

PRESS RELEASE

CROSS COMPLIANCE: FROM BIODIVERSITY TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

AGRICULTURE AS THE KEY PLAYER IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT

Rome, October 8th, 2010 – Reduction in soil erosion, maintenance of soil fertility and biodiversity protection are the first positive results obtained by the Italian agricultural activity within the new environmental challenge carried out by the Common Agricultural Policy – which allocates to such objectives a significant part of the funding -. “Cross compliance” is the keyword of this new strategy: a set of rules that farmers must comply with to ensure high standards of environmental and territory protection, food safety and public health, animal welfare.

The data generated from the first report on the implementation of this environmental standard, follow such direction both in terms of controls intensification and achieved results. The above mentioned report has been presented during the 2010 Cross compliance Workshop held in Rome last Friday by the National Rural Network - Ministry of Agriculture (in cooperation with the European Commission and AGEA).

As for the first issue, the field controls on the respect of obligations established by EU regulations, involved more than 22.000 farms in 2008, the number of farms increased more than fourfold compared to 2005 when the system was implemented. The infractions recorded are 2.600; in many cases such infringements refer to the Statutory Management Requirements bureaucratic and operating complexity and, in particular, to the agricultural requirements implementation in the Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. Such difficulties did not impede to achieve concrete and positive results in terms of environmental impact and agricultural activity.

Depending on the territory, a map of the various and different environmental critical issues can be drawn up. The farms at higher risk of erosion in Italy are located in sloping areas (Alps and Apennines) but also in Sicily, representing the 30% of the national territory. Cross compliance interventions, such as water management improvement, showed good results in terms of effectiveness, reducing the risk of erosion that is three times lower (from 30tons to less than 10tons/ha). Cross compliance interventions for habitat and landscape maintenance showed the

positive impact on biodiversity: the avifauna monitoring data in agricultural areas bring out,

since the Cross compliance and decoupling process introduction (2005), a gradual increase of bird species (10% average).

Opening the proceedings, Mr. Giuseppe Blasi, Director General for Rural Development Competitiveness – Ministry of Agricultural Food and Forestry Policies, underlined the important role played by the European debate: *“Some key issues belonging to Cross compliance are: the possibility to control the results on field, no discriminations among farmers, the simplification process and the possibility to communicate the achieved results to the public opinion. Each one of these elements can contribute to set up a package of rules essential for the new model of Agriculture aimed at providing public goods, also in view of the next post-2013 Community reform. On these bases, today, a range of good practices at European level has been presented, trying also to show their applicability in the present circumstances”.*

If not complying with cross compliance standards, a penalty will be provided and, in function of the infraction level, a reduction of the Community funding up to the 20% will be applied; in more serious cases, such as repeated infringements, the exclusion from the annual payment will occur.

At present, the total amount of direct payments allocated to Italian farms in the shape of “CAP payment entitlements” (1st Pillar) is equal to nearly 3,8 billion €, split in 9,5 million payment entitlements per 8,48 million Ha. The average amount of direct payments for each farm is equal to 2.500€, whose range is very broad at regional level: the leading region is Lombardy whose average amount is equal to over 10.000€ for each farm, followed by Piedmont with 6.500€; Liguria brings up the rear with less than 660€.

As for the 2nd Pillar, cross compliance requirements can be applied to different measures under Axis 2 (Environmental measures) for a total amount of roughly 1 billion € per year.

At present, the cross compliance requirements farmers must comply with, involve 1,3 million farms, almost twice the number of farms in 2005, due to the gradual increase of obligations and the subsequent CAP reforms that made different Community aid schemes merging into the Single Farm Payment.

The EU wanted this turn of the screw in order to strengthen the virtuous conduct of farmers, coherently with the new European model where Agriculture is no longer considered only as the agricultural raw material tank but it is also aimed at providing



“public goods” in the general public interest. The future CAP debate on post 2013 financial framework will help strengthening such objective.