

An 'eForesee' Meeting

ARI - Agricultural Research Institute, Cyprus

21-22 March 2002

Background

The 'eForesee' pilot projects are the first foresight activities to be carried out in Cyprus. ARI – the Agricultural Research Institute is not a policy maker as such, but it plays a key role in policy making by providing expert input to the policy process. The purpose of this visit was to demonstrate to an audience from ARI and the Ministry of Agriculture, the Natural Resources and the Environment that foresight is:

- an important tool for policy related consultation and decision making,
- can be applied to adoption of the aquis communautaire by accession countries,
- can be applied to reform of the agricultural sector,
- requires a significant level of stake-holder involvement, and
- is directly supported by the Commission via the STRATA programme.

Specifically we hoped to gain explicit support for the eForesee project from the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment in Cyprus, to answer questions about foresight, and to discuss specific themes for the foresight pilots to be undertaken in the eForesee project.

Conclusions

Michael Constantinides - the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment gave his full support to eForesee saying that he would 'stand by' the results of the project. It was clear from his questioning that he is focused on results and that he is interested in the concrete benefits that foresight can provide for this sector in Cyprus.

Short presentations by Guenter Clar of the European Commission, Patrick Crehan of CKA in Brussels - the project coordinator and Nikos Maroulis of Logotech in Greece - representing the recently launched Greek National Foresight exercise, were well received by the directors and personnel of ARI. However it is clear that foresight is an unfamiliar concept for most people, and it will take a little time before it is really understood and before people see either how they can use foresight or how they can contribute to a local foresight exercise.

The advice to the Cyprus team is that they should bear in mind that this is a pilot project, and can be used to demonstrate the role of foresight via concrete results. For this reason it is not necessary to bring everyone on board the project for the pilot, from the beginning.

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The pilot exercise should be build around early adopters and individuals who are interested in constructive experimentation with the foresight tool. Given the nature and role of a 'pilot project' the choice of theme is important in that it should be:

- Sufficiently complex to warrant a foresight approach, and
- Sufficiently limited to achieve a useful result given the available resources and time constraints of the project.

The original concept for the foresight pilots in Cyprus was to use them to provide input to decision making related to accession negotiations in the field of agriculture. It is clear that given the timetable for negotiation, this will not be possible. The opinion of participants from ARI was that the more complex challenges lie in dealing with the consequences of the negotiation - the change management and decision-making that comes afterwards as the impact of decisions become apparent. A number of studies have been carried out on the immediate impact of accession on the agricultural sector in Cyprus. However this has not been accompanied with a vision of what Agriculture in Cyprus could become in the future. Such a vision will provide a guide to managing the immediate consequences of change due to the adoption of the aquis communautaire. Furthermore the moment of change could be used to launch the whole sector on a new trajectory of development towards the future.

The following potential themes were briefly discussed:

- A Vision of Agriculture in Cyprus in the year 2010,
- Cyprus and the Challenge of Genetically Modified Organisms,
- Agriculture as a Knowledge Industry,
- Benefiting from the Introduction of Environmental Impact Assessment Laws,
- A Long-term Vision for Water Management in Cyprus,
- The impact of new materials, nano-technology and robotics on agriculture,
- The role of new technologies to boost agricultural productivity,
- Dealing with the impact of accession on agricultural establishments,
- Linking Energy, the Environment and Agriculture in Cyprus.

Follow-up

FU1: The Cyprus team will hold a meeting to decide on the main theme for the first foresight pilot in Cyprus. The challenge will be to select a theme that is sufficiently complex to warrant a foresight approach, yet sufficiently focused to yield useful results in a pilot scale exercise, taking account of the resource and time constraints of the eFORESEE project.

FU2: The Cyprus team will hold a meeting to discuss the theme and possible dates for the 'Second International eFORESEE Conference' to be held in Cyprus towards the end of 2002. These dates must be checked with the Commission so as not to clash with the launch of the Sixth Framework Programme, and other scheduled events in the last quarter of the year.

FU3: The Cyprus team will gather available information as inputs for the Cyprus foresight activity, and make it available via the eFORESEE and ARI sites. This material

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should include the various studies carried out in Cyprus on the impact of compliance with the 'acquis communautaire' on the agricultural sector.

FU4: The Cyprus team will follow-up on the link that has been made with the Greek National Foresight exercise, via Nikos Maroulis of Logotech, and via Prof. Koukios - the leader of the Greek National Foresight Exercise. In particular they should investigate the possibility of exchanging material on the agriculture and biotechnology related sectors with the Greek exercise. In particular the material produced by the Greek teams in Greek language can be readily used in Cyprus.

FU5: The Cyprus team should consider the use of experts and visionary thinkers from agriculture, and involve them in panel discussions or brainstorming sessions as part of the foresight exercise. In particular they should consider people from outside Cyprus and from outside the foresight community, and focus on individuals who can bring fresh insights based on specialist knowledge of domains on a convergence trajectory with traditional agricultural fields.

FU6: The Cyprus team will provide a short progress report on each of these tasks as a contribution to the collaborative research effort of the eFORESEE project.

Annex 1: Elaboration of the Role of Foresight in the Accession Process

Annex 2: Power Point Presentation given by Patrick Crehan

Annex 3: Final Version of the Meeting Agenda and List of Invitees