Farm Advisory System implementation in the European Union: experiences and prospects
Results of the FAS workshop, Barcelona 10-11 June 2010

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1. **Introduction**

1.1. **Report objectives**

The aim of the report is to describe the main technical findings and results of the workshop “Farm Advisory System implementation in the European Union: experiences and prospects” organised by the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs of Spain together with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Action of Cataluña and with the technical support of the MARS Unit of the Joint Research Centre.

The workshop was held in Barcelona at the Hotel Avenida Palace on 10th June and was combined with a technical field visit in Gerona area on 11th June 2010. 105 delegates attended the workshop representing 20 European Union Member States (all but Cyprus, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden and Romania) and two candidate countries (Turkey and Iceland). European Commission was represented by two experts of the Joint Research Centre, two of the Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development and one of the Directorate-General Environment.

1.2. **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to express sincere thanks to the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs of Spain, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Action of Cataluña and Tragsatec for the organisation and hosting of this successful event. He would like to thank all persons that were involved in the organisation and management of the workshop and without whom the workshop could not have taken place. A special thank to Elena Cores Garcia and Jaume Sió Torres for their active cooperation and personal sympathy.

He would also like to thank the presenters for agreeing to deliver their talks, as well as all participants for their contribution to the success of the event.

2. **Outcomes of the plenary session**

2.1. **Background**

European legislation established that since the 1st January 2007 Member States has to operate a system of advising farmers on land and farm management (Farm Advisory System-FAS), with a view to increasing farmers’ awareness of material flows and on-farm processes related to the areas covered by cross compliance\(^1\).

The European legislative framework establishes the main conditions that FAS shall fulfil (e.g. minimum issues to be covered, confidentially of personal data etc), leaving Member States (MSs) the freedom to design the most appropriate system to meet the needs and characteristics of their agricultural sector. The FAS shall cover at least Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) and Good Agricultural and

Environmental Condition (GAEC), but MSs may broaden its scope. Farmers may participate in the FAS on a voluntary basis.

The use and the setting up of FAS can be funded within the framework of the rural development policy for which further rules have been defined\(^2\). Funded advisory services should not only cover SMRs and GAECs, but also occupational safety standards based on Community legislation. 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.

The legislative framework establishes also that by 31 December 2010, the Commission shall submit a report to the Council on the application of the farm advisory system, accompanied, if necessary, by appropriate proposals. The report is currently in progress.

In 2009 an evaluation study on FAS covering the period from January 2005 until 2009 was financed by the European Commission and carried out by ADE in collaboration with ADAS, Agrotec and Evaluators\(^3\). The overall objective of the evaluation was to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the FAS with respect to achieving the objectives laid down in the Regulation. At the time when the evaluation was carried out, some MSs has just started operating the FAS and therefore data were not always sufficient to make a deep analysis.

### 2.2. Main issues of the workshop

After some year of implementation of FAS, in 2010 first observations on the implementation of FAS should be drawn in a view of assessing if the instrument meets the objectives for which it was created and defining how it is possible to improve it.

In fact this year the Commission has to submit to the Council a report on FAS accompanied by appropriate proposals, if necessary. This will determine the future development of FAS.

This year, in the second pillar policy, MSs have to carry out a mid term review of their Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). As most Member States fund FAS using some measures of their RDPs (expecially measure 114 “Use of Farm advisory services”) advisory services provided will be subject to the mid-term evaluation.

In the debate on FAS that took place in past years some issues seemed to be worth a major discussion such as tools and approaches for advice delivery, structure of the FAS, competencies of advisors etc. Some of them were deeply discussed in previous events and in exchanges among MSs or between MSs and the Commission. Some other issues were brought to attention while the implementation of FAS became effective in most MSs (e.g. use of the advisory services by the farmers, flexibility of advice, quality of the service provided). Before the workshop it was decided to select some topics that were considered of great interest taking into account also that the Spanish authorities hosted the meeting and could show and discuss real cases.

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\(^3\) [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/fas/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/fas/index_en.htm)
The topics that seem to have a major interest for discussion were identified in the following:

- content of the advice in the FAS (cross compliance and fields beyond cross-compliance),
- how to increase the farmer demand for advisory services,
- how to measure the impact on the agricultural sector,
- how to provide advisory service in disperse agricultural areas,
- structure of the FAS,
- evaluation of the quality of the advice provided,
- flow of information among actors involved in FAS.

2.3. Main facts on current implementation of FAS

The current implementation of FAS is illustrated by the main findings of the evaluation study financed by the European Commission and carried out in 2009. Generally speaking, the FAS in the EU is managed through a publicly-driven coordination and supervision function with a number of Operating Bodies (designed or outsourced) to provide the advice. Two major approaches to the provision of advice through the FAS were implemented by the MS: on-farm one-to-one (implemented in all MS except UK/ENG), on-farm one-to-group (small group advice on the farm), often complementing the one-to-one approach via thematic approaches. Other approaches, such as one-to-one outside the farm and small group outside the farm were implemented to a lesser extent.

It is interesting to see that already in the existing legislative framework that establishes cross-compliance as a core issue of FAS, 14 MSs focus their FAS strictly on SMR and GAEC, but 12 MSs have already designed their FAS going beyond the scope of cross compliance, often embedded it in broader issues, such as competitiveness of the holdings, environmental aspects linked to farming practices and support to the implementation of rural development measures (e.g. agri-environmental schemes). The importance of rural development in implemented FAS is testified by the fact that the use of advisory services by farmers is funded in 59 rural development programmes (in 20 MS and in some regions in 4 MS), with the highest budget availability in PL, IT and ES. Even if the uptake of advisory service progressed slowly in the first period of implementation, the evaluators see the potential for an increase of the use of the FAS in the long-term, based on the observation that the FAS has attained a higher outreach (up to 20% of beneficiaries of direct payments) in those MS or regions that have implemented the system from 2005 onwards.

According to the evaluation, FAS seems a well-suited instrument for enhancing modern, high-quality agriculture at EU level and it is expected to be more effective in relation to the enhancement of environmental sustainability of agriculture. Anyway it seems to have a limited impact on improving the perception of the CAP by EU farmers: the FAS is often regarded by farmers as being in strict relation with cross-compliance provisions and related controls, which triggered a negative perception of the

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4 Presentation: Main issues and evaluation of the FAS implementation in Member States, Inge Van Oost
instrument. The issue of trust, linked to the confidentiality of the advice provided, seems to be one of the most crucial issues for a successful implementation of FAS. However, some FAS seemed to succeed in building a trustful and effective relationship between the farmers and the advisors.

In the evaluation study some recommendations were given by the evaluators. The voluntary-based access to the advice by EU farmers was seen by the evaluators as a fundamental prerequisite for the FAS, due to the nature of advisory activities, in contrast with control/certification compulsory-based systems. Therefore the concept and overall architecture of the FAS should be maintained: a voluntary based system leaving a high margin of flexibility to the MS in applying the system. Anyway MS are invited to explore ways of taking greater advantage from the opportunities offered by the FAS particularly regarding the integration of the advice on cross compliance with advice on economic-related issues and the coverage of broader needs and domains for the advice (e.g. climate change, market-oriented agriculture, etc.). At this regard, in the 2009 Communication from the Commission accompanying the White Paper on adapting to climate change “Adapting to climate change: the challenge for European Agriculture and rural areas” the Commission stated that “Strengthening information and advisory support on climate-related matters to farmers and agricultural workers is key for motivation and preparedness to adapt.” and “Farm advisory services could be developed so that they can become an instrument for disseminating regionally-specific information and practical adaptive solutions enhancing farmers' skills to respond to future changes.” It must be noted that many practices related to climate change are already covered under FAS via its priority for cross compliance requirements such as requirements related to manure, soil cover, catch crops, permanent pasture, soil organic matter, crop residues etc.

Monitoring FAS activities is a key issue for MS as well as enhancing the access to FAS by small farmers, e.g. by increasing the knowledge of the FAS and of its potential benefits among the farmers. At Commission level the evaluators suggested that the sharing of experiences and good practices on the approaches and tools for delivering the advice applied in the MS should be facilitated.

2.4. Examples of FAS for cross-compliance

In Spain farm advisory services are supported via the rural development policy. Rural development programmes are managed at regional level, but a national plan defines what measures should compulsorily be part of regional programmes: support for the use of farm advisory services by farmer and for the setting up of advisory services are measures that shall be present in all regional rural development programmes. The advisory services supported shall cover cross-compliance and occupational safety standards and in case of young farmers provide also a report at the beginning of the activity. The advisory service can cover economic management, agri-environmental schemes and...

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actions related to climate change, renewable energy, water management, biodiversity and the milk sector.

In the programming period 2007-2013 for the whole Spain it is planned that 164,762 farmers will receive a supported advisory service (167 MEUR of public expenditure, 1,1% of total for the all RDPs public budget) and the setting-up of 507 new advisory bodies is co-funded (67 MEUR of public expenditure, 0,4% of the total public budget). Since 2009, only 32,026 farmers uses co-funded advisory services, which represents 19,4 % of the expected farmers in the whole programming period. Most advisory services were provided for full advisory services (47%) and for cross compliance and occupational safety standards (40%). It is interesting to note that 49% of beneficiaries are farmers who receive less than 5,000 EUR of direct aids.

During the first years of implementation of the farm advisory system in Spain the main issues that have been discussed and brought to attention are7:

- important role in innovation and transfer of technology and training,
- rural development measures due to their legislative limitation do not properly meet current needs of FAS,
- advisory services go beyond cross-compliance,
- evaluation of the quality of the service shall be followed-up,
- advice is not control.

England is the only Member States that does not deliver one-to-one advice to farmers in the framework of the FAS. The advice programme on cross compliance, that consists of regional and national programme activity, is based on events delivery at regional level (such as farm walks, workshops, drop in sessions, third party events, shows etc) and helpline, website, PR, marketing & innovations at national level8. The Cross Compliance Advice Programme is run on behalf of Defra by AEA that manage a consortium of independent advisors to deliver cross compliance advice across England.

Since 2005 over 40.000 people have attended a Cross Compliance Advice Programme event and, according to evaluation questionnaires completed after the events, most of them found the event good or excellent.

At national level one of the most popular tool is a helpline that provides a technical advice service and also a booking function for events. Over 36,000 calls have been registered since the beginning of the service. The most common queries refer to GAECs standards about hedgerows, watercourses, permanent pasture, soil conservation and eligibility of the land.

English advisory activities are also focussed on promoting events and stimulating attendance. Different tools are used at this regard such as:

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7 These issues were identified and discussed during a workshop among FAS actors in Spain held in Barcelona on 9th June 2010
- Direct mail – to promote attendance at events,
- Text Messaging – to promote attendance and delivery timely advice reminders,
- Intermediary liaison – to use established advice networks to assist with promotion,
- The website www.crosscompliance.org.uk,
- Bi monthly newsletter – timely advice provision via email and mail outs,
- Technical Articles – Informative updates on cross compliance for national press,
- Web Based training – electronic knowledge transfer.

A market research carried out in 2009 recognized that 72% of farmers had changed their practices as a result of attending a cross compliance event or using the cross compliance helpline.

Among the tools offered at national level, the Whole Farm Approach\(^9\) plays an important role. It is an online service that offers 4 Government Gateway services: My Farm, Surveys and Assessments, RPA Online (for Payments), Cattle Tracing System and ELS Online (for Stewardship). Farmers are requested to register in order to use the facilities provided (online regulation, FAS tools, a Self Assessment Tool for new users). An Action Plan is built up depending upon how the farmer has responded to the questions relating to different cross-compliance requirements; the Action Plan describes the actions that shall be undertaken by the farmer. The system provides also Action Reminders for the farmer.

The future of the online delivery of FAS will be the convergence of Whole Farm Approach to the supersite Business Link bringing together all UK Government websites. The convergence plan is foreseen for November 2010.

2.5. Examples of FAS beyond cross-compliance

The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI)\(^10\) is aimed at promoting voluntary, non regulatory actions to tackle pollution from agriculture. As its main policy framework derives from the Water Framework Directive\(^11\), this initiative can be considered as an example of advisory services that goes partly beyond cross-compliance for certain measures. In fact, not only does it help in reaching the target of Good Ecological Status of water bodies, but also may have positive effects on biodiversity and climate change emissions (fertilisers are responsible for 29% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions). This initiative is available in 50 priority catchments

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(focused into target areas) and in 10 partnership areas all over England (figure 1).

Figure 1- Priority catchments in the ECSFDI

Three activities represent the core of the initiative: - reducing the source of pollution; - breaking or slowing the pathway for the pollutant and protecting/ buffering the receptor.

A fundamental part for the success of the initiative depends on advisory activity delivered for engaging farmers and making them change behaviours. Different approaches are used and shaped on farmer needs (cold calling, technical advice, scheme related advice, group events, clinics / drop in centres). Initial engagements are important, especially for ‘hard-to-reach’ farmers (drop-in visit can be used); group events are commonly used for developing contacts (farm walks, workshops). For mature relationships, one-to-one advice is important.

In 7 catchments where pesticides are above target levels in drinking water, a catchment sensitive farming working with Voluntary Initiative was developed based on: -engaging farmers to ensure effective applications through; -provision of text alert service on weather conditions; training for farm advisers; and guidance and help for farmers

In order to evaluate the initiative a model was developed (figure 2).
The engagement of farmers is determined by statistics of the number of farmers involved in the different activities proposed. Increase of awareness is checked by telephone survey on temporal regular basis during the implementation of the initiative. Changing practices is assessed with audit on farmers to check how many recommended farm-specific control measures have been implemented. Modelling activities are carried out in order to determine environmental improvements (reduction of phosphorous, reaching WFD good status for phosphorous).

In **Baden-Württemberg (Germany)** advisory tools have been developed to help farmers check their compliance. Check lists (GQSBW) cover cross-compliance, occupational safety standards, specialist law (federal and state) and private quality standards\(^\text{12}\).

In recent years environmental sustainability is becoming more and more important in Germany and public opinion is sensitive about environmental and health issues and this also influence consumers.

choices. Agriculture, as a sensitive part of life and industry, is obviously affected by these trends. EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme) was opened for farmers in 2001, but tools for farmers did not exist. Projects in different federal states to implement EMAS in farming business have started (e.g. Hohenlohe and Donaueschlingen in Baden-Württemberg); guidelines for farmers implementing an environmental management system were published by the Federal Environment Ministry in April 2003. A need emerged to build up and implement a farm and environmental management system using EMAS and creating a FAS that goes beyond cross compliance. Aim, structure and content of GQSBW seemed to be close to the requirements of an eco-management system for farmers; therefore GQSBW Umwelt-Audit Environmental (figure 3) have been developed to cover also further environmental issues and it has been approved as FAT (farm advisory tool) since 2005. GQSBW Environmental-Audit requirements include: cross compliance regulations (SMR and GAEC); documentation and evaluation of the farm advice; occupational health and safety; energy balance; crop production survey; livestock farming survey; EMAS certificate. Since 2005 10 farms have been validated, 7 farms updated their first validation done in 2006, 2 farms need to get their validation updated in 2010; 3 farms will be validated in 2010 for the first-time.

Figure 3- The GQSBW Environmental Audit scheme

2.6. Examples of how to increase quality and to evaluate FAS

In Italy FAS is managed by Regional Authorities. Pre-existing National Framework for the whole knowledge system in agriculture was driven by the Council Regulation (EEC) No 270/79 (supporting the
development of agricultural extension\textsuperscript{13} and since 80s advisory activities have been set up on the basis of a National framework agreed within the “Interregional Network of agricultural advisory services”\textsuperscript{14}.

Currently advisory services are funded in 17 out of 21 regional Rural Development Programmes. 4 FAS are outside rural development policy and are funded by different sources but with the same rules. Delays in the procedures for the accreditation of advisory bodies have been registered and this has influences the opening of calls for beneficiaries of advisory services. Compared to objectives set up in the RDP for rural development measure 114 related to the use of advisory services, only 10,5\% of the targeted farmers in the whole programming period 2007-2013 had their claim already approved and this percentage decrease to only 1,63\% in terms of money already paid compared to programmed budget.

In order to provide a high quality advisory system, regional authorities have created their FAS taking into account some main challenges: - considering FAS as part of a wider system of advice and of the entire knowledge system in agriculture; - Farmers’ need for advisory services on global performance of the holding; - Rationalizing FAS, focusing on CC specific standards mostly concerning to farmers; - Strengthening advisors capacities authorities.

Increasing the participation of farmers in FAS has been seen as a crucial issue for the success of FAS and different approaches have been introduced by regional authorities:

- Meeting farmers’ needs for advisory services (by: keeping open the calls for selection or schedule their timing; Focusing on the needed specific fields of advisory service; let the farmer defining the terms of the advisory service (contract) in agreement with the advisor, giving the farmer the choice; provide a catalogue of advisory services to apply for);

- Boosting the development of human capital (FAS integrates the whole agricultural knowledge system; Measures 111 and 114 to be applied jointly; providing specific training to advisors);

- Integrate the advisory services into wider farms’ development projects (FAS as a booster for improving the overall performance of the holding);

- Anticipate the calls for selection with a strong communication campaign targeted both to advisors and farmers.

In Flanders (BE) advisory services are composed of five modules that are offered to farmers (module 1-3: Statutory Management Requirements and GAEC; Module 4: Occupational safety standards; Module 5: Business optimisation)\textsuperscript{15}. Legislative requirements establish that the advice should be composed of the following steps: an overview of all relevant SMRs and GAEC; an evaluation of all relevant SMRs and GAEC per module, including a farm visit (premises) and a field visit; proposals for improvement including advice on agro-environmental measures. Advice on cross compliance is an


essential part of FAS. Advice service is a contract between certified advisory body and farmer, who is partially refunded by public funds for the costs incurred.

In 2009 a first evaluation of the FAS was carried out. 17 farmers were interviewed by phone or by visit, a questionnaire was sent to advisory bodies by e-mail. Farmers stressed the importance of membership of farmer groups, the benefits in combining CC advice with economical advice, the importance of the farm visit (on the spot check of premises and fields), the need of more attention in the contents and timing of the advice and a wish for proposals of improvement. According to advisory bodies, farmers give much importance to economical parameters. Some of these requests have already been transferred into practical actions.

3. **Outcomes of the working groups**

During the workshop, participants were split in three working groups according to their interest in the issue discussed in the working group. After a one and half hour discussion, the results of the discussion were presented in a plenary session. The conclusions reflect exclusively the opinion of the experts who took part in the working group.

3.1. **FAS for and beyond cross-compliance**

**Background**

Legislation establishes that FAS shall cover at least Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC), but MSs may broaden its scope. When advisory services are co-funded in the Rural Development Programmes also occupational safety standards based on Community legislation should be covered. Some MS have already opened up their FAS in order to cover issues that are not part of cross-compliance.

In same cases the reason for a lack of farmers’ interest in advisory services has been reported as determined by a limited flexibility among advice topics that farmer can choose.

Different issues that have been discussed lately can be the object of debate of this working group such as: if FAS should be open to other topics and not only on CC advice; if funding the use of FAS should continue; if it is acceptable to open co-financed (2nd pillar) FAS beyond CC and if this will increase the interest of farmers in FAS (higher flexibility etc.); which topics should be included in FAS (i.e. agri-environmental measures, climate change, water protection WFD, economic management etc.); if a more open FAS can be less effective for CC; if it is necessary that (subsidised) FAS cover occupational safety standards; how much advisors are trained to deliver advice; what happens if FAS is extended to new topics like climate change also in terms of new training needs for advisers to cover these new topics; if the advice on particular topics should be linked to priority groups (e.g. involvement of all farmers in a catchment area into some farming practices).

**Results**

Cross compliance should remain the core of the FAS. Anyway it is suitable that new topics may be offered also within the FAS, especially legislation on Plant Protection, energy balance (success and
failure) and Greenhouse Gas reduction. Advisory services could also include advice on rural development measures (such as agri-environmental), business opportunity, market situation and financial advice.

It was underlined that advice should deal with the farm as an enterprise and offer integrated advice services. A general bias towards public funded extension services have been registered in the working group, ensuring a baseline service for farmers as main reason.

For the effectiveness of advice, continuity and trust advisor-farmer as well as voluntary access to advice services seems to be crucial factors.

Financing support to cover advice cost is important but the topic of “who pays” for it remains open. In fact advice provided in agriculture helps both in maintaining public goods and assuring market return for farmers.

Advice could be useful in identifying business case and opportunities. Advice could also help farmers in meeting requirements of external schemes such as EMAS and GlobalGap.

3.2. Techniques and structures of advisory systems

Background

In the implementation of FAS MSs uses different tools and approaches, but one-to-one is the core approach of the advice. Check lists are often used. Sharing and exchanging best practices among Member States can help to find solutions.

One of the issues raised in the first years of implementation is how to reach farmers that are less informed or whose holding is situated in scattered or marginal areas.

The flow of information between authorities managing cross-compliance and advisors could help in better focussing the advice, but it seems to be a very sensitive item.

Results

Among advisory methods, it is underlined that online delivery is just a first step that should be integrated by other approaches like one-to-one.

In one-to-one advice there is also the opportunity to create synergies, advice farmers not only on cross-compliance, but also in the implementation of rural development measures or in carrying out a business plan. Advice on new technologies could also be part of the advice.

The advisors network should be close to the farmer. Advisory skills could be improved with training, e.g. on advisory techniques.

There is a general fear that advisory services are involved in controls and this can create very negative effect on the trust of the farmer in the advisor and in general of the performance of the FAS.

3.3. Evaluation and Quality of Services for users

Background
The issue of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and quality of advisory services is becoming important as Member States now operate the FAS. In previous years not many examples were provided on the evaluation of the FAS; in 2010 mid-term evaluation of the rural development programmes should be carried out and therefore also the measure on the use of FAS by farmers shall be assessed.

The scope of the working group was to discuss the following points: how MS monitor the implementation of FAS, what they monitor, how MS evaluate effectiveness and quality of FAS, what instruments they use in the evaluation (e.g. feedback form farmers, questionnaire etc, results of CC controls to see if CC implementation improved etc.), how they consider the efficacy of each farm advisory tool, which indicators they use, if they analyze and compare performance of farmers receiving and not receiving FAS, if they relate the quality of the advice and the advisor competencies, how they manage the training of advisors.

Results

Monitoring is related to different aspects such as the financial resources, the process of delivery (financial and procedural data), the human resources involved (divided by administrators, advisors and farmers), the typologies and the field of the services delivered.

Data and information to be used for monitoring are gathered with interviews, questionnaire, checklist, case-studies etc. If monitoring systems are created, it should be determined if they should be specific for FAS or integrated into other fields of knowledge systems.

The effectiveness of FAS is related to the effects that are expected in terms of: increase of farmers' awareness (respect of cross-compliance, improvements of environmental-friendly behaviours); improvements of environmental performance (and in the near future also contribution to climate-change), improvements of competitiveness.

It is important to have a clear definition of what should be measured and evaluated. The evaluation should refer to a period of time, generally mid-term and long-term.

The collection of data for the evaluation process represents a sensitive item as the use of personal data can infringe the confidentiality clause and in long term reduce the trust between the farmer and the advisor. At this regards the use of aggregated data can be an opportunity. It seems that not only the transfer of data from advisor to control body, but also from control bodies to advisors (in order to give advisors a hint to better focus the field of the advice) can be perceived as a infringement of the distinction between advice and control. At this regards different, and sometimes opposite, cases are reported such as the refusal of providing data to administration as advice contract is private (and in the current legislative framework no data are requested to the advisor) or the use of cross-check of data which can lead to reveal a non-compliance in holdings that had an advice service. By the way, the use of aggregated data is considered to be very useful. In some MS the results of the controls are made public; in some other yearly events are planned to discuss the results of controls, sometimes with the participation of controllers, advisors and policy makers. The aggregated results of controls can be used for the training of advisors.
Quality of the advisory services is linked to the competencies of advisors that should be evaluated. Training is compulsory in some MS. When advisory services are in the market, market itself may be one of the elements in selecting the best advisors. Obviously the situation is different when the advice is free and provided by public services or companies funded by the public sector.

4. **Outcomes of the field visit**

The first visit was to a fruit cooperative, Girona Fruits S.C.C.L.. The cooperative is constituted by 30 producers with 681 ha (average 20ha/producer); 22,000 tons of fruits produced and sold\(^{16}\). The cooperative takes part in quality certification Global Gap, Nature’s Choice, Integrated production of Catalunya and Poma de Girona (Girona apple) IGP.

The cooperative was formed in 1966 and since then the advisory structure has been grown (first technical agricultural advice, then integrated agricultural advice and finally also environmental and good farming practices. Currently the advisory service is provided by 3 agricultural engineers, 1 economist, 1 biologist and 1 veterinary. Data related to each single parcel are store and managed; parcel data are also linked directly to the parcel identification system in Spain (SigPAC) and permitted parcel by parcel analysis of quality analysis and production potential. The software Espèrides manages the data related to the process for integrated production and traceability (registration of farming practices at parcel level, farm register, technical advice on the use of fertilisers, pesticides etc.).

The second visit was to a wetlands site surrounded by landscape under pressure from intensive agriculture and tourism (Natural Park Aiguamolls de l’Empordà) and demonstrated how, since 1983, these privately 4,300ha of owned agricultural wetlands had been stabilised and returned to a nature zone through the application of (among other measures) European Union funding.

The third visit was to a farm advisory unit (Fundación Mas Badia: an Agricultural Experimental Station associated to IRTA - Research & Technology, Food & Agriculture) that carried out specialist management of manure management, irrigation and fertiliser application, to ensure compliance with (among others) the Nitrate Directive\(^{17}\). The aim of the advisory service provides is to expand Good Agricultural Practices beyond the Code from Nitrates Directive. This is carried out by generating information in the area (research and experimentation) with main focus on medium to long term managements and then transferring technology to farms.

The main activities carried out are:

- Mid to long term research on manure and slurry application,
- Evaluation of tools for N recommendation at the different systems,
- Effects of fertilization practices on environment,


- Improvement of other management practices related with fertilization (irrigation, rotation,…),
- Systems performance on N cycle characteristics,
- Implementation of recommendation strategies and use of tools based on applied research.

The transfer of technology to farmers is based on the following tools: informative leaflets, technical sessions (8-10 sessions per year with 20-50 participants per session), technical trips with farmers (1-2 annual trip at different areas or events related with crop fertilization), training courses (2 annual courses - 4-5 field sessions), and field demonstration days.

The results achieved so far are promising and include a significant decrease of mineral N application and an improvement in the slurry and manure distribution.

5. **Conclusions**

The technical presentations delivered during the workshop showed a variety of models for the implementation of FAS ranging from checklist approaches to one-to-one schemes. MS are also starting collecting first feedback of the effectiveness of these different tools. Rural development programmes plays an important role in funding the use of advisory services, but in some Member States delay is reported in the implementation of the dedicated rural development measure and the farmer uptake is weak.

It was confirmed that FAS should keep a voluntary approach for farmer. It should be easily accessed and bureaucracy should be kept to a minimum. For its nature FAS should follow the evolution of agriculture and therefore it should be always possible to adjust its structure and contents in order to better meet the need of the sector.

Cross compliance should remain the core business of the FAS, but advice may be extended to other topics like agri-environmental schemes, climate change and energy balance. Anyway in some Member States some of these topics have already been included in FAS and issues covered by cross-compliance can have also an effect on some of these new challenges (e.g. practices related manure management, soil cover, soil organic matter included in cross compliance can have an effect on climate change).

A successful FAS needs very well trained advisors. Training sessions to update advisors’ competencies may be needed on a regular basis. Market can play a role in the regulation of the quality of the advisors, but its effect does not exist in systems where the advice is free for the farmer.

The cost of advice may represent a limiting factor for the farmer to ask for advice. Integrated advice covering different subjects, also beyond cross-compliance, can be expensive and hardly bore by the farmer. Introducing advice on business opportunity or on certification schemes can produce an increase of farmer income and therefore make the advice more appealing to farmers.

The advice should be targeted to the farmers who need it. In the current situation it seems that small farmers are the ones that receive less advice, with some exceptions like in Spain. It is not always easy to identify farmers that need advice but do not ask for it. If the advisory service covers a selected area like a catchment basin, there could be means of identifying farmers that do not take part in advisory
events and go and visit them with dedicated drop-in sessions. An advisor visiting a farm should be able to carefully identify that the farm is compliant in all aspects.

The evaluation of the FAS can improve the effectiveness of the tool. MS are collecting data to monitor the performance of FAS, but evaluation is a deeper, more complex and often expensive process that needs data related to what one wants to measure and evaluate. The use of data raises the issue of confidentiality of personal data. In addition the flow of information between control authorities and advisory bodies in both directions can be negatively perceived by the farmer and can decrease the trust in the FAS. Aggregated data represent a good opportunity for better focusing the topics for which advice is needed. Meetings among inspectors, advisors and policy makers seem to be efficient methods to share feedback and identify actions to improve advisory services to be delivered.
### Annex 1- Workshop agenda

**Thursday, 10th June 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>Registration of the participants</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>Welcome Ministry / DAR / JRC</td>
<td>15m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>FAS in Spain: results of the Spanish Workshop (in Spanish), Elena Cores Garcia, MARM, SP</td>
<td>30 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>Main issues and evaluation of the FAS implementation in Member States, Inge Van Oost, DG AGRI, European Commission</td>
<td>30m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>The cross compliance advice programme in England, Hugh Martineau, DEFRA, UK</td>
<td>20m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>The online delivery of Cross Compliance and FAS through Whole Farm Approach (WFA), Greg Krmadjian, DEFRA, UK</td>
<td>20m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI), Bob Middleton, Natural England, UK</td>
<td>20 m</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.10</td>
<td>FAS and FAT beyond cross compliance, Tomma Bieling, State Institute for Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas, DE</td>
<td>20 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>How to increase farmers participation in the FAS: experiences in the Italian regions, Simona Cristiano, Rete rurale nazionale, IT</td>
<td>20 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>FAS in Flanders: Organisation &amp; First Evaluation, Annemie Leys, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of Flanders, BE</td>
<td>20 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.10</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>1h 35 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>Working groups</td>
<td>2h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1- Advisory systems for and beyond cross-compliance</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- 2- Techniques and structures of Advisory systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3- Evaluation and Quality of Services for users</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Presentation and discussion of the results of the working groups

**Time:** 16.45

Duration: 45 m

**Speaker:** The JRC FAS web-database and questionnaire, Vincenzo Angileri, JRC, European Commission

**Location:**

### Friday, 11th June 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>Departure from Barcelona</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>Arrival to a fruit cooperative</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome and presentation of the advisory body GIRONA FRUITS, SCCL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bordils</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Visit to a fruit holding advised by GIRONA FRUITS, SCCL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>Arrival to the Natural Park Aiguamolls de l’Empordà</td>
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<td>Presentation and visit to the park</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Lunch in the park facilities</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Castelló d’Empúries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>Presentation of the farm advisory model: nitrogen fertilization scheme in areas of Gerona by Fundación Mas Badia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>Scheduled arrival at Barcelona (airport and hotel)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All presentations may be accessed on-line at:**

Abstract
JRC-IPSC action GeoCap, together with the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs of Spain and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Action of Cataluña, organised the workshop “Farm Advisory System (FAS) implementation in the European Union: experiences and prospects” held in Barcelona on 10-11 June. The event was attended by 105 delegates from 20 Member States, 2 accession countries and the European Commission. The technical presentations and discussion covered the ways to communicate technical innovation to farmers in order to help comply with cross compliance legislation, and, in some examples, beyond. Results and recommendations of the workshop, included in this report, will be valuable for the report on FAS that the Commission has to submit to the Council this year.
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