

Compliance with Standards in European Agriculture vis-à-vis Main Competitors on the World Market; A Comparative Approach on Public Benefits

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Standards are introduced in agriculture to control agricultural practices and improve their harmful effects on soil, water and air. Other measures are implemented to improve land management practices. Cross-compliance is introduced in the European Union, and the main objective of the instrument is to improve compliance with standards that were previously ignored. In addition, rules for Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) need to be respected. It is a mandatory system to be implemented by Member States, and applicable to farmers claiming direct payments. Costs involved for farmers who ignored standards in the past. Cross-compliance could create a level playing field, with harmonisation of requirements across Europe, also creating benefits to the environment and other public goods.

The current understanding comparing measures in the EU vis-à-vis main competitors in the world remains limited. Differences in farming practices, biophysical, socio-economic and geo-political conditions are large. The ambitions to achieve standards in agriculture may also differ across main exporting countries in the world.

An attempt is made to compare standards in agriculture on environment, land management, animal welfare as well as human and animal health. Conditions in the European Union are compared to the main competitors on the world market (USA, Canada and New Zealand). Emphasis is given towards:

- Costs of compliance for the farming community;
- Public benefits achieved of measures taken to enhance compliance with standards that were previously ignored;
- Impacts of legislation on competitiveness of agriculture.

The paper adopts a comparative approach, presenting examples from different parts of the world.