

Brussels, 19 March 2008

Transparency: All recipients of EU farm aid to be published by April 2009

All recipients of European Union agricultural and rural development payments will be published in detail under new rules adopted today by the European Commission. By 30 April, 2009, the full name, municipality and, where available, postal code of every recipient will be published in a clear, harmonised manner on nationally-managed websites with a search tool which enables the public to see how much money each person or company received. Amounts will be broken down in direct payments to farmers and other support measures. For rural development policy, which is co-financed between the EU and the national government, the information will cover both EU and national money. This information will be available by 30 April every year for the previous financial year and must remain on the website for two years from the date of its original publication. In addition, the European Commission will manage its own website which will have links to each national site.

"This is taxpayers' money, so it is very important that people know where it is being spent," said Mariann Fischer Boel, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. "Transparency should also improve the management of these funds, by reinforcing public control of how the money is used. Only in this way can we guarantee an informed debate about the future of the Common Agricultural Policy. This level of transparency is something both we and the European Parliament have been pushing for and we're glad we now have agreement on how the system will work."

The new Financial Regulation, adopted in 2006, sets out the principle that Member States have to ensure the publication of a list of all recipients of all forms of EU agricultural and rural development funds for each financial year. The Commission Regulation adopted today, which has received the support of the Member States, sets out the details of how this publication will be done, after the Council had agreed on the main elements last November.

It provides that each Member State shall publish the information on a website which allows people to search for the beneficiaries by name, municipality, amounts received (and the currency concerned) or a combination of these three criteria and to extract the information as a single set of data. It requires Member States to inform the beneficiaries that their data will be made public and that they enjoy the rights accorded to them by EU data protection rules, thus ensuring that the system complies with the requirements of data protection.

This information will be available from 30 April of the year after the money was paid and remain on the website for two years after the initial date of publication. The publication of data on rural development funds will begin slightly earlier than data for direct farm payments. For all rural development funds spent between 1 January and 15 October 2007, the information will be published by 30 September 2008.

Given the different organisational structures across the EU, the Member States themselves will decide who will be in charge of setting up and maintaining their single website. They can also decide to publish more detailed information if they so choose. The Commission will run its own website, providing a link to the individual national sites.

A number of Member States already publish the recipients of EU agricultural funds. The Commission already provides a link to allow members of the public to find these national websites.

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

Today's decision is the latest stage in the Commission's long-running Transparency Initiative, an idea which aims to increase openness and accessibility of EU institutions, raise awareness of the use of the EU budget and make the Union's institutions more accountable to the public.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/kallas/transparency_en.htm