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DG AGRI Contract AGRI 2005/0421

Evaluation of the Information Policy on
the Common Agricultural Policy

Final Report – December 2006

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Disclaimer

The views and comments expressed in this text are the responsibility of Deloitte and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and description of the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy

This report provides the European Commission (EC) with an evaluation of the information policy of DG AGRI¹ on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) within the European Union, from May 2000 to 2005.

The evaluation covers two types of activity:

- **direct actions:** i.e. conferences and seminars, participation in fairs, publications, DG AGRI's website, information visits, audiovisual productions and other direct information actions; and
- **indirect actions:**² conferences and seminars, publications, information visits and exchanges, audiovisual productions and other information actions for which the EC provided part-funding.

The rationale of Council Regulation 814/2000, which provides the legal basis and political direction for expenditure on information policy on the CAP, was the belief, in particular, that “the common agricultural policy is often misunderstood because of a dearth of information”, as stated in the Regulation itself.

The overarching objective was: “*to rectify this situation ... through a consistent, objective and comprehensive information and communication strategy.*”

The objectives were to be to:

- help explain, and implement and develop the Common Agricultural Policy;
- promote the European model of agriculture and help people understand it;
- inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas;
- raise public awareness of the issues and objectives of that policy.

The Regulation noted also that the issues surrounding the common agricultural policy and its development should be explained to both farmers and other parties directly concerned, as well as the general public.

The themes or messages for both direct and indirect actions were formulated with the help of inputs from across the DG and from the Commissioner and his/her office, some of which are set out in internal strategy documents.

The objectives of the Regulation in relation to *indirect actions* were expanded or supplemented by objectives/suggestions on key messages found in the annual calls for proposals for these actions.

The total budget allocated for information measures under Regulation 814/2000 in the period 2000-2005 was €37m. However the yearly budgets were significantly underspent, and over the period 2000-2005, only 56% of the budget allocation was actually expended. The limited uptake of the funding possibilities was due principally to underspending of the budget allocated for indirect actions.

¹ DG Agriculture and Rural Development.

² This terminology differs from standard Commission budgetary terminology in which an indirect action is one financed via a Member State.

Direct actions

The organisation of Conferences and the publication of information documents were the key information activities over the period 2000-2005. However, participation at Fairs assumed an increasing importance over that period. Another regular activity was the financing of large surveys.

Indirect actions

During the review of the projects financed between 2000 and 2005, we identified nine types of activity financed within the annual work programmes and specific measures:

1. Conferences/seminars;
2. Publications;
3. Audiovisual/Video/CD-ROMs;
4. Information visits;
5. Exchange programmes;
6. Websites;
7. Stands at fairs;
8. Surveys;
9. Multiple actions.

Conferences and seminars accounted for more than half these activities. Farmers, farm advisors and farmers' associations made up well over half the groups targeted by the indirect actions. The world of agriculture was targeted in some way by the vast majority of activities. The general public, though clearly identified as a target group by calls for proposals constituted only 7% of the immediate target groups of the indirect information actions.

Evaluation themes and methodology

The Commission sought an evaluation on the basis of seven themes (presented below from A to G).

Our evaluation is based on desk research, including access to Commission files, and on perceptions gathered in interviews with EC officials, Member State officials at central and local government level, and stakeholders across the EU-25,. In principle, we interviewed the Ministry responsible for agricultural matters, some farming and rural organisations, the European Commission Representations, European Information Relays and journalists and/or communication experts. We also took into account formal measurements of instrument and programme impact to the extent that these were available.

Several issues had to be taken into account during our evaluation work:

- There was a lack of quantitative data on impact on target publics (as opposed to indicators on numbers reached, for example).
- The survey data from the Eurobarometer was not an adequate baseline measurement in order to define clearly in advance the communication objectives; without this baseline, the effectiveness of a measure cannot be measured against the starting point and original objectives. Even had such data existed, the link between a communication programme and the quantitative impact is very often difficult to establish in a clear and irrefutable manner.
- Collection of qualitative data is a valid tool for evaluation, but when campaigns or activities have ended several years previously, it is not realistic to obtain reliable feedback. This limited our ability to evaluate activities carried out during the first part of the period covered by the evaluation.

Results of the evaluation

Our conclusions by evaluation theme are:

A. Effectiveness in targeting the general public

CONCLUSIONS

During the first part of the period under evaluation, there was a heavy emphasis on reaching the farming community. Whereas the Regulation provided a framework for reaching a wider audience, more of an effort to reach the general public was made from 2003 onwards. There was a recognisable increase in professionalism in the approach to supply over this period (i.e. the right message and material were prepared in a generally timely fashion), but there was not sufficient clarity about the needs of the target groups (including for material in all EU languages) and about the corresponding dissemination requirements.

Individual activities were effective, but it cannot be considered that the policy as a whole was effective because the target was too broad and the numbers reached too low by comparison.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clearer strategy on reaching the general public as a primary target, either direct or via relevant stakeholder organisations, paying more attention to the nature of demand and implementation;
- devote a significantly increased budget to reaching the general public.

B. Effectiveness in targeting rural area stakeholders

CONCLUSIONS

Individual activities were effective in reaching some members of the overall target group, or the specific target group for a particular event or indirect action. Conferences and some aspects of the website were particularly effective. Participation at Fairs was notably more professional from the middle of the period onwards. However, insufficient attention was paid to distribution, dissemination, translation and suitability for local contexts, to reaching the rural community as a whole rather than such the farming community, to verifying that stakeholder organisations were passing the desired messages on to their members and for learning lessons or disseminating information/best practice from indirect actions. These shortcomings meant that the policy was not effective as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clearer strategy on reaching farming/rural stakeholders and individual members of the farming/rural community based on a deeper understanding of the needs of these groups, and improvements in implementation;
- create a better balance between activities targeting the farming community and those targeting the rural community in the broadest sense of the word, in order to reflect better the importance of rural development in the European agricultural model.

C: Effectiveness in improving the implementation and management of the CAP

CONCLUSIONS

Information policy can be used to improve policy implementation and management by:

- building in feedback mechanisms, and
- ensuring that personnel involved in implementation and management of the policy are as well equipped as they can be to carry out their work and to represent the policy to the outside world.

Some forms of information policy, e.g. conferences, did provide one of many channels for feedback on the CAP as a whole. and one that was felt to be working satisfactorily. There is, on the other hand, an unfulfilled need for a mechanism for feedback on information policy to ensure that it results in improvements in implementation and management of the CAP.

The internal communication tools used to ensure that EC staff have the information they need to implement and manage the CAP are relatively effective, but the background material provided could be more effective if it were more up-to-date or more concise.

The effectiveness in obtaining feedback on how information policy can improve the implementation and management of the CAP was limited, but internal communication was broadly effective in communicating with DG AGRI personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- define more specifically when, whether and how to use information measures as a source of feedback, and
- investigate further the needs of officials for up-to-date information and clear messages on current policies.

D. Effectiveness in mixing information tools and resulting efficiency

CONCLUSIONS

Information policy is a tool kit. The issue is less the relative effectiveness of one tool as opposed to another than the mix. The website is by far the most widely used tool, but this does not mean that it could exist in isolation or that those who ranked it as the most useful in our interviews would want to be without the other tools. However, the synergies were not taken into account in any structured fashion in order to maximise effectiveness, thus meaning that it was not possible to evaluate resulting efficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop its understanding of the synergies between different types of information tool, so that relative effectiveness and resulting efficiency are optimised, using a matrix for taking decisions on which tools should be used as a function of the definition of the target groups and the “communication” objectives to be reached;
- define precisely the target groups, better assess and understand the information needs, develop an overall strategy taking into account the targets, the priorities, the needs, the channels and tools and the available budget, and especially when considering the general public, evaluate whether a

critical mass of communication and information flow can be reached with the available budget, bearing in mind that developing only a few actions because of the limited budget to reach the general public is probably bound to be ineffective.

E. Coherence and synergy with other information actions on the CAP

CONCLUSIONS

The extent to which the Information Unit within DG Agriculture, which is the main channel for implementation of information policy, exploits synergies with other Commission players varies significantly, but works well with key players, such as the Spokesman's Group. The potential for cooperation with EC Representations, Relays, Member States and stakeholder organisations needs further development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- adopt a more structured approach to co-operation with other actors in the information process, both inside and outside the Commission, including via:
 - regular consultation with Representations, and an annual joint strategy for cooperation with each Representation;
 - a communication strategy targeting rural-based Europe Direct relays based on consultation with this network on the development of publications, in particular for the general public;
 - regular consultations with both Member States and key stakeholder organisations on strategy and key information tools.

F. Relevance of the objectives - main targets and communication strategy

CONCLUSIONS

For the objectives of an information policy to be relevant, they should meet the needs of the main target groups, in this case the general public and farming/rural stakeholders, and the objectives need to be incorporated in an overall communication strategy. There was, however, limited baseline measurement of the need as Eurobarometer questions were not designed to elicit appropriate information on awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAP. What information was available was generally not available on a continuous basis..

Our interviews enabled us to identify the major concerns across the EU. Despite national differences related to different patterns of agricultural production and differences in the importance of agriculture to different countries, there is a common range of core subjects on which information is felt to be needed. The Commission's information priorities were relevant to these needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- put in place a system to measure awareness, knowledge and understanding, and changes in these on an ongoing basis, so that there is a clear picture of needs and how they are evolving. Such a system would also provide a benchmark for ex post evaluation of activities. DG AGRI should

build its own capability to make needs assessments as a basis for its own work and to judge those of others.

G. Monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures

CONCLUSIONS

We concluded that there are weaknesses in the ex ante needs assessment and ex post impact evaluation of both direct and indirect actions, including weak prior target setting, the lack of a clear dissemination strategy, of a structured approach to ex post evaluations and of systematic monitoring of activities for their communications effectiveness as opposed to financial compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- pay much closer attention to monitoring and evaluation of all projects. The results of this should form the basis for the selection of activities to make them more consistent with the objectives of the information policy;
- consider the implementation of an appropriate system to collect, analyse and share the feedback provided by the target group/applicants and the information passed on to the European Commission through this channel.
- define and develop from the beginning the measurement system and set of indicators to be used in order to evaluate the information measures.

More specific recommendations have been made in relation to each direct action tool, in the main report.

General conclusions and recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

The sums of money available for information policy on the CAP, and for individual activities, were small by any standards. With such limited resources, the task of officials implementing the policy would have been made easier if there had been a clearer strategic direction for DG AGRI's information policy as a whole with clearly defined written policy objectives and priority target groups.

In the absence of these, the Information Unit in DG AGRI, with which responsibility for delivery ultimately rested, found itself in a situation during the period, where it was juggling priorities without a framework establishing the appropriate focus to bring the most effective result.

Implicit objectives did exist and were relevant to the information needs of the target groups –but they were not always implemented in an optimal manner, albeit there were areas where significant improvements were introduced from the middle of the period onwards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- have a structured written strategy framework for its information policy;
- be proactive in promoting the availability of the funding;
- update the strategy and the operational objectives for its information policy when necessary;
- limit itself for its ultimate target groups, i.e. farmers and the general public, to a set of clear and consistent messages;
- define priority target sub-groups and develop appropriate dissemination strategies in order to reach these;
- spread its activities more evenly across the EU as a whole, and provide information in a wider range of languages;
- establish a hierarchy and mutually reinforcing mix of tools by target group;
- base all the above on continuous measurement of needs and impact via appropriate tools;
- design a monitoring system which enables the collection of data in the course of and at the end of projects in order further to feed the strategic process;
- establish mechanisms for obtaining and systematically applying feedback on its own activities, and appropriating within DG AGRI and disseminating externally lessons learned from indirect actions;
- introduce costing techniques which will allow it to measure efficiency of direct and indirect actions in terms of communication objectives;
- acquire a deeper understanding of the information activities of the Member States and stakeholder organisations;
- work more closely with external players on tools, timing and messages.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Introduction

This project is intended to provide the European Commission with an evaluation of the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy within the European Union, from May 2000 to 2005.

For this policy the European Council established a Regulation (EC) 814/2000³, which provided the legal basis for the Commission to organise direct information and communication actions and to co-finance indirect information and communication actions⁴.

2.2. Context of the evaluation

This evaluation of the information policy on the Common Agricultural Policy is being carried out in accordance with European Commission (EC) requirements that activities financed on an annual basis be evaluated at least every six years.

The evaluation covers two types of activity both:

- **direct actions:** i.e. conferences and seminars, participation in Fairs, publications, the website, information visits, audiovisual production and other direct information actions, on the one hand, and
- **indirect actions:** conferences and seminars, publications, information visits and exchanges, audiovisual productions and other indirect information actions financed by grants to non-governmental organisations, media, universities and public authorities on the other.

The evaluation covers the whole of the EU in its descriptive and prospective parts, but evaluation of indirect action is limited to the EU-15, as new Member States were not eligible to apply for funding in the period covered by the evaluation, i.e. May 2000 to 2005⁵. The evaluation also examines the correlation between the information policy measures and the need for information in the Member States.

The evaluation took place at a time when the Commission had recently introduced a Communication Action Plan and was consulting on the *White Paper on a European Communication Policy* published on February 1, 2006.

³ Regulation 814/2000 was supplemented by Regulation (EC) No 2208/2002 of 12 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for applying Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy. Regulation 1820/2004 extended the deadline for issuing calls for proposals.

⁴ Throughout this report, we have used the terminology 'direct actions' and 'indirect actions' wherever this refers to the distinction between the information work of the Information Unit and co-financed NGO projects.

⁵ They were eligible at the time of the final call for proposal covered by the evaluation, but in practice only one organisation put in a successful application.

2.3. Key issues of the evaluation work

Two main issues have played an important role in carrying out the study:

- the interest of the Commission in understanding the awareness, understanding and attitude of the ***general public and the farming/rural community*** to European agriculture issues and policy. This is a natural area of attention, even if the great majority of the actions implemented under the Regulation were neither designed for nor addressed to the general public (despite a general motivation to reach that audience progressively more over time). Nevertheless, the changes in the CAP and the topicality of agriculture in general make it important for DG AGRI⁶ and the Commission in general to plan their information strategy on the basis of a good understanding of public awareness.
- the ***limited availability of results or impact data*** for the measures undertaken, which naturally limits the direct measurement of the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the activities. This issue was noted from the beginning and the approach was designed to compensate for it as much as was feasible. This approach, which is one recognised in communication theory, uses a range of mutually reinforcing techniques, including file analysis, quantitative data and qualitative input based on interviews to develop an insight into the effects of the measures, in the absence of direct data. We, therefore, refer throughout the report to the views of information intermediaries who because of the positions they occupy are able to comment authoritatively on the perceptions of the general public and the farming/rural community regarding the CAP and agriculture.

In addition, we were asked to review the internal communication within DG AGRI, both in relation to the way it contributes to strengthening external communication and in creating a corporate spirit which will help DG AGRI function more effectively. Where the output from the interviews was relevant, it has been incorporated into our analysis.

⁶ DG Agriculture and Rural Development.

3. REGULATION 814/2000 - CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. CAP policy context

Regulation 814/2000, which is the subject of this evaluation and which provides the legal basis for the direct and indirect actions of DG AGRI's information unit, was adopted as the 'Agenda 2000' reform package was being implemented, and therefore at the time when rural development officially became the second pillar of the CAP alongside farming. The EU was also preparing actively for the May 2004 enlargement (which increased the number of farmers in the EU by more than 70%), and the Doha Round of world trade negotiations.

As a result of Agenda 2000, a holistic approach is now taken to the rural economy - rural areas cover 90% of the territory of the enlarged EU⁷. This approach covers farming, forestry, the environment, the countryside, diversification of the rural economy, the rural quality of life, innovation in farming, new uses for agricultural products (e.g. in biofuels and biomass for power generation), environmental protection in rural areas, and job creation.

Agenda 2000 also consolidated a shift in thinking to allow new concerns to be taken into account. Hygiene, food quality, food safety and animal welfare began to receive increasing amounts of attention and funding⁸.

Major reforms further building on the results of Agenda 2000 were agreed in a 2003 Mid-Term Review. Income support related to production is being replaced by payments to farmers which are 'decoupled', i.e. not directly linked to production. These payments are linked to on compliance with environmental, food safety, animal and plant health, and animal welfare standards, as well as on keeping farmland in good condition, both for farming and in terms of preservation of the countryside.

The reforms continued in 2004 and later, embracing products not included in the first wave in 2003: cotton, hops, olive oil, tobacco, sugar, wine, bananas, and fruit and vegetables. The European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund has been replaced by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund and the EAFRD, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

At the same time, the reforms to the way EU farming is funded are also minimising the possibility that EU agriculture policy and food exports could distort world trade.

The timing of the adoption of Regulation 814/2000 broadly coincided with a significant expansion of the work of the information unit inside DG AGRI as a result of the transfer of a number of information responsibilities from the then DG X (now DG COMM⁹) to the then DG VI (DG AGRI).

⁷ *The Common Agricultural Policy and the Lisbon Strategy*, http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/lisbon/index_en.htm

⁸ Some of these policy areas, notably food safety, hygiene, and animal welfare are the responsibility of DG SANCO (DG Health and Consumer Affairs).

⁹ DG Communication

3.1.1. STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF THE REGULATION

3.1.1.1. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The internal strategy framework which applied at the time Regulation 814/2000 was drafted was a document written in 1998 entitled *Orientations for a Communication and Information Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development*. This advocated a communications approach, not just an information campaign, i.e. proactive actions rather than a reactive approach. It anticipated the need for communication around the Agenda 2000 reform package then under discussion.

The objectives were to:

- help bridge the perceptions gap with the ordinary citizen as well as with the different parts of the agricultural sector itself, with national administrations and the various interest groups;
- enhance the credibility and improve the image of the CAP and its objectives by demonstrating its added value and its benefits at European level;
- improve the effectiveness of the policy by forging stronger links between policy development at European level and implementation at national level;
- include communications considerations in the discussions on the development of policy in order to anticipate, and avoid, unnecessary complexity in the regulations.

Target audiences were to be political decision makers at all levels, the national and regional media, including the specialised press, and the agricultural and rural community. The messages were to be about jobs and growth, solidarity and cohesion, the European way of life and its social values, and the accountability of the Commission.

The specific messages on the CAP were to be about its strategic importance, its efficiency and equity in guaranteeing a fair standard of living for the agricultural community while ensuring that food reaches consumers at reasonable prices.

3.1.1.2. SUPPLEMENTARY INPUT TO STRATEGY

The 1998 *Orientations* were supplemented by a further strategy paper written in 2000 a few months after Regulation 814/2000 was adopted and with an eye to CAP reform, the Doha Round of trade negotiations and enlargement. That document defined political objectives and operational objectives.

The *political* objectives were to foster an understanding and acknowledgement of the specific features of European agriculture and the CAP in the general public – as consumers, taxpayers, those worried about environmental sustainability, among others, and stakeholders – producers and those along the agri-food chain, both inside and outside the EU.

The *operational* objectives were the optimisation of the benefits that the instruments of the CAP offer to those affected by it through enhanced understanding of these instruments and mechanisms.

The *key messages* were to be about:

- competitiveness/openness,
- sustainability,
- multifunctionality,
- quality/safety and diversity,
- explanation of the policy so that it is comprehensible for those it is designed to serve.

The target publics were the same as in the previous document, with multipliers to be used to reach public opinion in general.

The strategy was supplemented in 2003 with a descriptive note to the Commission entitled *Information Strategy 2003* which listed actions being undertaken in relation, in particular, to the reforms (in this case the Mid-Term Review), enlargement and WTO.

These strategy papers and the objectives set out in the Regulation have formed the basis for the intervention logic encapsulated in graphical form in Chapter 4.

3.1.2. ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

3.1.2.1. THE COMMISSION-WIDE FRAMEWORK

Implementation of activities for which Regulation 814/2000 provides the legal basis are essentially the responsibility of the DG AGRI Information Unit. We note here the broader context of the work of this Unit. Its work – as of all the DG-based information units - is just one strand of EU information policy. The lead is taken by the College itself, whose sub-group on communication establishes the priority themes for the Commission as a whole. A high-level inter-institutional group ensures consistency with other institutions, notably the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

Within the Commission, DG COMM has a general responsibility for communicating the overarching objectives of EU policy and provides more general information on policy content. It is responsible for informing the Commission of the evolution of opinion in the member states and for ensuring a coherent approach to communication and information issues within the Commission. The principal institutional framework for this is the cross-Commission 'ECN' network headed by DG COMM, but this was unevenly active over the period covered by the period of the evaluation¹⁰.

Bilateral cooperation is obviously necessary where there is an interface/overlap. This is particularly the case for DG AGRI and DG's such as SANCO¹¹, Environment and Trade. There has in the past also been cooperation with DG REGIO¹², notably in relation to optimising participation in some Fairs.

The closest cooperation is with the Spokesman's Group, since, on the one hand, some of DG AGRI's information work targets the media, and, on the other, the Spokesman's Group calls on DG AGRI, including the Information Unit, for technical support. The Spokesman's Group within DG COMM acts as the voice of the Commissioners and deals with the day-to-day concerns of the media with topical issues, particularly those who are Brussels-based and specialist trade press across the EU. The Spokesman's Group can call on the DG AGRI Information Unit for technical support, such as in writing press releases, providing replies to questions and for ghost-writing articles.

DG COMM is also responsible for Representations in Member States and provision of information to third countries. Communication activity in some Representations has recently been strengthened as a pilot experience for more systematic upgrading of the communication activity of these offices, consistent with an objective of delivering more information locally and with a higher local or more tailored content. This has strengthened the capability of Representations to target the regional media.

¹⁰ There is also an Internal Communication Network whose objective is to define requirements, co-ordinate activities and exchange best practice among staff working on internal communication.

¹¹ DG Health and Consumer Affairs

¹² DG Regional Policy

Co-ordination with other specialist providers of EU information – 'the relays', e.g. Infopoints and Europe Direct and, in the past, the rural Carrefours¹³, is also the responsibility of DG COMM¹⁴, though there is some interaction between DG AGRI and the relays. This was particularly the case when there were still rural Carrefours.

3.1.2.2. THE WORK OF DG AGRI'S INFORMATION UNIT

Within the Information Unit of DG AGRI, responsibilities were at the time this evaluation was carried out broadly speaking broken down into publications/websites/audiovisual, visitors and external speaking arrangements, Fairs and conferences, and internal communication – all of which are direct actions on the part of the unit, and indirect actions.

The Unit – and its predecessors – have since 1997 been able to call on external contractors – though not always on a continuous basis – for assistance in writing materials for paper publications and the website, preparing Fairs and conference material, and public relations at external events. Via contractors, DG AGRI uses press clipping services to monitor the extent to which its presence at one-off events has resonated externally. Budgets have been available in recent years for buying in external strategic advice, but have not been utilised for that purpose. A new call for tender for strategic advice was under preparation when this report was being drafted.

The Information Unit works with other units in DG AGRI on content, and other units are encouraged to keep the Information Unit informed about their communication activities, notably when they give speeches. The Unit co-ordinates the activities and content of presentations of the 'Green Team' – those DG AGRI officials designated as external speakers where, in particular, the Commissioner or top officials are unable to accept an invitation.

Direct contact with multipliers and other target audiences comes through participation in Fairs, conferences and seminars, visitor groups, direct mailings, an electronic newsletter, and distribution via the 'relays'. The Unit distributes printed materials via OPOCE¹⁵.

It also receives requests for publications through the agri-library mailbox and via the OPOCE website.

3.2. Regulation 814/2000: objectives

The rationale of Regulation 814/2000, which provided the legal basis and political direction for expenditure on information policy on the CAP between 2000 and 2005, was the belief, in particular, that "the common agricultural policy is often misunderstood because of a dearth of information¹⁶."

¹³ Previous Commission information relays in rural area providing information on the EU to rural stakeholders and the general public. There were some 133 relays in 2003. The network was closed in 2004. Several of the current Europe Direct Centres are previous Carrefour relays.

¹⁴ When they still existed, the rural Carrefours were also the responsibility of DG COMM, though there was direct contact with DG AGRI and its information unit.

¹⁵ The Office for the Official Publications of the European Union.

¹⁶ 'déficit d'information' in the French version.

The overarching objective was:

“to rectify this situation ... through a consistent, objective and comprehensive information and communication strategy.”

This was in line with the 1998 internal strategy framework which talked of the need ‘to bridge the perceptions gap’ with citizens and key groups of stakeholders.

The objectives were to be to:

- help explain, and implement and develop the Common Agricultural Policy
- promote the European model of agriculture and help people understand it
- inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas
- raise public awareness of the issues and objectives of that policy.

The Regulation also enlarged on what was intended by stating¹⁷ that:

- the issues surrounding the common agricultural policy and its development should be explained to both farmers and other parties directly concerned, as well as the general public, both inside and outside the Community (Proper implementation of the common agricultural policy depends to a large extent on the explanation given to all protagonists and necessitates the integration of information measures, which are regarded as management components of that policy);
- the priority measures which the Community may support should be defined.

It gave more specifics on the channels, i.e.¹⁸:

“Organisations representing those active in farming and in rural areas, particularly farmers' organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations play a vital role in informing their members about the common agricultural policy and relaying to the Commission the opinions of the parties concerned in general and farmers in particular.

“Since the common agricultural policy is the first and most extensive of the Community's integrated policies, it should be explained to the general public. Other parties likely to be able to present information projects that will help achieve this goal should therefore be eligible to make proposals.”

It further stated that:

“The Commission must have the necessary resources to implement the information actions it wishes to realise in the area of agriculture.

“Although activities that can be assisted under other Community programmes should not be financed under this Regulation, the complementarity of such activities with other Community initiatives should nevertheless be encouraged.”

¹⁷ In recital 6. This was also consistent with the internal strategy framework of 1998 which talked about improving the effectiveness of the policy by forging stronger links between policy development and implementation.

¹⁸ Recitals 7 and 8.

Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 also states that:

“The main practical aspects of the present information policy in the common agricultural context should be maintained”.

Those practical aspects had included participation at Fairs and funding for farming organisations.

The Regulation is, therefore, the legal framework for actions taken at the initiative of the Commission, known as direct actions, and for so-called indirect actions¹⁹, i.e. annual work programmes of one to five measures and specific (one-off) measures.

The themes or messages for both direct and indirect actions were formulated with the help of inputs from across the DG and the Commissioner and his/her office, some of which are set out in internal strategy documents. We have considered these documents to be an integral part of the strategic framework for information policy in the period 2000-2005.

The objectives of the Regulation in relation to *indirect actions* were expanded or supplemented by objectives/suggestions on key messages found in the annual calls for proposals for indirect actions. The topics covered in the calls included the Doha round of trade talks, the 2003 reforms, simplification of communication with farmers (as of the underlying regulatory framework), the role of farmers in sustaining rural economies and conserving the traditional rural environment, or the role of the CAP in providing jobs and growth.

Applicants for funding were offered a broad choice of communication channels which can be used: broadcast media, the Internet, conferences and seminars, and the written press. All this is intended as guidance since local knowledge of what is appropriate is also taken into account in evaluating proposals.

3.3. Regulation 814/2000: implementing measures

Council Regulation 814/2000 states that the “*Community may finance information measures relating to the CAP*”. These measures can be directly implemented by the Commission (direct actions) or by other public and private actors (indirect actions). Regulation 814/2000 defines three types of measure eligible for funding:

- a. annual work programmes presented in particular by farmers’ and rural development organisations, consumers’ associations and environmental protection associations ;
- b. specific measures presented by any party other than those eligible for annual work programmes, in particular the public authorities of the Member States, the media and universities;
- c. activities implemented at the Commission’s own initiative.

Annual work programmes can consist of two to five specific measures. Specific measures are those limited in time and space and financed on the basis of a single budget. The organisations and associations referred to in (a) are to be private, non-profit-making and have been established in a Member State for at least two years. The parties referred to in (b) must be legal persons legally constituted in a Member State for at least two years.²⁰ In practice, applications for specific measures were also accepted from the types of organization mentioned under 'a'.

¹⁹ This terminology differs from standard Commission budgetary terminology in which an indirect action is one financed via a Member State.

²⁰ All the conditions mentioned here were set out on Commission Regulation 2208/2002, and therefore applied only from the 2003 call for proposals onwards.

The total budget allocated for information measures under Regulation 814/2000 in the period 2000-2005 was €37m, with around 75 per cent for indirect actions and 25 percent for direct actions in the years 2000-2001, 60/40 percent in the years 2003-2004 and about half for indirect actions and half for direct actions in 2005. However, as the table below indicates, the yearly budgets were significantly underspent, and over the period 2000-2005, only 56% of the budget allocation was actually expended. The limited uptake of the funding possibilities was due principally to underspending of the budget allocated for indirect actions.

Table 1 - Budget allocated for information measures relating to the CAP and actual execution

Year	Budget/Total (€)	Budget allocation for Indirect Actions (€)	Budget allocation for Direct Actions (€)	Execution (€)	Execution (%)
2000	4,500,000	3,500,000*	1,000,000*	2,760,564	61
2001	4,500,000	3,500,000*	1,000,000*	3,282,664	73
2002	8,500,000	Not defined	Not defined	3,539,011	42
2003	6,500,000	4,000,000	2,500,000	4,166,172	64
2004	6,500,000	4,000,000	2,500,000	3,287,077	51
2005**	6,500,000	3,910,000	2,590,000	3,731,915	57
Total	37,000,000	11,910,000	7,590,000	20,767,402	56

*indicative allocation

Source: European Commission, DG AGRI

3.3.1. ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AT THE COMMISSION'S OWN INITIATIVE (DIRECT ACTIONS)

Activities implemented at the Commission's initiative are governed by Council Regulation (EC) 814/2000. However, the latter does not specify the nature of type of actions that may be financed, but leaves this choice to the Commission.

In the budget years 2000-2005, five types of activity were financed:

1. *Conferences/seminars*
2. *Publications*
3. *Participation/stands at Fairs*
4. *Surveys/polls*
5. *Videos*

The annual commitment for each type of activity financed between 2000 and 2004 is presented in the table below.

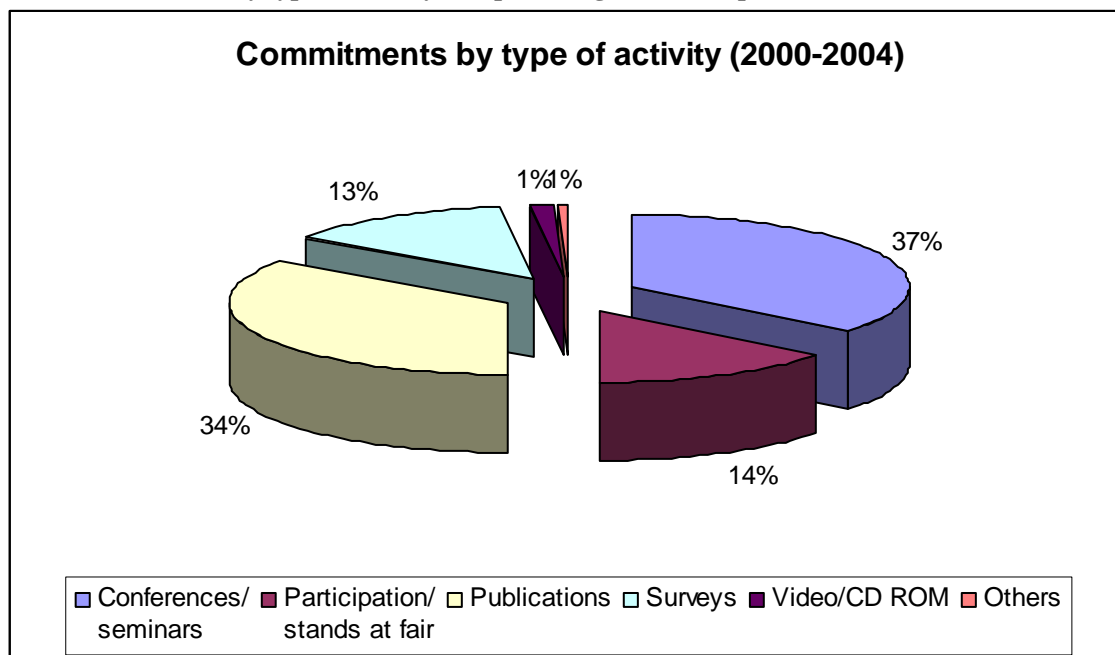
Table 2 – Annual commitments by activity type, 2000-2004 (€)

Commitments by activity type (€)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	TOTAL
Conferences/seminars	491,485	59,380	1,075,562	728,933	499,254	2,854,614
Publications	167,046	393,049	159,299	1,151,701	849,026	2,720,120
Participation/stands at Fair	42,159	98,216	244,808	310,907	443,857	1,139,947
Surveys	654,089	74,083	118,325	76,207	149,693	1,072,397
Video/CD ROM		25,866	85,575	25,865		137,306
Others			13,350		31,281	44,631
TOTAL	1,354,779	650,594	1,696,919	2,293,613	1,973,111	7,969,016

Source: European Commission, DG AGRI

Commitments by type of activity in percentage of total commitment of direct actions are presented below for the budget years 2000-2004²¹.

Figure 1 - Commitments by type of activity as a percentage of total expenditure on direct actions



Source: European Commission, DG AGRI

²¹ The tables and graphs presented in this section are based on the files made available to us by DG AGRI.

The organisation of conferences and seminars is a recurrent key activity. This category includes both activities, such as hearings, round tables, seminars for specific target groups (journalists, consumers organisations, Carrefours etc.), and European and international conferences. A total of 19 conferences and seminars were financed in the budget period 2000-2004. Commitments related to conferences and seminars amounted to €2,85M for the budget period 2000 – 2004, and 36% of the total budget commitment.

The publication of information documents was a key information activity over the period 2000-2004. DG AGRI produced, partly with assistance from a sub-contractor, various information documents, such as the AGRI newsletter, fact sheets on specific products and sectors (beef, milk, environment, etc.) and annual reports and other reports (e.g. CAP Prospects 2003-2010).

Other publications are produced on an irregular basis: brochures, information packs, special newsletter, leaflets, photo books and postcards. For the budget period 2000 - 2004, commitment related to publications totalled €2.72m in the period 2000-2004. This was 34% of the total. However, figures include storage and distribution, which in the 2003 budget year, included €0.53m for storage and distribution for the 2002-2004 period, for example.

With 14% of the total budget, participation at Fairs is also an important activity. The Commission has, with the exception of 2003 participated yearly with a stand at key Fairs, including the agricultural Fairs in Berlin and Paris. Participation in 14 Fairs was financed in 2000 – 2004, at a cost of €1.14m.

Another regular activity is the financing of large surveys. Six surveys were financed between 2000 and 2004 for a total cost of €1.07m (13% of the budget). These are all Eurobarometer surveys of citizens of the EU-15, EU-10 or EU-25 and, in one case, of farmers^{22 23 24}.

Videos are produced occasionally. Two videos, one on the WTO negotiations and one on CAP reform were financed over this period.

3.3.2. INDIRECT ACTIONS

Two types of measure can be funded via calls for proposal: annual work programmes and specific measures. The calls for proposal identify key issues to be addressed and priority target groups. The calls for proposals also indicate which information tools might be used, but the list is not exclusive.

²² Eurobarometer Flash Survey 85, Special Eurobarometer 55.2, Eurobarometer Special 57.0, Special Eurobarometer 190/ wave 59.2, Special Eurobarometer 221/wave 62.2.

²³ Eurobarometer Flash 86

²⁴ CC-EB 2002.3

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3.3.2.1. BUDGET

The table below provides an overview of the indirect actions financed in 2000-2005 and the financial allocations.

Table 3 – Overview of the indirect actions financed in 2000-2005

Year	Indirect actions	Specific measures	Amount granted (€)	Work programmes	Amount granted (€)	Number of measures in work programmes	Total number of information activities	Total all indirect actions (€)	Average per activity (€)
2000	19	12	325,431	7	1,074,928	22	34	1,400,359	41,187
2001	40	25	898,236	15	1,343,350	36	61	2,241,586	36,747
2002	28	24	1,064,398	4	824,981	17	41	1,889,379	46,082
2003	26	17	701,975	9	569,153	23	40	1,271,128	31,778
2004	23	19	919,249	4	329,685	12	31	1,248,934	40,288
2005	20	14	664,086	6	611,486	17	31	1,275,572	41,147
Total	156	111	4,573,375	45	4,753,583	127	238	9,326,958	39,189

Source: European Commission, DG AGRI

During the period 156 indirect actions were financed, including 111 specific measures and 45 work programmes. As work programmes may be composed of several actions, the total number of individual information measures financed was 238 for a total amount of €9,33m. The average amount given per individual information measure, irrespective of the type is approximately €40,000. About 50 percent of the budget allocated to indirect actions was provided for specific measures and 50 percent for work programmes.

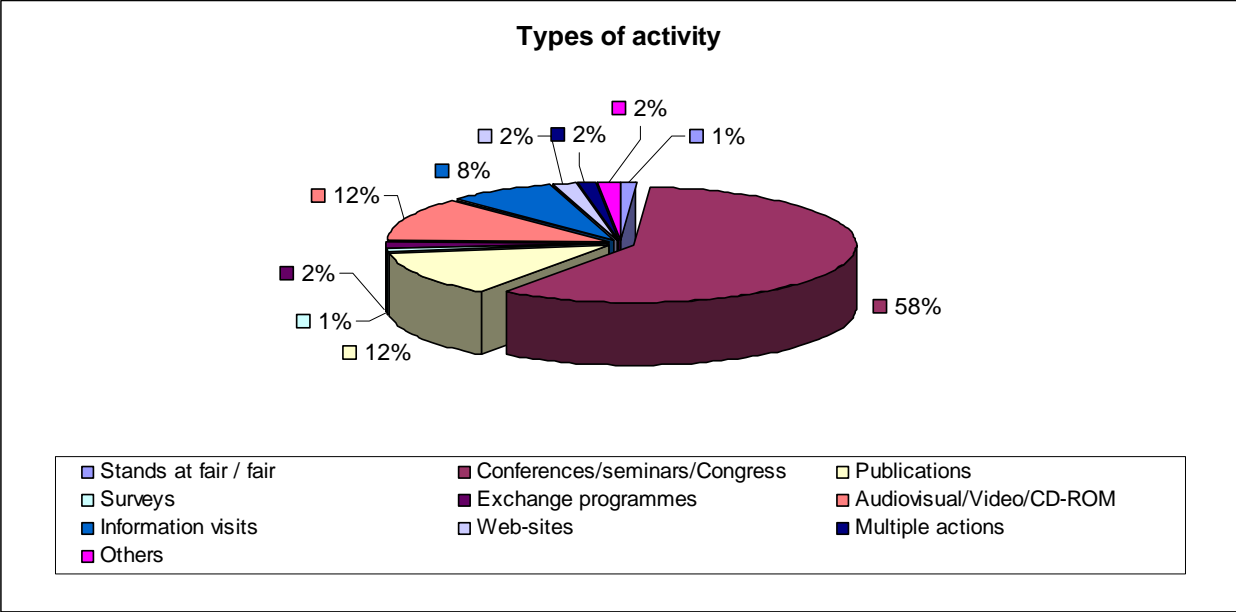
3.3.2.2. TYPES OF ACTIVITY

During the review of the projects financed between 2000 and 2005, we identified nine types of activity financed within the annual work programmes and specific measures:

1. Conferences/seminars;
2. Publications: various publications including information guides, brochures and newsletters;
3. Audiovisual/Video/CD-ROM: some projects using multimedia tools (TV commercials, broadcasts, educational CD-ROM) were co-financed;
4. Information visits: visits to the European Commission allowing visitors to have an overview of the CAP and the organisation of the Commission. It could also consist of visits by farmers to specific European organisations or regions in order to learn from others' methods, experiences and good practice;
5. Exchange programmes: exchange of farmers or members of farmers' associations between European and/or candidate countries in order to share experiences and know-how;
6. Websites: some internet sites, such as a web portal, were co-financed;
7. Stands at/participation in Fairs;
8. Surveys;

9. Multiple actions: some projects contain different types of action and cannot be entered in a specific category.

Figure 2 – Types of activity carried out (in % of the number of activities carried out)

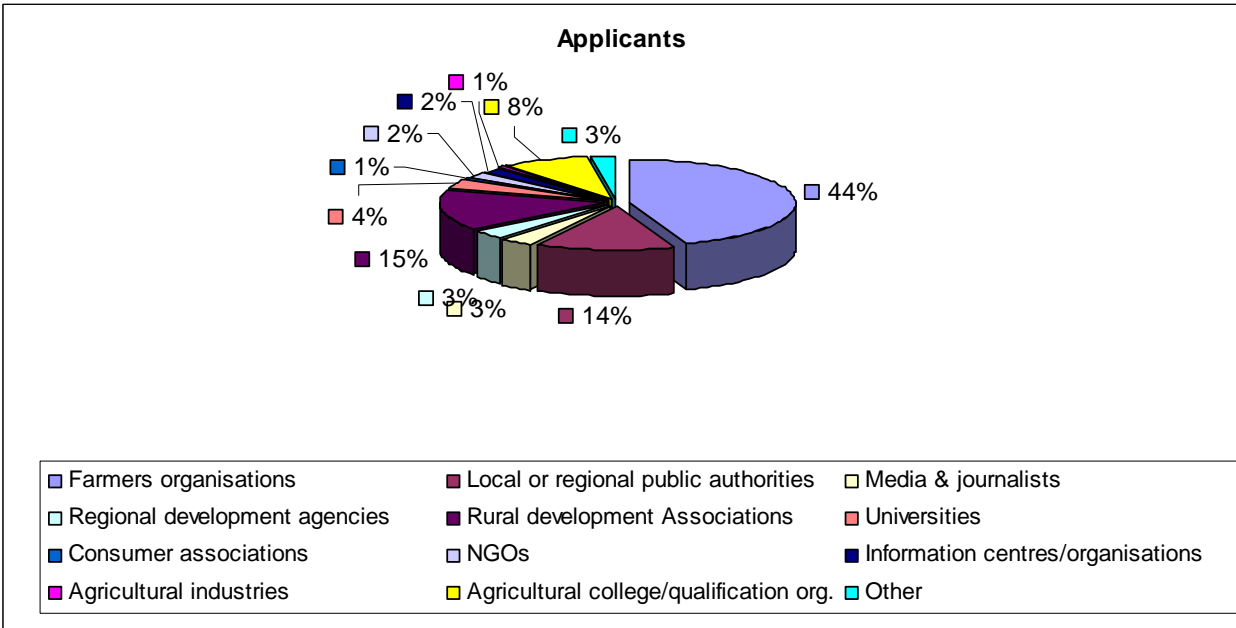


Conferences and seminars accounted for more than half of these activities (58%). Audiovisual/video/CD-ROMs (12%), publications (12%) and information visits (8%) were other important information activities financed.

3.3.2.3. APPLICANTS

Based on our review of the project files we have identified eleven types of successful applicant. The relative importance of each type of applicant/promoter is presented in the following graph.

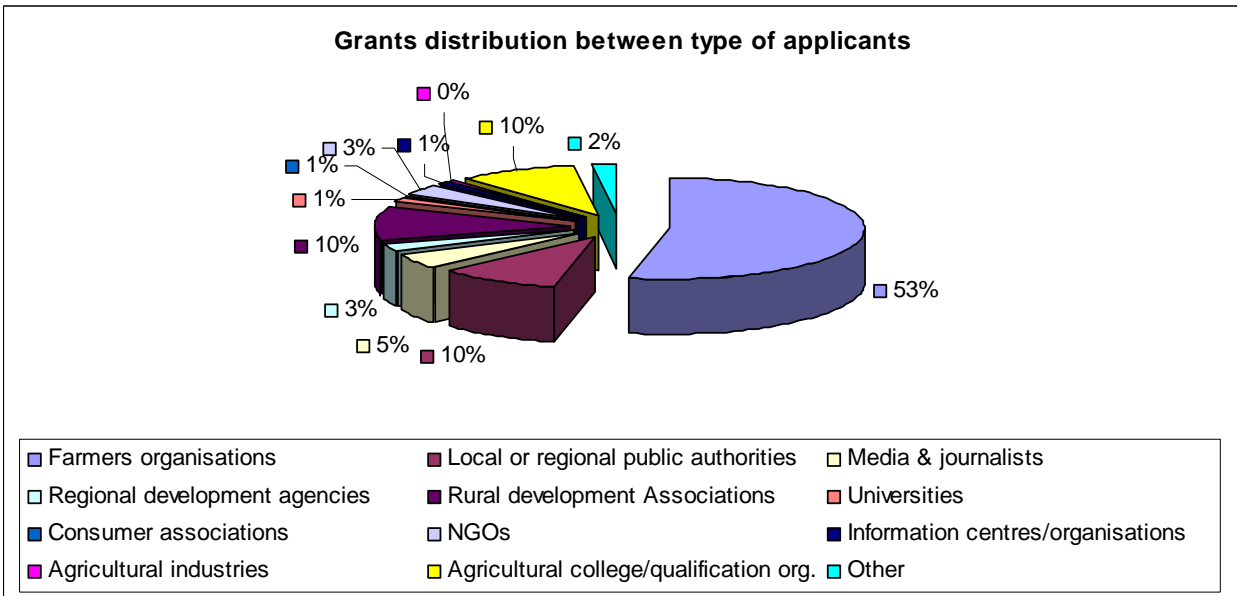
Figure 3 – Distribution of applicants



Farmers’ organisations (including European, national and local farmers associations) represent the major category of successful applicants. Forty-four percent of indirect actions (specific measures or programmes) were implemented by farmers’ organisations. Other groups of successful applicants include rural development associations (15%), local or regional public authorities (14%) and agricultural colleges/professional qualifications organisations (8%). Other successful groups of applicants were only of minor importance.

The total allocation of indirect actions by type of applicant is presented below:

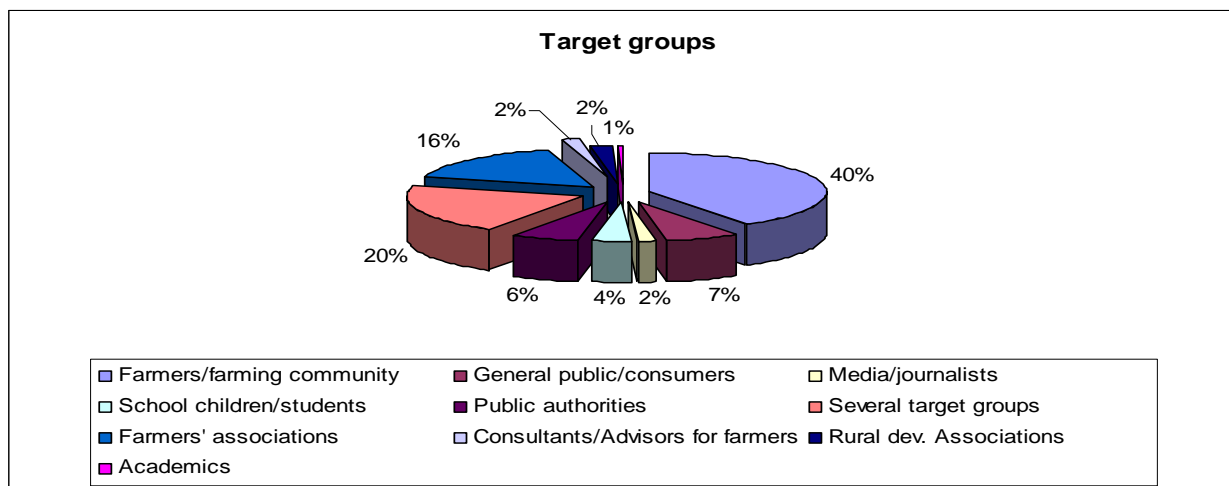
Figure 4 – Allocation between types of applicant



3.3.2.4. TARGET GROUPS

The calls for proposals identified potential target groups very broadly, such as the agricultural and food sector as whole, consumers and general public. In our analysis of each action, we have identified ten types of target group, as described in the graph below.

Figure 5 – Distribution of target groups



Farmers and farmers’ associations made up more than the half the groups targeted by the indirect actions. Moreover, many projects which addressed several publics²⁵ had the farming community as an important sub-target group. This means that the world of agriculture was targeted in some way by the vast majority of activities. The general public, though clearly identified as a target group by calls for proposal constituted only 7% of the target groups of the indirect information actions. Rural development associations and local authorities were targeted by 10% of the indirect actions.

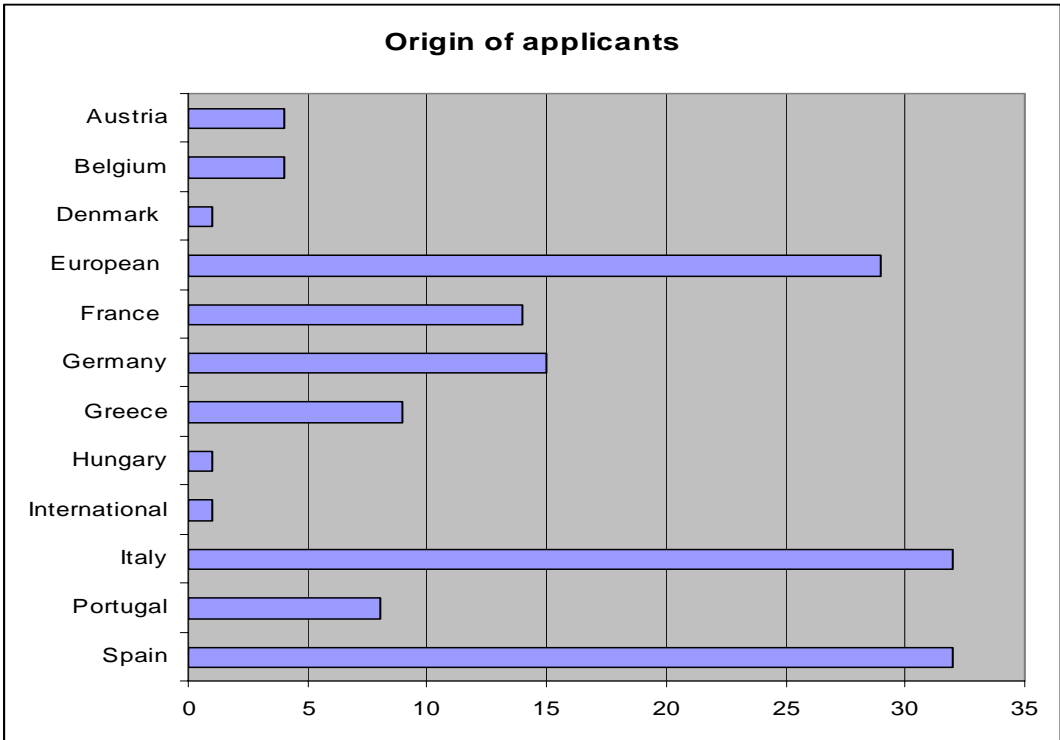
Media and journalists are often involved in the information measures as multipliers of this information but are only rarely the main target group, i.e. 2% of the co-financed actions.

²⁵ This category includes general projects addressing a wide range of publics (civil servants, farming community, rural development associations...).

3.3.2.5. COUNTRIES OF APPLICANTS

Spain and Italy were the countries with the most applicants. Applicants from new Member States as such were not eligible until the 2005 call for proposals, although entities in these countries could be partners in applications put in by entities from the EU-15 prior to this.

Figure 6 - Origin of applicants



4. LOGIC OF INTERVENTION

In order to create a clear point of reference for evaluating the CAP information policy, it is necessary to clarify the intended objectives of the information policy, the problems that the policy was intended to address and the strategy that was followed to reach the objectives. By clarifying these key issues, we set the framework for the evaluation by identifying on the one hand what the information policy was actually expected to achieve and how it was expected to obtain these results and on the other hand an overall methodology to assess to what extent these results were actually achieved.

The models presented below are based on official and internal working documents as well as on interviews with key Commission officials.

4.1. CAP information policy – overall analytical approach

CAP information policy is a public sector intervention that should be based on policy objectives and a strategy for implementation, and should lead to (expected) outputs (e.g. a number of people informed about a characteristic of the policy), (expected) results (e.g. a positive influence on perceptions of that characteristic) and (expected) impacts (e.g. support for that characteristic of the policy or for the CAP.)

In order to be relevant, the policy must meet the specific needs of the intended target groups in terms of basic awareness, knowledge and understanding of the policy and/or specific characteristics. Ideally, these needs should be clearly identified and specified at the inception of the policy. Moreover, in order to ensure that public spending is used in the most efficient way, the policy should take the information policies of other players (at least of public actors) into account in order to avoid duplication and to ensure external coherence.

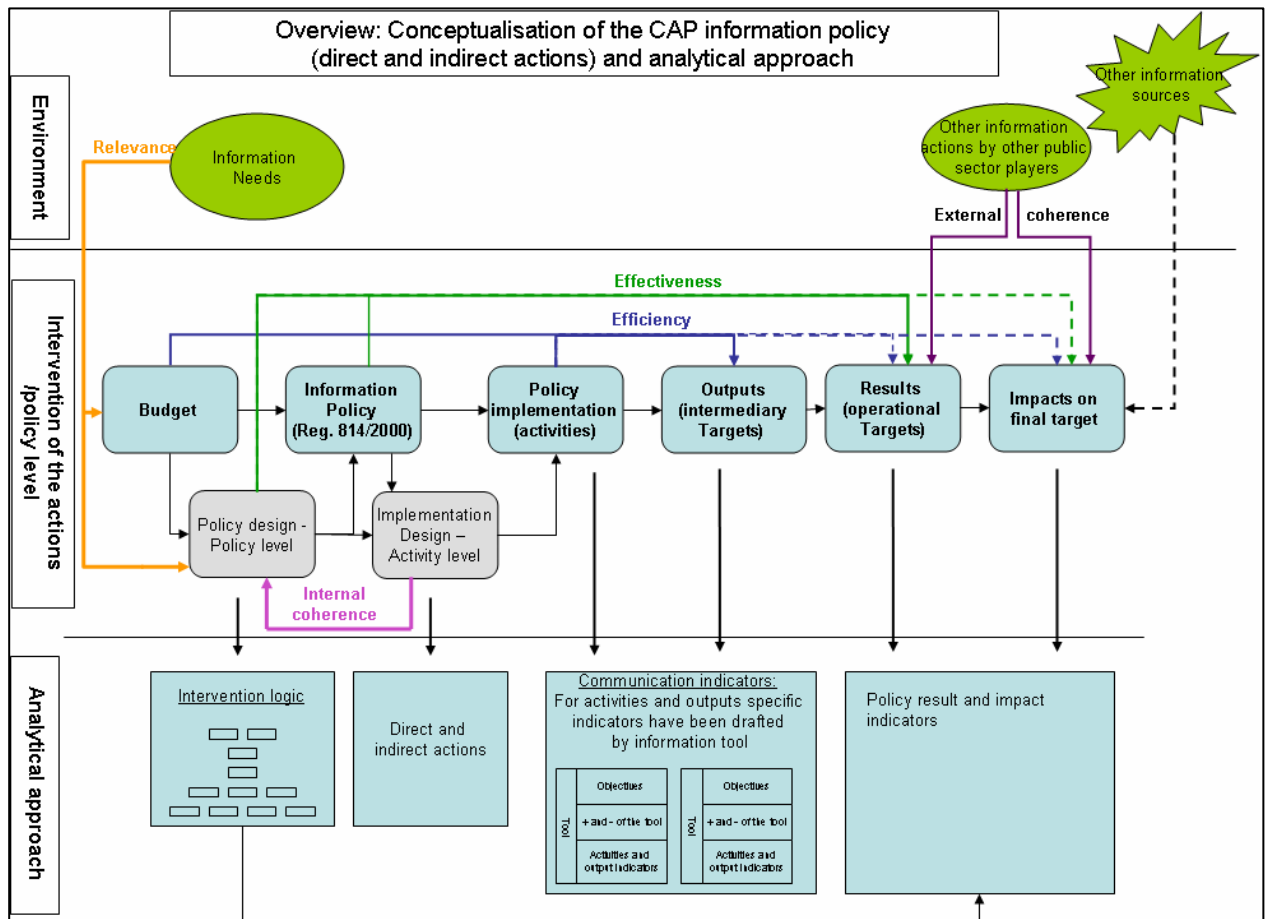
An appropriate baseline measurement is very important inasmuch as there is otherwise:

- no baseline situation against which progress can be measured and assessed;
- no way to design and implement an appropriate monitoring system; indeed without knowing the data to be measured, it is quite difficult to design an effective monitoring system.

A crucial point in the management process of a policy, a programme or a project is the setting up of a monitoring system to collect information about various types of indicator, such as utilisation and resource indicators (linked to the implementation and necessary for the efficiency measurement), outputs and results indicators (necessary for the evaluation of the effectiveness and the efficiency) and impact indicators (linked to the overall effects on both direct and indirect target groups).

The following model conceptualises the flow of information policy and the link with the external environment of the policy²⁶:

Figure 7 - Conceptualisation of CAP information policy and analytical approach



The upper part of the model ‘the environment’ represents on the one hand the needs of the target audience and on the other the information policy of other players, particularly those of the public sector with whom there are sometimes problems of external coherence, particularly when proposals are under discussion, but sometimes also when there is an agreed policy. There are other information sources in the environment which can interfere, either positively or negatively, with the public information policy concept. The scope for interacting with these in a complementary manner is often limited, particularly in the policy formulation stage when the changes being put forward by the Commission have not yet been fully embraced by stakeholder organisations and Member State governments.

The central part of the model describes the flow of the policy. With a budget allocated to the policy, the policy is designed and the relevant regulation/s are passed to enable policy implementation and provide the legal basis for the selection of information activities and programmes. The combination of *all* the individual information actions implemented under the Regulation leads to the output of the policy. All the

²⁶ This budget-led model is an expansion of the model which was prepared by the Commission as the basis for the evaluation.

activities should then contribute through the outputs and, following the logic of intervention, to the results and impacts at policy level²⁷.

In order to increase the potential effectiveness, objectives for the policy should be clarified before the policy is actually implemented. A policy (or programme or project) might be effective, compared to objectives formally identified or structure after the policy is in place, even without prior clarification of the objectives. But a prior specification and clear identification of formal objectives provide guidelines in the implementation of the activities and give the process direction. Moreover without a prior definition of objectives, the setting up of a structured monitoring system is likely to be more difficult; indeed indicators need to be defined in function of the objectives. If there are no objectives, either implicit or explicit, it is not possible to evaluate the policy simply because the actual results of the policy cannot be assessed in relation to the objectives. The objective setting phase is in the model referred to as 'policy design'.

The official documents governing the information policy of DG AGRI are Council Regulation 814/2000, Commission Regulations 1390/2000, 1557/2001, 2208/2002 and 1820/2004, and Calls for proposal for the years 2000-2005. They do always set out objectives in a structured fashion. In addition analysis of internal documents and interviews with Commission officials make it clear that there were 'implicit' objectives.

In the following models, we begin by analysing the general objectives of the policy and then break these down into more measurable specific and operational objectives. Through this exercise, it is possible to identify the objectives and expected outputs, results and impacts against which the actual outputs, results and impacts may be assessed. This analysis is referred to in the model in Figure 7 above as 'Intervention logic'.

Once this analysis has been carried out, it is possible to set judgement criteria and indicators which guide the data collection process.

On the basis of the intervention logic and the data collection process, we can then assess the:

- effectiveness of the policy i.e. to what extent the communication policy reached its intended objectives;
- efficiency of the policy i.e. the extent to which the desired effects were achieved at reasonable cost (budget and other resources);
- complementarity/external coherence with other actions i.e. to what extent the policy and its outcomes were complementary with other information activities carried out by other public actors;
- relevance of the policy i.e. the appropriateness of objectives of the communication policy in relation to the information needs of the target groups the policy is intended to address.

These links/analyses are presented with coloured arrows in Figure 7 above.

²⁷ The concepts of activity level outputs (both from a communication point of view and from a policy point of view), results and impacts are further discussed in section 4. 4.

4.2. Conception and use of communication tools

It is worth noting here that a communication tool (Fair, seminar or other) does not have objectives in itself, but is an instrument which is used to reach one or more objectives contributing to the operational, specific and general objectives of the policy. Objectives regarding budget or resource use, or activity and output from a communication point of view (such as number of attendees at a conference for instance) can of course be established, but nevertheless an instrument remains an instrument that contributes to the achievement (or not) of the policy objectives. The choice of one or other tool depends on the objectives identified and the target groups to be reached. Not all communication tools are equivalent in this context and the choice should be made carefully. In itself, there is no logic of intervention embedded in a communication tool; a logic of intervention and the choice of the right communication tool within the mix will depend on various criteria, such as reach/coverage of the intended target group, speed for reaching audience, potential coverage, geographic selectivity, target group selectivity, favourable impact cost, favourable production cost, precise dissemination, potential for developing an argument.

To give an example, the “sequential logic of organisation” of a press conference is as follows:

- a message has to be communicated to a target group;
- a press conference is chosen because the communicator considers this tool as the most relevant to reach the target group concerned;
- invitations are sent to journalists and journalists do or do not attend the press conference;
- the journalists receive a press kit containing all relevant information;
- journalists are expected to write an article (not all of them will), that should be in line with the content and the tone of voice of the communication (at least this is the wish of the communicator);
- readers of the identified target group should then read the articles;
- ... and preferably they should either be made aware of or understand the message.

Some indicators could be defined at organisational or activity level, such as the number of invitations that have been sent, number of journalists present, etc., but these indicators are not relevant when considering the effectiveness or the impact of the press conference. The number of articles and the tone of voice of the articles could be considered as first insights on effectiveness but are certainly not sufficient to give a satisfactory answer to the question of effectiveness. Information relative to the increase of awareness or understanding among the readers is the right information that could partly measure the effectiveness of such an action.

As we see from this example, the underlying logic of a communication tool and the indicators that could be linked to this are not relevant when considering the effectiveness and the impact of a communication and information policy. The relevant indicators are relative to the achievement of the objectives at policy level.

Finally it is important to reiterate that communication tools belong to a toolbox and it is the combination of tools that could lead to results. Therefore evaluating the effectiveness of a communication and information policy cannot be isolated for each tool separately but must be considered at policy level, in relation to the achievement of the general objectives of the policy. That is the reason why the activity and communication output indicators collected by “communicators” (when they are collected) are not relevant for evaluating the effectiveness of a communication and information policy. They are relevant for assessing the implementation of the communication tool, for measuring the “success” of the communication tool (if activity and outputs targets have been defined upfront, such as number of

attendees, number of visitors, number of press articles, media coverage, etc.) and evaluation from a “communication specialist” point of view, but not from a “communication policy” point of view. These are the overall contributions and effects of all communication tools that have been used, which it is important to assess. And to evaluate this, either indicators have been identified upfront and information has been collected through an appropriate monitoring system, or, if the evaluation is taking place not too long (meaning a few weeks) after the communication activities took place, quantitative polling can be organised, or a proxy has to be defined and very often stakeholder consultation is considered as the most appropriate one.

4.3. Defining objectives for CAP information policy

We understand that CAP information policy was conceptualised as a response to a perception of a dearth of information among the target groups: the general public and the farming/rural community.

At the time Regulation 814/2000 was adopted, there was a concern that the reforms (Agenda 2000 and the anticipated Mid-Term Review) would not be publicised or understood. Hence, there was a risk that the already somewhat negative image of the CAP among the public would persist. Moreover, it was perceived that the reforms could be viewed by a large part of the farming community as a threat to their economic viability and that the opportunities would not be understood. There was therefore a resistance to change.

In the following trees we have conceptualised these perceived ‘information deficit’ problems, their roots and the overall problems to which they were perceived to lead. As this evaluation covers a period of five years, not every problem or objective was equally appropriate at all times. ‘Reform fatigue’, for example, began to surface as an issue only in the latter part of this period. Nevertheless, we believe that these ‘trees’ are a good starting point for classifying the negative underlying messages and the necessary underlying positive messages respectively.

Figure 8 - Problem tree: general public

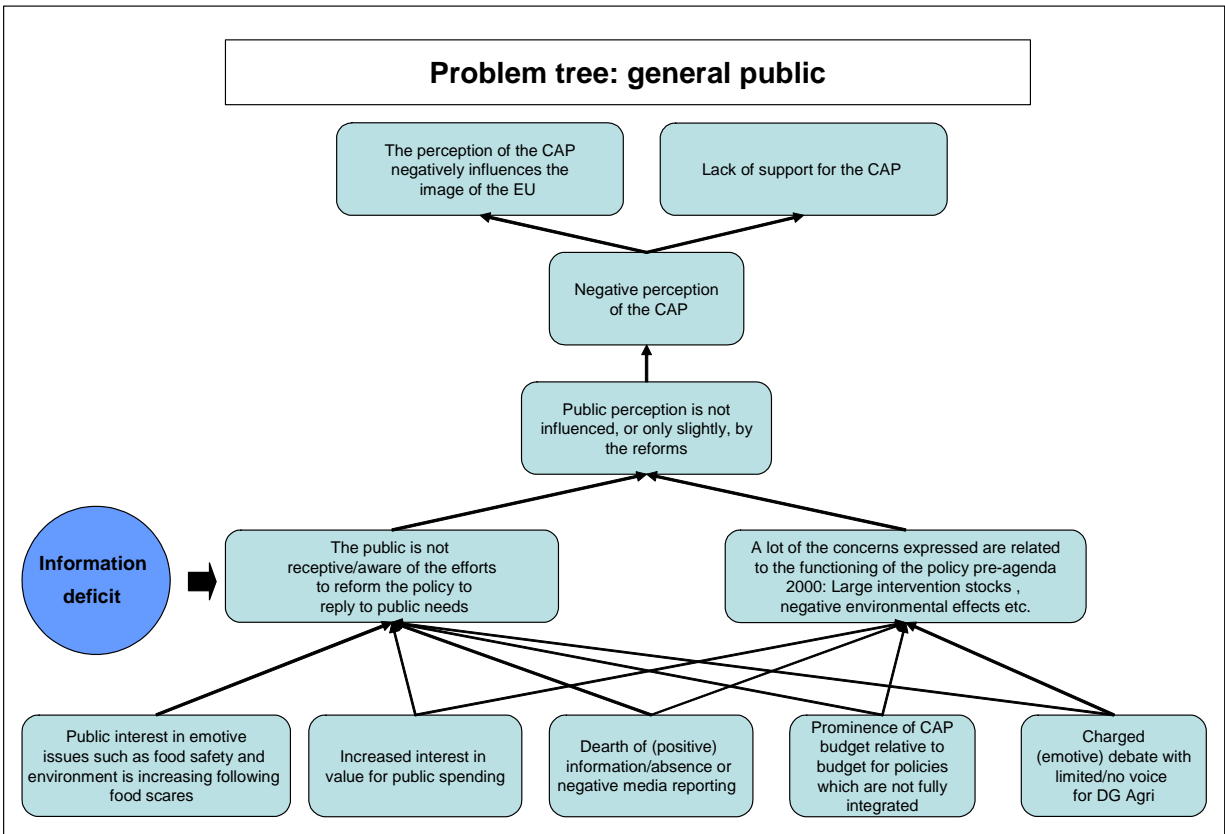
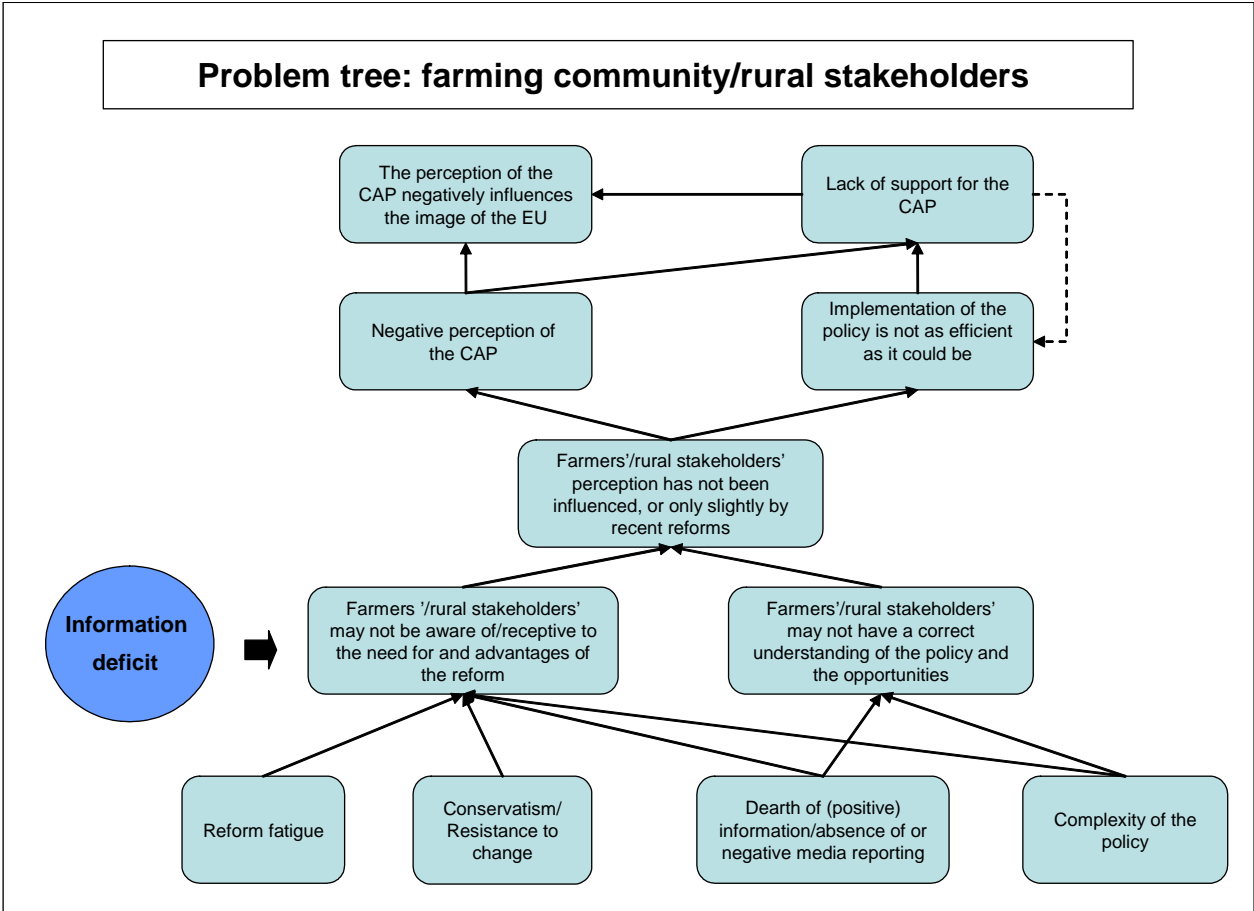


Figure 9 - Problem tree: farming/rural community



Based on interviews, document analysis and the problem tree analysis, we have identified what we believe were the information policy objectives for the years 2000-2005 for the two intended target groups. To the extent possible we have specified and broken down these objectives and classified them, in order to make it possible to evaluate. These objectives are presented below.

Figure 10 - Objective tree: general public

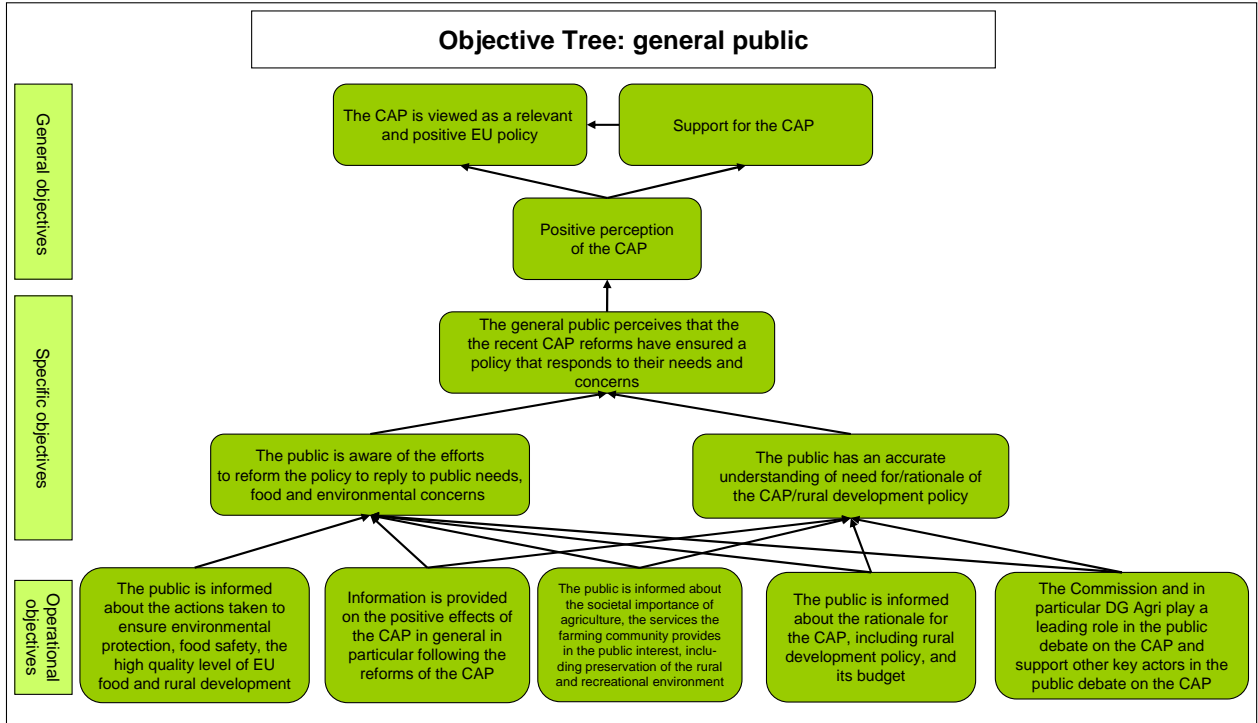
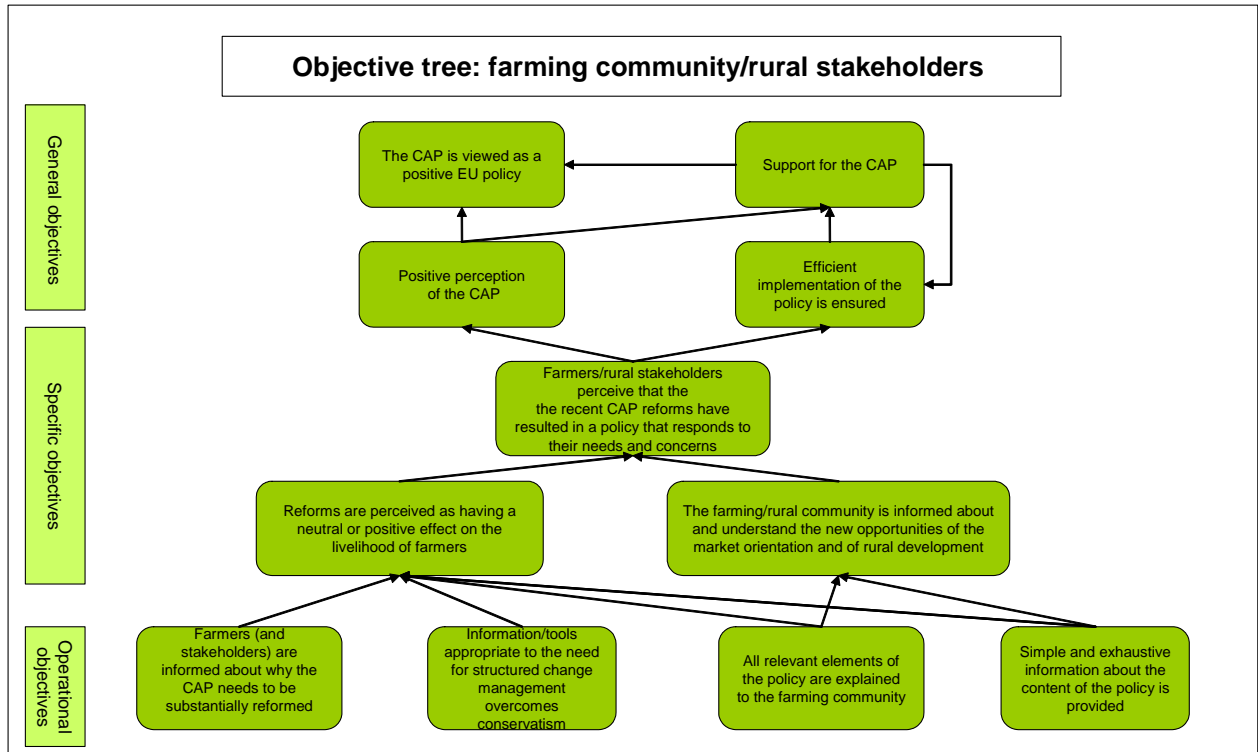


Figure 11 - Objective tree: farming/rural community



The underlying assumption of an information policy is that the greater an affected person's knowledge and understanding of the subject, the likelier it is that this will lead to a positive perception, and that in turn should contribute to building a positive image of the subject (albeit that can be influenced by factors other than perception, such as educational level or socio-economic profile, the external environment linked to the communication cluster, the overall social climate in society, etc.) This image could then influence the support for (in terms of commitment, acceptance and value-sharing) the subject/issue at stake. If support is gained, then, very often, spontaneous informal feedback occurs, which makes it possible to refine further and develop the key messages to be communicated to the target groups in order to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding.

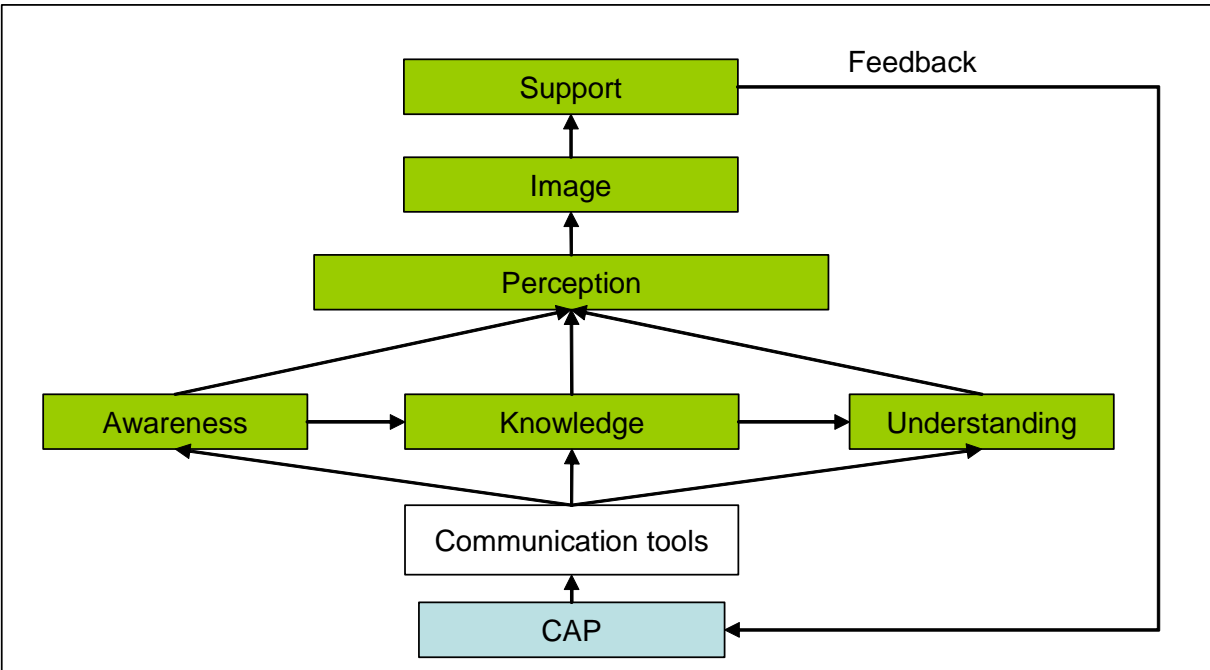
Based on this assumption, the *operational objective* of the policy becomes to inform the farming/rural community and the general public about different elements of the policy using various tools. These information activities should lead to awareness, knowledge and understanding of the policy, and this awareness, knowledge and understanding of the policy, it is assumed, will allow the target groups to perceive that the policy responds to their needs, demand and concern (*specific objective*). This perception of the policy will lead to a positive image of the CAP and hence to support for the CAP and improved implementation (*general objective*).

The general objectives resulting from this analysis are:

- a general objective vis-à-vis the general public and the farming/rural community of creating a positive perception of the CAP on the assumption that this will translate into support for the CAP;
- a second general objective in relation to the farming and rural community of ensuring an efficient implementation of the CAP, which would then further create and influence support for the CAP.

Figure 12 presents this underlying logic, while at the same time highlighting that the need for information varies depending on the target groups and sub-segments of the target group. It is important to note here that awareness without knowledge and/or understanding, already creates a perception, which could be positive or negative. Knowledge and understanding further influence this perception either positively or negatively. But it is a fact that awareness is on one hand a pre-requisite for the creation of a perception and on the other hand can alone create this perception, in the absence of any knowledge or understanding.

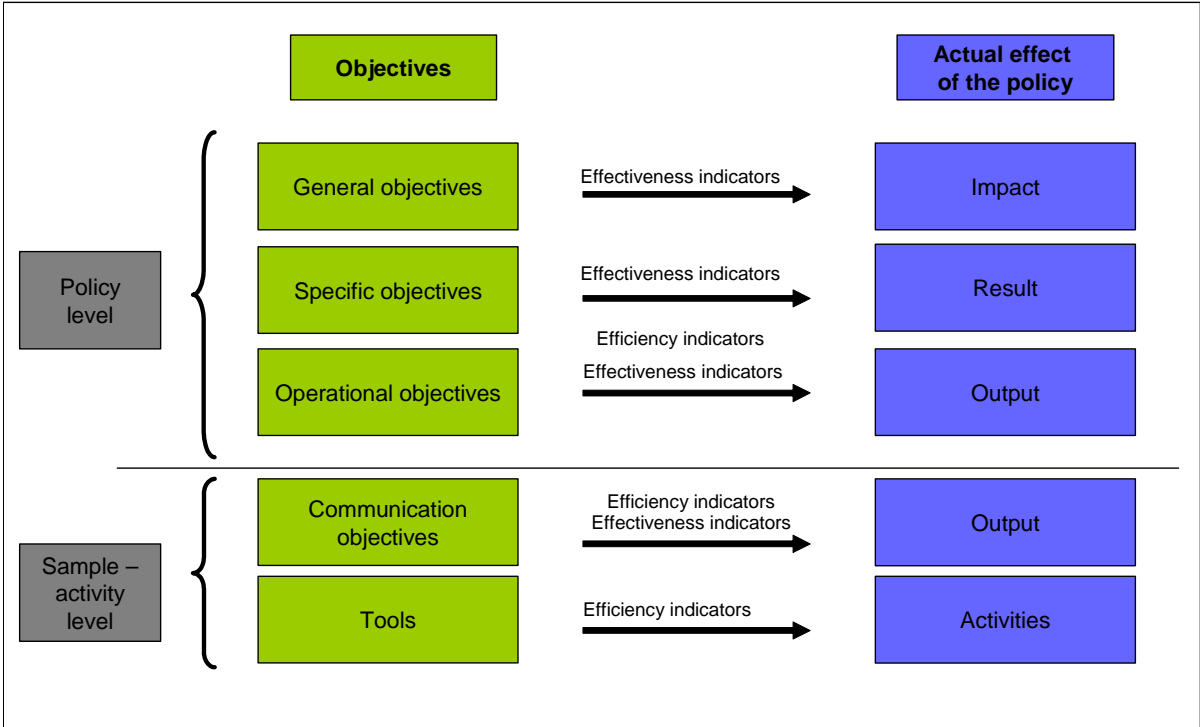
Figure 12 - Underlying logic of the intervention



4.4. Setting the judgement criteria and related indicators

Both objective trees present operational, specific and general objectives that the CAP information policy are expected to reach. By identifying these objectives we are able to set judgement criteria and indicators that will guide the data collection. These indicators are set both at policy level and at activity level. This approach is presented in the following model:

Figure 13 - Identification of indicators



As the model indicates, we set judgement criteria and indicators at two levels. For the analysis of the sample one might have been able to recycle the specific indicators at action/activity level from the files to assess the combined effectiveness of the actions/activities carried out²⁸. The objective would be to assess to what extent the different activities implemented were effective in achieving the anticipated outputs and to what extent they contributed to the operational, specific and general objectives of the CAP information policy²⁹.

At policy level, we have identified judgement criteria and indicators by evaluation question based on our analysis of the objectives. It should be noted that there is no baseline measurement and no-ex-post measurement available at EU or at national level which would allow us to draw conclusions quantitatively

²⁸ However we were confronted with a significant number of cases for which the final report could not be located. Therefore the information relative to these indicators was missing as well.

²⁹ Regarding communication indicators at sample-activity level, one can consider the activity-based indicators (such as use of budget or number of staff involved), the outputs indicators (for instance the number of attendees to a seminar) and the indirect output indicators (such as number of entries generated in the database, number of questions raised by e-mail afterwards, etc.). Those indirect output indicators are sometimes called by the communication-industry experts results and impacts indicators. We will restrict ourselves to the use of the wording “indirect outputs” as the terms “results” and “impacts” are linked to the specific and general objectives at policy level.

on the result and impact of the policy. This further supported our methodological approach to conduct a perceptions analysis (after a thorough analysis of the files) that allowed us to draw conclusions and recommendations, based on a qualitative approach.

4.5. Strategy and key players

It is generally accepted that public policy (information policy or other policy) is not exclusively influenced by policy objectives but also by the pre-existing institutional context, budget constraints, the various actors involved in the implementation of the policy, existing policy and high level political decisions.

The CAP information policy was largely designed based on a strategy paper written in 2000. Besides setting policy objectives, this document identified a strategy for communicating on the CAP based on four elements:

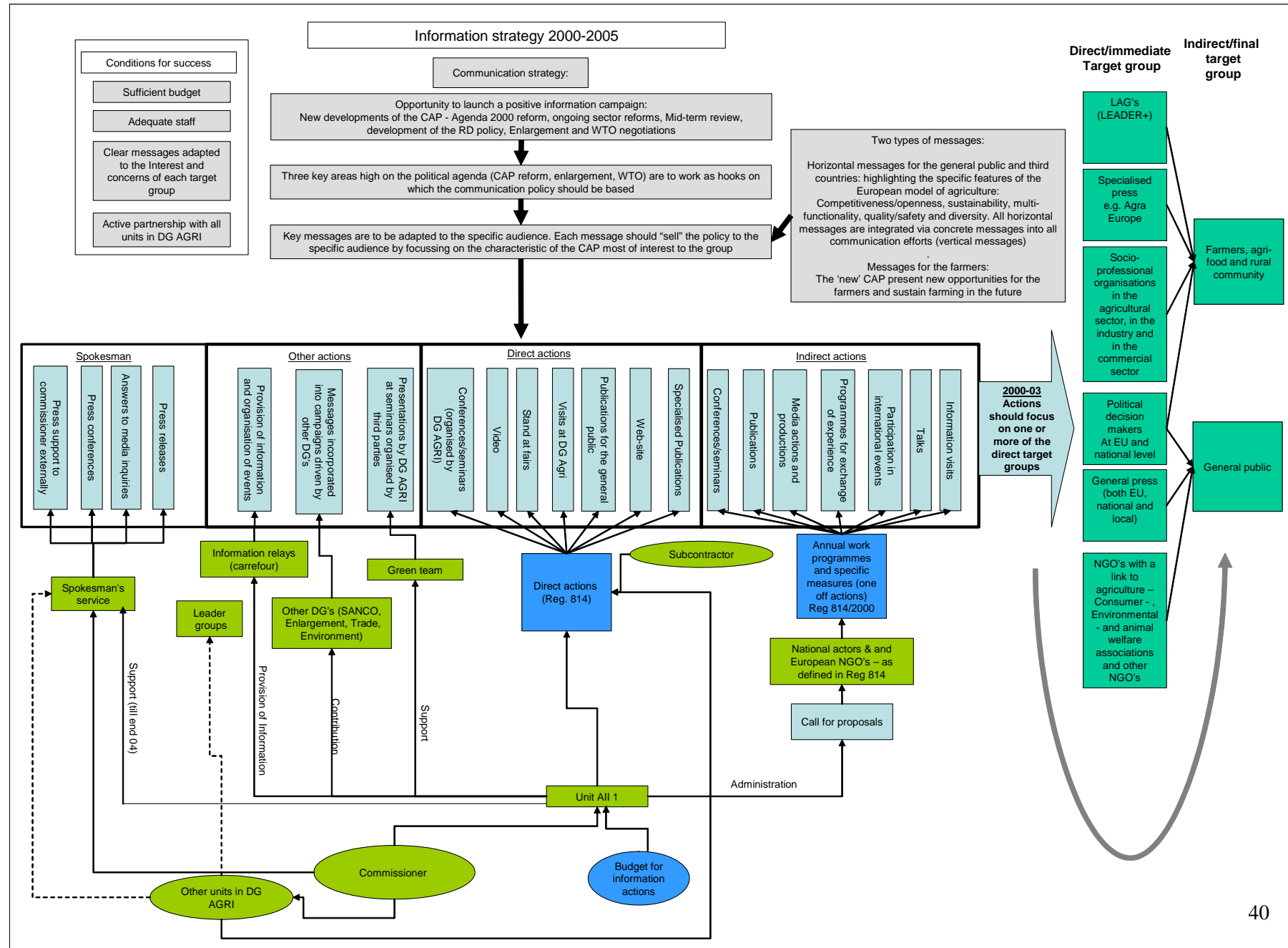
- The evolution of the CAP presented an ideal opportunity to launch a positive information campaign on the CAP;
- Three key areas high on the political agenda (CAP reform, enlargement, WTO) were to act as ‘pegs’ on which the communication policy should be based;
- In order to be effective the information and key messages provided should be adapted to the specific audience. Each message should “sell” the policy to the specific audience by focussing on the characteristic of the CAP of most interest to the group;
- The public and farming/rural stakeholders were essentially to be reached through intermediaries such as political decision makers, socio-professional organisations, NGOs and the press.

This strategy was to feed into decisions on the selection of information tools and actions

The formulation of an overall coherent strategy, and in particular the selection of most relevant information tools, appears also to have been affected by the organisational context. Although the information unit within DG AGRI is responsible for the implementation of the CAP information policy, numerous actors, from various units, both within DG AGRI and in other DGs, are involved in the implementation of the policy, and CAP information policy also attracts interest at political level.

The following figure presents these interactions. The upper part of the figure presents the key elements of the strategy (in grey) and how it feeds into the decisions regarding the choice of information tools and actions (in light blue). The lower level of the model presents the various actors involved (in green), and the legal constraints in the implementation of the CAP information policy (in dark blue) and how these feed into decisions regarding the choice of information tools and actions.

Figure 14 - Information strategy 2000-2005



As already stated in section 4.2, the choice of one or other tool depends on the objectives identified and the target groups to be reached.

The selection of the various tools should take into account their relevance to the different overall communication objectives, i.e.:

- create awareness of a topic;
- build knowledge on a topic;
- ensure understanding;
- promote positive perception;
- encourage feedback.

and balance it with the different criteria. The choice of the tool is mainly the result of a multi-criteria analysis.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Evaluation design

The tender specifications provide a list of five evaluation themes to be at the heart of the project.

- *Explanation of the CAP and reduction of information deficits*
- *Discussion with stakeholders active in the rural areas*
- *Relative effectiveness and efficiency of measures*
- *Coherence³⁰*
- *Improvements in the Commission's monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures.*

In order to reply to the evaluation questions indicated under each theme, we designed our methodology, taking into account some issues that we had to face.

We described below these issues and the methodological design.

5.1.1. KEY ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

5.1.1.1. DATA AVAILABILITY

We were aware of the fact that it would be difficult to obtain quantitative data on the degree of awareness, understanding or knowledge of the CAP among the target groups, particularly the general public.

The reason for this is twofold: firstly because our experience indicated that the monitoring and evaluation system of communication activities is very often focused on measuring the activity level and the communication outputs (such as number of attendees to a conference, number of press clippings after a press conference or readership of a newspaper) without trying to measure the results and impact of the communication activity (such as increase of awareness within the target group, level of understanding of the main messages, etc.); secondly because in general administrative bodies responsible for agriculture and stakeholders such as farming organisations and applicants either do not have the resources to collect such data and/or feel the results would not be reliable given other factors which may have had an influence.

This lack of quantitative data has been a fact during our evaluation work.

5.1.1.2. OBJECTIVES AND BASELINE MEASUREMENT

In order to measure successfully the effect of a communication initiative, it is necessary to have a clear prior definition of the communication objectives, a baseline measure of the target group awareness and post-campaign measurements. In general, these measures were not present. There is no clear and precise baseline measurement on the level of awareness among the different target groups and no measurement afterwards on a regular basis. Some Eurobarometer surveys were intended to serve this

³⁰ The term used in the Terms of Reference is Interference, but we have used Coherence here as representing more standard evaluation terminology.

purpose, notably those carried out in 2000, but in practice they fell short of what was needed as explained under Theme F/Relevance in Chapter 6.

Even in the case of existence of such data, the link between a communication programme and the quantitative impact is very often difficult to establish in a clear and irrefutable manner. This is due to the fact that many other factors might have influenced the degree of awareness, understanding or knowledge among the various groups.

In the absence of a baseline measurement and taking into account the multiplicity of factors that can influence the communication process, all quantitative data found during the process had to be carefully integrated in our analysis in order to avoid drawing biased conclusions.

5.1.1.3. TIMING OF THE EVALUATION WORK

Another important element when evaluating communication activities is the timing of the evaluation. When campaigns have ended long ago, it is not realistic to obtain reliable direct feedback from targeted audiences at this stage. It is a reality that most people forget, or even when queried at the time of a communications campaign, are unable to attribute clearly to specific communications initiatives any awareness of an issue they may have.

5.1.2. EVALUATION DESIGN

We designed the evaluation process taking into consideration the issues identified above. We therefore relied during the evaluation process on two main sources of information:

- the analysis of the files handled by the European Commission for the direct actions and for the indirect actions; we established a sample of these files in order to analyse and collect relevant data for the evaluation process;
- stakeholder-provided evidence and/or expert/intermediary opinion in order to establish or support the facts of what actually occurred. This approach has a proven track record and was reinforced by the major file analysis work that we did during the evaluation process. The collection of information happened via interviews (face-to-face, by phone and in exceptional cases by e-mail).

During our evaluation work we used on the one hand the quantitative data available from the file analysis and from any quantitative source identified during the interviews (but as already stated this information was not precise or comprehensive enough) and on the other hand all the qualitative information that we collected during our interviews with many stakeholders and key players.

5.2. Tools and techniques used during the evaluation process

The main tools and techniques that we used are further detailed below. The combination of tools allowed us to draw conclusions based on facts and perceptions from the interviewees.

5.2.1. DESK RESEARCH

We conducted desk research. We consulted more than 80 documents: Regulations, Calls for proposals, internal notes, Eurobarometer surveys, Member States documents, etc.

This desk research contributed to the contextual analysis of the evaluation, to the overall understanding of the communication and information policy of the CAP, to drawing up the policy intervention logic and to the analysis of the evaluation questions.

5.2.2. FILE ANALYSIS

We conducted solid file analysis based on a sample of the activities carried out. This file analysis contributed to identifying whether there were ex ante and ex post evaluations available and to feed our analysis relative to the evaluation questions.

The sample contained direct actions and indirect actions (successful and unsuccessful, specific measures and work programmes). The selection of projects, based on the sampling criteria was random³¹. We made the selection of the projects ourselves in order to guarantee the independence of the evaluation.

In the case of direct actions, the Terms of Reference identified a number of categories or specific actions. In the case of categories, we made a selection taking into account a spread of years, and, where appropriate, geography and target group. Full representativity over the time period was not possible within the sample, so we selected measures from more recent years. This selection was approved by DG AGRI.

At the end of the process we analysed the files for the following numbers of actions:

Table 4 – Number of actions in the sample

Type of action	Number
Direct actions	14
Indirect actions – successful	66
Indirect actions – unsuccessful	16
TOTAL	96

The direct actions selected for closer analysis were:

- the conference “The Common Agricultural Policy and the enlargement challenges” organised in Riga in 2002;
- the conference “The Common Agricultural Policy and the enlargement challenges” organised in Prague in 2002;
- the conference “Planting seeds for Rural Futures: Rural Policy Perspectives for a wider Europe” organised in Salzburg in 2003;
- the conference “The Common Agricultural Policy and Enlargement: Opportunities and Perspectives” organised in Sofia in 2004;
- the conference “Launch of Leader+ Observatory” organised in Brussels in 2004;
- the participation in the Green Week in Berlin in 2004;
- the participation in the Fieragricola in Verona in 2004;
- the participation in the Salon International de l’Agriculture in Paris in 2005;

³¹ Limited only to those projects for which the files are available, i.e. ca. 90%, of which the missing files are from the earlier years. 2003 files were missing at the time of our file analysis.

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- the fact sheets “EU Agriculture and enlargement”, “Agriculture and Environment” and “Overview of rural development implementation”
- three newsletters issued in October 2003, May 2004 and April 2005;
- the Eurobarometer Flash Survey 86 “Farmers’ attitudes towards the CAP” in 2000 and the special Eurobarometer Survey “Europeans and the Common Agriculture Policy” in 2004;
- the DG AGRI website;
- a selection of visits made to Brussels;
- the Green Team.

5.2.3. INTERVIEWS

We met a large number of interviewees for our analysis of perceptions of direct and indirect actions and our analysis of the availability of information on the CAP/rural development policy in the member states. We conducted two rounds of interviews: one at the beginning of the evaluation work in order to feed our views on the context and the information policy on CAP in the Member States, the other to collect information more specifically relative to the evaluation questions.

The breakdown hereunder details the interviewees by category:

Table 5 – Round one of interviews – distribution by category of interviewees

Category	Number of interviewees
Public Administration	29 at Member State level and 11 at EC level
Farming Organisations and NGO's	41
Consumer Associations	19
Total for the first round	100

During the second round of interviews, this list was supplemented by:

- names identified during the file analysis of the successful and unsuccessful applications;
- staff of Europe Direct information points³²;
- journalists and communication experts;
- relevant staff of the Commission Representations;
- farming and rural stakeholders;
- representatives of national and regional government.

Table 6 – Round two of interviews – distribution by category of interviewees

Category	Number of interviewees
Public Administration	50 at Member State level and 13 at EC level
Farming Organisations and NGO's	69
Consumer Associations	3
EU Relays	51
EC Representations	16
Journalists and communication experts	21
Total for the second round	223

We also interviewed 48 people within DG AGRI in order to collect information relative to the internal communication process.

We used different interview guides for the following six categories of interviewee: 1. Beneficiaries; 2. Public Administrations; 3. Third parties: Commission Representations/Relays/External communication experts, inc. journalists and academics; 4. Information availability and local context; 5. Internal communication; 6. Relays.

5.3. Elements regarding validity limits and hypotheses concerning the evaluation methods

We identified above in this section some important issues which need to be taken into account when evaluating information and communication programmes. We also identified some problems that we encountered during the evaluation process.

5.3.1. INTERVIEWEES

Interviews were conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the emphasis was on the availability of information and data in the Member States across all relevant stakeholders and government. In the second phase, this aspect was explored in greater depth, and a separate set of questions was asked about knowledge and experience of direct and indirect actions.

Despite the Commission's support for our efforts in seeking interviews, we encountered difficulties in some countries in persuading potential interviewees to meet us. The Commission's own Representations in some Member States were not available to meet us, while in a number of Member

³² As the information collected from the Consumer Associations during the first round was not relevant to the evaluation, an adapted approach to understanding the effect on the general public has been adopted as a proxy: this approach included multipliers like journalists and communication experts, EU relays and EC Representations in the Member States.

States governments potential interviewees felt that the sensitivity of the issues were such as to lead them to decline to speak to “outsiders”.

Finally, the fact that no or very few indirect actions had taken place in many of the Member States, meant that awareness of Regulation 814/2000 among interviewees in those countries was creatively poor³³.

Nevertheless, the overall total of interviews with a very wide range of relevant parties, coupled with the file analysis we performed in Brussels, delivered sufficient inputs to allow us to answer most of the evaluation questions with confidence.

5.3.2. LACK OF QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION

We attempted during our fieldwork to find relevant information relative to the effectiveness and impact issue. But as the information was not collected at the time, it was impossible to obtain sufficient data of sufficient value at this juncture to enable any evaluation of the direct impact (at least from a quantitative point of view). Generally speaking monitoring systems³⁴ were not in place to identify this type of information and moreover there was often no prior formal identification of strategic objectives to be reached and against which effectiveness could be measured. As already stated, we used then as a proxy the qualitative information that we collected through our interviews.

Due to these restrictions and to the difficulty of obtaining qualitative information so long after the activities took place and in a situation where the general knowledge of the communication actions of the European Commission on the CAP was quite weak, we were far from having all the information which would have enabled us to reply to all the evaluation questions in detail. This is particularly true of the questions relative to the general effectiveness towards the general public and towards the farming community. Of course, when effectiveness is difficult to assess and when the available information on costs and resources is not comparable from one activity to the other, efficiency becomes quite automatically very difficult or even impossible to measure.

³³ This low awareness was not restricted to those countries. This is discussed elsewhere in chapter 6.

³⁴ There is a difference between information relevant for financial follow-up and information relevant for impact evaluation.

6. ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following subsections present our answers to the evaluation questions classified as follows:

- A) Effectiveness in targeting the general public
- B) Effectiveness in targeting the rural area stakeholders
- C) Effectiveness in improving the implementation and management of the CAP
- D) Effectiveness in mixing information tools and resulting efficiency
- E) Coherence and synergy with other information actions on the CAP
- F) Relevance of the objectives - main targets and communication strategy
- G) Monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

Our methodological approach is set out in detail in Chapter 5, where we explained also the reasons for basing ourselves on perceptions and the limitations imposed on the evaluation by the time which had elapsed in many cases since the events we were discussing with interviewees. The absence of appropriate written documentation on strategy in many cases and baseline measurement is not an absolute bar to being effective, but it is likely to diminish the impact and it makes effectiveness much more difficult to quantify. Where such evidence of a strategy, baseline measurement, objectives and targets, and ex post evaluation existed, this is specifically mentioned in the relevant sections. Our comments should be read bearing this in mind.

For the sake of readability, in Themes A and B, conclusions and recommendations are presented after the analysis of each tool in relation to that tool. General conclusions and recommendations are to be found at the end of each of those Themes. Theme C covers direct and indirect actions together, with specific conclusions and recommendations, followed by internal communication, and conclusions and recommendations specific to that topic.

The main conclusions and recommendations for Themes D, E, F and G are to be found at the end of each Theme.

6.1. Theme A: Effectiveness in Targeting the General Public

6.1.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION

Effectiveness relates to the extent that the communication policy reached its intended objectives. In line with the objective trees that underlie our evaluation, we were looking in particular in relation to the *general public* and stakeholders relevant for reaching this group to see how effectively:

- information was provided on the positive effects of the CAP in general, in particular following the reforms of the CAP,
- people were informed of the actions taken to ensure environmental protection, food safety, the high quality of level of EU food and preservation of the rural lifestyle,
- the public was informed about the rationale for the CAP and its budget,
- the public were informed about the importance of agriculture to society and the services the farming community provides,
- the Commission and in particular DG AGRI played a key role in the public debate on the CAP and supported other actors knowledgeable about the CAP who play a key role in the public debate on the CAP.

We note that some of these issues became more important over time, in particular rural development and reform.

We are also aware that the primary responsibility for informing on some issues, in particular environmental protection as a whole, and food safety, lies with other Directorates-General.

6.1.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The judgement criteria and the sources used in evaluating the effectiveness of the policy included those in the table below which were applied as appropriate to the different categories of measure:

Table 7 – Theme A - Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Sources of information
Evidence of the content of the activities	Commission project files
Degree to which information provided corresponded to the key messages as defined by the Commission in the annual calls for proposal of indirect actions	Description of the measures Successful indirect action applications
Extent to which implementation was consistent with intentions	Media plans, ex-ante assessments and ex-post evaluations (where available)
Distribution/use of material	Final reports and evaluations of activities
Evidence of adverse impacts of measures	Questionnaires completed/other feedback provided by the recipients of the information (conference participants, recipients of information documents, website users etc.)
Correspondence between content of messages/information and the identified demand for information	Indicators of distribution/use of material
Evidence that programme led to reduction in information deficits; evidence of changes in awareness, knowledge and understanding on the part of the target groups	Data collected by Commission services Interviews with Commission officials, officials of relevant Member State authorities and agencies, and stakeholders
Timeliness of the information (given the significant changes in CAP and rural development policy over the period)	Existing survey/poll/focus group information Media coverage

6.1.3. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1.3.1. DIRECT ACTIONS

Conferences/seminars

Background³⁵

The conferences specifically covered by the evaluation were in Prague, Riga and Sofia (enlargement), Salzburg (rural development), Brussels (Leader observatory).

The Salzburg conference was organised in close collaboration with the Commissioner and his staff.

The Prague, Riga and Sofia conferences were developed in close cooperation with units responsible for Enlargement.

The Leader Conference was *sui generis* as the Information Unit merely provided administrative facilitation for the work of another unit.

None of these Conferences had as their primary target the general public (or relevant stakeholders through whom the general public can be reached).

Strategic approach

The European Conference on Rural Development ("Planting seeds for rural futures" - Rural policy perspectives for a wider Europe) in Salzburg in November 2003 was a follow-up to the Cork Conference on Rural Development (1996) which launched a wide debate on rural development policy. That process culminated in the Agenda 2000 reforms, which saw rural development policy established as the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The purpose of the Salzburg conference as explained to us by interviewees was to dialogue with and build consensus in the rural/farming stakeholder world around the policy reforms, including the increased emphasis on rural development. This was an objective formulated at political level, i.e. by the Commissioner, who took the initiative for the Conference and took the lead in setting the content.

The Prague, Riga and Sofia Conferences were designed to provide information on the impact of enlargement on agriculture in the new Member States.

Implementation

Participants present at these Conferences were key stakeholders in themselves. However, participants from outside the rural/farming community were in a minority. The range of stakeholders present was wider at some conferences than others, but the general public was nevertheless not a primary target. Mainstream and economic media were invited as a means of reaching the general public and those stakeholders who are influential in forming public opinion.

³⁵ We are aware that DG AGRI reaches stakeholders of all sorts as a result of invitations which its officials accept to speak at conferences. However, that is only relevant to this evaluation where they are part of the Green Team.

As stated in the section on monitoring, little information was collected at the time of Conferences to enable effectiveness to be quantified. There is virtually no written material setting out operational objectives for individual Conferences.

It was anticipated that stakeholders invited, including the media present, would act as multipliers of the information they received. The organisation of opportunities to photograph or interview the Commissioner, and in some cases press Conferences were also intended to maximise impact with the public at large. The extent to which the media were specifically targeted varied.

Documentation on implementation is limited to press clippings from the Salzburg Conference and evaluation forms from the Sofia Conference. More detail can be found under Theme G.

Findings

The subject matter of each of the Conferences was **clearly topical**. They were organised **at a key time** for the subject at hand, and **they did address a political need**³⁶.

Moreover, those interviewed in the Member States perceived that these Conferences were generally successful in raising awareness, providing information, providing opportunities for dialogue, and in the case of Salzburg of achieving the policy objective of DG AGRI of building consensus around the reforms. However, interviewees with knowledge of the Conference were generally those in the farming/rural world, who had not considered the possible impact on the general public. They generally did not perceive, however, that the general public had been a direct or indirect target audience.

No one considered that the measures had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

On the basis of the perceptions of the limited number of interviewees with knowledge of how the Conferences reached the general public, it is not possible to conclude definitively whether or not the Conferences were effective in reaching the general public as a secondary target.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- have an overall written policy on when conferences should target the general public, and clear specific and operational objectives on reaching the general public for individual conferences;
- have operational objectives and messages for individual conferences (which can be used for ex-post measurement of effectiveness, as recommended under Theme G);
- consider the dissemination process at the very start of the process when organising a conference.

³⁶ A political need is by definition difficult to measure. We do recognise, however, that a political dimension may justify a measure, though this is not necessarily the case. However, in the case of rural development and enlargement, it is our judgement that such a need did exist based on a requirement to build consensus around forthcoming changes. So although we have no specific evidence that a need for information as such existed, we accept that it was self-evident under the circumstances.

Fairs

Background

Participation in agricultural Fairs is a long-standing activity for DG AGRI. In the case of International Green Week in Berlin for example, it is certainly a matter of decades while, the Salon International de l'Agriculture and the Verona Fair have been regular events in the Commission's calendar for a number of years. However, the participation at the biennial Verona Fair now consists of sharing a stand with the Italian Ministry of Agriculture in order to release resources for attendance at other Fairs.

Participation in other Fairs is less regular. DG AGRI was, for example, present at Fairs in the period covered by the evaluation on a one-off basis in Cyprus, Finland Greece, Hungary, Spain and the UK³⁷.

The theme of the Commission's presence is calibrated on the theme of the Fair or the Hall in which the Commission is present, as well as with the Commission's own priorities. Stand design and some other organisational aspects, such as provision of hostesses to hand out brochures, are contracted out.

The Fair participation specifically covered by the evaluation was Verona in 2004, Green Week in Berlin in 2004 and the Salon International de l'Agriculture in 2005. However, we also looked at the strategic approach in general.

Strategic approach

The overarching objectives were to provide:

- visibility, in order to demonstrate that the Commission is an important part of the agricultural world – it proposes and implements policy;
- feedback: a chance for Commission officials to gain first-hand experience of the day-to-day interests and concerns of the general public.

Officials told us that attending Green Week in Berlin and the Salon International de l'Agriculture in Paris are regarded as political imperatives. Participation in other Fairs was on a more 'ad hoc' basis, often in reaction to an invitation from a particular Fair, according to information obtained from officials. The selection is also made on the basis of the availability of personnel at a given time. The dates of Fairs are often clustered (because they are organised during the months when farmers are least busy) and DG AGRI does not have the resources to attend them all in those circumstances.

Implementation

As stated in the section on monitoring, little information was collected on number of visitors, dissemination effects and or satisfaction of the visitors, particularly during the first years of the evaluation period. There is no written material setting out in advance how the Commission could maximise its visibility.

It is nevertheless possible to distinguish between two periods: 2000-2003, and from 2004 onwards. In the second period, much more effort has been made and more personnel have been made available to collect and use data. Since early 2005, the Commission has systematically obtained information from the Fair organizers on the number of visitors, the range of visitors – which days different target groups

³⁷ And since then in other countries, such as Denmark and Ireland.

come and information on the theme of the event. It is now also standard practice to have a meeting before a Fair with the Representation, with the national Agricultural Ministry wherever possible, and the Fair organisers, to discuss the theme and how the Commission can make the greatest impact.

The degree of ex ante co-ordination on objectives with counterparts in Member States has varied. It was high in Paris when the Member State and the Fair organising body were proactive in working with the Commission. It has also increased in general in the last couple of years, but during the 2000-2005 period it was still an exception.

The presence of the Commissioner is regarded as highly desirable for visibility, and officials who have participated in Fairs believe that visibility is enhanced, and in particular media coverage greater, if a leading political figure from the country concerned visits the stand and/or meets the Commissioner. This is an implicit objective for Fair participation, and one which the information officials in DG AGRI seek to maximise, but it is not axiomatic.

Since the later part of the period under evaluation, there have been briefing sessions in advance for the officials who will be present on the stands, records are kept of questions which cannot be answered on the spot and are systematically answered on return to Brussels, some track is kept of the publications which are requested and there is a debriefing in Brussels afterwards.

More thought is also being given to whether the design of the stand is fit for purpose. The Commission's presence is now publicised in schools in advance, a publication suitable for children is now available, and quizzes are held on the stand (with prizes available) to attract attention³⁸.

Internal evaluation by officials of attendance in Berlin, Paris, and Verona in 2004 was that visibility of the stand was good and demand for publications was high, but this was not quantified. A record was also kept of lessons learned in terms of staffing and availability of publications, for example. This internal evaluation does not differentiate between the general public and the rural/farming audience.

Findings

The Commission itself, in an internal strategy document from January 2003, recognised that different approaches have had variable impact. It stated that in the past, the stand had added little to overall impact where the Commissioner already had a high profile. In others, the stand has been a constant centre of attention, in this particular instance thanks to close cooperation with French “inter-branch” organisations, and presentation of quality products - flower-arranging demonstrations, olive oil tasting, presentations of geographically defined products, as well as meat and dairy products³⁹.

This was borne out by interviews we conducted in the Member States. It was felt that participation in the Salon de l’Agriculture had on occasions been enhanced when there were events on the stand which appealed to the general public or when samples of quality foodstuffs were available. Doubts were expressed about the effectiveness of participation in Green Week. The view that the Commissioner’s presence is critical to Commission visibility at Fairs was borne out by interviewees in the Member States.

³⁸ In 2006, and therefore outside the scope of this evaluation, cooking events have been organised with the Commissioner.

³⁹ Fairs at which the Commission had such attractions on its stand have in the past been the exception. There is research carried out by Green Week which establishes that this type of attraction is the primary reason the general public attends these Fairs.

Some interviewees also believed that the Commission needs to pay more attention to the availability of staff on the stand for whom the language of the country is the mother tongue (not just a language that the person speaks).

Some interviewees told us that they do not believe it is not necessarily the case that the general public needs to be a primary target at a Fair and that they doubt whether the public reached at the Salon de l'Agriculture is a key target for the Commission⁴⁰.

We note in this context an assumption on the part of officials that it is not possible to attend a Fair without targeting both the general public and the farming/rural community. Some of our interviewees disagreed: they pointed out that it is possible to design a stand in such a way that information is available to the general public who are actively interested, but which allows the organisers to be proactive only in targeting the rural/farming community, and in particular their representatives. Some interviewees were specifically critical of some of the stand designs⁴¹ used as not being attractive or meaningful for the general public.

We note that there is considerable competition for the attention of the general public at Fairs and that this context has not always been adequately taken into account. For instance, there were 320,000 general public visitors to International Green Week in 2006, but there were 1,568 exhibitors, including 496 from outside Germany. There were 375,000 general public visitors to the Salon International de l'Agriculture in 2006 and 1,114 exhibitors from 35 countries. At the 2004 Verona Fair, there were just under 140,000 visitors and 1,151 exhibitors.⁴²

No one considered that the measures had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- in the period under review, considerable improvements were made towards the latter part of the period (and continue to be made) to make the Commission's participation more professional. However, clear policy objectives, criteria for selection of Fairs to attend and when to target the general public, and operational objectives and messages for individual Fairs have yet to be developed systematically;
- DG AGRI was effective in reaching the media and individual members of the general public via participation at Fairs, particularly from 2004 onwards;
- effectiveness was greater where the Commissioner was present at a Fair;
- effectiveness could be improved by having more officials on the stand who have the language of the host country as their mother tongue;

⁴⁰ A visitor survey carried out by International Green Week in 2006 showed that visitors come 'primarily' for the experience and to find out about products from all over the world.

⁴¹ This mainly related to the most recent stand they have in mind, a 'Greek temple' approach used in Paris and Berlin in 2006; a similar design was used in Cyprus in 2005.

⁴² No breakdown between the general public and professional visitors is available, but the Verona Fair does not target the general public in the same way as the other two.

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- effectiveness was a function of prior co-ordination with the organisers, suitable stand design, and the availability of events/foodstuffs/objects likely to appeal to the general public;
- effectiveness in terms of reaching the general public as an overall target group was low.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- have an overall written policy on when Fair participation should target the general public, and clear specific and operational objectives on reaching the general public for Fairs in general, including considering whether outreach should be concentrated on the farming/rural community, while make available information only to those members of the public who proactively seek it
- set operational objectives for reaching the general public (by types of public) at each Fair;
- continue along the current path of continuous process improvement in terms of co-ordination with other interested parties present at the Fair, other parts of the DG (including the Cabinet) and the Fair organisers.

Publications

Background

The information unit produces a range of one-off and regular publications. The regular publications include the newsletters and Fact Sheets on topics selected for more detailed analysis. The one-off publications include the proceedings of conferences and 'The Common Agricultural Policy Explained'.⁴³

'The Common Agricultural Policy Explained' (36 pages) is one of three publications specifically targeting the general public in the period of the evaluation. The others were a foldout map, 'The Common Agricultural Policy: a policy evolving with the times', and a folder on organic agriculture.

Publications are distributed to a mailing list, to visitors to the Commission and on the Commission stand at Fairs. The mailing list includes European and international organisations, farming organisations, national and sub-national public authorities, rural development organisations, NGO's of various types (consumer, environmental), media, the Commission's information relays and documentation centres. The use of this mailing list is part of a deliberate strategy of dissemination via multipliers.

General-interest publications from other DGs are used for distribution at Fairs, e.g. publications on food safety, environment policy and regional policy.

⁴³ A drawing book for children 'On The Farm' was produced in 2006.

Strategic approach

The decision on whether to produce a publication is based on what is topical (or about to be topical), consultation within the DG, analysis of information gaps on the basis of requests received for information and stock levels of existing publications.

As noted above, only three publications specifically targeted the general public in the period under review. However, interviewees within the Commission indicated that they believe that other publications are useful for the general public as well.

Implementation

The best evidence of implementation comes from demand for the publications from relays, the general public directly (or via the OPOCE website) and at Fairs. This data is fragmented, and there is no systematic analysis of the data by publication, source, or language. There was an evaluation of the publications in 2000, but we did not use this evaluation as the information was too outdated. There is no qualitative data available, e.g. from readership surveys or focus groups. There is no data on a targeted approach to print runs, including the breakdown by language.

Findings

Production of publications for the general public as such was a secondary activity compared to the number of publications for the farming/rural community and its stakeholders. However, it was hoped to reach the interested general public via multipliers on the mailing list managed by OPOCE. However the evidence for this having been achieved is weak.

Our interviews indicated that impact of DG AGRI publications on the general public is limited. Of the three publications specifically designed for the general public, the best received was the fold-out map.⁴⁴

'The CAP Explained' was regarded by many interviewees, though by no means all, as too detailed for the general public. Where 'The CAP Explained' was successful was in timeliness of the English-language edition relative to the Mid-Term Review.

For the publications targeting the general public, our interviews clearly indicate that only Europe Direct (ED) relays and Representation documentation centres disseminate copies more widely⁴⁵. The relays and documentation centres do not, however, distribute large numbers because demand for information on the CAP from the general public is limited, and the general public is primarily interested in food safety and the environment.

Students and older schoolchildren use more specialist publications produced by DG AGRI, mainly for one-off assignments.

⁴⁴ This brochure contains a map. Information obtained from DG COMM indicates that maps and publications containing maps tend in general to be particularly popular.

⁴⁵ The experience of a Representation documentation centre, which told us 'we stumbled across *The Cap Explained*' can be taken as indicative, not an exception.

Demand for information on food safety is more likely to be met by DG COMM's brochure 'From Farm to Fork'⁴⁶. A brochure in the DG COMM series 'Europe on the Move' is also used to meet demand for information on the environment.

We note that relays generally appear to believe that there is still a market for print publications even in the Internet era.

A significant number of interviewees believe that the publications need to be better targeted to the local environment.

Our interviews also uncovered widespread distribution problems which are dealt with further in the section on monitoring.

No one among those interviewed considered that the publications as such had had an adverse effect. However, many interviews felt that the effectiveness of 'The Cap Explained' would have been greater if version in other languages had been available sooner. There were also complaints about poor translation, in general, particularly in the new Member States.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- publications which were intended for the general public were effective in conveying the Commission's messages to the general public, with the proviso that the short publications were more effective than 'The CAP Explained'.
- only a very limited segment of the general public was reached effectively;
- effectiveness could be improved if problems with distribution, quality of and delay in translations were to be improved.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Information Unit:

- have an overall written strategy on when and how publications should target the general public;
- set operational objectives for reaching the general public by publication, by distribution channel and by language;
- work more closely with other DGs in co-ordinating content and requirements;

⁴⁶ There are several reasons for this: (a) food safety is a primary concern for the general public; (b) documentation centre staff recognise DG COMM's 'Europe on the Move' series as a 'brand' for the general public; (c) there is no publication in the 'Europe on the Move' series on agriculture as such. 'From Farm to Fork' does contain some material on the Common Agricultural Policy and DG AGRI was consulted by DG COMM during the drafting.

- carry out regular surveys on the information needs of multipliers and have mechanisms in place for better publicising the existence of the publications and stimulating demand.

Website

Background

The website has similar characteristics to publications. It mainly contains material which has been written with a specialist audience in mind. However, material specifically designed for the general public such as the publication 'The Cap Explained' can be found on the website. The site does not have separate sections/access points for general, specialist and media users. However, a systematic attempt is made to keep the site simple and limit the number of clicks needed to get to information.

Strategic approach

The Commission's report to the European Parliament in 2003 on implementation of policy under Regulation 814/2000 contains explicit recognition of the modern value of a website in conveying information in publications via "a labour-saving and efficient method of communicating to those who are already interested in learning more."

Implementation

Officials indicated to us that they see the website as a means of reaching the general public by ensuring that publications for the general public and links to material of interest to the general public can be reached from the home page. These include the links to 'Europe Go', pages on BSE and to 'The CAP Explained'.

Management of the website sits with the Information Unit. Material supplied by other DG AGRI units receives some limited editorial revision, but it is essentially put on the web in the form in which the requesting unit supplies it. Background information on policies is generally also written by the units concerned. If the webmaster makes editorial changes, these must be approved by the specialist unit. Some general information is also supplied by an external subcontractor.

The cover page of the website is in the languages of the EU-15; there are pages in the languages of the EU-15, but in practice most material is only available in the original language (Commissioner's speeches), or English, French, and German. A limited amount of material, which includes 'The CAP Explained' is available in the languages of the countries which joined the EU in May 2004, but there are no separate language sections for the relevant languages.

The website is updated daily, but this does not mean that all sections are updated on a regular basis. The initiative for this often comes from the webmaster and relies on his knowledge of when a subject needs updating.

The website is promoted via bookmarks made from thin cardboard, which are distributed at Fairs, visits and other events, and added to every dispatch of paper publications.

Data is available on hits, but is not utilised. Some data is available on users of the electronic newsletter (though this is limited because the form which 'subscribers' use to sign up to receive the newsletter has not been designed with this in mind.) The webmaster receives spontaneous comments in e-mails, but this is not analysed. There have never been any user surveys.

Findings

In our interviews, it was possible to distinguish between the responses of two groups – the regular users and the irregular users. This is not a split between stakeholders in contact with the general public and stakeholders in contact with the rural/farming community. A large environmental organisation may be a regular user, a small farming organisation may be an irregular user.

What we found based on this breakdown was that the regular users generally found the site easy to find their way around, but that irregular users found the site difficult to navigate. A significant number of interviewees in both groups felt it was difficult to find what was new on the site. Interviewees frequently also indicated that they did not feel the material on the site was updated regularly enough.

Interviewees felt the material on the site was suitable only for a specialist audience⁴⁷. Awareness of the existence on the site of the material specifically intended for use by the general public was low.

Interviewees for who are not mother-tongue speakers of English, French and German were often critical of the absence of material in their own language.

No one among those interviewed considered that the website had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- the website is of limited effectiveness in reaching the general public. Its effectiveness could be improved if there were:
 - improved central management of the website communication tool within DG AGRI and more attention paid to the communication positioning of the website and its effective usefulness for various target groups with different levels of interest and knowledge. This would include;
 - more attention paid to readability for the general public;
 - a separate section targeting the general public in particular,
 - separate language sections for all EU languages;
 - comprehensive linguistic coverage in the major languages.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- reinforce its central management of the website with a clear communication positioning, taking into account, in particular, the suitability of content and messages for the target audience
- have an overall written strategy on when and how the website should target the general public, and include in this process consideration of whether the site should be layered with sections accessible from the home page for distinct target audiences;
- address as a matter of urgency the dearth of material in the languages of the countries which joined the EU in May 2004 and will join the EU on January 1, 2007.

⁴⁷ Some Commission officials themselves admitted to us that they believe there is too much 'euro-speak' on the website, while others feel the site is suitable for use by the general public, and indeed is its shop window for citizens.

Visits

Background

DG AGRI welcomes groups from inside and outside the EU and supplies speakers for these visits. Much of the demand comes via DG EAC⁴⁸. The responsibility for organisation falls on the information unit. Two members of the unit's staff are permanently employed for this facility and other speakers from elsewhere in the DG are brought in as required in order to meet a group's special interest.

Strategic approach

Visits are seen as a valuable two-way street. They are a means of informing interested groups, but also of obtaining direct contact with the concerns of the citizens of the EU.

Implementation

High priority is attached to matching speakers to the groups. A standard PowerPoint presentation is available for those who wish to use it, and to make copies of this or any other presentation available. The unit staff make oral presentations without audiovisual supports, however. As they often have little prior knowledge about many of the groups to which they believe oral/flip chart presentations enable them remain flexible on content. Suitable publications are distributed to each group in line with their presumed interests.

The staff in the Unit dealing with visitors only have capability in five of the EU's 20 languages. When interpretation is needed, only consecutive interpretation is available. Officials told us this does not give satisfactory results.

The statistics made available to us on visits for 2002-2005 do not make it possible to be conclusive about the nature of every visiting group, but groups of members of the public or stakeholders in contact with the general public are in the minority by far. During this period, there were no groups which can be specifically identified as being general public as such, and only a handful which may be civil society organisations or other entities through whom the general public can be reached.

The unit does not proactively promote the fact that the officials dealing with the CAP are available to speak to visitors⁴⁹. It believes that there is adequate knowledge, eg among MEPs and relevant organisations, of the possibility of having Commission officials speak to groups.

Officials say they receive positive feedback from visiting groups, but this is based solely on oral comments.

⁴⁸ DG Education and Culture

⁴⁹ This is left to DG EAC.

Findings

None of the interviewees who are multipliers had participated in a visit to the Commission for providing information to the general public. We note that they were generally also not aware that this possibility existed, and in some cases, would have been interested in organising such visits.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- visits were not effective in reaching the general public.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a strategy in terms of visits by the general public, and in so doing consider carefully when it is effective to make speakers available to groups of general public visitors, or civil society organisations who represent the general public;
- improve the capability to speak to visitors in their own language and/or make simultaneous interpretation available;
- if it concludes that a proactive strategy is justified in terms of reaching the general public, then take into account the recommendations made under Theme B in relation to visits by farming/rural groups and their stakeholders.

6.1.3.2. INDIRECT ACTIONS

Background

Indirect actions are activities co-financed by the Commission and implemented by stakeholders of various types (see also Chapter 3). Decisions were taken annually on which activities to fund based on applications in response to annual calls for proposal.

Existence of the funding is publicised via the calls for proposals in the Official Journal. Applicants are required to identify needs, define target groups, set out how they intended to disseminate information via the media, and provide an indication of what form of ex post evaluation they intended to carry out.

Strategic approach

The overriding objectives of Regulation 814/2000 applied, but each call for proposal contained objectives for the year in question – expressed in earlier calls as objectives and in later calls as messages. Each applicant was then free to set objectives within that framework.

There was a policy expectation from the middle of the period that more attention would be paid to the general public. This is contained in the Commission's 2003 report on implementation of measures

under Regulation 814/2000, which was subsequently endorsed by the Council of the European Union. In this, the Commission indicated that greater importance should be given to the impact of the co-financed actions on the media and on a wider public.

Attention was paid to this via the 'media plan' requirement in the application. This required applicants to provide more information than previously on dissemination via the media, though the term media plan covered a broader meaning of all the channels used.

Implementation

As indicated in Chapter 3, 156 actions covering 238 activities were implemented over the period under review. The representative sample which we looked at more closely covered 66 actions and 97 activities. Of these, four had the general public (including stakeholders who act as multipliers for informing the general public, e.g. consumer and environmental organisations) as their primary target – one in 2001, two in 2004 and one in 2005; three more targeted schoolchildren – one in 2000, one in 2002 and one in 2005. Four projects had the general public as a specific secondary target, one in 2001, one in 2002, one in 2004 and one in 2005. None had schoolchildren as a secondary target.

Overall, there was, therefore, a slight increase between the first and second half of the period 2000-2005: taking all these projects together, there were five projects in the three-year period 2000-2002, and six in the two-year period 2004-2005⁵⁰.

Of the projects with the general public or schoolchildren as their primary targets, four were in Italy, one was in Germany, one was in Greece and one in Spain. Of those with the general public as a secondary target, one was one of the Italian projects targeting schoolchildren, one was from France, one from Italy and one had pan-European coverage.

A number of the projects targeting several target groups or the media included the general public among their ultimate targets, but this was often driven by the 'tick-box' nature of the application form and not substantiated.

Findings

From our interviews, it is clear that knowledge of the existence of Regulation 814/2000 was low, even among Member State governments, European Commission Representations, relays and organisations providing the general public with information about the CAP and rural development.

Farming organisations are one channel for reaching the general public, and some farming organisations did apply for funding for projects targeting the general public, but there is scientific evidence that organisations perceived to have a vested interest are not the most trusted channel for information on agricultural issues.⁵¹

Consumer and environmental organisations, local authorities and mainstream media were alternative channels for reaching the general public, but very few applied (for detailed statistics, see Theme B), and our interview process made it clear that awareness of the existence of and possibilities under the Regulation among this group was very low. There was, however, a potential interest providing the associated paperwork was not too great.

⁵⁰ As noted in the Methodology section, there are no 2003 actions in the sample.

⁵¹ Trust in the Food Supply Chain, Fifth Framework Programme, TRUST project.

Where organisations in this category were aware of/had benefited from funding under the Regulation, it was more often than not the case that they had learned of it from the Official Journal, but by word-of-mouth, through their own Brussels office or consultants they employ to spot funding opportunities, or by means of a systematic web search for such opportunities.

There was no perception among those we interviewed of a policy shift on the part of the Commission in the middle of the period towards targeting the general public more. On the contrary, interviewees with both the farming/rural world, including national and local administrations, and others perceived that this funding was intended for farming organisations.

This was also true in some cases of applicants who had received funding for projects targeting the general public, i.e. they nevertheless felt that the funding was designed primarily for farming organisations. Their perception was that by restricting the information on the availability of this funding to calls for proposal published in the Official Journal and publication on the DG AGRI website, the Commission had not adequately disseminated the information on the availability of its funding and the policy shift to a wider audience.

One non-farming organisation, which had found the information during a 'web trawl' for funding opportunities also pointed out that organisations who had identified this funding source would be very careful *not* to spread the word in order to limit the competition for resources.

Moreover, the terminology of the calls was not such as to suggest openness to projects targeting the general public. The 2005 call (for example) stated that "preference will be given to projects centred on specific examples in particular sectors which illustrate the practical aspects of implementing the objectives."

Interviewees said they would welcome it if the Commission were to organise exchange of experience on projects.

No one among those interviewed considered that the measures had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- individual indirect actions may have been effective in reaching small number of the general public⁵² but indirect actions were not an overall an effective means of reaching the general public;
- effectiveness could be improved with more publicity for the availability of this funding for projects targeting the general public;
- effectiveness could be improved with a broader geographic spread of projects and exchange or compilation of best practice.

⁵² The interviews included some project promoters

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clearer strategy on why and how it can reach the general public through indirect actions given the limited resources available to reach such a wide audience, and consider which are its priority target groups;
- if it decides that the general public are a priority, consider a mechanism which would allow it to ensure a better balance in applications between projects which will reach the farming/rural world and the general public.

6.1.4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that:

- individual activities were effective, for example a fold-out brochure and the folder, and presence at Fairs when it was well co-ordinated with the activities of the Commissioner, the Fair organisers, the member states and/or was organised in some other way, such a way as to draw particular attention to the stand, e.g. food or drink tasting, and some individual direct actions.
- the activity for which Regulation 814/2000 provides the legal basis was not, however, effective overall in reaching the general public (see table 8);
- there remains an unfulfilled need for information for the general public. There is a demand for information on food safety, food quality and environmental issues.

Table 8 - Effectiveness of categories of activity (general public)

	POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE CAP IN GENERAL, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE REFORMS OF THE CAP		ACTIONS TAKEN TO ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, FOOD SAFETY, THE HIGH QUALITY OF LEVEL OF EU FOOD AND PRESERVATION OF THE RURAL LIFESTYLE		THE RATIONALE FOR THE CAP AND ITS BUDGET		THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE TO SOCIETY AND THE SERVICES THE FARMING COMMUNITY PROVIDES		DG AGRI ALSO PLAYED A ROLE IN THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE CAP AND SUPPORTED OTHER ACTORS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE CAP WHO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE CAP.	
	Info available for public	Effective	Info available for public	Effective	Info available for public	Effective	Info available for public	Effective	DG AGRI played a role	Effective
Conferences/seminars	Indirectly	No	Indirectly	No	Indirectly	No	Indirectly	No	Indirectly	No
Fairs	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Limited
Publications	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially	Limited	Limited
Website	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	N.A.	N.A.
Visits	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Limited	No
Indirect actions	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes	Limited

Note: This table indicates effectiveness by categories of activity as a whole in relation to the general public as a whole. Individual activities were often effective; as discussed in the text; this was particularly true of some publications and some indirect actions.

- one of the key reasons for the failure to be effective was that the target audience was too broad for the resources available and this was not properly addressed. The total budget for the period 2000-2005 under Regulation 814/2000 was €37m, of which by far the largest part was in fact spent on activities which reached the rural/farming community.

A campaign to reach every member of the general public, including via stakeholders, requires far more resources. For example, the Commission spent €185.3m on direct and indirect actions in the EU-15 to support the introduction of the euro between 1996 and 2001 and this expenditure was flanked by more than €200m of expenditure from their own budgets by member states in partnership with the Commission, and additional funds from central government plus expenditure from regional and local authorities, business and finance, civil society and the European Central Bank.

Commission and Member State partnership expenditure in 2001 alone, the key year in terms of the general public, when it was crucial to get across a few key messages about the cash changeover, was nearly €90m.

With such a limited budget as DG AGRI had, even allowing for the flanking activities of DG AGRI from budgets other than Regulation 814/1000 and the activities of the Spokesman's Group, it could not hope to be effective in increasing the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAP among the general public at large.

The year-to-year approach for indirect actions also made it difficult for continuity in information campaigns, when three years is the standard period for maximising a communication campaign.

DG AGRI's information effort would have been more effective even if implementation had been more effective, i.e. if more steps measures had been taken to measure, understand and meet demand.

6.1.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clearer strategy on reaching the general public as a primary target, either direct or via relevant stakeholders, based on a clear understanding of what is feasible, with:
 - clearly defined priority target groups,
 - a limited number of messages based on a clear understanding of the topics of most interest to the general public,
 - use of the tools best suited to each audience,
 - continuity in its messages,
 - attention to local relevance, and
 - more attention to implementation, notably distribution and availability in all EU languages.

6.2. Theme B: Effectiveness in Targeting Rural Area Stakeholders

6.2.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION

Effectiveness relates to the extent that the communication policy reached its intended objectives. In this instance and in line with the Objective Trees underlying our evaluation, this relates to the effectiveness in:

- explaining to stakeholders why the CAP needs to be substantially reformed;
- providing information/tools appropriate to the need for structured change management to overcome conservatism;
- explaining all relevant elements of the policy;
- providing simple and exhaustive information about the content of the policy.

The discussion under this Theme relates to effectiveness in reaching stakeholders in rural areas, and effectiveness in the pass-through of information to the people these stakeholders reach.

Council Regulation 814/2000, in its recital 8, states that "organisations representing those active in farming and in rural areas, particularly farmers' organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations play a vital role in informing their members about the Common Agricultural Policy and relaying to the Commission the opinions of the parties concerned in general and farmers in particular."

Consequently, we look here both at the effectiveness in reaching the stakeholders, but also their members. We looked at this from the point of view of information measures for which Regulation 814/2000 is the legal basis. Rural area stakeholders do clearly have other sources of information within the Commission, including from direct contact with officials in DG AGRI, in other DG's, with the Spokesman's Group and from attendance at working groups and participation in advisory bodies.

When assessing the effectiveness of the information measures in relaying Commission information, we were looking in particular for whether stakeholder organisations:

- received information relevant to them and their members;
- found the information useful for dissemination purposes;
- relayed the information to their members via their own tools or directly (e.g. distribution of publications).

6.2.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The judgement criteria and the sources used in evaluating the effectiveness of the policy included those in the table below which were applied as appropriate to the different categories of measure:

Table 9 – Theme B - Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Sources of information
<p>Perception of relevance to their members and quality of the information received by the organisations.</p> <p>Perception of value added to their members of the information received by the organisations.</p>	<p>Commission project files</p> <p>Description of the direct measures</p> <p>Final reports and evaluations of the direct measures (where available)</p> <p>Successful indirect action applications</p> <p>Media plans, ex-ante assessments, final reports and ex-post evaluations of the indirect action (where available)</p> <p>Questionnaires completed/other feedback provided by the recipients of the information (conference participants, recipients of information documents, website users etc.) – direct and indirect actions</p> <p>Indicators of distribution/use of material - direct and indirect actions</p> <p>Interviews with Commission officials and stakeholders and Member State officials</p>

6.2.3. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.3.1. DIRECT ACTIONS

Conferences/seminars

Background

The conferences specifically covered by the evaluation were in Prague, Riga and Sofia (enlargement), Salzburg (rural development), Brussels (Leader observatory). (For more detail on background, see Theme A). Their primary target was stakeholders in the rural/farming community, and that community itself.⁵³

Strategic approach

As explained under Theme A, the purpose of the Salzburg conference was to dialogue with and build consensus in the rural/farming stakeholder world around the policy reforms, including the increased emphasis on rural development. The Prague, Riga and Sofia Conferences were designed to provide information on the impact of enlargement on agriculture in the new Member States ahead of their accession.

The Salzburg conference brought together over one thousand of the major players in rural development within the EU. Participants included representatives of the EU-15 Member States and Accession countries, of other European institutions, national and regional programme management authorities, Leader groups, a wide range of sectoral associations and NGO's, international organisations, academics and experts.

The range of participants present was similar at the Prague, Riga and Sofia Conferences.

Specialist media were also present at both Conferences.

Implementation

In order to disseminate information on conferences as widely as possible, specific website pages were generally developed on the DG AGRI site, but no data was collected on hits on these pages. Press releases were also issued. Little information was collected, however, at the time of Conferences to enable effectiveness to be quantified. It was assumed that participants, including the media present, would act as multipliers. However, the communication staff of farming organisations were underrepresented, and no steps were taken to ensure that key rural and farming organisations systematically disseminated the information from the conferences.

The only information on press coverage is Spanish coverage of the Salzburg Conference. Evaluation forms were distributed only in Sofia. The response was positive, but the response rate was less than

⁵³ We are aware that DG AGRI reaches stakeholders of all sorts as a result of invitations which its officials accept to speak at conferences. However, that is only relevant to this evaluation where they are part of the Green Team.

20%. Proceedings of the Salzburg conference were printed in English, French and German, but no information is available on targeted dissemination (for further detail see under Theme G).

Findings

The Conferences were timely and stakeholders interviewed in the Member States perceived that these Conferences were generally successful in raising awareness, providing information, providing opportunities for dialogue, and in the case of Salzburg of achieving the policy objective of DG AGRI of building consensus around the reforms.

Interviewees did not consider that information had been systematically disseminated to the farming and rural community by the organisations present as a result of these Conferences. We emphasise this because it is a general finding from our perceptions analysis that these organisations are the primary channel through which the rural and farming community obtain their information on policy issues.

No one considered that the measures had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that the conferences were:

- effective in that they were timely;
- effective in reaching key rural and farming organisations;
- could have been more effective in relaying information to members of farming organisations had more emphasis been placed on this aspect, e.g. by paying more attention to the importance of participation of representatives of the publications put out by these organisations and following-up on coverage.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- have an overall written policy on when conferences can be effective in reaching the rural/farming community, and clear specific and operational objectives for individual conferences;
- have operational objectives and messages for individual conferences (which can be used for ex-post measurement of effectiveness).

Fairs

Background

Participation in agricultural Fairs is regarded as a core activity for DG AGRI. It participates systematically in International Green Week in Berlin, the Salon International de l'Agriculture and the Verona Fair, and as opportunities arise in Fairs in other Member States (for more detail see Theme A).

Strategic approach

Two of the overarching objectives are the same for the rural/farming community as for the general public, i.e. to provide:

- visibility, in order to demonstrate that the Commission is an important part of the agricultural world – it proposes and implements policy;
- feedback: a chance for Commission officials to gain first-hand experience of the day-to-day interests and concerns of the general public.

In addition, participation at Fairs is seen as important for:

- accessibility: a chance for farmers and those involved in the sector to meet Commission officials.

Implementation

As stated in the section on monitoring, little information was collected on number of visitors, dissemination effects and or satisfaction of the visitors, particularly during the first years of the evaluation period. DG AGRI did not set out in writing in advance how it could maximise its visibility, but (as indicated in greater detail under Theme A), the Commission has been more systematic since 2004 in its preparation, co-ordination with other players, and in recording the subjects of interest of visitors to the stand. The additional thought which has been given in the last couple of years as to whether the design of the stand is fit for purpose has made the stand more effective.

More attention has been paid, in addition, to organising events on and near the stand which will be of interest to the rural/farming community, and which will give farmers and their representatives an opportunity to learn and ask questions first hand about policy development. Oral feedback has been positive, but is not systematically measured. Internal de-briefing sessions organised during the second half of the period are an opportunity for assessing this feedback, both in terms of types of issue raised and publications, or other items, which are of interest.

Findings

Interviewees in the Member States perceived a clear improvement in the professionalism of DG AGRI's approach to Fairs from 2004 onwards. Doubts were expressed about the effectiveness of participation in Green Week.

Some interviewees believed that there has nevertheless not been sufficient expertise on the stand to meet the needs of the rural/farming community, and that the Commission pays too much attention to the general public at the expense of the rural/farming community (see also under Theme A). Moreover, there is little continuity in Fair participation, except at International Green Week, the SIAL in Paris and Verona.

No one considered that the measures had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- in the period under review, considerable improvements were made towards the latter part of the period (and continue to be made) to make the Commission's participation more professional, and therefore more effective. However, clear policy objectives, criteria for selection of Fairs to attend and when to target the rural/farming community, and operational objectives and messages for individual Fairs have yet to be developed;
- DG AGRI was effective in reaching the rural/farming community at Fairs, particularly from 2004 onwards;
- effectiveness was a function of prior co-ordination with the organisers, suitable stand design, and the availability of events likely to be of interest to the farming/rural community;
- effectiveness could be improved if:
 - there were more specialist expertise on the stand for the requirements of the farming/rural community;
 - DG AGRI had the resources to be present on a consistent basis at major agricultural Fairs in all Member States;
- effectiveness in terms of reaching the rural/farming community at individual events was high – particularly in the latter part of the period under evaluation, but was fragmented when looked at in terms of effectiveness over the EU as a whole.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- have an overall written policy on when to participate in Fairs, including considering whether outreach should be concentrated on the farming/rural community;
- have as an overall objective attendance at agricultural Fairs in each member state at least once ever two years;
- have operational objectives for each Fair;
- continue along the current path of continuous process improvement in terms of co-ordination with other interested parties present at the Fair and the Fair organisers.

Publications

Background

DG AGRI produces a range of one-off and regular publications within the legal framework of Regulation 814/200. The regular publications include the newsletters and Fact Sheets on topics selected for more detailed analysis. The one-off publications include the proceedings of conferences. Publications are distributed to a mailing list, during visits to visitors to the Commission and on the Commission stand at Fairs (for more details see Theme A).

Strategic approach

As noted under Theme A, the decision on whether to produce a publication is based on what is topical (or about to be topical), consultation within the DG, analysis of information gaps on the basis of requests received for information and stock levels of existing publications.

Implementation

As noted under Theme A, information on dissemination of publications is available only in very general terms. There is no information on reader impact, as there have been no reader surveys.

Findings

Leaflets, brochures and the paper-based newsletter are known by many stakeholder organisations according to our perceptions analysis. The Fact Sheets are the best known. However, our qualitative assessment suggests that awareness of these tools is low in some new Member States, as a result of distribution problems.

Our interviews uncovered widespread distribution problems which are dealt with further in the section on monitoring. On a significant number of occasions interviewees commented that their organisation became aware of publications only when visiting Brussels for a meeting, or because the publications was brought to them by the organisation's representative in Brussels.

These documents are largely perceived as background information, relevant for issues such as providing information to new staff and as reference documents, but are not actually used as tools. They are often seen as falling between two stools: they are not detailed or timely enough for specialist use – and the web now provides an alternative source of specialist information. On the other hand, they are too detailed for the organisations' members.

Leaflets and brochures are generally not passed on to members of stakeholder organisations. The content is perceived as too technical and too remote from their members' interests and knowledge. In addition, many interviewees felt that the information provided in written format, particularly in the paper-based newsletter, is often no longer news by the time it is received. Larger rural area stakeholders use external commercial publications as their source of up-to-date news, notably Agra Facts and Agra Europe.

The failure to produce material in a timely fashion (or at all) in the languages of many member states was also highlighted by many interviewees, who stressed that this is not just important for their members, but for the stakeholders themselves, whose fluency in English, French or German cannot be assumed, either individual or at stakeholder organisation level. The same is true of Member State officials, at both central and decentralised level. Where material is available in other languages, interviewees report problems with the quality of the translation, particularly into the languages of the new Member States.

A significant number of interviewees believe that the publications need to be better targeted to the local environment.

No one among those interviewed considered that the publications as such had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- publications which were intended for the rural/farming community were broadly effective in conveying the Commission's messages to the rural/farming community at stakeholder organisation level, with the proviso that the publications were regarded as reference documents rather than tools containing material that stakeholders in the rural/farming community could use in providing information to their constituents;
- effectiveness would be improved:
 - if distribution problems, problems with timeliness in the absolute, or delays in (or absence) of translation into many languages were addressed;
 - the need both for more technical material for stakeholders and basic information at grass-roots level were met.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- improve its understanding of what the farming/rural community expects in terms of printed information at stakeholder level and what would be useful for its members;
- set specific and operational objectives for reaching the farming/rural community by publication, by target group (stakeholder organisations and farmers) by distribution channel and by language.

Website

Background

The website has similar characteristics to publications. It mainly contains material which has been written with a specialist audience in mind. In addition to the standard features (see Theme A), which are nevertheless considered to be accessible to all interested readers, it is possible via the website to receive an electronic newsletter, which has a circulation list of 10,000 and targets a specialised readership. It contains a compilation of short versions of press releases from the Spokesman's group with links to the full release. The newsletter also has links to the Commissioner's speakers, information on what is new on the website, to calls for tender, the registration of product names under the Geographical Indication Scheme, and links to legislation.

Strategic approach

DG AGRI regards the website as an increasingly important tool for reaching many audiences cost-effectively.

In technical terms, the website is managed centrally by the Information Unit of DG AGRI, but responsibility for some elements of content is decentralised and the extent to which there is a centralised communication concept is limited.

Implementation

As indicated under Theme A, the webmaster sits within the unit within DG AGRI which specialises in information, but as described under Theme A, the webmaster has no powers to define content, impose homogeneity or style, or style appropriate to the audience, and there is no systematic approach to making sure the information is up-to-date. The website is also to all and intents and purposes only in the languages of the EU-15, and in practice is largely in English, French and German (see Theme A). There is also no analysis of data which could provide information on which items are of interest.

Findings

As indicated under Theme A, regular users among our interviewees generally found the site easy to find their way around, but that irregular users found the site difficult to navigate. However, this was not necessarily the case of smaller organisations (farming or otherwise), who are irregular users, and a significant number of interviewees felt it was difficult to find what was new on the site, and criticised the information for not being timely. Many prefer to use the website of COPA-COGECA as being more user-friendly and more up-to-date. In some cases, they use the website of their own Ministry of Agriculture.

The website was criticised for not containing enough information about planned proposals (which we accept is probably an unrealistic expectation, but it was a frequently expressed wish) or about forthcoming events.

There was consensus that the website is valuable as a source of legislation, press releases and the Commissioner's speeches. The DG AGRI electronic newsletter was relatively well known and relatively well used.

The website is felt to be best suited to a specialist audience and the material can only be used in adapted form for non-specialists, even in the farming/rural world. Many stakeholders would welcome a section on the website specifically targeting farmers, as Internet usage is increasing – albeit slowly in some rural areas.

Interviewees for who are not mother-tongue speakers of English, French and German were critical of the absence of material in their own language.

No one among those interviewed considered that the website had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- the website is effective in reaching the rural/farming community at stakeholder level, which finds it particularly useful for legislation, the Commissioner's speeches, press releases and the electronic newsletter;
- the effectiveness could be improved if there were:
 - a more strategic vision on the communication positioning of the website within DG AGRI;
 - a section targeting farmers directly;

- separate, and comprehensive, language sections for all EU languages;
- consistent updating of material on the site.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a more centralised management approach for the website with a clearer view on the communication positioning of the site and the suitability and readability of content for both stakeholder organisations and other stakeholders;
- have an overall written strategy on when and how the website should address different targets, and include in this process consideration of whether the site should be layered with sections accessible from the home page for distinct target audiences;
- address as a matter of urgency the dearth of material in the languages of the countries which joined the EU in May 2004 and will join the EU on January 1, 2007.

Visits

Background

DG AGRI welcomes groups from inside and outside the EU and supplies speakers for these visits. Much of the demand comes via DG EAC. The responsibility for organisation falls on the information unit. Two members of the unit's staff are permanently employed for this facility and other speakers from elsewhere in the DG are brought in as required in order to meet a group's special interest.

Strategic approach

Visits are seen as a valuable two-way street. They are a means of informing interested groups, but also of obtaining direct contact with the rural/farming community.

Implementation

The organisation of visits policy is the same as for the general public (see Theme A).

The statistics made available to us on visits for 2002-2005 do not make it possible to be conclusive about the nature of every visiting group, but most groups are of members of the farming/rural community or their stakeholders. The groups generally consist of 20-40 people. However, the visits category also includes visits by a single person, and groups may be as large as 70+. There are some 10-20 visits a month, sometimes more, including talks which members of the DG AGRI Information unit designated full-time to this responsibility give in the Member States.

Although there are variations from year to year, there is a clear predominance of groups from or in France, followed by the UK (though there was less interest from the UK in 2005), and Sweden (particularly in 2002/2003). There are only one or two groups a year from most other countries. There were no groups from Greece at all until 2005.

Although DG AGRI is of the view that there is widespread knowledge of the availability of speakers for visiting groups, this uneven spread suggests an uneven spread of knowledge and a strong word-of-mouth effect.

Officials say they receive positive feedback from visiting groups, but this is based solely on oral comments.

Findings

Interviewees who had participated in a visit to the Commission expressed satisfaction at the opportunity and the content, but many national farming organisations said they would be interested by such an opportunity, but had not been aware of it.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- visits were effective in reaching specific groups, but that they were not effective in reaching the rural/farming community as a whole.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a strategy in terms of visits by the farming/rural community which ensures that there is the widest possible dissemination of information about the availability of speakers in and outside Brussels, and at the same time develop criteria for targeting, since wider dissemination of information about this activity is likely to lead to excess demand;
- be systematically proactive in obtaining advance information about groups in order to ensure that content is appropriate for the audience;
- ensure groups are addressed in their mother tongue or that simultaneous interpretation is available;
- base development of its strategy on systematic collection of feedback.

Green Team

Background

The Green Team (GT) is a team of senior DG AGRI officials (around 100 people), who are available to accept speaking agreements in Member States who ask for native language speakers and/or particular expertise to talk about the CAP or any aspects of it. Demand often peaks around important events such as the reforms, and important and strategic or political conferences.

The Team receives coordinator support supplied by the DG AGRI information unit, specific training (e.g. media training) and there is an intranet for the exchange of information and presentations. Green

Team members receive a common PowerPoint template to use and information on policy content, messages suitable for external use, the information tools available on a given subject and speeches given by others. An attempt is made to select for the Green Team officials who are good communicators.

Strategic approach

The purpose of the Green Team is to ensure requests are met adequately, notably requests to speak that the Commissioner, in particular, and the most senior officials receive, and at times of major reforms to have a team of 'ambassadors' for the policy changes.

Implementation

Only some key members were continuing to play their ambassador role and feed the intranet with presentations at the time we conducted the interviews, though we note that the concept has been taken up by other DG's as best practice.

Provision of Green Team members for speaking engagements is mainly demand-driven.

The Team members are issued with a questionnaire for them to fill in with details of their speaking engagement as an internal record of impact. This is discussed further in the section on monitoring.

Findings

Interviews with officials dealing with or part of the Green Team indicate that they feel it is a powerful tool, but some members of the Team feel that there is a lack of continuity over time and that more could be done to keep them continuously in touch with each other and help keep their understanding of national contexts up-to-date.

The perception of some of those to whom we have spoken (which includes some outside the Commission who are familiar with it) is that top management currently attaches less importance to this tool, and is under-utilising a potentially valuable instrument.

Interviewees who were not familiar with the Green Team perceived that it was a good concept and one about which they would want to know more.

No one perceived any negative effects of the Green Team.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- The Green Team has been effective and is underutilised as a tool for disseminating information on policy.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- take a more continuous approach to using the Green Team.

6.2.3.2. INDIRECT ACTIONS

Background

Indirect actions are activities co-financed by the Commission and implemented by stakeholders of various types (see also Chapter 3 and Theme A).

Strategic approach

The overriding objectives of Regulation 814/2000 applied, but each call for proposal contained objectives for the year in question (see also Theme A).

Implementation

As indicated in Chapter 3, 156 actions and 238 activities were implemented over the period under review. The representative sample which we looked at more closely covered 66 actions and 97 activities. Of these, the three-quarters had the farming community as their primary target. A number of the projects targeting the rural community and several target groups included the farming community among their targets. Pan-European farming organisations, and their member organisations, were among the primary beneficiaries.

Table 10 - Target audience for information measures by primary target group

Target group	No. of measures	%
Farming community (farmers associations, farmers, farm advisors and farm students)	72	74.2
Several target groups	8	8.2
School children/students	3	3.1
General public	4	4.1
Rural community in general	4	4.1
Other	6	6.2
Total	97	100.0

Note: based on sample

Figure 15 - Target audience for information measures by primary target

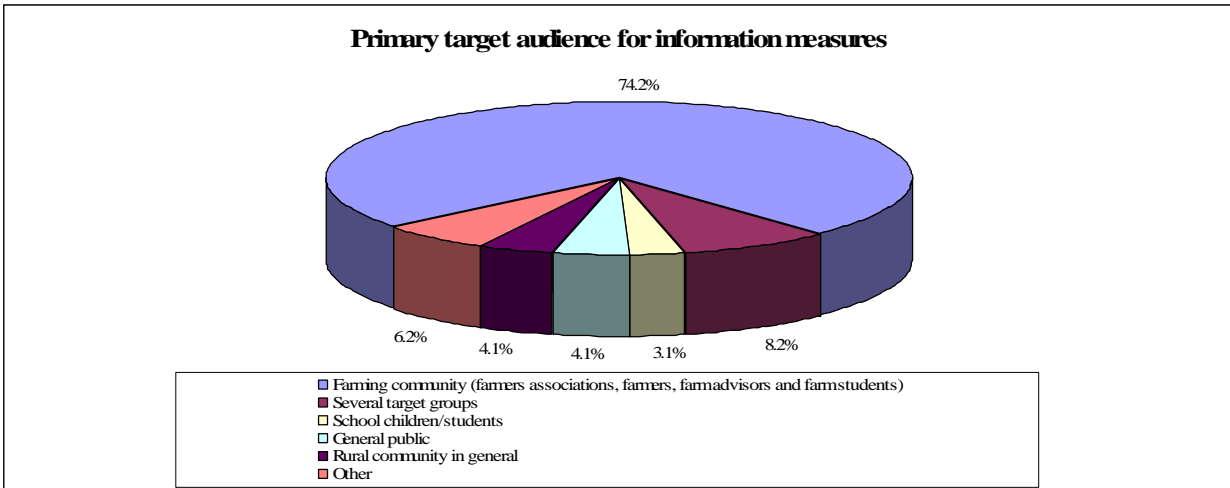


Table 11 – Type of project promoter per application

Type of project promoter	No. of work programmes/specific information measures funded	Number of information measures funded	(%)
Farmers' Organisations	33	57	62
Agriculture related other (school, Industry)	5	6	7
Local or regional public authority	7	7	8
Environmental NGO/consumer association	3	6	7
Rural Development Association	6	6	7
Media & journalists	2	4	4
University	3	3	3
Regional development agency	2	2	2
Information centre/organ	1	1	1
Other	4	5	5
Total	66	97	100

Note: based on sample

Applicants from certain countries were consistently successful in obtaining funding, and this reflected the pattern of applications. As can be seen from the table below, Italy and Spain together accounted for 36.5% of the funding and 41% of the measures, but they account for only 29% of EU-15 farmers. France, which has 22% of the farmers in the EU-15, accounted for only 6% of the funding and 10% of the projects. Moreover, not only was there a heavy concentration on southern Europe, but within these countries, there are often distinct clusters. This is particularly marked in Spain (a Basque/Galicia cluster), and in Italy (a central Italian cluster), though with outliers in both cases. Conferences and seminars were the most frequent activity, accounting for three-quarters of expenditure.

Table 12- Distribution of funding of indirect actions by Member State

Countries/nationalities	Measures	Budget envisaged (€)	Budget envisaged (%)
Belgium	2	142,286	2.2
Denmark	3	131,040	2.0
European	24	2,226,367	33.7
France	10	393,210	6.0
Germany	9	375,856	5.7
Greece	2	271,191	4.1
Hungary	1	81,163	1.2
International	1	295,840	4.5
Italy	19	1,196,260	18.1
Portugal	4	151,067	2.3
Spain	21	1,217,143	18.4
UK	1	119,196	1.8
Total	97	6,600,619	100.0

Note: based on sample

Table 13 - Breakdown of activities targeting farmers and farming related groups

Type of activity	Number of measures	%	Total cost envisaged (€)	%
Conferences/seminars	51	71	3,780,116	76
Information visits	8	11	405,321	8
Publications	10	14	558,900	11
Website	2	3	125,800	3
Other	1	1	99,458	2
Total	72	100	4,969,595	100

Note: based on sample

Findings

From our interviews, it is clear that pan-European farming organisations are very familiar with the opportunities under Regulation 814/2000. However, knowledge at member state level is much more fragmented, and virtually non-existent in the new Member States. Some pan-European organisations involve their member organisations in their applications and make them aware of calls for tenders, but others do not. Their member organisations – where they were aware of the Regulation – in many cases said that they relied on their Brussels office rather than the umbrella organisation to alert them to this type of opportunity.

The view was expressed to us by officials that the geographic spread reflects the level of interest in this funding. This is not consistent with the findings of our interview process, where we encountered organisations from old and new Member States who were unaware of the possibility of obtaining this funding and were actively interested.

As discussed further in the section on monitoring, there was widespread criticism of the administrative requirements on the part of organisations who have received funding, particularly smaller, national organisations, the norm for co-financing of 50% and the unpredictability of the timing of calls and decisions.

Awareness of projects, except COPA-Cogeca Conferences, was low. These last were seen as useful discussion fora, though the link with funding under Regulation 814/2000 was not necessarily made. Very few interviewees were aware of any projects (other than their own in cases where they had received funding.) They sometimes had a superficial knowledge of others' project, or guessed that a certain project had been financed under the Regulation, but did not have a view on the effectiveness of others' projects.

Several interviewees said they would welcome more exchange of information and best practice with other promoters.

No one among those interviewed considered that the measures had had an adverse effect.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- Individual indirect actions may have been effective, but indirect actions as a category of information activity were not effective;
- Effectiveness could be improved:
 - by publicising the availability of this funding more widely;
 - a mechanism could be found to ensure that funding is equitably distributed, but nevertheless more evenly distributed across the EU;
 - disseminating the results of projects more widely and organised exchange of experience and best practice.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clearer strategy on why and how it can reach the rural/farming community across the EU-25 through indirect actions, define priority needs and target groups;
- investigate whether different levels of need are the sole reason why project applications (and therefore successful applications) are geographically clustered.

6.2.4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that:

- activities were sometimes individually effective. For example, much of the website material is useful for the farming/rural community, the Conferences, the presence of DG AGRI of Fairs is increasingly effective, the activity of the visits unit and some direct actions (notably pan-European conferences) are effective at stakeholder organisation level, but in some cases fail to reach many stakeholders when the whole of the EU is taken into consideration;
- the activities carried out directly by DG AGRI were overall relatively effective overall in reaching the farming community at stakeholder organisation level (see table 14), but they were of only limited effectiveness in reaching rural area stakeholders in the wider sense of the word, including environmental and consumer organisations with an interest (or potential interest) in the CAP and/or rural development;
- the potential effectiveness of the co-financed activities was not optimised because they were geographically clusters, there was no dissemination of best-worst practice, and little attention was paid to the broader rural community
- There remains a large, unfulfilled need for information for rural area stakeholders,
 - on the one hand because there is a need for information containing more technical detail, and
 - on the other because farmers continue in many cases not to be well informed about or convinced of the rationale for reforms and continue to suffer from reform fatigue.
- There is a need for information which is timely, in all languages of the EU and more suitable for direct use with farmers.

Table 14 - Effectiveness by categories of activity

	EXPLAINING TO FARMERS (AND STAKEHOLDERS) WHY THE CAP NEEDS TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY REFORMED		PROVIDING INFORMATION/TOOLS APPROPRIATE TO THE NEED FOR STRUCTURED CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO OVERCOME CONSERVATISM		EXPLAINING ALL RELEVANT ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY		PROVISION OF SIMPLE AND EXHAUSTIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE POLICY	
	Info available for rural/farming stakeholder organisations	Effective	Info available for rural/farming stakeholders	Effective	Info available for rural/farming stakeholders	Effective	Info available for rural/farming stakeholders	Effective
Conferences/seminars	Yes	To some extent	Yes	To some extent	Yes	To some extent	Yes	To some extent
Fairs	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially
Publications	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially
Website	Yes	Largely	Yes	Largely	Yes	Largely	Yes	Largely
Visits	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes	Partially
Indirect actions	Yes	To a limited extent	Yes	To a limited extent	Yes	To a limited extent	Yes	To a limited extent

Note: This table indicates effectiveness by categories of activity as a whole in relation to the farming/rural stakeholders as a whole. Individual activities were often effective; as discussed in the text; this was particularly true of conferences, some publications and some indirect actions.

6.2.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clear strategy on reaching farming/rural stakeholders and individual members of the farming/rural community which distinguishes clearly between them as target groups, and is based on a deeper understanding of the needs of these groups;
- create a better balance between activities targeting the farming community and those targeting the rural community in the broadest sense of the word in order to reflect better the importance of rural development in the European agricultural model;
- develop a set of clear and simple messages for use with and dissemination by the farming/rural community to improve knowledge and understanding of reform processes.
- attach greater priority to implementation, notably distribution and availability in all EU-25 languages.

6.3. Theme C: Effectiveness in improving the implementation and management of the CAP

6.3.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION

Effectiveness relates to the extent that the communication policy reached its intended objectives. Successful implementation of the CAP implies that farmers and stakeholder organisations perceive that changes have a neutral or positive effect on them and that they understand the new opportunities of a market orientation and rural development.

This Theme examines the effectiveness of:

- communication of measures incorporating structural feedback to the Commission since this is a means for the Commission of improving its implementation and management of the CAP;
- internal communications measures which serve the same objective.

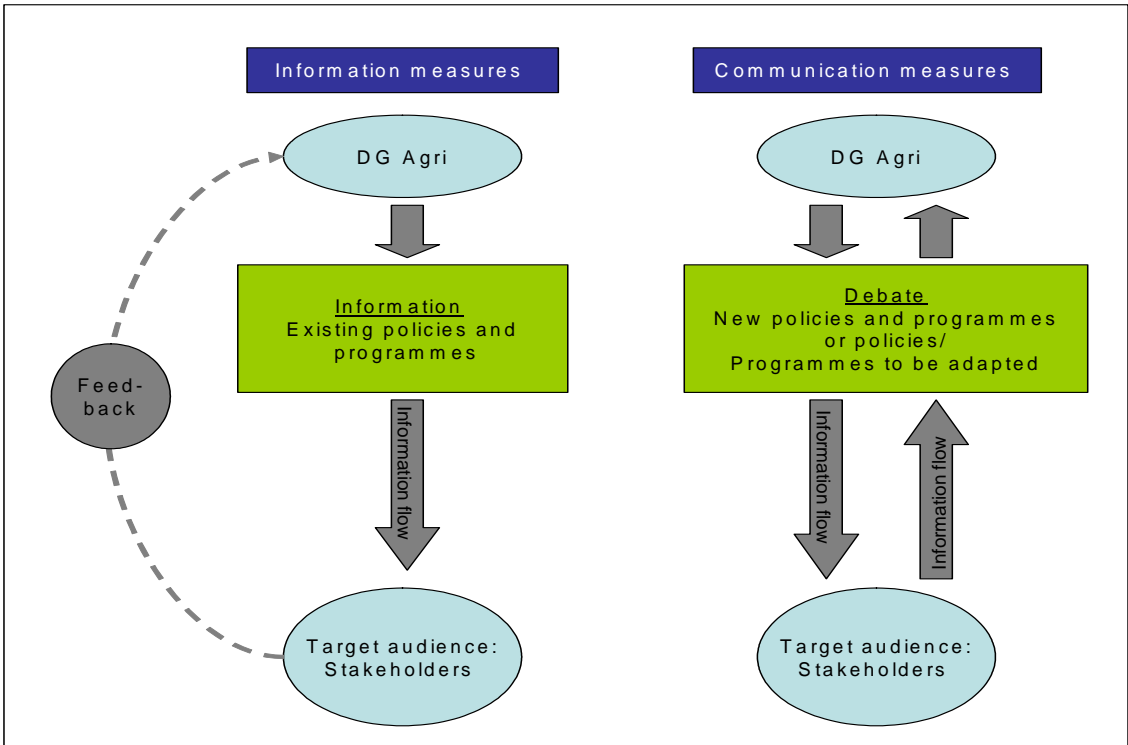
When assessing the extent to which the measures were effective in passing information from rural stakeholders to the Commission, it is important to make a conceptual distinction between:

- communication for debate, where feedback is specifically sought;
- information on the current policy, where feedback is generally only sought on the impact of the specific measure (implementation issues, best practice etc.) .

Each of these may imply discussions between the Commission and stakeholders. There is a difference, however, in the extent to which these actions aim at passing on to the Commission the opinion of the stakeholders, both in their timing in the policy cycles, and in where they originate.

The feedback in both cases is a bottom-up process, but in one case, it is integral to the process with the goal of providing a continuous loop; in the other, it is more specific and the impact on the policy cycle is less immediate. This is illustrated in the Figure below.

Figure 16 Flow of feedback within information and communication measures



We recognise, of course, that the borderlines are blurred, and that many information activities fed into the policymaking cycle, whatever the primary function. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some broad distinctions.

When assessing this aspect of the information measures during the interviews, we limited ourselves to information activities for which the legal basis is Regulation 814/2000, although in practice - and this is clear from the interviews - stakeholder organisations feed back information to the Commission in many ways, such as direct contact with officials, and participation in committees and advisory groups.

6.3.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The judgement criteria and the sources used in evaluating the effectiveness of the policy included those in the table below which were applied as appropriate to the different categories of measure:

Table 15 – Theme C – Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Sources of information
<p>Evidence from feedback/opinion measurement provided to the Commission.</p> <p>Evidence of an informal flow of information between the organisations described recital 8 of the Regulation and the European Commission.</p> <p>Implementation of feedback processes for the direct actions and evidence of the use of such processes.</p> <p>Existence of a process/procedure within the European Commission to take advantage of such feedback.</p> <p>Evidence of reference to the information collected through the feedback process (indirect and direct actions) in the selection of subsequent activities and/or drafting of calls for proposal.</p> <p>Evidence of any action taken by the European Commission, based on the information received.</p>	<p>Commission project files</p> <p>Description of the direct measures</p> <p>Final reports and evaluations of the direct measures (where available)</p> <p>Successful indirect action applications</p> <p>Media plans, ex-ante assessments, final reports and ex-post evaluations of the indirect action (where available)</p> <p>Questionnaires completed/other feedback provided by the recipients of the information (conference participants, recipients of information documents, website users etc.) – direct and indirect actions</p> <p>Indicators of distribution/use of material - direct and indirect actions</p> <p>Interviews with Commission officials, officials and with stakeholder organisations</p> <p>Interviews with managers of the information activities</p> <p>Media coverage/ press clippings – specialised farming magazines (where available)</p>

6.3.3. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.3.1. DIRECT AND INDIRECT ACTIONS

Background

Most information measures, both direct and indirect, were aimed at informing stakeholders of policy developments after the event. They were not designed to collect feedback from stakeholders during the policy formulation process. We include in this the Green Team (see Theme B) even though Green Team speakers may also cover forthcoming developments.

In the 2000-2005 period, only a few information measures implemented and financed under Regulation 814/2000 fell into the category where input was specifically sought.

Policy approach

The perception among senior Commission officials was that Regulation 814/2000 covered information policy in the conventional sense (of 'informing') and not of stimulating debate between the Commission and stakeholders regarding development and improvement of policies. It was considered that the advisory groups were the proper forum for such discussion.

Implementation

Within our sample, the measures designed to stimulate debate were essentially the conferences. The Salzburg Conference on rural development in particular was designed to do this (for further detail, see Theme A).

Consultations are organised via the website. These are initiated and managed by sector units and/or by the Cabinet, but are not part of an overall approach.

Some of the Green Team use their speaking engagements as an informal opportunity to collect feedback which will help implementation and management of the CAP, but there is no formal process.

There are seven indirect actions in our sample, where there is a specific record of feedback. However, there was no obligation to record this since it was not a specific requirement for indirect actions. We are aware from our interviews that other project organisers did pass information on the result of their activities to the Commission. Moreover, some conferences organised by stakeholders did have as their overall objective identification of a policy line for future lobbying work or reflect with Commission officials present on the potential impacts of a proposed policy or policy change, but this was essentially an informal process.

As DG AGRI is structured at present, any feedback is held in the Information Unit. It does not reach the policy units in any systematic fashion. The Green Team is the only exception in that the information provided in the questionnaires in which they report on their presentation goes to the Director-General.

As indicated in the section on monitoring, there is considerable scope for optimising the collection and analysis of feedback.

Findings

Many interviewees felt they have adequate channels for making their views felt via contacts with officials directly responsible for implementation and management of policy through advisory groups and direct contact with officials. Where they are unhappy with the feedback mechanism, this is directed at DG AGRI as a whole, not at the information measures.

In the particular instance of the Salzburg Conference where DG AGRI placed particular emphasis on dialogue, there was a consensus that this had been achieved.

In the case of indirect measures, as noted in Themes A and B, there is a demand for more opportunities to feed back and exchange information on results. The final project reports, or the associated ex-post evaluations, do not currently serve this purpose and dissemination of conclusions of indirect actions is not systematic.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- the use of direct activities to collect feedback was unusual, but where this happened, as in the case of conferences, notably the Salzburg Conference, the mechanism was effective;
- a few indirect actions individually provided feedback on how policy is viewed, but the policy as a whole was not effective in obtaining feedback from stakeholders.

Recommendations

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- define more specifically when and whether it wishes to use information measures as a source of feedback, given that this is a requirement of Regulation 814/2000, and
- where it wishes to use information measures as a source of feedback, that it have clear operational objectives for collection and dissemination to the appropriate policymakers.

6.3.3.2. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Background

There are two main information tools for internal communication: the *inside Agri* newsletter (print format) and the *Dimitra* intranet. Both are produced from within the Information Unit. DG AGRI also organises lunchtime debates on specific policy areas organised by the personnel department. The information unit sometimes provides input for these.

Policy approach

Internal communication activities aim at keeping EC officials informed of new developments and ensuring that they have the knowledge needed for their day-to-day work and have a general knowledge of all key issues in the interests of building a corporate spirit of cohesiveness, and give them the context for their daily implementation and management tasks. It also provides them with context if they are called upon to provide stakeholders with information about the CAP, including rural development policy.

Implementation

The *inside Agri* magazine is produced quarterly and is in the nature of an in-house magazine on staff matters and staff activities. It serves the purpose of developing a corporate spirit, but any information on policy is very general, e.g. interviews with the Commissioner. It is produced by staff of the DG AGRI information unit.

Dimitra is the tool used for providing information on policy developments. The information is largely in French and English (predominantly the former). Day-to-day management rests with the Information Unit of DG AGRI, and the provision of content operates on much the same lines as for the external website (see Theme A).

Findings

On the basis of a perceptions analysis of the views of 48 officials in the absence of any user surveys of *inside Agri* or *Dimitra*, DG AGRI officials are positive about internal communication, note much greater transparency than in the previous decade and believe they have the information they need to carry out their day-to-day work. However, they would welcome having more concise, clear material readily available to them on issues outside their normal sphere of work, and on the work programme and priorities of DG AGRI.

Inside Agri is rated highly for meeting people's needs for and for improvements during the period under evaluation.

The Commission's external portal (Europa) and other external sites are sometimes often used in preference to *Dimitra* because they are regarded as more user-friendly, or more up-to-date.

The interviewees were very positive about the lunchtime debates.

Overall, however, newsletters such as Agra Facts, Agra Europe and Agri Direct come ahead of any internal communication as a source of information and are considered to be more up-to-date in many cases.

Conclusions

We conclude that the internal communication activities of DG AGRI:

- are effective in achieving the objective of contributing to improved CAP implementation and management;
- could meet the objective still better if information on the *Dimitra* Intranet were more timely and easier of access, and clear, concise material on policy developments and priorities were available more systematically.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Information Unit:

- obtain a better understanding of the needs of Dimitra users;
- make improvements to the timeliness of the information on Dimitra;
- investigate further the needs of officials for clear messages and information on current policies.

6.4. Theme D - Effectiveness in mixing information tools and resulting efficiency

6.4.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION

Theme D is not about the effectiveness of individual activities as this was dealt with in Themes A and B. It is about the relative effectiveness of the activities in relation to each other, the right time and place in relation to need and both target groups - general public and farming/rural world.

6.4.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The table below presents the criteria/indicators and sources of information used for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the investigated information measures.

Table 16 – Theme D – Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Source of information
<p>Quantitative coverage by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU geography • general public • specific target groups <p>Cost versus numbers per target group reached by type of measure – direct and indirect reached; relationship between coverage and identified need/demand</p> <p>Consistency of messages per Member State taking into account both direct and indirect actions</p> <p>Data on attitudinal shifts, subject to the proviso that it is unlikely that it will be possible to establish a causal relationship</p> <p>Expert opinions on the appropriateness of given types of action to target audiences (both by type and geography)</p>	<p>Commission project files</p> <p>Description of the measures and budget statistics</p> <p>Successful indirect action applications</p> <p>Media plans, ex-ante assessments and ex-post evaluations (where available)</p> <p>Final reports and evaluations of activities</p> <p>Questionnaires completed/other feedback provided by the recipients of the information (conference participants, recipients of information documents, website users etc.)</p> <p>Data collected by Commission services (as mentioned in the call for tender)</p> <p>Interviews with Commission officials, officials of relevant Member State authorities and agencies, and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with managers of the information activities</p> <p>Existing survey/poll/focus group information</p> <p>Media coverage</p> <p>Interviews with specialist media representatives/communication experts</p> <p>Questionnaires completed or other feedback provided by the recipients of the information where available (conference participants, recipients of information documents, users of the website etc.)</p>

6.4.3. ANALYSIS

In evaluating the relative effectiveness of the measures, we looked for evidence in both our file analysis and in our perceptions analysis of measurement of the relative effectiveness on the bases mentioned above and of whether the mix of tools relative to each other was appropriate.

As explained in Chapter 4, communication theory confirms that a single instrument is not likely to have a lasting impact if it is a one-off activity or takes place in isolation.

Information policy is a tool kit. More than one tool will be needed. The issue is less the relative effectiveness of one tool as opposed to another than the mix of tools used at any one time, for a given objective with a given target group. For instance, the overall effectiveness of a conference might be increased if other communication tools are supporting the conference, such as a dedicated website (or a link to specific information on DG AGRI website), a new brochure distributed to the attendees (or made available to other target groups that are not in a position to participate), the development of an appropriate toolkit for further dissemination of the information to indirect target groups, the organisation of a press conference, some advertisements placed in the specialised (or general, if necessary) press, etc.

In addition, a tool which is appropriate in some circumstances may have no impact if the timing is not right. There are also 'one-size-fits-all' tools, and there are others which must be tailored – and a judicious mix is needed.

The relative effectiveness will also depend on the total budget available (and human resources). If DG AGRI had an unlimited amount of money to spend on information policy, then its toolkit would probably include billboard advertising and TV commercials. It is a reality, however, that it has to be creative with limited means, and this has been taken into account.

In evaluating the relative effectiveness, we were looking for evidence that these issues had been considered and that the Information Unit had a mechanism available to it for deciding when and where to use particular tools most effectively in relation to its objectives for different types of activity.

We were also looking for costings which would enable us to evaluate the efficiency of the tools relative to each other.

Strategic approach

There is no written strategy setting out how to ensure synergy between different measures or addressing relative effectiveness.

Implementation

The absence of quantitative data on impact for each tool and category of activity, which is discussed further under Theme G, and the absence of appropriate data on costing means that there is no starting point for evaluating relative effectiveness and efficiency.

The information on costs is not comprehensive enough for it to be possible to carry out an evaluation.

We did collect statistical information for both direct actions and for indirect actions in our sample, but it was not adequate for evaluation purposes because:

- figures relating to the number of attendees at events or to the number of copies of publications distributed are not enough for a comprehensive assessment of the number of persons reached by the message.
- the information on costs was not detailed enough for comparative purposes.

Findings

It is possible to differentiate on the basis of our interviews between the relative impact of the different tools. They are listed below, beginning with the most used/best known. There are no significant differences across the EU. In the list below, it should be borne in mind that the position of the indirect actions (n°. 5 below) can vary from Member State to Member State depending whether indirect actions have had national reach or not, and between European and local-level organisations, because the former have more consistently been organisers of direct actions. Fairs are not on the list because too few people had experience of this activity.

1. Website
2. Fact sheets
3. Conferences/seminars
4. Publications other than the Fact Sheets
5. Indirect actions
6. Visits
7. Eurobarometer

This being said, while the website has the greatest impact on stakeholders, they would not want to be without a number of the other tools in the right circumstances.

In terms of making an impact in the right time, place and format in order for effectiveness not to be diminished relative to the optimum, we note that:

- interviewees questioned whether timing relative to the time at which information could be used most effectively has always been optimal. These comments related to the website, paper publications and indirect actions; on the other hand, there are examples of timely provision of information, e.g. The CAP Explained.
- interviewees had a perception that CAP information policy is intended, or should reach the general public and the farming community directly with its information, but that the content and language relative to the need for simple language and messages had reduced the effectiveness of its activities;
- interviewees felt that there is not sufficient material in languages other than English, French and German, or does not produce it soon enough, and sometimes in poor translations (particularly in the new Member States), thus diminishing the effectiveness in relative terms, and should have enough human resources available to be able to staff stands at Fairs with more personnel whose mother tongue is the language of the audience. We noted under Theme A the fact that simultaneous interpretation is not available for visits and discussed there the language issue in relation to the website. We further note that the Internet site home page is only in the languages of the 'old' Member States (<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/>) and as indicated under Theme A the limited materials available in the languages of the 'new' Member States must be accessed via another language and are also not clustered to make it clear what is available in the other languages.
- our analysis of the Eurobarometer (see Theme F) indicates that there is a mismatch between what the Eurobarometer shows in terms of awareness, knowledge and understanding, and the

spread of funding for both direct and indirect activities. We have also noted in Theme B a clustering effect in indirect activities which cannot be logically explained on the information available and may mean that effectiveness have not been optimised relative to the need.

Measuring the cost-effectiveness of the information measures, on the other hand, requires much more data than was available for this evaluation. The cost per contact data we were able to produce was not enough to measure cost-effectiveness without full impact measurement data on the programmes as a whole. There is also a need to have precise information on the content and nature of the costs incurred in order to analyse comparable data.

6.4.4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

We can say that effectiveness could on a number of occasions have been improved in respect of timing and language issues. The website has had the most impact relative to other tools, but it is not a substitute for other activities.

More specifically and taking into account the analysis made under Theme A, it appears that the tools used to reach the general public were not numerous enough to demonstrate effectiveness. Then, quite obviously, the combination of tools was not effective in targeting the general public.

6.4.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- continue to make improvements in its ability to optimise effectiveness by making sure that its activities are carried out where, when and in the language in which they are needed;
- develop its understanding of the synergies between different types of information tool, so that relative effectiveness and resulting efficiency are optimised;
- define precisely the target groups, better assess and understand the information needs, develop an overall strategy taking into account the targets, the priorities, the needs, the channels and tools and the available budget, and especially when considering the general public, evaluate whether a critical mass of communication and information flow can be reached with the available budget, bearing in mind that developing only a few actions because of the limited budget to reach the general public is probably bound to be ineffective. Moreover, as already stated under Theme A, “general public” is generally not an appropriate target in communication terms. It is much too broad and can then cause many problems in the implementation of any communication activity, especially if these are isolated;
- develop a matrix allowing the Information Unit to decide which tools should be used as a function of the definition of the target groups and the “communication” objectives to be reached (such “objectives” are related to the coverage of the identified target group, the regional selectivity, the target group selectivity, the speed to reach the target, the dissemination effect, the potential for developing an argument, etc.); of course, the combination of tools also depends on the overall communication objectives to be reached: i.e. is the aim to increase overall awareness, to reinforce (or create) understanding, to develop commitment? The combination of tools will evolve as a function of the actual situation of the target groups in relation to their information needs;
- introduce costing techniques which will allow it to measure efficiency of direct and indirect actions in terms of communication objectives.

6.5. Theme E: Coherence and synergy with other information actions on the CAP

6.5.1. WITH OTHER INFORMATION ACTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

6.5.1.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION OF THE KEY TERMS OF THE EVALUATION THEME

This section first deals with complementarity and synergy between the information policy of DG AGRI (and implemented actions) and information activities implemented by other Commission players. In line with the terms of reference we have assessed the complementarity of actions funded under Regulation (CE) 814/2000 with actions funded:

- internally within DG AGRI
- by other Directorate Generals,
- information relays under these DGs and
- Commission Representations in Member States. .

6.5.1.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The judgement criteria and the sources used in evaluating interferences with other community actions are included in the table below:

Table 17 – Theme E - Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Source of information
Existence of a formal cooperation forum between the DG/Commission services or regular contacts with key commission officials.	Commission files
Clear division of tasks among DGs (subjects and jurisdiction/competence).	Final reports and evaluations
Evidence of co-ordination of information activities/products and, where relevant, of common activities/products	Interviews with Commission officials in various DGs and the spokesman's service
Evidence of contribution to actions/products carried out by other DGs	Interviews with Commission officials in DG AGRI
Existence of regular information meetings with key information relays (Carrefours, IP and Europe direct)	Interviews in Member States, in particular with Directors of Information.
Evidence of proactive distribution of information to key information relays (Carrefours, IP and Europe direct)	Relevant MS documents
Evidence of cooperation on information tools and key messages	
Feedback on “distortion effect” of other actions, blurring of messages, confusion in targets' minds	

6.5.1.3. ANALYSIS

In answering this question, we were looking for:

- the extent to which other DGs/Commission services or related relays carried out information activities related to CAP issues;
- at whether there was there any formal cooperation forum between the DG/Commission services or related relays carrying out information activities related to CAP issues, and if not, whether the Information Unit within DG AGRI ensured that regular contacts were taken with other key players (DG COMM, TRADE, TREN, ENLARG⁵⁴) in order to discuss information strategies and action;
- at whether regular meetings were organised and information provided proactively to the Commission's information relays (Europe Direct and the then Carrefours⁵⁵);
- at whether DG AGRI proactively ensured its participation in key information events organised by other DGs,;
- at whether DG AGRI ensured that key messages provided from other Commission Services in relation to agriculture (food, animal welfare, trade/WTO, enlargement etc.) were in line with DG AGRI's key messages, and what was the relevance of DG AGRI's actions in the light of those of other services/DGs.

Defining information policy

It should be mentioned here that we have made a distinction between press and information policy:

- *Press policy* deals with immediate issues, with information suitable for and designed for use the same day;
- *Information policy* provides a service to those whose needs are less immediate. Those needs may be regular or ad hoc.

This leaves the most specialist requirements left to be met by direct contact with officials.

The needs being met by press policy also cover the immediate needs of many stakeholders. While access to certain types of information (e.g. press conferences in most cases) is still reserved for the press, most information released to the press is now made available at the same time to the rest of the world.

In the case of agriculture and rural development issues, those with such immediate needs include many stakeholders, notably farming organisations. They want to be able to provide immediate information to their constituency, both because that gives them legitimacy in the eyes of their membership and because their members call for immediate information about decisions which have a direct impact on their professional activity. In a real-time world, this is increasingly the case. These needs are often met by material intended for the press.

It should be noted here that in the figure illustrating the Commission's information strategy in Chapter 3 we outlined the relationships between the Information Unit (and direct and indirect actions under Regulation 814/2000) and the rest of the European Commission. We did not specifically include the press offices of the Commission's Representations or the Commission's documentation centres in the graphic. However, we consider the former to be essentially extensions of the Spokesman's group, and our interviews with Representations in the course of this evaluation confirm that this is how they see

⁵⁴ DG Enlargement

⁵⁵ The Carrefour network was closed down during the period of the evaluation. Several of the previous Carrefour relays are currently Europe Direct relays)

themselves in relation to information on the common agricultural policy. The documentation centres are similar in the needs they meet to Relays – a fact we confirmed in our interviews.

Areas of interface, potential synergy and interference

We present below our findings relative to the interface:

- between DG AGRI and the Commission communication policy
- between DG AGRI's Information Unit and the Spokesman's Group
- between DG AGRI's Information Unit and Information Units of other DG's
- between DG AGRI's Information Unit and other DG AGRI units
- between DG AGRI's Information Unit and the Representations in the Member States
- between DG AGRI's Information Unit and the Relays

Interface between DG AGRI and the Commission communication policy

At the highest level, the Commission's communication strategy (including press and information) is set by a small group of Commissioners, who are designated to agree each year the themes for the Commission as a whole in a given year, e.g. in 2005 the Constitution was one of these and in 2006, one is the Lisbon Agenda.

Our interviews indicated that the Common Agricultural Policy or the reform process has never figured as a primary theme as such.

We note, however, that the link that can be made is acknowledged in the Unit's 2006 strategy paper.

DG COMM also organises **meetings for representatives of Information Units** from across the Commission. Some interviewees feel that **this channel is underutilised** as the meetings are used for exchange of information, but that they are not a forum for co-ordination, exploitation of synergies or avoidance of overlaps.

Interface between the Information Unit and the Spokesman's Group

As indicated above, information policy (which is the responsibility of Information Unit) and press policy (which is the responsibility of the Spokesman's Group) are not the same thing, though there are overlaps and synergies.

Moreover, there is a third dimension. Many stakeholders and some press need more detailed information than either can provide, which they obtain directly from their own sources within the Commission, notably the desk officers.

It is not the role of or within the ability of the Spokesman's group or Information Unit to provide this information. As a generalist unit, the Information Unit tends not to have the relevant expertise and is not necessarily kept informed by the rest of the DG about the minutiae of the policy. We note that when the Spokesman's Group needs specialist and/or timely input for press releases, this comes directly and logically from the units responsible for the policy. Our interviews with staff of the Information Unit indicated that they do not necessarily have the most up-to-date information. This is not necessarily a cause for concern except potentially in relation to the website that should by its nature be updated as soon as possible with the latest information. This is a good practice reflected in the fact that material from the Spokesman's Group (e.g. Press releases put out through Rapid) is placed on the website directly. Our interviewees use Rapid extensively.

The Information Unit, therefore, occupies a middle ground between the Spokesman's Group and the desk officers, where it is acting as what in press terms is called a 'journal of record', the source which records every key event and every piece of legislation on a timely, but not necessarily, immediate basis. It serves the background information needs of both the press and of stakeholders with immediate needs, and meets a more general need for awareness-raising on the common agricultural policy (CAP) among farmers and the general public in line with the objectives of Regulation 814/2000.

The Information Unit and the Spokesman's Group thus have complementary roles. We found that there is a **good working relationship** between the Information Unit and the Spokesman's Group, and **the synergies are exploited**, e.g. where the Information Unit can in fact provide input into press releases and where it can provide background information for distribution to the press at a time of major press conferences organised by the Spokesman's Group. When the Information Unit is involved in organisation of a major event, such as a conference, it liaises with the Spokesman's Group on release of information to the press at the Commission's daily press briefing and on information for the press attending an event.

This division of responsibilities works well and has been flexible enough to accommodate different levels of need from the Spokesman's Group, which drew more heavily on the writing skills of the Unit during the period of the Prodi Commission (i.e. most of the period covered by this evaluation) than it does at present.

However, **there was no systematic co-ordination during the period under review between the Information Unit and the Spokesman's Group on target groups or messages.** Co-ordination with the Cabinet as the intermediary step or umbrella was also somewhat limited, although we note that there have been working contacts, for example in relation to the definition of the priority measures in the calls for proposals and during the development of the Eurobarometer questions.

Interface between DG AGRI's Information Unit and Information Units of other DG's

There are policy areas where there is an overlap between the work of DG AGRI and that of other DGs, and areas which the general public associates with agriculture, but are actually the responsibility of other DGs. There is in addition an overlap with the work of DG COMM – including the Spokesman's Group. The latter is dealt with above.

The examples include animal welfare and food safety (DG SANCO), biofuels (DG TREN⁵⁶), a range of environmental issues (DG ENV), WTO, trade and development issues in general, and on specifics, such as sugar and biofuels (DGs TRADE and DEV⁵⁷), regional policy issues (DG REGIO), and Enlargement (DG ENLARG). The Visits section of the information unit provides speakers for visits organised by DG EAC.

Examples of cooperation/avoidance of overlap with the Information Units of these DG's but they are very limited:

- One example is the 'From Farm to Fork' brochure. This was an initiative of DG COMM and co-ordinated by DG COMM, but DG AGRI and DG SANCO provided input on the sections dealing with policies for which they are responsible. There are other examples of co-ordination, but they are ad hoc and there is no systematic co-ordination with other DGs on publications;
- Co-ordination with DG EAC on visits, and co-ordination with other DGs on the use of their publications for Visits, for Fairs or other events is very limited. The publications of other DGs

⁵⁶ DG Transport and Energy.

⁵⁷ DG Development.

are used, in particular for Fairs and other events, but there has hitherto been little, if any, joint planning of requirements. This is recognised within the Unit.

Overall **there has been no systematic co-ordination with other DGs even at the level of messages, still less at the level of products.** We note, however, that the DG AGRI is not necessarily responsible for this situation. It is by no means certain that other DG's are receptive to this idea, and it has so far not been systematically enforced either by the Commission as a college or by DG COMM. We also realise that this is the kind of activity which goes into the 'nice-to-have' basket when resources are short because of the time required in the short term to bring medium-term benefits.

Indirect actions are subject to **inter-service consultations** (CIS) in which a number of DGs that are active in the relevant areas are asked to comment on the lists of applicants and proposed projects in order to avoid any double funding.

We note that in its Strategy Paper for 2006, the Information Unit has recognised the potential for more cooperation with other DGs.

Interface between the Information Unit and other DG AGRI units

The Information Unit interacts with other units of DG AGRI as:

- a source of information for its own work;
- a channel to ensure that all external communication across DG AGRI is 'on message'.

Other units as a source of information for the work of the Information Unit

The accessibility of officials within the DG as a source of information for the work of the Information Unit is positively acknowledged. The information available on the Intranet, Dimitra, facilitates this. The processes of obtaining text clearance for publications or other products from other units are slow, but not out of line with what we know of other DG's. Moreover, it is possible to move quickly when required, e.g. *The Common Agricultural Policy Explained*, which was produced in three months.

Other units readily release staff to help staff stands at Fairs. This is a process which is both **supply and demand-driven** in terms of obtaining the right mix of skills in terms of subject matter and suitability for the task. It is supply driven, based on staff volunteering on the basis of interest and language skills and demand driven by the Information Unit to ensure that staff with the right technical are available.

The input of other units to the website is vital, but the system for obtaining this is **not systematic** and does not impose unified editorial standards or requirements on timeliness.

Where co-ordination has been weak is with LEADER and on rural development issues – at least that is the perception of officials outside the Information Unit, some of whom believe that rural development still suffers from a lack of visibility in the EU's information policy. This is notwithstanding the fact that rural development has recently been the focus of the stand at several Fairs.

Other units as a source of information for the outside world

Other units can be valuable as a means of disseminating messages and information on the common agricultural policy and rural development externally, particularly to stakeholders. The value of the Green Team in this respect, and the fact that it has underutilised potential is discussed under Theme B. Here we shall only note that interviewees within various Units, who are not members of the Green Team but who carry out presentations in Member States highlighted the need for clear key messages and indications of which type of information they could provide.

Interface between the Information Unit and the Representations in the Member States

The link to Representations appears to be weak, and based more on personal contacts and proactivity on the part of Representations than on any systematic relationship. They are contacted when key members of Cabinet or the Commissioner visit. There are also examples of cooperation in relation to conferences (selection of participants) and Fairs. However, our interviews with the Representations indicated **that in most cases there is little or no cooperation on information activities with DG AGRI**⁵⁸.

The links between the Representations and the Spokesman's Group are on the whole stronger. This may evolve if the pilot projects to expand the press and information staff at Representations are successful, as this will enable Representations to work far more closely with the regional press. We have identified the regional media through our field research as being often more interested in agriculture and rural development matters than national media, and as requiring relatively detailed information and being less prone than the national media to focus only on crises and other negative events.

Interface between the Information Unit and the Relays

The interface between the Information Unit and the Europe Direct Relays is weak to judge from our survey of relays⁵⁹. Relays in major towns (the old Europe Direct Centres) have generally little or no information from DG AGRI. Some have a single document which may be consulted, but they do not request additional information as they have almost no requests for information.

The previous Carrefours mostly are aware of DG AGRI's various information tools. Several tools are used, in particular the website which is a key tool to collect information for all "old Carrefour" relays. Fact sheets, newsletters, reports and other stakeholder targeted publications are perceived as useful but mainly for background information. They are in most cases not distributed. Relays regularly use information from DG AGRI to develop own information tools (newsletter, website) and for replying to questions. In many cases, however, information needs to be supplemented by national sources.

The farming/rural community at stakeholder organisation level is the target audience for almost all activities related to agriculture and rural development. Even in the countryside there is little demand for information on agriculture and rural development among the general public. Where information is requested, however, use is made of 'The CAP Explained' and the foldout map, to the extent that they are known and have been received in a sufficient number and in the national language. In several cases this was not the case.

This survey revealed that a number of relays are not on, or not aware of being on, the DG AGRI mailing list. This is particularly true of the new Member States, where we discovered this to be the case of relays we talked to in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

Contacts with the Commission services are principally via the Representations, or when they are direct with Brussels are with DG COMM, the EU bookshop or the Publications Office (OPOCE). Several old "Carrefours" regretted that there was not closer contact with DG AGRI and that there are no longer any seminars for them.

⁵⁸ Among the Representations interviewed the Representation in France appears to be an exception in the period evaluated.

⁵⁹ We interviewed a total of 50 ED relays in the EU25 in May and June 2006. Some 2/3 of these were situated in rural areas or smaller towns.

6.5.1.4. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that the extent to which the Information Unit exploits synergies with other Commission players varies significantly. With some actors, such as the Spokesman, there is a good working relationship and generally a clear division of responsibilities.

Cooperation with other DG AGRI units on Fairs and indirect actions is effective. Cooperation with officials who participate as speakers in events, but who are not members of the Green Team, is underdeveloped.

Cooperation with Information Units from other DGs is ad hoc. There are examples of good practice on publications, and there is cooperation in relation to visits, but there has been no systematic coordination at the level of messages or tools.

Cooperation with Commission Representations is with a few exceptions not developed, and there is no system in place to ensure continued cooperation with these, nor a tool to keep the Representations regularly updated.

There has been no formal cooperation with Relays since the Carrefour network was closed, and no action has been taken to ensure that the Europe Direct relays are aware of DG AGRI's information tools

On the other hand, we have found no evidence that information actions clearly overlapped with or duplicated those of the other Commission actors.

6.5.1.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop cooperation with the units responsible for Rural development to be developed with the aim of identifying potential synergies;
- identify DG AGRI officials who participate as speakers in events but who are not members of the Green Team, and in cooperation with these identify tools which may be of use to these;
- develop regular relations with other Information Units from other DGs and ensure that DG AGRI's Information Unit is consulted on activities carried out by these;
- consult regularly the Commission Representations on their need for information and where appropriate set up an alert function for their specific use;
- develop an annual joint strategy for cooperation on information activity between DG AGRI and each Representation;
- update DG AGRI's mailing list as to ensure that the Europe Direct Centres are included in the mailing list;
- consider the development of a communication strategy targeting rural-based Europe Direct relays and consult this network on the development of publications in particular for the general public.

6.5.2. WITH OTHER INFORMATION ACTIONS OF MEMBER STATES, REGIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

6.5.2.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION OF THE KEY TERMS OF THE EVALUATION QUESTION

We deal here with complementarity and synergy between the information policy of DG AGRI (and implemented actions) and information activities implemented by national actors. We have assessed the complementarity of actions funded under Regulation (CE) 814/2000 with actions funded by:

- Member States, in particular information actions financed by Ministries of Agriculture
- key stakeholders such as farming organisations, NGOs and Rural development organisations.

In answering this question in terms of Member States and Regions, we were looking for:

- evidence of a formal cooperation forum between DG AGRI and Member State players responsible for the information actions – and whether if there was not such cooperation DG AGRI (the Information Unit) ensured that regular contact was established with Member States key players in order to discuss information strategies and actions;
- evidence to see to what extent DG AGRI adapted its strategy to Member State activities in order to achieve synergies and to what extent DG AGRI consulted Member States on the relevance of the key messages it intended to use;
- at whether DG AGRI proactively ensured its participation key information events organised by Member States where Commission intervention could add value to the event, and at what has been the value added of the Commission/DG AGRI's information activities compared to MS information activities;
- at whether DG AGRI encouraged the Commission Representations in MS to participate in the public debate on agriculture and provided supporting material and key messages on a regular basis to be used for this purpose.

In the case of stakeholders, we were looking:

- at whether these stakeholders were consulted on DG AGRI's information strategy and the actions that were to be implemented;
- at the extent to which input from these stakeholders was used to identify information actions and activities to be implemented;
- at the extent to which DG AGRI consults these stakeholders on the relevance of key messages it intended to use and whether DG AGRI proactively ensured its participation in key information events organised by these stakeholders where the Commission intervention could add value to the action and what was the value added of DG AGRI's information activities compared to stakeholders' information activities;
- at the extent to which DG AGRI developed information tools that could be used directly or indirectly by stakeholders as part of their information activities.

6.5.2.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The judgement criteria and the sources used in evaluating external coherence are included in the table below:

Table 18 – Theme E - Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Source of information
<p><u>Member States</u></p> <p>Existence of a formal cooperation forum between DG AGRI and MS or regular contacts with key MS officials and evidence of co-ordination and promotion of synergies between Commission and Member States</p> <p>Evidence of a functional division of information activities/tasks between MS and DG AGRI (subject, target groups & competences)</p> <p>Evidence of co-ordination of information activities.</p> <p>Evidence of contribution to national information activities.</p> <p>Evidence of cooperation on key messages.</p> <p><u>Stakeholders</u></p> <p>Existence of a forum where key stakeholders are consulted on DG AGRI information strategy or regular contacts with key stakeholders (2000-05)</p> <p>Evidence of co-ordination of information activities.</p> <p>Evidence of cooperation on key messages.</p> <p>Evidence of contribution to information activities carried out by key stakeholders.</p> <p>Identifiable complementarity, incidences of success of synergy</p>	<p>Commission files</p> <p>Final reports and evaluations</p> <p>Interviews with Commission officials in various DGs and the spokesman’s service</p> <p>Interviews with Commission officials in DG AGRI</p> <p>Interviews in Member States, notably with rural stakeholders</p> <p>Relevant stakeholders</p>

6.5.2.3. ANALYSIS

Interface between the Information Unit and the Member States

The interface between the Information Unit and the Member States is limited. It has in the past been very close for certain events, such as the Salzburg Conference and the Paris Fair. It has, otherwise, not been particularly close or systematic. A start has been made to remedying this with more regular meetings with the Member States, of which there were two in the period of the evaluation and one since.

The objectives of these meetings are to provide a forum for coordination of information strategies. They have, however, been limited so far to an exchange of information on national and European information activities, general discussions of what communication should focus on and discussions of cooperation on stands as Fairs. Moreover the Commission has invited Member States to provide it with examples of diversification of farms and presentations of national information strategies.

Besides coordination of participation in Fairs there have been no substantial attempts to coordinate information strategies during these meetings or to ensure that the Commission’s information activities

are complementary to Member States. Also, there has been no attempt to consult Member States on the relevance of DG AGRI's information actions or on the key messages (for stakeholders or general public).

Interface between the Information Unit and stakeholders

There is no formal cooperation between the Information Unit and stakeholders to develop synergies and complementarities between their activities or to disseminate good practice from indirect actions.

There are Member States and some stakeholder farming organisations, though they are a minority, who do target the general public with information on agriculture and the CAP. The potential synergies with these Member States and other actors have not been exploited.

There have been informal consultations with a range of European stakeholder organisations and informal contacts with potential beneficiaries but the aim of such contacts was to discuss the functioning of the indirect actions not the overall information policy. National stakeholder organisations interviewed by us have not been consulted on DG AGRI information policy, its actions or on the key messages (for stakeholders or general public).

6.5.2.4. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that the interface between the Information Unit and the Member States/stakeholder organisations is limited. There has been cooperation on one-off events, and yearly cooperation meetings with Member States have taken place since 2004, but there is currently no coordination of information strategies with Member States or exchange of information with stakeholder organisations..

For stakeholder organisations there is currently no specific forum for discussion of communication activities or strategies with DG AGRI.

6.5.2.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- intensify its cooperation with Member States and key national stakeholder organisations with the aim to identify potential cooperation action and untargeted needs which could be covered by the Information Unit
- consult regularly both Member States and key stakeholder organisations on the overall information strategy, as well as Member States on the relevance of key information tools.

6.6. Theme F - Relevance of the objectives - main targets and communication strategy

6.6.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION

Relevance is the starting point of policy design. The relevance of the policy is the “*appropriateness of objectives and activities of the communication policy in relation to the information needs of the target groups the policy is intended to address*”.

The selection of the various tools to deliver the objectives of the policy should take into account needs and the relevance of the tools to overall communication objectives, such as:

- create awareness of a topic;
- build knowledge on a topic;
- ensure understanding;
- promote positive perception;
- encourage feedback.

These objectives are steps in a process. The needs cannot be established if there is no measurement of awareness, knowledge and understanding at the outset (see section 4.1).

The key issues addressed in this section are:

- whether the dearth of information which the measures for which Regulation 814/2000 provides the legal basis set out to address was established and the areas of missing or misinformation established;
- whether the objectives set for the Regulation and the objectives identified in the trees were in line with the real needs for information of the various target groups;
- whether some needs remain untargeted by the information measures.

For measurement of the deficit, i.e. the extent of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the policy, we were looking for a baseline around which the Commission could design its information policy, and ongoing measurement. Polls are a standard measurement tool. There are others, such as focus groups and perceptions analysis, but they are not used by DG AGRI.

We analyse first the use which was made of the sole tool available to DG AGRI, the **Eurobarometer**.

We further carried out our own **perceptions analysis** of the information deficits and main understandings, and the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAP in the Member States and took into accounts the needs assessments of indirect actions project promoters, which is also principally based on perceptions.

While this analysis covered the period 2000-2005, in practice the period is too long to obtain an accurate perception of the situation in the first half of the period. Consequently, the common threads in the EU as a whole identified below and the situation in each country are more a reflection of the situation in the last couple of years than for the full period of the evaluation.

6.6.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The judgement criteria and the sources used to address this issue include those in the table below:

Table 19 – Theme F - Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Sources of information
Existence of ex-ante analysis of the needs and level of connection between the identified needs and the objectives	Commission project files Final reports and evaluations of the direct measures (where available)
Evidence of relevance identified in the ex post evaluations of the projects	Eurobarometer polls Other survey material available
Baseline measurement of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the general public/stakeholders on the CAP in the beginning of the period under review	Commission strategy documents Media plans, ex-ante assessments and ex-post evaluations (where available)
Evidence on the evolution of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the general public/stakeholders on the CAP	Interviews with Commission officials, Member States officials and stakeholders
Evidence that programme led to reduction in information deficits, evidence of changes in awareness, knowledge and understanding on the part of the target groups	

6.6.3. ANALYSIS

As noted previously, the baseline for the information policy/Regulation 814/2000 is the dearth of information on the CAP, leading to misunderstandings. This is taken as a given without further analysis by subject or Member State in the Commission documents consulted. The Eurobarometer is regarded by the Commission as its principal tool for establishing its baselines in addressing this dearth of understanding and identifying the needs which DG AGRI information policy is designed to address.

We analysed the Eurobarometer questions and results to see to what extent the Eurobarometer was a useful tool in establishing first *awareness* (of the existence of the CAP), second *knowledge* about the CAP, and third *understanding* of the policy. Awareness is a prerequisite for knowledge and understanding. This is discussed further in Chapter 4. The assumption of Regulation 814/2000 is that knowledge and understanding of the policy will lead to a positive perception. As we illustrate in the intervention logic diagrams in Chapter 4, a positive perception is essential to the image of and support for the CAP, and therefore ultimately to the image of the EU.

We identified poll data available in a number of Member States on the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAP/rural development policy. This is not homogenous and not available in most countries. Member States do not systematically, if at all, share with the Commission the data which is available.

Background

The Commission carries out annual surveys of public opinion on 'Europeans and the Common Agricultural' policy; in 2004, the annual survey took the form of a special report on 'European Union citizens and agriculture, 1995-2003'; in 2003, there was a special survey on the candidate countries. In 2000, there was a survey of farmers. The surveys of the general public and the farmers in 2000 were regarded as a baseline for measuring these groups' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAP to underpin policy activities under Regulation 814/2000.

Strategic approach

DG AGRI considers that the Eurobarometer provides it with a good reading of the state of public opinion on the Common Agricultural policy and rural development to underpin its information policies.

Implementation

We analysed all the questions in all the Eurobarometer reports for the extent to which they measured **awareness, knowledge, and understanding**.

Awareness: we found two questions in 2000 which covered *awareness* in the EU-15:

1. *"The European Union has been dealing with agricultural issues for a long time. Have you seen or heard anything about its action, the "Common Agricultural Policy" or the "Agricultural Common Market"?"* (Flash EB 85 2000)

Only 48% of the population of the EU-15 were aware as of 2000 that the EU was involved in agricultural policy; in general terms, the Eurobarometer showed that awareness of the existence of the CAP in the EU-15 was lowest in (in ascending order – **lowest awareness first**):

*Greece, Netherlands, UK, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, Ireland, Luxembourg, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Austria, France*⁶⁰.

The priority groups to target EU-wide in order to raise awareness would have been the 15-24 age range, housewives and those living in rural areas.⁶¹

2. *"In which of the following areas do you think the European Union is active?"* (EB 55.2.2001⁶²)

In answer to this question, 59% were aware that the EU is active in agricultural policy. Awareness was lowest in (in ascending order – **lowest awareness first**):

⁶⁰ When the same question was asked in the survey of candidate countries in 2002, 46% were in some way aware of the link between the EU and agriculture, and the country order – lowest awareness first – was Czech Republic, Lithuania, Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Slovenia and Poland.

⁶¹ Eurobarometer sample sizes at national level are too small to be used as the only indicator for cross-segmentation of information policy by population type and geographic location.

⁶² Commissioned by DG Research.

Portugal, Italy, Greece, UK, Spain, Ireland, France, Finland, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden.

Knowledge: we found two questions which measured *knowledge*. Question 1 was asked of the general public and the farming community in 2000 and Question 2 was put to the general public in 2001:

1. *"As you know, the European Union has been dealing for a long time with agricultural issues. In your opinion, what is the proportion of agricultural expenditure in the total budget of the European Union?"(EB Flash 85 2000; EB Flash 86 2000)*⁶³

Only 13% answered this question correctly in the general survey (EB 85). Most respondents underestimated.

Among farmers (EB 86) 13% also answered correctly and most underestimated. EB 86 among farmers also revealed considerable hostility to the CAP with Denmark and Ireland the only countries where the CAP was more popular than unpopular. The older the farmer and the smaller the farm⁶⁴, the more unpopular was the CAP. On the other hand, there was broad support for the direction of the changes, i.e. granting more funds for the protection and development of the overall rural economy and for direct support to farmers. The younger the farmer and the smaller the farm, the greater was the support for the direction of the changes.

2. *"What percentage of total public expenditure, that is the expenditure of the Member States and the European Union taken together, is devoted to agriculture?"*

Only 7% answered this question correctly. Most respondents overestimated.

There are no time series in relation to these questions.

Understanding: There is a full time series (EB Special 55.2 2001, EB Special 57.0 2002, EB Special 59.2 2003, EB Special 62.2 2005, EB Special 242 2006) for a series of questions which are on the borderline between measurement of understanding and measurement of perceptions. They are borderline because there is no measurement of the knowledge on which the answer is based and therefore of whether there is a need to reinforce the knowledge or correct misunderstandings, both in those who accept these statements and the majority who do not.

These are questions about whether EU agricultural policy ensures that our food is:

- safe to eat
- of good quality
- reasonably priced
- accompanied by information on its geographic origin.

The figures for the EU-15 in the surveys published in 2001 and 2006 respectively were:

- safe to eat (36%, 39%)
- of good quality (35%, 35%)
- reasonably priced (26%, 25%)

⁶³ We note that this question assumes prior knowledge of the CAP without measuring it.

⁶⁴ The sample size in this case is large enough to draw conclusions in relation to specific groups.

- accompanied by information on its geographic origin (26%, 24%).⁶⁵

There are variations in levels of agreement with these statements depending on the statement, but Malta, Cyprus and Luxembourg stand out for their high level of consensus around these issues, while Sweden is the only country with scores of less than 30% on all four issues, while the Czech Republic, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and Slovakia are below 30% for three out of four.

The Eurobarometer surveys in 2000 also contained information on where people obtain information on the CAP, and whether they are interested in more information, and where demand comes from primarily.

Sources of information on the CAP

The Eurobarometers in 2000⁶⁶ also contain information on where people obtain information on the CAP. They obtain this from the mainstream print media and TV, and also to a large extent, the radio.

Men appear to have more access to information on the EU and its agricultural policy because they read more newspapers and specific documentation, use the Internet more, and listen more often to the radio.

For both men and women, television is the most important information source, and more detailed analysis of the Eurobarometer results indicates that this is particularly true of those with less formal education and women not in paid work outside the home. By farm size, farmers on large farms and younger farmers are more likely to read the trade press, whereas older farmers and those with small farms rely more heavily on TV rather than trade press.

Demand for information and interest in the CAP

A question of interest in information about agriculture was asked in Flash Eurobarometer 85 in 2000. This indicated that there was a high level of interest in the general public in hearing more about agriculture. In that poll, between 50% and 85% of the population – depending on the Member State - wanted to hear more about agricultural issues. Of those interested in hearing more about agriculture, fewer were interested in hearing more about the workings of the CAP than about agri-environmental or rural development issues. However, these preferences were relative. Even in relation to the workings of the CAP, the number wanting to know more was nevertheless higher than 50% in most EU-15 countries, and well above this in some.

There was very little difference by gender, age or profession in the level of demand for information in this survey, though there did appear to be a higher demand among women and among older age groups. By profession, there was a higher demand among housewives and farmers – but this is consistent with demand being higher among women and older age groups.

While it is worth noting the conclusions of that poll, we would also urge caution: the question was an abstract and very general one. It did not measure whether people would be interested in hearing more about agriculture relative to other topics, and it probably required a very strong negative reaction to the idea to produce a negative response to the question.

This is not to say that there might not be feelings of goodwill towards agriculture demonstrated by this question which could be made use of in developing information policy tools and messages. This is consistent with what a number of interviewees report, i.e. their perception that there is basic support

⁶⁵ The 2006 figures for the EU-25 were 37%, 32%, 23% and 23%.

⁶⁶ FLASH EB N°85

for agriculture despite a generally low level of knowledge and understanding of the CAP and negative coverage of the latter in the media.

The survey of farmers the same year showed that demand for information is also high among farmers - with Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, and to some extent Austria - as exceptions to the rule.

Findings

Only a handful of Eurobarometer questions measure awareness, knowledge and understanding. None make it possible to measure whether perceptions of the policy as a whole are positive, though information on perceptions of the impact of the EU on agriculture have become available since the period covered by the evaluation: Standard Eurobarometer 64 published in February 2006 based on interviews in October/November 2005 indicated that 48% of the population of the EU thinks that the EU has a bad effect on agriculture in their country (as opposed to 40% who are positive). The view that EU membership has had a good effect on agriculture is most widespread in Ireland (62%) and Poland (61%). On the other hand, in Finland (79%) and the Czech Republic (74%) around three-quarters of citizens hold the opposite view.

The only information specifically about the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the farming community is from 2000. There is no ongoing measurement of farmers' awareness, knowledge and understanding of reforms, of their demand for or interest in information on the CAP, or on the channels to use.

Most Eurobarometer questions seek information on what the public at large think agricultural policy should do, e.g. on where sovereignty should lie, the importance of agriculture for our future, what the EU should do in the area of agriculture and whether shifting subsidies from production to land area and compliance with broader objectives is regarded as a good thing.

Questions such as:

“The European Union is subsidising agricultural products less and less. However, it is granting more funds for the protection and development of the overall rural economy and for direct support to farmers. Do you think that this development is...?”

do not test whether people believe subsidies are a bad thing, whether they are aware that subsidies are falling, that more money is going into rural development, and that more money is going to direct support for farmers (even if they understand what that means). Moreover, the question does not enable the respondent to differentiate in the answer between views on rural development and direct support for farmers.

Other questions dealt with expectations, priorities, opinions of the Common Agricultural Policy. To take a simple example of why we differentiate: there is a difference between testing whether the general public thinks food safety is important and testing whether they are aware of (and understand) the role that the Common Agricultural Policy plays in ensuring food safety. Establishing, for example, that people think the priorities should be stable and adequate incomes for farmers, healthy and safe agricultural products and promotion of respect for the environment does not test whether people realise that these are priorities already.

Where such questions are valid is in providing an understanding of the topics which are of interest to the general public as it can be valuable in providing material to tackle information deficits which catches their attention, but it is not a substitute for information on the actual deficit, or on negative perceptions. They can thus help in defining and assessing messages. Questions on where the public obtain information on agriculture are helpful in identifying the channels which it is most appropriate to use subject to resource constraints which make it impossible to use TV – the natural channel.

The usefulness of questions on the channels through which people receive information was limited because they do not differentiate between regional and national media, or identify the publications of stakeholder organisations or farm advisors as channels. Our interview process revealed that regional

media are an important source of information in some countries and are more receptive to receiving information on the CAP/rural development, and that the stakeholder organisations are the main channel through which farmers receive information (often at information events, as well as through publications, and to some extent the Internet) and that farm advisors are another important source of information.

The Eurobarometer is also not providing a service to Member States in their policy design. Many of those we interviewed did not look at the Eurobarometer at all; some read it with interest as an indicator of opinion, but did not use it as a tool.

There was, therefore, information from surveys which provided baseline measurement and indications of countries or groups in society where awareness of the existence of the CAP and the benefits it brings to consumers was high or low, and knowledge of where the CAP budget was good or bad. Where Eurobarometer results could have been a guide to policy design, they were not, however, correlated with decisions on priorities in communication policy by topic or country. Moreover, there was virtually no measurement of understanding and no ongoing measurement to feed into policy implementation over the full period. Nor was any use made of the (admittedly) limited poll data that exists in some countries.

Conclusions

We conclude that:

- the Eurobarometer in its current form does not provide sufficient or continuous measurement of knowledge, awareness and understanding to be used for establishing conclusively the needs of the target groups, or establishing whether misunderstandings have been corrected. It is also does not provide adequate information on the best channels to use to reach the general public or farming/rural stakeholders.

Recommendations

We recommend for better identification of needs by DG AGRI:

- make continuous measurement of knowledge, awareness and understanding a priority, and differentiate between the general public and farmers;⁶⁷
- consider using measurement tools other than the Eurobarometer, such as focus groups and perceptions analysis, to measure knowledge, awareness and understanding on a continuous basis;
- work more closely with the Member States in obtaining poll data from them, and discussing with them the usefulness to them of the Eurobarometer;
- use the improved information on knowledge, awareness and understanding to set communication priorities and specific and operational objectives.

⁶⁷ We note from the EC *White Paper on a European Communication Strategy* published in 2006 that a re-assessment of the Eurobarometer methodology is under way with a view to responding to the pressing need to have a broader and deeper understanding of trends in European public opinion.

6.6.3.2. NEEDS IDENTIFIED VIA OUR PERCEPTIONS ANALYSIS

We have found in the course of the analysis of perceptions through the interviewing process that perceptions of where information is needed and of the misunderstandings on the part of both the general public and the farming/rural community are relatively homogenous across the EU.

General public

There is everywhere a view that the *general public* knows little about the CAP/agriculture and that where it has a perception, it is a negative one⁶⁸. There is a widespread view that little people know is often based on misconceptions, e.g the view which is perceived to survive in several continental European countries that the EU still has butter and beef mountains.

The message that the cost of the CAP is related to the fact that it is the only fully integrated policy is not felt to have reached the general public. Nor is there any understanding of recent reforms and the role of agriculture in modern society.

There are also perceptions that the population has a better understanding of/or is more likely to be well disposed towards the CAP where there is still a relatively large rural population, or where the population still relates to its rural roots.

Interviewees felt that there was a disconnect between any sympathy for the farmer and views on the CAP, and that it had not been possible to tap into the former to create support for support for agriculture.

What people know, they know from the mainstream media, which interviewees largely condemned for misinformation or concentrating on food safety crises, the overall size of the budget or the amount of payments to individual farmers, or for failing to cover these issues at all, reflecting a view that the readership is not interested.

Despite national differences, it is nevertheless possible on the basis of our perceptions analysis to identify cross-cutting themes:

- the level of the CAP budget (which is the predominant theme)
- the level of subsidies to individual farmers, or categories of farmer
- food safety/food quality/food and health
- environmental impacts of the CAP
- animal welfare
- food prices
- the impact of the CAP on the Third World.

⁶⁸ This is confirmed by a recent Eurobarometer question as to whether people believe the EU has had a bad effect on agriculture in their country, which was in Standard Eurobarometer 64 published in February 2006 and based on interviews in October/November 2005. In this, 48% of the population of the EU was of the opinion that the EU has a bad effect on agriculture in their country (as opposed to 40% who are positive). The view that EU membership has a good effect on agriculture is most widespread in Ireland (62%) and Poland (61%). On the other hand, in Finland (79%) and the Czech Republic (74%) around three-quarters of citizens held the opposite view.

Where there is a large domestic agri-food industry, issues likely to affect that industry are part of the public debate.

Perceptions of trends over the period of the evaluation were either that there has been no change or that the view of the CAP has become more negative. The role the CAP plays in rural development has not in most cases penetrated the public consciousness.

Farming/rural community

In the case of the *farming/rural community*, the picture we found is also broadly homogenous. Farmers are interested in - and generally well informed about - issues which affect them directly, but less interested in or informed about the broader picture of the rationale for reforms.

Direct payments and de-coupling have come to the fore as a topic in the last couple of years. A number of interviewees report misunderstandings about how these work, with a result that there is a belief that large farmers are benefiting at the expense of the small. The future role of farmers in producing crops for biofuel appears to be an emerging issue across the EU.

Many farmers do not see the outcome of the Mid-Term Review as representing an opportunity, are suffering from reform fatigue and worried at the prospect of having to adjust to further reforms in 2007/2008 and 2013/14.

There are many countries where farmers feel that their country's farmers have come off worse compared to those of other countries, e.g. in some EU-15 countries, there is a feeling that farmers in other EU-15 countries have done better from the reforms, and in some EU-10 countries, there is a feeling that farmers in the EU-15 generally have preferential treatment.

What also emerges fairly regularly is the perception of a significant difference in the knowledge of the CAP, the access to information and the perception of the CAP between large farmers (better informed, greater Internet access, more able to handle applications for EU funds) and small farmers. There is also a divide between younger and older farmers.

Despite these differences, it is nevertheless possible on the basis of our perceptions analysis to identify cross-cutting themes:

- introduction of direct payments/market orientation of the CAP
- a failure to understand the need for reform or what could be described as 'restructuring fatigue' – both related to reforms of the past and another budget review in three years' time
- fears of what the 2014-2020 Financial Framework will bring
- bureaucracy/complexity
- inequities in the CAP, either product-based or country-based
- issues relating to products important to the country concerned.

As indicated above, there are some one-off polls in the Member States on views of agriculture and the CAP (but mainly the former), but there is no measured trend data on interest in or attitudes to specific issues. However, there is no perception that the needs or views have changed significantly in recent years, except where issues surface in relation to one-off or unexpected events.

Interviewees distinguished clearly between the need for information for the farming/rural community on:

- policy *content*, which they regard it as the role of DG AGRI to provide information on;
- technical issues relating to *implementation* of the mechanisms (e.g. calculations of support, filling in forms etc.), on which they expect the national government (notably the paying agency) to provide information.

It has also emerged clearly from our work that the information needs of the farming/rural community need to be met at two levels:

- stakeholder organisations and;
- farmers themselves.

This has implications for the method of delivery of information activities. These are addressed in the sections on effectiveness.

Our interviews with relays provided qualitative data on the knowledge of non-farmer rural stakeholders. As in the case of farmers, they are aware of financing mechanisms for which they are eligible, but lack information on the broader issues.

Findings

Regulation 814/2000 specifies a need to raise public awareness of the issues and objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy. It does not limit that objective to those who are interested in the policy, or those who have misconceptions about the policy. In the interviews we conducted, we were often told that the general public has no interest in the Common Agricultural Policy. It is not certain that there is a *need* for the general public as a whole to be aware of the Common Agricultural Policy, however desirable in the absolute. The objective is to provide information where it is needed on the part of those who hold opinions and are interested, and to correct misunderstandings.

Our objective and problem trees were based on our analysis of the Commission's implicit policy objectives derived from the Regulation and internal strategy papers in combination with the themes defined in each year's call for proposal.

The DG AGRI needs assessment for arriving at these objectives is based on its broad interpretation of Eurobarometer and its contacts with the general public and the farming/rural world, both directly and via the information which it can see they receive via the media, as well as the relevant stakeholders.

On the basis of the problem trees, we identified in our objective trees five objectives for the *general public*:

- to provide information about the actions taken to ensure environmental protection, food safety, the high quality of EU food, and rural development;
- to provide information about the positive effects of the CAP in general, in particular following the reforms of the CAP;
- to provide information about the CAP in general, and in particular the rationale for the CAP and the budget;
- to provide information about the societal importance of agriculture, the services farming provides to the community, including the role agriculture plays in the preservation of the recreational environment;
- for the European Commission to play a leading role and support key actors in the public debate.

Implicit in some of these terms is the objective of providing information also on such issues as animal welfare, the impact of the CAP in developing countries, and more recently on the contribution it can make to biofuel production.

On the basis of the problem trees, we identified in our objective trees four perceived needs for the farming/rural community:

- to inform farmers and stakeholder organisations about why the CAP needs to be reformed;
- to provide information tools appropriate to the need for structured change management to overcome conservatism;
- to explain all relevant elements of the policy to farming/rural stakeholders;
- to provide information about the policy in a simple form appropriate to farmers' needs.

In the case of farmers, we note the need for information to be simple and appropriate to their needs (which also means their local and sectoral context), as this principle may not be self-evident – though our view on the necessity for this has been more than reinforced from the interviews carried out in the course of this evaluation.

The objectives identified for the individual indirect information measures were also internally coherent with the overall objectives of the information policy.

The objectives identified for the individual indirect information measures were also in line with the needs identified by our perceptions analysis. However, the objectives were broad enough to encompass a wide range of activities and the needs assessments in the proposals were often very general.

6.6.4. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that:

- the objectives established for DG AGRI information policy within the context of Regulation 814/2000 were relevant in principle to the needs of the target groups, both in the case of direct and indirect activities, and the general public and the farming/rural community;
- no needs went unmet in overall policy terms;
- DG AGRI information policy could have been more relevant to different situations across the EU had information and measurement tools available to allow DG AGRI to calibrate its policy more finely.

6.6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- put an appropriate system in place to measure awareness, knowledge and understanding, and changes in these on an ongoing basis, so that there is a clearer picture of needs and how they are evolving. Such a system would also provide a benchmark for ex post evaluation of activities. DG AGRI should build its own capability to make needs assessments as a basis for its own work and to judge those of others.
- be creative in devising ways to convey its messages based on appropriate strategic media planning, and combining above the line and below the line activities. This strategy should take into account the answer to the following questions: what are the real information needs of the EU citizen in relation to agriculture and how do these relate to the messages which DG AGRI wants to convey?

6.7. Theme G: Monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures

6.7.1. INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION

Considering the key terms of the theme, we defined monitoring, checking and evaluation follows:

- **Monitoring** means conducting and driving the process along during the whole time that the information measure is under way.
- **Checking** is about organising the call, selecting and verifying whether the process is in line with the Regulations, the calls and the internal guidelines.
- **Evaluation** is about assessing the applications ex ante or the measures implemented ex post in order to further feed the communication process, allowing the identification of weaknesses and implementation of corrective measures.

From a regulatory point of view, the monitoring, checking and evaluation were defined in the various Regulations concerned. We summarise below the main elements:

Council Regulation 814/2000 specifies in the following articles that:

“Article 6”

The Commission shall monitor and check the measures financed under this Regulation to ensure that they are properly and efficiently implemented. The Commission’s representatives shall be authorised to make on-the-spot checks on such measures, including by sampling.

“Article 7”

The Commission shall, where it judges it to be appropriate, evaluate the measures financed under this Regulation.

“Article 8”

The Commission shall present a report on the implementation of this Regulation to the European Parliament and the Council every two years. The first report must be presented not later than 31 December 2001.”

Commission Regulation 1390/2000 further specifies (in point (2) of the recital) that the implementation process that has been chosen, i.e. a call for proposals and (in (3)) that the eligibility criteria, the grounds for exclusion and the general selection criteria have to be laid down in detail.

The following articles of Regulation 1390/2000 are also relevant to this evaluation theme:

- Article 2 - Call for proposals
- Article 3 – Eligibility criteria for applicants
- Article 4 – Reasons for excluding applicants
- Article 5 – Ineligible measures
- Article 6 – Conditions governing the admissibility of applications
- Article 7 – Reasons for excluding measures
- Article 8 – Selection criteria for measures

- Article 9 – Rate of financial assistance
- Article 14 – Evaluation specifies that “Beneficiaries shall provide everything required for the evaluation of financed measures pursuant to Article 7 of Regulation EC 814/2000 and shall in particular complete the questionnaires and evaluation forms enclosed by the Commission with the application forms”.

Annexes further detail the submission process and the content of indirect action applications (Annex I), the selection criteria (Annex II), the eligible costs (Annex III).

Commission Regulation 1557/2001 was drawn up in order to provide some clarification, improve the arrangements for the receipt and processing of applications and provide for greater flexibility in financing arrangements to allow up to 75 % financing of certain measures of exceptional interest ('recital' (1)). The structure of the Regulation remained the same.

Commission Regulation 2208/2002 amended and replaced Commission Regulation 1557/2001 in order to improve the operation of the scheme again. In its article 2 this Regulation defines more precisely the nature of the specific information measures and the annual work programmes.

We have examined the methods the Commission used in order to monitor, check and evaluate the information measures in the context of the framework established by the Regulations and the calls.

We present below our findings relative to these aspects from a performance management perspective, i.e. starting with the strategy design of activities, through monitoring and checking and ending up with evaluation making the loop to the strategy design. Under evaluation we understood ex ante evaluations (participating in the fine-tuning of the strategy design) and ex post evaluations (supposed to feed back into the system).

Regulation 814/2000 makes the distinction between monitoring/checking (Art. 6) and evaluation (Art. 7).

This evaluation theme aimed at assessing the implementation and the organisation of the monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures by the Commission. We considered the difference between indirect and direct actions (and for the latter we examined the question making the distinction between the various communication tools).

We considered as well during our work the various elements relative to the strategy and design of activities conducted (for both indirect and direct actions).

6.7.2. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

We used the following Judgement criteria:

Table 20 – Theme G - Judgement criteria

Judgement criteria	Source of information
Existence of internal guidelines within the Commission to define the scope of the monitoring, the checking and the evaluation of the information measures.	Interviews with Commission officials Commission documents Project files
Existence of internal guidelines with regard to the selection of the applications to measures (quality of projects and cost-effectiveness).	
Measures to improve ex ante definition of information deficits, information needs and	

Judgement criteria	Source of information
<p>demand.</p> <p>Measures to improve quality/clarity/degree of enforcement of existing approach, including improvements to implementation design and establishment of intermediary and operational targets, and final objectives.</p> <p>Measures to improve collection of feedback and data, and to ensure collection is user-friendly for target groups.</p> <p>Measures to improve Commission’s evaluation / monitoring of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • content/subject matter • target audiences • media coverage • feedback and adjustment in the light of new information • measurement of attitudinal shifts, changes in demand for information, improvements to implementation and management of the CAP. 	

6.7.3. ANALYSIS

Our file analysis of projects coupled with our many interviews within DG AGRI underpins the findings below. We made the distinction between indirect and direct actions.

6.7.3.1. INDIRECT ACTIONS

The findings are structured according to a management cycle:

- ex ante definition of information deficits, needs and demand;
- setting up of a framework for applications;
- the definition of the scope of monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures by the Commission;
- the definition of selection criteria;
- the monitoring of the implementation;
- the collection of feedback and data;

Ex ante definition of information deficits, information needs and demand

In terms of the award criteria, the wording of the calls concerning the ex ante definition of information deficits, needs and demand remained unchanged year after year. We believe that specific identified needs or problems should have been identified and incorporated on an ongoing basis in order to further feed and orient the award procedure. For example we have already commented on the fact that there was a policy decision to target the general public more, but that the desire to put more emphasis on this was not properly translated into the calls, although the subjects proposed in the calls have evolved slightly to address issues that concern more the general public (e.g. food quality issues).

No system was put in place to evaluate whether the content/subject matters were still relevant, to check if the messages were still adapted for the target groups or to measure any shift in the demand for information, either from the general public or the farming community, resulting in a feedback or adjustment in the light of new information.

No actions were put in place to improve the Commission's own ex ante assessment of the awareness (and then of course of the understanding and knowledge) of the CAP among the various target groups.

We have not found any linkage between DG AGRI's experiences and the way Eurobarometer was used to explore public awareness and attitudes. The Eurobarometer was not used as a tool to target better the use of the available budget.

It is clear from the file analysis that ex ante needs assessments made by applicants were generally weak over the period. While there was nominally a needs assessment because the application form required it, the assessment generally consisted only of descriptive text based on unsubstantiated perceptions. The guidelines provided by the Commission were not adapted to improve the quality of those assessments.

For evaluating the accuracy or plausibility of needs assessments, the useful evaluation expertise acquired over the years by the members of the annual ad-hoc evaluation committees for the indirect action applications received could be considered as having played a role.

In general the strategy and the specific and operational objectives cannot be considered as having been precise and detailed enough to guarantee appropriate implementation of activities along the lines defined by the Commission.

Setting up of a framework for applications

We looked at two specific elements: the difference between work programmes and specific measures and the rate of financial assistance.

Difference between work programmes and specific measures

The difference between work programmes and specific measures was defined in Article 2 of Council Regulation 814/2000 as follows:

- (a) annual work programmes presented, in particular, by farmers' or rural development organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations,
- (b) specific measures presented by any other party other than those referred to in (a), in particular the public authorities of the Member States, the media and universities.

Until the end of 2002, the definition remained unchanged. Commission Regulation 2208/2002 then specified in article 2 that:

- (a) 'specific information measures' as referred to in Article 2(1)(b) of Regulation 814/2000 means information events limited in time and space and implemented on the basis of a single budget;
- (b) 'annual work programmes' as referred to in Article 2(1)(a) of Regulation 814/2000 means sets of two to five specific information measures

There is no further explanation or guideline provided about the limitation in time and space for the specific information measures.

We note that 286 applications were rejected between 2003 and 2005, principally for not fulfilling the eligibility criteria.

Table 21 - Applications rejected for not fulfilling the eligibility criteria

Rejected	2003	2004	2005	Total
Work programmes	47	52	33	132
Specific measures	62	46	46	154
Total	109	98	79	286
Rejections as % of all applications	84%	80%	81%	82%

The most frequent reason for rejection in the 2003-2005 period⁶⁹ was that a programme consisted of more than five specific information measures, or that an information measure consisted of more than one action (70 cases). Prior to then, it was possible for an applicant to include more than five information measures in a single programme. The result of the refinement of the rule led to situations where, for example, an application was rejected which proposed a specific information measure consisting of three seminars of the same type about the same subject and with the same speakers but organised in three different locations on three different dates. Our interviews with Commission staff indicated that there were internal rules specifying that a 'specific action' is one event and that applicants were always advised on this fact before the submission of their application.

Another element is relative to the nature of the applicant: the Council Regulation stated that specific information measures should be presented by parties other than those referred to in (a) (see Figure 17). In practice, applications were accepted for specific information measures from organisations falling within category (a). Further legal investigation would be required in order to determine if this was in line with the Council Regulation.

Rate of financial assistance

The maximum rate of the Community financing was established at 50 %. It could be increased to 75 % of the eligible cost for a specific measure or for one or more measures contained in a programme provided that they were of "exceptional interest" on the basis of the selection criteria and as stated in Regulation 1390/2000 they entail (a) costs of interpretation or translation into at least four of the official languages of the Community or of the applicant countries representing more than 20 % of the eligible costs, subject, in the case of interpretation, to there being at least five participants per language and (b) subsistence expenses per participant and per day of less than 60 % of the maximum amount laid down in the scales made available to applicants by the Commission. Regulation 1557/2001

⁶⁹ Data is not available for 2000-2002.

eliminated the proviso linked to the translation costs. Regulation 2208/2002 eliminated as well the proviso linked to the subsistence expenses and kept only the exceptional interest criterion (as defined in the call for proposals).

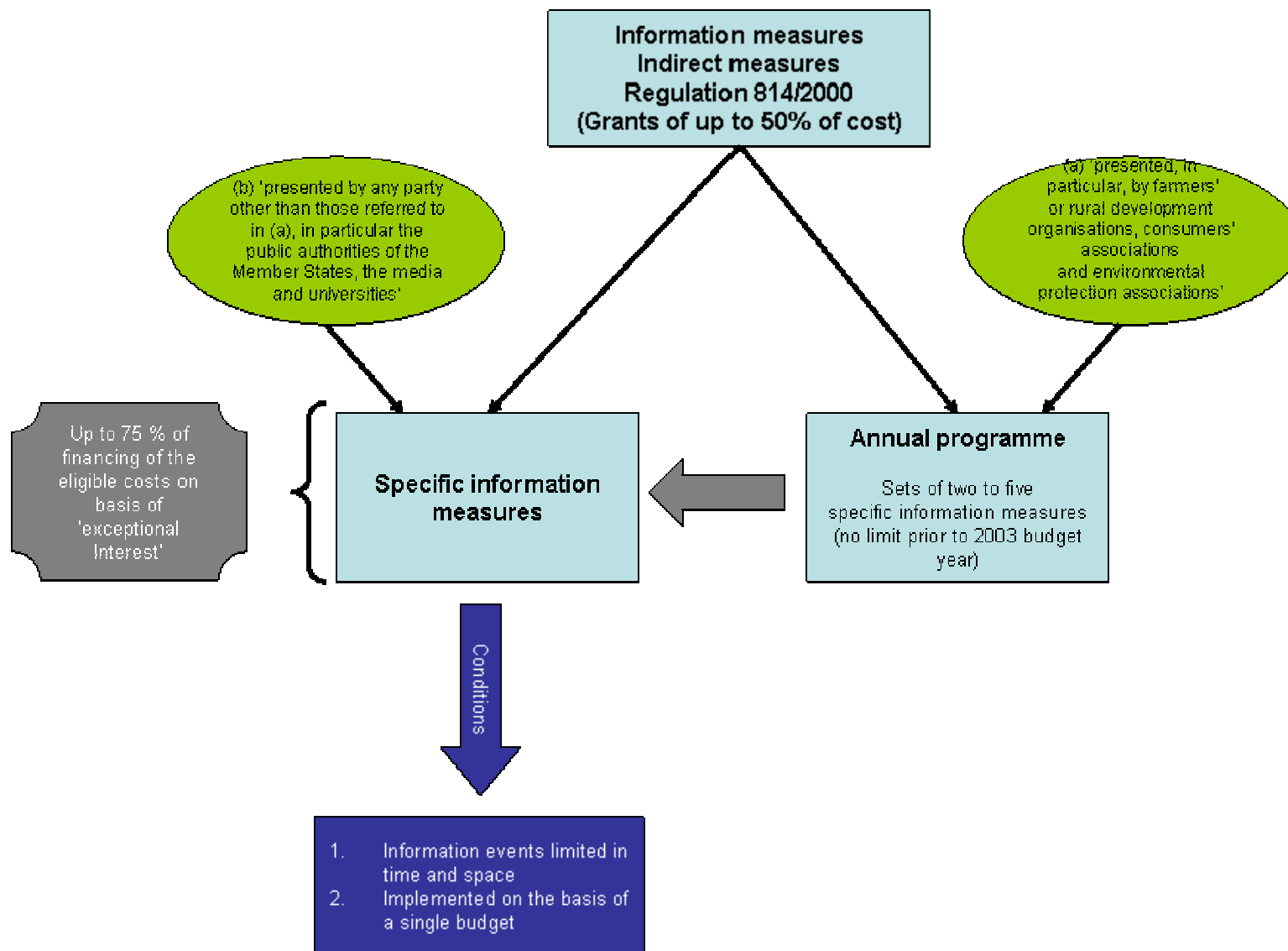
There were no clear internal or external guidelines on the interpretation of the “exceptional interest” of an application.

As stated in recital 1 of Regulation 1557/2001 “In view of experience gained during the 2000 and 2001 marketing years, Commission Regulation (EC) No 1390/2000 of 29 June 2000 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (2) should be amended in order to make some clarifications, improve the arrangements for the receipt and processing of applications and provide for greater flexibility in financing arrangements to allow up to 75 % financing of certain measures of exceptional interest”, the changes made by the subsequent Regulation aimed at making it more flexible for applicants applying for a 75 % rate. Based on our inventory of projects, we note that three programmes were above the 50 % level in 2000 (58%, 65%, 56%) and thus included a 75 % rate for at least some of the various activities proposed. There was no ‘75%’ rate between 2001 and 2004. Only one specific activity was financed at a ‘75 %’ rate in 2005.

Taking into account the fact that a majority of applicants applied for a ‘75 %’ rate, the fact that only four projects out of 150 received more than 50 % financing indicates that the attempt to make it more flexible to obtain was not successful.

However, recital 6 of Regulation 2208/2002 did specify: “In order to make the available financial resources accessible to the largest possible number of potential recipients, a part-financing rate of more than 50 % must be an exception”.

Figure 17 - Eligibility for co-financing under Council Regulation 814/2000



Definition of the scope of monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures.

As described in the introduction of this section, Regulations and Calls set the framework and the scope of the monitoring, the checking and the evaluation of the information measures.

The self-evaluation forms provided for the applicants evolved year by year.

The monitoring itself is not explicitly defined either in the Regulations or in the calls. We did not find a clear definition of the scope of the monitoring by the European Commission, if we understand monitoring as conducting and driving the process along during the whole time that the information measure is under way.

Definition of selection criteria of the applications

There were internal guidelines to support the selection process.

The selection criteria required that in deciding on applications, the Commission take the representativeness of the organisation into account.

We did not find any definition of what was understood by representativeness. We therefore have assumed that representativeness meant that the applicant was representative of his sector and of his country (or for the European Union for organisations at EU level). Many of the successful applicants were not in line with this assumption. There were many successful applicants that only have a regional or a local coverage. Some of these carried out transnational projects with partners.

However our file analysis showed that the representativeness of the organisations was interpreted in a broad sense. Sometimes projects proposed by organisations less representative of the farming community were accepted because the projects were an opportunity to reach a specific or specialised target group. Nevertheless we found examples where we do not believe that the Commission understood the local nature of many organisations making the application, where the proposals for media coverage were not likely to stand closer scrutiny and where the capacity of the organisation to disseminate information via their website at their own expense was not plausible.

For instance, when considering press coverage, we noted that almost all proposals in our sample foresaw press coverage as a key dissemination tool for the information passed on during the activity (e.g. such as an event). Several project proposals presented ambitious plans for press coverage, which appeared to be unrealistic. This element is further commented below when we deal with ex-post evaluation.

During our file analysis we noted discrepancies between the proposed budget, the estimated number of attendees to a conference, etc. and the reality. Cases of applicants under-spending or of the number of participants at conferences being *significantly* lower than envisaged are frequent. One could consider that it is very difficult to know exactly one year before the actual implementation of an action what the actual cost will exactly be. Moreover this could be linked to some “administrative” problems caused by the applicant (such as missing supporting documents for instance) and not to a weak assessment of the plausibility. This being said we found many examples of overestimates of attendees to a conference.

The points system used in the selection process to assess the cost effectiveness did not take directly the number of people who would be reached into account when considering the total budget. The number of people who would be reached was one of the selection criteria but the formula used decreased the weight of this criterion.

Monitoring of the implementation

There was no real monitoring system in place during the period 2000-2004. Applicants were required to submit a final report.

Collection of feedback and data

The Commission's approach to ex post evaluation is mainly driven by the "checking dimension" (checklist-type to check whether the foreseen activities were carried out).

Our research did not allow us to identify a system put in place by the Commission to assess the impact, including the results of the communication activity from a "policy" objective point of view.

There was a system to check the information relative to the communication indicators (number of attendees, etc.) against what was proposed in the applications, but no system was in place either to use this data further or even to pool it for all relevant projects.

No standard format for the final report was suggested to the successful applicants. The requirements for the beneficiaries' final reports are stated in detail in every indirect action agreement concluded between the European Commission and the beneficiaries. But no standard format allowing an easier compilation of information and comparison has not been developed and proposed to the applicants.

Our file analysis indicated that final reports do not always make it possible to ascertain whether projects were carried through as planned⁷⁰. The quality was very mixed and was generally not sufficient to evaluate the success and impact of the project, as opposed to checking compliance with procedures. While this process was supposed to include a consistency check between the original proposal and the end-result, the evidence we have is that this was not always thorough, apart from the pure quantitative check mentioned above.

Regarding the use of press, TV or the Internet for dissemination, it appears to us that the Commission has no real tools to assess upfront whether the plans for use of the media and claims of the potential multiplier effect are realistic - and it has arguably encouraged inflation of these plans by a requirement that more emphasis be put on this. It also has no tools or requirements for measuring the multiplier effect ex post. We note from the file analysis that the plans for press coverage are often unrealistic, not substantiated or not clear, e.g. the name of a national newspaper or television channel is used, when in practice it is more likely that their agricultural supplement and the local channel will be covering the event. Total circulation of a newspaper is taken as a measure of the number of people to be reached, even when that newspaper is a national daily unlikely to devote extensive coverage to a specialist conference.

In several cases, there were no press clippings available in the files, nor analysis of press coverage. When press clippings were available, we noted during our file analysis that the plans for media

⁷⁰ DG AGRI was unable to locate some final reports for the purposes of this evaluation, but as applicants did not receive payment unless they submitted a final report, we deduce that the reports were in fact available to DG AGRI at the time.

coverage were often not met. In some cases media coverage was limited to an article in the magazine of the project promoter.

From 2003 on the concept of a Media Plan was introduced into the calls. This can be considered as a positive element; we can see that an effort was made to improve the understanding of effectiveness, putting the emphasis on, for instance, the general appreciation of a radio programme instead of only the number of listeners. But as noted above, there was a perverse effect: this assessment is by definition more complicated to organise and it is unlikely that many applicants were qualified to do this.

We observed as well that proposals for ex post evaluations made by applicants upfront were often more detailed than what was actually carried out. The Commission took no actions to correct this mismatch.

Nevertheless, as the table below indicates, there is an improvement in the availability of ex-post evaluations from 2003 on.

A number of projects had creation of networks as an objective, but there is no means of checking whether this occurred as the Commission has no mechanism for further follow-up once the final report has been submitted.

Table 22 – Availability of ex-post evaluation in files

Availability of ex-post evaluations	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 (not completed projects)	Total
Number of projects with no ex-post evaluation available in the file	4	17	15	0	6	21	63
Number of projects with an ex-post evaluation available in the file	2	11	3	1	17	0	34
Total	6	28	18	1	23	21	97

Dissemination of results and good practice

The Commission could have developed complementarity and synergy through the dissemination of results and good practice. Our interview process revealed that project beneficiaries would welcome this. No specific actions were taken to activate this area.

The results of the projects were not disseminated in a proactive and organised way.

No system of sharing good practice was put in place by the Commission - a process which our interviews with project beneficiaries indicated they would welcome.

6.7.3.2. DIRECT ACTIONS

In assessing the monitoring, checking and evaluation of the direct actions, our views are classified by tool.

Before describing the situation by tool, we looked for evidence of an overarching strategy for deciding which tools to use, which actions to be organised and what were the objectives to be reached. We did not find proper written documents describing these elements. This is a problem in the sense that objectives should be described beforehand to allow to elaborate a monitoring system and to feed into an ex-post evaluation process. We have already discussed the important issue of baseline measurement when dealing with communication and information activities.

Conferences

Prior to 2004 there is no evidence of evaluation of the conferences having taken place.

We have seen no records of ex-post evaluation of Conferences/seminars, except in the case of the Leader Observatory Conference in Brussels in 2004 and the Conference in Sofia.

The results of the questionnaire distributed at the Leader Conference were not available to the evaluators.

The Sofia Conference is the most recent Conference of those considered in which the Information Unit played a policy role. It was also the first of these at which a (paper) questionnaire was distributed to participants and indicates an improvement in the latter half of the period 2000-2005 in attempts to monitor the results of direct actions more closely. It was specifically a response to a realisation within the unit according to officials that it would have been useful to have had systematic evaluation of the Salzburg conference, but also a reflection of changes in management, increases in personnel numbers and greater awareness of the importance of such activity according to officials we interviewed.

Only 37 questionnaires were collected in Sofia from a total of 200 participants. This is low by the standards of the professional conference industry. The reaction was positive, with 28 out of 37 saying that the Conference had to a considerable extent met their expectations, and the remainder saying it had to some extent met expectations. Twenty participants said they had received new information.

However, the Sofia questionnaire did not ask respondents to identify the type of organisation from which they came, so it is not possible to differentiate between these answers on the basis of target audience.

The questions did not provide a basis for evaluating to what extent knowledge and understanding were increased, or what the impact had been on participants in terms of their intention to disseminate the information more widely.

While our interviews in Member States indicated satisfaction with the Salzburg Conference, there was no survey undertaken at the time.

Finally collection of press clippings and monitoring of radio and TV coverage of the conferences was not systematic. Nor was there any analysis of which type of activity (release, press conference) or journalist (invited/not invited/one-off interview) had generated coverage.

There is no information on how print versions of the proceedings of Conferences (e.g. Salzburg) were distributed, or on hits/downloads of material on these Conferences from the DG AGRI website.

The only indicator available on dissemination of information is a limited number of press clippings from the Salzburg conference⁷¹.

Fairs

There was for most of the period under evaluation no advance target-setting and no systematic measurement of the numbers visiting the stand. There was no measurement of web hits on the DG AGRI website from the Internet connection on the stand as an indicator of topics of interest. Improvements in recording questions asked on the stand and demand for publications have been made since 2004. Improvements in obtaining systematic media coverage have been made recently, and in particular in 2006. However, there is still no analysis of the coverage to analyse the quality of the coverage, and the extent to which it reflects the Commission's messages as a first step towards having an impact. Information on the impact of the stand is based on feedback from talking to people on the stand, which is positive, but no visitor satisfaction surveys have ever been carried out.

There has been significant improvement in the organisation of the Fairs during the last three years, principally through briefing the Commission officials on important questions, on debriefing sessions and more professional planning. There is no evidence of prior target setting (meaning definition of the target groups that are key to be communicated with) nor of systematic monitoring during events in the period of evaluation. But increasingly use is made of the insights gained.

Publications

There is little monitoring of the brochures distributed and of their use. Only stocks are monitored. The process is mainly production-driven and not demand-driven, as the demand is not monitored. Nevertheless some publications were produced because of a perceived need through request to the AGRI-Library mailbox.

We found no evidence of assessment of potential needs. There is no co-ordination with other DG's on anticipated needs for their brochures.

No reader surveys have been organised.

There is no clear distribution strategy. Distribution is via Fairs and to a distribution list of 30,000. We noted that the organisation of the distribution of publications was mainly driven by tactics but that there was no clear distribution strategy behind it.

In the period covered by the evaluation, DG AGRI was using a mailing list of 30,000 inherited from the external organisation which built the database and maintained it until their contract came to an end.⁷² Less than 3% of the names were modified during the period of the evaluation, well under the industry benchmark that one-third of all names/addresses in a database become invalid each year. The nature of this database of media, universities, information relays, stakeholder organisations is such that there is likely to be greater stability, but this is nevertheless a wide gap. There were, however, technical problems external to the Information Unit of DG AGRI, in developing sophisticated database management techniques during the period of the evaluation. We note that the situation is likely to

⁷¹ The only coverage available is from Spain.

⁷² We note that a complete overhaul is planned for 2006. Once this clean-out has been completed, a readership survey is planned.

improve in future, as OPOCE has recently acquired the capability to carry out targeted mailings on behalf of DG AGRI, and a major cleanout of the database was also planned.⁷³

The Unit supplied copies of its materials to the 'relays' and responded to requests from them, but this was sometimes limited by lack of sufficient numbers of publications. Publications from other DG's used at Fairs were obtained on the basis of availability at the time of the Fair, but there was no prior co-ordination of requirements, with the result, for example, that not enough publications were available on enlargement when this was the theme of participation at the SIAL Fair in Paris.

However, not all relays receive the publications designed to target the general public and not all are aware of their existence. We consulted the DG AGRI mailing list and found that far from all Europe Direct relays were on the list. Relays who only receive one copy of a publication via the mailing list are often not proactive in seeking additional copies, so cannot meet what demand for information they do have. We found other examples of stakeholders whom one would expect to be on the distribution list who were not.

Website

There is a monitoring system (tracking number of hits), but it is not used and analysed.

The operational objectives for the website are not detailed and precise. The positioning of the website with regard to the general public or the farming/rural community is not properly defined

User surveys were not carried out.

Visits

There is no formal strategy for promoting the opportunities offered by the visit programme, no targeting of the relevant groups and no strategic planning of the visits. This was supported by the fact that visits are generally driven by demand rather than by the Information Unit offering/promoting a service.

There is no collection of any kind of evaluation or assessment survey at the end of the visits.

Eurobarometer

There is no strategic use of the Eurobarometer to develop further the views of needs or problems.

There was no appropriate internal review mechanism of the results.

Green Team

The Green Team was created in 1992 and was relaunched at the moment of the agenda 2000. Since 2003 it seems that the focus on to the Green Team at senior level has been less (as the perceived need was less after the Mid-Term Review) and that a tool which could still be useful remains under-used⁷⁴. In terms of feedback from Green Team members to the Information Unit, a specific form has been

⁷³ Until ca. 2002, the Unit was able to carry out segmented mailing via an external contractor, but this capability was lost when use of the contractor stopped.

⁷⁴ The Green Team, while it may not have been used to its full capacity in recent years, is an important tool as was seen in the recent wine reform campaign in 2006 and is central to DG AGRI's communication strategy. This confirmed the fact that the GT is a very powerful tool during major information and communication campaigns.

designed for this purpose, but has not been systematically disseminated, still less used, within the Green Team.

Video

We are unable to evaluate video material. There are no written objectives, there is no information on how the need for video material is defined, and we have not been able to obtain a copy of the video material covered by the evaluation.

6.7.4. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that there are serious weaknesses in the ex ante needs assessment and ex post impact evaluation from a communications point of view of both direct and indirect actions. The problems in relation to direct actions have been incorporated under each description of tool, but there are some that are very specific to indirect actions which are addressed here.

The Regulation requires monitoring of project implementation and permits on-the-spot checks. The indirect projects are evaluated to see whether they qualify for funding and there is no further contact, unless administrative problems arise, until the final report is due. This triggers a check on compliance with the proposals. Our file analysis shows that both the ex ante selection and the final report screening process fail to spot qualitative deficiencies because they are oriented towards compliance with formal and financial requirements and do not demonstrate an all-round process to determine the plausibility in communication terms of a proposal for co-financing. No mechanisms are in place to ensure that evaluators are chosen on the basis of their communication expertise, to ensure that the Commission has a qualified cadre of staff with those skills or to provide staff with the opportunity to acquire/upgrade their communication expertise for this purpose.

In addition, the rules are not sufficiently clear to the beneficiaries, nor even internally within the Commission as there are inconsistencies in what has been accepted or rejected as a specific measure or a programme. Despite evident problems with the requirement that specific information measures must be 'limited in space and time', nothing was done during the period of the evaluation to clarify this. Moreover, this rule has ruled out projects which do not qualify as programmes but could achieve economies of scale and heightened effectiveness by, for example, organising several events in several locations over a short period. No attempt has been made to improve the quality of ex ante needs assessments.

There was no system in place to centralise the information received as a result of direct and indirect actions, to identify impact or effectiveness, or to disseminate good practice. All this has implications for effective use of the information instruments.

6.7.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- pay much closer attention to monitoring and evaluation of all projects. In the case of indirect actions, a number of specific actions should be taken to make this action more effective. These include improving selection procedures to make them more consistent with the objectives of the information policy, being proactive in implementing the shift towards targeting the general public more, being proactive in promoting the availability of this funding, and creating a mechanism to disseminate good practice from the projects. DG AGRI should also consider the implementation of an appropriate system to collect, analyse and share the feedback provided

by the target group/applicants and the information passed on to the European Commission through this channel.

- define and develop from the beginning the measurement system and set of indicators to be used in order to evaluate the information measures. DG AGRI needs to apply a set of indicators to measure the effectiveness and impact of the information measures. As already stated, the need for a baseline measurement is a crucial element, without which measuring the impact will remain a very difficult task.

It will take investment in time and resources to implement these recommendations. We recommend elsewhere an increase in financial resources given the size of the challenge, but more could be achieved with the existing resources by developing templates, checklists and reporting processes, and devoting more resources to analysis and drawing strategic and operational conclusions from a communication policy point of view (and not only from a financial or communication activity point of view). This may impose an additional workload on applicants for funding (not in terms of financial compliance but in proper preparation and follow-through from a communication point of view), and this could require the budget for individual indirect actions to be increased, given the investment needed in better ex ante assessment or more effective ex post measurement. But all of this would then translate into and leverage better understanding of the activities carried out. That, in turn, could lead, if embedded in the policy feedback loop, to greater relevance, effectiveness and efficiency (and therefore) a better use of public money.

Below are more specific recommendations by tool:

- For conferences:
 - have a brief, written record as to which stakeholders are invited to conferences and why, and use that information to monitor the impact of the Conference;
 - set up a system for systematic collection press coverage (and information on radio, TV and electronic media coverage) of conferences, and analyse ex post the extent to which objectives were met/messages reflected as an indicator of first-level impact;
 - monitor the distribution of documents distributed at, or in the case of proceedings after the Conference, as a first-level indicator of the usefulness of the publications and channels;
 - monitor hits and downloads from the DG AGRI website of information on conferences as a first-level indicator of the usefulness of this information;
 - develop evaluation forms for conferences which differentiate between stakeholder/participant types;
 - develop questionnaires which improve the ability to evaluate effectiveness;
 - investigate the use of online surveys of conference participants after the Conference, providing the Unit is in a position to carry out the survey in the immediate aftermath of the conference, since response rates will be too low if too much time elapses.
- For Fairs:
 - continue along the current path of continuous process improvement in terms of co-ordination with other stakeholders present at the Fair, other parts of the DG (including the Cabinet) and the Fair organisers;

- systematically collect and analyse press coverage (and information on radio, TV and electronic media coverage) of its participation in Fairs as a first step towards measuring impact. This may require working more closely with Commission Representations in the Member States;
 - use visitor surveys to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of its presence at Fairs;
 - monitor the type of information provided to stakeholders during the Fairs and in particular identify the type of information that evokes most interest among stakeholders
 - collect data on the type of questions received and documentation required from stakeholders;
 - collect on the spot feedback on the relevance of the information provided to stakeholders;
 - use short questionnaires when the Commission carries out specific events for stakeholders (which a sample of selected participants are requested to fill in on the spot) to collect opinions on the relevance of the information provided for their needs.
- For the publications:
 - have an overall written strategy on when and how publications should target the general public;
 - set operational objectives for reaching the general public by publication and by distribution channel;
 - carry out regular surveys on the information needs of multipliers and have mechanisms in place for better publicising the existence of the publications and stimulating demand;
 - carry out regular reader surveys of its publications for readability, usefulness and impact;
 - work more closely with other DGs in co-ordinating content and requirements;
 - implement as a matter of urgency the planned clean-out of its mailing list.
 - For the website:
 - have an overall written strategy on when and how the website should target the general public, and include in this process consideration of whether the site should be layered with sections accessible from the home page for distinct target audiences;
 - carry out regular surveys on the layout on and readability of the material on the website from the point of view of the general public and of other visitors as well.
 - For visits::
 - develop a strategy in terms of visits by the general public, and in so doing consider carefully when it is efficient and effective to make speakers available to groups of general public visitors, or stakeholders who represent the general public;

- systematically survey participants on the impact of the visit and maintain contact after the visit with press visitors.
- For the Green Team:
 - develop a mandatory feedback system for the Green Team and ensure that the results of the feedback is collated and analysed and fed into the development of the Green Team
 - design a specific evaluation form for the Green Team to be used to collect feedback ex-post from the organisation that invited the Green Team member. Anonymity should be ensured.
- For indirect actions:
 - consider a mechanism which would allow it to ensure a better balance in applications between projects which will reach the farming/rural world and the general public;
 - improve its application form and final report process so that it is better able to evaluate the quality of the needs assessment, the definition of objectives and target groups, and the likely impact of the use of the media;
 - develop clear guidelines for monitoring and ex-post evaluation, setting standards for use of data collection tools (questionnaires, website monitoring etc.) and for the quality of information provided. To this end a semi structured reporting template, providing information on the type of information to be provided could be considered
 - consider the use of monitoring reports for indirect actions.

7. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These conclusions relate to our evaluation of the information policy activities of DG AGRI for which Regulation 814/2000 provides the legal basis. These activities are:

- direct actions, such as the organisation of conferences, participation in Fairs, production of publications, management of the DG AGRI website and of speaker programmes which are carried out directly by DG AGRI, and for which ultimate responsibility sits within the DG AGRI Information Unit;
- indirect actions, i.e. activities carried out by stakeholder organisations, which are co-financed by DG AGRI. The Information Unit also manages these activities.

The primary objective of Regulation 814/2000 is to rectify a situation where "the common agricultural policy is often misunderstood because of a dearth of information" though a "consistent, objective and comprehensive information and communication strategy."

These conclusions, which summarise the findings in the body of this report, are based on our desk research, including extensive file analysis, and a review of the perceptions of the various individuals and organisations who are directly and indirectly affected by the implementation and results of a given intervention, and who are likely to have an interest in its evaluation (e.g. programme managers, policy-makers, and the programme's target population.) We carried out more than 350 interviews, including with European Commission officials. The desk research and interviews took place in the period February to August 2006. The evaluation covered the period 2000-2005.

We chose to take a qualitative approach, namely our perceptions review, which is an accepted evaluation methodology.

We clarified our understanding of the policy's objectives at the outset through constructing problem and objective trees for the two target groups – the general public, and the rural/farming community, on the basis of the information available from DG AGRI on policy design. That design was often implicit rather than explicitly described in documents.

Our ability to draw conclusions on the basis of the qualitative approach was limited given the time period covered by the evaluation. In practice, even where interviewees were involved in implementation of the policy in the earlier years covered by the evaluation, they generally had poor recall of their objectives or perceptions at that time. In many instances, of course, people had moved on, and it was not possible to obtain information about particular activities in the earlier period.

We evaluated the policy against seven themes:

- A) Effectiveness in targeting the general public;
- B) Effectiveness in targeting rural area stakeholders;
- C) Effectiveness in improving the implementation and management of the CAP;
- D) Effectiveness in mixing information tools and resulting efficiency;
- E) Coherence and synergy with other information actions on the CAP;
- F) Relevance of the objectives – main targets and communication strategy;
- G) Monitoring, checking and evaluation of the activities.

The section on each theme in the body of the report contains conclusions developed, where appropriate, by different type of tool, and in relation to both direct and indirect actions, and both the general public and the farming/rural community. This section summarises our overall conclusions in relation to each theme before drawing general conclusions. In all cases, recommendations follow the conclusions.

A. Effectiveness in targeting the general public

CONCLUSIONS

The principal tools used for targeting the general public were presence at agricultural Fairs, a limited number of publications, which were available in print form and on the website, a limited number of visits to the Commission, the presence of mainstream media and some stakeholder organisations at some Conferences, and a limited number of indirect actions.

The Commission tried to reach more of the general public from 2003 onwards. This translated into a very limited increase in the number of indirect actions reaching the general public. At around the same time, there was a noticeable improvement in the professionalism of the approach to reaching out to the general public at Fairs. Other activities were generally professional in terms of supply (i.e. the right message and material were prepared), but were let down by insufficient attention to the nature of the demand and to dissemination. Most information was available in a timely fashion in English, French and German, but the lack of availability of material in other languages had a serious impact on effectiveness.

Many individual activities – and they were very few in terms of the general public as a specific target group – were effective in relation to the stakeholders they reached. Others were felt to be too complex for the general public even where this was the target audience: there are only a few topics in which the general public is interested and for which they need clear, simple messages.

Moreover, this must be seen in the context of the low numbers of people reached and the limited size of the budget – only a few million euro each year for reaching the general public. It is clear from our perceptions review that in many cases even the top level of stakeholders, such as consumer organisations, the Commission's own Representations and Europe Direct relays, are not being reached.

Overall, while some individual activities can be considered to have been effective, this was not the case for the policy as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clear strategy on reaching the general public as a primary target, either direct or via relevant stakeholder organisations, based on a clear understanding of what is feasible, with:
 - clearly defined priority target groups,
 - a limited number of messages based on a clear understanding of the topics of most interest to the general public,
 - use of the tools best suited to each audience,

- synergy between different tools,
- continuity in its messages,
- attention to local relevance,
- measurement of impact and collection of best/worst practice,
- more attention to implementation, notably distribution,
- availability in all EU languages, and in a timely manner,
- devote significantly increased budget to the policy in line with the scale of the challenge.

B. Effectiveness in targeting rural area stakeholders

CONCLUSIONS

The principal tools used for targeting rural area stakeholders were presence at agricultural Fairs, publications, the website, conferences, making speakers available for visitors to the Commission, the media attending Fairs and conferences, and the indirect actions – which were predominantly conferences.

As in the case of the general public, individual activities were effective in reaching some members of the overall target group, or the specific target group for a particular event or indirect action. Conferences and some aspects of the website were particularly effective. Participation at Fairs was notably more professional from the middle of the period onwards. On the other hand, similar issues relating to distribution, dissemination, translation and suitability for local contexts surfaced in relation to these activities as they did for the general public. Moreover, there was more success in reaching the farming community than the rural community in general, despite the growing importance of rural development.

The importance of (but the absence of) information available in the language of the stakeholder, not just at grass-roots level, but also at the level of stakeholder organisations, was constantly stressed during the perceptions review. In particular, the lack of a clearly centralised communication approach to the website, the ad hoc nature of content inclusion and updating, and the fact that it is only in nine languages, limits its effectiveness vis-à-vis the rural area stakeholder organisations for whom it has become the primary tool for obtaining information on the CAP. These are also issues in relation to the general public and farmers, but it is the rural areas' stakeholder organisations who are currently the main target.

As addressed below in relation to relevance, there was no baseline measurement for identifying what information was needed (for either rural area stakeholders, or the general public), and where there was the greatest need (both by type of farmer and geographically). The only baseline measurement, which was available from a 2000 Eurobarometer poll, was not fed into the policy design on a systematic basis. In the absence of such analysis, one would expect to see activity reasonably evenly spread across the EU. In practice, there was a concentration of activity at Fairs in France, Germany and Italy, and a clustering of indirect actions in Italy and Spain.

While the funds available in relation to the target audience were greater proportionately than for the general public, they were still not large in relation to the need to provide far more information to the group directly affected by the policy. Consequently, it was still important to target the use of the funds

carefully. There was, however, also no systematic approach to making sure that stakeholder organisations were passing on information from DG AGRI to their members, and were passing it on in a form which conveyed DG AGRI's messages. This is essential, given that DG AGRI does not use its resources to reach out to farmers direct. Stakeholder organisations are the main source of information for farmers – yet these organisations often obtain legitimacy in the eyes of their members through opposing DG AGRI proposals for change.

Farm advisors are an important source of information for farmers, but do not appear to have been considered as a specific target group.

There was also no process for learning lessons or disseminating information/best practice from indirect actions.

Consequently, while individual activities can be considered to have been effective, this was not the case for the policy as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- develop a clearer strategy on reaching farming/rural stakeholders of the farming/rural community which distinguishes clearly between them as target groups, and is based on a deeper understanding of the needs of these groups;
- create a better balance between activities targeting the farming community and those targeting the rural community in the broadest sense of the word, in order to reflect better the importance of rural development in the European agricultural model;
- develop a set of clear and simple messages for use with and dissemination by the farming/rural community to improve knowledge and understanding of reform processes;
- attach greater priority to implementation, notably distribution and availability in all EU-25 languages;
- set up a process for disseminating experience and best practice from indirect actions targeting rural area stakeholders.

C: Effectiveness in improving the implementation and management of the CAP

CONCLUSIONS

Information policy can be used to improve policy implementation and management in two ways:

- by building feedback mechanisms into the implementation of information policy, and
- by ensuring that personnel involved in implementation and management of the policy are as well equipped as they can be to carry out their work and to represent the policy to the outside world.

There were no formal feedback mechanisms built into the implementation of DG AGRI information policy, though there are formal feedback mechanisms within DG AGRI as a whole (such as advisory groups). Using information activities, e.g. conferences organised in the context of direct or indirect actions, is generally an informal feedback loop, reinforcing contact with officials (which is one of the standard channels for feedback).

In our perceptions review, we found that these alternative channels are regarded as satisfactory and there is no wish to use information activities as a formal channel on broader policy issues. There is also no process at present for the Unit responsible for information policy to disseminate information fed back in this way into the appropriate policy units.

There is an unfulfilled need for a mechanism for feedback to improve information policy, both by measuring the effectiveness of direct activities, and disseminating best practice and the experience gained in indirect actions.

We found, that internal communication tools are relatively effective in creating the corporate spirit which contributes to optimal implementation and management of policy, though the Intranet would benefit from the same more centralised management and systematic updating as would the external website, and there is an unfulfilled demand from DG AGRI officials for clear, concise information on policies with which officials are not dealing on a day-to-day basis.

Overall, therefore, the information policy was not effective in channelling external feedback which would improve overall implementation and management of the CAP, but this need is met in other ways. Nor was the policy effective in creating a feedback loop into the policy itself. On the other hand, it was largely effective in providing DG AGRI personnel with the information they need for optimal implementation and management of the policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- define more specifically when and whether it wishes to use information measures as a source of feedback, and
- where it wishes to use information measures as a source of feedback, that it have clear operational objectives for collection and dissemination to the appropriate policymakers;
- obtain a better understanding of the needs of users of its Intranet and make improvements to the timeliness of the information on Dimitra;
- investigate further the needs of officials for clear messages and information on current policies.

D. Effectiveness in mixing information tools and resulting efficiency

CONCLUSIONS

Information policy is a tool kit. The issue is less the relative effectiveness of one tool as opposed to another than the mix of tools used at any one time for a given objective with a given target group.

In evaluating effectiveness, we were looking for evidence that these issues had been considered and that the Information Unit had a mechanism available to it for deciding when and where to use particular tools most effectively in relation to its objectives for different types of activity. We were also looking for costings which would enable us to evaluate the efficiency of the tools relative to each other.

We found no written strategy setting out how to ensure synergy between different measures or addressing relative effectiveness. As there is no factual quantitative measurement of the effect on the

targeted audience and no comprehensive information on costs, there are no starting points for evaluating relative effectiveness and/or efficiency.

Nevertheless it is possible to differentiate, on the basis of our interviews, between the relative impact of the different tools. They are listed below, beginning with the most used/best known. There are no significant differences across the EU. In the list below, it should be borne in mind that the position of the indirect actions (no. 5 below) can vary from Member State to Member State depending whether indirect actions have had national reach or not, and between European and local-level organisations, because the former have more consistently been organisers of direct actions. Fairs are not on the list because too few people had experience of this activity.

1. Website
2. Fact sheets
3. Conferences/seminars
4. Publications other than the Fact Sheets
5. Indirect actions
6. Visits
7. Eurobarometer

The website has had the most impact relative to other tools, but it is not a substitute for other activities.

Effectiveness could on a number of occasions have been improved in respect of timing (timely provision of information) and language issues (use of simple language, especially when considering the general public, availability in languages other than English, French or German, and/or quality of translation).

As the tools used to reach the general public were not numerous enough to demonstrate effectiveness, the combination of tools was not effective in targeting the general public. In fact, developing only a few actions (because of the limited budget) to reach the general public is probably bound to be ineffective. Moreover, as already stated, the “general public” is generally not an appropriate target in communication terms. It is much too broad and this can then cause many problems in the implementation of any communication activity, especially when these are isolated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- continue to make improvements in its ability to optimise effectiveness by making sure that its activities are carried out where, when and in the language in which they are needed;
- develop its understanding of the synergies between different types of information tool, so that relative effectiveness and resulting efficiency are optimised;
- define precisely the target groups, better assess and understand the information needs, develop an overall strategy taking into account the targets, the priorities, the needs, the channels and tools and the available budget, and especially when considering the general public, evaluate whether a critical mass of communication and information flow can be reached with the available budget;
- develop a matrix allowing the Information Unit to decide which tools should be used as a function of the definition of the target groups and the “communication” objectives to be reached (such “objectives” are related to the coverage of the identified target group, the regional selectivity, the target group selectivity, the speed to reach the target, the dissemination effect, the potential for developing an argument, etc.); of course, the combination of tools also depends on the overall communication objectives to be reached: i.e. is the aim to increase

overall awareness, to reinforce (or create) understanding, or to develop commitment? The combination of tools will evolve as a function of the actual situation of the target groups in relation to their information needs.

E. Coherence and synergy with other information actions on the CAP

CONCLUSIONS

In answering this question, we were looking for the coherence and synergy with other information actions on the CAP managed by a series of other actors, such as other DGs/Commission services, relays, Member States and key stakeholders, such as farming organisations, NGOs and Rural Development organisations.

We conclude that the extent to which the Information Unit exploits synergies with other Commission players varies significantly. With some actors, such as the Spokesman, there is a good working relationship and generally a clear division of responsibilities.

Cooperation with other DG AGRI units on Fairs and indirect actions is effective. Cooperation with officials who participate as speakers in events, but who are not members of the Green Team, is underdeveloped.

Cooperation with Information Units from other DGs is ad hoc. There are examples of good practice on publications, and there is cooperation in relation to visits, but there has been no systematic coordination at the level of messages or tools.

Cooperation with Commission Representations is with a few exceptions not developed, and there is no system in place to ensure continued cooperation with these, nor a tool to keep the Representations regularly updated.

Cooperation with Relays has not taken place since the Carrefour network was closed, and no action has been taken to ensure that the Europe Direct relays are aware of DG AGRI's information tools.

On the other hand, we have found no evidence that information actions clearly overlapped with or duplicated those of the other Commission actors.

Interface between the Information Unit and the Member States is limited. There has been cooperation on one-off events, and yearly cooperation meetings have taken place since 2004, but there is currently no coordination of information strategies.

For stakeholder organisations there is currently no specific forum for discussion of communication activities or strategies with DG AGRI.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- cooperate consistently with the units responsible for Rural development to be developed with the aim of identifying potential synergies;
- identify DG AGRI officials who participate as speakers in events, but who are not members of the Green Team, and in cooperation with these identify tools which may be of use to these;
- develop regular relations with other Information Units from other DGs and ensure that DG AGRI's Information Unit is consulted on activities carried out by these;

- consult regularly the Commission Representations on their need for information and where appropriate set up an alert function for their specific use;
- develop an annual joint strategy for cooperation on information activity between DG AGRI and each Representation;
- update DG AGRI's mailing list as to ensure that the Europe Direct Centres are included;
- consider the development of a communication strategy targeting rural-based Europe Direct relays and consult this network on the development of publications, in particular for the general public;
- intensify its cooperation with Member States and key national stakeholder organisations with the aim of identifying potential cooperation action and untargeted needs which could be covered by the Information Unit;
- consult regularly both Member States and key stakeholder organisations on the overall information strategy, as well as Member States on the relevance of key information tools.

F: Relevance of the objectives - main targets and communication strategy

CONCLUSIONS

For the objectives of an information policy to be relevant, they should meet the needs of the main target groups, in this case the general public and rural area stakeholders, and the objectives need to be incorporated in an overall communication strategy. The need was expressed in general terms in the Regulation, in the sense that there was a perception that these groups lacked information and they often misunderstood the CAP.

There was, however, limited baseline measurement of the extent to which this was the case, via measurement of awareness, knowledge and understanding based on polls or qualitative techniques. Eurobarometer questions were not designed to elicit this information. Many questions in these annual polls measured the priorities for public opinion, without measuring the extent to which it is realised that the CAP already has these as priorities. There was no continuous measurement.

Our perceptions review enabled us to identify the major concerns of the general public and rural area stakeholders across the EU. There are differences related to different patterns of agricultural production and differences in the importance of agriculture to different countries, but overall there is a narrow range of core subjects of public debate and of concerns for rural area stakeholders across the EU-25.

In the case of the general public, the level of spontaneous interest in any issue related to the CAP or agriculture is low. The issues which do get their attention are the cost of the CAP, food safety and quality, animal welfare and environmental impacts of agriculture. In the case of the rural area stakeholders, the key issues are the immediate impact of recent reforms, bureaucracy associated with implementation of the CAP, reform fatigue and the unpredictability of their future, given the fact that a review is planned half way through the current Financial Framework and at the time of the following Framework.

The perceptions review confirmed that the objectives of the Commission's information policy were relevant to the needs of its target group. The objective-setting process was largely implicit and did not translate into a formal communication strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- put in place a system to measure awareness, knowledge and understanding, and changes in these on an ongoing basis, so that there is a clear picture of needs and how they are evolving. Such a system would also provide a benchmark for ex post evaluation of activities. DG AGRI should build its own capability to make needs assessment as a basis for its own work and to judge those of others.
- be creative in devising ways to convey its messages based on appropriate strategic media planning, and combining above the line and below the line activities. This strategy should take into account the answer to the following questions: what are the real information needs of the EU citizen in relation to agriculture, how do these relate to the messages which DG AGRI wants to convey, and how can DG AGRI deliver information which takes both of these dimensions into account?

G. Monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures

CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation theme aimed at assessing the implementation and the organisation of the monitoring, checking and evaluation of the information measures by the Commission. We considered as well the various elements relative to the strategy and design of activities conducted.

We conclude that there are weaknesses in the ex ante needs assessment and ex post impact evaluation of both direct and indirect actions.

The problems in relation to direct actions relate for instance to:

- weak prior target setting and the absence of a clear dissemination strategy;
- the lack of a structured approach to ex post evaluations (e.g. no reader or site/event user/participant surveys) relative to the policy objectives (of increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CAP);
- the lack of systematic monitoring of activities (albeit there were some improvements in the second half of the period, notably in relation to Fairs, and objectives in relation to database management).

Regarding indirect actions, the Regulation requires monitoring of project implementation and permits on-the-spot checks. The indirect projects are evaluated to see whether they qualify for funding and there is no further contact, unless administrative problems arise, until the final report is due. This triggers a check on administrative and financial compliance with the proposals. Our file analysis shows that both the ex ante selection and the final report screening process failed, on the other hand, to spot qualitative deficiencies because they are oriented towards compliance with formal requirements and do not demonstrate an all-round process to determine the plausibility of a proposal for co-financing, or of the results claimed, in communication terms.

Any internal guidelines were not clear enough to prevent inconsistencies in what was accepted or rejected as a specific measure or a programme. Despite evident problems with the requirement that specific information measures must be 'limited in space and time', nothing was done to clarify this. No attempt was made to improve the quality of ex ante needs assessments.

There was no system in place to monitor the indirect actions *ex itinere* and to centralise the information received as a result of direct and indirect actions, to identify impact or effectiveness, or to disseminate good practice. All this has implications for effective use of the information instruments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- pay much closer attention to monitoring and evaluation of all projects. In the case of indirect actions, a number of specific actions should be taken to make this action more effective. These include improving selection procedures to make them more consistent with the objectives of the information policy, being proactive in implementing the shift towards targeting the general public more, being proactive in promoting the availability of this funding, and creating a mechanism to disseminate good practice from the projects. DG AGRI should also consider the implementation of an appropriate system to collect, analyse and share the feedback provided by the target group/applicants and the information passed on to the European Commission through this channel.
- define and develop from the beginning the measurement system and set of indicators to be used in order to evaluate the information measures. DG AGRI needs to apply a set of indicators to measure the effectiveness and impact of the information measures. As already stated, the need for a baseline measurement is a crucial element, without which measuring the impact will remain a very difficult task.

More specific recommendations have been made in relation to each direct action tool, in the main report.

General conclusions and recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

These general conclusions should be read bearing in mind that the sums of money available for information policy on the CAP, and for individual activities, were small by any standards. With such limited resources, the task of officials implementing the policy would have been made easier if there had been a clearer strategic direction for DG AGRI's information policy as a whole with clearly defined written policy objectives and priority target groups.

In the absence of these, the Information Unit in DG AGRI, with which responsibility for delivery ultimately rested, found itself in a situation during the period, where it was juggling priorities without a framework establishing the appropriate focus to bring the most effective result.

Implicit objectives did exist and were relevant to the information needs of the target groups – but they were not always implemented in an optimal manner. However, a number of improvements began to be put in place towards the end of the period covered by the evaluation particularly in relation to participation in Fairs, and more recently in database management. We are aware that the need for further improvement has been recognised in 2006. Areas pinpointed for such improvements include cooperation with other information players within and outside the Commission, the website and overall coherence of all information activities within DG AGRI.

Information for the general public

Where people have thought about the CAP –they still have major misconceptions as to the rationale for the CAP and its cost, the contribution the CAP makes to food safety, food quality and preservation of the environment, and policy towards the Third World. However, overall interest is low.

With the very limited financial resources available to it to date, DG AGRI has only been able to identify and address needs on an ad hoc basis. While the tools are relevant to the needs in general terms and may be individually effective, the overall impact has been limited. The effectiveness of these activities could have been improved by paying greater attention to distribution and dissemination.

There are Member States and some stakeholder farming organisations, though they are a minority, who also target the general public with information on agriculture and the CAP. The potential synergies with these Member States and other actors have not been exploited.

Information for the farming/rural community

Farmers, particularly small farmers, are only spontaneously interested in policy measures which affect them. They generally do not understand the rationale for policy and reforms, and have yet to be convinced that recent reforms are the source of opportunities. They are suffering from reform fatigue and fearful of what future reviews will bring.

With the very limited financial resources available to it to date, DG AGRI has not been able to quantify awareness, knowledge, and understanding on a continuous basis through building on the baseline surveys which do exist. It has also only been able to address these needs with information which primarily targets the farmers organisations. Some of these have been reached effectively with individual activities, contributing to their overall level of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the policy, particularly where users can read English, French or German.

Stakeholder organisations would like to see the Commission produce more information suitable for use with farmers, either directly or via them. As indicated above, our perceptions review results indicated that there continues to be a negative perception of the CAP, which the activities of stakeholder organisations, Member States and DG AGRI have not been able to correct.

DG AGRI currently has no mechanism for obtaining a systematic understanding of what information is being passed on to farmers, either on the basis of information it supplies or from other sources.

Direct actions

As noted above, individual direct actions – e.g. Fairs, publications and conferences – are generally professional in approach, relevant to the objectives and effective vis-à-vis specific groups. There has been process improvement in a number of areas in the last couple of years. The effectiveness and relevance could have been improved, however, with more attention to implementation and impact, more importance given to the use of all EU languages, and more attention to the synergies between different tools and with other information providers.

The website is the most important communication tool available to DG AGRI at present. It is consulted daily by some key stakeholder organisations, but its effectiveness could be improved by more centralised management of content, clear differentiation of content for different audiences, better updating and from wider use of all EU languages. Some stakeholder organisations obtain their information second-hand from other sources because the DG AGRI website is not up-to-date or not in

their language. What is true of the external website, is also true of the Intranet, though internal communication is otherwise largely effective.

Indirect actions

The objectives of individual indirect actions were relevant for the needs of the target groups and appear to have been effective in many cases, but the absence of ex-post evaluation makes it difficult to be definitive in most cases. Overall the effectiveness suffered from the fragmented nature of the activities. The use of indirect actions for reaching the target groups would have been more effective if there had been mechanisms in place for publicising the availability of this funding more widely (and in particular outside the farming community), for evaluating the impact of the projects (as opposed to relying on evidence of outputs as an indicator of success), for spreading the funding more evenly across the EU in relation to the need for information, for developing synergies between projects, and through appropriating lessons learned within DG AGRI and disseminating best practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that DG AGRI:

- have a structured written strategy framework for its information policy;
- be proactive in promoting the availability of the funding;
- update the strategy and operational objectives for its information policy when necessary;
- limit its objectives for its ultimate target groups, i.e. farmers and the general public, to a set of clear and consistent messages;
- define priority target sub-groups and develop appropriate dissemination strategies in order to reach these;
- spread its activities more evenly across the EU as a whole, and provide information in a wider range of languages;
- establish a hierarchy and mutually reinforcing mix of tools suitable for use with given target groups;
- base all the above on continuous measurement of needs and impact, via polls, surveys, focus groups, message testing and pilot projects;
- design a monitoring system which enables the collection of data in the course of and at the end of projects in order further to feed the strategic process;
- establish mechanisms for obtaining and systematically applying feedback on its own activities, and appropriating within DG AGRI and disseminating externally lessons learned from indirect actions;
- introduce costing techniques which will allow it to measure efficiency of direct and indirect actions in terms of communication objectives;
- acquire a deeper understanding of the information activities of the Member States and stakeholder organisations;
- work more closely with Member States and Commission Representations in Member States on tools, timing and messages.