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EVALUATION OF WITHDRAWALS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SECTOR

Quality judgement of the final report submitted by AGROSYNERGIE

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This quality judgement provides a global assessment on the above-mentioned evaluation study. The Commission steering group in charge prepared it at the end of the evaluation processed.

It has to be pointed out that the judgement is not made on the contents of the results, conclusions or recommendations reached by the contractor, but on the methodology 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 evaluation study fully fits the Terms of Reference and meets the information needs of the Commission. All evaluation questions and themes have been addressed.

The main difficulty was to identify the effects of withdrawals on the price stability and on the farm income. The evaluation results in this respect vary a lot according to products and Member States, and do not allow drawing homogenous conclusions on the achievement of these objectives of the intervention. However, the evaluator delivered well what was envisaged in the Terms of Reference and the scope of the evaluation, as defined in the Terms of Reference, was covered.

The evaluation study, by analysing the impacts of the withdrawals and assessing other risk management measures already used or potentially applicable to cope with short-term surplus crises, could form a useful information source for the discussion on the crisis management measures in the proposal for the reform of the Common market organisation for fruits and vegetables.

Global assessment: **good**

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 evaluation study has fully examined the rationale, results and likely impacts of the withdrawals and other risk management measures. The report covers the period since the substantial reform of the CMO in 1996, and in order to assess the effect of this reform, a comparison with the previous period (since 1991) is also provided, both in the descriptive and in the analytical parts. The requirements of the Terms of Reference are fulfilled also from the geographical point of view.

Global assessment: **good**

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 methodology design is clearly presented and reasoned, including its limitations. The methodology was adapted to different issues covered by the evaluation and it took into account the availability of data. However, sufficient attention was not paid to possible deadweight effects.

Global assessment: **good**

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

The contractor had access to data provided by the Commission services which were treated correctly and well presented. These data had to be completed by data from other sources at national and regional level. The contractor in particular collected the data on prices and traded quantities from the relevant markets in Spain, Italy and France. These data fed the econometric model used to measure the hypothetical impact of withdrawals on the level and variability of prices. In order to get other missing data, the contractor carried out interviews which were designed also to cross-check reliability of data obtained from other sources. All data limitations are sufficiently explained in the report, including the effects on the analysis.

Global assessment: **good**

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 analysis is well developed both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The contractor tried to establish the causal links to the extent possible. However, the analysis was not always able to deliver clear answers to the evaluation questions, in particular, as mentioned above, on the effects of withdrawals on the price stability and farm income. The limitations of the analysis are presented in a transparent way, including the effects on its findings.

Global assessment: **good**

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?**

In general, the evaluation findings are credible, clearly reported and justified. In those cases when they are based on the analysis founded on assumptions and hypotheses, the contractor presents the limitations of the analysis in a transparent way, and recommends considering the findings with caution.

Global assessment: **good**

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

Conclusions are established in a clearly understandable and detailed manner. They are based on credible results, highlighting the contradictory findings and the difficulties to draw homogenous conclusions on the effectiveness and the efficiency of withdrawals.

Global assessment: **good**

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

Recommendations are fair and unbiased. For the current system based on withdrawals, operational recommendations are outlined. But in order to improve the management of short-term surplus crises, policy changes are proposed. The recommendations point towards directions to follow, but are rather general in character.

Global assessment: **satisfactory**

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 report is well-structured, balanced, and written in a clear language. The unnecessary repetitions have been avoided. The length of the report, including the annexes, is adequate.

Global assessment: **good**

10. ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORT AS A WHOLE

Taking into account the aspects mentioned above, the report can be considered **good**.

Quality assessment grid for the evaluation of withdrawals and crisis management in fruit and vegetable sector

Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is:	Unacceptable	Formally correct but weak	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
1. Meeting the needs: Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?				X	
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?				X	
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?				X	
4. Reliable data: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?				X	
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?				X	
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?				X	
7. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results? Are they unbiased ?				X	
8. Usefulness of the recommendations: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?			X		
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?				X	
Taking into account the contextual constraints on the evaluation, the overall quality rating of the report is considered				X	