



European Commission
Directorate-General for Agriculture

Newsletter

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Future EU citizens back CAP aims

Two thirds of the citizens of the countries set to join the European Union in 2004 believe in CAP reform. According to the results of a new Eurobarometer poll (1), 67 % of Accession State citizens support the EU shift in financial support away from subsidising farm products and towards the development and protection of the rural economy and direct support to farmers. The poll released on 8 March 2003 shows that almost nine out of every 10 future EU citizens believe the CAP's priorities should be providing safe, healthy food, and supporting and improving rural life.

The survey was carried out amongst a representative sample of the populations of 13 countries. They were the 10 set to join the EU in 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland Slovakia and Slovenia) together with Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. The results of the survey are broadly similar to polls conducted among EU citizens in 2001 and 2002.

One major difference between the latest survey and recent polls conducted within the EU-15 is that people in the future Member States believe much more strongly than those in the EU-15 that a major role of the CAP should be to support farmers' incomes. The CAP's role in protecting life in the countryside, encouraging diversification of products and in reducing disparities in rural prosperity between regions also have significantly more support among future citizens than the current ones.

Country-by-country variations among the future Member States are significant. In Slovakia, the main concern is about public issues that European-level policies can address. In others, particularly Cyprus, Estonia, Romania and Turkey, people believe that agricultural and rural policies should be aimed primarily at personal advantages (i.e., healthy food, respect for the environment, adapting production to consumers' needs or favouring organic production) or farmers' interests. In the

remaining countries, people expect the policies to address the well-being of farmers and interests of citizens equally. There is much less variation across the demographic segments of society though in rural areas, for example, people are more likely to expect EU-level agricultural policies to address the problems of farmers than the problems of society more widely.

There are some apparent contradictions in the results. Future EU citizens, especially in the Czech Republic and Slovenia, fear that the CAP may fail to deliver on the desired goals and could turn out to be unfavourable to farmers. In contrast, 69 % of respondents expect that joining the EU will have either a positive or very positive effect on farms. There appears to be greater confidence in the EU-15 in the CAP's ability to deliver assistance to farmers, even if EU citizens believe the support should be more limited.

These anomalies might be explained partly by a lack of information. It is clear that more could be done to inform the general public in the new Member States about the concept and aims of the CAP, as the current level of knowledge is low. The best informed are the Poles (36 % aware of the CAP) and the Slovenes (31 %) but, on average, only every fifth citizen (20 %) can recall that they have heard of the CAP, and half of all citizens in the future Member States (49 %) say they have never heard about the agricultural policies and actions of the European Union.

The Commission is already bridging this information gap. Under a regulation introduced in the year 2000 (2), EU funding is available for a comprehensive information drive on the CAP, aimed at existing and future Member States as well as further afield. The EU part-finances information programmes run by farmers' and rural development organisations, and by consumer and environmental protection associations. It is also involved in projects implemented by public authorities, the media and universities.

Question:	Yes — future Member States (%)	Yes — EU 15 (%)
Should the EU use its agricultural policy to ...		
... ensure that agricultural products are healthy and safe?	88	90
... favour and improve life in the countryside?	88	77
... ensure stable and adequate incomes for farmers?	86	77
... promote respect for the environment?	84	87
... help farmers to adapt their production to consumers' expectations?	84	80
... protect medium- or small-sized farms?	83	81
... defend farmers' interests in their dealings with intermediaries and distributors?	81	69
... make European agriculture more competitive on world markets?	80	77
... encourage the diversification of agricultural products and activities?	80	73
... reduce development disparities between regions?	80	72
... protect European agricultural products?	78	73
... favour methods of organic production?	69	72

(1) The full Eurobarometer report can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/survey/cc/index_en.htm

(2) Council Regulation (EC) No 814/2000 of 17 April 2000.

Commission to reclaim over EUR 90 million misspent CAP money

The Commission will reclaim EUR 92.94 million of European Union farm money misspent by Member States, it announced on 14 February 2003. Member States were found to have inadequate control procedures or not to be complying with expenditure rules. Under this decision, the twelfth since reform of the clearance of accounts began in 1996, money is being reclaimed from all countries except Austria, Belgium, Finland and Sweden.

Commissioner Fischler commented: 'Our taxpayers have to be sure that their money is being correctly spent. This is why we claw back misspent agriculture funds via our farm audit system'.

Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom will have the most money clawed back:

- EUR 26.44 million from Germany for unsatisfactory controls in the arable crops sector;
- EUR 26.26 million for considerable payment delays, and shortcomings in the management of rural development measures, in Italy;
- EUR 24.39 million in the United Kingdom for unsatisfactory control of animal premium payments and problems in the public storage system.

In other Member States problems were identified in the olive oil, fruit and vegetables and milk sectors, as well as in financial audit and public storage control procedures.

Under CAP rules, Member States are responsible for paying out and checking nearly all CAP expenditure, but the Commission is required to ensure that Member States have made correct use of the funds.

The Commission carries out an annual audit to check the legitimacy of payments and whether control systems are adequate. Each year, the Commission also launches over 200 on-the-spot inspections in Member States. Working with Member States, the Commission is developing advanced techniques, such as checking fields by aerial or satellite photography and cross-checking claims in computer databases.

Member States have the right of reply and the right to a fair hearing. Ultimately they have the right to appeal to the European Court of Justice.

News in brief

□ Commission reduces export subsidies on live cattle

The Commission has substantially reduced the possibility of claiming export refunds for live cattle thereby meeting the concerns expressed, among others, by the European Parliament with regard to animal transport to third countries. A new regulation has been introduced that will discourage the unnecessary transport of live animals over long distances ⁽¹⁾.

Under the new regulation, subsidies will no longer be paid on cattle destined for slaughter. An exemption will be made for the export of male animals to third countries such as Egypt and Lebanon which traditionally import substantial numbers of such animals for cultural and religious reasons. Furthermore, refunds for export of pure-bred animals are now limited to young female animals intended for breeding purposes in third countries.

Furthermore, the Commission has adopted a regulation to reinforce veterinary checks and penalties applied in the framework of export refunds for live bovine animals. In particular, the regulation establishes compulsory veterinary checks in third countries for every consignment, and increases penalties in case of non-compliance with the EU rules on animal welfare during transport.

These two legislative initiatives follow the announcement made in the Mid-Term Review of July 2002 where the Commission announced its intention 'to reinforce the conditions and controls under which export subsidies for live animals can be granted'.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Regulation (EC) No 118/2003 of 23 January 2003 (OJ L 20 of 24.1.2003).

