Resolution 764 (1982)[1]

Entry into farming in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Considering the need for a viable and efficient European farm sector in a world whose population is increasing by about 77 million per annum and in which millions of people die every year from hunger or malnutrition ;

2. Aware that a healthy agricultural sector needs a continual influx of dedicated and well-qualified farmers ;

3. Concerned at the considerable difficulties faced by those wishing to farm, due for instance to high land prices, loss of land for industrial and commercial development, high interest rates, and the amalgamation of small and medium-sized holdings into large farming concerns ;

4. Concerned at the depopulation of rural areas and the attendant social ills this brings in its wake, not only in the countryside but also in urban areas ;

5. Aware of the major linguistic, social and cultural difficulties facing anyone wishing to farm in another Council of Europe member state ;

6. Aware also that numerous other obstacles - legal and administrative - exist in many countries, and conscious that these hamper establishment outside a person's own member state, thus amounting to discrimination which is incompatible with the aims of the Council of Europe,

7. Urges the member states of the Council of Europe to consider these matters urgently and in particular :

   7.1. give more active help to new entrants - particularly young people- who wish to start farming, both by developing their professional and general training, and by helping them to overcome the financial obstacles to present-day farming ;

   7.2. take urgent measures to reduce the dangerous loss of valuable agricultural land by the rebuilding of old worn-out towns and industrial areas, while making sure that if any "green field" developments have to take place they are on the least agriculturally valuable land ;

   7.3. shape taxation and other policies so as to favour efficient family farming either on owneroccupied or tenanted land, so long as this does not discriminate unfairly against other sectors of the economy ;

   7.4. define- in countries where this is not already the case- a maximum limit to the size of farms, on the understanding that this limit will vary according to the quality, type and location of the land ;

   7.5. examine whether and, if so, in what way the widespread and usually valuable practice of parttime farming may affect the entry of new farmers, also taking into account other effects it may have on farming and development in rural areas ;

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1. Assembly debate on 27 January 1982 (23rd and 24th Sittings) (see Doc. 4814, report of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 1982 (24th Sitting).

7.6. draw up a "code of conduct" for institutions purchasing agricultural land, with a special view to ensuring that the land is let to qualified individuals and not farmed directly by the institutions, except in the rare cases where the landlords need to gain personal experience of farmers' problems ;

7.7. speed up the turnover of family farms by encouraging the earlier retirement of older farmers through financial and other inducements, for instance the building of separate living quarters on the farm where appropriate ;

7.8. preserve and possibly enlarge a sizeable tenancy sector so as to enable would-be entrants - lacking the capital to buy land- to start farming ;

7.9. work within the Council of Europe area towards the elimination of legal and administrative obstacles which discriminate against farmers of other nationalities, on the lines of what is being achieved within the European Community ;

7.10. work for the creation of a "European Green Card"- possibly within the framework of OECD- describing the holder's agricultural experience and qualifications, which would be valid throughout Council of Europe member states to support an application to farm.