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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture

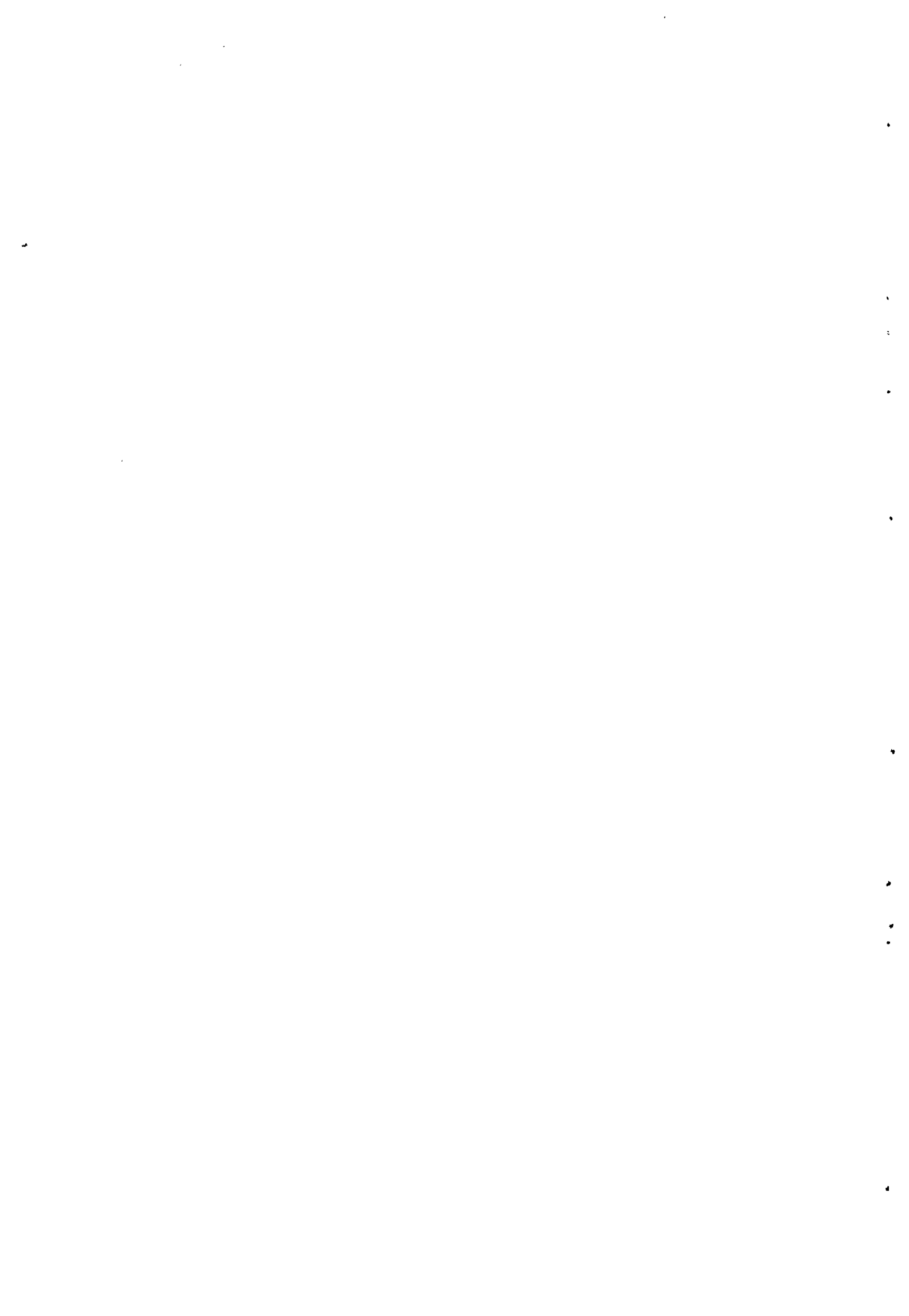
on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 246/76) for a regulation relating to the organization of a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings for 1977

Rapporteur: Mr J. SCOTT-HOPKINS

PE 45.595/fin.

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English Edition



By letter of 29 July 1976 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a regulation relating to the organization of a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings for 1977.

On 6 August 1976 the President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Agriculture as the committee responsible, and the Committee on Budgets as the committee asked for its opinion.

The Committee on Agriculture appointed Mr Scott-Hopkins rapporteur.

It considered this proposal at its meeting of 4/5 November 1976.

At the same meeting the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement with one abstention.

The following were present : Mr Houdet, chairman; Mr Laban and Mr Liogier, vice-chairmen; Mr Scott-Hopkins, rapporteur; Mr Brégégère, Mr Frehsee, Mr Früh, Mr Gerlach (deputizing for Mr Hansen), Mr Hughes, Mr de Koning, Mr McDonald, Mr Martens, Mr Ney, Mr Pisoni, Mr Pistillo, Mr Pucci, Lord St. Oswald and Mr Vitale.

The opinion of the Committee on Budgets is attached.

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The Committee on Agriculture hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement :

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a regulation relating to the organization of a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings for 1977

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities¹,
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 246/76),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (Doc. 413/76),
1. Approves the Commission's proposal subject to the amendment indicated below;
 2. Insists that the proposal be applied strictly so as to ensure that there will be no delays caused by the failure of Member States to submit information within established deadlines and in a proper form;
 3. Doubts the wisdom of allowing Member States to choose between a full survey and a random sample survey;
 4. Believes that the statistical surveys on the structure of farm holdings should be employed more directly to monitor the effectiveness of particular structural policies, and calls upon the Commission to come forward with proposals to this end;
 5. Welcomes the indications given by the Commission that efforts are being made to improve the forms in which the results of surveys are published so as to ensure them a wider audience and greater relevance;
 6. Believes that whilst horticultural products are included in Annex I, it is wrong to include general provision for holdings of less than one hectare, and that specific provision should be made for the inclusion of horticultural holdings of less than one hectare in the survey;
 7. Requests, furthermore, the Commission to make provision for special surveys of intensive and non-land based production of beef, poultry and pigmeat, in holdings of less than one hectare;

¹ OJ No. C 240, 13.10.1976, p. 8

8. Requests that a further item, to read '4a, for corporately owned farms', be added to the list of characteristics for the Community schedule of tables for 1977, given in the Annex to the Commission's proposal;
9. Requests the Commission to adopt the following amendment, pursuant to Article 149, second paragraph, of the EEC Treaty.

Proposal from the Commission to the Council
for a regulation relating to the organization
of a survey on the structure of agricultural
holdings for 1977

Preamble, recitals and Articles 1 and 2 unchanged

Article 3

Article 3

sub-paragraph 1 unchanged

2. The survey shall cover :

unchanged

- (a) agricultural holdings where the agricultural area utilized for farming is one hectare or more;
- (b) agricultural holdings where the agricultural area utilized for farming is less than one hectare, if they market a certain proportion of their products or if their standard gross production exceeds certain physical units.

(a) unchanged

- (b) agricultural holdings where the agricultural area utilized for farming is less than one hectare, if they market a certain proportion of their products and if their standard gross production exceeds certain physical units.

sub-paragraph 3 unchanged

Articles 4 to 7 unchanged

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTThe purpose of the Commission's proposal

1. The purpose of the Commission's proposal is to lay down the organization of a survey in 1977 on the structure of agricultural holdings, to bring up to date information collected on previous surveys carried out within the programme of Community surveys laid down in 1973 for the period 1975 to 1980.

Surveys of agricultural structures

2. The need to provide regular and high quality information on the development of agricultural structures is widely recognized. National statistics do not allow for proper comparison between Member States, nor do they cover the specific aspects essential for the development of Community policies. Not all Member States have regular annual censuses of agricultural structures, while definitions differ.

3. Regulation No 70/66/EEC¹ provided for a basic survey.

The 1966/67 survey covered a random sample of 1.2 million holdings, carried out by Member States following their normal procedures. The published results give for each of the 200 survey districts a split by agricultural area in use of most of the items of information collected (crops, livestock, machinery, labour, legal status, land tenure, farmers' education, accounts, cooperation, further processing and contract sales).

4. Following a recommendation by the FAO, provision was made in Council Directive 69/400/EEC of 28 October 1969² for a general agricultural census every ten years.

The 1970/71 Community survey adopted a different approach, by specifying a common programme of tables of the information collected in the context of the FAO census.

5. It became evident that there was a need for more precise information, updated at shorter intervals, within those ten-year periods.

Consequently, a programme of Community surveys to be conducted by the Commission and Member States over the period 1975 to 1980, was drawn up in 1973³ and consisting of :

¹ O.J. No 112, 24.6.1966

² O.J. No L 288, 17.11.1969

³ Doc. 167/73

- (a) a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, "the intermediate survey", to be held in 1975¹;
- (b) a survey on the development of the structure of agricultural holdings, covering farming over one year for harvest in 1977, a shorter updating of information;
- (c) and a census of agricultural holdings in line with the FAO recommendation for a world agricultural census referring to farming over one year for harvest in 1979.

6. The aim of the Commission is to establish, on a regular and automatic basis of a system of two-yearly surveys, processing at a Community level information collected in the framework of criteria laid down in national censuses.

7. The 1970 and 1979 surveys constitute an adaptation to Community needs of existing FAO censuses, and employing standard tables already established.

At five-year intervals, greater in-depth surveys are carried out, covering a wider range of information, including the structure of marketing (membership of cooperatives and use of contracts, etc.) and going beyond data provided in the standard tables.

8. The 1977 survey should be seen as an updating exercise.

9. This system already works well in seven Member States, and France is creating a regular system, drawn up with the Community's needs in mind.

The 1977 survey

10. In its broad outlines the proposed survey to update existing information is similar to the 1969 general agricultural census, while at the same time being designed to permit comparison with the results of the structural survey for 1975, the first survey to provide comparable information for the nine Member States.

11. This survey will be used to provide a Community schedule of tables for the purpose of analysis at Community level, covering the following characteristics: type of tenure, land use, livestock, machinery and equipment and farm labour force.

12. The survey shall cover the crop harvested in 1977, and shall be conducted, by means of a full survey or by random sampling, between 1 December 1976 and 31 January 1978.

¹ Directive No 75/108/EEC, O.J. No L 42, 15.2.1975, p. 21.

13. The provisions covering definitions and size of agricultural holdings are the same as for the survey in 1975.

14. Certain important modifications are introduced.

15. For the first time the Community classification of agricultural holdings, currently being developed by the Commission and Member States, is to be applied.

16. Secondly, the necessity to collect data at regional or area level has been recognized in view of the development of regional measures, particularly those for mountain and hill farming and certain less-favoured areas. This was implemented in the 1975 survey, but on a voluntary ad hoc basis.

For Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, results are to be prepared at regional level and the results (with the exception of the Netherlands) are to be given by a breakdown of the less-favoured agricultural areas within the meaning of Directive 75/268/EEC.

Financing of the surveys

17. The financing of the survey is to be done on the basis of the principle of covering a part of the extra cost incurred by Member States above that normally required by their own national periodic surveys. The cost therefore varies according to the degree of capability of Member States to carry out such surveys.

For seven Member States such surveys present no problems and the Commission estimates the additional cost of analysing data at 20,000 u.a. per Member State.

One of these Member States has particular problems in adapting its information for Community use for the current year, and therefore an additional sum of 10,000 u.a. will be required.

One Member State does not have a system of continuous surveys and therefore additional expenditure is required to organize as well as analyse the results of the survey, or a sum of 600,000 u.a. The ninth Member State is currently setting up an organization for the carrying out of regular surveys, and an additional 150,000 u.a. will be required.

18. Total expenditure for the nine Member States is therefore 900,000 u.a., and will be charged to appropriations set aside for those purposes in the 1976 budget under Article 264 "Surveys and studies of a statistical nature".

Observations

19. The programme of surveys being carried out on Community agricultural structures is evidently a hybrid one, consisting :

- (a) of information gathered within existing national surveys, where they exist;
- (b) and of information intended for different purposes for FAO censuses, for national statistics and specific Community surveys.

This raises the problem as to the comparability of the information transmitted to Luxembourg.

20. A second problem arises from the fact that certain Member States do not yet provide for national surveys, while information collected must be transmitted in a form suitable for compilation by the Community's statistical services. These two factors have led to considerable delays. For example, the figures for the 1970 survey have yet to be published¹.

21. A considerable improvement has been made on both these counts.

Common criteria and definitions have been established, and a standard form for the submission of data laid down : for the 1970 survey Member States were free to transmit information in any form they thought fit, resulting in considerable delays.

22. Consequently, considerable advances have been made in both comparability of information and time required for processing. The results of the 1975 survey should be available in 1977/78.

23. A further problem exists as to the presentation of information. The 1966/67 survey results run to thirteen volumes, giving figures by geographical regions. This is indigestible as to volume and content. A far more analytical approach is required.

24. As for the 1970 and subsequent surveys, information will differ from that of 1966/67 survey in being presented in terms of variables rather than purely by geographical areas.

25. A greater effort is being made by the Commission to ensure that statistics collected will be presented in a form which will :

- (a) ensure a wider audience;
- (b) be more directly related to policy elaboration.

¹ The results should be available in the autumn of 1976

The statistics acquired will be presented in a number of different forms :

- (i) a popular digest of abstracts;
- (ii) a 15 page summary of key results;
- (iii) publication in farm classification scheme;
- (iv) analyses by groups of holdings (for example dairy and horticulture);
- (v) special analyses (200-300 pages);
- (vi) a basic publication by tables rather than geographical regions (1,000 pages).

26. The 1975 survey, as mentioned above, contains information on the structure of marketing - membership of cooperatives, use of contracts, etc. This aspect of structural policy is of particular importance, and should be given greater attention in future surveys and analyses.

27. There is one important omission in all surveys so far : no information is collected on part-time farmers with other occupations. Such information is evidently of great value, and, despite objections made by Member States, should be included.

28. More important, in the long term, than the question of the presentation of the statistics themselves is the use to which they are put. Statistics should not be an end in themselves but a tool to make structural policies more effective : to examine policies already in force and to develop new measures where needed.

29. The surveys at present organized do not allow for in-depth monitoring of the effects of particular measures on individual factors, such as income, management skills, training, except indirectly by comparing holdings or regions affected with other holdings or regions. Even here the delays in publishing information limit its utility.

30. One useful step which the Commission is developing at the moment is the Community farm classification scheme mentioned above; this will allow for a more analytical approach to be adopted, for example by giving values of items by groups of holdings.

31. Another step would be to use the data to establish natural groupings of farms which could be examined as a whole and compared with one another.

32. A much clearer picture would be given of the problems and effectiveness of structural policy if, within the framework of the surveys, a representative sampling of holdings were followed through time.

33. These possibilities are limited, however, at present by two factors :

- (a) methodological problems yet to be solved;
- (b) limited Community resources.

34. Clearly, a great deal of work has to be done in this direction, and the Commission should make a step by drawing up a communication for the European Parliament and Council setting out the possibilities, stating the methodological problems, indicating the time scale within which each approach could be made operational and stating the resources, both in terms of finance and staff, that would be required.

35. In the meantime, the Commission should ensure that the results of surveys should be published without delays, and that provision be made for supplying information for those requiring it from a data bank, either in summary form or in special tables.

Conclusions

36. The Committee on Agriculture considers that it can approve the Commission's proposal.

37. The Committee on Agriculture would like to point out that if Member States cooperate in establishing a regular system of surveys, there will be no need for Community financing of the 1979 survey.

38. Furthermore, the Committee on Agriculture notes with satisfaction that the Commission proposal is presented in the form of a regulation rather than a Directive as for the 1975 survey. This will reduce delays in so far as national legislation will not be required, as in the case of a directive, to make it binding. The Committee on Agriculture requests that future proposals in this field be similarly drawn up in the form of regulations.

39. The European Commission proposes to charge this survey to the budget heading "Statistical studies and surveys" (Article 264).

In your committee's opinion, however, this survey is not so much an ad hoc study as part of a periodic collection of data required in all quarters. Hence, it would be more logical to charge it to Item 2711 ("Statistical publications"), as is already apparent from the fact that the proposal forms part of a programme which has been given a character both very fundamental and oriented to a lasting activity.

40. The Committee on Agriculture insists that there be no delays in the publishing of results of the 1977 survey as there have been with previous surveys, and that there be a strict interpretation of Articles 2 and 5 so as to ensure that Member States submit information in time and in a proper form.

41. The Committee on Agriculture calls upon the Commission to provide facilities for the rapid transmission of information received from surveys, in the form of summaries or special tables, to those requiring such information.

42. The Committee on Agriculture requests the Commission to draw up a Communication indicating the best uses of the material for the development of a Community structural policy, the methodological problems involved, and the resources that will be required.

43. The Committee on Agriculture welcomes indications given by the Commission that efforts are being made to improve the presentation of statistics, by complementing volumes containing overall results with digests and analytical studies.

44. The Committee on Agriculture would like to express its doubts:

- as to the wisdom of allowing Member States a choice between random and full surveys;
- and the necessity to include a general provision to cover holdings of less than one hectare : specific provision should be made for horticultural holdings and intensive farming units of less than one hectare.

45. Finally, the Committee on Agriculture would like to point out the very important increase in corporately owned farms in the Community. This has important implications for structural policy, and consequently the committee requests that a further item, to read: '4a, for corporately owned farms', be added to the list of characteristics for the Community schedule of tables for 1977, given in the Annex to the Commission's proposal.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

Letter from the chairman of the committee to Mr Roger HOUDET, chairman of the Committee on Agriculture

Luxembourg, 1 October 1976

Dear Mr Chairman,

At its meeting of 23 September 1976 the Committee on Budgets considered the proposal for a regulation relating to the organization of a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings for 1977.

This proposal follows a series of similar regulations organizing regular structural surveys in this sector. It is based on the widely recognized interest in ensuring a regular and high quality supply of information on the development of agricultural structures, an interest which has also been expressed by the Committee on Budgets in its opinions on the previous Commission proposals.

In view of the comments on the financial implications of the proposal and the satisfactory explanations given, the Committee on Budgets is prepared to deliver a favourable opinion.

However, it qualifies its favourable opinion on this proposal for a regulation with the following reservations:

- the Committee on Agriculture is urged to help to bring about a reform of the common agricultural policy with a view to achieving a reduction in expenditure;
- the Committee on Agriculture is asked to consider the question of whether proposals for regulations such as this one are not in the long run opposed to the reduction in agricultural surpluses being aimed at.

(sgd) Erwin Lange

Present: Mr Lange, chairman; Mr Bangemann, Mr Cointat, Mr Concas, Lord Bruce of Donington (deputizing for Mr Della Briotta), Mr Fletcher, Mr Pêtre (deputizing for Mr Martens), Mr Patijn, Mr Radoux, Mr Shaw and Mr Yeats.

