

Evaluation of the forestry measures in agriculture

Quality judgement of the final report submitted by IDF in June 2001

Preliminary remarks

This quality assessment report relates to the final evaluation report for the evaluation of the forestry measures in agriculture, Regulation 2080/92. The study was executed between 6 July 2000 and 31 March 2001, while additional editing of the report took place until 15 June 2001.

The present assessment does not concern the substance of the conclusions and recommendations, only how they were obtained and their presentation. The assessment is based on the nine criteria below, each aspect being assessed on the following scale: unacceptable, poor, acceptable, good, excellent.

1. MEETING NEEDS: *Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?*

The information/answers provided in the report does in general meet the needs, given the constraints on the study in terms of available time and scarce monitoring information.

The requirements of the terms of reference are adequately dealt with, especially the explicit evaluation questions, which are conspicuously and comprehensively treated, although this is less pronounced for the last question about the arrangements for implementing the individual programmes. Elements such as employment, go beyond the terms of reference while parts of certain answers/information are more qualitative than expected.

Some quarries of the terms of reference (other than explicit evaluation questions) are less systematically covered (e.g., implementing practice, effectiveness of the innovations introduced to the scheme in 1992, alternative measures...).

The evaluation provides a good view of the extent to which the objectives of the scheme have been attained.

Assessment of this aspect: "Good"

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 legal and temporary scope is adequately covered in accordance with the specifications of the terms of reference. In line with the terms of reference, more effort has been put into analysing the afforestation measures than the amelioration measures. The information on the evolution in the implementation of Regulation 2080/92 between 1992-1999 was scantily examined.

Concerning the geographical scope, it is adequate that the study focuses on the six Member States having used the scheme extensively and having the largest expenditure. The other Member States are exemplified by detailed investigation in two countries while the rest are covered superficially. The representativity of the regions within the countries having used the scheme extensively is not always clear. Site specific information, e.g., about certain environmental effects is scarce, but this is for a large part due to the difficulty of obtaining data.

In line with the terms of reference, the interaction with other policies such as structural policies and undesirable effects are treated, although sometimes anecdotally (the relations to the CMO for cereals is treated in detail).

Assessment of this aspect: "Acceptable"

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?*

The general approach is straightforward (structuring, data collection, analysis, judgement) and the intervention logic and the judgement criteria follow the terms of reference closely. The design is clearly linked to the evaluation questions. The reference situations are in general adequate in relation to the available information. The information offered by studies or the programming/implementing documents at the different geographical levels for the implementation period of the scheme may not have been fully utilised. A part of the data collection started while elements of the structuring phase was still ongoing. The motivation or comportment of non-beneficiaries has in general not been considered by the study.

Assessment of this aspect: "Acceptable"

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

A very laudable priority was put into collecting primary data from experts and direct beneficiaries. This included both data to complement lacunas in the monitoring data and data about results or impacts. However, the sources of the information are sometimes intransparent and there is no systematic assessment or cross-validation of the data so the limits of validity of the findings is not always easy to verify.

Much less effort was invested in systematic collection of secondary information, e.g., from administrative sources. These data are in principle from reliable sources (official monitoring data, Eurostat, FADN...) and have been complemented and to a certain degree validated with regional level monitoring data and field data (e.g., national and regional data have been compared).

Assessment of this aspect: "Acceptable"

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?*

The analyses, clearly focused on the evaluation questions, are in general uncomplicated and sound (mainly totals, averages, repartitions or through standard procedures for calculating prospective yield in terms of wood, etc). The cause and effect relationships are clearly understood by the evaluator. The typologies are in general helpful for structuring and synthesising the information. More methodological ambition would be welcome in certain cases (e.g., spatial analysis of environmental effects or simple graphic analysis depicting raw data and findings together).

Assessment of this aspect: "Acceptable"

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?*

The findings are in general justified by the data analysis and the interpretations are prudent. They benefit in terms of realism from the field knowledge of the geographically differentiated team of evaluators as well as from the different types of data sources.

Assessment of this aspect: "Good"

7. VALIDITY OF THE CONCLUSIONS: *Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?*

Conclusions are in general clear and derive logically from identifiable analysis in the report. They are well structured in terms of impacts, obstacles and weaknesses and the thematic recapitulations regarding the general objectives of the forestry measures are helpful.

Assessment of this aspect: "Good"

8. USEFULNESS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS: *Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personnel or shareholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?*

Virtually all recommendations derive logically from the conclusions. The structured presentation (overall and detailed recommendations with explanations and examples) provide useful options for further contemplation. Even though the report clearly is aware of the changed context (Agenda 2000, enlargement) in which the recommendations would have to be implemented, this aspect is not distinctly integrated.

Assessment of this aspect: "Good"

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?*

The report is well structured and easy to read. The link between the findings on the one side and the questions, judgement criteria and indicators on the other side is clearly displayed. The recapitulations, at the end of each question, are useful. A large number of annexes presents matters that otherwise would overload the main text of the report with technical information. The summary conveys a good picture of the typical implementation and of the contribution to the objectives of the regulation.

Assessment of this aspect: "Good"

10. FINAL REMARKS: *Taking into account the contextual constraints on the evaluation, the overall quality rating of the report is considered*

The report is well structured and legible. It deals adequately with the requirements of the terms of reference and especially the explicit evaluation questions are conspicuously and comprehensively treated. The evaluation provides a good view of the extent to which the objectives have been attained. The study of the implementing arrangements is fair. A large effort has been put into gathering of primary data about outputs, results or impacts in the face of sparse monitoring information.

The representativity of certain elements of this information is uncertain, but the analysis largely overcome this problem; it is sound and leads logically to the conclusions which in turn is the base for the recommendations. The conclusions and recommendations are coherent with the silvicultural and agricultural context, and they are constructive although the recommendations could have been more explicitly integrated into new legal context for rural development.

Global assessment: "Good"