

Webinar on Farm Advisory Systems (FAS)

21 October 2020

The objective of the webinar, jointly organised by the Joint Research Centre and the Directorate General for Agriculture of the European Commission, was to have open and constructive exchanges with representatives from the Member States and the Commission about the current implementation of the Farm Advisory Systems (FAS) in the Member States. These FAS exist since 2007 in the CAP and promote making available advisory services to farmers and other beneficiaries of the CAP on a number of priority issues related to farming activity and farm land.

Farm advice should play an important role in the next CAP after 2020 and it was deemed interesting to take stock of the situation after the various evolutions of the FAS since 2007 and before the implementation of the CAP reform.

The discussion was organised according to the annexed agenda.

The main conclusions are as follows.

- **Farm advisory services are key** to ensure that farmers and other operators face the growing complexity of farming methods and legal requirements as well as facing the growing challenges for environment, climate and health. In that respect advisory services will remain an important element of the future CAP. They will be part of CAP Strategic Plans as central element of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and their scope will be enlarged to the current challenges.
- **Farm advice is a complex topic as for the issues dealt with** (environment, climate, health, pesticides, economical issues, etc.).
- It is also very **diverse as regards the way advice is provided** (face-to-face, peer-to-peer, group seminars, demonstration farms, advice by remote, leaflets, etc.)
- The **situation of farm advice is also very diverse** across the EU. This ranges from strongly integrated systems with strong elements to weak systems with sometimes very limited advice capacity.
- The **nature of operators** (public, private, cooperatives, chambers of agricultures, etc) is also very diverse.
- The **education/training/certification of advisors** is an important issue. Different approaches are observed between MSs. Impartiality of advisors should always be preserved.
- The **financing of advice also considerably varies** between Member States. It can be fully charged to farmers, up to being provided for free with public money. FAS is associated in a number of MSs to financing with rural development money and it is in this case difficult to distinguish the two instruments.
- It is **difficult to have a common analysis matrix** and the question of data for monitoring is still a problem.
- There is **interest in developing the relationships with other advisory or training networks**. The example presented of the “Better Training for Safer Food” SANTE programme is an interesting way forward for public and animal health, food safety-related and animal welfare-related issues.
- The use of new technologies can improve the quality of the advice, facilitate the coverage of more farmers, prioritise advice topics and geographical areas of intervention. Experience on current

pandemic situation indicates that in the future the advice could be channelled through on line advisory services complemented with on-site practical advisory services.

- The **issue of uptake of farm advice by farmers** is also very important and there is a need to develop approaches to reach farmers and to increase this uptake (public funding, link with aid schemes, increasing the trust, alleviating the administrative burden, etc.).