



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Directorate EII. Rural development programmes II
EII.2. Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Sweden

Brussels,
D(2007)

EVALUATION OF THE NORDIC AID

Subject: Quality assessment of the evaluation study on the impact of Nordic Aid Schemes submitted by the MTT

1. GLOBAL REMARK

The following text and grid provides a global assessment of the above-mentioned evaluation. The assessment has been prepared at the end of the evaluation process.

The judgement is made on the methodological approach followed to answer the evaluation questions, but also to some extent on the results, conclusions or recommendations reached by the contractor.

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

Overall the evaluation report addresses satisfactorily the requirements of the terms of reference.

The first part is well structured and provides a complete description and definition of the scheme, including a clear overview on all different measures taken up in the two countries concerned.

The evaluation questions in the second part are answered with a varying degree of quality. The assessment of the impacts of the national aid to agriculture in Finland and Sweden is hampered by some methodological limitations and weaknesses in the analysis.

The evaluation is also somewhat weak on looking into the opportunities provided by the scheme in order to capture the full scope of the relevance and effectiveness of the scheme as set out in the Terms of Reference. Moreover, an investigation in whether the relevant criteria for defining the sub-regions in relation to their specific situations have been chosen has not been duly undertaken.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

2. Relevant scope: Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?

The context and purpose of the scheme are clearly described within the descriptive part. The rationale of the policy is correctly interpreted and the set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts of the policy are put into the context of the different policies interacting in the same geographical area. Still, the intervention logic of the scheme is only developed to a limited extent.

The chronological and geographical scopes of the evaluation are fully covered.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

3. Defensible design: Is the study design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for addressing the tasks?

Overall, the study design allowed the evaluators to tackle the different tasks satisfactorily and the indicators identified by the contractor have generally permitted to address the evaluation questions adequately, despite the methodological limitations.

The case studies have only marginally contributed to underpin the findings and to overcome methodological limitations. The outcomes of the questionnaires are generally referred to without a critical interpretation of the information collected.

The modelling approach followed by the evaluators, by using modelling tools of separate design, has limited the comparability of results in the two concerned countries.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

4. Reliable data: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?

The access to and use of secondary data has been abundant, especially within the descriptive part but also for covering the needs for carrying out the analysis in relation to the indicators. Adequate efforts have been completed by the consultant for complementing available secondary data with reliable primary data.

Final assessment: Good

5. Sound analysis: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that the study tasks are addressed in a valid way?

The analysis is considered weak as regards the establishment of counterfactual scenarios, which in some cases has hampered the assessment of the effectiveness of the scheme. The net effect of the Nordic Aid scheme, in particular regarding Theme 3, is not clearly identified. General trends are often presented as being due to the implementation of the policy, whereas the assessment of net contribution of the scheme to those trends is not sufficiently developed. The same applies concerning the assessment of the effects of the scheme as an instrument accompanying other policies.

The analysis also lacks a clear structure, which in some cases makes it difficult to link the findings of the evaluation with their respective analytical basis.

The analysis stemming from the benchmarking is well developed; however, the benchmarking itself was not considered as being the most appropriate.

Final assessment: Poor

6. Credible findings: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?

Findings do generally follow logically from the analysis, but their justification is generally limited due to the above-mentioned methodological constraints. Most findings are driven by the results of the models used, but with limited critical interpretation.

Final assessment: Poor

7. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results? Are they unbiased?

Due to the weaknesses of the analysis the conclusions are not sufficiently underpinned by findings derived from the analysis. In some cases the conclusions are simply based on the observation of general trends, thus appearing too simplistic.

The complexity of the structure of the report makes it difficult to link the conclusions with the respective analytical parts.

Final assessment: Poor

8. Usefulness of the recommendations: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?

The recommendations do not fully stem from the analysis and the conclusions. A good proportion of expert judgment is included, which however results in satisfactory and useful recommendations.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

9. Clear report: Does the report clearly describe the policy evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the study, so that information provided can easily be understood?

The report, in particular the descriptive part, sufficiently describes the context and purpose of the policy. However, the outcomes of the evaluation part could have been presented in a more reader friendly way. As mentioned above, in some cases the structure of the report makes it difficult to link the findings of the evaluation with their respective analytical basis. The effects of the scheme in the two countries are sometimes not comparable and show large discrepancies.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

The overall assessment of the evaluation: Satisfactory

Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is:	Unacceptable	Poor¹	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
1. Meeting the needs: Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?			X		
2. Relevant scope: Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?			X		
3. Defensible design: Is the evaluation design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for answering the main evaluation questions?			X		
4. Reliable data: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?				X	
5. Sound analysis: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way?		X			
6. Credible findings: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?		X			
7. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?		X			
8. Usefulness of the recommendations: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?			X		
9. Clearly reported: Does the report clearly describe the policy being evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?			X		
The overall quality rating of the report is considered			X		

¹ The foundation "Poor" should be considered as weak as the contractual obligations are considered to be fulfilled.