



Newsletter

Strong support for the CAP in the EU of 25

'Europeans and the common agricultural policy', the first Eurobarometer survey into public attitudes to the common agricultural policy (CAP) conducted in the enlarged EU of 25 Member States, indicates that two thirds of citizens approve of the current direction of agricultural policy. They support the role agriculture plays in EU society and the balance the CAP now strikes between the public interest and the needs of farming and rural areas.

The survey is very up to date, having questioned 25 000 people in the 25 Member States between 22 November and 19 December 2004.

The main conclusion to be drawn from the survey results is that two thirds of EU citizens believe that directing funds towards the protection and development of the overall rural economy, and for direct support to farmers, is a good thing. The clear majority supports recent changes in the CAP, and would like to see the way in which it supports EU farmers continue to evolve along these lines. The move towards a more cost-effective and market-oriented system is seen as beneficial for both consumers and farmers.

The poll shows that the CAP's first priority remains ensuring a stable and adequate income for farmers (36 % of respondents). The second most important priority is to ensure that agricultural products are healthy and safe (30 %), and the third (28 %) is to promote respect for the environment.

Other findings make equally interesting reading, for example:

- 57 % of Europeans agree that the CAP is doing a good job in ensuring that agricultural products are healthy and safe;
- 55 % think that the CAP plays its role in promoting the respect of the environment 'fairly well';
- 48 % believe that the CAP is making European agriculture more competitive on world markets;

- 47 % of citizens consider that the CAP favours organic methods of production;
- 29 % (9 % more than in 2003 and 2002) recognise the importance of information on the geographical origin of food, and appreciate the role the CAP plays in this;
- respondents in Cyprus and Malta are the most approving of the advantages offered by the CAP (76 % of Cypriots and 72 % of Maltese believe the CAP ensures that the food consumers buy is safe to eat). Citizens in Sweden and Denmark are less convinced of these advantages (25 % and 31 % respectively);
- in the EU-15 also, there has been an increase in positive opinion towards the role played by the CAP. This is especially the case in countries such as France (a 9 % improvement since the 2003 poll), Luxembourg and Sweden (+ 8 %), Germany (+ 7 %) and the United Kingdom (+ 6 %).

One of the most encouraging indicators is that younger age groups believe that the development of the CAP is a good thing, to a greater extent than older people, though the variation — 68 % for younger citizens (15–24 and 25–39 years old) to 63 % for the 55-plus age bracket — is not significant. Analysis of the occupational scale shows that managers (74 %) are far more positive about the CAP than other groups.

A further cause for optimism is that the survey shows a rise in the belief among Europeans that the CAP favours consumers rather than farmers. This contrasts with the 2003 and 2002 surveys which found that it favours both equally.

The full Eurobarometer report is available at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/survey/index_en.htm

Salon de l'Agriculture: The EU stand was a big success in Paris!

The EU stand with its 10 'mini-stands' representing the 10 new Member States was one of the highest attractions at the fair — after the animals of course.

The Agriculture and Rural Development DG was present at the 'Salon de l'Agriculture' in Paris from 26 February to 6 March, with an information stand that featured a common area in which Commission publications were displayed and conferences held as well as 10 'mini-stands' for the 10 new Member States. The project reflected one of the themes of

the 2005 Salon: the recent enlargement of the EU. It was also an example of successful cooperation between the Commission's services, the French Ministry, the 10 new Member States and the organisers of the Salon, Comexpo. The stand itself, an impressive and very visible structure, hosted a press conference by Commissioner Fischer Boel as well as a reception in her honour. It was visited by a number of French dignitaries including the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Minister for European Affairs and the Agriculture Minister. It also provided

a base for the ministers of the 10 new Member States and a number of other agriculture ministers who were present on the opening day for the visit of Mr Chirac. They were welcomed by the Chairman of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, Joseph Daul. The new Member States provided a daily fare of traditional music, dancing, food and drink which was extremely well received. The stand was one of the most visited in the Salon and was well covered by the media.

The Agriculture and Rural Development DG was also present at the 'Buonitalia' Italian Ministry stand at the 'Agrifood' fair in Verona from 3 to 6 March. Visitors included Italian Agriculture Minister Alemanno and a number of local dignitaries. The Ministry kindly provided the Commission with the infrastructure to display its publications and receive the general public.

News in brief

Risk and crisis management

On 9 March, the Commission adopted a communication that looks at ways of helping farmers to manage risk and improving the EU's response to crises in the agricultural sector.

The communication fulfils the Commission's commitment, made when the 2003 CAP reform was agreed, to examine two issues: how a portion of modulation funds might be used to finance risk, crisis and disaster-relief measures in agriculture; and whether provision for crises might be integrated into each CAP market regime.

While CAP reform encourages farmers to be more entrepreneurial, it will also increase their exposure to market forces. And farming will always be vulnerable to climatic disasters, livestock diseases and plant pests. Crises of this kind may endanger a farm's viability or the economic stability of an entire rural area.

The Commission's communication presents three risk and crisis management options for debate: agricultural insurance, mutual funds, and an income crisis tool. The communication emphasises that the aim of these new policy options would be to help farm businesses withstand temporary shocks and improve their access to finance. Any new measures agreed would have to be in line with the reformed CAP and comply with WTO requirements.

The Commission's communication, and a staff working document, can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/publi/communications/risk/index_en.htm

What is veal?

The Commission has launched an Internet consultation on consumers' perceptions of veal, to try to establish what characteristics consumers expect.

While occurring in nearly all EU countries, veal production and consumption levels vary markedly between Member States. Three countries account for almost 75 % of EU production and two of these three countries represent around 63 % of EU consumption. At the moment, meats with different characteristics, obtained from animals produced according to different standards, are sold on the EU market under the denomination 'veal', without the consumer always being correctly informed on what she or he is buying. Several Member States have asked the Commission to harmonise the definition of veal at EU level, in the consumer interest. The Commission wants to consult as widely as possible before making proposals. Participants in this consultation are invited to fill in the questionnaire at: http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

Banana regime report

The Commission has sent a report on the operation of the EU banana 'regime' to the Council and European Parliament.

A report on the EU's banana sector and support and trade arrangements for bananas (the banana regime) was adopted on 17 February. The aim of the report is to stimulate a debate with the Commission's institutional, economic and social partners on possible improvements to the regime.

The full report can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/publi/reports/banana/rep_en.pdf

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This publication does not necessarily express the official views of the Commission.

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