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Regional Development and Agricultural Research

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Abstract. The new EC policy involves a number of modifications concerning the objectives and means which national and regional research institutions have to take into consideration.

Key words. Regional Development – Agricultural Research

Titre. Développement régional et recherche agricole

Résumé. La nouvelle politique agricole commune implique un certain nombre de changements dans les objectifs et les moyens dont les appareils de recherche nationaux et régionaux doivent tenir compte.

Mots clés. Développement régional – Recherche agricole

I. – The principles in the past and the implications of the present EC Regional policy (Single Market)

1. General Approach

We could say that years ago the general aim of the different Regional Policies was to reduce territorial disparities (reduction of production, physical handicaps) by means of subsidies, fiscal help, etc.

At present, the principal aim of these policies is: to apply the structural adjustment with the less harmful implication which means lower prices and a liberalization of markets.

We then have to be practical and accept the realistic picture. On a short term basis, we will probably have an abnormal share of external financial resources among the different regions because the most prosperous ones show better conditions to compete in the free market below the general structural adjustment of the country as a whole.

2. The new EC policy

The above is modified when we take into account the present agreements concerning the establishment of the single market. This is a good way for

introducing a new approach to the previous statements.

So, the EEC countries agree within a real and political compromise in order to give priority to the economic and social cohesion. It is within this new EC context, as far as Regional development is concerned, that the objective is to reduce territorial disparities and the subsequent implications on the actual regional differences and to introduce new policies to balance differences in terms of comparative disadvantages among the regions (compensatory allowances: mountain and less favoured areas, direct income aids). We must point out that if we apply structural adjustments, clear zones and disadvantaged areas immediately appear which increase the regions' differences in terms of development and social growth.

Therefore the structural funds of the EC will play an important role in this case.

II. – Basic objectives of the Ministry of Agriculture's program in order to balance development growth and political applied research (Sectorial Plan)

We believe that with the present economic situation, at farm level and within the new Common Agriculture Policy of the EEC, the targets, in the context of R&D, might be to point out some guide lines or basic objectives, on the occasion of meetings with Universities, different branches of the Ministry of Agriculture, etc. Freedom within a certain framework is very important to carry out research work allowing to:

– improve the competitiveness and profitability of agriculture and agroindustry by diversification and reduction of costs of production (integrating the consideration of its impact on ecosystems);

– improve the quality and safety of food products as well as to develop new products of specific interest for the national agro-industrial sector;

– improve the analysis and management procedures applied to the rural sector and, at the same time, the socio-economic conditions of less favoured areas, including the conservation, restoration and compatible use of environment and landscape;

– and develop studies on the economy of research and development and on technological change in agriculture. Transfer of technology and adoption of technical innovations.

Again we have to keep in mind that the framework of the Spanish agricultural sector is very much alike that characterizing Mediterranean Agriculture.

Our main constitutional law established seventeen autonomous regions varying as regards agricultural characteristics. It is consequently worthwhile to point out that 60% of the Spanish agricultural production is obtained in regions with Mediterranean characteristics (Andalucía, Baleares, Cataluña, Valencia, Extremadura, Murcia, Navarra, La Rioja y Canarias). These zones benefit from favourable natural conditions in relation with the European Single Market, but other aspects have also to be considered (structural, commercial, etc).

A few significant figures:

– 13% of the Agricultural GDP is produced in Aragón and Castilla-La Mancha.

– 27% of the Agricultural GDP in Galicia, Northern Spain and Castilla-León (encountering various problems, and with a high agricultural population).

It must be pointed out that 40% of the territory has to face the problem of desarticulation of the territory due to the fact that the average population density is very low (roughly, 25-50 inhabitants/km²).

Other constraints:

Extremadura is in a geographically bad position. Castilla-La Mancha has similar problems as Extremadura, and, in these regions, a modernization of structures is necessary as well as a younger population.

Castilla-León has one of the most difficult perspectives in the Spanish agricultural future (specially combining livestock and cereals).

Finally, a very important problem of the Spanish agriculture is to cope with the increasing desertion

of a very important part of the rural population. We have 37 inhabitants/km² (half of Europe's average) and yet many areas with 10-15% inhabitants/km². The mountain less favoured areas represent more than 60-65% of the total territory. This figure will increase with the new PAC. We hope that the new regulation will improve our structural situation: reforestation, environment measures, etc.

III. – Our system of evaluation and its influence on the balance among the Regional Development

Our system of resource allocation concerning the distribution of projects presented by researchers from different regional communities for evaluation is as follows.

First of all this evaluation has two important components: it is a competitive system; it is an external evaluation as well.

We also have to say that the system concerns only the "Sectorial Plan of Research". That means approximately 1/3 of the total annual budget devoted to agricultural research in Spain (National and Sectorial).

In order to obtain a proper share of the budget among the different regions with a definitive purpose of cohesion, we found out a polynomial formula to be worked out each year.

The relevance of this polynomial formula is to allow an homogeneous distribution and a correlation between the regional development of the region and the research potential.

We will try to explain this polynomial formula as follows:

\$ (share) = **Initial Allocation** (based on three significant components below. The relative weight within the polynomial is 57% + **Horizontal Allocation** (based on a common fund for all the projects not included in the initial allocation). The relative weight within the polynomial is 33% + **Reserve Allocation** (based on a flexible concept in order to create a "cushion" which allows different applications as: joint project with enterprises, demonstration projects and monitoring, evaluation of the whole process) whose relative weight is 10%.

Historic fund. It considers the historical background during the last three years as far as the number of projects presented by the communities. Its relative weight is 14%.

Equalitarian fund. It considers the same quantity for each community. Its relative weight is 18%.

Equalitation fund. It is the most significant component of the polynomial mentioned above. Its relative weight is 25%. The aim is to distribute proportionally according to the:

- total agrarian production,
- active population,
- number of researchers

of the different regions of Spain.

Both the equalitarian fund and the equalitation fund in the above mentioned formula represent the main components concerning cohesion purposes.

We must always take into consideration that beside this polynomial formula, all the regions also have their own distribution of funds for research (national plan, proper budget, EC research programs).

It is also necessary to mention that before the regionalization of Spain (Constitution Law), the

research budget was centralized and each year it was distributed among several regional research centers. These regional centers were located in the main agricultural areas and consequently their activities were linked to sectorial purposes (Galicia: forage and pasture land; Andalucía: olive oil and irrigation; Levante and Cataluña: horticulture and citrus, etc.).

Table 1 shows how the purposes of the cohesion work out properly. If we compare columns number two and number four (obtained according to the polynomial formula), we can observe according to the subtotal figures the high correlation obtained.

To sum up, we can say that it is possible to balance a more decentralized research policy with flexible objectives within a framework and, at the same time, achieve regional development, as far as research influence is concerned taking into account the cohesion purposes.

We hope that this policy, set as an example, can be useful to our Mediterranean friends.



Table 1. Agricultural Gross Product and Resources for Agricultural Research in the Autonomous Communities of Spain

Autonomous Communities	% Regional in the Agricultural Gross Product (GDP)	% of the Agriculture in the Regional (GDP)	% of the Resources for Agricultural Research
Northern-West Spain			
Galicia	10.27	9.61	10.8
Asturias	1.93	3.80	6.3
Cantabria	1.31	5.63	1.7
País Vasco	2.16	1.94	—
<i>ST1</i>	<i>15.67</i>		<i>18.8</i>
North-East Spain			
Navarra	1.69	6.22	2.6
La Rioja	1.54	11.55	2.1
Aragón	5.16	8.20	8.8
<i>ST2</i>	<i>8.39</i>		<i>13.5</i>
East Spain			
Cataluña	7.19	2.05	13.34
Comunidad Valenciana	9.21	4.84	11.01
Murcia	4.32	10.64	3.48
<i>ST3</i>	<i>20.72</i>		<i>27.83</i>
Central Spain			
Castilla-León	10.71	10.00	4.92
Madrid	0.71	0.24	4.71*
Castilla-La Mancha	8.10	13.29	4.86
<i>ST4</i>	<i>19.52</i>		<i>14.49</i>
Southern Spain			
Extremadura	4.85	14.89	4.68
Andalucía	26.74	11.67	16.53
<i>ST5</i>	<i>31.59</i>	<i>21.21</i>	
Insular Spain			
Baleares	1.07	2.23	0.50
Canarias	3.04	4.37	3.80
<i>ST6</i>	<i>4.11</i>		<i>4.30</i>
Total	100		100

* Influence of the capital, population and services

Note: ST3 (East) + ST5 (South) = Research: 49%, Agricultural GDP: 52.32%.

