion policy**. In addition, on the internal market, consumers should be made more aware of the quality and diversity of the available range of products.

With this in mind, in-depth discussions were launched in July 2011, including a public debate, with the adoption of a [Green Paper](#) on information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products to serve as a flagship measure to reinforce the competitiveness of EU agriculture. The reflections presented in this Communication are also based on the external evaluation report, prepared in 2011, on the present promotion policy. The European Parliament too expressed support for reinforcing promotion measures, in particular those aimed at quality products.

CONTENT: this Communication aims at **increasing the added value of the agri-food sector** and its contribution to the European economy by moving towards a European and global promotion policy more focused on the commercial aspects of the sector.

The main objectives of the future promotion policy are as follows:

(1) Higher European added value: the promotion of agricultural products must not replace promotion activities in the private sector but should rather endow them with a special European dimension.

This European added value can be generated by **defining a European information and promotion strategy** that targets markets more precisely and offers products or messages to be highlighted (for example products with a high added value). Account should be taken of free trade agreement negotiations and the most profitable markets in order to avoid the fragmentation of effort. Furthermore, **cooperation between the economic players of the different Member States** contributes greatly to European added value and to highlighting the diversity of European agricultural products.

(2) A more appealing and assertive policy: the information and promotion policy is also subject to administrative constraints. Programmes have been submitted too timidly in third countries. In addition, it is not always easy to assess the range of actions, whose impact may not be seen until later. It is therefore important to **conduct more appealing campaigns** preceded, if necessary, by market analyses, studies of consumer habits or pilot campaigns. In order to reinforce the cost-effectiveness of the future policy, each action will require a **more systematic impact assessment** to confirm that the objectives set have indeed been met.

(3) Simpler management: information and promotion programmes are usually financed and managed on a tripartite basis (trade organisations, the Member State and the European Commission). In turn, trade organisations rely on implementing bodies such as advertising agencies to carry out the actions they have planned.

The contributions to the Green Paper are often requests to **review the method used to select programmes** and to make their planning and execution more flexible so changes can be made during implementation. The contributions call for a **more active role for the Commission** in drafting and coordinating multi-country programmes, especially in third countries. At the same time, the respective roles of the Member State and the Commission in following up and monitoring activities will be clarified in order to avoid duplication of effort and lengthy procedures.

(4) Greater synergy between the different promotion instruments: while the special features of the different sectors should be kept in mind, it is desirable to seek linkages and synergies that strengthen the promotion policy.

Regardless of the scheme, a **common identity, including visual and content-related elements**, would provide these promotion activities with a stronger European identity and better

consumer visibility and improve their performance.

A variety of reform options for achieving an information and promotion policy that meets the above objectives are set out, such as:

- a wider scope of application of information and promotion measures beyond professional organisations;
- establish a single, homogeneous list that follows more closely the list of products covered by the quality policy;
- activities could also deliver thematic messages illustrating the special characteristics of European products and, in particular, their quality, gastronomical aspects, health issues, sustainable development or animal well-being;
- using new technologies that would make it possible to visualise the implementation of good production practices on farms or sell products online more easily;
- a wider scope of activity with the development of technical assistance for operators;
- revised intervention methods, especially in multi-country programmes;
- greater consistency between information and promotion activities under the promotion scheme and other promotion measures within the CAP;
- ensure that Europe's budget can ensure the objectives set out. When investing in promotion measures, Europe will have to look for the best possible return on investment.

These objectives will be examined during the impact analysis process that will accompany and be used to justify the legislative proposal to be adopted by the Commission **before the end of 2012**.