NOTE TO MEMBER STATES

Subject: Execution of checks following Regulation (EU) No 2020/532

Following the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2020/532 of 16 April 2020 allowing derogations due to the Covid-19 crisis, DG AGRI and JRC are joining efforts in order to help Member States in a good and efficient execution of checks for Area based direct payments under the rules of this regulation.

Therefore, I would like to ask each Member State to inform of its intentions to make use of the possibility to reduce the rate of on-the-spot checks from 5% to 3% (or 3% to 1%) and its planned way of implementing this derogation (Articles 4(1) and 4(3) of the above mentioned regulation).

For the sake of transparency, a single note is sent to all Member States, not only those who already requested to benefit from the EU-financed image acquisition for their Control with remote sensing (CwRS), but also to those who have not done so. Obviously, since the Commission is purchasing satellite imagery, DG AGRI and JRC would like to verify if a reduction in the control rates would entail a decrease in the planned expenditures of these satellite imageries.

If you intend to lower the percentage of controls, please provide replies to the questions below.

To be replied by all MS:

1. What percentage do you plan to achieve in 2020 for each of the schemes?

For MS that are currently doing classical OTSC

2. Will you substitute classical OTSC by using CwRS?
3. If so, do you have the required imagery lined up (planet, aerial, satellite, etc.)?

For MS that are currently doing CwRS

4. Do you envisage substituting aerial based OTSC by use of Satellite imagery?
For MS that will be doing classical OTSC or CwRS

5. How will the priority to areas other than those of permanent grassland / permanent crops be addressed in this (revised) selection (Article 4(5) of the above-mentioned regulation)?

6. Can you identify the areas that are predominantly permanent grassland / permanent crops? If so, will you consider this in the deselection process of the control zones?

7. Will you pick up relevant changes in the land of the deselected controls zones via the LPIS updates i.e. what is the expected delay of the LPIS update in the deselected control zones?

8. For the zones that are dropped: How will you pick up relevant changes in the land of the remaining controls via the LPIS updates?

9. For the zones that are not dropped: Would you require access to the sentinel imagery as to follow up in year land change and substitute for example rapid field visits (RFV)?

10. Which of the imagery planned in December 2019 (CwRS zones) do you accept to be cancelled following your decisions?

If you do not have yet all the details, I would appreciate to receive the main outline of the planned implementation, while additional information can be provided at a later stage.

Nevertheless, it is reminded that the random and risk based part in the OTSC should be maintained. Also, that areas deselected this year will have to be processed later on through LPIS update process.

The information provided will be used to consider possible changes in the acquisition of imagery for CwRS, in line with the Commission obligation to ensure sound financial management in using the appropriations under the EU budget, set out in Article 33 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.

Both DG AGRI and JRC are aware of the challenging task you are facing in the reduction of OTSC as it entails a change in planning, implementation and organization of the activities of several services involved at national or regional level. That change and any introduction of new technologies will need to take place within a very limited timeline.

My services will continue to provide guidance and invite you to come forward with questions, linked to issues you would identify when preparing the implementation of the necessary changes.

I hereby take the opportunity to remind you of the advantages of new technologies, like Sentinel data of Copernicus and geo-tagged photos. I would encourage you to consider making the most of them when planning checks this year.

In addition to this note, I would like to inform you about a new Wikicap¹ page developed by the JRC with technical information, and tips and tricks on the new technologies available replacing rapid field visits that could be used in the context of the Covid-19 restrictions and beyond. The proposed alternative solutions will be structured as a dedicated chapter of the CTS, related to the reduction of OTSC sample from 5% to 3%, the use of Sentinel information, the use of geo-tagged photos, the use of other data, the need of RFV for area measurement checks and finally the benefit of doubt.

Please provide your reply to DG AGRI IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT mailbox (AGRI-IMPLEMENTATION-SUPPORT@ec.europa.eu) by 27 of April 2020, so that initial analysis can be instigated on the first overview. To enable the Commission services to take appropriate action, including a bilateral contact where needed, in a timely manner, the complete detailed information is needed from all Member States by 30 of April 2020.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

(e-signed)

Pierluigi LONDERO
Head of Unit