

Avalon Foundation,
the Netherlands

Institute for European
Environmental Policy, London

AGRI-ENVIRONMENT BULLETIN

ISSUE 4: OCTOBER 2001

This Agri-environment Bulletin is produced as part of an international project entitled "Building Know-how for the Implementation of Agri-environment Schemes in Central and Eastern Europe" that is funded by DG Environment of the European Commission.

Contents:

- 2 The road ahead for the accession negotiations on the CAP
– *David Baldock, IEEP*
- 3 Derogations for processing – *Harriet Bennett, IEEP*
- 3 SAPARD unit initiative to support agri-environment measures
– *Peter Sturesson, DG Agriculture*
- 4 PHARE Access funding possibilities – *Maria Staniszewska, Polish Ecological Club*
- 5 Summer Academy on organic farming - *Viara Stefanova, Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture*
- 5 New publications

For comments or enquiries, please contact Harriet Bennett at IEEP, London.
E-mail: hbennett@ieeplondon.org.uk

The road ahead for the accession negotiations on the CAP

Accession negotiations on the 'agriculture chapter' of EU legislation are now entering an important phase. Following a first round of negotiations with all the candidate countries, culminating in an initial Community position in 2000, a further round is now beginning. Individual candidate countries have been responding to the Community position for many months and are embarking on a new series of bilateral meetings with the Commission. These are conducted largely by DG Agriculture in association with DG Enlargement. The latter has a group of officials who have the twin role of taking forward agricultural negotiations and focussing on a single accession country. Other Directorates General, including DG Budget are also involved, but to a lesser degree.

For the remainder of 2001 and the first half of 2002 under the Spanish Presidency, these negotiations will intensify, leading to the drafting of an EU common position by the Commission in spring 2001. This is expected to deal with the critical issues of quotas, support levels, direct payments and the budget available to accession countries, including their allocation under the Rural Development Regulation. All these issues are extremely sensitive politically and the Commission will need to take full account of budgetary and political factors, as well as trying to ensure consistency in its approach between accession countries. They will be

operating strictly on the basis of the current Community *acquis*, effectively ignoring changes which may occur as a result of the prospective mid-term review of the CAP.

Once a common position has been developed by the leading DGs it will be circulated to other DGs, including DG Environment, with a request for comments within a relatively short time-scale – often 10 days or so. Significant changes can be made at this point, but it is not a frequent occurrence. Thus it is important that the negotiations over the winter take due account of the environmental dimension of agricultural policies, including the livestock quotas available to the accession countries and the funding they are to receive under the Second Pillar. Environmental concerns need to be brought to the attention of both accession countries and the Commission.

Once the Commission has developed a common position it will need to be agreed by the Council. The aim is to reach this point in June 2002, leaving the remainder of the year to negotiate the proposals with the candidate countries. At the last accession the EU was reluctant to make any significant changes to its position during this final stage and it remains to be seen how much flexibility will be offered this time.

David Baldock, IEEP, London.

Derogations for processing

The European Commission plans to allow food processing establishments in CEE to continue business for a period after accession without complying with EU veterinary and health criteria. Products would, however, only be eligible for sale on the domestic market. The derogation would also be allowed only on condition that adaptation to the full EU legislation would be undertaken in the shortest time possible.

These plans will come as a welcome relief to small, rural producers that are likely to find it difficult to meet tight EU standards. Allowing such a derogation should give this type of producer a better chance of staying in business while adapting to EU conditions, and is likely to contribute to sustainability in rural areas in the long-term.

Harriet Bennett, IEEP, London.

SAPARD unit initiative to support agri-environment measures

When the SAPARD programmes were originally presented to the STAR Committee it was agreed the agri-environment measures were potentially complex to implement. It was decided that all the further details that were required would be defined at a later stage of negotiations, in co-operation with the Commission, and before implementation began.

There have been some fora at which agri-environment measures were discussed and refined, such as the 'Expert Seminar' in Bratislava (December 2000) and the 'High Level Conference in Wassenaar on EU enlargement, agriculture and nature management' (January 2001). Both seminars reinforced the conviction of the SAPARD unit to proceed using a step-by-step approach during the preparation of agri-environment measures. Some issues, such as 'Good Farming Practice', require particular attention.

The SAPARD unit has felt it appropriate to establish closer networking links with those responsible

for development and implementation of agri-environment measures in CEECs. They aim to assist with the elaboration of pilot agri-environment schemes. In order to achieve better communication they have established an informal e-mailing platform between staff responsible for agri-environment pilot actions within the SAPARD Programmes and the Commission services mainly concerned (DG Agriculture and DG Environment).

The e-mail platform has allowed a guidance document on pilot agri-environment measures to be discussed, and the resulting comments, along with those received during an informal review at the Commission, will be incorporated into a technical paper. A workshop is planned for November 2001 at which this paper will be discussed.

More information can be obtained from:

*Peter Sturesson
SAPARD Unit
DG Agriculture
Peter.Sturesson@cec.eu.int*

PHARE Access funding possibilities

PHARE Access has been identified by many NGOs in CEECs as a valuable source of funding for agri-environment activities. An example of a project funded through this instrument is one submitted successfully by a coalition of NGOs aiming to support organic agriculture in Poland. The project aims to inform politicians, decision-makers, farmers and the general public about possible support for organic farming through agri-environment measures and related environmental legislation, new directions in the CAP and opportunities for the expansion of organic farming in Poland. Project outputs will include a series of training sessions, a brochure, establishment of an advice and information centre for sustainable agriculture, a web page and quarterly bulletins on related agri-environment developments. Further information can be obtained from:

*Maria Staniszewska
Project Co-ordinator
Polish Ecological Club, Gliwice.
pkegliw@silesia.top.pl*

Invitations to tender for PHARE Access are ongoing in many CEECs, and in many countries the programme is currently open for applications. Further information can be obtained from the following websites and contacts:

Bulgaria: www.evropa.bg
www.ngo.bg/progs/eu-access/index-en.htm
Isabela.Uribe@delbgr.cec.eu.int

Czech Republic: www.evropska-unie.cz
Nancy.MEECH@cec.eu.int

Estonia: www.euroopaliit.ee/index-eng.html

Hungary: www.eudelegation.hu
virag.sandor@delhun.cec.eu.int

Latvia: www.lvaccess.lv

Lithuania: www.eudel.lt/ek_skelbimai.html
audrone.steiblyte@delltu.cec.eu.int

Poland:
www.access.atomnet.pl/html/index2.html

Romania: www.infoeuropa.ro

Slovak Republic: www.europa.sk

Slovenia: Not available until 2002. Contact
Mojca.Krisper@delsvn.cec.eu.int for details.

Romania: www.infoeuropa.ro
Ioana.Derscanu@delrom.cec.eu.int

Summer Academy on organic farming

The first European Summer Academy on Organic Farming took place in Lednice, the Czech Republic, during June 2001. The overall aim of the four-day course was to promote organic farming, and thereby to ensure maintenance of extensive farmland management and economic use of its high quality products by improved marketing. In order to achieve this the seminar aimed to utilise the knowledge of European pioneers in organic farming and transfer their practical experience to farmers who have recently converted to organic farming. The seminar focused mainly on the political recognition of organic farming, the food safety standards and the marketing possibilities. In a joint declaration the Summer Academy entitled 'A European Strategy to pave the way for the pan-European model for agriculture' the prerequisites for accelerated development of organic farming were considered to be the following:

- high environmental awareness of the population so that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for

environmentally friendly, high quality products;

- efficient organisational structures of all areas concerned (research, extension, production, processing, marketing, control); as well as
- the necessary political framework conditions.

The Summer Academy is the first of a series of experience-exchange events that are intended to establish the necessary requirements to enable the accelerated development of organic farming. A similar event will take place in summer 2002, and the organisers intend the Academy to provide a regular system of practical international education in the field of organic farming. Further information can be obtained from the following websites:

<http://bioacademy.ecn.cz>

<http://mpc1.at>

<http://www.pro-bio.cz>

Viara Stefanova
Ministry of Agriculture
Bulgaria
viara_mail@dir.bg

New publications

A bulletin on the *Emerald Network* has been launched. The bulletin will be produced every four months, and is designed to inform all actors involved in the establishment of the Emerald Network, established under the Bern Convention.

Emerald Network sites are important nature conservation sites. After

accession they are likely to become Natura 2000 sites, taking account of the requirements of the EU birds and habitats Directives.

To be placed on the email distribution list, contact:

Sandra Jen
WWF European Policy Office
sjen@wwfepo.org