Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 744 (1981)[1]

Agriculture and energy

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Noting that the characteristics of modern European agriculture are a more intensive use of land, a high degree of mechanisation and a heavy reliance on nitrogen fertilisers ;

2. Observing that these developments have been accompanied by a greater emphasis on energy-intensive animal breeding as well as year-round production in glasshouses, reduced growing of nitrogen-fixing plants that enrich the soil, and a reduction in the production or use of organic fertilisers in certain countries ;

3. Aware that all the above has caused European farm production to become excessively dependent on petroleum products, and this at a time when the latter are threatening to become prohibitively expensive and scarce ;

4. Believing that such heavy reliance could have serious consequences for agricultural production, particularly in the case of an even more severe energy crisis in the future, and considering that it is imperative to plan in advance for such an emergency ;

5. Noting that agriculture is commonly held accountable for the energy spent in areas which are in fact not directly related to it, for example horse riding, the keeping of game and pets, pisciculture and the upkeep of lawns, parks and gardens ;

6. Recalling that the share of agriculture proper in the total energy consumption in member states is at most about 5%, to which 10-13% can be added from the rest of the agro-food sector, and considering that due credit should also be given to the energy produced by agriculture itself ;

7. Observing that, while European agriculture in the past strove to reach maximum production at a minimal cost, national policies in today's and tomorrow's energy-scarce societies may have to concentrate on producing food requiring less energy ;

8. Concluding that savings in energy can probably be made through a more efficient use of fertilisers and machinery, and more economic heating of glasshouses, premises, etc. ;

9. Aware that energy production from crops is still far from economical under European conditions, believing that any large-scale efforts to this effect could create a dangerous competition between food and energy production on the limited land area available to Europe, and suggesting that attention be given in this context to the future needs of developing countries ;

10. Observing, however, that energy, not least for agriculture's own use, can be obtained from dried biomass for which there exists no alternative use, in particular straw and residual products in forestry,

1. Assembly debate on 28 January 1981 (23rd Sitting) (see Doc. 4660, report of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 1981 (23rd Sitting).

11. Urges member states :

11.1. to encourage agriculture to economise as much as possible its consumption of energy, especially fossil fuel, and to promote a greater use of and research into irrigation as a means of raising agricultural production without a corresponding increase in energy ;

11.2. to further the production of energy from agricultural waste products, notably straw and forestry residuals ;

11.3. to promote the use, within agriculture, of other sources of energy, such as solar, geothermal, wind and tidal energy, as well as residual heat from nearby power stations ;

11.4. to inform farmers more actively of ways of conserving and producing local energy, and include such subjects in their professional education ;

11.5. to encourage research and international co-operation in the above areas and in the field of energy production from plants ;

11.6. to help the developing countries in particular in the development of their own energy production possibilities.