

Simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

As part of its ongoing drive to **reduce the regulatory burden and red-tape**, the European Commission has proposed a major simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy. Building on the improvements brought by the recent CAP reform, the time has now come to **harmonise as much as possible the rules covering the various agricultural markets**. The aim is to reduce red tape for both farmers and administrations by making rules more transparent, easier to understand and less burdensome to comply with.

The Commission has carried out a number of simplification actions since the mid-1990s. The Communication forms part of the CAP's contribution to better regulation and realising the objectives of the "[Lisbon Strategy](#)".

As a fully integrated common policy, the CAP obviously replaces a large quantity of national legislation which would otherwise exist. Agricultural and rural development policies are by nature complex, reflecting the need to meet a wide range of agricultural conditions and administrative traditions, and both internal and external policy objectives.

However, the Commission shares the concerns increasingly expressed by farmers over the burdens of red tape. For this reason, the concept of "technical simplification" aims at complementing the agricultural reforms by focusing on revision of the legal framework, administrative procedures and management mechanisms to achieve streamlining and greater cost effectiveness, without changing the underlying policies. The Communication underlines that simplification must not become a pretext to reopen policy decisions.

The Communication proposes to:

- identify and eliminate unnecessary or out of date provisions through a "legal audit" of existing rules, and to improve the structure and presentation of agricultural law;
- amalgamate the existing Common Market Organisations (CMOs) into a single CMO. The aim is to provide a single set of harmonised rules in the classic areas of market policy such as intervention, private storage, import tariff quotas, export refunds, safeguard measures, promotion of agricultural products, state aid rules, communications and reporting of data, without changing the substance of the existing instruments and mechanisms;
- assist national administrations to quantify and reduce burdens imposed on farmers;

In October 2006 the Commission organised a simplification conference "[A simple CAP for Europe – a challenge for all](#)", focusing on the views and needs of stakeholders.

On this occasion it also presented a **CAP simplification action plan** [[pdf](#)] with the concrete measures envisaged and taking account of appropriate suggestions made by Member States and stakeholders.

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en.htm