Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1141 (1997)[1]

Role of farmers' professional organisations as partners of governments in developing and implementing policies

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly considers that successful agricultural and rural development is dependent on the involvement of the rural population, and in particular farmers and their organisations.

2. It notes that it is in countries where there are efficient and well-organised agricultural organisations, collaborating with the government, that food production has progressed the most in terms of quantity, quality and regularity of supply and that agriculture and the rural economy are the most prosperous.

3. The Assembly considers that an organised dialogue between governments and representative socio-professional organisations strengthens democracy and is beneficial for policy design and implementation, particularly in the field of agriculture.

4. It notes that these professional structures and this dialogue were lacking until very recently in the countries of central and eastern Europe and that their development should be promoted.

5. To this end, it stresses the importance of the existence of a sound legal framework and stable economic conditions to permit the introduction or continuation of the structural reforms necessary for the development of a modern and competitive agriculture.

6. The Assembly therefore calls upon member states :

6.1. to establish a political, institutional and regulatory framework which provides a legal and administrative basis for and removes obstacles to the creation of professional agricultural organisations and permits them to play a role as partners of government in framing and implementing agricultural and rural policies;

6.2. to create fair and supportive legal and financial conditions for representative professional agricultural organisations (agricultural trade unions, chambers of agriculture, co-operatives, and mutual credit and insurance societies), especially in the countries of central and eastern Europe;

6.3. to further, in particular, the establishment of financial and agricultural credit institutions based on co-operative principles and benefiting from special formation and operating conditions, with a view to improved support for farming activities and their effective development;

6.4. to develop economic activity in rural regions and, in particular, socio-economic infrastructures (education, health, transport, housing, etc.) so as to preserve a living and prosperous rural society;

6.5. to promote employment in rural regions, in order to maintain their productive role and retain the local population and, to this end, give priority to family farming, which forms the social fabric of rural communities;

6.6. to encourage the social and economic organisation of farmers within representative and independent professional associations, so that they can be actively involved in decisions concerning the evolution of their sector;

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1. See Doc. 7944, report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, rapporteurs : Mr Figel and Mr Telgmaa. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 7 November 1997.

6.7. to hold full and regular dialogue with professional agricultural organisations when framing and implementing agricultural policies, involving them in decision making.

7. The Assembly recommends international, European and national agricultural organisations :

7.1. to co-operate in the creation or strengthening of professional agricultural organisations (agricultural trade unions and federations, chambers of agriculture, co-operatives, mutual credit and insurance societies), especially in the countries of central and eastern Europe;

7.2. to co-operate, in particular, with their counterparts in the countries of central and eastern Europe to help them adapt to legal and economic reforms, notably through exchange programmes and the recruitment of consultants from within the farming movement, and to become members of the international agricultural organisations;

7.3. to provide support and assistance to young farmers' organisations, especially those being created in the countries of central and eastern Europe;

7.4. to establish operational links between those organisations and public bodies, and in particular with research institutes and extension services;

7.5. to be prepared, as partners of the government, to take on greater responsibilities in developing the food and agriculture sector;

7.6. to co-ordinate better between themselves so as to be able to present balanced policy proposals to government after having resolved the internal differences between the regions and the sectors of production.