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ΑΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΤΗΣ 28-30/05/2006

ΣΧΕΔΙΟ ΠΑΡΕΜΒΑΣΗΣ

ΜΕ ΘΕΜΑ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΤΑΡΤΙΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΡΟΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΚΕΣ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΕΣ

Mr. Chairman

First of all allow me to congratulate the Presidency on its choice to bring forward such an important subject for discussion at our present informal meeting.

I would like to express my satisfaction for the working method selected, which, in my opinion, will prove to be a very effective way in allowing us to investigate the issue thoroughly and thus reach more concrete conclusions.

The future competitiveness of our agriculture certainly lies heavily on research and development, innovation and diversification and, not least, on effective education and training of the farmers.

Advisory Services are viewed as the means to integrate and transfer knowledge and expertise, gained in all these sectors, to the farmers who in fact apply our agricultural policy on the field.

Within this conceptual framework, let me express some thoughts regarding the specific questions raised in the working document.

(Q.1)

It is true that, in the European Union, there is no common platform for agricultural advisory services. Considering the particularities and the variable conditions under which agriculture is practiced throughout Europe, it would be really hard to draw the picture of such a common system.

On the other hand the reformed CAP, through the provisions made to support implementation of cross compliance, offers the motive for the creation of a common basis for demand - oriented agricultural advisory services.

it is my belief that cooperation on advisory services can be promoted more effectively by the advisors themselves, who are anxious to succeed and therefore have a strong incentive to develop and improve the services they offer.

To facilitate this, the EU could provide the incentives and support conferences, working groups and other means of information exchange and experience dissemination. This action can lead to the development and enhancement of services and provide useful practical suggestions for common European actions.

(Q2)

Managerial know-how and competition survival skills become all the more important in agriculture nowadays. Although it is widely acknowledged that training farmers in these aspects can bear multiple benefits for the agricultural sector, advice on such competition issues and management of agricultural holdings are not formal constituents of the advisory system implemented by reg. 1782/2003.

However, the establishment of the system in each Member state can be considered an important step. The same network of advisors can be trained and assigned to provide advice on management issues, complementary to their main duties. In this case, I feel that holdings, especially small ones, should be supported in order to seek and accept these services. In this context, it could be useful to investigate the possibility of including such an action in the rural development program.

(Q3)

Cooperation among EU institutions, Member State authorities and other relevant institutes, is the cornerstone of success in the task of promoting and developing advice further.

Within the already established framework we can envisage cooperation and synergies on some practical issues such as:

- Research and development of diagnostic and managerial tools used by services as means to provide advice
- Evaluation of the performance of agricultural holdings expressed in common indicators and relevant to individual farms as well
- Technical support of advisors in the critical issues of cross compliance as food safety for example

It would also be very useful if the EU provided a dedicated website accessible by all stakeholders who will communicate and exchange information, knowledge, experiences, problems and solutions in the most fruitful and cost-efficient way.