

# **Monitoring of the Walloon agricultural state with remote sensing: project management and benefits for the department of agriculture**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The DGA (Direction Générale de l'Agriculture) is a department of the Ministry of the Walloon Region which was re-established in 2002 during the last reform wave of institutional Belgium. As such it now gathers the resources and competences of the former DGA and partly of the former federal Ministry of Small Enterprises, Traders and Agriculture.

Both former structures were approved as Paying Agencies by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) of the European Commission. Since 2002 the DGA's Division of Agricultural Aid has taken over this role.

Both structures had build up an extensive knowledge base within the field of agricultural geomatics. In 1993 the federal institute launched the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) based on continuous mapping of agricultural parcels from one meter resolution orthophotos to manage the direct aids. On the regional side, particularly the former Walloon Office for Rural Development, geomatics implementations were dedicated to the management of the rural area: acquisition, production and integration of thematic cartographic data for internal use.

The present DGA capacity is due to a long time collaboration with several national scientific institutes having specific domains of expertise (universities, research centres, private companies) and particularly with the federal Science Policy Office. Thanks to its intervention the DGA benefited from several successful technology transfer projects.

The most recent project, SAGRIWATEL, aimed at developing tools to monitor the status of the Walloon agriculture with remote sensing. This project relied on a strong partnership between the DGA and four Walloon research centres. The SAGRIWATEL project provided the very useful knowledge within a domain of increasing political interest, namely rural development, having relevance in three sectors: supervision, control and decision making support.

From the very beginning of the project the DGA had the desire to get closely involved in order to get tangible results corresponding to the requirements at that time. As such the objectives were definitely reached. The problem the DGA faces now is how to make use of these excellent results in a practical manner. Sure, they are reproducible in laboratory but they should also fit in everyday services of the DGA. In a first phase the finalized processes should be adapted for operational use. After that, opening access to other institutions and target communities will be considered.

The « operationalization » phase involves analysis of profits, computer development and internal organisation management. Moreover, this task is not conceivable without the collaboration of experienced scientists.

In order to start the phase the DGA considers using its internal project management system which has been developed for its role as Paying Agency. It consists of tools for guiding a steering committee, requirements analysis, scheduling, financial and technical impact assessment and frequent validation by the management level.

This well established way of functioning is a prerequisite for success. It allows managing complex processes involving many participants and facilitates coordination among the technical, scientific and computer teams.

New defined actions are planned for next year which will allow the DGA to implement the most effective methodology in order to retrieve the knowledge from the project. We can also start thinking of new developments in collaboration with the scientific community and the different governmental levels in Belgium and Europe.