



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 16-8-2013
C(2013) 5373 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senat for its Opinion concerning the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down certain transitional provisions on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and amending Regulation (EU) No [...] [RD] as regards resources and their distribution in respect of the year 2014 and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 and Regulations (EU) No [...] [DP], (EU) No [...] [HZ] and (EU) No [...] [sCMO] as regards their application in the year 2014 {COM(2013) 226 final}.

Transitional rules for rural development are being established following a three-step approach, adopting at each stage those decisions that may allow Member States to assure the necessary certainty to implement the current programmes throughout the transitional period 2014-2015.

The first set of rules was adopted by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 335/2013 of 12 April 2013, allowing Member States to continue to undertake new commitments and make payments to beneficiaries until the end of 2015. These rules define that under multiannual early retirement, meeting standards and afforestation measures which will either be abolished or significantly changed in the next period, new commitments cannot be undertaken after 2013. It also defines that on-going agri-environment, animal welfare and forest-environmental commitments can be extended until the end of 2014 claim period. Finally, it defines how the current technical assistance can be used for the preparation of the next period, including the ex-ante evaluation of future programmes.

The second set of rules, the ad hoc basic act, is the one on which the Senat is emitting its Opinion. They provide that Member States may continue to undertake new commitments in 2014 for multiannual area and animal-related measures under the conditions of the current programme even if the current financial means are exhausted. They also provide that for the same measures, both old and new commitments can be paid from the new budget from 2014

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onwards. Furthermore, it derogates from the application of the new rules on cross-compliance and prohibition of double funding so that in 2014 old rules still apply. For areas facing significant natural constraints (ANC) it provides that commitments made in 2014 do not need to comply with the requirement to continue farming in ANC areas for five years. This set of rules is currently under discussion by the co-legislators.

Finally, a third set of rules is also currently being discussed with Member States in the framework of the Expert Group for Rural Development. These rules will be established as a delegated act based on Article 95 of the rural development proposal. They define how old commitments under measures other than area and animal-related ones (which are covered by the ad hoc basic act previously mentioned) can be supported from the financial envelope of the new programming period and how the new technical assistance can be used for the closure of the current programmes, including their ex post evaluations.

The multi-annual measures referred to in the Senat's Opinion, i.e. "supporting semi-subsistence farms" and "setting up producer groups", would have to be covered by this third set of rules currently under discussion, in the spirit of continuity of instruments and safeguarding the necessary legal certainty and smooth transition to the next period.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns and issues raised by the Senat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

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Vice-President/Member of the Commission