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EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY POLICY

FOR STARCH AND STARCH PRODUCTS

Subject : Quality grid for the report submitted by L.M.C.

PRELIMINARY REMARK

The steering group prepared this quality grid on the basis of the final report received in January 2002.

If the report is to be published on the Internet, the present grid, with the comments of the steering group, will complement the final report.

The judgement is made on the methodology, not on the results, conclusions or recommendations reached by the contractor. It has to be pointed out that it is not the content that is judged here, but only the methods used for obtaining it.

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

   The evaluation team has made a remarkable effort to identify the objectives and implementation details of the starch policy and to understand the rationale behind the evaluation questions.

   The specific part on market presentation was appreciated, although a synthesis, giving an overview of the sector and its future, is still felt missing. The 'land use' aspects, dealing with base products, crop substitutions and alternative possibilities, are not really covered.

   As for the evaluation questions, the steering group regrets that the study could not lead to conclusions on some of them. As far as potato starch, which was an essential chapter in the evaluation, is concerned, some parts, in particular those regarding the potato starch scale (barème féculier), the potato starch premium and the equilibrium between potato and cereals starches, are considered weak.

   The production cost analysis was not carried through either.

   Generally speaking, the evaluation questions have been well understood and the main issues of this evaluation are addressed.

   Global assessment : *acceptable*

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

   The contractor reconstructed the intervention logic of the sector. In line with the themes of the evaluation questions, the different impacts of the policy were examined.

   The geographical aspects were well covered. The evaluation team carried out interviews with the various categories of operators concerned. The differences between interviews and the examination of regulatory aspects led them to analyse unintended effects.

   Global assessment : *good*

3. **DEFENSIBLE DESIGN: Is the evaluation design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for answering the main evaluation questions ?**

   The steering group appreciates the readiness showed by the evaluation team to follow the evaluation methodology outlined in the terms of reference : question – criteria – indicator, and the team's efforts to provide rigorous information.

A weakness was felt on the interview plan and timing. The interviews were started before the evaluation team grasped the rationale behind the evaluation questions, and some interviews could not be carried out in-depth. Delaying the interviews may have allowed a better result of this tool, but this didn't harm the analysis part.

The methodological limitations are clearly explained in the text.

Global assessment : *good*

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

A considerable effort was made by the evaluation team to collect and analyse data on the sector concerned. This work is not entirely visible in the report and only partly reflected in the annexes, but deserves to be acknowledged. An effort was also made to crosscheck the data as much as possible, sometimes leading to further difficulties.

The lack of general data remains a striking point in this evaluation. Part of it was available with the Commission, but needed processing (refund licences and amounts). Part of it could not be accessed for confidentiality reasons (some COMEXT data). Finally, part of the data simply didn't exist, for lack of ad hoc collection (areas sown to starch potatoes), or because time series are too short to allow conclusions (typically, the structural data to evaluate alternative possibilities).

These shortcomings particularly show for the 'land use' aspects, the production and processing costs, and the detailed budgetary expenses.

Global assessment : *poor*

The steering group acknowledges that the contractor can not be held entirely responsible for the lack of data or their weaknesses.

5. **SOUND ANALYSIS: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way ?**

In spite of the difficulties on gathering data mentioned in point 4 above, the analysis was carried out in a correct way.

The analysis of costs (of production costs as well as of budget costs) should have gone more in-depth. In the absence of direct proof, indirect evidence was used. It doesn't replace a full cost analysis, but can be accepted as an alternative evaluation method.

Whenever possible, the evaluation team compared data and cross-checked results. They made use of analyses, analogies, specific examples and interview results. The results of these different approaches and their respective strengths and weaknesses are made explicit.

Global assessment : *good*

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

For lack of data, some findings, as explained above, result from indirect elements rather than direct analysis. In spite of this, the report contains useful factual information, which can serve for further consideration.

The cost-effectiveness analysis was considered weak.

Global assessment : *acceptable*

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

The report presents interesting and clear conclusions on various aspects of the policy. Some reserves have to be formulated regarding the limits of the methodology followed and solidity of findings.

Global assessment : *acceptable*

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

The recommendations are clear and concrete, based on findings and conclusions. The steering group acknowledges the efforts of the evaluation team to formulate them in a balanced way, taking into account practicability, and appreciates that the evaluation team took position on the issues raised by the questions.

Global assessment : *good*

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

The report shows a clear structure : first the market overview, then the policy description and finally the answers to evaluation questions following the themes defined in the terms of reference. The main findings are summarised in italic at the end of each section, which makes them easy to point out and allows fast reading. The conclusion chapter summarises findings and makes recommendations. The executive summary takes full account of all successive chapters of the main report.

The writing is clear and precise.

The main criticism is the size of the report, with 275 pages and 200 pages annexed. Although the numerous questions and sub-questions can justify it, the total volume of the document can be seen as deterrent, and might cause it to be less widely read than its overall quality would deserve.

Global assessment : *good*

10. ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORT AS A WHOLE

The steering group acknowledges that, in spite of some data and analysis weaknesses, a real effort was made by the evaluation team to analyse the policy, identify its intended and unintended impacts and assess them in a rigorous way. This report contains many interesting and useful results, and was qualified by the steering group as 'a reference document' for the starch sector.

Taking into consideration all the aspects discussed above, the overall judgement of this evaluation report is : *good.*

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