



Start of a new EU Study

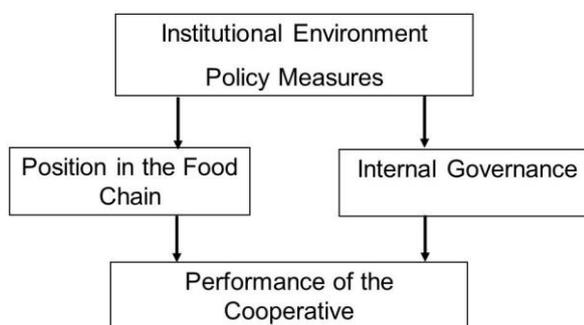
SUPPORT FOR FARMERS' COOPERATIVES

In order to foster the competitiveness of the food supply chain, the European Commission is committed to promote and facilitate the restructuring and consolidation of the agricultural sector by encouraging the creation of voluntary agricultural producer organisations. DG Agriculture and Rural Development has launched a large study, "Support for Farmers' Cooperatives", that will provide the background knowledge that will help farmers organise themselves in cooperatives. In this context, the specific objectives of the project are:

1. To provide a comprehensive description of the current level of development of cooperatives and other forms of producer organisations in the 27 EU Member States. In particular, the following drivers and constraints for the development of cooperatives will be examined:
 - Economic and fiscal incentives.
 - Legal aspects, including those related to competition law.
 - Historical, cultural and sociologically relevant aspects.
 - The relationship between cooperatives and the other actors of the food chain.
2. To identify specific support measures and initiatives which have proved to be effective and efficient for promoting cooperatives and other forms of producer organisations in the agricultural sector. Based on the legal distribution of competences between the EU and the Member States, the project will identify the specific actions or measures that would benefit clearly from the EU intervention, as compared with national or regional measures.

Content of the study

The central objective of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of support measures for cooperatives (and other producer organisations). This requires analysis of the performance of cooperatives and the factors that affect performance. These factors can be grouped in three categories, or "building blocks" of cooperatives' performance: the internal governance of the cooperatives, the institutional environment, and the position of the cooperative in the food chain. The figure to the right provides the overview of these building blocks, for which data in all 27 member states will be collected. A typology of cooperatives will be developed, to classify different types of producer organisations. The data gathering in the member states, carried out by a national expert, will provide the basis for an analysis at EU level, including analysis per sector (dairy, wine, sugar etc.). In addition experiences in other OECD countries will be explored. Based on this first phase, the project will target and examine a large number of cases in detail in the second phase. These cases will also include a number of transnational cooperatives.



The research approach is mapped into the following 8 components of the study:

1. Typology
2. Experiences in OECD countries outside EU
3. Fact finding in the 27 member states
4. Analysis at EU level
5. Sector level overview
6. Clustering
7. Case Studies
8. Tans-national Cooperatives

The project concludes with a synthesis on the *effectiveness of support measures*.

The project Support for Farmers' Cooperatives started in the last days of 2010 and will take 23 months. Two stakeholder meetings will be organised, the first one in November 2011, the second one in July 2012.

The study is overseen by the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development. The European Union invests € 1.45 million in this project. Results of the study will not be made available until the project is finished. Upon completion of the project, the final report will be made publicly accessible to all interested parties on the DG Agriculture and Rural Development website.

Consortium

The project is carried out by a large consortium, managed by Wageningen UR's Agricultural Economics Research Institute LEI and Wageningen University. Krijn J. Poppe and Jos Bijman act as project managers. Other members of the consortium are:

- Pellervon taloustutkimus and Helsinki University Finland,
- AGEPRI, part of NAGREF, Greece,
- Justus Liebig Universität Giessen, Germany,
- Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany,
- HIVA Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium,
- Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, The Netherlands.

The first five of this list act as regional coordinators for the data gathering in the member states (figure to the right). All consortium members contribute as experts to the methodology or provide know-how on specific sectors.

In addition to the consortium members special expertise has been secured from a group of legal experts.

The European Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives, Copa-Cogeca, has welcomed this study.

National Experts

The regional coordinators are supported in gathering data by national experts on cooperatives in each of the EU Member States. These experts will provide data and write a country report.

More Information

Please note that opinions expressed in this leaflet are those of the contractor, and do not represent the European Commission's official position.

The project management can be contacted by mail: Krijn J. Poppe (Krijn.Poppe@wur.nl) or Jos Bijman (Jos.Bijman@wur.nl)

