

**Common Market Organisations in
Agriculture**

Current Evaluation Practice

- Guide -

28 février 2001

Introduction

Scope: external evaluations of Common Market Organisations

This guide applies to the evaluation of Common Market Organisations (CMOs) in the DG AGRICULTURE. Specific programmes like POSEI, Promotion campaigns and Food programmes are also included. Altogether, CMOs constitute the biggest part of the Common Agricultural Policy in terms of budgetary expenditures. This document does not cover the second pillar of the CAP, i.e. rural development.

The scope is limited to the evaluations of a retrospective nature. Pure ex ante evaluations are not covered.

The present guide builds upon DG AGRICULTURE's evaluation practice with CMOs over the period 1998 -2000. These are the first three years in the life of the newly established Evaluation Unit¹.

During this period, 16 evaluations have been launched, 9 evaluation reports have been finalised, one evaluation has been stopped and 6 are ongoing. All have been commissioned to external evaluators. This document takes stock of all decisions and methodological options that have been taken in this framework.

Aim : capitalising current good practice

This guide aims at knowledge management and organisational learning. This means that it describes current good practice within the Evaluation Unit of DG AGRICULTURE, and not what should be done in an ideal world. In order to capitalise the lessons learnt and to maintain a sound knowledge base within the Evaluation Unit, this guide is to be updated periodically. New versions will include improved practices and validated lessons.

The main purpose of the document is daily guidance for the members of the Evaluation Unit, especially for newcomers. It might also be used as a tool for internal quality control in the conduct of evaluations, although this should not be done in a rigid way. Finally, this guide responds to a recommendation of the Commission (SEC 2000 1051 - July 2000), that requires every DG to make its evaluation procedures explicit.

The guide does not picture an average or standard practice. On the contrary, it points out what is presently considered as 'current good practice'. The term 'current practice' applies the evaluation works that are just finished or still in progress in December 2000. What is termed as 'good practice' results from a consensus that has been collectively reached by experienced members of the Evaluation Unit.

Structure: chronology of a standard evaluation

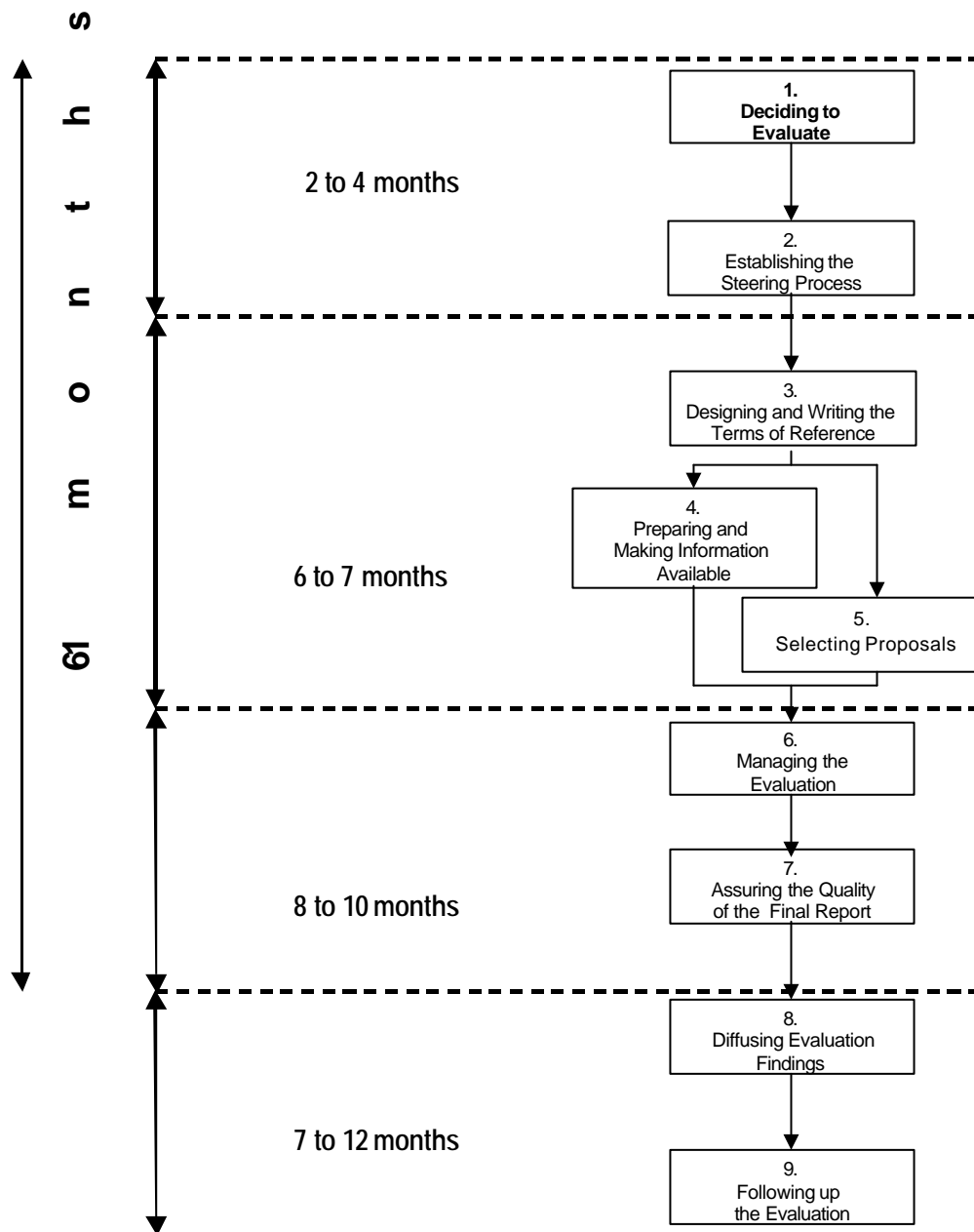
The nine-chapter structure of the guide reflects the main phases of the process of an external evaluation commissioned by DG AGRICULTURE. Several standard steps are described at each phase, always in a chronological presentation.

¹ Directorate A: "Economic analysis, Forward studies and Evaluation", Unit A4: "Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture"

Although this guide is presented in a very structured way, the whole process is far from a standard one. In terms of quality control, it should not be formally used as a template and needs to be adapted to circumstances. This guide is an informative document that should not be understood as a commitment by people concerned. Indeed it differs from a procedure code and can not be opposed to the European Commission nor to DG AGRICULTURE.

One of the most critical factors of variability is the time schedule (See the figure 1 hereafter). The duration of phases varies considerably, depending on the complexity of the CMO under evaluation and the stakes associated with the policy.

Figure 1 - Evaluation process duration

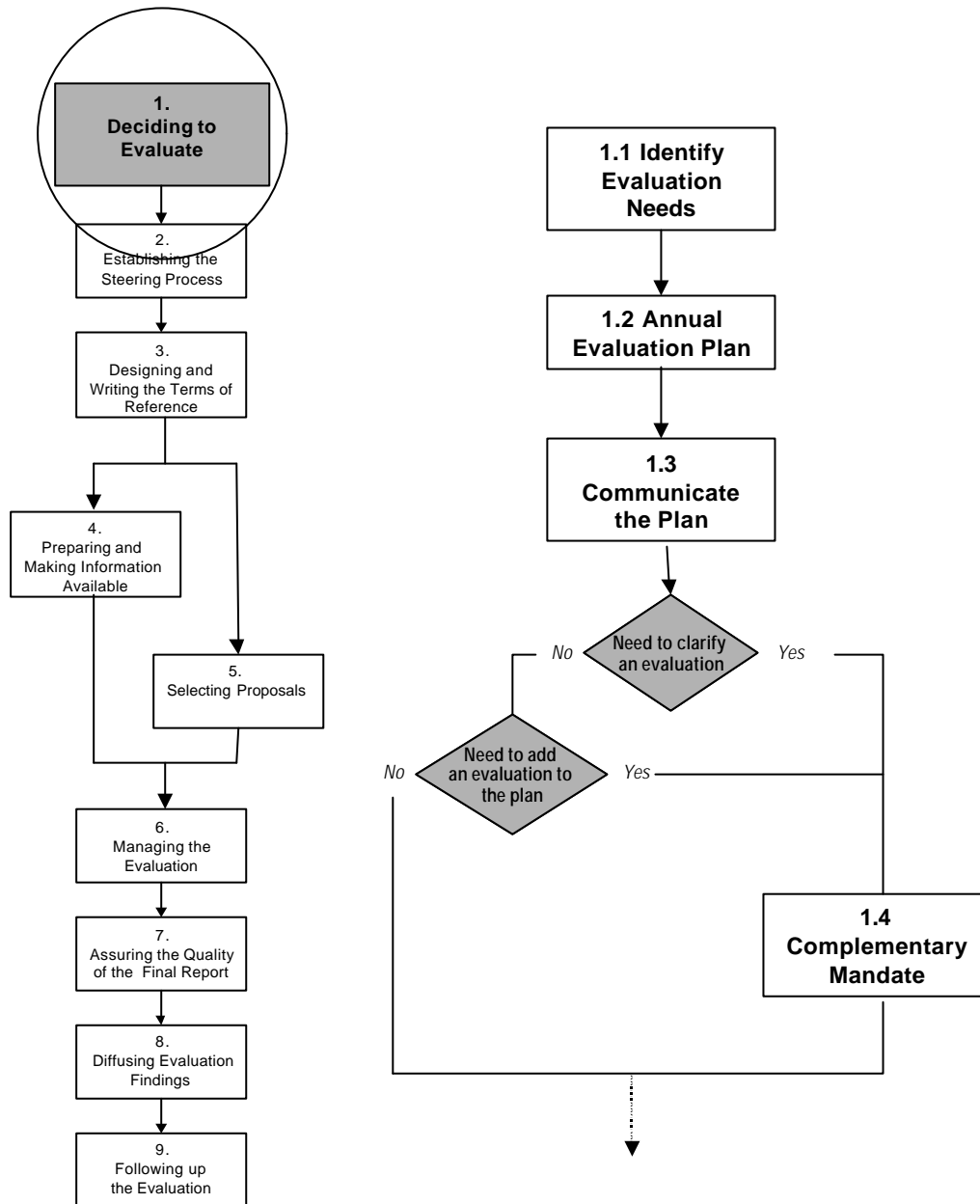


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1. Deciding to Evaluate



1.1 Identify Evaluation Needs

1. The Head of the Evaluation Unit is constantly attentive to information that may indicate the evaluation needs that are likely to occur over the next two years. He/she keeps up-to-date with internal discussions and external sources of documentation that, for example, propose future reforms, and with new legislation.
2. Internal demands from within DG AGRICULTURE (with units making formal demands for evaluations to be conducted) and external demands (e.g. from DG BUDGET or Parliament) are a second way in which evaluation needs arise.

1.2 Annual Evaluation Plan

3. The Head of the Evaluation Unit draws up a draft annual evaluation plan, programming the evaluations in such a way as to minimise the possibility of several evaluations starting or finishing at the same time. The draft plan is submitted to the Director-General through the Director (Directorate A). The draft plan may be seen as a menu for the final version (e.g. with 9 evaluations proposed and 5 decided for the year 2000).
4. The Director-General meets with Director (Directorate A) and the Head of the Evaluation Unit and his/her staff. They discuss the priorities and needs. The Director-General decides upon the plan.
5. The number of evaluations decided depends on two main factors: 1/ the capacity of the Evaluation Unit (number of evaluation managers available) 2/ priorities and needs as perceived by DG AGRICULTURE.

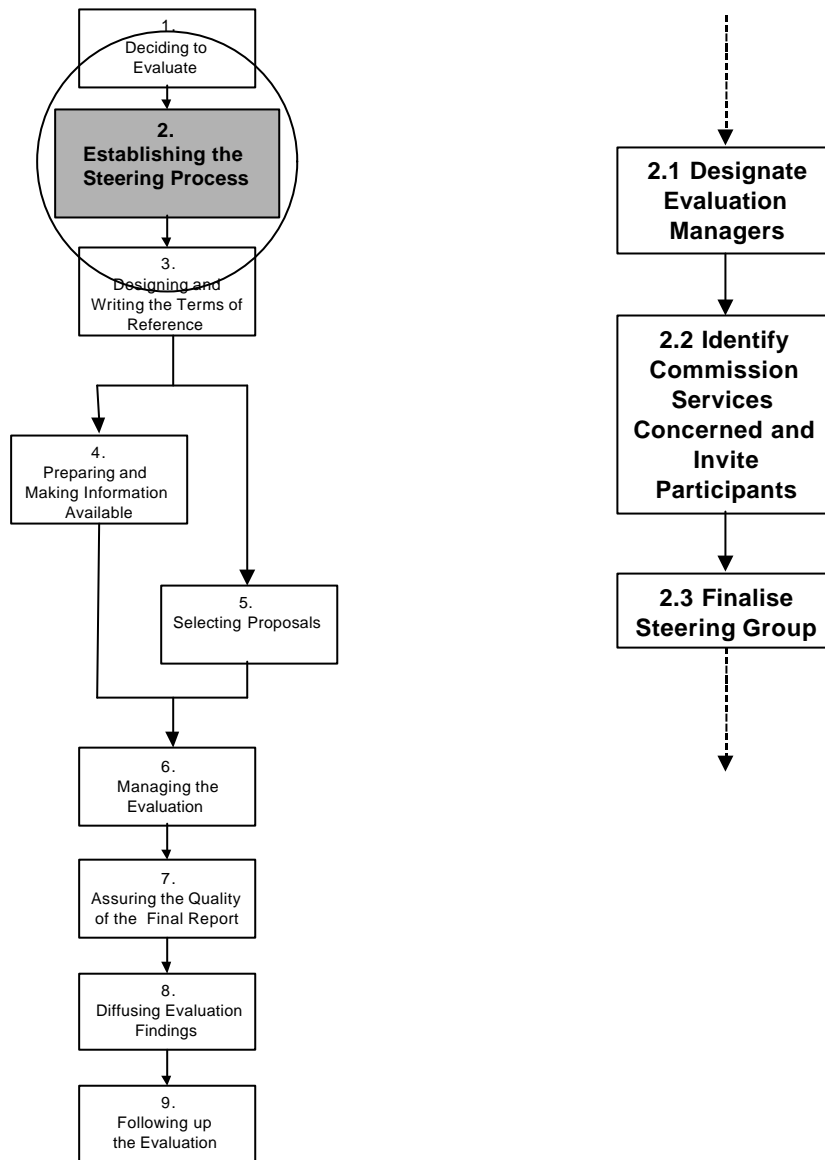
1.3 Communicate the Plan

6. The Head of the Evaluation Unit sends the validated plan to the following addressees through the Director (Directorate A) and the Director-General: Secretariat General, DG BUDGET, all other Directors of DG AGRICULTURE, deputy Director-General for Markets. The plan is also transmitted with a letter to the Cabinet of the Commissioner of Agriculture.
7. The plan is then published on the Intranet.
8. The Head of the Evaluation Unit submits an abridged version of the plan, outlining the evaluations to be launched in the year, to the Official Journal for publication in the form of a prior information notice. This notice is also published on DG AGRICULTURE's website.

1.4 Complementary Mandate

9. When it is necessary to clarify the annual work plan about an evaluation (e.g. durum wheat and sugar), or to conduct an evaluation that does not figure in the annual evaluation plan (e.g. sheep meat, milk), a complementary mandate is drawn up by the Evaluation Unit. The mandate typically establishes the scope of the evaluation, the themes to be tackled, the members of the steering group, etc. The document is submitted to the Director-General who approves and signs it before it is communicated for information to the hierarchy concerned within DG AGRICULTURE and possibly to other concerned DGs.

2. Establishing the Steering Process



2.1 Designate Evaluation Managers

10. The Head of the Evaluation Unit designates a lead evaluation manager and a deputy evaluation manager within the staff of the unit. In normal circumstances, each staff member leads four evaluations (two are continued from the previous year and two are launched during the year). In addition he/she gives assistance to four other evaluations per year. The main role of the deputy is to provide interaction on the substance of the project to the lead manager when reflection is required, for example, when the logic model and the evaluation questions are being drawn up. The deputy also takes over the lead role when the evaluation manager is not available.

2.2 Identify Commission Services Concerned and Invite Participants

11. The evaluation manager identifies which units within DG AGRICULTURE are concerned with the evaluation and should be invited in the steering group. The Head of the Evaluation Unit formally contacts the heads of these units with copies to Directors concerned. The role of the evaluation steering group is explained. The heads of units are invited to formally nominate a person from their staff who will participate in the steering process. Sometimes the participation of ad hoc experts may be required.
12. A formal proposal is also sent to DG BUDGET and any other concerned DGs (e.g. DG ENVIRONMENT), asking them to nominate a participant. Later in the process, the steering group may also decide that the standpoint of a particular DG is missing and send out an invitation to participate in the process.
13. Members of the steering group are appointed as individuals with an aim to bring their particular expertise in relation to the policy under evaluation. They are not meant to express the official views of their unit or DG.
14. The steering group is commissioned 1/ to prepare the terms of reference and establish assessment criteria 2/ to provide the evaluator with full access to information 3/ to monitor the work of the evaluator 4/ to discuss and verify the methodological validity of conclusions 5/ to report to the Director-General.

2.3 Finalise Steering Group

15. The evaluation manager along with the Head of the Evaluation Unit considers whether the number (i.e. usually between 5 and 10) and balance of participants is acceptable or not (e.g. not too many participants from management units in relation to horizontal units and other DGs, or vice versa).
16. When an imbalance exists, the Head of the Evaluation Unit makes informal demands to other heads of units and other DGs that are under represented in order to obtain the nomination of additional participant(s).
17. The membership of the steering group is finalised just before its first meeting. The evaluation manager or the Head of Unit chairs the meetings. The evaluation manager and/or his/her deputy act as its secretary.

20. These documents provide the raw material of the **evaluation dossier**.
21. **Synthesis documents** that summarise particular aspects of the policy may be produced from the analysis of documentation in the evaluation dossier. These documents are for internal use of the Evaluation Unit.
22. He/she systematically examines the regulations and communications to identify policy objectives, which are listed. Duplicates are eliminated. Objectives are classified according to whether they are situated at the operational, specific, or global level. They are then entered on the appropriate line in the first column of a **structuring matrix**. Measures and instruments of the policy are also located and listed.
23. The evaluation manager reformulates objectives into expected effects and fills in the second column of the matrix. For example, the objective "to limit price fluctuations on internal market" when transformed into an expected effect becomes "stabilisation of prices on internal market".
24. Using the effects classified in the matrix, the evaluation manager constructs the first **logic model** (also known as logical diagram of impacts, theory of action, etc.). This is done with the help of an appropriate software package such as PowerPoint or Visio. This process helps the evaluation manager to understand the policy sufficiently to help the steering group to construct its own version of the policy logic. The process of constructing a logic model is ongoing throughout the design phase of the terms of reference. When interviews are conducted, they may also feed into the process by clarifying the evaluation manager's understanding of the policy logic. When a training seminar is held, the participants construct a collective draft. The steering group either validates the model produced at the training seminar or constructs collectively its own model. The final draft of the model is based on a synthesis of the different drafts and any complementary information produced during steps 3.1 to 3.4.
25. At this step, the evaluation dossier provides sufficient information for the evaluation manager to construct the training seminar (see 3.2) or to prepare formal interviews with key informants (See 3.3).

3.2 Training Seminar

26. A training seminar of two days' duration is organised by the evaluation manager when the management unit concerned is not familiar with the evaluation process. If most of the management unit and other participants have been trained, the seminar is replaced by a short "refresher" presentation, of between thirty minutes and one hour, given at the first steering group meeting (see 3.4).
27. The evaluation manager invites up to 15 persons to participate in the training seminar, consisting of potential steering group members (including those from other units or DGs) and other staff from the management unit. Invitations are sent as soon as possible before the seminar.
28. Drawing on the evaluation dossier, the evaluation manager prepares the **working documents**, consisting of the structuring matrix, previously filled in (first two columns) to which are annexed extracts from the most important regulations containing the objectives of the policy and a list of instruments and measures.

29. The evaluation manager works closely with an outside trainer to prepare the seminar. During the seminar the trainer makes the presentations, while the evaluation manager assists in the running of workshops, stimulates discussion among participants and notes information generated during the course of the seminar.
30. The participants of the training seminar discuss the structuring matrix and use it to construct the logic model. Furthermore, a list of data sources, evaluation themes or a very first draft of evaluation questions may also result from interactions with the participants. When full and open discussions have taken place, additional information about major policy and evaluation issues is gathered. The evaluation manager uses all this material to complement the evaluation dossier.
31. The participants of the seminar are not exactly the same as the members of the steering group. Consequently, the outputs of the seminars are not automatically endorsed during the first meeting of the steering group.

3.3 Interviews

32. If a training seminar has not been held, or has not given rise to full and open discussions about major policy and evaluation issues, including participants' expectations and fears in regards to the evaluation, then key persons from the units concerned are interviewed individually. The evaluation manager contacts 2 to 5 key persons. He/she draws on the information available in the evaluation dossier to prepare the interviews, identifying key aspects to be discussed with the interviewees.
33. When conducting the interviews, the evaluation manager gathers three broad categories of information: the policy and the context in which it is implemented, the logic of the policy and data availability. He/she also encourages interviewees to talk about their expectations and fears with regards to the evaluation. The interviews also allow the evaluation manager to clarify ambiguities and resolve any misunderstandings that may exist.
34. The information gathered is used by the evaluation manager to further advance the evaluation dossier, providing him/her with the necessary information to prepare the first steering group meeting (see 3.4) and to start drafting the terms of reference (see 3.7).

3.4 First Steering Group Meeting

35. The first steering group meeting is organised by the evaluation manager. However, it is often chaired by the Head of the Evaluation Unit. When the meeting has not been preceded by a training seminar, it may include a short refresher course. The evaluation manager invites the members of the steering group at least one week before the date of the meeting, with a reminder being sent out the day before.
36. Drawing on the information constituted in the evaluation dossier, he/she prepares the working documents (regulations, structuring matrix and second version of the logic model) for the meeting.
37. Working together, participants and the evaluation manager construct a logic model of the policy or improve the pre-established logic model (e.g. when they have already participated in its construction during the training seminar). The evaluation manager

discusses with participants the context in which the policy is implemented and how this puts constraints on the attainment of policy objectives.

38. Participants are asked to identify relevant sources of data and information that are available within DG AGRICULTURE.
39. After the meeting the evaluation manager prepares the consolidated logic model².

3.5 Evaluation Questions

40. The evaluation manager prepares a first list of potential evaluation questions. He/she uses the themes raised at the first steering group meeting and draws up around 2 to 5 questions for each theme. The themes typically cover some or all of the following subjects: market stability (in terms of volume and price); farmers' income; the environment; productive structures; internal and external competitiveness (including quality); implementation issues.
41. In drafting the potential questions, the evaluation manager builds upon what have been discussed during the first steering group meeting (objectives, logic model, constraints, context...). Additional comments by participants are also taken into account, either directly or by e-mail.
42. Potential questions arise from a variety of different viewpoints. Therefore, the evaluation manager should carefully balance issues and strike compromises in the drafting of the list so as to make it acceptable to a majority of participants.
43. Some themes may already be in the form of questions, but they always need to be redrafted into operational evaluation questions. Evaluation questions are drafted in accordance with the following rules. (1) The question starts with a term that relates to the CMO under evaluation, to a given measure within this CMO or to several measures. (2) The question refers to one or several effects, either expected or unintended, or to one or several needs or stakes. (3) The question includes a term that carries some kind of value judgement.
44. Items (1) and (2) are drafted in an unambiguous way. On the contrary, item (3) is included in an open form, offering some leeway for discussion and elaboration. Later on in the process, the evaluator and the steering should interact in order to make clear what value judgement (evaluation criterion) is embedded in the question.
45. Admittedly, steering groups hardly achieve to be selective. For this reason, the evaluation manager should not prepare too long a list of questions at this step (see Sheet 3I). Good practice are the sheep and goat meat evaluation (with 14 questions and 4 themes), and the durum wheat evaluation (with 11 questions and 4 themes) In the case of the sugar evaluation, the questions have been recognised as too numerous (18 questions and 7 themes).

² The production of a logic model is an iterative process that is ongoing throughout steps 3.1 to 3.4 of this phase of the evaluation.

3.6 Next Steering Group Meeting(s)

46. A second steering group meeting (and possibly a third) is held primarily to discuss and validate the questions. The evaluation manager invites the members of the steering group no less than one week before the date of the meeting, with a reminder being sent the day before.
47. The evaluation manager prepares a working document containing the list of themes and potential evaluation questions. He/she may also present a description of the policy and the scope of the evaluation (elements that will be later integrated into the terms of reference). If the work is sufficiently advanced, the working document may in fact be the initial draft of the terms of reference.
48. The evaluation questions are presented and discussed at the meeting, when necessary modifications are agreed, and the individual questions are validated.
49. Core questions often relate to the achievement of major policy objectives. The steering group may also select questions about unintended effects, although a consensus might be more difficult on such issues. The steering group members may decide that they do not want to deal with a given question (e.g. questions about consumer safety or the environment have been rejected for not being linked enough to the policy under evaluation, although they were legitimate in their own right).
50. As far as possible, the steering group decides upon the respective weights of the various themes. Weights might be displayed in the terms of references in order to focus the consultant's works on key issues (see also paragraph 93)
51. Additional meetings may be necessary to finalise the list of questions and to grade the themes.
52. In addition to validating the evaluation questions, the evaluation calendar is agreed and any other elements prepared for the terms of reference are also validated.

3.7 Terms of reference

53. The evaluation manager drafts the terms of reference. The standard sections (i.e. structure and contents of the final report, structure of the tender, payment, situations of exclusion and selection criteria, prices, publication, submission, annex 1), which remain mostly unchanged across evaluations, are integrated into the terms of reference.
54. The evaluation manager modifies the sections of the terms of reference that have to be adapted to the characteristics of each evaluation (i.e. documentation, evaluation contractor and users, organisation, timetable and reports, attribution criteria).
55. Using the information held in the evaluation dossier, or more advanced work presented at the second steering group meeting, he/she writes the sections of the terms of reference that are specific to each evaluation (i.e. description of the subject to be evaluated, reasons for and objective of the evaluation, scope of the evaluation, evaluation themes and questions, annex 2 - List of regulations applicable, annex 3 - List of information available).
56. In general the choice of DG AGRICULTURE has been to keep methodological guidance provided by the terms of reference to a strict minimum. The only indication

given is the request to conduct interviews with stakeholders. Nevertheless, in particular cases, DG AGRICULTURE has required a specific technique to be applied (e.g. cost-benefit analysis for the evaluation of oilseed products, expert panel for the promotion of agriculture products, econometric model and case studies for the set-aside). Consultants are invited to propose the method that they feel is the most suitable to answer the evaluation questions.

3.8 Validation

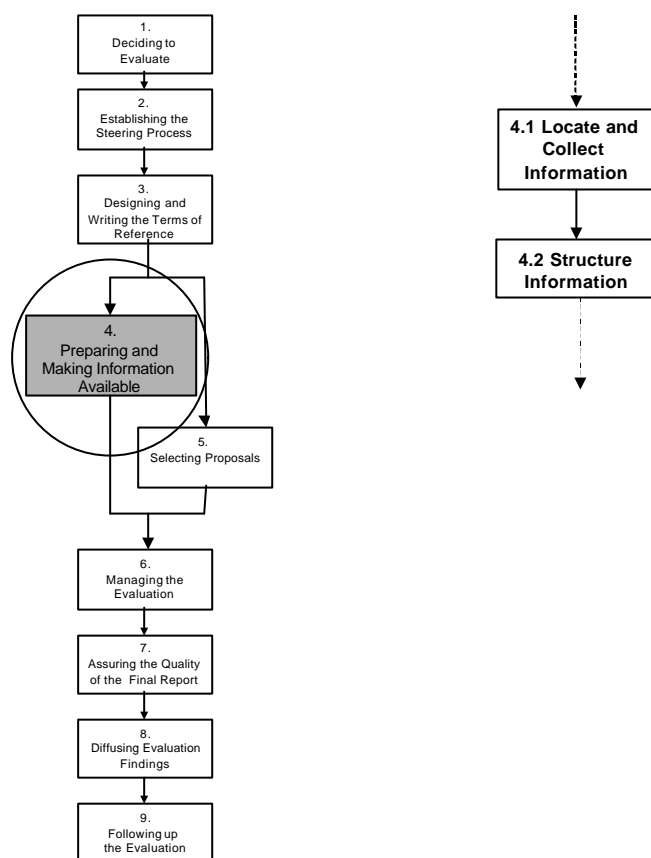
57. The draft terms of reference is presented to the group for discussion and validation. This can be done by way of meeting or by e-mail.
58. The comments of the participants are introduced into the draft terms of reference as appropriate. The result is the final version of the terms of reference, which is now ready to be translated.
59. The final version of the terms of reference is sent by email to the steering group members.

3.9 Launching the call for tenders : administrative procedures

60. Once the steering group has validated the terms of reference (and, if appropriate the annexes 2 and 3 hereto, concerning applicable legislation and available information), the following documents are prepared or completed: notice of call for tenders, invitation to tender, draft contract.
61. The inter-service consultation within DG AGRICULTURE is then launched. The documents sent out for comments are the terms of reference, the draft contract, the invitation to tender, the notice of call for tenders, with an accompanying letter.
62. During this period, the evaluation manager asks for consultation of the central database ADAM, to make sure that no other survey on a similar subject is under way or has been carried out recently by or for the Commission. This consultation is done via the Data Room of DG AGRICULTURE Library. The request can be sent by e-mail, and the answer is usually received within 3 days, by e-mail as well. This consultation can be done earlier or later in the process, but it has in any case to receive a negative answer (no other recent and relevant survey reported) before sending the notice of call for tenders to the Secretariat General.
63. The inter-service consultation within DG AGRICULTURE finishes after the two weeks required. Generally, it is useful to give a telephone call a few days before the end of the consultation period to check that the concerned services have had time to go through the documents.
64. The set of documents "terms of reference" (which includes the terms of reference as such, the draft contract, the annexes 2 and 3 to the terms of reference and the invitation to tender) is adjusted, following the comments made by the services consulted.
65. The notice of call for tenders is sent to the Office of Official Publications via the Secretariat General – unit SG A2.

66. During the period between the sending of the notice and its publication, the set of documents “terms of reference” (terms of reference as such, draft contract, annexes 2 and 3 to the terms of reference and invitation to tender) is translated in order to be available in French and in English.
67. The notice of call for tenders (or market notification) is published in the S series of the Official Journal, about 10 working days after sending. The Secretariat General sends to the Evaluation Unit a fax with the exact publication references (date and No of the S Official Journal issue) a few days before the notice is published.
68. The organisations interested can ask for the terms of reference during a period of about 25 days after the notice is published (the exact date is mentioned in the market notification). Requests are generally sent by fax. They are registered by the Evaluation Unit Secretariat, and the terms of reference are sent out by e-mail and by ordinary mail, in French or in English according to the request. The invitation to tender, signed by the Director (Directorate A), is enclosed. The secretariat of the Evaluation Unit keeps a file and a follow-up table of these requests. This table will later be annexed to the CCAM report.
69. The period for submitting tenders normally ends 52 days after the call for tenders.

4. Preparing and Making Information Available



4.1 Locate and Collect Information

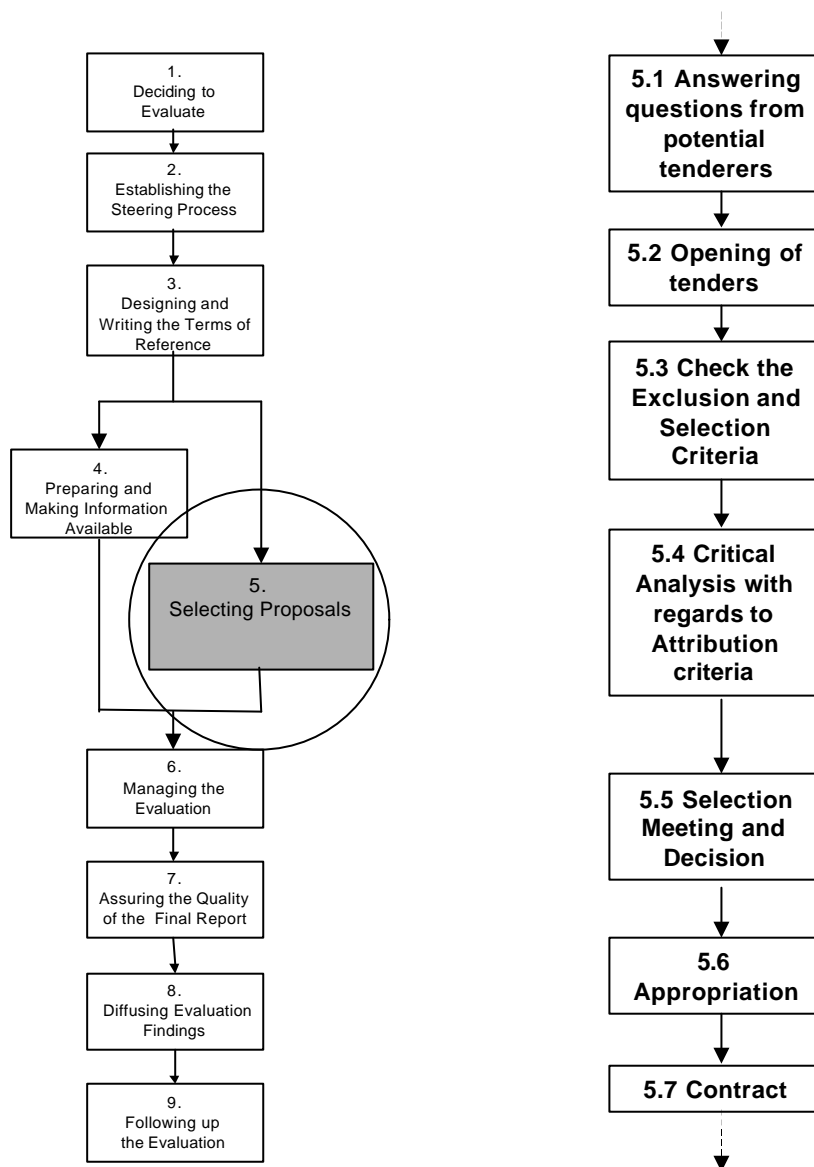
70. The evaluation manager locates all the information available in-house, reports from the European Court of Auditors, Eurostat statistics, COMEXT Data base, FADN (RICA) data base etc., including both official and unofficial documents, drawing on the contacts made during 3.1 to 3.4.
71. He/she makes a detailed inventory of all available information (time period, countries, format, etc.) and verifies that the information is not classified and can be supplied to the consultant.
72. In the specific case of FADN (RICA), information is individual and confidential and can only be processed internally. The evaluation manager and his/her deputy prepare the structure of available information so that the consultant could express a precise request.

4.2 Structure Information

73. Information is sorted into what is immediately usable (e.g. paper documents and statistics stored on computer file) and data to be processed (e.g. statistics only available on paper).

74. Data are structured in a usable form for the evaluation so that the consultant should not spend excessive time to collect data that exist within the Commission. In some units, large amounts of data are not available in computerised form. When such data are of critical interest for evaluation purposes, the Evaluation Unit may devote considerable time to proceed these data into computer files.
75. With regards to statistics, the Evaluation Unit often needs to interact with the Commission services. In some cases it is essential to have an explanation of the construction of data or to understand the "history" of data and provide information for the evaluation manager and the consultant about how it has changed over time.
76. Data originating from multiple sources may be drawn together and synthesised. The evaluation manager crosses data to verify their reliability.

5. Selecting Proposals



5.1 Answering Questions from Potential Tenderers

77. European Commission rules are very strict. Relations with potential tenderers are normally forbidden except in two cases described in the CCAM procedure. If a consultant calls, the Commission can only answer questions about the procedure itself. The Commission can only contact a consultant for solving a problem in the terms of reference (such as a print mistake). In that case, the Commission has to contact all the potential tenderers. Considering the length of the procedure, such contacts are exceptional.

5.2 Opening of Tenders

78. The tenderers must notify by fax that they are sending a tender. It is then possible to make sure that all expected tenders have been received, and that all will be opened at the same time.
79. The tenders are opened one week after the period of submission is over. This allows for the necessary delay in case of mail delivery. The opening of tenders is a formal operation. Its date and time are set in advance, and published in the Official Journal as part of the notice of call for tenders. At least three Commission officials take part in the operation: usually the evaluation manager chairs the meeting, the deputy evaluation manager and a person from the management unit being the two other members. These three people form the opening committee. If they wish to do so, the tenderers can be represented by one person each to attend the opening. To this end, they have to inform the Evaluation Unit by fax a few days before the opening of tenders.
80. On the day of the opening, it is first checked that all tenders have been received (based on the faxes announcing them). The following points are then checked for each tender: the sending date, the proper closing and sealing of the external and internal envelopes, the number of documents (one original and two copies). The president and the two deputies sign to authenticate the outside envelope and, on the original tender, the formal offer of services and the budget. The attending tenderers are not allowed to know the amounts offered by their competitors. After opening and checking the tenders, an official report is written and signed by the opening committee.

5.3 Check the Exclusion and Selection Criteria

81. The evaluation manager checks as soon as possible whether the candidates meet the exclusion and selection criteria in order that the selection committee validates them.

5.4 Critical Analysis with regard to Attribution Criteria

82. The evaluation manager asks members of the steering group to be involved in the critical analysis of proposals (at least 3 persons). In general, a minimum of two persons from Unit A-4, one or two persons from the management unit and at least one person from horizontal units are involved. This group is called the selection committee. All of its members are also members of the evaluation steering group. In addition, all steering group members are informed of the process and at any time may be requested to participate in the selection committee.
83. The evaluation manager makes copies of the tenders and sends them to the members of the selection committee.
84. The evaluation manager circulates a scoring grid covering all the attribution criteria.
85. The selection committee members make their critical reading of the proposals, being allowed about ten working days to do this task. They are required to analyse the proposals with regard to attribution criteria mentioned in the terms of reference.

5.5 Selection Meeting and Decision

86. The evaluation manager invites the selection committee members to a meeting at the end of the period allocated for the critical analysis.
87. The meeting is organised in two parts: 1) each member presents the result of his/her critical analysis of the proposals, 2) the evaluation manager leads a discussion with the aim of producing a ranking of proposals, based on consensus, in order of quality.
88. The following days the evaluation manager writes a report that presents the decision and the basis on which it was made. This report has to be signed by all the selection committee participants.
89. The winning proposal enters the CCAM cycle.

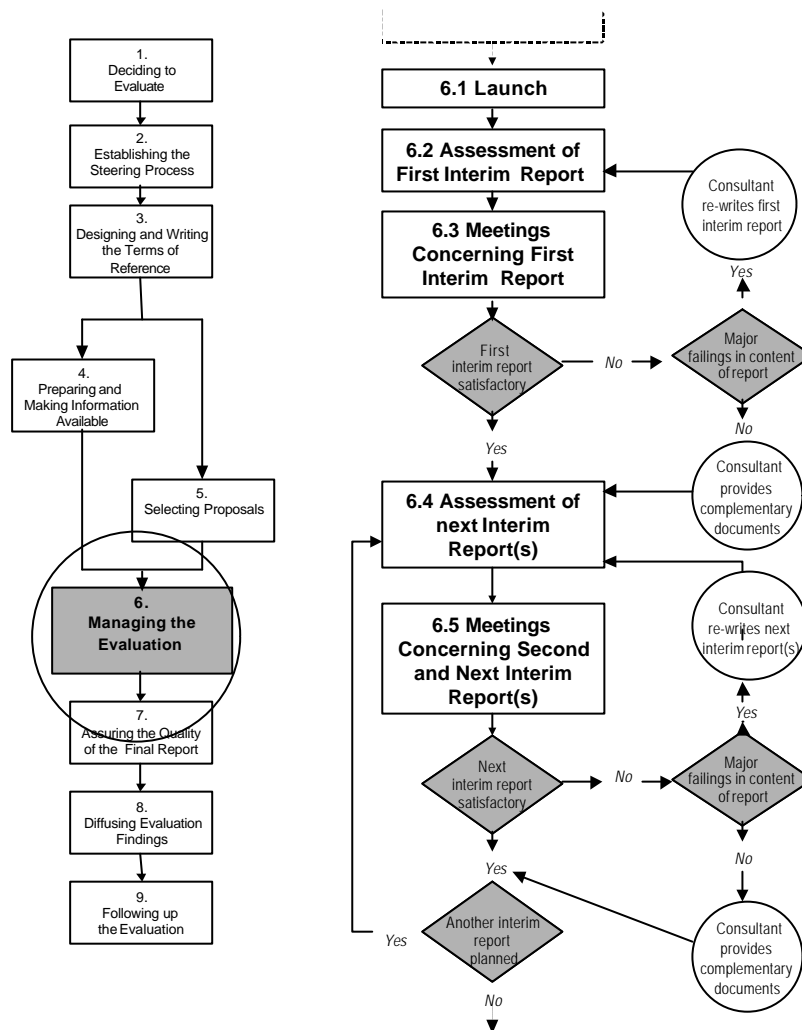
5.6 Appropriation

90. After the agreement of the CCAM, the appropriation procedure is launched. The evaluation manager has to fill in banking information on the consultant selected. Once the appropriation procedure is validated, the evaluation manager can launch the contract.

5.7 Contract

91. Two copies of the contract are signed first by the consultant and then by the Commission. One copy is sent to the consultant.
92. Other tenderers are informed of the result once the contract has been signed. The decision is published in the Official Journal in the form of a post-information notice. A letter can also be sent directly to the non-selected candidates.

6. Managing the Evaluation



6.1 Launch

93. Two weeks before the first meeting with the consultant, the evaluation manager gathers a meeting of the steering group. If this has not been done in a satisfactory way, the steering group decides upon the respective weights of the various themes (see paragraph 50). In addition, the members refresh their understanding of the evaluation questions. As far as possible, they clarify the judgement criteria that are to be associated with each question.
94. The evaluation manager organises a launch meeting with the consultant. This first meeting between the consultant and the steering group is organised as soon as possible after the signing of the contract (within two weeks). The consultant is instructed to use these two weeks to prepare a short working document to be sent to the Evaluation Unit in advance, or presented at the meeting. The aim of this document is to check with the steering group that there are no misunderstandings or doubts about the terms used in the evaluation questions or about the questions themselves. It provides the consultant with an opportunity to reflect on the contents of his/her proposal, which is often drawn up quickly so as to respect the deadline of the call for tenders.

95. The Head of the Evaluation Unit chairs the meeting, assisted by the evaluation manager and his/her deputy. During this meeting: 1) the consultant and the steering group become acquainted with each other; 2) the consultant presents his/her working document; 3) misunderstandings are rectified; 4) steering group questions are answered by the consultant, and vice versa; and 5) ways of overcoming difficulties and limits are explored. During this meeting, the evaluation manager gives the assessment quality grid for final report to the consultant.
96. During the meeting the consultant is given basic data (e.g. internal or external documents such as regulations, study reports, working papers, evaluations reports, books or booklets about the sector concerned, statistics, etc.) and references. The evaluation manager emphasises to the consultant that these data are not exhaustive.
97. A list of key persons to meet may also be given to the consultant. This does not prevent him/her from organising meetings with other identified relevant persons.
98. An extra meeting with the Evaluation Unit and Head of Unit is in general planned to discuss general evaluation principles and methods.
99. The evaluation manager writes a launch meeting report that is sent (by e-mail) to the consultant and to the members of the steering group.

6.2 Assessment of First Interim Report

100. During one month on average, the consultant clarifies his/her general approach and explains the terms of the evaluation questions as precisely as possible. The consultant has to introduce and take into account observations that have been made at the launch meeting. He/she also designs specific methods for each evaluation question (or group of evaluation questions): setting judgement criteria and indicators, planning data collection and analysis works. The evaluation manager remains available on an informal basis to answer any queries that the consultant may have and to supply him/her with additional statistics, especially FADN (only available on the demand of Commission services) and Eurostat (free access for the Commission). At the end of this step, the Evaluation Unit receives the first interim report from the consultant covering the aforementioned points.
101. As soon as the Evaluation Unit receives this report, the evaluation manager sends it to all steering group members.
102. All the recipients are required to critically examine the report and to prepare their comments. Steering group members belonging to the management unit and horizontal units will concentrate mainly on specific operational issues. The members of the Evaluation Unit critically examine the report in respect to both the overall evaluation design and the individual evaluation questions. They check that accepted rules and procedures (the state of the art) are respected and whether the consultant's approach is moving towards providing answers to the evaluation questions.

6.3 Meetings Concerning First Interim Report

103. The evaluation manager organises three meetings, each one lasting around half-a-day maximum. This round of meetings takes place on the basis of the first interim report, within two weeks of it being received. The three meetings are :
 - ⇒ First, an internal meeting of the steering group
 - ⇒ Second, within a week, a meeting with the steering group and the consultant (the most formal of the three meetings)
 - ⇒ And third, on the same day, a working meeting with the evaluation manager and the consultant.
104. The steering group holds its internal meeting to discuss the assessment of the report and associated comments. The aim of this meeting is to decide on a common position in respect to the report so that the steering group can speak with one voice to the consultant.
105. If this first interim report is considered unsatisfactory or poor, the order of the second and third meetings may be reversed. The meeting with the evaluation manager and the consultant is then used to prepare the later for the meeting with the steering group.
106. The meeting with the steering group and the consultant is chaired by the evaluation manager who mediates and joins in discussions. The steering group members officially present their assessment of the first step of the evaluation. The consultant usually takes the opportunity to discuss the issues involved, explain the work done and/or discuss modifications. First of all, method and global issues are discussed. Each chapter is then reviewed in respect to understanding of the questions, choice of criteria and indicators, target level of the indicators, work programme for data collection and analysis, etc.
107. Methodological points raised at the previous meeting are discussed in-depth in the third meeting, between the evaluation manager and the consultant. This meeting is particularly important when the consultant has experience of the sector being evaluated, but relatively less experience of evaluation methods. This meeting is planned up to half-a-day.
108. When detailed points related to data remain to be clarified after the series of meetings, the evaluation manager facilitates the fixing of meetings between the consultant and individual members of steering group, or other persons from the Commission in regard to these points.
109. In some rare cases, when specific demands are made, a detailed report of these meetings is written and sent to the consultant and steering group members.
110. If the first interim report is considered unsatisfactory, the steering group may ask the consultant to write a second version. This version is assessed in the same way as for the first one. Alternatively the consultant may be requested to provide complementary documents that are included in the next interim report.
111. At the end of this process, the dates of the next series of meetings related to the second interim report are fixed. When the report is acceptable, the consultant is called to send his/her first bill.

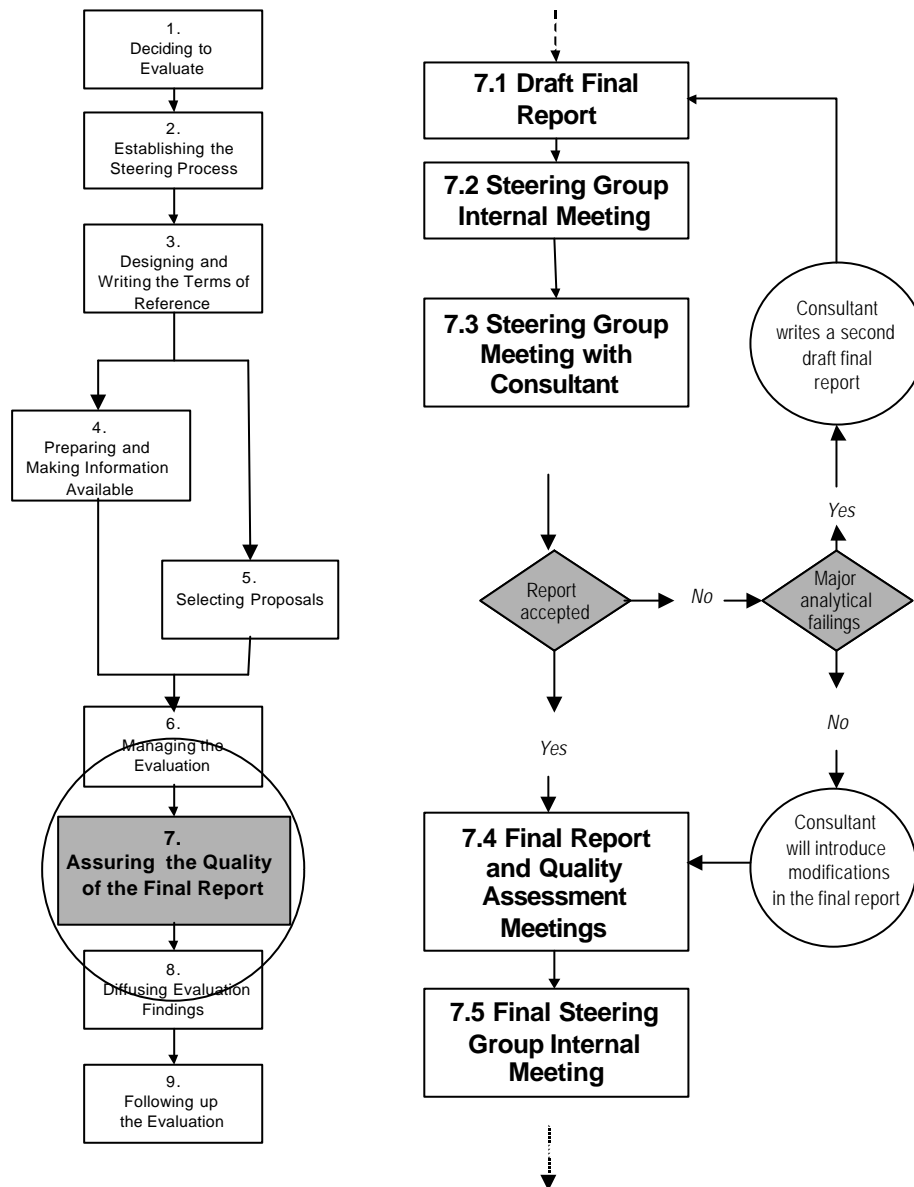
6.4 Assessment of the Second and Next Interim Report(s)

112. During this step, that lasts between two and three months, the evaluation manager remains available to deal with any queries that the consultant may have. The consultant carries out secondary data collection (mainly statistics), undertakes primary data collection (interviews, surveys, etc.) and verifies the appropriateness of definitions, criteria and indicators.
113. At the end of this step the Evaluation Unit receives the second interim report from the consultant covering the aforementioned points, and incorporating a draft plan of the final report. If the work is progressing as planned, the consultant is capable of providing elements of answer for one or two questions, preferably related to an important theme.
114. With this second interim report, the Evaluation Unit will test whether the evaluation process and methods employed are likely to produce sound answers to the evaluation questions.
115. As soon as the second interim report is received by the Evaluation Unit, it is sent to all the steering group members, who critically examine it and prepare their comments.
116. The same process as for the first interim report is engaged. Attention is particularly paid to the extent to which the consultants have taken into account comments made on the basis of the first interim report.
117. The evaluation manager and his/her deputy critically examine the report, with particular attention to methodological issues and the progress made towards answering some of the evaluation questions. They use a “progress and method assessment grid” that is detailed and technical.
118. Members of the steering group make their quality assessment of the second interim report, concentrating more on relevance of data and findings to the sector concerned than on the methods used.

6.5 Meetings Concerning Second and Next Interim Report(s)

119. Following the same procedure as for the first interim report, the evaluation manager organises and conducts three meetings within two weeks of receiving the second interim report. The same process applies to the next interim report(s).
120. If the second (or next interim report) is considered unsatisfactory, the steering group may ask the consultant to write a new version that is treated as for the first interim report.
121. As soon as the quality of second (or next) interim report is acceptable, the consultant goes on working in view of the draft final report.
122. The consultant is called to send a bill for the 2nd payment of fees.

7. Assuring the Quality of the Final Report



7.1 Draft Final Report

123. Lasting between one and three months, this step consists in producing a draft final report. During this period of time, all data collection and almost 100% of the analyses should be completed. For each evaluation question, the consultant presents findings and formulates substantiated conclusions. When relevant, conclusions include value judgements that refer to the success criteria identified and validated previously.

Recommendations are rarely suggested at this step. If they are, they might not necessarily be finalised.

124. At the end of this step, the Evaluation Unit receives from the consultant the draft final report covering the aforementioned points.
125. As soon as the Evaluation Unit receives the draft final report, the evaluation manager sends it to all the steering group members.
126. The evaluation manager completes two quality assessments, one for interim reports (see previous chapter) and one for the final report. Both grids are forwarded to the steering group members.
127. The evaluation manager decides on two meeting dates (internal steering group meeting, meeting of the steering group with the consultant). These dates, place and time of the meetings are forwarded to the persons concerned. In case of poor or unacceptable report there may be a third meeting with the Evaluation Unit.

7.2 Steering Group Internal Meeting

128. This internal steering group meeting aims at allowing a discussion on the quality of the answer to each evaluation question and the overall quality of the draft final report. The evaluation manager presents his/her completed grids and each member is asked to contribute to their finalisation. In addition to rating the report as a whole (“unacceptable”, “poor”, “sufficient”, “good” or “excellent”) the group member also screen the evaluation with regards to the 9 quality criteria. They try to provide a sound justification for every score.
129. This way of doing has the benefit of assessing, question by question, the quality of the report. The meeting allows reaching a common position that can then be presented to the consultant. This approach will be helpful to guide and oblige the consultant to improve the final report on a question-by-question basis.
130. This meeting is generally composed of four parts: 1) general impressions of the group; 2) chapter by chapter (or question by question) comments, criticisms or complementary requests; 3) major concerns related to the approach, methodology, ethics, etc.; and 4) decision concerning the common position and the content of the next meeting with the consultant.
131. There are three main possible outcomes of the meeting: 1) the report corresponds with requirements, 2) the report contains minor factual errors or 3) the report has major failings in terms of design, data collection, analyses and/or judgement. The first outcome hardly ever occurs and minor amendments or additions are always needed. However, there are many possible situations between the second and third outcome. When the situation is close to the second outcome, the consultant needs to be informed very precisely so that he/she is able to eliminate errors in the ultimate final report. Situations closer to the third outcome occur if the group considers that the report is far from meeting the requirements of a draft final report. In this case, the report is considered as an additional intermediate report and the consultant is asked to write another version of draft final report.

132. After the meeting, the evaluation manager prepares a report of the meeting and finalises the common global assessment of the draft final report, using the quality assessment grid. In case of the outcomes 2 and 3, guidelines for improvements are produced and in case of alternative 3, questions raised during the internal meeting may be written down and included in the document.

7.3 Steering Group Meeting with Consultant

133. The steering group members give the consultant their general remarks about the draft final report. As an introduction, the chairman of the meeting (usually, the evaluation manager) may read the common quality assessment to set the general tone of the discussion.
134. The meeting then concentrates on specific topics requiring in-depth discussion. Generally, they concern data, analyses and conclusions. In some cases they may also concern the normative dimension of the conclusions (Do they include a judgement? Does this judgement actually rely on explicit criteria?). It gives the consultant the opportunity to explain the work undertaken and the limits encountered.
135. Evaluation methods should not be discussed at this step except if the report is far from reaching its goal and requires another round of data collection and analyses. The requested improvements should remain of a methodological nature. They should not aim at distorting the evaluator's judgement or at changing the conclusions. Discussions about conclusions are possible, if based on data, analyses, findings and judgement criteria. Minor details should not be discussed at this point, but passed on later to the consultant.
136. At the end of the meeting, copies of the quality assessment grids are given to the consultant.

7.4 Final Report and Quality Assessment Meetings

137. According to the conclusions of the meetings, the consultant adapts the draft final report, taking into account the comments and the amount of work necessary. He/she is usually given a fortnight to deliver the final report.
138. As soon as the Evaluation Unit receives the final report, the evaluation manager dispatches it to all the steering group members and final meeting proceeds.
139. The main difference is that the critical examination concentrates on a global quality assessment and, when necessary, on minor factual details. As a result of the global quality assessment, two possible situations may occur:
- ⇒ Report is good enough to be edited as such.
 - ⇒ Report still contains minor errors that the consultant is required to take into account before the final editing (phone and mail interaction).

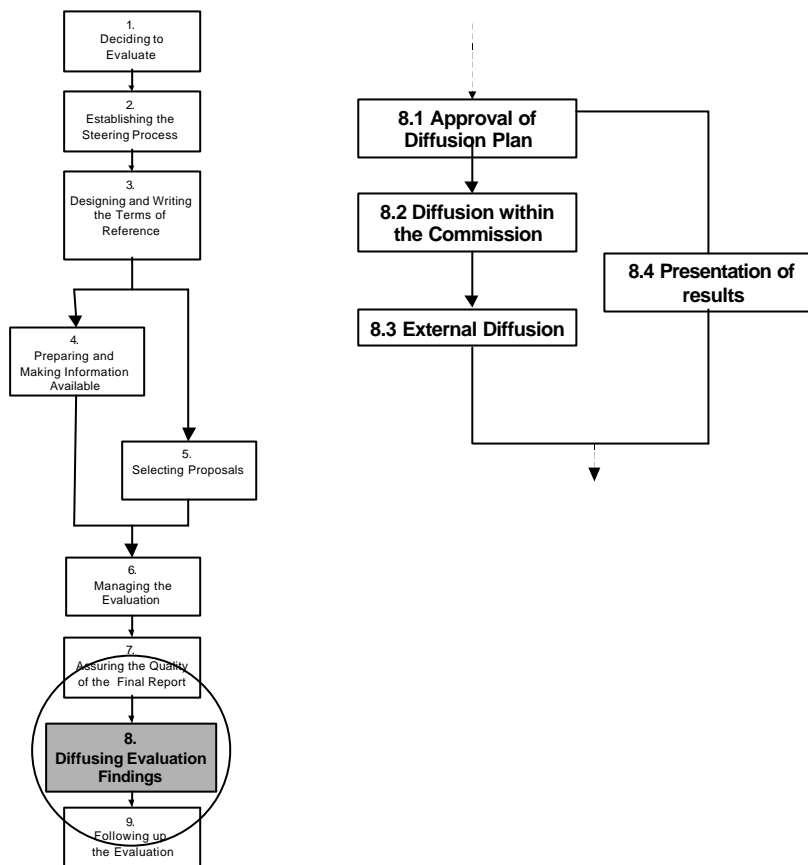
7.5 Final Steering Group Internal Meeting

140. When the last version of the final report is received, the evaluation manager organises an internal meeting with the steering group. For this meeting, he/she prepares three

notes: 1/ a draft commentary note highlighting the major conclusions and recommendations of the consultant, 2/ the draft quality assessment and 3/ a draft diffusion plan.

141. The steering group examines the consultant's conclusions and recommendations in terms of methodological validity only. The commentary note should not deal with relevance nor acceptability of the conclusions and recommendations.
142. The quality assessment is discussed, substantiated and revised as necessary.
143. The diffusion plan should match general instructions (see section 8). Nevertheless, the steering group adapts these instructions to the practicalities of the present evaluation. In case the report is judged unacceptable, the steering group may propose to restrict the dissemination.
144. After the meeting, the evaluation manager prepares a covering note to the Director-General. He/she attaches four documents that have been validated by the steering group: five-page summary of the consultant, commentary note, quality assessment and diffusion plan. This covering note is sent to the Director-General, with a copy to Directors and Heads of units concerned by the evaluation.
145. Once the report is accepted, the consultant is called to send the last bill for payment of fees.
146. In case the quality of the final report is not acceptable at all to the steering group members, they might ask the evaluation manager to write an additional document that presents all the problems and questions related to the final evaluation, presents the arguments on the assessment and gives examples of unacceptable elements. Another final report may be required if the consultant agrees on that.

8. Diffusing Evaluation Findings



8.1 Approval of the Diffusion Plan

147. The diffusion process should be launched as soon as possible after the steering group has accepted the final evaluation report. Nevertheless, it is subject to a formal approval of the diffusion plan and other attached documents by the Director-General.
148. In principle, the report is disseminated as widely as possible, considering the various targets. Exceptionally, the steering group might recommend a restricted dissemination if the final report is unacceptable. Other restrictions might be decided if the Director-General considers the evaluation deals with too sensitive issues (e.g. international negotiations underway).

8.2 Diffusion within the Commission

149. The members of the steering group have free access to the whole set of documents relating to the evaluation. They may transmit any of these documents to their hierarchy (and only to their hierarchy) under their own responsibility. This applies to all members, whether they belong to DG AGRICULTURE or to other DGs.
150. The evaluation manager transmits the consultant's five-page summary, the commentary note and the quality assessment, together with a note of information to the Cabinet of the Commissioner via the Director-General, with copy to all deputy Directors-General.

The information note summarises the main points of the diffusion plan (to whom the results are diffused and where people can have access to the report).

151. The evaluation manager transmits the consultant's five-page summary, the commentary note and the quality assessment to Unit All.1 (this unit is responsible for information policy) in order to have these documents included in the DIMITRA internal database. It usually takes one or two days before the information is available to the whole staff of DG AGRICULTURE.
152. The evaluation manager also sends the same documents, plus the full-length report to all DGs involved in the steering group. The same is sent to the DG BUDGET, even if they were not represented in the steering group.
153. Whatever the diffusion plan, the final report is sent to the central study deposit in the archives of the Commission. This deposit can specify a restricted access. This is a formal requirement before the payment can be done.

8.3 External Diffusion

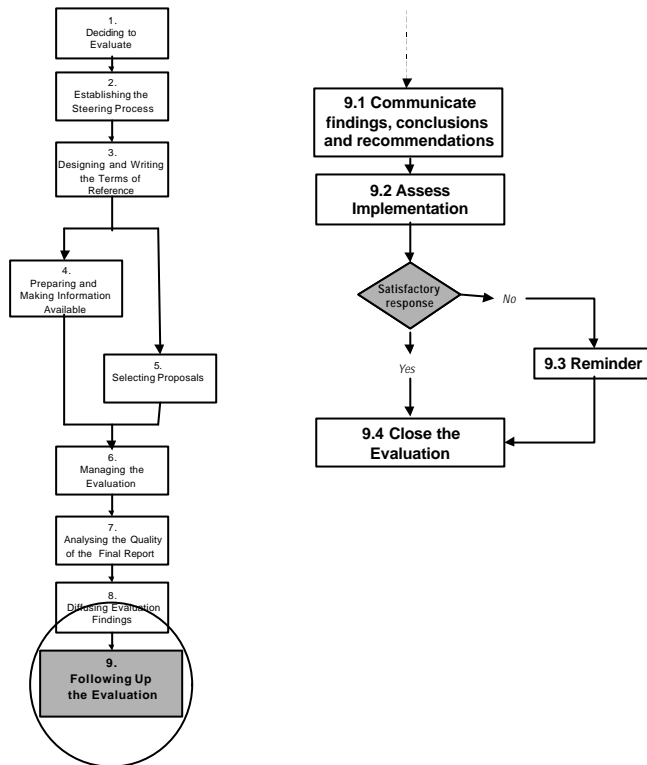
154. The evaluation manager systematically gives a copy of the evaluation report and the quality report to Unit A.2.4 responsible for the relations with the Court of Auditors and the Parliament.
155. The evaluation manager transmits the consultant's five-page summary, the commentary note and the quality report to all concerned Member States via the FEOGA Committee, the management Committee and via the CIRCA site.
156. The unit in charge of the evaluated measures may also decide to inform national and regional administrations that hold stakes in the evaluation. This diffusion is decided on a case-by-case basis.
157. The evaluation manager sends the material to be published on the web site (<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/evaluation>). The following material is emailed to Unit All.1, responsible for information policy: 1/ the quality assessment, 2/ possibly the consultant's comments on that assessment and 3/ the full-length report including the summary. The material is sent in its original language, plus others when available. Depending on whether the format has to be changed or not, it can take some days before the material is published on the website.
158. The evaluation manager places one paper copy of the final report at DG AGRICULTURE's library.

8.4 Presentation of Results

159. A discussion is held in the Evaluation Unit about the times, ways and places to present the evaluation. The evaluation manager prepares one or several presentation(s). The aim is to adjust the messages to the targeted audience: focus on relevant issues, simple and rigorous explanation of the findings. In the case of the POSEI a 10 page presentation was specifically written for internal communication within DG AGRICULTURE.

160. The presentation is tested in internal meetings such as (1) weekly meeting of Directorate A (20/40 persons) or (2) the "Outlook" working group bringing together different services of DG AGRICULTURE concerned by the sector. The presentation is then adjusted if necessary.
161. The Head of Unit prepares a shorter presentation (one page summary and some graphs) for his/her hierarchy. In general he/she arranges a meeting with the Director-General to make this presentation. The meeting typically deals with several evaluation reports.
162. The Evaluation Unit or the management unit may also present the evaluation to the FEOGA Committee, the Management Committee (e.g. evaluation of durum wheat) and/or the Advisory Committee (e.g. evaluation of sheep meat).

9. Following up the Evaluation



9.1 Communicate Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

163. The evaluation manager draws a follow-up sheet from the evaluation report. He/she selects a list of findings, conclusions and recommendations that call for action. The evaluation manager sends this follow-up sheet to the management units concerned with a request for feedback within a 6-month deadline.

9.2 Assess Implementation

164. 6 months after the sending of the list, the evaluation manager conducts a number of face to face or phone interviews with the aim of finding out evidence about the actions being taken. He/she updates the follow-up sheet by stating the position of the service concerned towards each item of the list. He/she states the modifications to regulations or new legislation that have resulted (are likely to result).

9.3 Reminder

165. If a finding, conclusion or recommendation called for action and no significant feedback has been received during six month, the Evaluation Unit sends a reminder letter to the Director concerned (through Director - Directorate A), in order to relaunch the process.

166. Whatever the answer (or the absence of answer), the follow-up process stops at this point.

9.4 Close the Evaluation

167. At the end of the follow-up process, the evaluation manager prepares a closure note for the Director (Directorate A). This note summarises the diffusion process and the follow-up process. It assesses the extent to which recommendations have been applied by the Commission services. It gives evidence of how the evaluation has been used or is being used (meetings, press articles, positions taken in a negotiation).
168. The evaluation manager keeps the whole file, plus the remaining copies of the report. The Head of Unit keeps one copy of the report and all written interactions with the Director-General.
169. Over the following months, the evaluation manager has a passive watching on the consequences of the evaluation. He/she tries to identify and to file significant facts related to the evaluation. This material might be used later on, for the sake of reporting or in a meta-evaluation.