Parliamentary Assembly
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Recommendation 1143 (1991)[1]

Relations between animal husbandry and the quality of the environment

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly considers that animal husbandry should respect the environment. The preservation of a fertile and unpolluted soil is fundamental for a sustainable agriculture and for society. It also regards animal manure as a valuable fertiliser and soil-improvement product when correctly applied to cultivated soil. However, intensive farming practices combined with incorrect storage and use have often led to serious soil, water and air pollution in several European regions.

2. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of member states and the European Community :

2.1. to establish satisfactory rules and legislation which can guarantee that the storage, handling and application of animal manure on farmland do not result in any degradation of food quality or of the environment but rather improve soil and soil fertility. This implies setting maximum limits on the quantities applied according to the soil, cultivation methods and manure quality (mineral, nitrate, phosphate, etc. content), fixing quality norms (including sanitary standards) and establishing rules for storage, application periods and application technology in accordance with geography, climate and habitation. Particular emphasis should be given to the reduction of nitrates, phosphates, heavy metals, methane and ammonia, unwanted organic contents and chemical additives, by modifying animal feed, if necessary, while respecting the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes ;

2.2. to adopt measures, in order to meet the above requirements, designed to make the maximum number of animals per holding dependent on locally available land, to adapt the feed composition and improve systems for the handling and processing of manure. These measures may require the introduction of manure accountancy and a manure tax (the polluter pays) ;

2.3. to make sure that the implementation of these new regulations will not lead to unfair hardship for individual farmers who have made investments according to past political priorities, by assisting the farming community financially and technologically and by allowing for the necessary adjustment time ;

2.4. to considerably increase joint research on

a. feed systems which can reduce the mineral contents of manure ;

b. the possibilities of transforming manure into high-quality products and/or energy ;

3. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers include, in the intergovernmental work programme of the Council of Europe relating to the environment, soil uses and public health, relevant activities designed to reduce the possible negative effects on air, soil and water quality and on health stemming from pollution caused by manure.

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1. Assembly debate on 31 January 1991 (25th Sitting) (see Doc. 6363, report of the Committee on Agriculture, Rapporteur : Mr van der Linden). Text adopted by the Assembly on 31 January 1991 (25th Sitting).