Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 859 (1979)[1]

Land use

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the report on land use presented by its Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 4315) ;

2. Having regard to previous texts adopted in a similar context, such as Resolution 647 (1977), on the evolution of agricultural structures in Europe ;

3. Bearing in mind the studies of its Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities, to which the motion for a recommendation on land use policy, with particular reference to the allocation of areas for the provision of infrastructures (Doc. 3497), was referred on 30 September 1974 (Reference No. 1034) ;

4. Recalling the European Soil Charter, adopted in 1972, and the Ecological Charter for mountain regions in Europe (Resolution (76) 34 of the Committee of Ministers), which embody the basic principles to be followed if soil is to be ecologically preserved ;

5. Welcoming the organisation, in September 1979, of a European ministerial conference on environment, when, amongst other topics, the following general theme will be discussed : "Compatibility of agriculture and forestry with the conservation of the environment" ;

6. Considering that land use is one particular aspect of agricultural policies deserving greater attention, owing to the limited quantity of land available in modern society, the use of which is conditioned to an ever greater extent by industrial considerations ;

7. Having regard to the fact that as world population increases the land factor will undoubtedly assume an ever-increasing significance, although the stabilisation of the population of Western Europe also necessitates the revision of certain past assumptions, particularly concerning the priority given to the allocation of land for housing at the expense of agriculture ;

8. Emphasising that it is important to develop strategies to mobilise the world soil potential for food production ;

9. Alarmed by the competition and use conflicts for land in member countries diverting from agricultural use large areas of prime land, and by the fact that acreage figures often disguise the real loss in agricultural potential ;

10. Observing that it is of vital importance for each nation to examine critically its land use policies, and to include as a fundamental element in such policies the preservation and optimisation of good agricultural land ;

11. Believing that land should be allocated according to its capability, its suitability and the needs of society, and not made subject almost exclusively to market demand as the principal criterion for its allocation amongst competing uses,

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1. Assembly debate on 8 May (3rd Sitting) (see Doc. 4315, report of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 8 May 1979 (3rd Sitting).

12. Recommends :

12.1. that the forthcoming Council of Europe Campaign on Urban Renewal include amongst its subjects to be examined the question of conflicts of land use between urban policies and strategies for rural areas ;

12.2. that the Committee of Ministers instruct the Steering Committee on Regional Planning and the Architectural Heritage, as well as the European Committee on Nature Conservation and Natural Resources, to ensure that the Council of Europe's intergovernmental activities are inspired by the principles contained in this recommendation :

a. to draw up harmonised soil maps at a minimum scale of 1 : 1000 000 for the prediction of potential productivity levels and to enable an assessment to be made of soil consolidation, conservation and reclamation, including irrigation possibilities, and also to identify the most valuable agricultural land ;

b. to develop, through international co-operation, a classification of land, allowing an objective qualitative confrontation which can serve as a rational basis for the drawing up and the carrying out of future land use planning ;

c. to study the optimum land use patterns for the major agricultural ecosystems, paying particular reference to areas such as the Mediterranean zone, Alpine regions and northern hill and wetland areas ;

d. to investigate in order to provide policy-makers with adequate information on :

1. the physical factors of production,
2. agricultural structure, farm size and demography,
3. input/output studies for farm commodities and research into farm systems development ;

e. to identify those areas best suited to continued agriculture (stock farming) and delimitation of those best suited to afforestation - which should be confined to land with a low agricultural potential - by ensuring that no land use conflict occurs between forestry and farming, but rather an integration of these uses through a planned approach, the abandonment of land originally used for agriculture in the less-favoured areas being of particular concern, although these areas might provide profitable studies of their forest yield capacity ;

f. to further the integration of the mountain zones which play a special role for beef and mutton production, and are ecologically more suited to these uses than dairy farming, with the lowlands producing high-energy forage crops for the fattening of beef animals ;

g. to pay attention to the deterioration of land by water and wind erosion due to deforestation in mountain regions, maize and sugar-beet cultivation and hedge removal in the lowlands ;

h. to collect information on the role of organic matter in soils, water infiltration and workability of the land ;

i. to examine the problems associated with the integration of leisure activities (such as tourism and sports) with agriculture, forestry and nature conservation ;

j. to take all appropriate measures to assure that good agricultural land is protected from appropriation for non-agricultural uses by improving the efforts of co-ordination within and between countries ;

k. to determine long-term land requirements for specific uses as a basis for a multi-sectional planning approach to the most rational use for each area, by monitoring land use trends which could indicate the movement of land between various uses at national level ; a European remotesensing satellite programme directed to the particular needs in agriculture, forestry and fisheries as requested in Recommendation 845 (1978) finding, here again, its justification ;

l. to continue and promote research of the interaction between intensive agriculture, nature conservation and environmental pollution ;

m. to examine the effects on rural land use of changing patterns of resource availability (natural resources, raw materials and capital) ;

n. to develop farm and off-farm employment opportunities in industry, forestry and tourism, to stabilise and prevent further deterioration of rural infrastructure and balance ;

o. to make land accessible to young farmers, thus avoiding that land is too often purchased as an investment or hedge against inflation by financial institutions who have little interest in keeping the land in good heart.