



OPERA



Press release

**Indicators and quantitative targets to measure the progress towards sustainability
Report presented in Brussels today**

Brussels, 27th January 2011.- Today the independent agricultural think-tank and Research Centre OPERA* presented Risk Indicator selection and Quantitative Targets, an extensive and comprehensive compilation of pragmatic implementation guidelines recommended by OPERA to measure the progress of the sustainable use of pesticides in agriculture. The report aims to support national authorities in transposing the European Sustainable Use Directive, and in elaborating their national actions plans for the implementation of the said Directive that recently entered into force .

The context: EU Sustainable Use Directive 128/2009

The transposition **into national laws and plans** throughout the European Union of the Sustainable Use Directive 128/2009 is foreseen **by December 2011** while the **national action plans** are due to be presented **by December 2012**.

This reform in European agricultural policy creates an important opportunity to make significant environmental gains, alongside efficient agricultural production. OPERA is a not-for-profit scientific think tank, committed to sharing and developing the best practices in agri-environmental measures, to assist pan-European implementation of the most appropriate ideas and helping to deliver the best possible results. The objective of OPERA is to provide a list of recommendations to policy makers that can improve the future effectiveness of agriculture policies across the EU.

Implementation guidelines for the transposition phase

The **Indicators and Quantitative Targets** are expected to help national regulatory bodies to assess trends in pesticide risk reduction and to judge the effectiveness of their national programmes implemented under the Sustainable Use Directive.

The **implementation guidelines** presented today are part of OPERA's contribution to the implementation process of the Directive 128/2009. It is also one step in OPERA's activity to promote the development of a sustainable use of pesticides in the agricultural production system in Europe.

*"The **farmers** need to be supported to take action towards sustainability, on one side through the guidance and regulatory framework provided by the **national authorities** and on the other side through **the signals received from the market**. Equally, society needs to understand the added value of the measures taken by the farmers and be ready to reward these efforts. We need simple and pragmatic recommendations which are harmoniously perceived and interpreted by all the actors involved,"* comments OPERA Director Prof. Ettore Capri.

OPERA has undertaken to look into the future challenges for European agriculture and food production. The study sets out to explore risk prevention measures, and the document proposes a "toolbox" of indicators and targets to be used in the development of the National Action Plans under this Directive.

The recommendation consolidates the contributions of more than 20 experts from around 12 countries in Europe and representing academia, industry, farmer associations, NGOs, authorities and research organizations. They have been gathered in a dedicated OPERA working group which has been active during 2010 to produce the recommendation.

"This study is an important contribution to our understanding of the role that all stakeholders play in helping farmers become more sustainable. I trust that it will inspire the work of many officials



when the new directive will undergo **the transposition phase** later this year," says Alexandru Marchis, OPERA Coordinator of the Policy Team.

Economic, social and environmental factors of a sustainable strategy

Any set of the selected **indicators** should reflect a minimum number of economic, social and environmental aspects, to cover all implications and effects of the measures. **Risk Indicators** can, in turn, highlight Environmental, Social and Economic factors of a sustainable strategy.

The OPERA panel of experts considers that the most coherent procedure to establish quantitative risk reduction targets is to give benchmark values over time to the most significant of the indicators selected to monitor risk reduction. This approach allows also a dynamic change of the quantitative targets based on the results of the monitoring activity and the efficiency, at a certain point in time, of different mitigation measures to address risk reduction. While the indicators measure the progress in achieving a risk reduction, their quantitative changes over time represent a quantitative target which is achieved through the implementation of the national action plans.

Following the consultation process, OPERA has sought to prioritise strategies and Risk Indicators that can be pragmatically implemented and are achievable by all stakeholders. The focus for policymakers and stakeholders using this "toolbox" should be on the most appropriate measure that will deliver the greatest benefit, along with selecting the Risk Indicator measures that can quickly and clearly identify which tools are working most effectively, and are most efficient in achieving the desired effects for each individual Member State.

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The report can be downloaded on www.OPERA-indicators.EU

About OPERA

(): OPERA is a think tank and a Research Centre of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy, a major European private university.*

It is an independent, non-profit scientific organization, committed in supporting the successful implementation of the agri-environmental measures within the European legislation.

Within this context OPERA reviews, advises and promotes the sharing of knowledge in the implementation and measurement of risk reduction methodologies, which are crucial for the successful implementation of the Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides.

The working group members who contributed to the development of the paper are: Alain Dini, Cesare Pacini, Pierre Nadin, Antonella Romano, Giustino Trincia, Ton vander Linden, Johan Vanhemelrijck, Colin Brown, Ettore Capri, Kiki Machera, Martin Streløke, Martin Wilks, Marco Trevisan, Maura Calliera, Nicoletta Toniutti, Paul Chambers, Romano De Vivo, Sara Sánchez-Moreno, Silke Bollmohr, Alexandru Marchis.