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**Subject: The use made of European agricultural statistics**

Ref.: Your letter of 13 April 2010 to the attention of Commissioner Dacian Cioloş

Dear Sir Michael,

Thank you for your question concerning the use of European agricultural statistics.

While contributing to a limited extent to the Community GDP and employment rate, the agricultural sector nonetheless ensures a variety of crucial functions supporting the whole economy of the Union and contributing to the well-being of its citizens. Among others, it underpins the vitality of rural areas, covering 50% of the population and 90% of the territory of the EU, supplies the agri-food sector, and represents the primary source of food for the totality of the some 500 millions European citizens.

The European agricultural statistical framework ensures the collection and processing of relevant, timely, reliable and comprehensive data sets, which are essential for orienting policy decisions and anticipating policy challenges. The Community Institutions make use of agricultural statistics for a variety of purposes, in the following main (though non exhaustive) domains: monitoring and evaluation of policies and policy instruments, preparation of policy proposals, assessment of the complex relationship between agricultural and environment, analysis of possible synergies between different Community interventions, development of policy scenarios, forecasts and projections, etc.

European agricultural statistics also feed a number of relevant research activities outside the Community Institutions.

A broad public dissemination of the outcomes of these activities is ensured, although in some cases agricultural statistics feed internal ad hoc working papers. Examples of publicly available statistical reports published by DG AGRI can be found at the following web-page: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/index_en.htm).

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The European Commission is firmly devoted to strike the right balance between information needs, legislative requirements and administrative burden for the Member States. The upcoming 2013 reform will certainly provide a further occasion for taking stocks of previous experiences and lessons learnt in the context of statistical activities and, where relevant, proposing appropriate adjustments in collaboration with the Member States.

In the meantime I can inform you that the issue of simplification requirements in data collection is on the agenda of the next Simplification Experts' Group, which will take place in June.

In your letter you also refer to the Commission Communication (COM (2009) 404, of 8 August 2009) on the production method of EU statistics in the next decade. This Communication launched a debate on the strategic orientations for the work of the European agricultural statistics system and on how the modernisation of the system can meet the challenges that statistical producers are faced with at national as well as at European level.

To achieve this modernisation of the agricultural statistics, the following lines will be explored:

- (1) Produce efficiency gains in the vertical production chain from Member States to Eurostat. These efficiency gains will be derived from: a) development of validation tools that can be used by the different production chains both in Member States and Eurostat; b) rebalancing of the validation tasks moving them to earlier steps of the chain (validate the sooner the better); and c) policy decisions and guidelines on the roles of the different actors in that chain.
- (2) Launch of specific actions to promote the use of administrative sources and/or other sources than statistical surveys for agricultural statistics. This should include guidelines on the quality of the other used sources as well as actions to promote their stability and their fitness for purpose.
- (3) Reassess the user (especially policy) needs and consequently rebalance the current demands of agricultural statistics data in order to cater for emerging policy areas of interest.

I can ensure you that careful attention with respect to these strategic lines will be given during the appropriate meetings between the Commission and Member States.

Yours sincerely,



Jean-Luc DEMARTY  
Director General