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FOR AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS (CPSA)**

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**MEETING ROOM QUETELET, BECH BUILDING,  
KIRCHBERG, LUXEMBOURG**

**CHAired BY: M. DÍAZ MUÑOZ**

**ITEM 2.5: OUTCOME SEMINAR NOVEMBER  
2009 AND PLANS TO ORGANISE FUTURE  
SEMINARS\***

\* Document available on Circa: <http://circa.europa.eu/Members/irc/dsis/asa/library>

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this document is to ask the SCAS to evaluate the outcome of the seminar which was held in November 2009 on "New needs, challenges and the changing role of statisticians"; to analyse the proposed actions and possible ways to carry them out; and to discuss the plans to organise further events in the future.

**THE MEMBERS OF THE SCAS ARE INVITED:**

- to provide their opinion on the outcome of the seminar which was held in November 2009;
- to discuss the proposed actions, identify their feasibility, set up priorities and give guidance on their follow up;
- to express their views on the plans for organisation of further seminars on agricultural statistics;
- to reflect on specific topics to be discussed in a next SCAS seminar.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The SCAS Partnership Group in its meeting on 4 February 2010 discussed the possible follow up of the seminar and came up with a list of possible actions. The purpose of this document is to serve as basis for a discussion on priorities for these actions and possible ways to carry them out.

## 2. SUMMARY OUTCOME OF SCAS NOVEMBER 2009 SEMINAR

### 2.1. Session 1 – Coherence between EU and National Data

#### 2.1.1. Identify the priority areas where reducing or explaining of observed data incoherencies would be especially important

There are certain areas in which incoherence is specially visible and critical. For example: land use statistics (existing sources: *crop production, forestry, environment*); economic accounts for agriculture (*EAA, National Accounts*); crop areas (*FSS, crop production statistics*); Livestock data (*FSS, animal production statistics*).

Action: Identify the priority domains and follow up at technical (WG) level.

Responsible: CPSA to identify areas and to mandate corresponding WG's to take action.

#### 2.1.2. Tools or Methods developed by the countries to achieve coherence:

NSI's have created tools or methods for improving coherence in their own or international data sets. For example: use other statistical data to verify figures; adapt administrative data to statistical requirements; coordination/crosscheck between data deliverers ...

Action: Identification of good practices.

Responsible: Eurostat could trigger the action requesting at WG level Member States contributions.

#### 2.1.3. Internal coherence checks

Work to ensure coherence should start at the preparatory phase, from classifications, variable names, definitions, survey methodology, etc. If the data collected is deviating from another survey, this should be visible from the start and explained in the data produced.

In addition, routines that verify coherence between data produced from different sources could be developed and exchanged. For instance, for crop/animal statistics and FSS corresponding to the same reference year, it should be automatic to verify the plausibility of wheat areas in both surveys and check inconsistencies.

Action 1: Analyse data classifications, coding, variables, definitions to see if phenomena observed in different sources are referring to the same standards. Clear-cut problems should thereafter be corrected.

Responsible: CPSA to discuss and Eurostat to take the initiative in WG agendas.

Action 2: Develop and exchange routines for coherence checks.

Responsible: Eurostat for European statistics, NSI for the national surveys

#### **2.1.4. Revision of data backwards (retrapolation)**

An important source of incoherence between national and international databases is the revisions of historical data. If national statistical institutions revise their data, but don't report them to the international organisations, an inconsistency will occur. There are also cases where the international organisation makes its own estimations based on national data.

Procedures should be set up to treat such cases. In the longer term, it might be worthwhile analysing the whole data transmission set-up: should it be push or pull-based, i.e. should NSI's send the data to Eurostat or should Eurostat access the data directly from the databases in the Member States?

Action: Ensure that national revisions of data are retransmitted to Eurostat and other international organisations.

Responsible: Member\_States statistical institutes and Eurostat.

#### **2.1.5. Improvement of meta-data in order that users understand incoherence and its reasons.**

The present meta-data published by for example Eurostat in its databases are describing in detail the statistical quality issues and similar concepts. It is, however, not always an exhaustive source to understand incoherence in different data. In addition, there might be a need to describe issues specific for certain Member States: exceptions, availability of data, confidentiality issues that affect the figures.... Tools for a lighter, but more "layman" user-oriented meta-data are therefore needed.

Action: Create an environment where producers of data could explain the data, methodology and similar issues in a format aimed as users are more interested in the factual use of the data than the underlying quality aspects.

Responsible: Eurostat

#### **2.1.6. Direct feedback from users**

The users are the most likely to detect errors in the data-sets, if they are not found during the routine validations at the elaboration stage. If user-friendly systems would be put in place at national level for reporting anomalies, incoherence or asking questions on the data, this could greatly enhance the possibility of feedback from the users.

A rapid reaction system quickly responding by informing the user of the reason why an apparent anomaly is not, or alternatively finding the source of the error, should be put in place.

Action: Implement direct user feedback and reaction in the databases.

Responsible: MS and Eurostat

#### **2.1.7. Access to already available data**

Sometimes new policy needs require statistical data, but not always on a European level neither on a regular basis. In some cases it would be enough to make case studies in one or two countries. In other cases it might be satisfactory to use data that are already available.

There are at least two potential solutions to this issue. First of all an ad-hoc approach could be a set up whereby the users (AGRI, ENV; JRC; EEA,...) would turn to Eurostat, describing their needs which would then be transmitted to the CPSA representatives. The countries which consider that their data would satisfy most of the described needs would then make them available in the most appropriate format. Alternatively, countries could set up portals to the data they have available, also in administrative registers.

Action 1: Contact Eurostat at the initial stage of identifying data needs

Responsible: DG AGRI and other Commission services

Action 2: Discuss the best way forward

Responsible: CPSA

## ***2.2. Session 2 – Improve and facilitate the use of administrative sources***

- 2.2.1.** Qualify administrative sources according to their capability to be used to fulfil statistical requirements. Define the relevant criteria for that purpose (coherence, stability, accuracy, accessibility ...). As a result, identify those sources that could be used, with highest guarantee of quality, effectiveness and less risk.
- 2.2.2.** DG Eurostat to actively engage EC colleagues to promote a fruitful collaboration with statisticians any time they expect to propose any kind of new administrative register to implement EU initiatives. So that from the moment of its design the possibility of using the source for statistical purpose can be optimised.
- 2.2.3.** Promote actions at political level to raise awareness about the use of specific administrative sources and ensure that their utility for statistical purposes is maintained or improved.
- 2.2.4.** Exchange of good practice (organise one seminar with statisticians of the EU countries to present and discuss examples of good practice in use of administrative sources for the production of agricultural statistics).
- 2.2.5.** Launch a study to request specialists from Member States to analyse the possible statistical outputs (results) at EU wide level from a specific administrative register or group of registers needed to meet EU requirements.

Responsible: CPSA will deepen the analysis already launched for the seminar about administrative sources used with the objective to identify those that should be considered in priority. Follow up actions should be launched at political (ESSC) and technical (corresponding WG) levels.

## ***2.3. Session 3 - Quality and Confidentiality***

### **Confidentiality**

- 2.3.1.** A Confidentiality Charter per domain needs to be developed, making explicit the role and responsibilities of national statistical authorities on the one hand, and the Commission (Eurostat) on the other. Criteria for the publication of EU totals with confidential components, such as the three-unit rule, need to be defined and agreed.

**2.3.2.** Agreed rules, such as the rule that when a data value is legally published, the corresponding unit may no longer claim that the value has to be kept confidential, should be implemented.

Responsible: Specific implementation actions should be discussed and decided at the Working Party level. Specific domains will be decided by the CPSA. Examples could be FSS and animal production.

### **Quality**

**2.3.4.** A policy concerning revisions (frequency, reasons, calendar) needs to be defined and implemented.

**2.3.5.** Quality should be assured, for example by the detection and resolution of outliers, from the start of the process of drawing up statistics, onwards.

**2.3.6.** Best practice for quality improvement across Member States should be identified and shared.

**2.3.7.** Quality reporting should be introduced step by step across domains.

**2.3.8.** The connection between Community actions (Eurostat and Member States) and the FAO Global Strategy should be maintained.

Responsible: Specific implementation actions should be discussed and decided at the Working Party level, after guidance provided by the CPSA.

## **2.4. Conclusions**

The above list of actions attempts to respond to the most important recommendations of the November 2009 seminar.

The most important leading principles are:

- Development of specific tools, concepts or procedures. They would be carried out either by Eurostat or via ESS networking activities such as ad-hoc TF's or ESSnet projects,
- Focus on those areas deemed most important or susceptible to give more immediate results,
- After specifying the main development lines, mandate specific WG's to carry out the implementation phase.

The CPSA is requested to discuss on these actions, identify their feasibility, set up priorities and give guidance on their follow up.

**3. PROPOSED TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED IN A NEXT CPSA SEMINAR**

- 3.1. Economic accounts for agriculture and link with other statistics (other agro-economic statistics, livestock and crop production statistics and national accounts).
- 3.2. Further specific and deeper discussion on a topic emerging from the November 2009 seminar.
- 3.3. Simplification in agricultural statistics by exploring ways to reduce current data demand and to give room for new statistical needs.