

Evaluation of Promotion and Information Actions for Agricultural Products

Final Report

Executives Summaries in English and French

November 2011

**Study realised by ADE in collaboration with Metis and
Agrotec**



This report has been prepared by ADE
at the request of the European Commission.

The views expressed are those of the
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Executive Summary

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Objective and scope of the evaluation

This evaluation commissioned by the DG Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission aims at providing an overall independent assessment of its promotion policy.

The **objective** of this evaluation is twofold:

- First, to analyse and synthesise the evaluation reports on promotion programmes carried out within the framework contracts (commissioned in 2006, which assessed the effectiveness of information and promotion programmes on the EU market and in third countries) and to draw horizontal conclusions and recommendations for promotion on the internal market and in third countries.
- Second, to examine the relevance and effectiveness of the EU information and promotion policy for agricultural products with respect to achieving the objectives laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008 as well as its coherence with other promotion measures applied under the CAP.

The **scope** of the evaluation concerns main instruments covered in Article 2 of Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008¹, namely co-funded information and promotion programmes and Commission initiatives including high-level trade visits.

The evaluation covers all EU Member States benefitting from EU co-financed promotion programmes. The Member States that are the main beneficiaries of promotion programmes and the Member States that take part in multi-country promotion programmes are examined in more depth.

The examination period covers the time span from 2002 to 2010. The 2002-2008 period is covered by the synthesis of the previous framework contract evaluations; whereas promotion throughout 2008-2010 is subject to a further in-depth analysis based on current programmes.

The evaluation examines the relevance and effectiveness of the above-mentioned measures with respect to the achievement of their objectives, as well as the management of programmes. Coherence of the above-mentioned measures with other promotional measures applied under the CAP, notably in the fruit and vegetable and the wine sectors, under the rural development policy, and under Article 68 of Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 is examined too. Complementarities with promotional policies and initiatives implemented by private actors and Member States are studied as well.

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008 of 17 December 2007 on information and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries

Evolution of EU promotion policy

In the framework of the CAP, the Commission support to promotion and information on agricultural products has been evolving significantly since the early 1980s. From 2000 to 2007, these activities were ruled by two distinct regulations, one concerning the internal market and the other targeting third countries². Since 2008, the two regulations have been merged in one single harmonised regulatory scheme (Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 501/2008) with no significant modification in terms of content, except an enhanced support to fruit and vegetables in schools and the introduction of poultry meat as eligible product following the avian influenza crises. Currently, the promotion policy includes a large number of eligible agricultural products and food products, at the first processing stage.

The main objective of this scheme is to improve the image and raise the awareness on the quality and specific production methods of EU agricultural products in order to reverse static or declining consumption (i.e. fruit and vegetables, milk), expand the demand (i.e. olive oil, organic products) or open new markets, depending on the case. The European dimension of the initiative is justified by the fact that it supplements, reinforces, and has a multiplier effect on Member States' and private actions. The scheme is based on co-financing, usually up to a maximum of 50% of EC contribution³, with at least 20% of financial participation from the private sector and the remainder by the Member States concerned.

Promotion actions must be generic and focusing on the intrinsic quality of products. They may cover public relations work, promotion and advertising as well as information campaigns. They have to be presented in the form of a programme submitted by a professional trade or branch organization in response to national calls for proposals. The programmes are pre-selected by the Member State and final selection is done by the European Commission.

Over the recent years, a high number of submitted programmes (up to 57%) were rejected by the European Commission (DG AGRI), mainly for eligibility and quality reasons. To clarify requirements and expectations, DG AGRI has issued several guidelines since 2006, incorporating lessons learned from the experience and the framework contract evaluations.

The yearly overall EC expenditure for promotion measures increased from minor amounts in 2002 to relatively stable amounts since 2007, fluctuating between €45m and €50m, the three quarters being roughly dedicated to internal markets and the rest to third countries.

Regarding products and themes, six of them account for 78% of all EC expenditure from 2002 to 2010: fruit and vegetables (26%); dairy (15%); meat (11%); European quality schemes (PDO, PGI, TSG) (9%); wines (8%); and organic products (8%). As for the

² Council Regulation (EC) No 2826/2000 of 19 December 2000 information and promotion actions for agricultural products on the internal market and Council Regulation (EC) No 2702/1999 of 14 December 1999 on measures to provide information on, and to promote, agricultural products in third countries

³ The EC contribution can be increased from 50 to 60% for actions to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables targeted at children in educational establishments, and for information on responsible drinking patterns and harm linked to hazardous alcohol consumption

repartition per country, 56% of expenditures by the Commission have been for programmes proposed by Italy (19%), France (14%), Spain (8%), Germany (8%) and Greece (7%). A further 16% has been allocated to multi-country programmes (common programmes put forward jointly by several Member States).

Over the total of 458 programmes signed between 2001 and 2010, single proposer programmes targeting internal market in their own country are dominant. Multi-country programmes, which are prioritised in the selection process, represent less than 10% of the total number, with 41 programmes through 2001-2010, but 16% in terms of expenditure which shows that they are often of larger financial amount.

Different promotion measures exist under the CAP other than the scheme governed by Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008. Important ones are in the wine sector as well as in the fruit and vegetables sector, both under Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 (Single Common Market Organisation) and measure 133 under the Rural Development Policy. They all have their own specificities, differing in terms of beneficiaries, targeted markets or possibility to mention brands. Best efforts are made to avoid overlaps and establish demarcation lines between these different schemes.

Methodology

The evaluation was developed in four phases: structuring, observing, analysing and judging. It combined both desk and field work. The descriptive chapter is mainly based on EU Regulations and documentation provided by DG AGRI on promotion programmes numbers and budgets. The comprehensive synthesis is based on 9 evaluation reports produced by the framework contract evaluations commissioned by DG AGRI (4 sector-specific evaluations the Internal Market, 5 country evaluations of promotion in Third Countries)⁴.

The replies to the Evaluation Questions (EQs) are the core of the study. They are based on elements gathered for the descriptive chapter, from the comprehensive synthesis and on a survey among Competent Bodies in all 27 Member States. An in-depth analysis of the promotion programmes adopted between 2008 and 2010 was done through the analysis of a sample of 15 programmes originating from 9 EU Member States⁵. Both programme document analysis and stakeholder interviews were performed for these programmes in all 9 EU Member States.

The evaluation is organised around 12 evaluation questions which cover the following three themes: (i) policy relevance and effectiveness, (ii) management of information and promotion programmes and (iii) their coherence and complementarity with other initiatives.

⁴ The Four sector-specific evaluations on the internal market were structured according to the following product sectors and themes: 1) organic products (2006), wine (2007), fruit and vegetables (2007) and dairy (2008). Five evaluations in third countries were structured according to the following third-country markets: 1) USA and Canada (2006), Russia (2007); Japan (2007); Norway and Switzerland (2007) and China, India and South-East Asia (2008).

⁵ France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

Conclusions

Theme 1: Policy relevance and effectiveness

The list of themes and products

The current list of eligible products and themes includes a large number of agricultural products and agri-food products at the first processing stage, grouped under 15 products/groups of products and themes. The list is to a large extent inherited from the sectoral approach of the CAP in the eighties and nineties. Since the early 2000s, three criteria were guiding the integration of additional themes and products eligible for EU co-funding, namely (i) the fact that highly differentiated and valued products are typical or produced in a quality scheme, (ii) the need to handle markets or consumers confidence in individual sector crises and (iii) the potential export opportunities in third country markets. The current list of eligible themes and products is large, as well as heterogeneous reflecting the diversity of agricultural products (e.g. including fresh and processed products at the first stage of processing; single products (such as milk) or group of products (such as fruit and vegetables or organic products); “standard” products (such as olive oil) versus products under EU quality schemes).

The list of themes and products is broadly relevant. Thanks to a large scope of eligible products, it contributes to enhancing the image and improving knowledge of EU agricultural products. The large scope does also allow responding to a high heterogeneity of situations and various trends (growing/stable or declining markets and the relative position of EU products, etc). However, the list of products and themes alone is not enough to achieve the objectives of the regulation. Although the principles of the policy are defined, an overall strategy is missing.

The list of eligible third country markets

As for the list of eligible third country markets, it covers almost all regions of the world, and as such is rather unfocused. This is not per se a problem for stakeholders (competent bodies and proposing organisations) since the list now provides flexibility for their actions. Most important trading partners for Europe are in the list, which is essential.

In order to assess the relevance of this list of countries compared to the objectives of the Regulation, an indicative scoring system has been developed based on EU exported product trends to third countries, third countries consumption of covered products and their GDP trends. This indicative scoring system shows a large range of relevance among the listed countries. To arrive at the list of eligible third country markets the statistical approach needs to be completed by more qualitative criteria.

On the other hand, the concept of geographical areas eligible for promotion actions, such as for instance Latin America, is not considered useful as such, except the flexibility it

provides to Member States, because they encompass highly diverse national or sub-national realities.

In other words, both the **list of (i) themes and products and (ii) third countries eligible to the scheme are not in essence a hurdle to the achievement of the objectives laid down in the regulation** because they are large and allow flexibility and adaptation to markets. Yet, they offer an unexploited possibility to define more structured strategies or to prioritise actions in programmes.

Commission initiatives

In line with the subsidiarity principle, the **Commission may take the initiative in measures that are of Community interest** or where no appropriate proposal has been submitted otherwise by Member States. On the internal market the Commission undertook initiatives in the organic sector throughout the 2005-09 period, with large visibility, which had a leverage effect on other promotion campaigns launched in Member States.

There is little available information on the Commission's initiative in third countries, namely for the European Authentic Tastes campaign (EAT) promoting European quality schemes (PDO, PGI, TSG and organic), implemented over the 2005-07 period. Although there was evidence of minor coordination problems, it also led to synergies with some co-funded programmes.

Furthermore, the Commission organises on average once a year so-called high level trade visits to third countries that include participation in international events, mainly trade fairs. They aim to value a positive European image of agricultural products, facilitate further relations for national stakeholders and enhance business opportunities for exporters. The immediate feedback from these visits is positive, although the longer-term impact on effective business opportunities is complex and not yet assessed.

Synergies between Commission initiatives and EU co-funded programmes may gain from enhanced communication between the different decision levels, in order to harmonize messages, coordinate agendas and increase efficiency possibly through the use of common tools.

Multi-product and multi-country programmes

There are three types of "multi-programmes", namely multi-country programmes (put forward by more than one Member State), multi-product programmes and multi-target programmes.

Multi-product and multi-country programmes are of particular importance for the EU promotion policy, because they bring EU added value such as economies of scale, leverage effects, wider target group reach, cooperation and socio-economic cohesion between countries. They therefore have the potential to bring an EU dimension to initiatives taken at lower levels.

Although the EU promotion policy framework has encouraged multi-country programmes and multi-product programmes, they had limited occurrence so far. The number of proposals is hampered by the specific difficulties they face for design and implementation.

The risk exists that multi-product and multi-country programmes be proposed for opportunist reasons such as increasing the chances to be selected by Commission services but without meaningful rationale behind.

The main difficulty with multi-product approaches is to find adequate and relevant associations among the list of eligible products that give sense for promotion, but meaningful combinations exist not only for cheese and wine. Overall, difficulties to identify reliable partners, different rules among MS and different interpretation of guidelines and regulation, as well as language and cultural hurdles and administrative burden complicate the setting up and implementation of multi-country programmes. In order to overcome these management difficulties, strengthening the EU support to multi-country programmes might contribute to their development.

Programmes involving measures in more than one Member State or in more than one third country (multi-target programmes) present less difficulties and are more widely and easily adopted. They have the advantage to penetrating new markets with sufficient critical mass, allowing for economies of scale and leverage effects.

Evolution of effectiveness

The analysis of improvement of programmes implemented since 2008 is based on the 15 sample programmes chosen for in depth analysis. However, as many of the programmes have only been operating for a year, there is limited evidence yet of the achievement of objectives.

Good practices for programme design such as market analysis, definition of clear objectives, setting targets, etc. are widely supported and adopted practices among the proposing organisations of the analysed programmes, with some exceptions such as the justification of the choice of communication channels which should be based on the best possible efficiency criteria. This is reflected in an improving standard of selected proposals.

Most of the proposing organisations and national competent bodies interviewed believe that the overall quality and effectiveness of the programmes is improving, also thanks to the experience gained over the years. But this trend is not translated into higher success rates at the level of the EC selection, characterized by important fluctuations without clear trend until the end of 2010. Indeed, there are still weaknesses in a number of submitted programme proposals, such as unclear or inconsistent activities, and lack of details in actions proposed and insufficient strategy especially for third country programmes. According to the Commission, applicants should better adapt their communication channels to the target group, with best possible cost efficiency and potential impact.

Theme 2: Management of information and promotion programmes

Overall management set-up

The overall management set-up, from the European Commission, to competent bodies in Member States (often Ministry) and proposing organisations (branch organisations) down to the implementing bodies (often advertising agencies), is clearly defined in the Regulations and further guidelines. The roles of each stakeholder in the overall management set-up are described in details. However, issues are met at two levels: 1) the two step selection process of programme proposals and 2) the implementation procedures. While the overall management structure is not questioned, both these issues impede the achievement of objectives of the Regulation.

In the first case, the two step selection process, at Member State level (pre-selection) and at EC level (selection) is causing an important time spent on the procedure (over 6 months) and some degree of duplication in selection roles. This time span is considered long in the context of promotion.

In the second case, implementation procedures from the European Commission down to the implementing organisations – including programme modifications, monitoring and evaluation, are heavy and time consuming. As far as multi-country programmes – programmes put forward by more than one Member State – are concerned, more time is needed to fulfil administrative and technical requirements (e.g. agreement on messages conveyed in the Member States implementing the programme) and lack of coordination between involved proposing organisations and competent bodies may slow down the implementation of the co-funded programme.

Guidelines

The available guidelines and accompanying documents are generally appreciated by the Member States, particularly for the *design* of programmes, even if some streamlining is possible in terms of quantity, as well as simplifications. On the other hand, guidance documents are reported as less adapted for the *implementation* of the programmes, particularly for multi-country programmes where clarifications are needed.

There are no specific guidelines for designing and implementing programmes in third countries. Consequently proposing organisations tend to base these programmes on guidelines for the internal market, which may not be fully adapted to third countries.

Some aspects of the guidelines, in particular in annexes of Commission Regulation (EC) No 501/2008 which give a short overview of the situation of the sector and mention the main target groups, messages and communication channels have not always been updated.

On the other hand, the variety of guidelines and good practices in different binding or guiding documents may become confusing in the absence of a streamlining exercise.

Monitoring and evaluation reports

In terms of reporting, a source of confusion is the distinction between monitoring and evaluation. First of all, reporting requirements are judged excessive (mainly but not only) by proposing organisations. Particularly the quarterly monitoring reports are judged too frequent, even if one should keep in mind that these reports are triggering the payments. On the other hand, the template for annual reports (essentially aggregates of quarterly monitoring reports) is largely oriented towards monitoring and hence not used as annual evaluation of the results obtained. Overall, the annual reports have facilitated the monitoring of promotion programmes but only partially contributed to effective evaluation. The format provided in the contracts does not include the explicit request of evaluation of the results obtained although the description of expenditure in the contracts mentions this possibility.

The final evaluations, for which 5% of the budget can be earmarked, should provide relevant information on programme impact and achievements⁶.

Administrative requirements for selecting and implementing programmes

As already underlined above, the two-step programme selection process, based on short-listing at the Member State level and final selection by the Commission services, is considered long by proposing organisations (3 months at Member State level and 3 to 4 months at EU level) and generates misunderstandings, particularly when the rejection rates are high at the Commission level (57% from July 2006 to end 2010) in a context of budget availability, which is often the case in this EC-supported scheme.

While the Commission endeavours to undertake at its level an objective selection (eligibility check followed by quality assessment by external reviewers based on four main criteria: quality, European dimension, impact and cost effectiveness), the selection approaches in Member States vary. Member States check eligibility and quality of proposals, some of them using evaluation grids usually also based on four criteria (general interest, quality and effectiveness, EU dimension, cost/effectiveness). Some Member States do a careful pre-selection including support to applicants to respond to the Commission requirements while others tend to handover most (all) proposals received leaving the responsibility of selection to a more distant body. Furthermore, some selection requirements are too thorough, namely the detail of unit costs of activities throughout the programme.

Overall, overlaps between roles at the two selection stages exist (both checking eligibility and quality) and sometimes insufficient transfer of information to the proposing organisations can generate misunderstandings.

As far as implementation requirements are concerned, the main issues relate to the high reporting frequency, the details of unit costs, and the lack of flexibility in terms of budget

⁶ The final evaluations of the studied promotion programmes were not yet available, since these programmes were still in operational phase.

transfers leading to administrative burden especially for multi-country programmes, as already mentioned under the overall framework.

Theme 3: Coherence and complementarity with other CAP and national and private promotion initiatives

Complementarities and synergies with national and private initiatives

Complementarities and synergies between EU-co-funded information and promotion programmes on one hand and other national or private promotion initiatives on the other hand is a central preoccupation in this scheme. Indeed, as explicitly stated in the recitals of Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008, the promotion policy seeks to supplement and reinforce schemes run by Member States. If such complementarities definitely exist according to stakeholders (competent bodies and proposing organisations), they are almost never the result of a well structured promotion strategy. They are so to say coincidental or contextual, as a result of a broad basis of shared grounds between programmes and initiatives such as the main messages and goals (healthy food, food quality, etc.), the target groups (e.g. schools) and the communication channels (common websites, food fairs, etc.).

Two major constraints were identified to synergies and cooperation with the private sector though. This is the exclusion of brands from the scheme, as well as the restrictions to mention origins except in cases of recognised quality schemes.

Overlaps between EU co-funded programmes and national/private initiatives are not reported as an issue.

EU added value

EU funding has an important leverage effect on generic, multi-country and multi-product programmes. Without EU co-funding, promotion programmes would have a much smaller scale and would be funded mainly by the private sector (PO). Due to this private funding, they would be brand-oriented and not generic. Some programmes would probably not take place at all, especially for third country promotion, where a minimum critical mass is needed in terms of budget, not often affordable without EU support for smaller operators.

Co-funded multi-country programmes also generate an important leverage effect as several parties participate in a programme, allowing a higher impact. These elements emerge from the previous evaluation reports and interviews with proposing organisations and competent bodies in Member States.

The transnational meetings that are organised by proposing organisations to elaborate multi-country programmes are mainly to coordinate the programmes and agree on their design (channels, messages, etc.). These meetings do however, as a side effect, contribute to the exchange of experience among organisations.

The I&P programmes are generally thought to improve the image of EU products and contribute to the development of positive connotations (e.g. high quality, safety, taste, etc.) according to framework contract evaluations and interviewed competent bodies. The specific contribution of multi-country programmes on the image is recognised by competent bodies and concerned proposing organisations. Promoting the intrinsic value of the products also has a positive effect overall on consumer behaviour. However, there is a lack of clear evidence as to the direct economic impact (e.g. exports and sales) of generic campaigns, working on the image and awareness.

Coherence of I&P programmes with other CAP promotion measures

Promotion of EU agricultural products can be financed in a horizontal way through Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008, on a smaller scale for national or EU quality schemes through rural development programmes (RDPs) and in a sector-specific way for wine and fruits and vegetables⁷.

The promotion and information scheme is coherent with these other CAP measures in terms of objectives, messages conveyed, groups targeted and channels used except the possibility of mentioning brands under certain conditions under the CMO (wine as well as fruit and vegetables), which makes an essential difference with Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008.

Regulations and implementation of CAP promotion measures focus on demarcation lines between each-other rather than actively building complementarities and synergies. More precisely, there are no overlaps between these initiatives either because most of them have explicit or implicit specificities in terms of types of beneficiaries or coverage, demarcating them appropriately or thanks to additional demarcation lines. Nevertheless, the coexistence of an increased number of promotion measures resulting from recent CMO reforms, with important financial allocations such as for the wine sector, could limit the overall efficiency of the promotion policy.

Recommendations

With a view to improve the EU promotion policy in light of the above-mentioned conclusions, the evaluation has come to the following recommendations:

- The **global objective** of the scheme is to support demand and consumption of EU agricultural products. This **should be mentioned explicitly in the regulation together with the potential benefits for the producers and the consumers**. This is considered a necessary step in order to remove ambiguities and better shape promotion

⁷ Several CAP measures provide support for promotion activities, namely measure 133 of Rural Development Programmes (Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005) for quality schemes promotion (€29m co-funding per year), the single CMO for wine and fruit and vegetables (Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007) with respectively promotion on Third Countries for wine (approximately €150-250m per year); and for fruit & vegetables in the framework of operational programmes (approximately €30-40m co-funding per year) and the school fruit scheme (€90m co-funding per year). This has to be compared to around €50m co-funding per year from Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008

strategies. The specific objectives and targets might differ between the Internal Market on one hand and Third Countries on the other hand.

- While the **lists of eligible countries, regions, products and themes** for promotion actions may remain large and even **be enlarged to enable flexibility**, it should be **associated to a European promotion strategy** that gives focus and priorities to ensure contribution to the global objective.
- A **European strategy** for promotion of agricultural products should be defined and should **encompass all promotional measures of the CAP** in order to ensure internal coherence. It could be differentiated between the Internal Market and Third Countries. Market trends should be included as a dimension of the strategy. The evaluation proposed an approach to position products/themes compared to market trends. This positioning could be a first basis to set priorities. The strategy should be revised periodically depending on the changes of priorities. A set of further criteria could be used to identify priorities such as the European dimension, European production standard, the need to address crises or sectoral difficulties etc.
- In addition to the development of a European promotion strategy, **Member States should be asked to define their own national strategies**, clarifying their priorities in terms of products/themes and their potential public support to promotion. National strategies should include national and regional support but also potential EU co-funding including that from rural development, from some sectors under the single CMO etc. This step would maximize potential for developing synergies and complementarities of EU promotion actions with the actions of private sector.
- Given the EU value of **multi-country programmes** (common programmes set-up by more than one Member State) and their associated constraints (difficulties in design and implementation of such programmes); the EU should **strengthen support to such programmes**. This incentive could take the form of an additional share of overheads and fees of implementing bodies to support additional management and coordination costs. Through an attractive budget and by simplifying the administrative requirements of their implementation (e.g. clarifying the role of the coordinating proposing organisations), and by clarifying different interpretation of guidelines in different Member States with clear responses (e.g. through an EU exchange platform below), such programmes could be made more attractive in the future.
- In terms of the **selection of programmes**, the overall procedure could remain unchanged with essentially a **clearer distinction of roles and a better communication between the EC and Member States**. Competent Bodies could take care of eligibility checks as well as other verifiable criteria (e.g. market analysis, relevance to national strategy, duration). At the end of this first step, they should provide sufficient documentation and justification to the EC before the second step. The Commission on the other hand would be better suited to assess the potential impact of programmes, their EU dimension and their compliance with the European strategy, in the second step. A scoring system would be used at both levels in order to underpin final selection. Based on these elements, the selection procedures could be improved in terms of legibility and coherence.

- The **administrative burden** of the different types of programmes could be **alleviated by reducing the level of details required in the proposals in terms of unit costs of actions for last years of programme implementation, adding flexibility to implementation procedures** (e.g. facilitating budget transfers over 10% within a programme if this is well justified and improves efficiency) and **reducing monitoring and reporting frequency** and requirements, limited to annual (or bi-annual) progress reports that need to include an **internal evaluation of results obtained so far** (for annual reports) **and retrospective evaluations** at the end of the programme.
- **Streamline the guidelines into one document** which would not be part of the Regulation and which would encompass EU priorities and guidance for the design (as currently Annex I of Council Regulation (EC) No 501/2008) and operational requirements for implementation and evaluation.
- The leverage effect of co-funded programmes could be improved if the **rules governing the reuse of co-funded communication 'material'** (e.g. slogans, messages...) were **made more explicit in order to make this 'material', such as slogans**, accessible also to the private sector under specified conditions.
- To ensure a European return of generic campaigns and enhance visibility of EU promotion, **introduction of a European identification to the promotion programmes**, including visual and/or content elements, should be considered.
- Finally, to ensure improved procedures and enhanced mutual understanding among all parties involved, it is suggested to **set up a permanent EU Exchange Platform on the Promotion and Information Actions for Agricultural Products**. This Platform would not interfere with the existing decision mechanisms involving the Commission and the Management Committee which would remain unchanged. Its main role and objective would be to maintain an active community of stakeholders interacting between them, as well as with the competent authorities in Member States and the European Commission: **top-down and bottom-up exchanges of views, networking of stakeholders, transfer of know-how and good practices, formulation of proposals and suggestions**. Some of main deliverables could be: a website, workshops, technical documents, catalogues of good practices, lists of FAQs, a helpdesk, etc.