Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1167 (1991)[1]

Crucial role of food supply in helping to consolidate democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly is deeply concerned about the risk of food shortages during the forthcoming winter in certain Central and East European countries and in particular in some of the republics of the Soviet Union. Such shortages of food could jeopardise the democratisation process and the economic reform programmes and lead to important migratory flows with unforeseeable consequences.

2. The Assembly attaches the greatest importance to ongoing and future assistance efforts towards meeting needs with the highest possible efficiency and effectiveness and making the fullest use of existing production and supply possibilities in the Central and East European countries.

3. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite governments of member states and governments of other members of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations (G7),and the Group of Twenty-four industrialised nations (G24) and the Commission of the European Communities :

3.1. to increase, during the forthcoming winter, emergency food aid to certain republics of the Soviet Union and other Central and East European countries in need, and preferably to buy available surplus stocks from the new democracies in Central Europe. Barter trade agreements should also be envisaged ;

3.2. to set up an agency, or entrust an existing organisation with the responsibility of promoting, co-ordinating and controlling food aid, storage and distribution as well as co-ordinating assistance and investments in the agricultural and food sector in Central and East European countries in transition, with a view to reaching maximum efficiency and effectiveness. The agency should be an operational co-ordination instrument for all countries concerned and it should build on existing experiences in this field. It should fully involve the private sector and it should work in close co-operation with such organisations as the Commission of the European Communities, the Council of Europe, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as the United Nations and its specialised agencies ;

3.3. to organise assistance in improving fundamentally systems of storage and distribution to ensure an adequate flow of food aid and of food supply on a permanent basis by employing all relevant and available know-how ;

3.4. to give priority to and increase assistance and investments for the revitalisation of the food and agricultural sectors (including fisheries and forestry), with special emphasis on production methods and inputs, the processing systems and training. Of particular importance is the involvement of farmers, their organisations and the food and related industries ;

3.5. to press for and assist in the transformation of military production units to consumer goods production and in particular for the production of machinery and equipment for the food and agricultural sectors ;

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1. Assembly debate on 24 September 1991 (16th and 17th Sittings) (see Doc. 6510, report of the Committee on Agriculture, Rapporteurs : Mrs Gjorv and Mr Sipos). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 September 1991 (17th Sitting).

3.6. to give special emphasis to the creation of viable family farms in land reform programmes and to the needs of rural regions through assistance and investment programmes ;

3.7. to strengthen the work of organisations such as OECD and the Economic Commission for Europe in their assistance to countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and to make sure that the EBRD will have enough funds to respond to priority needs.

4. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers include in the Intergovernmental Work Programme of the Council of Europe, relating to East-West co-operation, relevant activities for the promotion of a living countryside, the strengthening of local and regional administrations, and actions to improve agricultural education and training for family farmers including visiting schemes and study tours. The Council of Europe's Social Development Fund should be encouraged to give preference to loans in line with the priorities set out in paragraph 3 above.