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Directorate F. Horizontal aspects of rural development
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**STUDY ON ANALYSIS OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SOIL AND BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION
AS WELL AS FOR GREENHOUSE GAS MITIGATION WITHIN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMES**

**Quality judgement of the final deliverable submitted by GFA Consulting Group,
July 2006**

PRELIMINARY REMARK

This quality grid provides a global assessment of the above-mentioned study. It was prepared by the Commission steering group in charge of the study at the end of the study process.

If the report is to be published on the Internet, the present grid, with the synthesis note, will complement the final deliverable.

The judgement is based on the methodological approach followed to fulfil the three tasks, not on the results and conclusions reached by the contractor. That is, it is neither the opinion of the consultant nor the content of their conclusions that are judged here, but only the methods and the reasoning used for obtaining them.

1. **Meeting the needs:** Does the study adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?

All the tasks of the terms of reference have been addressed and all the elements required for the analysis and the classification of the measures have been provided.

The study led to the creation of data sets by Member State and Region and the classification of the rural development measures and sub-measures by environmental objective and sub-objective. The relevant measures which are expected to have an impact on the three environmental objectives: (i) soil protection, (ii) biodiversity protection, and (iii) greenhouse gas mitigation, have been ranked on a scale from 1 (moderate impact) to 3 (high impact).

Therefore, the study will form a good information source for rural development and environmental experts to make clear the number and the width of the rural development actions directly or indirectly aimed at improving the state of soil, biodiversity and climate. However, it is regrettable that the information gathered on the level of implementation of the measure was not available in quantitative terms but only in qualitative terms.

Global assessment: **excellent.**

2. **Relevant scope:** Are the environmental reasons for the implementation of the rural development measures as well as the description of the context for their application well examined, and the expected impacts fully analysed?

In accordance with the timeframe given by the contract and the information analysed, the study provides a good picture of the status of implementation of the selected measures. It identifies all measures having a moderate, medium or high expected impact on the three environmental objectives. Based on their quantity and quality, the implemented rural development measures are considered to have a positive environmental effect.

Global assessment: **good.**

3. **Defensible design:** Is the applied methodology appropriate and adequate to ensure a clear and credible result?

The methodology is well structured. It was explained in the first interim deliverable and improved in the second interim report. The tables with the data sets are well prepared and suitable to fulfilling the tasks. However, the tables concerning the level of implementation had to be modified once it was clear that not all data were available. Tables with information on success stories were added.

Global assessment: **good.**

4. **Reliable data:** To what extent is the selected quantitative and qualitative information adequate?

The literature information has been well selected and corresponds to the need of the analysis. The information that comes from the rural development programmes, mid-term evaluations and annual monitoring reports, is also appropriate and interesting. Moreover, we can congratulate the consultant for the intensive work carried out to analyse the huge volume of documentation made available by the Commission services.

Global assessment: **good**.

5. **Sound analysis:** Is the quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed and have the respective tasks been correctly fulfilled?

The evaluation of the expected impacts is essentially based on the expertise of the consultant. However, it follows a logical pathway and is underpinned by correct assumptions and deductions.

Global assessment: **good**.

6. **Validity of the conclusions:** Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are the conclusions based on credible information?

The conclusions are essentially based on expert interviews and, partly, on the analysis of the measures contained in the rural development programmes. The conclusions are clear and well presented, but they are fairly limited in terms of new insights gained.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**.

7. **Clearly reported:** Does the report clearly describe the expected impact of the rural development measures on the three environmental objectives and can the information provided be easily understood?

The structure and presentation of the report are reasonably clear. The technical language is not always appropriate. The report is very long but it was probably not possible to have a shorter final report due to the complexity of the topic, the number of rural development programmes analysed, and the methodological approach used.

Global assessment: **good**.

8. ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORT AS A WHOLE

Taking into account the aspects mentioned above, the report can be considered as being of **good** quality.

Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is :	Unaccep- table	Poor	Satisfac- tory	Good	Excel- lent
1. Meeting the needs: Does the study adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?					X
2. Relevant scope: Are the environmental reasons for the implementation of the rural development measures as well as the description of the context for their application well examined, and the expected impacts fully analysed?				X	
3. Defensible design: Is the applied methodology appropriate and adequate to ensure a clear and credible result?				X	
4. Reliable data: To what extent is the selected quantitative and qualitative information adequate?				X	
5. Sound analysis: Is the quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed and have the respective tasks been correctly fulfilled?				X	
6. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are the conclusions based on credible information?			X		
7. Clearly reported: Does the report clearly describe the expected impact of the rural development measures on three environmental objectives and can the information provided be easily understood?				X	
Taking into account the contextual constraints of the study, the overall quality rating of the report is:				X	