

## PRESS RELEASE

19<sup>th</sup> July 2017

### Report to the Walloon Parliament

### *Organising and managing the statutory missions of the Walloon Centre for Agronomic Research*



**The Belgian Court of Audit conducted an audit on the organisation of the Walloon Centre of Agronomic Research (CRAW), the administration of its interdisciplinary activities and the follow-up of its research activities.**

The CRAW is a regional public organization since 2003. Its purpose is to assist the government regarding the definition and the application of its policy about agricultural research.

The Court of Audit notes significant organisational problems: difficulties to recruit, lack of standardisation and of a structured and centralised internal control.

Only 67% of the positions in general and 20% of the top management positions are held. Since there is no chief accountant or sales manager, the Centre is significantly late regarding the presentation of the annual accounts. The last ones received by the Court date back to the year 2009.

The Centre enjoys an important financial surplus because the staff expenses and the costs of the building works were lower than expected.

The Court also notes the lack of an exhaustive inventory including the stock of animal or plant products from the research activities and sold by the Centre. Consequently, its assets are not properly secured against losses or theft. As for the public procurements, even though improvements can be noted, this audit confirms the previous remarks about their splitting, the risk of unfair competition and the shortage of control during their implementation.

As for the strategic plans, the political objectives of the agricultural research defined by the government are vague and unquantified. Additionally, the governance and supervising scientific council does not meet. As a result, the Centre draws the triennial work program, contrary to the rules applicable. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the research program is linked to the government's policy objectives.

#### ***Recommendations***

The Belgian Court of Audit makes several recommendations. Five of them are of capital importance: setting objectives and targets in terms of agricultural research; ensuring the permanent guidance and supervision; evaluating the current need in human resources and skills in order to better link human resources and achievements; organising the internal

control and, finally, re-examining the financial means at disposal of the Centre through regional budget.

The new managing director announced several measures designed to overcome the listed problems.

#### ***The Minister's answer***

The Minister of Agriculture answered that he is going to instruct the Centre to update its action plan in order to include the Court of Audit's recommendations.

#### **Information for the press**

*The Court of Audit exerts an external control on the financial operations of the Federal State, the Communities, the Regions and the provinces. It contributes to improving public governance by transmitting to the parliamentary assemblies, to the managers and to the audited services any useful and reliable information resulting from a contradictory examination. As a collateral body of the Parliament, the Court performs its missions independently of the authorities it controls.*

The audit report on the *Organising and managing of the statutory missions of the Walloon Centre of Agronomic Research (CRAW)* has been sent to the Walloon Parliament. The full version, which only exists in digital version (French only), and the press release can be found on the Court's website: [www.courttofaudit.be](http://www.courttofaudit.be).