



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Simplification in rural development
- *Requested by the Belgian delegation*

Delegations will find in Annex a note from the Belgian delegation regarding the above-mentioned subject, to be presented under "Any other business" at the Special Committee on Agriculture on 7 December 2015.

AOB Belgium : Rural development – modifications and request

The simplification of the CAP is a top priority of commissioner Hogan. Belgium fully supports this ambition. So far, several simplification initiatives have been proposed and adopted. In the November Council, the commissioner gave more information about the steps ahead. Belgium welcomes this simplification calendar and looks forward to a genuine simplification of both CAP pillars.

During the Rural Development Committee of 18th November proposals were made to clarify or simplify the communication and monitoring requirements for the Rural Development Programs. Some of these modifications, however, raise concern. They seem to go against the simplification agenda promoted by commissioner Hogan as they will generate extra administrative burden for the beneficiaries and administrations alike. Moreover, this extra work comes at a time when administrations are very busy implementing direct payments and rural development programmes.

Belgium would like to hear the Commission on the contribution of these requests to the simplification process. We ask the Commission to reassess them in the light of the simplification agenda and to take into account the administrative and time constraints faced by Member States in the implementation of the new 1st and 2nd pillar measures.

The modifications in question are the following.

- 1) *Regulation (UE) n° 808/2014 , point 2.2(b) of part 1 of Annex III on **the information obligations of the beneficiaries of EAFRD funds.***

The current rules require that as from 10.000 € of public support, the beneficiaries has to put a poster with information about the operation and the support received "depending on the supported operation (for example for art. 20 measures or for LEADER)".

Following our understanding, The Managing Authority can decide for what measure the obligation of placing a poster is relevant and necessary (for example for investments or for LEADER and other local development operations).

The proposed modification imposes that also the beneficiaries of area measures for more than 10.000 € annual payments shall place one poster. This modification, although presented as a simplification element, will create extra burden and confusion for the beneficiaries.

- 2) *Art. 75 of Regulation (UE) n° 1305/2014 provides that the Member-states send an annual implementation report to the Commission every year before 30th June.*

Art. 15 of implementing regulation (UE) n° 808/2014 and its annexe VII set up the structure of the implementation report.

Following this structure section 3 shall present the steps taken by the Managing authority to ensure good quality in the implementation of the programme but no indicator is imposed.

During Rural Development Committee of 18th November, the Commission presented a draft working document on the SFC 2014 template for the submission of the implementation report.

In this template, for section 3, the Commission proposes new tables with preformatted indicators: percentage of expenditure realised through simplified cost options, percentage of EAFRD funding concerned by e-management on the level of the application for support, payment claims,...average time for payments to beneficiaries. The calculation of these new indicators requires a lot of time and comes at a moment where MS have already started with the implementation of most measures.

3) *Table B4 of the annual implementation report presents the total public expenditure of the realised operations which have additional contributions to other priorities.*

Logically this table should be read in line with section 11.3 of the rural development programme where the potential additional contributions of programmed measures to other priorities have been identified.

In table B4, only the realised additional contributions of supported operations in respect of those identified ex-ante in the programme should have to be reported, and not

all the additional contributions. This is a new administrative burden at a time the measures management systems have already been developed without taking this requirement into account.

4) *During Rural Development Committee of 18th November, the Commission presented a questionnaire on the setting up of the maximum eligible area for the different area rural development measures. The Member states should send the information to the Commission before 15th December. This questionnaire is not a legal requirement and the required information demands a lot of calculation from the Member states' LPIS system. We invite the Commission to limit extra demands for information (above all the legally required information flows) to an absolute minimum.*
