Employers’ Group
of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the E.U.

Continued vocational training for agricultural workers in the European Union
A substitute for inadequate initial training, an opportunity to develop skills and the need to promote worker mobility.

REPORT
from the second seminar organised by Geopa-Copa-Copa on the implementation of

THE EUROPEAN AGREEMENT OF 5 DECEMBER 2002
ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN AGRICULTURE

Hämeenlinna (FI) from 28 September - 2 October 2011

With the support of the Directorate-general Employment, Social Affairs of the European Commission
Geopa-Copa-Copa, rue de Trèves 61, B 1040 BRUXELLES tél : (+32 2) 287 27 11
On 5 December 2002, Geopa-Copa-Copa and EFFAT signed a European agreement on vocational training in agriculture. The aim of this agreement was to put forward a number of initiatives on continued vocational training for workers in agriculture to the national organisations representing employers and workers in agriculture, the Member States’ public authorities and the European Commission.

The first Geopa-Copa seminar on the implementation of this agreement was held in September 2004 in LISBON.

The second Geopa-Copa seminar on the implementation of this agreement took place between 28 September and 1 October 2011 in HÄMEENLINNA (Finland) and was organised by the Finnish agricultural employers’ organisation MTA (Maaseudun Työnantajaliitto).

This seminar, which was made possible thanks to the support of the European Commission, brought together 68 representatives from the national agricultural employers’ organisations that are members of Geopa-Copa from 20 European Union Member States, as well as three external speakers. The working sessions were held on 28 and 29 September, with 30 September being taken up with a visit to two training centres and two farms.

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**SUMMARY**

Opening of the seminar by Mr Bernard LEVACHER, President of Geopa-Copa-Copa

Welcome speech by Mr Kimmo HOVI, MTA President

Speech by Mr Pekka PESONEN, Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca

Speech by Mr Arnd SPAHN, Secretary of EFFAT

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**THE AGRIPASS PROJECT AND COOPERATION WITH ESCO**

**SUMMARY REPORT: THE STATE OF PLAY IN THE MEMBER STATES**

- Training at the employers’ request
- Training at the employees’ request
- Validation of the experience acquired
- Financing for continued vocational training

**SIX EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES**

- The “poultry passport” in the UK
- Training advisors in the Netherlands
- Reconversion training for farmers in Belgium
- Access for jobseekers to jobs in agriculture in France
- The validation of experience acquired in Finland (see summary report)
- Financing for continued vocational training in France (see summary report)
Mr Bernard LEVACHER, Geopa-Copa-Copa President, opened the seminar by warmly thanking the colleagues from Finland for having organised the meeting in Hämeenlinna. He specifically welcomed Mr Veli Matti REKOLA, a member of the Geopa-Copa bureau, who had been inviting the group to visit Finland for a number of years.

Mr Levacher introduced the programme for the three days of the seminar and encouraged all participants to contribute towards exchanging information on how vocational training was organised in different countries. Training for our workers was considered vitally important for the competitiveness of our businesses and European agriculture needed increasing numbers of qualified workers.

PRESENTATION BY MR KIMMO HOVI

Mr Kimmo HOVI, President of MTA, welcomed all participants to the Finnish autumn. He explained that the difference in temperature between summer and winter was in the range of 60 degrees. Finnish agriculture was carried out in the very northernmost part of Europe. There was a great deal of forestry and breeding of fur animals but there was also cereal production which exceeded the needs of the country despite low yields. He specified that he himself farmed over 320 hectares and a small area of forest. This year the yields for rapeseed amounted to 2.4 tonnes per hectare and 3 to 4 tonnes for barley. Approximately 90% of farms were family farms but the number of them was declining and they were growing in size and specialising more and more and therefore had a growing need for workers.

Finland had a long tradition of collective bargaining. The agricultural employers’ organisation, MTA, was set up in 1945 and signed the first collective agreement in 1946. Collective agreements were mandatory for all employers including those who were not members of the organisation. Collective agreements in agriculture, horticulture, plantation forests and associated industries organised in particular the seasonal variations in working hours. The revision of the European Working Time Directive risked having an impact on this organisation.

HÄMEENLINNA was the birthplace of the national composer SIBELIUS which was a source of pride to those who lived there.

Mr Veli Matti REKOLA also welcomed participants to the town close to where he lived. To start the seminar he introduced a musical interlude with a pianist and a singer who would interpret scores by SIBELIUS.

(The presentations from Mr PESONEN and Mr SPAHN mentioned below were given on the second day of the seminar.)

SPEECH BY MR PEKKA PESONEN
Mr Pekka PEISONEN, Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca, welcomed the participants to Finland and in particular to a town which was very dear to him.

He remarked that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) had to be a sustainable framework for European agriculture whilst the global demand for food was on the rise and production capacities were decreasing, especially because of climate change. There was a need to improve the profitability of agriculture and to guarantee food security.

Agriculture also had to ensure a better environment and the European Commission’s proposals with regard to the development of the CAP placed emphasis on this point under the second pillar. It was unacceptable, however, for the profitability of agricultural holdings to be affected under this pretext, for example, by stopping production on 7% of land and imposing administrative constraints upon farmers. This would not encourage young people to enter the sector and invest in it.

The Commission has made, nevertheless, some good proposals for example with regard to altering the references for direct payments, creating an emergency fund and supply chain security. On the other hand, a link between direct support and maintaining jobs was unacceptable.

The CAP was the only common policy to have built Europe. In the view of Copa-Cogeca, the CAP had to allow farmers to contribute towards the prosperity of the European Union and its citizens amid the current challenging economic times.

As far as Geopa-Copa was concerned, we were approaching the end of Mr LEVACHER’s presidency and the Geopa-Copa Secretary, Agnès LUYCX, was to retire at the end of the year. A great wealth of expertise had been acquired by Mr LEVACHER and by Agnès which had to be retained. The Geopa-Copa assembly was to elect a new present on 23 November, and Agnès was to be replaced by a full time member of staff; Copa had decided to allocate the appropriate resources to that end. Copa was convinced that social questions were growing in importance and that agricultural organisations needed to have a European approach to the subject.

President LEVACHER thanked the Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca for addressing the members of Geopa-Copa. He underlined that agriculture could create jobs for workers. Copa too, however, had to be concerned about the social problems of farmers, especially concerning retirement for older farmers and replacement incomes for farmers who had been victims of the crisis and of restructuring.

Ms Tania PAGANO (Italy) stated that it was important to feel that Geopa-Copa was part of Copa. Agriculture could create employment and it was important for this aspect to be taken into account by Copa. Concerning the reform of the CAP, she feared that this would only result in a decrease in revenue for Italian farmers.

Ms Danuta KOZUSZNIK (Poland) confirmed that since joining the European Union in 2004, Poland had seen many structural changes. With regard to the implementation of the CAP, the new EU Member States had to be on an equal footing with the older Member States.

Mr Chris BOTTERMAN (Belgium) was convinced that in spite of the economic crisis, it was necessary to invest in agriculture but also to protect what was produced in Europe by providing consumers with information regarding the origin of food products. The cost of the work was much higher in Europe than in the rest of the world, due especially to the regulation in Europe, for example, on health and safety. In this sense another survey should be carried out on labour costs in the Member States.

Ms Jovita MOTIEJUNIENE (Lithuania) insisted on the fact that the newer Member States also wanted equality with the older Member States. The newer countries were not starting from the
same point and she asked what specific measures were in the pipeline for these countries that were not yet quite as competitive.

**Mr Veli-Matti REKOLA (Finland)** noted that the structural changes underway were leading to a decrease in the number of farms but in an increase in size of those that remained which was creating jobs. For Copa, the question of employment was therefore becoming very important.

**Mr Pekka PESONEN** observed that the reform of the CAP had led to a decrease in the budget for agriculture and therefore a decrease in support. This would be difficult for all concerned, including the newer Member States. Some people would lose out. Landowners were not happy.

Farmers’ incomes had to be generated by the markets. Currently, only Brazil and the United States were investing in agriculture. Our objective therefore had to be to improve the competitiveness of European agricultural holdings; there was scope for progress in this domain. Importing agricultural products from other countries could only be possible if European standards were respected.

We also had to highlight the role of agriculture in maintaining and developing employment. Agriculture and the related sectors in the food chain provided employment in rural areas where there were no other jobs. The cost of labour was increasingly squeezing the competitiveness of our farms.

The Commission’s proposals certainly constituted a good point of departure from which we would have to negotiate.

## SPEECH BY MR ARND SPAHN

**Mr Arnd SPAHN, Secretary of EFFAT,** presented the point of view of the organisation representing workers in agriculture on the implementation of our 2002 European agreement on vocational training.

The term “continuous training” covered two aspects:
- continuous vocational training; the aim of which was to supplement the initial training and which was directly linked to the occupation itself. This type of training had to be financed by employers or by funds to which employers contributed;
- continuous personal training which was carried out outside of the scope of professional activity: political, social or linguistic training, etc. This could be financed by the workers themselves, by the State or by other institutions.

Vocational training in the agriculture sector was organised in very different ways across the 27 Member States. The national key players, employers and employees, had different requirements in this respect. If the initial training had been lacking, the demand for continuous training was important. Where the initial training had been very comprehensive, continuous vocational training was considered superfluous.

From now on, we had to take into account that in agriculture the labour market was becoming more and more cross-border. Workers were arriving from different countries and employers had to be able to access information on the skills and qualifications of these workers. We had been trying to overcome this difficulty with AGRIPASS. A register of agricultural jobs was to be set up – 32 key jobs had been indexed – and a description needed to be added for the skills required to perform these jobs. The characteristics of jobs in agriculture were very complex. By way of example, a good pig-keeper had to have knowledge in the area of animal health and animal care to avoid having to outsource this part of livestock farming. A cowman did not only have to look after animals but also
had to know how to grow wheat and rapeseed. This versatility of agricultural jobs had made it difficult to implement AGRIPASS, which had been difficult for the Commission services to understand. LANTRA ought therefore to be congratulated for having done a lot of work to come up with solutions that were appropriate for our sector.

That being said, we also should be concerned about initial vocational training which was indispensable for allowing workers to progress further in their careers. The Member States must be called upon to organise initial training according to the skills that would be needed in 5 or 10 years’ time.

Geopa-Copa and EFFAT had to join forces to address these issues at European level. European financing had to be obtained to hire a person who would work for both of our organisations to investigate everything being done in the 27 Member States in terms of training, identifying deficiencies and putting forward solutions.

Mr SPAHN thanked Mr LEVACHER for all his efforts over the years in steering the Geopa-Copa ship and helping social dialogue to progress at European level. He wished him all the best for retirement; an active but much less stressful retirement.

THE AGRIPASS PROJECT AND COOPERATION WITH ESCO

Mr Martin LE VRANG, from the Employment Services unit at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, introduced the European Commission’s ESCO project. He specified that the unit he was representing oversaw the coordination between the national public employment services. EURES was a platform for exchanging information on job vacancies and applications, curriculum vitaes (CV) and study and training opportunities.
Within the framework of the EU 2020 Strategy, the Commission had decided to create a European multilingual classification (taxonomy) of skills and aptitudes, professions and qualifications. Qualifications (awarding of certificates) would be described in terms of results i.e. acquired competences.

The ESCO instrument would comprise four levels:
- the administrative board, made up of 2 representatives from the Commission, 3 from national employment services, 2 from training institutes, 2 employers’ representatives and 2 worker representatives, as well as 4 observers including CEDEFOP. The board met for the first time in February 2011 and was to hold its third meeting on 28 October.
- the secretariat, in charge of defining the administrative board’s strategic guidelines, comprised representatives from DG Employment and DG Education and Culture.
- the committee of experts, who were to meet in November, on which sat Mr Tony BIRD who was participating in the seminar.
- 30 reference groups in different domains including the Agriculture-Forestry-Fisheries group which would be one of the first to be meeting again this year. In fact, agriculture which was characterised by very high mobility and labour shortages, had already begun to work with the AGRIPASS project.

ESCO was intended to become a common language of interoperability at European level between employment sectors, between teaching and employment and between training and the return to work. The European classification could be used by jobseekers to describe their skills when writing their CV and by employers when defining the skills and aptitudes required when writing a job vacancy notification that was about to be sent out by public and private employment services. The intention was not to harmonise national classifications which could be more comprehensive and detailed. At the time of the seminar there was already designation of 5000 jobs and 6000 skills in 22 languages. The European classification was expected to be finished by 2017.

In the discussion that followed Mr LE VRANG’s presentation, Mr FIDDAMAN reminded participants that the AGRIPASS tool had already been introduced in the United Kingdom and that there was some frustration about how slow it was for projects to progress at European level. Mr LE VRANG confirmed that it was a long-term project but that the intermediate results could be used well before 2017.

Mr Tony BIRD, representative from LANTRA (UK) indicated that the role of the organisation he was working for was to facilitate the recruitment of workers in the agricultural professions and worker mobility in the United Kingdom. His role was also to detect workers’ skills and their potential shortcomings in order to direct them to the appropriate training. Furthermore, checks had to be carried out to verify these skills against the skills required for certain jobs by regulation or by clients.

Mr BIRD gave a potted history of the AGRIPASS project:
- May 2007, resolution adopted by Geopa-Copa and EFFAT with a view to setting up AGRIPASS;
- October 2007: after having envisaged a “paper” system, the decision was made to create an instrument that was accessible by internet;
- January 2008, LANTRA gave a demonstration of the linkage between job vacancies and applications by internet at the joint sectoral committee;
- October 2008, LANTRA created an inventory of agricultural jobs;
- October 2009, initial contact with EURES;
- March 2010, LANTRA carried out a demonstration of the British AGRIPASS tool at an ESCO conference to be able to prove that it was already operational;
December 2010, EFFAT published a report on the possible use of AGRIPASS in pig breeding but paradoxically left out the concept of going online;

- in 2011, use of AGRIPASS in the United Kingdom to create a passport in the poultry sector which would be discussed during a presentation given by James POTTER during the seminar.

AGRIPASS could be used to recruit migrant workers thanks to:
- The placing online of the description of vacant positions and required skills;
- The placing online of CVs with skill indicators;
- Then the linkage of compatible vacancies and applications.

At the time of the seminar, over 70% of European citizens had access to the internet without including mobile phones with screens. The European authorities’ delay in supporting this project was therefore regrettable.

In the debate that followed the presentation, Mr VAN DER GRIND (NL) enquired as to what the possible links were between the national public employment services and EURES. Mr BIRD and Mr LE VRANG specified that ESCO was to form a common denominator for describing jobs and skills. AGRIPASS was already more precise than the European classification and the national classifications could be integrated easily into this tool.

The rapporteur Arnold BRUM said that there continued to be a clash with EFFAT who wanted AGRIPASS to be a system for validating skills. There was also confusion surrounding the term “classification” which for ESCO was a description of the listed jobs and skills required for these jobs whereas for the people negotiating collective agreements, the classification of jobs served to establish the hierarchy of salaries.

Mr LEVACHER closed the debate by offering his congratulations for the progress achieved at the level of the European Commission as the initial contact with EURES had been difficult.
Arnold BRUM, the seminar’s rapporteur, presented an initial summary of the responses to questionnaire. This presentation was then supplemented over the course of the debates by Messrs and Ms Veli-Matti REKOLA (Finland), Claudia MERLINO and Tania PAGANO (Italy), Stephan GERSTEUER and Stefan SCHÖNEMANN (Germany), Manuel GARCIA MATAS and Vicente PEREZ GARCIA DE PRADO (Spain), Chris BOTTERMAN (Belgium), Agnieszka ROLEWSKA (Poland), Bob FIDDAMAN (UK), Bohemil KUDLA (Czech Republic), Jovita MOTIEJUNIENE (Lithuania), Bernard LEVACHER and Jerôme DESPEY (France), Milka KOSANOVIC (Croatia).

1. Training at the employer’s request

There had to be a distinction between two scenarios: training decided upon unilaterally by the employer and work-linked training offered to the worker by the employer.

A. Unilateral decision by the employer.

The question of whether the employer had the power to force employees to receive training was not asked. The answer to that question appears to go without saying as the employment contract states that the employer has a right to issue instructions and the employee is obliged to follow them. It would appear, however, that the matter is not always that straightforward: in Germany the employer could not force the employee to embark upon training, but the employee’s refusal could nevertheless have consequences on their career thereafter or even justify dismissal if the employer believed that the training was essential in order for the employee to continue to do his/her job.

Consultation of staff representatives. Another question that went unasked was whether or not, before sending an employee on a training course, an employer had to consult the company’s staff representatives: trade union, staff representatives or works council. It is likely that this is the case in many Member States but a representative forum would still have to exist within smaller companies. This consultation may also relate to the drawing up of an annual training plan for the company’s personnel and this training plan may be subject to the negotiation of a company-level agreement.

Some types of training were mandatory. Training on safety in the workplace is mandatory everywhere but in different guises:

- In Finland, a two-day training course on safety is mandatory upon hiring an employee or if an employee changes jobs.
- In Spain, training on safety is compulsory at least once a year and also upon the hiring of a seasonal worker. Without this, the employer is liable to face a minimum fine of 3,000 euros. In the event of an accident at work involving an employee who has not received the mandatory training, the Social Security could force the employer to reimburse 30 to 50% of the cost of the accident. Additionally, the employer risks standing trial and a civil case to pay damages-interest of up to 300,000 euros. Court cases of this nature are becoming more and more frequent. The employer may take out insurance against this risk but not all employers are insured.
- In Poland, some types of safety training had to be renewed periodically. For example, for workers using plant protection products, training was mandatory every five years.
- In the United Kingdom, a one- or two-day safety course was compulsory for carrying out a range of activities. These training courses resulted in certificates which allow the employee and the employer to prove that they are up to date.
- In the Czech Republic, certified skills are needed to carry out some activities such as driving tractors or operating agricultural machinery.
- In France, the legislation is very restrictive. The employer must ensure that employees have adapted to their role in the workplace and also ensure that employees are still able to do their jobs whenever they are affected by developments in technology. In the event of an employee being dismissed for professional incompetence, the employer is penalised and has to pay out
compensation if he/she cannot prove that training was offered that would more than likely have meant that the employee could have kept his/her job.

B. The training contract proposed by the employer.

Alongside the training that is decided unilaterally by the employer, the employer may, in some countries, offer to hire an employee with an employment contract that includes a period of training, alternating periods of working within the company with training days at a training centre.

- In France, this is known as the “professional training contract”. These are contracts that combine work and training and they can be signed by young people under the age of 26, older workers over 45 or people who are unemployed or who have disabilities. It is either a fixed-term contract lasting at least six months or training that is provided during the first few months of the contract. The employee must complete at least 150 hours of training at a training centre and very often more: up to 1,200 hours in some cases.

- In Italy it is possible to sign a “professional apprenticeship contract” combining work and training; with the employer benefiting from fiscal advantages in this case, or an “integration contract” with some categories of workers such as senior workers or unemployed women, which is encouraged by State aid.

- In Spain there is a training contract that combines work and training during which the employer pays a wage that is lower than the minimum set by the collective agreement.

2. Training at the request of the employee.

The right to paid leave for training purposes exists in several countries but in very different formats. There are three different scenarios as far as the choice of training during training leave requested by the employee are concerned:

- free choice of training by the employee;
- choice limited to agricultural training;
- choice subject to employer approval.

A. Free choice of training by the employee.

In France, Belgium, Finland and Croatia, workers have, under certain conditions, the right to take leave to undertake training of their choice. This may be vocational training for non-agricultural jobs, foreign language training or general cultural training, etc.

- In France, the right to take leave in order to go on a training course is open to employees with at least two years of seniority, of which at least one year must have been spent with the company in question. The employer does not have the right to refuse the employee leave; they may only postpone the date according to production constraints. The duration of the leave is dependent on the length of the training course and may not exceed one year. At the end of the course, the training centre must award the employee with a certificate of attendance that must be submitted to the employer. The employer is not obliged to maintain the salary nor to finance the training activity. In practice, this type of training is only requested if the employee receives a wage and training costs from the training insurance (FAFSEA). This body only finances training courses that include at least 140 hours of training, potentially reaching up to 1,200 hours. The applications are examined by a regional joint committee from FAFSEA. It must be noted that seasonal workers may also obtain financing for a training course if they can prove that they have worked for at least 12 months or 1820 hours or during the last 4 years for at least 4 months or 607 hours on an open-ended contract during the last 24 months. FAFSEA has an annual envelope of 25 million euros in order to finance these training periods and 80% of applications were able to be accepted. In 2010, 1,620 workers had their training course costs paid for, of which 742 were seasonal workers, at an average of 890 hours of training.

- In Belgium, the employer must grant a leave of absence for an employee wishing to undertake training within the framework of “educational leave” which is financed by the State.
- **In Finland**, workers may obtain unpaid leave if they sign up for a university training course and in which case they receive state aid for students. After 8 years of professional activity, they may also go on a training course for adults covered by the “education fund”.
- **In Croatia**, employees may obtain 7 days of training leave with the employer continuing to pay their salary, whilst the employee is not required to prove that they have indeed been on a training course.

**B. Choice limited to agricultural training.**

In Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Lithuania, employees have a right to take leave of absence on the condition that they are undertaking an agricultural vocational training course.
- **In Italy**, employees have the right to take 200 hours of statutory leave over a three-year period. Employers continue to pay their wages during this time. Approximately 1% of employees exercise this right every year.
- **In Portugal**, employees are entitled to 35 hours of training per year whilst receiving their full salary on the condition that it is for agricultural training. Training costs are paid for by the state.
- **In Spain**, the right to take leave for training purposes whilst continuing to receive a salary is regulated by different modalities by 50 regional collective agreements in the agriculture sector.
- **In Germany**, the laws of 12 Länder out of 16 have provisions for training leave for employees working for companies with 5 employees or more and who have at least 6 months of seniority. These workers may receive leave of absence for 5 days a year (or 10 days over a two-year period) on the condition that the training selected by the employee is recognised by the Land. The employer does not have to approve their choice but may only delay the worker’s departure in certain cases.
- **In Lithuania**, the law allows employees to take 40 days of training leave per year in order to receive vocational agricultural training financed by European funds. Farm-owners may also benefit from these activities.

**C. Choice subject to employer approval.**

In Austria, Poland, Bulgaria, Latvia and France, employees may take the initiative to go on a training course but their employer must agree to the course’s content. Employers do not continue to pay their wages, except for in Poland where employees must guarantee that they will return to the farm to work once the training course has come to an end, as well as in France.
- **In Austria**, employees receive financial support through an administrative body. This must be a training course consisting of at least 20 hours per week.
- **In France** there is a legal clause called the “individual right to training”, the “DIF” in French. Every worker accumulates every year the right to 20 hours of training that can be drawn concurrently over 6 years, i.e. a maximum of 120 hours of training. By way of example, a worker who has not used his/her DIF for 5 years has accumulated the right to take 100 hours. If he/she follows a training course that is 40 hours, he/she still has 60 hours left over which will increase again by 20 hours a year. The worker decides when to exercise their right and must obtain the employer’s approval regarding the choice of planned training activity; a procedure is in place in the event of a disagreement. The training costs are covered by the employer and the worker continues to receive a wage if the course take place during working hours. The course may also take place outside of working hours and in this case the worker receives an allowance of 50% of their net hourly wage per hour of training. (The question of knowing if the training course outside of working hours constitutes “working time” or a “rest period” with regard to the European directive has not yet been resolved.) In practice, the employer asks the training insurance fund (FAFSEA) to cover these costs and remuneration. In 2010, 6,197 workers in the agriculture sector benefited in this way from FAFSEA covering these costs to the tune of over 3 million euros.
3. The financing of continued training.

This report only concerns continued training for workers currently employed by companies. The question of financing for training for jobseekers and other people in difficulty (people with a disability etc.) shall not be examined here.

Providing training to employees comes at a cost. The main obstacle in the development of continued vocational training for workers is obviously the question over financing. There are two different types of expenditure: paying the employee’s wages whilst they are receiving the training and the cost of the training invoiced by the training provider, which may be a school or public or private training centre. There are also additional costs when the training does not take place in the workplace: transport costs, accommodation, meals away from home.

Continued training is in theory financed by employers. Continued training is a matter for employees on a current employment contract. If the training is decided by the employer, it is normally the employer who pays. In several countries, the public authorities share these costs in different ways: free provision of training centres, payment of a training allowance to employees, etc. In some cases, the employees themselves make a contribution. The situations vary too dramatically to be described within the context of our survey.

In six Member States, the law or a collective agreement has set up a system whereby mandatory contributions are made by companies into a fund: France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Spain and two Länder in Germany. These funds were set up by collective agreements in the form of an association or a mutual and are managed by the social partners. The general principle is that all employers pay a contribution and the funds cover, according to different criteria, the training costs and payment of the employee’s wages or an income replacement during the training course.

A. FAFSEA in France

(Insert presentation given by A. BRUM on “good practices” here)

Since 1971, the law has made it compulsory for employers to participate financially in continued vocational training. The employers’ contribution, expressed as a percentage of salaries, is partially paid to a training insurance fund and partially used to finance training for the company’s workers (companies with fewer than 10 employees have to pay the entirety of their contribution into a fund). Companies which do not use the whole of the fund available for training for their workers have to pay the remaining part to the fund or risk sanctions.

In agriculture, in 1972 a national agreement created the Training Insurance Fund for Farm Workers and Agricultural Businesses, FAFSEA. This agreement was signed by the trade union organisations representing employers and employees in agriculture and its associated sectors. FAFSEA is administered equally by the representatives of these organisations. It is licensed and checked by the State because of the fact that the employers’ contribution can be likened to a tax. FAFSEA asked the Social Agricultural Mutual (Social Security) to collect this contribution. A generally applied collective agreement makes it mandatory for agricultural businesses to contribute to FAFSEA. There are 15 other funds which work in a similar way.

The amount of the contribution depends on the average number of employees (see table). Furthermore, for workers on fixed-term contracts, including seasonal workers, an additional contribution of 1.00% is due from all companies regardless of their numbers of personnel.

Contributions are shared within FAFSEA, businesses do not benefit from a special drawing right on the contributions that they have paid. Applications to fund training activities are sent to FAFSEA by the employers (for the company’s training plan, professionalisation contracts, individual right to
training - DIF) or by the workers (for the training leave, skill set, validation of acquired experience – VAE). These applications are examined and accepted or rejected by the regional joint committees. FAFSEA also employs ... advisors working in ... regional offices. Their mission is to establish the diagnostics of businesses’ training needs and to organise training programmes for the larger firms or collective plans for smaller firms.

In 2010 FAFSEA had resources that amounted to 212 million euros. It financed 6.4 million training hours for 155,000 employees and a total amount of 201 million euros see table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTRIBUTIONS FROM COMPANIES TO THE FINANCING OF TRAINING IN FRANCE</th>
<th>More than 20 employees</th>
<th>Between 10 and 19 employees</th>
<th>Fewer than 10 employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Businesses in question</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training decided by the employer</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
<td>0.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual training leave on CIF</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Training leave CIF-CDD) (*)</td>
<td>(1.00%)</td>
<td>(1.00%)</td>
<td>(1.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CONTRIBUTION</td>
<td>1.60% (+ 1.00%)</td>
<td>1.05% (+ 1.00%)</td>
<td>0.55% (+ 1.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF WHICH: transfer to FAFSEA</td>
<td>0.55% (+ 1.00%)</td>
<td>0.55% (+ 1.00%)</td>
<td>0.55% (+ 1.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF WHICH: use in company</td>
<td>0.85%</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies paying into FAFSEA</td>
<td>4,445</td>
<td>6,176</td>
<td>167,879</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(*) This additional contribution is due for employing workers on fixed-term contracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAFSEA COUNTS IN 2010</th>
<th>RECEIPTS</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions from companies Cofinancing (Regions, EU)</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Management costs 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| FINANCED TRAINING ACTIVITIES |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2010 | Recipient employees | Training hours | Cost (million euros) |
| Training leave (CIF) | 878 | 1,444,000 | 32.7 |
| CIF CDD | 742 | | |
| VAE, Balance | 1,272 | | |
Professionalisation and individual right

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIF</td>
<td>14,955</td>
<td>2,276,600</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company training plans</td>
<td>137,218</td>
<td>2,689,100</td>
<td>136.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>155,218</td>
<td>6,409,000</td>
<td>201.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. EDU and MSVW in Belgium**

The national objective is to finance training to the tune of 1.9% of salaries. This objective was set in reference to the European recommendation within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. Each year the various professional sectors have to make additional efforts to achieve this objective. The agriculture sector conforms to this rule especially through a mandatory contribution to the training funds in addition to the training costs that the businesses pay for directly. Officially agriculture in 2010 achieved the level of 1.3% but if the training activities that are directly financed by small enterprises that are not required to publish an annual social balance are taken into account, the level rises to 1.7%.

Two training funds were set up through collective agreements, EDU in Flanders and Mission Secteurs Verts in Wallonia. In both regions, collective agreements introduced for agriculture and horticulture (i.e. specialised crops) a compulsory payment of 0.50% of salaries. These contributions are recovered by the national social security organisation and are considered social security contributions but they are the property of the social partners. Both funds are managed equally by the employers’ and employees’ organisations who signed the collective agreement and are, in fact, the same people. These funds reimburse employers with all or part of the training costs and any remuneration that has been paid during the training courses.

**C. FORCEM in Spain**

The law introduced a mandatory contribution for the financing of training. This contribution amounts to 0.70% of salaries, of which 0.60% is paid for by the employer and 0.10% has to be covered by the worker. Until now, the agricultural sector has not been subject to this contribution but a recent law has included agriculture in this system as of 2012. This contribution is recovered by the social security and is then paid to FORCEM.

FORCEM is a fund that is managed by a tripartite administrative board: The employers (the CEOE which represents larger companies and the CPME) the two trade union workers’ confederations (CC.OO and UGT) and the State administration. The farmers’ organisation ASAJA which is, however, a member of CEOE, is not represented by the Representation. Until now, FORCEM has given very little credit to the agriculture sector. ASAJA and the two workers’ trade union federations signed an agreement in 2008 asking for the supplementary resources needed to finance training for workers in agriculture. Given that contributions will have to be paid in agriculture as of 2012 it is hoped that the situation will improve from then on.

**D. FORAGRI in Italy**

Vocational training is mainly organised and financed by the Regions. It is organised within the framework of structures created by the employers’ organisations.

In 2000, a law introduced a new social security contribution of 0.30% of salaries. It is a mandatory contribution paid to the social security institution but what sets it apart is that the employer may decide to pay this contribution into a training insurance fund put in place by the social partners in the various professional sectors. If the employer does not select this option, the contribution
remains in the social security. The employers’ decision is not definitive and he/she may revoke it or decide to pay the contribution into another fund in a different professional sector.

In 2006, a national collective agreement set up a specific fund for agriculture, FORAGRI. It is managed equally by the three agricultural employers’ organisations and the three trade union federations for workers in agriculture who signed the agreement. The social partners produce publicity to encourage agricultural employers to pay into this fund. The fund’s annual budget is to the tune of 4 million euros. FORAGRI offers territorial training programmes to employers. The employers who contribute to FORAGRI may, with the agreement of trade union delegates, sign their employees up to the training activities on offer.

A project suitable for large companies is planned for 2012. These companies may save up their contribution of 0.30% over three years to be able to finance major training activities that are adapted to meet the company’s specific needs. The contributions that haven’t been used after three years will be pooled within FORAGRI.

E. The “qualifications funds” in Germany

After the reunification of Germany, an urgent need for training arose. In fact, agriculture and forestry in the former GDR employed an excessive number of workers who were very poorly trained and very inefficient. The need for training also exists in the West and as such a national agreement created a contribution for financing training. This agreement had been declared to be generally applicable. However, legal action led to this agreement being cancelled using the argument that in the East fewer than 50% of agricultural employers were part of the employers’ organisation.

Two funds were then created by regional collective agreement, in Schleswig-Holstein and in Hesse. These agreements were declared to have general application in these two Länder. In the Land of Schleswig-Holstein, the compulsory contribution is 5.11 € per employee and per year. It is paid into a “qualification fund” managed by the organisations that signed the agreement. The budget amounts to 180,000 euros. The managers decide upon the activities that they will agree to finance or to cofinance. No transfer is made to the employers, the fund pays the training centres directly. Following the setting up of this fund, a certain number of employers decided to leave the professional agricultural organisation. In Hesse, an analogue fund was set up.

Comments from the rapporteur

The examples listed above give an overview of the options that can be considered when creating specific financing for continued vocational training through compulsory contributions.

a) There are two possible vectors for setting up a mandatory contribution, either by law or by a collective agreement that is applied generally. The law either may introduce a tax or a tax of a fiscal nature, or a social security contribution. The collective agreement may create an advantage that is financed by the employers and benefits the employees.

b) A collective agreement aims to regulate employees’ working conditions. It applies to individual employment contracts in which employees are in a subordinated legal position with regard to the employer. It determines especially the minimum level of remuneration which is either directly due to the employees or granted through an insurance body that is financed by the employers.

This for example is the case of financing for a provident society which pays benefits to employees in the event of reaching certain objective conditions set out in the collective agreement such as sickness or reaching retirement age.
With regard to training, the collective agreement may create the right for the worker, for example, the right to take 120 hours of training leave after six years of seniority with the obligation for the insurance body to finance the training. There is no need to obtain the employer’s approval with regard to the content of the training selected by the employee, and the insurance body cannot refuse to pay on the pretext of not having sufficient resources. In fact, the right of workers is determined by the collective agreement. Even if it is managed by the social partners the insurance body does not have the power to alter this right and to make this decision. If a problem with financing arises, the social partners must take on board their responsibilities: either decrease the planned advantages or increase contributions.

c) The aim of a social security contribution is to finance a facility established by law. As is the case in insurance bodies set up by collective agreements, contributions are due when the objective conditions described by law are met. The social security body may not refuse to pay using the pretext of having a lack of resources: they must take out a loan whilst awaiting a change in law.

d) A tax or a tax of fiscal nature is not directly linked to the financing of a right. Generally speaking, the State (or local authorities which are recipients of a local tax) has the power, under the control of the electorate, to decide upon how its resources are used. It may also delegate to a private body, which it must then approve and check, the task of managing the resources generated by a tax and the task of financing the activities described by law. Managers of these institutions necessarily have the power to decide whether the activities they are financing are appropriate as the law was not able to create a drawing right for employees on the State’s resources.

The examples provided for France and Spain fall under financing through tax: an approved body has the power to decide whether or not the training activities that they are financing with this fiscal resource are appropriate.

In Italy the contribution is classified a social security contribution but it does not correspond to a right to social benefits.

In Belgium, it is a conventional contribution that is qualified as a social security contribution and in Germany it is unquestionably a conventional contribution but in both countries this contribution does not correspond to a drawing right for a worker.

The above observations are in compliance with an analysis within the framework of French law. It is highly likely that the provisions that exist in the different countries given are consistent with current national legislation. The debate on this subject ought therefore to continue.

4. The validation of acquired experience.

The European agreement of 2002 prescribes access for workers in agriculture to VAE. Many agricultural workers have real skills but do not possess diplomas. They began to work at a very young age and acquired their skills “on the job”, on the farm through contact with their employer and fellow employees. An official authority should be able to validate these skills and award a diploma or part of a diploma attesting to the qualifications that have been gained this way. The agreement also proposes that the representatives of employers’ and workers’ organisations be involved in the validation process and take part especially in examining juries.
The European Commission’s Communication of 27 October 2010 announced that a proposal would be made at the Council to promote and validate training outside of school. It is therefore worthwhile looking at this question.

VAE exists in 10 of the 18 Member States that were surveyed. The social partners actively participate in the validation process in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, Austria and Latvia. It is specified that in Belgium, VAE is only currently accessible for two agricultural jobs in Flanders and three in Wallonia. In the United Kingdom, VAE is rarely used. In Sweden, VAE provides access to the “Green card” which remains to be seen as to whether it is truly the same as in France or in Finland.

In the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal VAE does work but the social partners are not involved in it. It would be interesting to find out whether this is due to the monopoly that the teaching profession does not want to share with the social partners.

In Spain, the law exists but is not used in practice. In Italy, the law establishes a “citizen’s training booklet” but does not organise VAE. In Hungary, VAE does not yet exist and that is also the case for Poland, Bulgaria, Ireland and Cyprus. It does not exist in Germany either and German employers have explained that they wouldn’t want it to because it would create an intolerable administrative burden. They believe that the working certificates issued by employers are credible enough to attest to the professional qualifications acquired in the workplace. This type of response leads us to contemplate our cultural differences....

The example of Finland. Mr REKOLA stated that since 1964 adults have been able to obtain qualifications without having the obligation to follow any formal training. A test system allowed skills to be recognised and validated, regardless of the way in which they were acquired.

An education committee in the agriculture sector was set up within the directorate general for teaching. It is made up of teaching staff, employers’ representatives (MTA) and representatives from the workers’ trade union federation. The committee defines the requirements needed to award diplomas (qualifications). There are two categories of qualifications:

- Complementary vocational qualifications that validate the skills needed to perform a given job.
- The specific vocational qualifications validating the skills needed to carry out more demanding and complex tasks.

In agriculture, 9 complementary qualifications are available (crops, livestock farming, organic crops and livestock farming, agricultural mechanics, the training of horses, teaching horse riding, farrier training, reindeer breeding, artificial insemination and 1 specific qualification for the breeding of fur animals.

In horticulture, there are 3 complementary qualifications and 3 specific qualifications for flower growing, landscape gardeners and nurserymen/women.

In fish farming there is 1 complementary qualification.

In forestry, there are 3 complementary qualifications and 2 specific qualifications.

The committees in charge of testing skills in agriculture, horticulture etc., are also made up of employers’ and workers’ representatives. They validate the qualifications of candidates or only part of a qualification. These committees work closely with teaching establishments and vocational schools. In fact, although no formal preparation is required to sit a skills test, 95% of candidates undertake training during the course of which they benefit from an individual learning programme.

During training courses, employees benefit from training leave that is not paid for by the employer. If the duration of the training is at least equal to two months or 43 days, they benefit from an allowance from the “education fund” of which the amount varies between 62% of the salary (monthly salary of 1,600 €) to 47% of the salary (salary of 3500 €).

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE
“BRITISH POULTRY TRAINING” AND THE “POULTRY PASSPORT”

Mr James POTTER presented the poultry passport created in the United Kingdom in 2008. It is an online database which contains a list of standardised jobs (poultry worker, person responsible for the hatchery, etc.) and lists the minimal training standards for these jobs. Employers and employees can determine the training required for a given job.

The training courses undertaken by each employee are uploaded to the system. The poultry farm owner receives a username and password to be able to access their employees’ files. Employees may view their own file. The system is financed by a contribution from employers consisting of £20 per employee subscribing to the system and then £20 per year for updates. When the worker leaves the farm, their file is saved and can be transferred to a new employer. The employee may keep his/her own “poultry passport” when leaving, for a fee.

At present, 263 farms have signed up to the system. 3,350 passports have been issued and another 800 are being processed which represents approximately 80% of workers in the poultry sector. Employers have joined the system who only have one employee and others have up to 1000 employees. The advantages are clear for the profession (verifying that production standards and quality assurance are being respected, statistics), for the employer (instant access to a person’s training file who he/she employs or is considering employing, identifying training needs, motivation and specialisation of staff) and for the employee (proof of training when searching for a new employer or planning their career path).

TRAINING ADVISORS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Mr Gerard VAN DES GRIND revealed that in the Netherlands, the agriculture and horticulture sector was changing rapidly. Farm-owners were employing staff and especially staff who were qualified in different areas, including the processing and marketing of agricultural products and environmental protection, etc. Initial and continued agricultural training is essential. The range of training on offer must be adapted to businesses’ needs. This is why agricultural and horticultural employers resort to training advisor services who form the interface between training establishments and businesses.

Advisors receive training requests from businesses, help employers to plan their staffing needs, supply information on the training provided at various training establishments and organise training programmes for businesses. They work as a team to share their experiences and they run a website to provide information on existing training.

The training advisors are approved by AEQUOR, the Ministry of Agriculture’s training institute. Their work is boosted by the social partners. They are collectively financed by a contribution from employers from various professional sectors and, currently, by a temporary additional subsidy from the Ministry of Agriculture.

RECONVERSION TRAINING FOR FARMERS IN BELGIUM

Mr Chris BOTTERMAN presented the action undertaken in Belgium to reconvert small agricultural and horticultural farm owners who have had to stop their farming activities due to economic
difficulties. Anyone interested may register for training modules to be able to reconver as a worker on agricultural and horticultural farms which need a qualified workforce.

The training is free and a certificate confirming that the training has been completed is issued. They do not, however, receive any benefits or unemployment benefits which can be a serious problem for the family income during the training course. On the other hand, finding work after the training is facilitated by the agricultural or horticultural employer receiving an employment bonus of approximately 3000 euros. This bonus is paid by the joint agri-horticultural social fund on the condition that the interested party is employed on an open-ended contract and that they are still there six months after being hired. Additionally, the employer benefits from a reduction in social security contributions of 400 euros per quarter with an increase if they are the employer’s first employee or if the person is under the age of 30 or over 50.

ACCESS FOR JOBSEEKERS TO AGRICULTURAL JOBS IN FRANCE

**Mr Jérôme DESPEY** explained that because of a labour shortage in agriculture, the social partners had signed on 6 January 2010 a national agreement that created the “ADEMA” tool, access for jobseekers to agricultural jobs. These are beginners’ training courses in agricultural jobs that are designed to attract jobseekers, especially the long term unemployed from villages and suburbs who may not have considered agriculture at all. The scheme is made up of sessions at a training centre and a three-week immersion period on a farm. The operation is being piloted by FAFSEA, which puts jobseekers from the “Pôle Emploi” (public employment agency) in touch with agricultural employers and training centres.

ADEMA was launched in June 2010 by FAFSEA. As of 31 December, 1578 people had benefited from the scheme, of which 78% completed the whole programme. This initial cohort comprised 69% of people under the age of 35 and 36% of women. Their initial level of training was very low and 7% were illiterate. 55% had particular physical, health or family difficulties, etc. The host companies chosen by the trainees were mainly landscaping businesses (25%), livestock breeding farms (20%) market gardening businesses (16%), nurseries (12%) wine-growing (9%). 40% of host companies had fewer than 5 employees. The periods spent in the training centres had an average duration of 154 hours, i.e. 243,000 hours in total. 147 training centres scattered all over France took part in this scheme with an average of 10.7 trainees per centre. The whole scheme was financed by FAFSEA for 3.2 million euros.

This scheme benefited from extensive media coverage by the print media, radio and television. In 2011, the objective is to reach 3,000 trainees and 6 million euros in credit has been earmarked to that end.