



Overview of the implementation of the Farm Advisory System in Member States

Vincenzo Angileri



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Report

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1. Introduction

1.1. Report framework

- 1.1.1. Supporting DG AGRI in the assessment and follow-up of the first year of implementation of the Farm Advisory System is the objective 07 of the current year activity for "Action 21102 - Geo-Information Management and Control Methods". In 2007 this objective has been carried out throughout some technical visits in Member States, a workshop with Member States held in October and the analysis of the answers given by Member States to a questionnaire on the implementation of FAS prepared and sent by JRC.
- 1.1.2. This report provides information on how Member States have implemented the Farm Advisory System (FAS); it represent one of the deliverables foreseen in the action 2007 work programme and it is produced following the request of the client (DG AGRI D1) to monitor the implementation of FAS in Member States without producing any guidelines for their implementation which the client considered premature and not necessary at this stage. Therefore this report completely replaces the deliverable "Guidelines for implementing Farm Advisory Services" defined in the work programme at the beginning of the year.

1.2. Report objectives

- 1.2.1. The general objective of this report is to provide an overview on how Member States have set up the Farm Advisory System in the first year of its compulsory implementation. This overview can also be used to have hints to understand if the Regulation has been fulfilled and if there are some aspects in the implementation of FAS that need a closer follow-up in the following months.

2. The questionnaire

2.1. Aims and contents

- 2.1.1. In order to monitor the implementation of FAS in Member States JRC, in agreement with DG AGRI D1, has prepared a questionnaire to be sent to Member States. The questionnaire was made and sent to Member States as a .ppt file in May 2007. It was a simple questionnaire without too much detailed questions that could be easily completed by Member States. In the .ppt file sent to Member States a sample answer was suggested as an example on how each question could be answered. The sample questionnaire sent to Member States is in Annex 1.
- 2.1.2. A first questionnaire on the implementation of FAS had been sent to Member States in September 2006 and its results were presented in the workshop on FAS held in Ispra on 2-4 October 2006. At that time most MSs were taking actions in order to set up their FAS before the deadline of 1st January 2007, but for many of them strategic decisions had not been taken yet. That was the reason why a second survey was launched in May 2007. This second survey is not only an update of the previous survey, but it contains questions in fields that were not investigated in 2006 such as the way of providing advice to

farmers, criteria for the selection of accredited bodies and advisors, the monitoring of the performance of FAS and main concerns faced by MSs in this first year implementation of FAS.

2.1.3. For some topics, such as the way of providing advice to farmers, a predefined list of answers was proposed. The purpose of providing this list was not only necessary for standardisation purpose, but only to suggest solutions that may have not been conceived by a Member State.

2.1.4. The topics that have been investigated by the survey are:

- Organisation of FAS
- FAS operating bodies
- Targeted farmers' population & communication
- Funding of FAS
- Way of providing advice to farmers
- Farm Advisory Tools
- Criteria for the selection of advisers
- Performance of FAS
- Concerns in the implementation of FAS.

2.2. Responses from Member States

2.2.1. The questionnaire was sent to all Member States. For Belgium the questionnaire was sent to Flanders and Wallonia, for the United Kingdom it was sent to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Therefore a total of 31 questionnaires were sent. 23 answers were received between June 2007 and September 2007. Among Member States that did not complete the questionnaire, Italy and Germany stated that the competence on FAS belongs to Regions and Portugal that decisions has not been taken yet. Denmark will be investigated with a technical visit; for Sweden the results are the ones provided with the first survey. Bulgaria, Malta and Slovakia have not provided any information (figure 1).

2.2.2. The author would like to thank the Administration of the EU Member States for their kind support and the answer they provided to the questionnaire.

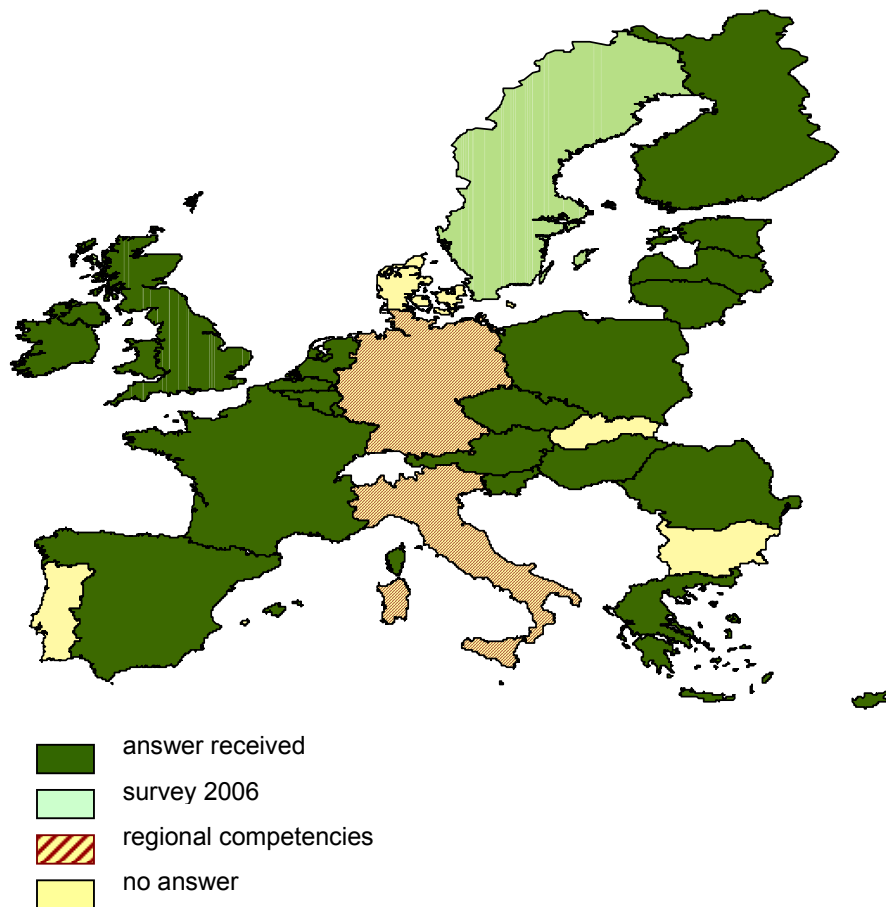


Fig. 1- Answers to the questionnaire from Member States

3. Implementation of FAS in Member States

3.1. Legislative framework

3.1.1. According to Council Regulation 1782/2003 (art. from 13 to 16) by 1 January 2007 Member States had to set up a system of advising farmers on land and farm management, the so-called Farm Advisory System Member (FAS). The FAS shall cover at least SMR and GAECs, but MSs may broaden his scope. Farmers may participate in the FAS on a voluntary basis and MSs shall give priority to the farmers who receive more than 15.000 euros of direct payments per year.

3.1.2. The use and the setting up of FAS can be funded within the framework of the rural development policy and as a result of this further rules for the implementation of FAS are defined in Council Reg. 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). FAS should not only cover SMRs and GAECs, but also occupational safety standards based on Community legislation (art. 24) if its use has to be financed. A threshold of 80% of the eligible cost for the use of the advisory service has been established, with a maximum of 1.500 euros.

3.1.3. The FAS is a core element of the CAP reform in 2003 and recently its importance has even increased as the Commission Regulation n. 1550/2007 of 20 December 2007 establishes that the participation of a farmer to the FAS could be seen as a lowering factor in the risk analysis for the selection of the holding for on-the-spot checks and therefore should be taken into account.

3.2. Organisation of FAS

3.2.1. According to the experience gained in the subject, three main functions were recognised in the organisation of FAS in MSs and investigated in the survey: coordination, accreditation of farm advisory bodies and control (see table 1).

3.2.2. Coordination: in almost all MS the Ministry of Agriculture is in charge of the coordination in the implementation of FAS. The only exceptions are Estonia and Luxembourg where the Chamber of Agriculture coordinates FAS.

3.2.3. Accreditation of farm advisory bodies: art. 13 of the Council Regulation 1782/2003 states that the FAS shall be operated by one or more designated authorities or private bodies. Most Member States have established a system for the accreditation of FAS operating bodies. The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the accreditation in most MSs, but in Greece the responsibility belongs to the Geotechnical Chamber while in Lithuania the Ministry of Agriculture shares responsibility with a Training Centre. In France accreditation is accomplished by regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture and in Spain is directly managed by Regions.

3.2.4. Control: the function of controlling the correct implementation of FAS and the activities of FAS operating bodies belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture in most MSs. The control is carried out by advisory centres in Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. In Estonia the economic Chamber in charge of coordination deals with the control as well. In Romania controls are carried out by the Paying Agency. In France control is performed by regional offices of the Ministry of Agricultural and in Spain is directly managed by Regions.

3.2.5. According to the answers given to questionnaire, table 1 shows different bodies involved in coordination, accreditation and control of FAS and their status.

	coordination		certification		control	
AT	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
BE_FL	MA Ag	<i>pb</i>	MA Ag	<i>pb</i>	MA Ag	<i>pb</i>
BE_WA	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
CY	MA	<i>pb</i>	-	-	MA	<i>pb</i>
CZ	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	Ad	<i>pb</i>
EE	CH Ag	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
ES	MA	<i>pb</i>	Reg Aut	<i>pb</i>	Reg Aut	<i>pb</i>
FI	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
FR	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA Reg	<i>pb</i>	MA Reg	<i>pb</i>
GR	MA	<i>pb</i>	CH ag	<i>pb/pr</i>	CH ag	<i>pb/pr</i>
HU	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA Ad reg	<i>pb pr</i>
IE	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
LT	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA Tr	<i>pb</i>	MA Tr	<i>pb</i>
LU	CH Ag	<i>pd</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
LV	MA	<i>pb</i>	it will be established	<i>pb</i>	it will be established	<i>pb</i>
PL	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	Ad	<i>pb</i>
RO	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	PA	<i>pb</i>
SE	MA	<i>pb</i>				
SI	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>
UK_EN	MA	<i>pb</i>	-	-	MA	<i>pb</i>
UK_NI	MA	<i>pb</i>	-	-	MA	<i>pb</i>
UK_SC	MA	<i>pb</i>	-	-	MA	<i>pb</i>
UK_WA	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>	MA	<i>pb</i>

LEGEND:

MA- Ministry of Agriculture, MA Ag- Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, MA Reg- Ministry of Agriculture at regional level, CH Ag- Chamber of Agriculture, CH ge- Chamber (in general), Tr- Training Centre, Ad- Advisory Centre, Ad reg- Advisory Centre at regional level, PA- Paying agency, Reg Aut- Regional Authorities

pb- public

pr- private

Table 1- Bodies involved in coordination, accreditation and control of FAS and their status.

3.3. FAS operating bodies

3.3.1. In many Member States the process of accreditation has not been completed yet and the picture raised in the survey represents a situation not completely definitive.

3.3.2. The situation varies from country to country depending on pre-existing advisory services, advisory tradition and administrative systems (figure 2). The most frequent condition is that the advice is delivered both by a designed public authority (like the Ministry of Agriculture or one of its agencies or a state advisory centre) and by private advisory bodies as it happens in the Netherlands, Wallonia, Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland and in the United Kingdom.

3.3.3. In general terms different bodies have been designated or selected to deliver advice in the different Member States: public authorities (Ministry of Agriculture or agencies and services of the Ministry), Chambers of agriculture, advisory centres, research and training centres and even the Paying Agency, as it occurs in Romania. Besides this, advice can be delivered by private delivers and individual advisors. In Czech Republic 341 individual advisers are part of the FAS; in Finland around 50 individual advisers have been accredited.

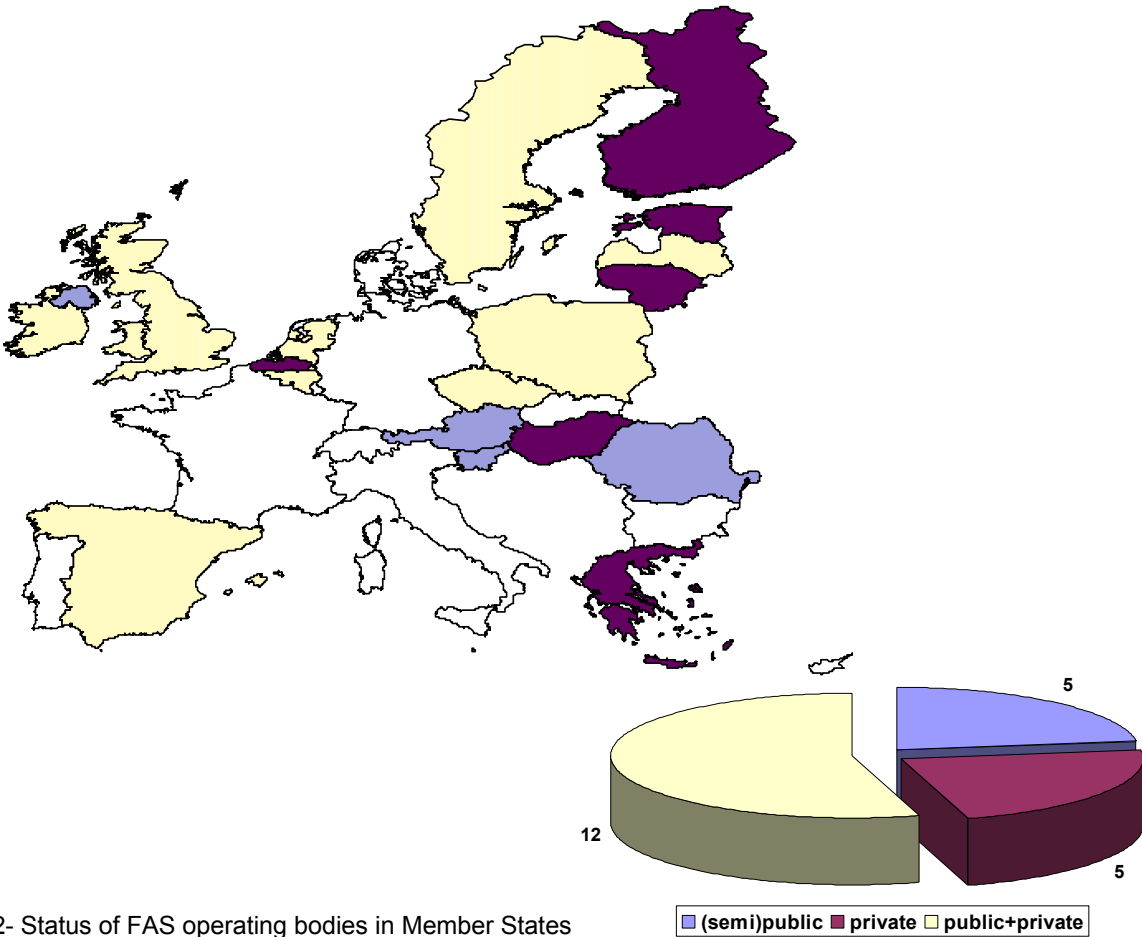


Fig. 2- Status of FAS operating bodies in Member States

	Public (semi)	Private	
AT	(X)		Chambers of Agriculture (national & regional)
BE-FL		X	Likely 10 private advisory services
BE-WA	X	X	8 private + MoA, all at Wallonia level
CY	X		Ministry services
CZ	X	X (341)	UZPI + Private accredited advisers
EE		X(15)	Local farmers' producer unions, private companies
ES	X	X	Bodies at regional level
EL		X	private and cooperatives, 969 private bodies
FI		X	Pro Agria (19), (50) private accredited advisers
FR			Not completed yet
HU		X	96 private preselected bodies (educational institution, chambers, advisory enterprises, research institutions); Agr. Chamber (free of charge information for farmers); advisory organisation (free of charge information to farmers)
IE	X	X	TEAGASC- National Agriculture Advice, Education and Research Agency + Private Planning agencies
LT	X	X	Advisory service (private with 30% public control) + Chambers of Agriculture (private) + college (public)
LU			in preparation
LV	X	X	Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (99% public)
NL	X (2)	X(10-20)	MoA + Agency of MoA + 20/30 private advisory services
PL	X(1)	X	CDR + Agriculture Advisory Units, Agricultural Chambers and Agriculture Consulting Firms (public/private) at regional level
RO	X (2)		Paying agency, Agricultural Advisory Centre
SE	X(21)	X	County Administrative Boards
SI	X		CAFS (Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia)
UK-E	X(1)	X	Internal (i.e. DEFRA) and external (i.e. ADAS, farm Business Advice, Momenta)
UK-NI	X(1)		DARD operating through its college
UK-S	X	X	Scottish executive (public) + Scottish Agricultural College (private)
UK-W	X	X	Welsh National Assembly, external deliverers (private)

Table 2- FAS operating bodies in Member States

- 3.3.4. In Cyprus, Slovenia, Romania and Northern Ireland all advisory bodies are public; in Austria advice is provided by the Chamber of Agriculture, a semi-public body. France, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Latvia and Wallonia stated that the process of accreditation is not finalised yet.
- 3.3.5. A detailed picture of FAS operating advisory bodies in Member States is reported in table 2.
- 3.3.6. The coexistence of public and private advisory bodies has raised debate in some Member States. One of the main issues is the fact that farmers do not consider cross-compliance advice as much strategic as technical and economic advice for their holding and therefore they are not willing to pay for it. The existence of free public advice on CC can penalise private advisors with the risk that two types of advisors will develop: public advisors for cross compliance and private advisors for helping the farmer in matters with an economic and technical impact on the farm.

3.4. Target farmers population

- 3.4.1. The participation of farmers in the FAS is on voluntary basis, however, in setting up their FAS, Member States shall give priority to the farmers who receive more than 15.000 Euros of direct payments per year (art. 14 of Council Regulation EC 1782/2003 of 29 September 2003). The same rules should apply if FAS use is funded within Rural Development policy (art. 24 of Council Regulation EC 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005).
- 3.4.2. According to what is stated in the Regulation, most Member States have defined priority for farmers receiving more than 15.000 euros of direct payments (table 3). Anyway some Member States (BE-FL, BE-WA, CY, FR, PL, UK-SC) have not establish any priority for the delivery of advice, preferring the so-called “all served” or “first come, first served” approaches. RO and UK-WA put the threshold down to 10.000 Euros. Instead of the priority to farmers receiving more than 15.000 Euros of direct payments, AT defined different priorities and UK-EN defines priorities every year.
- 3.4.3. Member States often established other priorities together with the priority referring to 15.000 Euros of aids. These priorities are for holdings in environmentally sensitive areas (AT, EE, ES, EL, SI), young farmers (EE, ES, LT), women farmers (ES) or new entrants into the business (UK-WA), holdings with high stocking density (AT, SI), farmers receiving support for agri-environmental schemes (EE, ES) or Natura 2000 areas (EE), large holdings (RO, SI), holdings implementing quality production systems (ES).

	No priority	>15 000 €/year	Other Priorities
AT			Environmentally sensitive areas, high stocking density
BE-FL	X		
BE-WA	X		
CY	X		
CZ		X	
EE		X	+ young farmers, agri-environmental and Natura 2000 support, Environmentally sensitive areas
ES		X	+ young and women farmers, environmentally sensitive areas, agri-env. measures, quality production systems, priority holdings with special requirement of income
EL		X	Environmentally sensitive areas, multi-farming holdings
FI		X	
FR	X		
HU		X	beneficiaries of semi-subsistence holdings (2nd priority)
IE		X	
LT		X	+ young farmers declaring biggest plots
LU		X	
LV		X	
NL		X	
PL	X		
RO			> 10.000 Euros/y, Holdings > 50 ha
SE		X	
SI		X	Environ. sensitive areas, stocking density, larger farms
UK-E			Defined every year
UK-NI		X	
UK-SC	X		Priorities may be considered in future years
UK-WA			> 10.000 Euros/y, New entrants

Table 3- Priorities for the access to farm advisory services in Member States

3.5. Way of providing advice to farmers

3.5.1. Before the setting up of FAS one of the most common discussions was to define what could be considered as an advice delivery and not simply a release of information. Some clarification about this concept comes from the results of the CIFAS study (Environmental Cross-compliance Indicators in the context of the Farm Advisory Systems), a two-year (2005-2006) study that was carried out by the European Environment Agency (EEA) under the guidance of a steering group composed of DG

Agriculture (DG AGRI), DG Environment (DG ENV) and the Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) of the European Commission.

- 3.5.2. In order to evaluate the complexity, the approach and the farm advisory tools needed to help a farmer to fulfil a SMR-GAEC, the CIFAS study classified SMR-GAECs in three different types: the so-called “stand alone/type 1” SMR-GAEC (requirements and standard are self explanatory and a leaflet can be enough to inform farmers on what they are supposed to do), “non stand alone/type 2 SMR-GAEC” (additional information are necessary for farmers, i.e. to know how a protected bird looks like or if parcels are situated in a nitrates vulnerable area) and type 3 SMR/GAEC based on calculations (like requirements referring to nitrates where a nitrates balance model can be requested at farm level). This classification can be bore in mind when considering the approach to follow for an effective advice as this depends on the SMRs and GAECs for which the advice is delivered.
- 3.5.3. In the questionnaire the following approaches were identified:
- One-to-one on farm
 - One-to-one off farm (i.e. phone helpline, helpdesk for individual questions via website, consultation/“sitting days” of advisors in each region)
 - Small group advice on farm
 - Vocational training
 - Workshops/meetings off farm
 - Self-check from manuals
 - Internet based (3 types: general info, interactive tailored to specific farm types, tailored to specific individual questions from the farmer)
 - Publications based (paper copies)
 - Others
- 3.5.4. Based on experience of different MSs, the list had not only a standardisation purpose, but also the aim to suggest approaches that a Member States may not have taken into consideration yet.
- 3.5.5. Table n. 4 illustrates some of the approaches chosen by the Member States and the number of holdings which are supposed to be fulfilled each year with the approach considered. The results show that all Member States have provided paper information to farmers. This includes leaflets and information sheets generally printed in a number of copies sufficient to cover all farmers receiving direct payments. Anyway the effectiveness of the information provided to farmers is difficult to assess. Some leaflets seem to be so full of information that this can negatively affect the interest of farmers; some others, on the basis of an initial test, give the possibility to select only the parts that applied to a type of holdings reducing the amount of information to read. Anyway no much is known about the way this information was delivered to farmers (by post, deliverance when farmers provide the aid application etc.) and if it the texts have been somehow directly explained to them when delivered with a one-to-one contact (this kind of information can be obtained by specific technical visits to Member States).

MS (holdings subsidied)	CZ 21.000	EE 18.000	FI 68.000	HU 200.000	LT 210.000	PL 1.480.000	SI 80.000	UK-EN 110.000	UK-NI 40.000	UK-SC 21.000	UK-WA 18.000
One-to-one on farm	1.500	500	3.000	12.000	2.000	70.000	7.400	10.000		11.400 (off farm incl.)	300
Heldesk for ind. quest. via website	4.000	2.000		5.000	5.000	10.000		500		5.000 (phone)	X
One-to-one off farm (general)		500		7.000			10.000				
Small group advice on farm	2.000	1.000			4.000	10.000		10.000	300	2.000	1.152 (off farm included)
Vocational training				10.000	5.000						
Workshop/meeting off farm	8.000	5.000				25.000	1.000		4.500	1.000	1.152 (on farm included)
Self-check from manuals			70.000		2.000						
Internet based (general info)			15.000						X		
Int.based (tailored to farm types)	60.000	50.000			20.000			110.000			18.000
Int.based (individual quest.)						50.000					
Publication based	300.000	20.000	70.000	200.000	250.000	500.000	65.000	110.000	40.000	10.000	18.000

Table 4- Way of providing advice and number of holdings planned to be reached yearly

3.5.6. A common way of providing advice to farmers is the so called face-to-face approach, which can be characterised by a one-to-one or group delivery. One-to-one advice is quite common in almost all Member States even if not always a big number of farms seems to be concerned.

3.5.7. Interned-based approach is widespread despite the fact that in not all Member States IT facilities are common tools on farms. In some cases an internet based approach only includes information provided via web-site with the option to download leaflets or information sheets (this is considered as “general info” in the questionnaire). Anyway in most case the interned based approach is tailored to specific kind of holdings like it happens in CZ, EE, LT, SI and UK-WA.

3.5.8. According to the results of the questionnaire many Member States established a helpdesk that allows the farmer to ask individual questions via website.

3.5.9. Workshops and meetings are quite widespread approaches.

3.6. One-to-one advice

3.6.1. Providing one-to-one advice delivery seems to be considered by Member States as the most common and useful way to provide advice. All Member States completing the part of questionnaire on the way of providing advice to farmers, except Northern Ireland, stated that they use a one-to-one approach. The advice delivered covers all SMRs and GAECs and, if it is funded within the framework of Rural Development programmes, also occupational safety standards.

3.6.2. One to one advice is free for farmers in CY, RO, SI, UK-EN, UK-SC as well as in AT where it is just a basic advice. On the contrary is completed paid by farmers in FR and IE. More often the use of advice services by farmers is funded by the appropriate rural development measure. For that reason in many Member State the setting up of FAS is strictly related (both in contents and time) to the implementation of the Rural Development programme 2007-2013.

3.6.3. If we analyse the data provided by Member States on the number of holdings that are expected to use one-to-one advice each year we can see that rarely this number goes beyond 5% of the farmers receiving direct payments (chart n. 1).

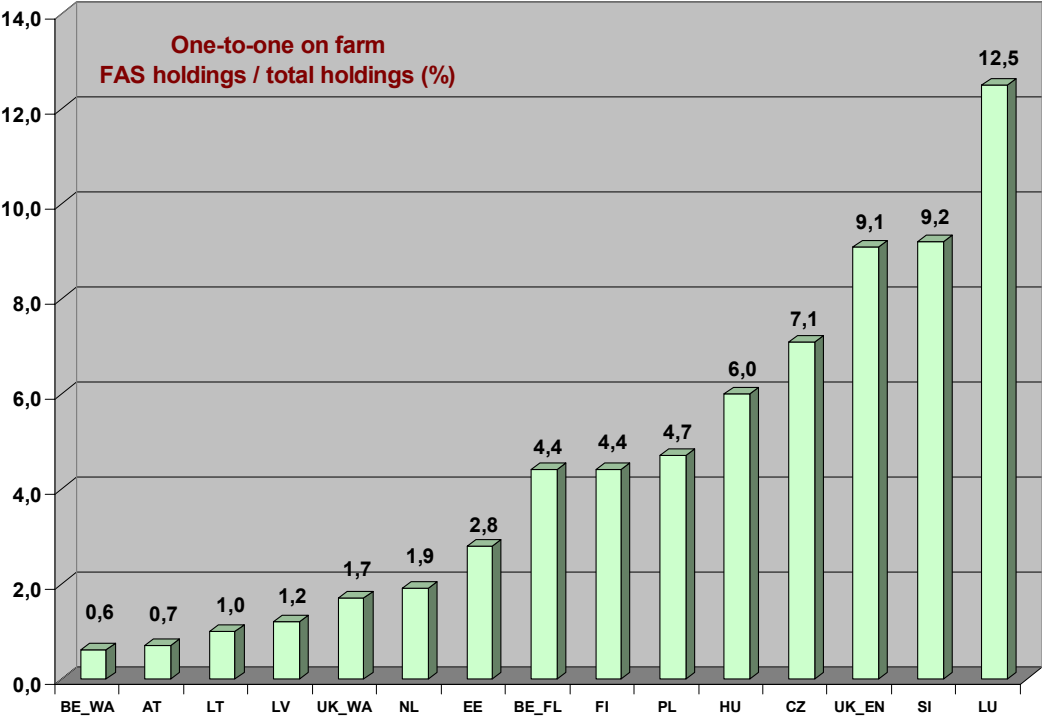


Chart. 1 – Percentage of holdings planned to be involved in one-to-one advice yearly

3.7. Advisers

3.7.1. In the 16 Member States that have provided information on the number of advisors included in the FAS (see chart n.2) there are 8.019 advisors. If we compare the number of advisors with the number of holdings receiving direct payments we can have an idea of the relationship between advisors and farmers in quantitative terms. CZ is the Member States with the highest number of advisors per farm (15,4 advisors per 1.000 holdings) and if this data is compared with the above excepted percentage of holdings receiving one-to-one advice (7,1%), it testifies a significant offer of advisory services compared to the number of farms. Anyway this figure seems to represent an exception to the common situation in the European Union where the average in the analysed Member States is 1,6 advisors per 1.000 farms receiving direct payments.

3.7.2. For some Member States information on the type of advisors that are part of the FAS has been collected. One of the choices that have been made in setting up the FAS is the qualification that advisors should have in terms of specialisation (which means to decide if it is better to have a specialist or a generalist advisor). The choice obviously depends on many factors among which agriculture characteristic and the historical approach of advisory service systems in the country. In general terms it is possible to assert that cross compliance topics are different and complex and sometimes it is not easy for an individual advisor to cover all issues; anyway advice provided by different people is sometimes not very much accepted by farmers as they perceive recurring visits of different people on farm as a waste of time. Besides that specialist advisors can occasionally have a too specialist approach not easily understandable by farmers.

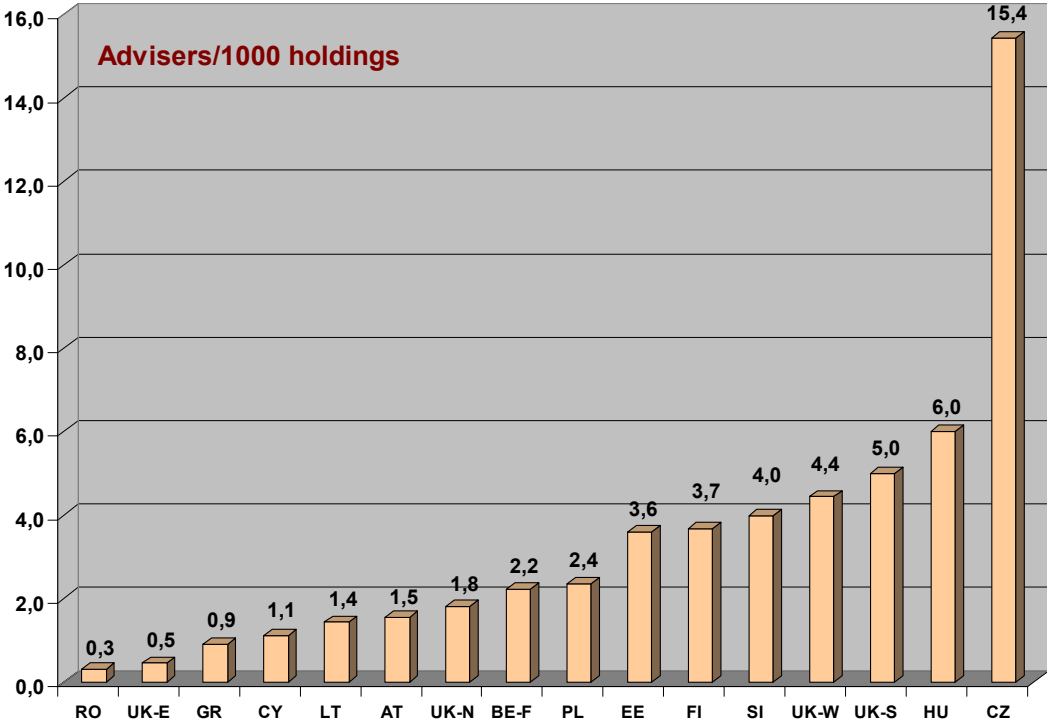


Chart 2- Percentage of advisers per 1.000 holdings

3.7.3. Eight Member States have provided figures about specialist and generalist advisors. According to the total figures of seven member States (see charts 3 and 4) specialist advisors seem to be preferred by these Member States on the whole. Anyway if we add the figures provided by Poland the situation changes (chart 5): Poland has in fact 3.500 advisors 3.050 of which are generalist advisors.

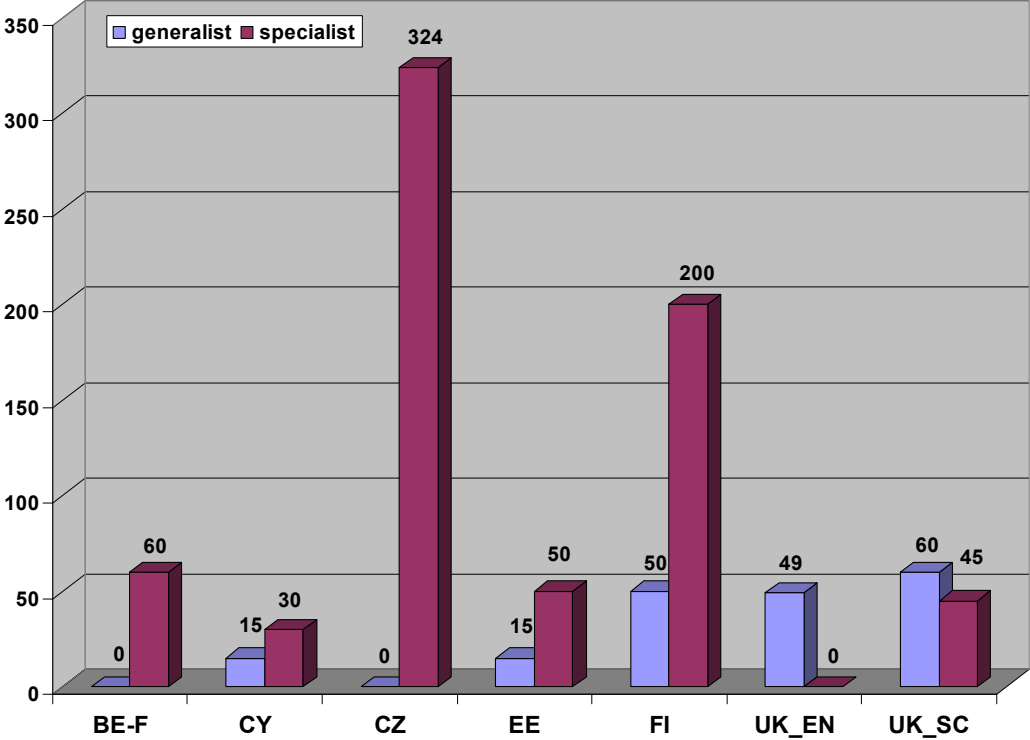


Chart 3- Generalist and specialist advisors in Member States

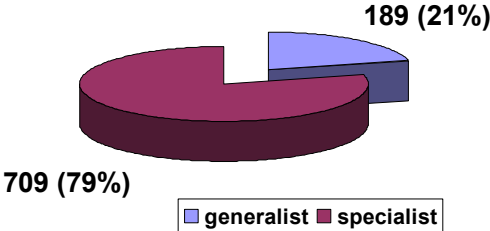


Chart 4- Total of generalist and specialist advisors in selected Member States

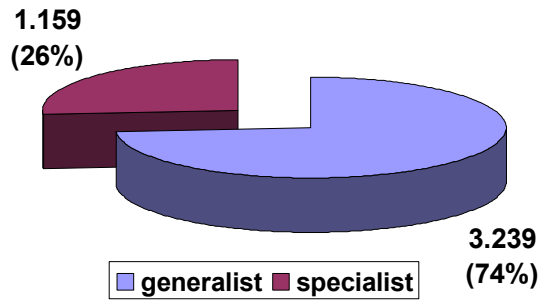


Chart 5- Total of generalist and specialist advisors in selected Member States (Poland included)

3.7.4. As shown in chart 6 the biggest number of specialist advisors is found in the environmental and plant health field (68%). Advisors specialist in animal represent 20% of the total of specialist advisors. The fact that 7% of specialist advisors are experts in economics or in fields not strictly related to cross compliance explains the attitude of some Member States to extend the field of activity of their FAS. It seems also that only a small number of advisors who are experts in public health and occupational safety standards are part of FAS in these Member States.

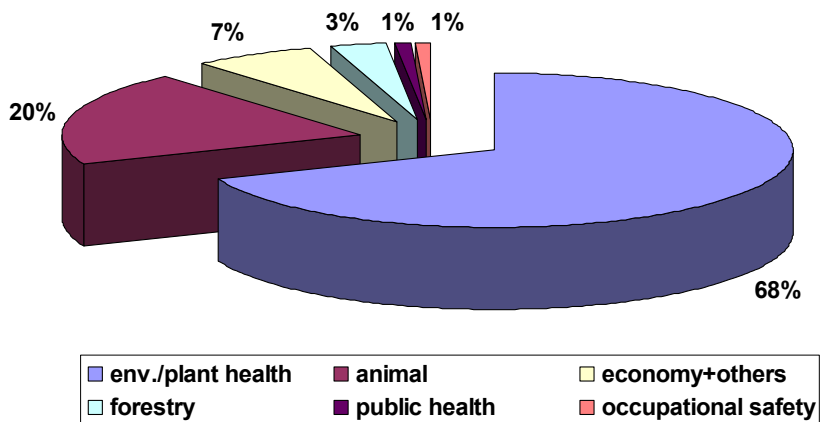


Chart 6- Specialist advisors per field of activity

3.8. Financial support

3.8.1. The FAS can be funded by Member States. Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 establishes that Member States may support:

- the use of advisory services by farmers and by forest holders;
- the setting up of farm advisory services.

3.8.2. Support may be granted to farmers only if the service covers SMRs, GAECs and occupational safety standards based on Community legislation as a minimum (art. 24 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005). Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1974/2006 (art.15) outlines that the advisory service for which support may be granted shall be in accordance with the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) 1782/2003 establishing FAS.

3.8.3. According to answers received, almost all Member States (21 out of 23) fund or intend to fund farmers for the use of FAS. Only in France and Ireland this service will be entirely paid by farmers. 7 Member States will use only national funds (AT, BE-W, FI, SI, UK-EN, UK-SC, UK-NI), but most Member States (12) will implement a measure for funding the use of FAS in their rural development programmes. In most cases the implementation of FAS is consequently linked to the rural development policy and the effective use of FAS by farmers will start when the procedures for financing are completed and funds are available for farmers. The approval of rural development programmes is currently taking place.

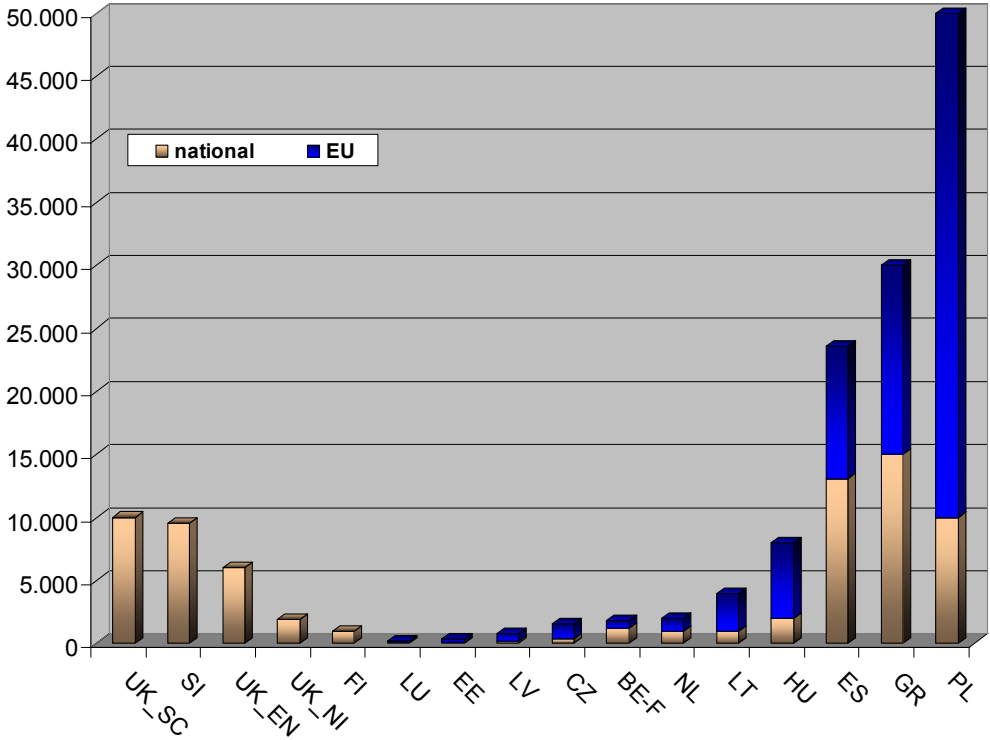


Chart 7- Financial support for the use of FAS (1.000 euros/year)

3.8.4. Chart 7 shows the support Member States intend to devote yearly to the use of farm advisory services by farmers. Poland is the Member States that will offer the biggest amount of money (the equivalent of 50 million euros yearly) to support the use of FAS, taking it mainly from its rural development budget. A

significant amount is also granted by Greece and Spain but with a major national contribution. The percentage of public support and the duration of funding are defined within the terms of the rural development support, but details can be known only after the process of the approval of the rural development programmes is finalised.

3.8.5. On the contrary, funding the setting up of FAS is less popular among Member States than financing its use. Only 12 out of 23 Member States fund or intend to fund the setting up of FAS and 4 of them will use only national funds (AT, BE-W, LU, NL). When the setting up is supported, the amount of money dedicated to it is less relevant if compared to the support given for the use of FAS. As it is shown in chart 8 a relevant amount of money is granted only in Spain as well as in Latvia and Estonia, if we take into account the dimension of agriculture in these two countries. Anyway for Latvia it must be considered that for FAS setting up the equivalent of 5.000.000 euros have been given only to an organisation.

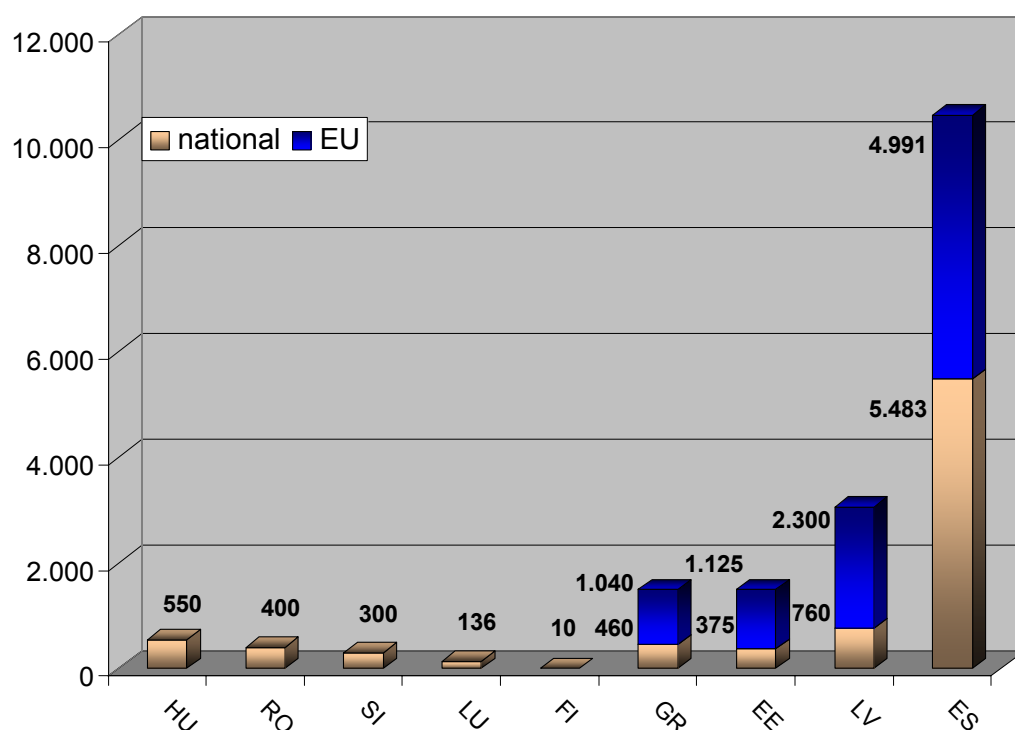


Chart 8- Financial support for the setting up of FAS (1.000 euros/year)

3.9. Selection criteria for advisors

3.9.1. Education and experience requested to advisors in order to be part of FAS varies from one Member State to another. In general terms a 2-3 year university degree and some experience in advising (from 1 to 5 years depending on the Member State) are requested; when a lower educational level is acceptable this should be generally combined with a longer experience in advising.

3.9.2. Most Member States requires the attendance of a specific training course, generally provided by public services and ended with a final exam (table 5). Specific course are compulsory in 13 out of 22 Member States. In UK-NI a one-day course is requested prior to specific tasks as advice on nitrate directives. In

FR and NL the responsibility to decide if a specific course should be attended in order to be accredited belongs to the advisory body. In Spain courses are established by Regional authorities. In EE and LU decisions have not been taken yet. Only in Belgium and Scotland the attendance of a specific course is not requested.

Member State	Training course to be attended by advisors (duration and compulsory exam, if applicable)
AT	yes
BE_FL	no
BE_WA	probably not
CY	12 hrs
CZ	40 hrs + final exam
EE	not yet
ES	yes, established by Regions
FI	20 hrs + final exam
FR	it depends on FAS operating body
GR	20 hrs
HU	8 hrs + final exam
IE	1 day
LT	40 hrs + final exam
LU	not determined yet
NL	no prescription, but it is under the responsibility of the Advisory body
PL	36 hrs + final exam
RO	40 hrs + final exam
SI	3 days + final exam
UK_EN	yes
UK_NI	1 day course prior to certain tasks (e.g. nitrates)
UK_SC	no
UK_WA	yes

Table 5- Compulsory courses for advisors in Member States with indication of duration and exam, if applicable

3.10. FAS concerns

3.10.1. A part of the questionnaire gave Member States the opportunity to indicate which topics have given rise to main difficulties during the very first year of FAS implementation. As the farm advisory system has not been fully put into practice in many Member States feedbacks from farmers are still scarce.

3.10.2. Anyway the main difficulties reported by Member States are:

- Lack of advisers (pointed out by 9 out of 19 Member States): this can be due to the difficulty in recruiting suitably-qualified advisers, to lack of expertise in cross compliance in the advisory services or to money constraints that limit the recruitment of advisers.

- Difficulty in reaching some type of farms (pointed out by 9 out of 19 Member States): smaller holdings seem to be hardly reached by the advisory services for cross compliance for several reasons such as the scarce farmer's awareness of cross compliance, the little amount of the sanction which is linked to direct payments that are not generally important for small holdings, the high incidence of the costs for a small holding to be compliant. England underlined difficulties in reaching holdings in poultry and horticulture sectors.
- Lack of money (pointed out by 4 out of 19 Member States): this generally refers to the high cost associated with one-to-one advice.
- Farmers' awareness (pointed out by 3 out of 19 Member States): even if information was widely diffused to farmers, it seems that there is still an insufficient awareness of the rationale and importance of cross compliance among some farmers.
- Some Member States signalled other concerns like the coordination among different advisory bodies and poor IT infrastructure on farm.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Current main issues

- 4.1.1. Member States had to set up a Farm Advisory System for cross compliance starting from 1st January 2007. As only few of them managed to start the advisory service before that date, 2007 still represents a sort of experimental year used by Member States to "tune" their systems. Furthermore in many Member States the effective use of the Farm Advisory System by the farmers depends on the support granted to farmers in the framework of the rural development policy and consequently details of how the system works (accreditation procedures, services provided etc.) have been defined during the process of creation of the rural development programmes whose negotiations with the European Commission has not been completed for all Member States yet. For the above reasons it is currently not possible to outline a precise picture of how FAS is organised in Member States. It will be necessary to update the survey in the near future in order to complete the lacking parts for Member States where some decisions have not already been taken.
- 4.1.2. Anyway according to the responses obtained with the questionnaire as well as the discussions taken place during the JRC workshop and bilateral meetings some strategic points in the implementation of FAS can already be raised.
- 4.1.3. The Farm Advisory System is considered to play a more and more important role for the success of the new elements of the Common Agriculture Policy introduced by the 2003 reform. In particular a strategic role of the advisory system should be to increase farmers' awareness in cross compliance which still seems to be perceived by some categories of farmers just as additional burden and costs for farming, a cost that in some farmers' opinions should be somehow compensated by an increase of the financial support. In this respect a proactive role of advisory services towards the most sceptical and less informed groups of farmers can be advisable. Different approaches can be used in delivery advice, but the major role must be assured by one-to-one advice that, even if it is not the cheapest one, seems to be the most effective way to advice farmers. Group advice can be used to facilitate exchange of experience and knowledge between participants.

- 4.1.4. As 2007 has been the first year of compulsory implementation of FAS, in most Member States the structure of the system has not been finalised yet and/or adjustments are foreseen according to the results of the implementation in the first year. Accreditation of advisory bodies is not completed and it is not possible to give a definitive picture of the choices made by every single Member State. Some important issues have been debated during the setting-up period, such as the crucial matter of giving a preference to generalist or specialist advisors. Cross compliance requirements are sometimes very specific (such as for animal health and animal welfare) and covering fields that are different from one to another so that specialist advisers can be recommended. At the same time, it was often reported that farmers may consider more than one farm visit by the advisor as a waste of time as well as that generalist advisors may have a more comprehensible way of communicating to farmers.
- 4.1.5. Another most debating issue relates to the option of accrediting not only advisory bodies but also individual advisers. According to rural development policy, the use of FAS can be funded only if it covers at least all cross compliance requirements as well as occupational safety standards. In case of advice provided by a single specialist advisor it is fundamental for the farmer to ask for advice from different advisors in order to cover the entire cross compliance requirements and occupation safety standards affecting his/her farm.
- 4.1.6. As it is mentioned in this report, in most Member States FAS is composed of one or more designated public authorities and many private bodies. The coexistence of public and private advisory bodies can sometimes generate market concurrence distortions if the public advice is free. As it seems that farmers are more willing to pay an economic advice than an advice aimed at improving the environmental performance of their holdings, it may happen that in the future public advice will become specialised in cross compliance matters while private services will be generally dedicated to the improvement of farm efficiency in economic terms.
- 4.1.7. For the same reason as above, the effective use of FAS may depend on the financial resources that Member States make available for FAS funding. National and community funds can be used to support FAS. As most Member States will use Rural Development budget to fund FAS, the decision on the amount of the financial support has been taken when the rural development programme was made. At the same time, there a strict relationship between FAS and Rural Development policy and FAS is often designed in a way that its use can be funded within the Rural Development programme. This means also that in most Member States the effective start of FAS will be when rural development funds are available.
- 4.1.8. One of the critical point in the use of FAS is the disclosure of individual data on cross compliance. Council Regulation 1782/2003 (art. 15) clearly states that Member States shall ensure that private bodies and designated authorities do not disclose personal or individual information and data obtain in their advisory activity to persons other than the farmer managing the holdings concerned. Anyway sometimes it was reported a scarce confidence of farmers on the fact that their participation in advisory services shall not be used by control authorities as a sign of non-compliance and therefore taken into account in risk analysis to define the on-the-spot check sample. This issue can be even more sensitive if advisory use is funded within rural development programmes because the evidence that the advice has been delivered shall be demonstrated to the control authority. It was reported that the participation

of farmers in funding schemes of rural development plans in the programming period 2000-2007 has been affected by this lack of confidence.

- 4.1.9. Currently in almost all Member States there is a lack of assessment procedures to check the quality and effectiveness of FAS. This can be justified by the fact that FAS has just started but it would be recommended that assessment tools and procedures should be defined and improved in the near future.
- 4.1.10. There are still various points that should be clarified in the implementation of FAS, especially related to the interpretation of the legislation of the second pillar. Some of the most frequent questions asked by Member States refer to the possibility to fund multi-year advice delivery once that cross compliance issues have been addressed, the choice to give priority to farmers other than the ones receiving more than 15.000 euros of direct payments or the funding of group advice.
- 4.1.11. Legislation adjustments referring to FAS give now the possibility to Member State of taking into account the participation in FAS as a lowering factor in the inclusion of the holding in the on-the-spot control sample (Commission Regulation n. 1550/2007). In the future it will be interesting to observe how this opportunity will be considered in the risk analysis made by Member States.

4.2. Follow-up

- 4.2.1. Following the results of the survey presented and having in mind that in 2010 a report on FAS should be presented by the Commission, some activities on FAS could be foreseen for the near future.
 - Collecting further information on the setting up of FAS: as FAS is not completely set up in all Member States, on the basis of the survey carried out this year, it would be necessary to collect currently lacking information on the setting up of FAS for the Member States that have completed it already. An update of the questionnaire can be foreseen as in most Member States the FAS will be effectively implement when the rural development programmes are financed and details of the implementation still have to be defined.
 - Evaluation of effectiveness: one of the points that were raised in this year survey is the lack of procedures established in order to assess the quality and effectiveness of FAS. It will be interesting to monitor if Member State will define some procedures in the future and to stimulate this approach.
 - Technical visits in Member States: further and more detailed information could be collected in technical visits in Member States. Technical visits are often a good opportunity to discuss problems and also to see how the FAS really works. 3-4 visits in Member State can be foreseen in 2008.
 - Clarification of legislation: this year some problems of interpreting the legislation were raised especially related to the rural development issues (i.e. funding the use of farm advisory service by farmers). Collecting these questions, analysing them and finding a common answer with the appropriate DG AGRI services is another activity that should be carried out.

Annex- Questionnaire sent to Member States



FAS 2007 – *MS* (to edit, go to view /master)



This questionnaire concerns only the official *Farm Advisory System (FAS)*- Art. 13-16 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003

Organisation of FAS			
Existence of Member State legal provision for the implementation of FAS	yes	National law 02/03/2006 N°142 (www.FAS.gov.xx)	+ 2 regional acts (Bavaria, Saxony)
Date of setting up	31/07/2006		
FAS coordinating authority (responsible) and its status	MARD (Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Devel.)	public	Existence of regional coordination authorities
Official person in charge of FAS within the coordinating authority	Name Surname	FAS unit	Tel. +33145678765 E_mail: name.surname@mard.uk
Authority that certifies FAS operating bodies and its status	- Ecocert S.A.	- At national & regional levels	- Public
Authority that controls FAS operating bodies and its status	-Hawkeye S.A. -Bigears S.A.	-At national level -At regional level	-Public -Private

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007



FAS 2007 – *MS* (to edit, go to view /master)



FAS operating bodies			
What kind of accredited operating bodies are part of the FAS?	Both designated authorities and private bodies	1 designated authorities	4 private bodies
Is there a procedure for the accreditation of FAS operating bodies?	Yes	Both at national and regional level	Concerns both private & public operating bodies
Are there any minimum selection criteria for bodies accredited for the FAS as regards staff qualification, administrative and technical facilities, advisory experience and reliability?		Yes	Staff qualification and advisory experience: a university degree and at least 3 years experience
Are any other selection criteria for bodies accredited for the FAS?		No	
Is there a training system for FAS operating bodies?	yes	Provided by MARD	3 days courses, websites, power point, monthly newsletter *
Give a short description of the training system in relation to courses for the updating of the advisors' knowledge: frequency, who is responsible, is there a help desk/contact point for advisors at Ministry level etc.	Courses for the updating of the advisors knowledge in legislation are compulsory every 2 years; a help-desk is provided by MARD to whom advisors can call for information on how to solve problems in the implementation of the nitrate directive		

* Do read comment or go to last slide to see a list of proposed FAT

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

FAS operating bodies			
Denominations	Field of activity	Status	Level
1. DEFRA	All SMR and GAECs, and Farm Economy, Trade performance, etc.	Designated authority	National
2. Vets Associated	Animal welfare	Private	National
3. Ecoadvisory s.a.	Environmental SMR and GAECs	Private	Regional: Lombardy
4. E.N.V. 2007	Environment and biodiversity	Private	Regional: Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna
5. GeoTrack	Plant and Animal Traceability	Private	Regional: Sicily

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

Targeted farmers' population & communication			
Is "holdings receiving more than 15.000 €/year of direct aids" your priority group?	no	-holdings receiving more than 10.000 €/year	
Are there any groups targeted with priority as potential beneficiaries?	yes	-holdings in environmentally sensitive areas -holdings with high stocking densities	
Total number of expected holdings yearly	10.000		
Total number of requests received (and requests covered) in 2006	5.532 received	3.300 covered	Budget not sufficient to cover all the requests received
Total number of requests received (and requests covered) in the period Jan-May 2007	4.300 received	1.200 covered	2000 requests will be fulfilled 1.100 will not be covered due to lack of budget
During 2007-2010 do you plan to enlarge the yearly number of advised holdings?	Yes	12.000	
Did you make an information campaign about FAS implementation?	1 campaign in 2006 2 campaign in 2007	To all farmers	-Agricultural magazines -Web sites *
Estimated percentage of holdings reached yearly by the information campaign (paper and electronic based)	reached by paper information 50% farmers	reached by electronic based information 20% farmers	

* Do read comment or go to last slide to see a list of proposed FAT

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

FAS Funding				
Yearly budget dedicated to fund the use of FAS by farmers	Total: 1.000.000€	Of which national funding: 750.000€	Of which community funding: 250.000€	Private funding (as Cooperatives or private sources, etc): None
Rural Development measure for the use of FAS:	Maximum support amount (≤1500€/year): 1.300€	Percentage of the public support per advisory service (≤80% of eligible costs): 40% in general 80% in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones	Duration of funding for each farmer: 3 years	
Yearly budget dedicated to fund the setting up of FAS	Total: 500.000€	Of which national funding: 300.000€	Of which community funding: 200.000€	Private funding (as Cooperatives or private sources, etc): None
Rural Development measure for the setting up of FAS:	Maximum support amount: 15.000€	Percentage of support for the eligible costs: 20%	Duration of funding (≤5years): 3 years	

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

Way of providing advice to farmers *				
Approach	Fields covered	Provided by	Holdings expected yearly	Cost for farmers
One-to-one at the farm	All SMRs and GAECs	Agriculture chamber (public)	1.000	Co-funded with Rural development programme
Helpdesk for individual questions via website	Environmental SMRs	Agriculture chamber (public)	5.000	Free of charge
Small group advice at the farm	Nitrate directive	Individual advisers (private)	2.000	Co-funded with Rural development programme
Workshops outside the farm	Animal Health	Vets Associated (private)	5.000	Totally paid by farmers
Publication based (paper copies)	All SMRs and GAECs	Agriculture chamber (public)	500.000	Free of charge
Internet based- interactive tailored to specific farm types	All SMRs and GAECs	Agriculture chamber (public)	150.000	Free of charge

* Do read comment or go to last slide to see a list of proposed ways of providing advice to farmers

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

Farm Advisory Tools (FAT) *				
FAT	Fields covered	Managed by	Targeted holdings	Reached holdings
Web site	All SMR and GAECs	Agriculture chamber (public)	All holdings	10% of the total number of holdings
Technical magazines	Soil, agriculture machinery	Ecoadvisory s.a. (private)	Subscribers	5.000 subscribers
Standardised power point presentation	Environmental SMRs	DEFRA (public)	Meetings	1.000 holdings
Farm practices recording software	Animal health	Vets Associated (private)	Working Groups	5.000 holdings
Farm diagnosis software	Nitrate directive	Freelance certified adviser	Face to face	1.200 holdings
Other: brief description	Environmental SMRs	Regional Agriculture chambers (public)	Holdings in Natura 2000 areas	50% of the total number of holdings in Natura 2000 areas

* Do read comment or go to last slide to see a list of proposed FAT

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

Selection criteria for advisers			
Type of advisers	Generalist Specialist	•Environment and plant health •Animal health and welfare	
Minimum level of education requested	3 year university degree	Agronomy Veterinary	
Minimum level of experience requested (in general and in cross compliance issues)	2 years of general advising experience	1 year of experience in environment issues or in animal health issues	
How the reliability is checked or proved?	Curriculum vitae based		
Attendance of a specific course organised within the framework of the FAS	Yes, provided by the Agricultural Chamber	20 hours	Final exam
Which technical and administrative facilities are requested for the advisory service?	Computerised registration system of advices provided		
Estimated number of advisers in the FAS	250	•150 generalist •60 environment and plant health •40 animal health and welfare	

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007



Performance and evidence of FAS implementation		
Are quantity data collected on FAS performance?	yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Number of advices given / year • Number of farmers asking for advice / year
Are quality data collected on FAS performance?	yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Evaluation forms filled up by farmers receiving advice
What kind of documents are kept in order to demonstrate that an advice has been delivered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invoice of farmer's payment Written copy of the advice received 	
Concerns about FAS		
Topics where difficulties have been reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Difficulties in reaching small farms •Lack of advisers due to money constraint 	
Feedbacks from farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A need of much more face-to-face approach for nitrate management 	
General comments:		



FAS Quality Control			
Have you set up a procedure to control quality of advisory activities?	Yes	To control advisers, advice and farmers' awareness	
FAS Integration			
Have you planned to integrate FAS with other Information Systems such as LPIS, Farm Level Traceability IS, etc?	Yes	By sharing dedicated databases	By checking farmers' and advisers' identification systems
If Not, will you plan to do it during the 2007-2010 period?	No		

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007



Proposed Farm Advisory Tools (FAT)

- -Newspaper/periodical news bulletins
- -Dedicated internet websites
- -Booklets/brochures
- -Check list
- -Standardized Power Point presentations
- -Plan/map on paper support
- -Manuals, templates for farm plan
- -Farm diagnosis software
- -Crop growth model
- -Computer assisted identification system (i.e. animal breeding traceability)
- -Farm practices recording software (i.e. plant production traceability)
- -Environment management GIS assisted tools
- -Equipment for quick tests on the farm
- -Telephone helpline
- -Internet helpline
- -Others

Proposed list of ways of advising farmers

- -One-to-one at the farm
- -One-to-one outside the farm (i.e. telephone helpline, helpdesk for individual questions via website, consultation/"sitting days" of advisors in each region)
- -Small group advice at the farm
- -Vocational training
- -Workshops/meetings outside the farm
- -Self-check from manuals
- -Internet based (3 types: general info, interactive tailored to specific farm types, tailored to specific individual questions from the farmer)
- -Publications based (paper copies)
- -Others

Questionnaire on the implementation of FAS, May 2007

European Commission

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Abstract

By the beginning of 2007 Member States had to set up a system of advising farmers on land and farm management which should cover at least cross compliance requirements (the so-called Farm Advisory System). The report provides an overview on how Member States have set up the Farm Advisory System in the first year of its compulsory implementation. It describes and analyses the information acquired throughout a JRC questionnaire based survey in all Member States. The main topics presented are: the organisation of the system, the bodies that have been accredited to deliver advice, the funding support to farmers for the use of FAS, the way the advice is delivered, the priorities established for farmers and the number of holdings that may be concerned in the service. Finally the main concerns arisen in this first year of FAS implementation are discussed.

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