Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1330 (2003)[1]

Agriculture and enlargement of the European Union

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has already discussed some of the problems facing farmers in the countries of central and eastern Europe, particularly with regard to structural reforms and the transition process in those countries' agricultural sectors. The Assembly welcomes the decision to give the ten acceding countries full membership in the European Union, including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

2. Farming in the acceding countries generally plays a far greater role than in the present European Union and remains a sector of vital importance for them in both social and environmental terms. Agriculture was accordingly a key issue in the accession negotiations, with both a significant impact on the economies of a number of acceding countries and implications for the farming sectors of the existing European Union member states.

3. The Assembly notes that the conclusions of the Copenhagen European Summit, adopted on 13 December 2002, which define the conditions for integrating the acceding states' farming sectors in the European Union, are perceived by rural communities in a number of those countries as penalising their agricultural and rural development, especially as far as direct payments and production quotas are concerned.

4. The Assembly considers that the European Union's most recent proposals for rural areas in the future European Union member states fail to afford sufficient guarantees of sustainable growth to enable these states to modernise their farming sectors and develop new, non-agricultural activities in rural areas, while respecting the environment and biodiversity. The CAP is still confronted with a fundamental contradiction between supporting agricultural production and repairing the damage it causes to the countryside, as well as with the difficulty of defining the real role of rural inhabitants as either farmers or park-keepers for the European Union.

5. It further considers that to establish an effective, sustainable development policy in the acceding countries' rural areas while preserving their extensive, multifunctional agriculture, account must be taken of the low purchasing power of those countries' rural populations and their inexperience in making use of European Union funds.

6. The Assembly believes that the European agricultural model must be strengthened in the context of reform of the CAP. It is important that changes to the CAP do not undermine its fundamental principles, in particular the principle of equal competition in the single market (inter alia, by avoiding discrimination vis-à-vis the future member states' farmers after their accession to the European Union) and the principle of financial solidarity (ruling out the possibility of a renationalisation of CAP financing).

7. The Assembly believes that current discussions between European Union member states on the mid-term review of the CAP will have a direct effect on the shape of European agriculture following enlargement. The outcome of this reform should therefore also take into account acceding countries' concerns and suggestions, so as to achieve a single, coherent agricultural policy respectful of European rural diversity. The Assembly therefore considers that acceding countries should officially submit as soon as possible their contribution to the European Commission proposals on the mid-term review of the CAP.

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1. Assembly debate on 23 June 2003 (17th Sitting) (see Doc. 9812, report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Libicki). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 June 2003 (17th Sitting).

8. The Assembly consequently recommends that the European Union:

8.1. review the CAP so as to simplify it and make it more transparent and accessible for rural populations throughout the European Union;

8.2. continue to support rural development and sustainable agriculture in the enlarged European Union, taking account of the economic, social and environmental implications;

8.3. ensure that introduction of the CAP does not lead to worsening of the rural environment in the acceding countries, and preserves the close-to-nature values of their agriculture;

8.4. amend its proposals on modulation and degressivity of direct payments, providing for a substantial increase in amounts allocated to CAP second-pillar measures concerning rural development;

8.5. take into account criteria such as farm size, the degree of intensification of farming and standards of living when determining the eco-conditionality of direct payments;

8.6. ensure that the phased-in direct payments to the future member states reach the same level as those granted throughout the enlarged Union as soon as possible;

8.7. ensure that direct payments do not distort trade but have the converse effect of making the farming sector more receptive to market indicators.