



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Regulatory Scrutiny Board

Brussels,
D(2016)

Opinion

Title **DG ESTAT – A strategy for agricultural statistics towards 2020 and beyond**
(draft version of 3 February 2016)*

(A) Context

Comparable statistics from all Member States on agriculture are important in determining the development of various policies in the European Union, including Common Agricultural Policy, Rural Development, Climate Change, environmental and regional policies. Environmental and Agricultural statistics are one of the three pillars of the statistical production under the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 initiative. Among the objectives of the programme relevant to Agriculture Statistics is "the review and simplification of the agricultural data collection in line with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) review post-2013 and the redesign of the official agricultural data programme, in particular with the objective of improving the quality of the produced data". This initiative implements this objective.

(B) Overall opinion: POSITIVE

The Board gives a positive opinion, with a recommendation to further improve the report in the following key aspects:

- 1) Strengthen the links with the REFIT evaluation conclusions and stress (and quantify wherever possible) the simplification/burden reduction potential of the proposed solution;**
- 2) Deepen the analysis as regards impacts on particular Member States in view of the potential simplification/cost savings on the one hand and on the other the necessary financial outlays to adapt the national statistical systems to the new framework;**
- 3) To allow for a future evaluation of the initiative, include benchmarks against which the key performance indicators will be assessed.**

* Note that this opinion concerns a draft impact assessment report which may differ from the one adopted

(C) Main recommendations for improvements

(1) Reinforce the links of the impact assessment analysis with the REFIT evaluation outcomes. The report should strengthen the links with the REFIT objectives (simplification, cost-efficiency and burden reduction). In particular the objectives of the initiative should include more explicitly the need to reduce the burden on respondents (instead of just avoiding an increase in the burden) and on the possible elimination of no longer needed data sets. The quantified estimates of cost savings of the preferred option should be presented more prominently to better illustrate how/why the preferred option is in line with the REFIT objectives.

(2) Enhance the analysis of impacts on particular Member States. The report should bring out in greater detail the analysis of financial impacts on particular Member States. Given that national statistical institutes in Member States are organised and operate in diverse ways to some extent and agricultural sectors display different characteristics, the proposed changes to the European Agricultural System are likely to affect EU countries not to the same degree. On the one hand (and in line with the REFIT objectives), the initiative is likely to bring substantial savings thanks to simplification/integration of surveys and methodological/technological progress. On the other hand, the implementation of the new agricultural statistical system will require substantial upfront investment (e.g. in building up/upgrading administrative registers) which may vary across EU Member States.

(3) Include benchmarks for future evaluation of the initiative. The report proposes several key performance indicators for measuring the effectiveness of the proposed initiative. However, the benchmarks against which the indicators will be compared are not defined and should be proposed wherever this is feasible.

Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG and are expected to be incorporated in the final version of the impact assessment report.

(D) Procedure and presentation

The report should be brought in line with the Better Regulation guidelines in terms of presentation requirements (page limit, font size). Moreover, the report should be a self-standing document, accessible to the general public, and thus should not contain any references to internal Commission documents (e.g. ARES notes or CIRCA-B documents).

(E) RSB scrutiny process

Reference number	2015/ESTAT/035
External expertise used	No
Date of RSB meeting	2 March 2016, written procedure