



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

**ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROFARM-PROJECT
(in accordance with Article 13 of Regulation 571/88/EEC)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Preliminary remarks**
- 2. The legislative framework for the Farm Structure Survey from 1999 to 2007**
- 3. Revision of the Community classification of agricultural holdings (typology)**
- 4. The 1995 survey**
- 5. The 1997 survey**
- 6. EUROFARM and the special situation of the F.R. of Germany**
- 7. Dissemination of Farm Structure Survey results**
- 8. Technical development of the EUROFARM system**
- 9. Migration of the EUROFARM system to UNIX/Windows NT**
- 10. Community contribution to survey costs**

1. Preliminary remarks

Council Regulation (EEC) No 571/88¹ of 29 February 1988, as last amended by Commission Decision N° 98/377/EC² provides for eight Community surveys on the structure of agricultural holdings to be carried out between 1988 and 2007. In accordance with Annex II of this Regulation, the results of these surveys are stored, processed and disseminated via the EUROFARM system set up by the Commission. Article 13 of the Regulation states that every three years the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the implementation of the EUROFARM project. The Commission shall also propose any necessary changes to Regulation 571/88.

The first report was submitted to the Council in 1992³, the second in 1996⁴. This is the third report; its object is to provide an overall picture of the administrative and technical developments in the EUROFARM system since the last report was submitted and of the data processing of the 1995 and 1997 surveys.

2. The legislative framework for the Farm Structure Surveys from 1999 to 2007

By adopting its Regulation 2467/96⁵, the Council defined the framework for the continuation of the farm structure surveys between 1999 and 2007.

In its decision 98/377/EC the Commission updated the list of characteristics to be surveyed in the next basic survey, taking place in 1999 or 2000.

Changes in this list of characteristics will be complemented by an amended list of Community definitions (see Commission Decision 89/651/EEC⁶) which was last changed in the preparation of the 1997 survey by Commission Decision 97/418/EC⁷.

¹ OJ L 56 of 2.3.1988, p. 1

² OJ L 168 of 13.6.1998, p. 29

³ Doc. SEC (92) 2084 final

⁴ COM(96) 370 final

⁵ OJ L335 of 24.12.1996, p. 3

⁶ OJ L391 of 30.12.1989, p.1

⁷ OJ L 177 of 5.7.1997, p. 26

The list of characteristics for the 1999/2000 survey contains changes in the way the legal status of the holdings is recorded as well as some new characteristics. It will therefore be necessary to prepare a new Commission decision defining the tables which have to be made accessible within EUROFARM's database of statistical tables (called BDT).

The Commission submitted first drafts for the revised list of definitions as well as for the contents of the BDT to the Working Party meeting of May 1998. The final definitions as agreed by the Working Party have been unanimously approved by the Standing Committee for Agricultural Statistics.

3. Revision of the Community classification of agricultural holdings (typology)⁸

As already mentioned in the previous report to the Council, it should be discussed whether the Community typology be simplified, so making it less susceptible to changes in the thrust of the Common Agricultural Policy. The Commission intends to propose in 1998/1999 to the Group of Experts 'Typology of Agricultural Holdings' some measures for discussion.

4. The 1995 survey

Member States started delivering the results of the 1995 Farm Structure Survey to Eurostat in May 1996.

Once the data had been received by Eurostat, an extensive validation program was executed to verify the consistency of the data. Only when data had been accepted as consistent were statistical tables calculated and made available.

The computer programs used for the validation process in this survey were on the whole the same as used in the previous two surveys.

⁸ The Community typology for agricultural holdings is defined in Commission Decision 85/377/EEC of June 7, 1985 published in OJ L220 of 17.8.1985, p. 1

Once approved, the statistical tables provided for by this survey (defined by Commission Decision 97/341/EC⁹) were made accessible in the tabular database (BDT). Since February 2, 1998, all the tables for all 15 Member States have been available.

The delay between the receipt of the first data and the availability of the respective tabular results in the database varied significantly from a few days to several months: Only in the case of 3 Member States, were the first set of data sent accepted as being consistent. In all other cases, additional information or corrected versions had to be asked for at least once, until such time as the data could be regarded as being adequate.

5. The 1997 survey

The list of characteristics, standard tables and typology for the 1997 survey are identical to those of the 1995 survey. There was, therefore, no specific software development envisaged for the preparation of the processing of the 1997 data. According to Commission Decision 97/407/EC¹⁰, Member States are to send these data to Eurostat between July and December 1998.

The established practice of making data available only after all errors have been removed does not seem to be completely satisfactory. Very often, significant delays are experienced even when mistakes relate only to a few characteristics or have a minor impact on statistical results. The Working Party therefore approved a modification to this procedure in order to speed up the publication of Farm Structure data: from the 1997 survey onwards some summary tables, with the main statistical information, will be published as soon as data have been received by Eurostat. These tables will be marked as provisional.

6. EUROFARM and the special situation of the FR of Germany

In accordance with paragraphs 6 and 8.1 of Annex II of the above-mentioned Council Regulation 571/88, Germany does not yet forward individual but rather tabular data for the BDT tabular database. After the Community adopted common arrangements for the

⁹ OJ L149 of 6.6.1997, p. 1

¹⁰ OJ L169 of 27.6.1997, p. 90

protection of confidential statistical information (Council Regulation 1588/90¹¹), and in view of the measures which have been taken in Eurostat¹² and in the context of the EUROFARM system for maintaining statistical confidentiality of collected data, Germany has agreed to send individual data from the basic 1999/2000 survey onwards (see Article 12c of the above-mentioned Council Regulation 2467/96/EC).

7. Dissemination of the Farm Structure survey results

The main results of the 1993 survey were published in

- Farm Structure – 1993 survey: Main results¹³.

An additional publication comparing the structure of agricultural holdings between 'northern' and Mediterranean Member States was issued:

- Overview of the structure of agricultural holdings – 1993 survey: North-South comparison¹⁴.
- A short publication with some of the main indicators from the 1995 survey came out in August 1997¹⁵. The main publication containing the results of the 1995 survey should have appeared in the course of 1998. One of the reasons for the delay in publication was that Greece and Ireland subsequently carried out corrections on data which had already been supplied and disseminated in the data bank.

Statistical tables from the EUROFARM-system were also published in Eurostat yearbooks¹⁶ as well as in publications of Directorate General VI¹⁷.

¹¹ Council Regulation (EEC) No 1588/90 of 11.06.1990, in OJ L151 of 15.06.1990, p. 1

¹² See "Protection of confidential data in Eurostat" published by Eurostat in Luxembourg, December 1996

¹³ Farm Structure – 1993 survey: Main results, Brussels and Luxembourg 1996, ISBN: 92-827-8048-1.

¹⁴ Overview of the structure of agricultural holdings – 1993 survey: North-South comparison, Brussels and Luxembourg 1996, ISBN: 92-827-8309-X.

¹⁵ 1995 survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, Statistics in Focus 12, 1997, ISBN 1024-4263

¹⁶ Europe in Figures, Brussels and Luxembourg 1995, ISBN 92-827-0075-5, pp. 260, Eurostat Yearbook 1997, Luxembourg 1997, ISBN 92-828-2133-1, pp. 320 ff.; Agriculture – Statistical Yearbook 1997, Luxembourg 1997, ISBN 92-827-9557-8, pp. 123 ff.

¹⁷ The agricultural situation in the European Union 1996 report, Brussels and Luxembourg 1997, ISBN 92-827-9007-X

In order to improve the dissemination of the EUROFARM data within the Commission and facilitate the access to its results, the EUROFARM tables were also introduced into Eurostat's database "Newcronos". Newcronos is available throughout the Commission and can be accessed via the Internet by preferential users outside the Commission if they have received access permission from Eurostat. It covers all domains for which Eurostat collects statistical data.

Due to budgetary restrictions the idea of publishing the results of the Farm Structure Survey in a CD-ROM was abandoned. The contents of the Newcronos database can be made available on CD-ROMs on request. In this way, users who want to analyze the EUROFARM tables very extensively can get cheap, user-friendly access to a large volume of data. This approach has made the development of specific CD-ROM software unnecessary.

8. Technical development of the EUROFARM system

An overall description of the EUROFARM system and its components can be found in the previous report to the Council.

Given the fact that changes between the 1993 and 1995 surveys were minor and that there are no changes between the 1995 and 1997 surveys, less technical developments were necessary than in the reference period covered by the preceding EUROFARM report.

In 1996 an improved version of the user interface for the consultation of the tabular database and the accompanying user manuals were released. This updated version was presented in two courses given to officials of DG VI in Brussels in November 1996.

A PC-based database was developed by an external company to improve the administration of the text information describing the rows and columns in the tables.

9. Migration of the EUROFARM system to UNIX/Windows NT

The existing EUROFARM system operates on an Amdahl computer, running the operating system MVS. It is part of the Commission's informatics policy to replace this system by UNIX and/or Windows/NT systems.

It became necessary therefore to move the EUROFARM system to computers running these operating systems.

Following the guidelines for the management of informatics projects in the Commission, a feasibility study was prepared as a first step by an external firm. This study proposes the architecture for a new UNIX based system. It was finalized in autumn 1997. The Commission is currently preparing the necessary steps to start the design and implementation of this system.

It is expected that certain parts of the system should benefit from this development:

- The technical access to the database should be easier when Internet technology, instead of the currently used X.25 protocol, is applied.
- Windows-based technology should provide a more user-friendly interface and allow better integration of EUROFARM-consultation software in the standard PC-environment of Commission officials.
- The technical facilities to calculate user-defined tables on request are therefore intended to be improved.

10. Community contribution to survey costs

As provided for in Council Regulation (EEC) No. 571/88¹⁸, the Commission makes a financial contribution to the costs which the Member States incur in carrying out surveys on the structure of agricultural holdings. The payments provided for under this Regulation for the 1995 survey have all been made.

¹⁸ OJ L 56 of 2.3.1988, p. 3, Article 14

For the 1997 survey it is planned to pay all Member States an advance from the resources of the 1998 budgetary year. For each Member State this would amount to approximately 30% of what the Member State concerned could expect to receive under the Regulation. Remaining contributions are to be paid out of the resources of the 1999 budget.

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