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## **GREEN PAPER**

**on promotion measures and information provision for agricultural products: a reinforced value-added European strategy for promoting the tastes of Europe**

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### **on promotion measures and information provision for agricultural products: a reinforced value-added European strategy for promoting the tastes of Europe**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION: WHY A GREEN PAPER ON THE INFORMATION AND PROMOTION POLICY FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS?**

The quality of Europe's agricultural and agri-food products is widely acknowledged. The result of tradition, know-how and the innovative ability of producers, the European model is also the legacy of a strong Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and of standards of production unmatched anywhere in the world. We should be promoting this model, which plays a crucial role in the European Union's ability to create growth in local economies, meet the expectations of European consumers and create interest among consumers in other countries.

However, the success enjoyed by Europe's agricultural and agri-food sector should not hide the considerable challenges facing it. First of all, the strides made by EU producers in the areas of sanitation, the environment or animal welfare are not always known or given due recognition. Secondly, new players have arrived on the scene as genuine competitors both in traditional EU markets and in emerging markets. Finally, the EU has a culinary heritage of great diversity that should be exploited to the full.

The CAP enables better use to be made of the potential of the European agricultural and agri-food sector. A reform is under way which will ensure, with effect from 2013, that this policy feeds directly into the Europe 2020 Strategy for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth by promoting an agriculture sector which delivers food security, a sustainable use of natural resources and more dynamic rural areas. This calls in parallel for a fundamental review of the policy for information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products, which is one of the instruments of the CAP.

The aim of this Green Paper is to open this debate by speaking to all of the players concerned – consumers, producers, distributors and authorities – with the objective of shaping a new promotion and information strategy which will be targeted and ambitious in scope in order to draw greater benefit from the considerable resources of Europe's farming and agri-food sector.

## **2. THE ADDED VALUE FOR EUROPE OF THE INFORMATION AND PROMOTION POLICY**

### **2.1. What are the challenges facing the agricultural product information and promotion policy?**

#### *2.1.1. Strengths and weaknesses of previous measures*

The agricultural product information and promotion policy was drawn up at the beginning of the 1980s. It has gradually been extended to include most agricultural and agri-food products at the first processing stage. At the end of the 2000s, in addition to measures introduced in the area of hygiene and food safety, this policy has proved capable of supporting the efforts of EU producers to restore the confidence of consumers shaken by the dioxine and BSE crises. It has come to the fore by creating an environment that makes it easier to open up new markets for products such as olive oil that used to be distributed only through limited channels in Northern and Central Europe. Finally, it has contributed to the rapid increase in the number of quality labels raising awareness of the food products available in the EU among consumers.

In addition to these very positive examples, the last five years (see Table 1 on the period between 2006 and 2010)<sup>1</sup> have also provided evidence of the limits of the current agricultural product information and promotion policy in the following areas:

- Global markets are booming. The EU is a world leader in the trading of agricultural and agri-food products, but its market share is being squeezed by other more aggressive players. Promotion campaigns outside the EU are currently limited (less than half the number in the internal market). It is important to determine whether the EU should increase its activity at this level;
- What are known as ‘Multi-Country’ or ‘Multi-Product’ initiatives, which cover several Member States or several products in a coordinated fashion, are insufficiently encouraged or seem too complex to carry out within the present framework. However, they make it possible to increase the effect of any measures taken;
- The geographical distribution of programmes does not satisfactorily cover the diversity of products and know-how in all EU Member States;
- Weaknesses were also found by the European Court of Auditors in 2009 following an audit of the effectiveness of information provision and promotion measures<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of Regulation No 3/2008 in November 2010 (ref.: COM(2010)692)

<sup>2</sup> Special Report No°10//2009. Information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products

Table 1: Agricultural product information and promotion programmes under Regulation (EC) No 3/2008 between 2006 and 2010

<i>% in number (% in value)</i>	Internal market	External market
Distribution of programmes	71% (74%)	29% (26%)
Rejection rate	59% (56%)	56% (62%)
Multi-country or multi-product programme rate	8% (16%)	9% (12%)

*2.1.2. What targets need to be achieved to maximise added value for Europe?*

In order to exploit the growth potential of agricultural and agri-food markets, to provide better support to the efforts being made by European producers and to promote the diversity of its products, the EU has to show greater ambition in implementing the promotion and information policy. This could, for example, take the form of a differentiated, more targeted strategic approach according to the specific characteristics of local, European and global markets.

The specific aims of the information and promotion policy for each of these markets will be defined at a later stage in order to target more effectively the measures to be taken in each case and to derive from them the greatest possible added value for Europe. Generally speaking, these aims include:

- Exploiting European agricultural production more effectively and consolidating its position in the various markets;
- Promoting the EU’s very high standards when it comes to food safety, the environment and animal welfare and offering consumers better information on the European production model;
- Introducing consumers to new products and exploiting the diversity of products available in Europe;
- Raising awareness of quality systems and products with high added value.

**Question 1:** To meet the new challenges in local, European and global markets and ensure the greatest possible added value for Europe, what should the aims of the agricultural product information and promotion policy be? In addition to measures already taken by other players (e.g. the private sector), what contribution should this policy make?

**3. THE INTERNAL MARKET: PROMOTING THE SINGLE AGRICULTURAL MARKET THROUGH ITS PRODUCTS**

**3.1. The regional and local market**

Regional and local farming has hidden potential that is not currently being fully exploited. Regional and local markets are an essential meeting place for producers and consumers. They

enable the former to receive the rewards for their labours more efficiently and the latter to contribute to the development of their local areas, reduce the environmental impact of their consumption habits and access a wide variety of products rooted in their traditions and ways of life.

### *3.1.1. The value of regional and local markets*

Short distribution channels increase the income of producers and ensure the survival of a large number of farms, particularly thanks to higher margins, a reduction in transport costs and greater autonomy with respect to the agro-industrial sector. They can help improve environmental performance in terms, for example, of limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or packaging. From a cultural and social point of view, they encourage collaborative decision-making and local governance that is more sensitive to the specific needs of the areas concerned and preserve and support local traditions, while at the same time linking the product to a geographical area shared by producers and consumers.

In a territorial approach, the involvement of producers in quality systems and the promotion of these products plays a key role in meeting growing expectations in relation to local produce, tradition and authenticity, reaffirming the social link between consumers and producers and capitalising on the freshness, innovation and nutritional qualities of produce and product awareness.

### *3.1.2. Tools used to develop regional and local markets*

Reflecting on the possible ways of strengthening the tools used to support local markets, it is important to exploit synergies and complementarities with other European funds in order to bolster an approach that is more targeted to the needs of the areas concerned and to comply fully with the principle of subsidiarity.

Particular attention should be paid to the cooperation of various players in order to develop strategies for the production and promotion of local agricultural products. To help in the marketing of local products, measures aimed at financing basic services should be available in order, for example, to create commercial centres, local shops or multi-purpose convenience stores, the development of covered and uncovered markets, etc. Moreover, a LEADER tool that is better integrated into the CAP after 2013 could play a more significant role in promoting short distribution channels.

### *3.1.3. The method of managing regional and local markets*

At present, the EU's rural development policy contains a number of measures that seek to encourage quality production and support groups of producers in their information and promotion measures. Legislative proposals to be drawn up by the Commission under the CAP reforms by 2020 will supplement and improve the current list of measures. Even if these measures are managed outside the horizontal promotion system, they should be consistent with it and enjoy the same visibility.

<p><b>Question 2</b> : What information and promotion measures should be put in place to develop stronger local and regional markets?</p>
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### 3.2. The European internal market: strengthening the link between Europeans and the world of farming

#### 3.2.1. *The needs and specific objectives of the internal market (excluding regional and local markets)*

Consumption of European products needs to be encouraged, on the one hand, by promoting the image of the products and, on the other, by raising awareness of Europe's quality systems among consumers and among producers who are sometimes ill-informed about the development tools available to them under the CAP. From this viewpoint, it would be interesting to focus information more on the following subjects:

- **European production standards:** European farming is well-known for the strict requirements it sets in relation to health and hygiene, environmental protection and animal welfare. Information on and promotion of European agricultural products should place greater emphasis on characteristics associated with production standards.
- **Information to ensure a more balanced diet:** programmes promoting the eating of fruit and vegetables (e.g. 5 a day) can improve dietary habits. Another example is the programme encouraging moderate drinking levels;
- **Europe's quality systems<sup>3</sup>:** for example, the PDO/PGI/TSG/organic agriculture/Outermost Regions labels offer consumers products with guaranteed quality in terms, for example, of taste, origin or method of production.

Moreover, either during or after a crisis, it may be necessary to provide support to a sector in difficulty in order to re-establish confidence or boost consumption. In 2009, for example, a series of supplementary programmes was cofinanced to help producers overcome the milk crisis. The European Union can play an important role by intervening after health crises, as they did during the BSE, foot-and-mouth or bird flu crises, by distributing clear and detailed information.

Finally, cooperation between Member States could be supported in order to create complementarity with information and promotion campaigns carried out by Member States and/or the private sector and encourage synergies.

**Question 3:** What are the specific needs in relation to information on and promotion of European products and what should the aims be in the internal market?

#### 3.2.2. *Measures for the internal market (excluding regional and local markets)*

Under Regulation (EC) No 3/2008, information and promotion measures in the internal market take the form of programmes submitted by professional organisations from one or more Member States. These programmes, usually cofinanced by all of these participants (the EU, professional organisations and Member States), generally last three years. They relate to one or more products or quality indications and have, at this stage, insufficient coverage within Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> See also the proposals made in the "Quality package 2010"  
[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/quality-package-2010/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/quality-package-2010/index_en.htm)

In order to improve the scope of EU measures, focusing on key messages associated with the European agricultural production model and illustrating them with products could prove useful. These measures could take the following forms:

► ***Information campaigns on different subjects/themes:***

- To raise awareness of the CAP through its products: production standards, respect for the environment and countryside, animal welfare, quality indications and promoting their image among consumers,
- To encourage a healthier diet and thereby contribute to achieving public health targets.

For each campaign, target groups and communication tools (such as TV or radio advertisements, websites, publications, visits to schools and companies, etc.) should be defined.

► ***Promotion measures to illustrate the **European production model*****

In certain cases, there are close links between, on the one hand, a product and, on the other, a particular facet of the European agricultural and agri-food model. Within the framework of an information and promotion measure, these products could be the driving force able to exploit the specificity and excellence of the EU's production methods. There are already a number of programmes relating to quality labels, focusing on certain products in particular, for example in the meat sector guaranteeing compliance with animal welfare practices.

► ***One-off interventions in the **event of a crisis*****

In the event of an economic or health crisis, it is important that the public is given a clear message at European level. Measures such as information and promotion campaigns relating to the relevant products would help provide a dynamic, rapid and effective response.

► ***Creation of a **European platform for exchanging good practices*****

The exchanging of good practices between professionals is a valuable tool when it comes to developing appropriate measures. An exchange service (workshops, websites, etc.) available to all parties involved in the information and promotion policy could be set up at European level. This platform would facilitate the designing of 'Multi-country' programmes, which could be better structured and better coordinated than today. For example, a programme could be designed by Mediterranean Member States targeting Member States in Northern Europe, providing information under a 'common generic and European banner' on the benefits of the Mediterranean diet through a number of products such as olive oil, fruit and vegetables and the moderate consumption of wine.

<p><b>Question 4</b> : What measures should be developed to achieve the aims set and thus optimise the European Union's intervention in the internal market?</p>
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#### **4. THE EVER MORE COMPETITIVE EXTERNAL MARKET: A PLACE OF CHOICE FOR THE PROMOTION OF EUROPEAN PRODUCTS**

##### **4.1. Strengthening the hand of European farming in the world market**

In 2010, exports of European agricultural products were worth over €90 billion. Finished products accounted for 64% of this figure, with the leading product being wines and spirits (16%). At present, exports of agricultural products are almost all being achieved without a refund (€385 m in 2010 compared to more than €6 000 m in 2000). This kind of result has been possible because of a competitive European farming sector with agricultural products benefiting from a favourable environment in global markets, but global competition is fierce and European market shares have been squeezed by more aggressive players.

Product promotion is primarily the role of producers, exporters and Member States, but the European Union can play a crucial role as facilitator and support. At present, European companies largely follow their own strategies without incorporating any European dimension, which leads to a fragmentation of messages and duplication of measures costing time and money. In the current context, Europe must use all of its energy to promote its specialities and its production methods in the same way as its main trade partners (United States, Australia, Canada, etc.) are doing. This requires consistent financial support.

To strengthen its competitive position, the European Union could, in particular:

- **Support the opening and development of markets** – particularly connected with the negotiation of international agreements – so that European producers have more opportunity to raise awareness of and export their products;
- **Support consistent promotion measures following a clearly defined European strategy and objectives.** These measures may either be targeted directly at foreign consumers and professionals who must be informed about European products and encouraged to buy them, or be targeted at European producers and groups of producers who must be encouraged and helped to increase their sales in third markets (leverage).

<p><b>Question 5:</b> What are the specific needs in terms of information on and promotion of European products and what should the aims be in the external market?</p>
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##### **4.2. Measures for the external market**

Within the horizontal framework of Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008, the European Union currently finances promotion measures (1) through multi-annual programmes proposed by professionals or (2) directly initiated by the Commission.

Between 2007 and 2010, programmes for the external market represented just 29% in terms of numbers and 26% in terms of amount (averaging €14 m/year over the period for the part cofinanced by the EU). The rate of programmes rejected was 56%. The main tools used were information leaflets, participation in fairs and the involvement of professionals, used in more than 90% of approved programmes.

The Commission also organises promotional events (1 or 2 a year) through high-level commercial missions in third countries via seminars, participation in fairs, meetings with the

press or inter-company meetings. These visits are always accompanied by public relations activities both before and after the mission.

The Court of Auditors has deemed these measures to have had a positive impact. Nevertheless, it would be worth knowing whether the European Union's intervention could not be improved, for example following the recommendations of the last external assessment<sup>4</sup>, and those of the European Parliament<sup>5</sup> or of the European Court of Auditors<sup>6</sup> with regard to the budget, proposing different measures that are more targeted towards technical support given to producers/companies:

- **increasing the export capacity of European producers:** the Commission should initiate assistance measures to help European farmers develop their marketing strategies in line with their product, their target market, etc. For example, it is proposed that the Commission carry out studies of consumer habits, organise information days, develop interactive internet platforms such as already exist in other countries like the USA or Canada or use new media (Facebook-type media specialising in agricultural promotion measures) and that access be provided to the infrastructure of European stands at international fairs;
- **increasing the synergy between producers and programmes.** European Union measures should encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to join forces so that they can reach a critical mass for trading in the external market. Specifically, the development of networks could help to achieve this aim. At European level, these networks would allow the creation of synergies between producers to encourage multi-product or multi-country programmes with considerable added value for Europe;
- **helping newcomers** by extending eligible measures to include exploratory work (one-year trial campaigns or market studies, for example).

Any measure targeting the external market should be developed in line with existing support measures within the framework of European trade policy<sup>7</sup>.

**Question 6** : What measures should be developed to achieve the aims set and thus optimise the European Union's intervention in the external market?

## **5. THE CONTENT AND METHODS OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MARKETS**

### **5.1. Who will benefit?**

At present, in the horizontal system, organisations that draw up programme proposals have to be professional or inter-professional organisations representing the sector or sectors

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<sup>4</sup> “What lessons can be learnt from 8 years of promotion programmes in third countries?” Euréval-December 2008. An external assessment of the promotion and information policy is currently being prepared and will be completed by the end of 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Legislative resolution No 2007/0095 (CNS)

<sup>6</sup> Special report No 10/2009

<sup>7</sup> Trade policy as a core component of the EU's 2020 strategy – COM(2010)612

concerned in one or more Member States or at European level. This limitation does not exist in the wine sector where private companies and public bodies – unless they are sole beneficiaries – can also benefit from promotion measures.

It would be worth looking into the possibility of extending access to structures other than professional organisations, such as companies or chambers of commerce. Opening the system up in this way would make it possible to include sectors that are not necessarily structured through professional organisations in each Member State.

Moreover, the participation of individual players might be conceivable within clearly defined limits, such as a ban on direct promotion (i.e. advertising) of a given company's product. Showing products could be allowed if they were illustrative of a broader European message that the company would undertake to promote.

**Question 7:** Who should benefit? Should priority be given to certain beneficiaries?

## 5.2. Greater consistency with other CAP instruments

Over time, specific promotion and information instruments have been designed for certain products, in addition to the measures laid down in Regulation (EC) No 3/2008. These tools reflect the relevance and importance of maintaining ambitious measures for the businesses concerned. However, it is also necessary to examine the extent to which synergies would be possible between these various instruments in order to carry out promotion measures that are better coordinated and more effective.

In order to define consistent methods of accessing markets, thought should therefore be given as to the possible links between the promotion and information policy for agricultural and agri-food products as such and the following tools: the system supporting the consumption of **milk and fruit in schools**; promotional instruments in third countries for **wine**; information and promotion measures laid down within operational programmes for **fruit and vegetable** producer organisations; the system for supporting farming in the outermost regions within the framework of the **POSEI** programmes; food quality systems or systems for the promotion of products under official quality indications provided for under **Rural development** (measures 132 and 133, Axis 1 of EAFRD, improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector); specific support provided in **Article 68** of the Single Payment Scheme (Regulation (EC) No 73/2009); measures for the promotion of **olive oil** in non-European countries through the International Olive Council (IOC); or the policy **of information and communication on the Common Agricultural Policy** introduced under Regulation (EC) No 814/2000.

**Question 8 :** In order to develop more effective and more ambitious strategies for accessing local, European and global markets, are there any conceivable synergies between the various promotion and information tools available to the EU?

## 5.3. Identifying and defining measures more effectively

The current regulatory framework is relatively restrictive. Positive<sup>8</sup> lists of products that may form the subject of promotion measures have been drawn up. In the European market, for

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<sup>8</sup> Annexes I and II to Regulation (EC) No 501/2008

each product or theme, a list of target groups, messages and instruments to be used has been prepared. These lists, inherited from the past, have gradually been updated by the Commission, but their relevance has to be re-examined.

Similarly, at present, programmes relate to specific products or quality systems (e.g.: information on milk and its nutritional qualities). A new, more flexible and possibly more incisive approach would involve focusing initially on key messages defined at European level and then breaking these messages down and illustrating them with products in order to better demonstrate the diversity, richness and complementarity of European produce.

**Question 9:** Which agricultural and agri-food products should be eligible and what criteria should be used to decide?

**Question 10:** To be more incisive, which means of promotion should be used? Should the focus be on promoting key messages, such as ‘5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day’ or ‘the taste of Europe’, or on product ranges (such as cheese, wine, etc.)?

#### **5.4. Exploiting geographical origin and/or brand names more effectively**

There is such a rich variety of agricultural and agri-food products in Europe that it is often necessary to go beyond the generic European image in order to promote a product properly. However, at present, there are limited possibilities for mentioning brands and/or origin and this sometimes reduces the interest of private operators in cofinancing promotional programmes at European level.

For the majority of measures, any reference to origin usually has to be secondary to the central message. The origin of the product may be displayed when it is a designation provided for under European rules (e.g.: PDO/PGI products)<sup>9</sup>. There are special rules for two sectors:

- Wine<sup>10</sup>: individual brand names can be promoted for third countries provided that no additional state aid is granted to finance the promotion and that the measures relate to wines having protected designation of origin or a protected geographical indication or wines for which the grape variety is indicated.
- Fruit and vegetables<sup>11</sup>: individual brand names or names mentioning the geographical origin cannot be promoted, with the exception of:
  - the brand names of organisations of producers, of associations of organisations of producers and of their subsidiaries;
  - generic promotion and the promotion of quality labels. Geographical origin may be mentioned only in the case of protected designation of origin or protected geographical indications.

Within the framework of a clearly defined strategic approach, it should be possible to rely more on the ability of certain well-known brands or indications of origin to open up markets, provided that they can also serve as a real driving force for all European products, particularly

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<sup>9</sup> Regulation (EC) No 501/2008, Article 5(2)

<sup>10</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 Article 103p

<sup>11</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1580/2007 Annex VIII(15)

in the external market. One possibility would be to emphasise the European character of products in promotional programmes submitted by professional and/or interprofessional representative organisations, though without requiring them to remove any more precise indications of origin or brands. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to ensure that the European message was clearly more prominent than the brand or indication of origin of the product and that any measure that was of purely private interest did not receive European financing, only infrastructure and other horizontal activities stipulated in the programme.

**Question 11:** Would it be appropriate to provide more space for the indication of origin of the product and what criteria should be used to decide?

**Question 12:** Would it be appropriate to use brands as a promotion tool in the external market and what criteria should be used to decide?

### **5.5. What can be done to encourage multinational management?**

Under the current rules, *‘priority shall be given to programmes submitted by several Member States or providing for measures in several Member States’*.

When several Member States join forces to submit and implement a common programme aimed at several countries, the European dimension is multiplied and the budget available is used more efficiently. That is why the Commission has encouraged and will continue to favour this type of programme.

However, the current situation and data available for the period between 2006 and 2010 show that few Member States have adopted such an approach and, where they have, the programme is not always selected, generally because of the lack of any real strategy or shared measures and objectives.

Cofinancing and current procedures such as the signing of contracts between Member States and national organisations submitting proposals mean that the role of professional organisations at European level is reduced to a minimum, while these organisations would be best placed to draw up and implement programmes that have a genuine European dimension. It is necessary to find structures or procedures that make these types of programmes easier.

**Question 13 :** What is stopping the presentation and implementation of Multi-country programmes? What would need to be done to encourage these programmes with a greater European dimension?

**Question 14:** Do any other types of programmes and/or tools need to be developed?

### **5.6. How should measures be implemented?**

Measures should be implemented through simple procedures, and implementation should be adapted to the objectives in question and enable them to be achieved ‘at the lowest possible administrative cost’ within a coherent framework.

Currently, the management of promotional programmes is shared between the Commission and the Member States<sup>12</sup>. In practice, Member States assess programme proposals in terms of conformity, prospects and value for money, then forward to the Commission those they consider eligible for cofinancing. The Commission then, after examining them and any requested amendments, selects programmes for cofinancing. These programmes are then implemented by ‘implementing bodies’ to be selected by the proposing organisation. The Member State is in charge of monitoring the proper execution of programmes, payments to beneficiaries and corresponding control measures. A monitoring group, with the Member State concerned as president and the Commission as a member, meets regularly to monitor progress made in the various programmes.

The selection process is two-fold and extensive (seven months between the deadline for submission to the Member State and the Commission’s decision), which limits any ability to develop campaigns reactively and pragmatically according to requirements. Two alternatives would be possible:

- selection at Member State level. Beforehand, it would be necessary to be able to allocate financial budgets for each Member State. Besides the difficulties associated with doing this (how much and what criteria should be used to decide?), management through national budgets allocated in advance would risk weakening the European dimension of any measures. However, the fruit and vegetable (maximum budget allocation per organisation depending on its production volume) and wine (budget allocation fixed at national level) sectors are managed in this way. But, for these two sectors, the context is different, with promotion measures forming part of a whole series of measures for the sector concerned and being integrated into programmes that also include development or restructuring activities.
- selection at European level. A method of selection similar to that used in calls for proposals would be used here, with the Commission assessing proposals usually with the help of external experts. In most cases, after this selection procedure, the Commission is also responsible for monitoring, control and payment. It would therefore be necessary to reflect on the roles of the Member States in this context. Would they have no role at all or is it conceivable to decide on measures at Commission level and ask Member States to monitor and control implementation of programmes selected in this way?

**Question 15 :** How can the selection and implementation of programmes be simplified and improved?

### **5.7. What should Europe’s budget be to ensure we can achieve our objectives?**

At present, programmes are partly financed by the EU (up to 50%), the remainder being paid for by the professionals or organisations submitting proposals (at least 20%) and the Member States concerned. The principle of cofinancing seems to be the most appropriate in order to give the various players a sense of ownership. It would be necessary to look at whether, to

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<sup>12</sup> Under shared management, the Commission is still responsible for budgeting, but makes Member States responsible for paying beneficiaries in accordance with conditions laid down at EU level. The Commission then ensures that appropriations are indeed spent (account clearance procedure).

achieve our objectives, or certain prime objectives, a greater level of cofinancing ought not to be proposed.

Within the context of improving the approach to the market by gradually eliminating export subsidies, decoupling direct payments and using market management measures only in exceptional cases, promotion measures represent a tool complementing conventional market measures with the aim of maintaining and increasing the competitiveness of the EU farming sector.

To be effective, a tool should be allocated a budget that matches its ambitions. An initial estimation of the budget required will be prepared at the end of the consultation procedure based on an assessment of the existing policy and an impact analysis of future options.

## **6. CONCLUSION: PUBLIC DEBATE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

The subjects and questions raised in this Green Paper are the main aspects to be focused on in developing a common strategic framework for the EU's information and promotion policy for agricultural products and the instruments relating to it.

Through the present consultation process, the Commission hopes to hear the opinions of all organisations and members of the public having an interest in information on and promotion of agricultural products.

Farmers, producers of agri-food products, non-governmental organisations, processors, retailers, distributors, wholesalers, importers, exporters, consumers, public bodies and any other interested parties are encouraged to contribute to the debate via:

- the website <http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice>

The Commission invites any organisations who wish to present their observations as part of the public consultation process to provide the Commission and the public with information explaining who and what interests they represent. If an organisation decides not to provide this information, the Commission's stated policy is to consider this contribution to be an individual contribution (for standards applying to consultations, see COM(2002) 704, and the communication on the follow-up to the Green Paper 'European Transparency Initiative', see COM(2007) 127 of 21 March 2007).

The consultation period will come to an end on **30 September 2011**.

<p><b>Question 16 :</b> Participants are invited to raise any questions concerning the information and promotion policy for agricultural products that have not been covered in this document.</p>
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