

GAEC implementation in Italy after Health Check

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1. National Decree on Cross-Compliance ⁽¹⁾

Italy has acknowledged the prescriptions on Cross-Compliance (CC) included in Reg. (EC) n.73/2009 by means of the National Decree n. 30125 of the 22nd December 2009.

It has been promulgated after a six-months work of the Ministry of Agricultural Policies staff along with experts from Italian Regions.

National Decree is a framework: it has been subsequently acknowledged by Italian Regions through 21 Regional Resolutions.

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2. Modification of the National Decree on Cross-Compliance after Health Check ⁽¹⁾

Addition of 2 more groups to farmers who has to comply with Cross-Compliance (CC):

- Beneficiaries of payments supporting grubbing up and restructuring of vineyards;
- Agro-Environmental schemes within Horticultural sector.

Addition of Farm requirements in SMRs text (Annex 1).

GAEC Modification (Annex 2)

Addition of calculations rules of CC reductions within the National Decree text (Annex 4)

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3. GAEC modification after HC₍₁₎

Today we deal with GAEC modifications (Annex 2), which have been implemented in Italy. They relate to four mainstreams:

1. Modification of the Annex 2 framework.
2. Prescriptions modification;
3. Applicability modification;
4. Alignment of the requirements attribution to the framework of the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽²⁾

Modification of the Annex 2 organization

CC standards, within the Annex 2 of the Italian National Decree on CC, have been grouped according to the Issues of the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009. Therefore, there are five sets of standards:

Objective 1 – Soil erosion: Protect soil through appropriate measures.

Objective 2 – Soil organic matter: Maintain soil organic levels through appropriate practices.

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3. GAEC modification after the HC ⁽³⁾

Objective 3 – Soil structure: Maintain soil structure through appropriate measures.

Objective 4 – Minimum level of maintenance: Ensure a minimum level of maintenance and avoid the deterioration of habitats.

Objective 5 – Protection and management of water: Protect water against pollution and run-off, and manage the use of water.

Therefore, each set is made up by those standards which (mainly) contributes to the same Objective, according to the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

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2. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽⁴⁾

Prescriptions modification

Introduction of the Objective 5 – Protection and management of water: Protect water against pollution and run-off, and manage the use of water). Therefore, in the Italian CC Decree there is a new set of standard, which is called “Measures for the protection and management of water”. It is made up by 2 standards: 5.1 - Respect of authorization procedures when use of water for irrigation is subjected to authorization.

5.2 –Establishment of buffer strips along water courses

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽⁵⁾

Applicability modification

In the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009, there are 7 standards, which are considered “optional standards”. In Italy, 6 of those are still compulsory because Italy had defined, for those standards, a minimum requirement for the GAEC before 1 January 2009.

They are: “Terraces retain”, “Standard for crop rotation”, “Appropriate use machinery”, “Minimum livestock stocking rates or/and appropriate regimes”, “Prohibition of the grubbing up of olive trees” and “Maintenance of olive groves and vines in good vegetative condition”.

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽⁶⁾

Alignment of the requirements attribution to the framework of the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

Standard 1.2 – Minimum soil cover. The enforcement of this standard has been widened to arable land and permanent crops: before it was limited to set-aside land.

Besides, now it relates to soil erosion objective: before it was attributed to minimum level of maintenance objective.

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽⁷⁾

Alignment of the requirements attribution to the framework of the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

Standard 3.1 – Appropriate machinery use. This standard is made up by one requirement: it is forbidden to till when the soil is too wet and machinery must be used in such a way to avoid soil structure decline. Before HC, this standard included the obligation to appropriately manage the ground drainage system (ditches, drains, etc.), too. It has been moved to Standard 1.1.

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽⁸⁾

Alignment of the requirements attribution to the framework of the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

Standard 4.4 – Retention of landscape features. The National Decree in force states:

- the observance of national and regional laws concerning retention of landscape features,
- and it includes, following to Annex III, landscape features such as hedges, ponds, trees in line, in group or isolated. Before HC, this standard included “terraces retain”, which, according to Annex III, has been moved to Objective 1 (Soil erosion), becoming Standard 1.3.

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽⁹⁾

Alignment of the requirements attribution to the framework of the Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

According to Annex III, in the National Decree in force, “Prohibition of the grubbing up of olive trees” (Standard 4.5) has been separated from “Maintenance of olive groves and vines in good vegetative condition”(Standard 4.3); whilst “Minimum livestock stocking rates or/and appropriate regimes” (Standard 4.6) has been split up with “Protection of permanent pasture” (Standard 4.1).

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3. GAEC modifications after HC ⁽¹⁰⁾

- On the whole, Italian farmers have to respect 20 requirements, relating to GAEC.
- The requirements refers to 14 Standards.
- The Standards have been grouped into 5 sets of Standards.
- Each of these sets refers to the Objectives stated by Annex III of Reg. (EC) n.73/2009.

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4. Problems, comments and considerations ⁽¹⁾

- Italy has overcome the possible overlapping between the standard 4.4 (i.e. Hedges retention) and Rural Development (RD) measures, which finance hedges protection: according to the meaning which has been attributed during last GAEC workshop in Dublin, in the case of standard 4.4, retention does not consist of an environmental enhancement but it is a preservative action, aimed at the non-elimination of hedges, at the limitation of negative externalities.
- Moreover, even the RD measures, which fund hedges planting, keep their “appeal” for farmers.
- There are, however, administrative difficulties in describing some landscape features.

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4. Problems, comments and considerations ⁽²⁾

- Regarding to Standard 1.2, the extension of the enforcement to arable land and permanent crops has been an essential decision in terms of soil erosion prevention!
- The elaboration of this standard as a fair framework, which takes in the variety of environmental conditions all over the country, has been a major issue during the six-months work of Ministry staff with regional experts.

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4. Problems, comments and considerations ⁽³⁾
- By 2012, Italy will apply Standard 5.2 - Establishment of buffer strips along water courses. The meaning that the words “establishment” and “buffer strips” are going to acquire seems to be decisive. There are 8 Italian RD Programs (RDP) which fund the establishment of buffer strips. From 2012 onwards, RDP will not fund this establishment any longer, since it becomes a CC standard. Therefore, the farmers, who own lands by water courses, will have to fund “buffer strips” planting on their own. They could decide not to invest in such a way; in this case they would not be compliant with CC.

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4. Problems, comments and considerations⁽⁴⁾

- Difficulties in translating environmentally friendly objectives in administrative prescriptions, which must be checked out. There are cases, where it is difficult to strike a balance between environmental ambitions and the possibility to control on-field applications.
- In some situations, EU prescriptions might state broader rules, adding more flexibility to CC with respect to the variety of environmental situations throughout Europe.
- It seems to be difficult to deal with some environmental commitment, which are initially funded by RDPs, when they become a CC standard.

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5. Conclusion (1)



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5. Conclusions ⁽²⁾

The “nice” map we have just looked at tells us about a “little” prejudice widely spread all over Europe and outside Europe, too. Next years could be helpful to scientifically demonstrate that the part of EU-budget allocated to agriculture is *not ineffectively* invested: along with the actual value of commodities, there are a number of public goods, which are provided only by the agricultural sector, whose value must be properly assessed. Actually, CC prescriptions are aimed at limiting negative externalities, but that could be a good starting point!

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Thank you for your attention!

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