

A single system for quality employment and more effective services in the 25 Member States

- *Development of a **European Best Practice Guide** for the certification of work and services.*
 - *Employment and environment protection are at the heart of EU strategies aimed at maintaining a high standard of living and social protection*
- In response to current environmental and food safety concerns, European legislation has been under pressure to regain the confidence of consumers and of society in general in the quality of agricultural produce. This has been achieved by means of various European regulations.
- Hence the fundamental importance of Agricultural and Rural Contractors (ARCs) who carry out this work on behalf of farmers!
- Anxious to safeguard the future of ARCs, at its **European Conference on 27 April 2006**, the European Confederation of Agricultural and Rural Contractors (CEETTAR) discussed its proposed best practice guide (traceability standard). The aim of this project was to define the contribution of ARCs to compliance with Community and national standards within the framework of the conditionality of agricultural subsidies.
- By means of this best practice guide, it will be possible to implement on a larger scale the certification of work and services provided by our members (ARCs) in the Member States.

Set objectives:

In order to achieve the above aims, CEETTAR anticipates the following results:

- Creation of quality employment opportunities
- The creation of a safe environment in order to increase the quality of services.
- Adding value to activities conducted by contractors.
- Transfer of knowledge from the “old” members to enterprises in the new Member States.
- A marked increase in opportunities to access new private and public markets, particularly in terms of rural development.

- Development of the professional skills of contractors and employees through the optimisation of activities.
- Promotion of more efficient equipment and techniques leading to improved working conditions and food safety, by means of the quality system and networking.

CONCLUSION

- In line with the Lisbon strategy and other international commitments/agreements between the Union, its Member States and their international partners, employment and environment protection are at the heart of European Union initiatives aimed at maintaining a high standard of living and social protection.
- Ultimately, the project has certainly responded to the concerns expressed by clients of rural service contractors (farmers, industry, public authorities, consumers) but this does not mean that the relevant conclusions should necessarily be implemented at local, regional or European level.
- The new, ever-changing and increasingly complex realities of the rural service contractor sector are still too often ignored or rarely recognised, even though they form an integral part of the agricultural sector. These realities are both the consequence and end product of the contemporary importance and crucial role of relationships between people and land, society and food, agriculture and rural development.
- We have now reached the end of a chapter, but the story is set to continue. New demanding and innovative chapters will certainly be added to the epic story of our countries, societies and people. It is up to us as contractors to show an open mind and a willingness to take action, which will enable us to face challenges, fulfil new expectations and express the thoughts of everyone involved.
- More indispensable and open to change than ever before, we are primarily builders of hope and architects of change.

Without wishing to boast on behalf of CEETTAR's members, it would be not be possible to conclude this report without expressing our feeling of pride in what has been achieved with very limited resources by our European organisation. No one could fail to notice the topicality and urgency of the problems that we tackle, the initiatives that we strive to implement, the proposals that we support and the role that we assume.