



European Commission
Directorate-general of Agriculture

Newsletter

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Preparing for enlargement: allocating Sapard funds

On 20 July, the Commission laid down the indicative budget allocations among the applicant countries from central and eastern Europe under the Sapard programme (special accession programme for agriculture and rural development) – representing an overall budget of EUR 520 million in each year of the programme's seven-year run (2000-06) in line with the Union's forward budget planning drawn up at the European Council in Berlin on 25 March.

These allocations (see table below) are based on the objective criteria set out in the Council Regulation of 21 June 1999 setting up Sapard: the size of the agricultural population; the total agricultural area; per capita GDP, based on purchasing power parity, and the specific situation of rural areas.

The Sapard programme was created to support the efforts being made by the applicant countries in the run-up to accession as they prepare for their participation in the common agricultural policy and the single market. The plan is to fund a wide range of structural adjustment and rural development schemes in these countries and forms part of the broader pre-accession strategy being pursued under the "Accession Partnerships" that have been set up between the Commission and the applicant countries.

Now that the budget allocations have been decided, each applicant country can start to draw up a seven-year development plan for the appropriate regional areas, which, after consultation with the competent authorities and organisations at the relevant levels, can be submitted to the Commission. These plans are meant to provide a sound basis for programming and must therefore contain various components specified in the Sapard Regulation, such as a description of the situation in the rural areas of the applicant country; an explanation of the strategy being proposed, including its main priorities and quantified objectives; an indicative financial table, and the names of the authorities appointed to administer the programme. Once these plans have been assessed and approved by the Commission, they will form the basis for each country's agricultural and rural development programme.

In financing the programmes, the Community may contribute up to 75% of total public expenditure, although this may rise to 100% of the total programme volume for technical assistance. In the case of revenue-generating investment, total public aid may not exceed 50% of the overall volume, of which the Community share is limited to 75%.

Measures eligible for Sapard assistance

In concrete terms, Sapard can provide funding for the following measures:

- investment in agricultural holdings;
- improvements to methods for processing and marketing agriculture and fishery products;
- veterinary and plant health controls, food quality and consumer protection;
- promotion of production methods that protect the environment and conserve rural heritage;
- diversifying economic activities and developing alternative sources of income;
- farm relief services and farm management services;
- setting up producer groups;
- village renewal and conservation of rural heritage;
- land improvement and reparation;
- updating land registers;
- vocational training;
- improvement of infrastructure in rural areas;
- management of water resources for agriculture;
- forestry and farm woodland projects, investment in private forest holdings, processing and marketing of forest products;
- technical assistance (studies, monitoring, information, publicity campaigns).

Sapard: annual indicative budget allocations (in EUR million, at constant 1999 prices)

Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Estonia	Hungary	Lithuania	Latvia	Poland	Romania	Slovenia	Slovakia	Total
52.124	22.063	12.137	38.054	29.829	21.848	168.683	150.636	6.337	18.289	520.000

BSE: United Kingdom and Portugal

In a decision of 14 July, the Commission set 1 August 1999 as the date for the resumption of exports of certain beef products from the United Kingdom produced from animals that have been certified free of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The conditions for resumption were set out in the "date-based export scheme" (i.e. based on the animal's date of birth) that was approved by the Commission on 25

November 1998. The only products authorised for export are beef off the bone and certain products manufactured from meat from animals born after 1 August 1996 (the date on which it was established that the ban on meat and bone meal had become effective in the United Kingdom) and aged between 6 and 30 months. Further conditions for export are: the mother of an animal must have survived for at least six

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months after its birth and been proven to be BSE-free; the young of contaminated animals born after 1 August 1996 must have been slaughtered and destroyed before the regime was put into effect; the products may be produced only in specially authorised establishments, exclusively designed for handling approved products, and the production process must demonstrate full compliance with the strict conditions governing animal tracing and control.

This decision was made subject to verification that the system had been effectively implemented; on the whole the system has been found to be working in a satisfactory manner, and the United Kingdom authorities have demonstrated a willingness to comply with the Commission's recommendations for tightening up the system even further in advance of the 1 August deadline. Readers will recall that the ban on beef exports was partially lifted on 1 June 1998, for beef products from Northern Ireland produced from herds certified as healthy (see Newsletter N° 4).

In Portugal's case, although significant improvements have been made as a result of the emergency measures taken, the Commission decided on 28 July to extend the ban on exports of beef products from this country that was imposed on 18 November 1998 (see Newsletter N° 6) and which had been

due to expire on 1 August last. The new decision by the Commission is due partly to the level of BSE incidence in Portugal (which is still above the ceiling set by the International Office of Epizootics) and partly to shortcomings noted by the Food and Veterinary Office of the Commission as regards the removal and destruction of materials presenting specific risks, animal identification and registering and abattoir monitoring. In the light of the recommendations made by the Standing Veterinary Committee, the length of the extension was set at six months starting on 1 August 1999.

Although the Portuguese authorities have introduced the necessary measures in the area of animal feedingstuffs (a ban on mixing them with meat and bone meal, compulsory destruction of meat and bone meal, authorisation to recall and destroy existing stocks of meat and bone meal and feedingstuffs that contain it, etc.), there is still a shortage of incineration facilities in Portugal. Accordingly, in the same decision, the Commission authorised in principle the export of Portuguese meat and bone meal solely for purposes of destruction and subject to extremely tight controls, and on the proviso that the control systems in the recipient countries are inspected prior to the export.

in brief

Exports to Russia: alternative proof of delivery

The paying agencies in several Member States have recently suspended the payment of export refunds on certain Community products exported to Russia, after finding that many of the import documents supplied by Russia were either falsified or incomplete. It is only by presenting these documents that Community exporters can obtain a refund of the price difference for certain exports to Russia (beef and pigmeat, eggs and poultry, fruit and vegetables, wines and some dairy products, etc.). To remedy this situation, which is harmful both to Community exporters and to trade with Russia in general, the Commission decided on 28 July, for a limited period only, to permit operators to submit alternative documents as proof of delivery of goods exported to Russia, such as the transport document, discharge certificate, proof of payment for the goods or other official Russian documents including the veterinary certificate and the certificate attesting the discharge of the "TIR carnet" procedure, providing that they enable the authorities to trace the route taken by the exports. This decision will not be published in the Official Journal but has been notified to the Member States in accordance with a procedure provided for in the Treaty (Article 191(3)).

The new Commission and its plans for departmental reorganisation

On 9 July, Romano Prodi, the new President of the European Commission, released the names and portfolios of the proposed Commissioners, and announced a shake-up of the service. The agriculture portfolio remains with Commissioner Fischler, who has also been asked to take on fisheries. Of the current DG VI policy areas, public health and animal and plant health (covered by Unit B.II, except for organic farming) and the activities associated with infringements of Community regulations in this area (currently under Unit B.I.3) will henceforth come under DG XXIV (Health and Consumer Protection) as the result of a decision to group together all these related activities in this DG. Similarly, the coordination of agricultural research (up to now part of Unit F.II.3) will be taken on by DG XII (Research). The European Parliament is set to vote to approve the new Commission in mid-September. More information can be found at the following website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/newcomm/index_en.htm>.



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For further information: Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Bruxelles/Wetstraat 200, B-1049 Brussel - Belgium - Office: L/130-4/148A
Telephone: direct line (+32-2) 295 32 40, exchange (+32-2) 299 11 11. Fax: (+32-2) 295 75 40.
Telex: COMEU B 21877. Internet: <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/index.htm>>
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