Recommendation 577 (1970)[1]

European Agriculture Charter

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its Recommendation 456 (1966) on the social protection of independent farmers and members of their families working or living with them ;

2. Noting that the Committee of Ministers has not thought fit to act on this recommendation, while the problems facing European agriculture are becoming continually worse ;

3. Considering that European farmers and the members of their families who work with them are entitled to the same economic and social rights as other categories of workers ;

4. Considering that the profound changes now imposed on European agriculture and causing it legitimate anxiety require the recognition of certain rights for farmers in order not to lower the status of the farmer in modern society ;

5. Considering that an agricultural policy which aims to reform agrarian structures and is forcing many people to abandon farming must be accompanied by measures guaranteeing such people decent conditions in their new way of life ;

6. Considering that the European states - despite a considerable financial effort by the community to promote farming - have failed in the last decade to assure self-employed farmers an economically and socially satisfactory future by comparison with other categories of workers ;

7. Considering that the European Social Charter, although to a large extent it applies equally to rural populations, does not explicitly satisfy all their requirements,

8. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers

(a) instruct a committee of experts composed of senior government officials with special competence in social and agricultural legislation to prepare a legal instrument (convention or agreement) for a European Farmers' Statute on the lines of the attached model ;

(b) invite the qualified farmers' organisations and the Consultative Assembly to participate in the work of this committee of experts.

Draft Statute of the European Farmer

The member states of the Council of Europe, signatory hereto,

9. Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is the achievement of greater unity between its Members, particularly for the purpose of facilitating their economic and social progress ;

10. Considering that improvement of farmers' living conditions through the implementation of appropriate measures can contribute to social progress in Europe ;

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1. Assembly debate on 22 and 23 January 1970 (16th and 17th Sittings) (see Doc. 2689, report of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 January 1970 (17th Sitting).

11. Recalling that the aim of the European Social Charter is the social protection of both urban and rural populations, including improvement of their standard of living and promotion of their social well-being ;

12. Considering that the profound changes at present taking place in European agriculture require the adoption of appropriate measures to avoid a deterioration in the social well-being of farmers in modern society ;

13. Considering in consequence that measures should be taken to extend and reinforce the social protection of farmers and their families, with due regard to the special conditions and characteristics of farming activities,

Have agreed as follows :

Article 1

The contracting parties undertake to introduce all necessary measures to ensure the effective application of the provisions contained in Articles 2-12 of this Statute.

Article 2

14. Farmers and sylviculturists shall benefit from social measures equivalent to those extended to other categories of workers.

15. The social security standards laid down by the national legislation of the contracting parties shall be applied as far as necessary, to farmers and their dependants.

Article 3

Farmers shall be covered by a social security system which guarantees them benefits in the case of sickness, maternity, incapacity, old-age, death, occupational accident and disease, as well as family benefits.

Article 4

Farmers shall benefit from special measures where, for structural reasons, they are compelled to give up their occupation either partially or completely. In such cases, the following measures shall be taken :

a. the public authorities shall offer farmers who are obliged to change their occupation all appropriate facilities to enable them, as easily as possible, to take up a new occupation, or to exercise an additional occupation, guaranteeing them an adequate income. Such facilities shall consist, in particular, in arrangements for vocational guidance, training and further training and in the payment of transitional allowances ;

b. fair compensation or appropriate grants shall be paid to farmers who are obliged to give up farming and who, because of their age, cannot take up another activity.

Article 5

The public authorities shall, as part of a regional planning policy adapted to local needs and possibilities, facilitate the creation in rural areas of new employment for farmers who are obliged to give up their occupation.

Article 6

The public authorities shall take all appropriate measures to inform farmers of the immediate and long-term objectives of national and international agricultural policies and developments in them and shall consult farmers when establishing such policies.

Article 7

The public authorities shall take all appropriate measures with a view to :

a. providing rural areas with adequate socio-cultural facilities ;

b. establishing minimum standards applicable to farm buildings, including homes, particularly in regard to sanitary amenities ;

c. granting long-term loans, tax relief or subsidies to farmers to enable them to comply with the standards laid down in sub-para (b) of this Article.

Article 8

Appropriate measures shall be taken to guarantee the children of farmers as high a level of training and education as possible, particularly with a view to :

a. assisting rural municipalities or groups of rural municipalities in the construction of the school buildings necessary for the gradual abolition of classes comprising children of all ages and for making transport to and from school more widely available ;

b. appointing qualified teaching staff to rural schools in sufficient numbers and granting them a special allowance.

Article 9

16. Specific measures shall be taken with a view to providing adequate general education and vocational training for young people in rural areas, particularly by means of appropriate vocational guidance given by qualified counsellors in the schools.

17. In addition to the existing apprenticeship scheme, such measures shall include, by the creation of new institutions or the adaptation of existing ones, the setting up of a sufficient number of vocational schools, university level training centres and agricultural colleges.

18. The state shall provide for higher education grants to rural youth.

19. Free information and advice services dealing with the various sectors of the farming profession shall be made available to young people in rural areas.

Article 10

In order to ensure as favourable working conditions as possible on farms, the public authorities shall take all necessary steps to facilitate and encourage various forms of co-operation and mutual assistance between farmers and to encourage voluntary workers to participate in certain agricultural activities.

Article 11

The public authorities shall take all appropriate measures to :

a. improve women's working conditions on farms, in particular by the creation or adaptation of installations for the communal use of modern technical facilities ;

b. organise and facilitate the provision of family help workers and kindergartens in rural areas.

Article 12

The provisions of Articles 2 - 5 of this Statute shall apply to the members of farmers' families working with them, so that they enjoy the same rights.

Article 13

20. Each contracting party shall submit, every three years, to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in a form to be determined by the Committee of Ministers, a report not only on the application of the provisions of Articles 1 - 12 of this Statute, but also on the long-term objectives of its agricultural policy, on the social implications of that policy and the results obtained.

21. Such reports shall be published by the Secretary General and submitted, for opinion, to a committee to be appointed by the Committee of Ministers and to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

22. The above-mentioned committee and the Consultative Assembly shall submit to the Committee of Ministers a report containing their observations and, if appropriate, their proposals for :

a. more effective application of this Statute ;

b. revision or completion of its provisions.

Final clauses...