

Agenda 2000: CEEC applicant countries, pre-accession aid for agriculture and rural development SAPARD

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The European Commission has presented the SAPARD annual report for the year 2003. Throughout this year, all SAPARD beneficiary countries continued the implementation of their programmes. In certain countries, additional measures envisaged were implemented. Agri-environmental measures are included in all SAPARD programmes in beneficiary countries except for Slovenia.

As regards investments in agricultural holdings, the most essential sectors in terms of requirements for acquis related investments are the livestock sectors and, to a certain extent, the wine, fruit and vegetable sectors. Investments in the crop sector are largely focused on rationalisation, mechanisation and the improvement of efficiency. As illustrated by Annex B, a significant share of the investments, with a few exceptions, relate to investments in these sectors.

Data from programme monitoring and the mid-term evaluation reports suggest that investments in the crop sectors have progressed faster than investments in the livestock sectors due to, inter alia, economic problems and a lack of financial resources available for the latter. The Commission is addressing this issue in the context of following up on the annual implementation reports and, where appropriate, the mid-term evaluation reports (MTE). This includes reviewing and, if necessary, adapting the programmes in accordance with the Multi-Annual Financing Agreement (MAFA), with the objective of improving access to the programme for the sectors requiring most support to prepare for accession, and to achieve balanced progress in all sectors covered by this measure.

As regards investments in food processing and marketing, the need for acquis related investments to meet acquis standards is most pressing within the dairy and meat processing sectors. Meeting EU standards is also important in the fishery, wine, fruit, and vegetable sectors. A significant share of investments under this measure relates to investments in the sectors with a tendency towards a higher activity level in the field of further processing. Investments in first stage processing, and in particular, slaughterhouses, develop at a slower pace. Data from programme monitoring and, where appropriate, the MTE suggest that there is a certain amount of deadweight investment, especially in the further processing sectors. The Commission is addressing these issues in the context of following up on the annual implementation and the MTE with a particular emphasis on reviewing the programmes with the objective of strengthening the focus of the programmes on acquis related investments and the preparation for accession.

As to the investments in rural infrastructure, the most important activities relate to investments in local roads, water supply and sewage systems with the level of investments depending on the situation in their respective rural communities and the objectives set out.

With regard to the investments in diversification in economic activities, the most important activities relate to investments in improvement and development of rural tourism facilities, small and medium sized food processing enterprises and local service providers.

As regards agri-environment measures, the progress made in preparing for the implementation of this measure varies as beneficiary countries have either focused efforts on improving efficiency in the implementation of already accredited measures with a view to increasing absorption, or have concentrated on preparing the post-accession agri-environment measures. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia,

Commission decisions conferring management of aid for agri-environmental measures were taken. By the end of 2003, the Czech Republic contracted 36 projects committing a total of EUR 524 380 of SAPARD funds. The first payment made to the Czech Republic in January 2004 totalled EUR 124 756.

As regards the financial and budgetary issues, SAPARD budgetary allocations for commitments in the 2003 budget were set at EUR 564 million of which EUR 560 million was allocated to programme line B7-010, and EUR 4 million to the administrative management line B7-010A. On 23/12/2003, EUR 3,9 million, the amount not used by the Commission for administrative purposes under Article 7(4) of the SAPARD Regulation (line B7-010A), was made available to programme line B7-010 and was carried over to 2004. No appropriations were carried over from 2002 and no appropriations lapsed in 2003.

Payments made by the Commission to the beneficiary countries from the beginning of the programme to the end of 2003 amounted to EUR 417,6 million, of which EUR 207,6 million represented payments on account and EUR 210 million reimbursement payments based on expenditure declarations.