**Integrated farm statistics**

As the EU’s policies evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, European statistics need to develop and meet users’ information needs efficiently. New technologies can help to combine and integrate different data sources without too great a burden on data producers. Farm statistics are the backbone of the EU’s agricultural statistical system. To increase their response speed to new data needs, the Commission put forward a new approach based on an integrated, flexible and modular framework. The Parliament and Council reached a negotiated agreement on the proposal, which is scheduled to be voted by Parliament at first reading during the July plenary session.

**Background**

The EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the most iconic policies that have accompanied the EU integration process from its early days in the 1960s until today, adapting to changing circumstances through its successive reforms. Similarly, since 1966 the EU’s farm structure statistics have developed over time to provide the knowledge basis for the taking of informed decisions as regards the evolution of the CAP. It is thanks to them that we know that EU farms are decreasing in number, are increasing in average number of hectares, and use a large share of the EU’s total land area as agricultural land. However, this information alone would not help to design and monitor the CAP. Farm statistics have thus evolved to respond to new policy requirements, which implies new data needs but also their cross-linking to data in other domains, from environment to rural areas. New technologies such as satellite data and more modern integrated IT systems for keeping and sharing data can help to further develop farm statistics, and simultaneously reduce the administrative burden and the costs of running frequent and wide-ranging serial surveys.

**European Commission proposal**

The EU’s current legislation has provided the framework for the Agricultural Census 2010 and Surveys on the structure of agricultural holdings over the last ten years, with the 2016 survey being the last one covered by the current provisions, and the next agricultural census – in 2020 – to be built on a new legislative basis.

Following on from its strategy for the modernisation of agricultural statistics in the EU, in December 2016 the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation that puts forward a new approach for integrated farm statistics. This is based on a flexible and modular framework that includes a decennial agricultural census – in line with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s programme – and regular, modular and ad-hoc sample data collections, varying in frequency, sampling and topics. The proposed system of farm surveys should allow the gathering of traditional and new data, while reducing the burden of data collection, and integrating previously separated datasets.

**European Parliament position**

The European Parliament’s Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) adopted its report on the proposal in October 2017. It supported the idea of combining different sources to collect farm data, such as the administrative registers for the management of CAP payments. It also required more details on EU farmers (young farmers, shared ownership, etc.) and more organic variables, and urged the introduction of data on farm safety. The text agreed between Parliament and Council negotiators was endorsed in the EP by the AGRI committee on 16 May 2018. It now needs to be voted during the July plenary session.

First-reading report: 2016/0389(COD); Committee responsible: AGRI; Rapporteur: Maria Gabriela Zanoá (S&D, Romania).