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STANDING COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS (CPSA)

17-18 May 2010

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

CHAired BY: M. DÍAZ MUÑOZ

DRAFT MINUTES*

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Draft Minutes of the Standing Committee for Agricultural Statistics (CPSA) 17-18 May 2010

Introduction

The meeting was opened by Mr Pedro Díaz, Director of Directorate E who welcomed the participants and informed the CPSA on organisational issues of this meeting.

1. Items for approval / decision

1.1. Adoption of the agenda

France asked to add the following three issues to the agenda: (a) Data delivery for hatchery eggs; (b) Entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon – changes in comitology procedure and (c) Availability of exchanges between France and Commission concerning statistics on food and feed control and monitoring activities. Germany highlighted the need for discussion on data transmission on organic farming under point 3.7. and suggested to renumber the CPSA documents if some revisions are launched in the preparatory phase. The chairman proposed to add an additional item on the agenda concerning changes in comitology procedure for which Unit A5 (Legal and institutional affairs; document management) will be asked to participate to the meeting; to cover the issue on hatching eggs under miscellaneous and to enlarge item 3.7. on food safety and organic farming statistics with the raised concerns by both countries.

The proposed agenda was then adopted.

1.2. Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved unanimously, taking into account the following changes in the text referring to points 1.2. and 3.2.2.:

"1.2. Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting

"France asked that exchanges between les French authorities and the Commission concerning statistics on food and feed control and monitoring activities would be communicated to the other members of the CPSA."

"3.2.2. Proposal for a Regulation on permanent crop statistics

Eurostat presented the draft Regulation on permanent crops and a report on the outcome of the discussions on this issue at the Crop Statistics Working Group in October 2009. Document includes a report on progress made since the written consultation of the Member States on the new regulation on permanent crop statistics carried out in June 2009.

The main comments from MS and the conclusions of the Commission were presented. A deep discussion took place. Some delegations question the opportunity for a new legal act merging the two existent ones as it is not clear for them the need to do so. No consensus appears on the issue. As conclusion the president took some commitments on the new version of the draft regulation. It will take into account as much as possible the suggestions from MS, in particular concerning some flexibility in adapting the reference years for vineyard statistics and a revision clause of these statistics in case the Vineyard Register is no more compulsory. A new version of the draft

regulation will be prepared during next weeks and will be sent to the Commission for adoption, followed by presentation to the EP and the Council in then beginning of 2010."

2. Issues for discussion and decision

2.1. Development projects related to the structure of agricultural holdings

2.1.1. Eurostat reported on the state of the reference legal acts as well as the outcome of discussion on the Working party held on 22 and 23 February concerning the on-going implementation of the agricultural census 2009/2010 and SAPM as well as the preparation of the sample survey 2013.

Countries were asked to brief on possible particular encountered problems to carry out the census 2009/2010 and their findings concerning the new list of characteristics proposed by the Commission services. Further strategies for the launch of future surveys, in particular the 2013 sample survey, were raised as well.

2.1.2. Concerning the ongoing implementation of the agricultural census 2009/2010, all countries agreed to continue the update of existing overview (Annex I to Document CPSA/580) regarding the main technical and strategic issues related to the census implementation. Several countries (i.e. PT, GR, FR) raised some remaining problems concerning national budget allocation for the census and eventual drawbacks related to their implementation of the current census. In general all countries are confident that the announced deadlines for data delivery can be honoured. Eurostat highlighted the importance of receiving data which are full compliant with the validation rules as established in the Data Supplier Manual. Portugal confirmed its aim to send first FSS data by the end of 2010 to Eurostat. Spain asked for a translation in Spanish of the Handbook on implementing the FSS and SAPM definitions. Concerning FSS 2013, most countries welcomed the effort made by the Commission to reduce the list of new needs but asked for further effort to find a right balance between new needs and burden for respondents. Several countries expressed interest of decoupling the collection of data on production methods from the survey on farm structure. Eurostat proposed to continue working on a consolidated version of the list of characteristics which will be discussed at the next FSS WG meeting in September. The CPSA welcomed the proposal for better promotion of the census and dissemination of the results. Countries were asked to submit in writing their national experiences and suggestions on how to benefit from new dissemination tools.

2.1.3. Decided actions

- a) Countries will continue to update by e-mail the technical and strategic issues related to the census implementation (Annex I to Doc. CPSA/580);
- b) Eurostat will add Spanish translation of the handbook on implementing the FSS and SAPM definitions;
- c) Revision of the list of characteristics for FSS 2013 will be continued and discussed in the forthcoming FSS WG on 21 and 22 September as well as in the next CPSA meeting in November;
- d) Further investigation will be made on the possibility of decoupling the collection of data on production methods, especially inputs, from the survey on farm structure;
- e) Countries will provide in writing, their ideas for better promotion of the EU FSS and dissemination of the results.

2.2. Revision of the Commission's Decision on Dairy statistics

Eurostat introduced the point and presented document ESTAT/CPSA/581. Directive 96/16 and Decision 97/90 specified that the Member States should provide Eurostat with data on the structure of dairy enterprises every three years. The Decision laid down the size classes to be used for the data. With the passage of time and the concentration of the dairy industry, more and more enterprises were found in the largest size class. Thus in 2005 Eurostat proposed and the Member States accepted a further breakdown of the largest size class, to be used on the basis of a gentlemen's agreement for the reference year 2006. It was agreed to continue this approach for the reference year 2009. Eurostat now proposes that the Decision be amended to include the further breakdown of the largest size class. The revised Decision would be applicable for the first time in reference year 2012.

Several Member States (FR, DE, AT, SK and PT) considered that the gentlemen's agreement was sufficient and there was no need to amend the Decision. Eurostat replied that not all Member States had transmitted the data under the gentlemen's agreement and that a complete set of data for the EU would have added value. Certain Member States (FR, DE and IT) underlined the large number of confidential cells in the tables arising from the further breakdown.

The Chairman assured the Member States that the confidentiality of data provided under the Decision or the gentlemen's agreement would be respected. He confirmed that Eurostat planned to submit a draft legal text to the Committee for opinion in November 2010.

2.3. Land use/Land cover statistics – Lucas; Set up of Advisory Group

2.3.1. Eurostat presented its proposal for a strategy on creating an integrated system of harmonised and coherent land cover/use statistics at European level to simplify data collection to avoid double efforts. Eurostat highlighted its importance to enhance the cooperation with National Institutions. The set up of an Advisory Group on Land Cover/Use statistics was proposed and delegates were invited to discuss the terms of reference and express their willingness to participate to this Advisory Group. The state of art of the Lucas survey 2008/2009 and the dissemination plans of its results was explained

2.3.2. The CPSA endorsed the proposal for creation of an integrated system of harmonised and coherent land cover/use statistics at European level. Some countries (i.e. FR, DE) asked for more transparency and better dissemination of the LUCAS results. A few countries (B, FIN) highlighted the need for better use of the existing sources on land use and land cover. Several countries (FIN, (DK), IT, GR, D, and PL) agreed with the proposal to set up an Advisory Group and expressed their interest in the participation.

2.3.3. Decided actions

- a) The set up of a harmonised land use/cover statistical system will be continued drawing special attention to the elaboration of a coherent nomenclature;
- b) Results of 2008/2009 Lucas survey will be discussed in the forthcoming Lucas WG and the dissemination plan for Lucas results will be implemented;
- c) The Advisory Group will be created. A letter asking for volunteers will be addressed in the coming days to the CPSA and DIMESA members. A first meeting is planned to take place in Luxembourg on 6 October 2010.

2.4. Data collection on Land Prices and Rents

The purpose of this agenda point was to inform on the actions taken to develop the common target methodology for data collection on Land prices and rents and to agree on the next steps to be taken in order to set priorities for such data collection which is currently based on gentlemen's agreement. Eurostat presented also the current situation as regards data availability and highlight the need for improvement.

The members of the SCAS were invited to acknowledge the importance of statistics on land prices and rents, express their views on the future approach (eventually introduction of a legal base) regarding data collection based on the common methodology, and agree on the next steps. Several member states took the floor and underlined that do not see the need for an introduction of a legal base, proposing the reinforcement of the gentleman's agreement.

Regarding the final version of the methodology for agricultural land prices and rents briefly presented by Eurostat, IT, FR and DE mentioned that some technical aspects should be still clarified in the next EAP WP meeting. Eurostat underlined that the final version of the methodology was developed in close cooperation with member states and DG AGRI and the technical issues were already agreed during the past EAP working party meetings.

SI was interested if some grants can be allocated for the development of agricultural land prices and rents data collection in those countries which do not have already in place a system for collecting information.

DG AGRI mentioned that the existing gentleman's agreement was not successful (only 11 out of 27 MS are sending the data, with different methodologies) in spite of the increasing interest of the Commission in developing as soon as possible a comparable and complete set of agricultural land prices and rents data.

The members of the CPSA committee concluded that the collection of data should remain under gentleman's agreement and agreed that information has to be provided according to the plan proposed in the economic accounts and prices (EAP) working party meeting by all Member States following Eurostat general guidelines by end of 2011.

Those countries which are not sending data on agricultural land prices and rents were asked to transmit this data for the next exercise. Eurostat will next year come back to the CPSA with an evaluation of the voluntary collection.

2.5. Outcome Seminar November 2009 and plans to organise future seminars

Eurostat introduced the point and presented document ESTAT/CPSA/584. The Greek delegation congratulated Eurostat for organising the seminar which he considered to be a valuable contribution. The first session of the seminar concerned the coherence between EU and national data. The German delegation underlined the importance of user access to metadata. The Greek delegation noted that incoherence could arise when different national services sent data to different international organisations (EU, FAO etc.). The Dutch delegation advised Eurostat to check data across domains, for example, production statistics and supply balance sheets. The French delegation, supported by the Greek delegation, underlined that there could be good reasons for incoherence, calling for the explanation of discrepancies. The Irish delegation urged Eurostat to flag breaks in series.

The second session of the seminar addressed the improvement and facilitation of the use of administrative sources. The co-chairpersons of the session, Mrs Beate Schmidt (AT) and Mrs Eva Laczka (HU) underlined the different objectives of statistics and administrative data, the need to

identify good practice, and the need to involve statisticians at an early stage in the design of administrative systems. In reply to a question from the Greek delegation, the Danish delegation confirmed that 85% of all statistics in his country were derived from administrative sources which followed from the thoroughness of the administrative system. The Swedish and Norwegian delegations confirmed a similar situation in their countries. The maintenance of the quality of the registers required constant work. The French delegation, supported by the German delegation, warned of the possible consequences of changes in the administrative system for the availability of data. The Portuguese delegation, citing the example of external trade data, warned that efforts to reduce burden on respondents could lead to an erosion of the statistics. The Belgian delegation called for a general information system, of which statistics would be a part.

Eurostat reported on the third seminar session, which concerned confidentiality and quality. The Belgian delegation underlined the importance of the confidentiality charter and advised Eurostat to develop a general charter rather than one per domain. Several delegations (NL, IT, FR and DE) discussed the identification of user needs, and the different needs of different users (researchers, political deciders, and others). The DG-AGRI representative noted that the needs of his Directorate-General were expressed in the various Working Groups. The Portuguese delegation underlined the importance of quality reports and the need to maintain a common approach. The Greek delegation drew attention to the links among the subjects treated in the three sessions.

The Chairman opened the discussion on a future seminar. Several delegations (FI, DK, NO, FR and BE) would welcome a future seminar and advocated various possible subjects. He confirmed that Eurostat planned another seminar linked to the SCAS meeting of November 2010. Several countries highlighted the importance to ensure a follow up to topics which came out of the previous seminar and the importance to address the simplification issue which some countries consider as an opportunity to give room for new demands. The Partnership Group planned for early September will discuss the subject and future topics of the future seminar.

3. Issues mainly for information

3.1. Recent developments in agricultural policy

Mr Pierluigi Londero, Acting Head of DG AGRI Unit L2 (Economic analysis of EU agriculture) described the challenges facing European agricultural policy in the context of global economic changes and the impact on agricultural statistics. The latest developments with respect to the Review of the CAP post 2013 were announced, together with details of initiatives relating to the Health check exercise.

These developments combined with the greater emphasis put on the better management and evaluation of public policies should lead to an increase in the demand for statistics across a range of domains. Priorities will need to be carefully defined, bearing in mind that they will differ between the Directorates General. Improved communication between statistical suppliers and users will be required and more attention will need to be focused on information at the regional level.

DG AGRI raised issues that will need to be addressed to meet these increasing needs, including the role of agricultural statisticians, the potential for efficiency gains, the consistency between EU and national statistical systems as well as the institutional set-up (at both EU and Member State level).

3.2. Developments at an international level

The chairman introduced this item and Mr Pietro Gennari, FAO, reported on developments at international level. The following issues have been highlighted:

a) Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

The Global Strategy was endorsed at the forty-first Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in February 2010 and at the thirty-sixth Session the FAO Conference in November 2009. The UNSC urged FAO and the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics to expedite the development of the Implementation Plan aimed at strengthening the national agricultural statistical system. The process to develop the Implementation Plan and its key components were presented by FAO representative. In particular, he reported that a comprehensive technical assistance program, an articulated training program and a targeted research agenda as well as clear indications on funds management and Governance Arrangements at the global, regional and national levels will be included in the Plan.

EUROSTAT and EU Member Countries could collaborate in the development of the Implementation Plan and could contribute to the establishment of a Multi Donor Trust Fund (MTDF) and assist in mobilizing resources for funding the Plan.

The Implementation Plan will be submitted for endorsement to the forty-second Session of the UNSC in February 2011.

b) Fifth International Conference on Agriculture Statistics - ICAS-V

The Conference will be organized in Kampala, Uganda on 13-15 October 2010, under the auspices of the ISI Committee on Agricultural Statistics and with the support of many International Organizations, including FAO and Eurostat.

The Conference will provide an opportunity to review the draft Implementation Plan of the "Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics". A major recommendation of the Strategy is that countries should be "Integrating Agriculture into the National Statistical System". This recommendation is the overarching theme of the Conference.

The document CPSA/592 provides an overview of the key objectives of the scheduled conference and of its programme.

c) Relevant scientific sessions at the 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) meeting in Durban, August 2009.

- Relevant sessions include: "Linking Agricultural Census to Population Census" and "Economic-Environmental Accounts for Food and Agriculture: Design and Practice".

d) ISWG Agricultural statistics as a follow up of the CES review and discussion in Geneva

e) IAOS conference in Chile planned for October 2010 (Environment stats) with Eurostat in organising committee."

3.3. Agro-environmental indicators (AEI)

3.3.1. The CPSA was informed on the outcome of the update on the AEI questionnaire and the request from Eurostat to send existing national level data before mid of the year and regional data before the end of September 2010. Eurostat briefed the CPSA on the ongoing development of two implementing regulations for pesticides statistics and highlighted the importance of improving the cooperation between international organisations to reduce burden on the reporting organisations in the countries.

3.3.2. In general, countries will transmit data to Eurostat based on existing data as requested in the joint Eurostat/OECD questionnaire on agro-environmental indicators but several data cells will remain empty for the series 1990-2009 as data is missing.

- 3.3.3. Countries agreed on the proposed strategy to develop two implementing regulations on pesticides statistics.

3.4. Implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1165/2008 on livestock and meat statistics

The Committee took note of the report presented by Eurostat on the state of play with respect to the implementation of the Regulation (EC) No 1165/2008. The Working Group on Animal Production Statistics which met in March 2010 had defined the technical details of a gentlemen's agreement to collect monthly estimates on other slaughtering, following the guidelines given by the SCAS in November 2009. This agreement focuses on the most significant figures. Only BE had disagreed with the principle of the agreement. DE had suggested a more explicit wording for the duration. Regarding derogations to the Regulation granted to BG and DE in 2009 and 2010, a Decision was going to be published.

3.5. Rural development

- 3.5.1. Eurostat informed the CPSA and asked the opinion of the CPSA on the latest developments in the framework of the Rural development statistics (draft up to date list of the indicators list, gentlemen's agreement, funding via grants in 2010).
- 3.5.2. The CPSA agreed with the proposed updated list of Rural development indicators and accepted to provide data on a voluntary basis and based on available data. Several countries (i.e. FR, D, IT) draw attention on the need for cooperation and integration with other sources and requests.
- 3.5.3. Eurostat confirmed its effort to look for better coordination with data requests stemming from other services. A back to back organisation of WG in 2010 on Regional and urban statistics and "Rural development statistics" will be checked.
- 3.5.4. Countries will be asked over the coming weeks about their willingness to participate, with eventual Community financial contribution, in a further data collection exercise and the set up of a data collection framework as laid down in Annex I of Document Estat/CPSA/587.

3.6. SDMX workshop for fisheries statistics

Eurostat unit E2 reported on its project of setting up a Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange standard (SDMX) for improving an efficiency of data collection and processing as well as maintaining and improving data quality. Collaboration between fisheries statistics team, other Commission services and international fisheries organisations on the SDMX initiative was implemented through a workshop held in March 2010.

The Member States provided a sound contribution to the workshop and a pilot project was launched to test the practical implementation and the wider uses of SDMX standards for fisheries statistics. The most important feature of this project is the close co-operation of various data providers and receivers who are involved in a complex net of data flows, either at international level or EC's level. Data transmission (including SDMX standards and formats) the "Single entry point" and electronic validation are the key elements of the project. Eurostat E2 will report to the Fisheries Statistics Working Group on the progress made on both of these issues and on the work done with the pilot countries.

"Single entry point" informatics data transmission way and SDMX-ML format reports standardised are the key elements of the project.

Eurostat E2 will report to the Fisheries Statistics Working Group on the results the progresses made on both this issues and on the work done with the pilot countries.

3.7. Entering into force of Treaty of Lisbon – changes in comitology procedure

On request of the CPSA, a point was added to the agenda concerning the expected changes in comitology procedures due to into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. A copy of the document ESSC 2010/05/20/EN was provided as room document to the members of the CPSA. M P Bischoff, Head of Unit A5 (Legal and Institutional affairs; Document management) presented the planned changes for implementing powers that are conferred upon the Commission by the legislator as the new Treaty makes a clear distinction between the powers delegated to the Commission to adopt non-legislative acts of general application to supplement or amend certain non-essential elements of a legislative act (Article 290, delegated acts) on the one hand and the powers conferred on the Commission to adopt implementing acts (Article 291) on the other hand. It was stressed that a proposed Regulation of the EP and of the Council laying down the rules and the principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission's exercise of implementing powers is still under discussion between the three institutions. In the meantime, Council Decision 1999/468/EC continues to apply, with the exception of the regulatory procedure with scrutiny (PRAC), which is no longer applicable for new proposals.

3.8. Food safety and organic farming statistics

Eurostat provided an overview of the current situation of the data collection on organic farming statistics and ongoing initiatives, such as the revision of the questionnaire, the award of grants to countries for the development of a data collection on crop production and the publication plans.

With respect to the question raised by Germany regarding the approval of the revised questionnaire, Eurostat informed that it will again be discussed in the next meeting of the Task Force 'Organic farming statistics' and proposed for final approval to the Working Group 'Food safety statistics' in 2011. It was confirmed that the CPSA will then be requested to adopt it under comitology.

No new information could be given to the question of a possible new legal basis under Art. 285 of the Treaty.

Eurostat apologised for not having addressed so far the exchanges between the French authorities and the Commission concerning statistics on food and feed control and monitoring activities and promised to upload this information in CIRCA in the coming days.

3.9. Forestry statistics

Eurostat Unit E3 (Environmental statistics and accounts) presented the latest progress concerning the collection of statistics linked to forestry statistics, mainly for forestry and logging accounts 2010. The need for harmonisation of these accounts (in particular by asking all countries to value the growth of cultivated timber) and the yearly timetable were explained.

3.10. Report of the CPSA Partnership Group meeting on 4 February 2010

The outcome of the meeting of the CPSA Partnership Group, in particular the review of the draft agenda of the CPSA meeting as well as the outcome of the CPSA seminar held in November 2009 and plans for further seminars, was presented. Concerning the membership to the Partnership Group, it was decided to apply replacement of three Member State representatives in the November CPSA meeting. The Commission thanked the Partnership group for the work it has done and its high level of commitment. The next Partnership Group discussion will be held on Thursday 02 September.

3.11. Agenda of the ESS Committee

The Chairman presented the agenda for the European Statistical System Committee, which would take place on 20th May and described the planned discussions.

In particular, the items on the draft Commission Regulations amending Regulation(EC) N° 2150/2002 on waste statistics and Regulation (EC) N° 1099/2008 on energy statistics, the annual work programme 2011, the report on ESSnet projects and ESSnet Plan 2011, the launch of a Census Hub for population statistics, Europe 2020 and the Entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon –changes in comitology procedure were briefly presented.

3.12. Meetings schedule 2010

The list of meeting planned for the relevant units of Directorate E were circulated under Document CPSA/591. Eurostat informed the CPSA that the meeting of the CPSA Partnership Group scheduled for 23 September 2010 will be brought forward to 02 September 2010.

4. Any other business

4.1. France asked the Commission to clarify a footnote in Regulation 617/2008 referring to transmission of data on hatching eggs to both services Dgagri and Eurostat which can lead to overlap and double work. The Commission promised to investigate on this item

4.2. Eurostat gave a brief summary of the main conclusions arising from the discussions over the two days and thanked the delegates for their participation. The date of the next meeting of the CPSA will be from 8 to 10 November 2010.