Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 936 (1990)[1]

Consequences of set-aside programmes in agriculture for rural areas

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly has considered the report on theconsequences of set-aside programmes in agriculture presented by its Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 6159).

2. The Assembly expresses its concern at the fact that the withdrawal of agricultural land from production seriously threatens the survival of many rural regions, particularly the less favoured ones, and may have serious negative social and economic consequences for the populations concerned. It is of the opinion that such policies therefore should be complemented with measures designed to prevent rural decline and to foster new positive developments for European agriculture and for those engaged in it.

3. The Assembly also fears that numerous agriculture-dependent industries will suffer as a result of set-aside programmes, and that the damage to rural regions, in which farming is the all-dominant economic activity, may be wide-ranging.

4. The Assembly is also concerned that set-aside programmes are being introduced at a time when world food stocks have reached dangerously low levels, and when certain East European countries are facing food shortages, and requests that in these circumstances set-aside programmes be reconsidered urgently.

5. Consequently, pending this reassessment and while the programmes are still in force, the Assembly calls on the governments of the Council of Europe member states and the European Community :

a. to reorientate set-aside programmes towards a further encouragement for alternative production of non-surplus crops, afforestation, or the introduction of extensive farming, in particular for regions where farming still plays an important role in the rural society, and to encourage wider use of less intensive farming methods as an alternative to set-aside programmes, in areas where intensive farming or animal production are threatening the environment ;

b. to put special emphasis on afforestation programmes, the prevention of soil erosion, and alternative production of raw materials for industry and the energy sector, on the understanding that these alternatives to simply letting land lie fallow are compensated by an adequate economic supplement to farmers' income ;

c. to prevent holdings setting aside more than 35% of their cultivated land under such schemes, except where the holding is occupied by a part-time farmer or where the holder proposes to retire ;

d. to select land to be set aside in such a way that :

1. life in the countryside and particularly the economy of less favoured regions are not threatened ;

2. environmental concerns are duly integrated into the programme, and that the Community is urged to ensure that adequate assessment of the effect of change and development upon the environment is carried out before expenditure is committed ;

3. the objectives of the programme are reached ;

---

1. Assembly debate on 31 January 1990 (26th Sitting) (see Doc. 6159, report of the Committee on Agriculture, Rapporteur : Mr Soares Costa; and Doc. 6162, opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, Rapporteur : Mr Bösch). Text adopted by the Assembly on 31 January 1990 (26th Sitting).

e. to ensure that set-aside programmes on marginal farmland and in disadvantaged regions are undertaken with caution, while they could be stimulated in rich areas or in intensively farmed areas where environmental problems caused by artificial fertilisers, pesticides and natural manure, from large concentrations of cattle, are major ones and could thus be alleviated ;

f. to draw up an action plan for the countryside and the environment with special emphasis on soil use, conservation of the environment and the preservation of wild species of fauna and flora, and to make use of extensive farming schemes and environmental set-aside programmes based on environmental impact assessments for their implementation ;

g. to prevent set-aside land from being permanently taken away from agriculture (housing, roads, etc.) ;

h. to make sure that set-aside programmes in agriculture will not endanger world food security and, more specifically, not threaten West European democracies' capacity in the short term to assist certain East European countries in assuring an adequate food supply at a crucial time in their democratisation efforts.