



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
AGRICULTURE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate G. Economic analyses and evaluation  
**G.4. Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture**

Brussels,

## **SYNTHESIS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT MID TERM EVALUATION REPORTS – LOT I**

**Subject: Quality grid based on the Final Report submitted by Agra CEAS, on  
28<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

### **PRELIMINARY REMARK**

This quality grid provides a global assessment on the above-mentioned evaluation study, and has been agreed by the steering group in charge of the following up of the contract.

The judgement is made on the methodological approach followed to answer the evaluation questions, not on the conclusions and recommendations reached by the contractor. It has to be pointed out that it is neither the opinion of the evaluators nor the content of their conclusions that are judged here, but only the methods used for obtaining them.

**1. MEETING THE NEEDS: Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?**

The main task of providing answers to the evaluation questions set out under the contract's terms of reference has been fulfilled. The issues of relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the different rural development measures and programmes have also been addressed.

The structure of the report is sufficiently balanced among the different sections which have been developed.

The requirement to supplement the analysis by doing literature research has been fulfilled to a limited extent.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

**2. RELEVANT SCOPE: Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?**

The rationale of the policy, including the analysis of its expected impacts, has been addressed on the basis of close and continuous guidance by the steering group, and the final result can be considered satisfactory.

The consultant's evaluation of the extent to which the implementation of the rural development programmes reflects –at the mid term stage- the overall rationale of the policy is less satisfactory, although this aspect has been improved during the last implementation phases.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

**3. DEFENSIBLE DESIGN: Is the evaluation design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for answering the main evaluation questions?**

The methodological limitations with a view to data availability, varying quality of national/regional evaluation reports, and shortcomings of the underlying Common evaluation questions and indicators emphasised in the report are justified in most cases. However, the efforts to overcome those limitations have been inadequate. Some of the above-mentioned issues have been addressed during the last phases of the evaluation, when it was too late to improve considerably the quality of the final product. As a consequence, the quality of the answers provided is limited in some cases.

On balance, the original design of this evaluation is considered satisfactory.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

**4. RELIABLE DATA: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?**

As for the national/regional reports to be summarized, the evaluator used all available material in a manner which took account of methodological limits of these reports. Under the agreement of the steering group, the consultant has carried out interviews with implementing authorities and other stakeholders with respect to a selection of programmes and measures.

However, the need to acquire secondary data to complete the information available from the mid-term evaluation reports has been an important issue under this contract. This was mainly addressed through interviews, the results of which have had a limited impact in terms of added value to the analysis.

Despite the substantial list of references presented under the bibliography appendix, only some of them have been used to feed the analysis in a consistent way. In this respect, the consultant has mainly referred to evaluation studies that he had already carried out, and to Court of Auditors' reports.

Global assessment: **poor**

**5. SOUND ANALYSIS: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way?**

The particular nature of this evaluation study implied a two-step approach to answer the evaluation questions: the synthesis of available information on one side (together with gathering additional data to fill information gaps), and, on the other side, the analysis of that information together with the presentation of relevant findings.

Concerning the synthesis, the final results can be considered satisfactory, although in many cases, information from individual reports was presented without making it clear how this information fed into overall messages regarding rural development measures or programmes.

As regards the analysis, the occasional lack of relevant data, and therefore of solid evidence, is invoked too often as an issue leading to partial answers to some of the evaluation questions. On balance, the latter are answered with caution, and in some instances answers are based on logical assumptions rather than on solid fact-findings coming from the evaluation reports and/or on information collected (e.g. Less Favoured Areas). In other cases, the relevance of quoted references is doubtful for the judgements presented and generally sources are cited in an uncritical manner. The critical interpretation of available information is considered limited.

In conclusions, even if the steering group acknowledges that the evaluation of the output, results, and, above all, outcome/impacts has been partially affected by the relatively early stage of implementation of the rural development programmes (and in some cases by the late implementation of certain measures), the quality level of the answers provided is considered low.

Global assessment: **poor**

**6. CREDIBLE FINDINGS: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?**

The findings do follow logically from the data analysis; logical assumptions are mostly sufficiently justified and linked with the global rationale of the analysis.

As far as overall findings and interpretations are based on the relevant findings from the national/regional reports, they can be considered as based on sound data analysis and interpretations. Where findings are based on the evaluator's own information gathering and secondary sources, their justification is sometimes impaired by the evaluator's limited efforts to access and exploit such information sources (cf. point 5 above).

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

**7. VALIDITY OF THE CONCLUSIONS: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?**

The main findings and conclusion of the analysis are presented in a clear way. The conclusions are normally based on the content of the chapter summaries, and as such reflect the same above-mentioned analytical and methodological limits.

Judgements and conclusions referring to individual measures are considered satisfactory when they are based on relevant findings emerging from the synthesis/assessment of the programmes. Judgements and conclusions addressing overall policy issues such as deadweight, and the interrelation with other Community policies, appear to be not always clearly justified by the analysis carried out.

Occasionally the conclusions seem rather to be founded not on the data presented, but on previous knowledge/assumptions by the evaluator (e.g. setting up of young farmers).

Overall, the conclusions concerning rural development measures address their rationale and their overall objectives in a satisfactory manner, and provide a sufficient description of the state of implementation of these measures at the mid-term stage where sufficient evidence is available. As regards the delivery system, the conclusions sufficiently cover the requirements of the terms of reference. In the case of the evaluation system, the conclusions leading to recommendations are considered to be well founded, although the ones concerning the relevance of CEQs could have been better developed.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

**8. USEFULNESS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?**

The recommendations issued by the consultant are on the whole sufficiently balanced and detailed to be applicable. Their usefulness at operational level could have been increased through a deeper analysis of the overall policy framework and in particular of the role played by each measure within the whole “policy package”.

The synthesis of the information gathered at national/regional level is rarely converted into useful statements for the European level synthesis, and the overall results of this evaluation are therefore limited at policy level.

The number of the recommendations issued is relatively limited, as a consequence of the difficulties to translate the information provided into relevant recommendations at the Community level.

Global assessment: **poor**

**9. CLEAR REPORT: Does the report clearly describe the policy evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?**

The consultant has presented a satisfactory overview of the rural development policy context and of its main recent developments. The methodological aspects of the evaluation are clearly explained.

The report is written in a sufficiently clear language, even if somewhere the core messages are difficult to be caught. The “judgement” sections for the measures and the chapter summaries are also sufficiently clear; their separation from the core text leads to a user-friendly presentation.

Further analytical efforts and more concentration on the most relevant information and/or findings could have helped to reduce the report’s length.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

**10. ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORT AS A WHOLE**

Taking into consideration all the aspects discussed above, the overall judgement of this evaluation report is: **satisfactory**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the criteria for which the evaluation report is considered « poor », the steering group considers that on the whole the report is compliant with the contract requirements and therefore is acceptable, although the final results are weak for some aspects.

<b>Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is:</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>1. Meeting the needs:</b> Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?			<b>X</b>		
<b>2. Relevant scope:</b> Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?			<b>X</b>		
<b>3. Defensible design:</b> Is the evaluation design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for answering the main evaluation questions?			<b>X</b>		
<b>4. Reliable data:</b> To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?		<b>X</b>			
<b>5. Sound analysis:</b> Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way?		<b>X</b>			
<b>6. Credible findings:</b> Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?			<b>X</b>		
<b>7. Validity of the conclusions:</b> Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?			<b>X</b>		
<b>8. Usefulness of the recommendations:</b> Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?		<b>X</b>			
<b>9. Clearly reported:</b> Does the report clearly describe the policy being evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?			<b>X</b>		
<b>Taking into account the contextual constraints on the evaluation, the overall quality rating of the report is considered</b>			<b>X</b>		