



Resolution 1331 (2003)¹

Challenges for Mediterranean agriculture

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that agriculture in the Mediterranean region has an economic and social role that goes well beyond its primary function as a supplier of food products. In some Mediterranean countries agriculture accounts for a high proportion of GNP and employment, and helps to reduce poverty, restrict emigration and protect the environment.
2. It also notes that in a rapidly evolving international context, involving changes to the European agricultural model, new Euro-Mediterranean relations, enlargement of the European Union and the liberalisation of world trade, Mediterranean agriculture faces a number of serious challenges, to which it has to find answers, but for which closer co-operation with European countries is essential.
3. In particular, the Assembly hopes that the European Union, which is the Mediterranean countries' main trading partner, will pay particularly close attention to agricultural trade with these countries, particularly given the possible consequences of its forthcoming enlargement to ten new member states (including Cyprus and Malta) and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.
4. It also welcomes the proposal in the 1995 Barcelona Declaration to establish a Euro-Mediterranean partnership leading to the gradual introduction of a free-trade area by 2010. In that connection it supports the new association agreements linking the European Union and the Mediterranean countries, while regretting the continuing lack of significant progress with regard to agricultural trade.
5. The Assembly has also noted that while there is still a considerable trade imbalance in agri-foodstuffs between Europe and the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, the equivalent trade between the Mediterranean countries themselves suffers from a form of compartmentalisation that prevents the emergence of a genuine Euro-Mediterranean market for food products.
6. The Assembly has identified three main ways of fostering the Mediterranean region's agricultural development: diversifying production, raising quality and improving water supplies. Efforts should also be made to encourage sustainable and multifunctional agriculture, balanced rural development and co-operation between Mediterranean countries, in order to develop an intra-regional market and avoid damaging competition between the countries concerned.
7. It also considers that agronomic research can make a substantial contribution to solving the specific problems of Mediterranean agriculture, particularly in relation to climate, water and soil conditions. It therefore welcomes the activities of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (Icamas) and encourages it to develop its work on new technologies (irrigation, genetically modified organisms, etc.). It also supports the awareness-raising and co-ordination initiatives of the Council of Europe's Hydrotechnological Euro-Mediterranean Institute, aimed at improving the management of water resources in the Mediterranean region.

1. Assembly debate on 23 June 2003 (17th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9807](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Fernández Aguilar). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 June 2003 (17th Sitting).



8. The Assembly considers that the Mediterranean countries should consult each other on and harmonise their agricultural policies regarding both production and commercialisation, to avoid competition which is damaging to their individual and collective interests and encourage complementarity between their products and their produce seasons, diversification and higher quality.9. Consequently, the Assembly recommends:

8.1. that the Mediterranean countries, particularly those in the southern and eastern Mediterranean, promote sustainable agriculture that makes sparing use of natural resources, based on the criteria of multifunctionality developed by European countries, encourage rural development, protect their fishing and forestry sectors, and develop their agri-foodstuffs industries, particularly with regard to food processing, marketing, distribution and exports;

8.2. that the Mediterranean countries and the European Union expedite the application of the association agreements between them and of the measures to establish a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area encompassing agricultural products by 2010, and that direct European investment in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries be developed;

8.3. that the European Union take all necessary steps to ensure that Mediterranean products are not penalised by the review of the Common Agricultural Policy and the incorporation of the ten acceding member states and to reduce the agricultural trade imbalance between itself and the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean;

8.4. that the presidency of the European Union convene a meeting of the Mediterranean agricultural ministers, with a view to co-ordinating and harmonising the agricultural policies of the countries concerned and to promoting the transfer of new agronomic technology to the southern and eastern Mediterranean;

8.5. that the European Parliament consider the organisation of a second joint Euro-Mediterranean conference on agriculture, following the one it held in Strasbourg on 14 and 15 June 2001. This could focus on the liberalisation of agricultural trade in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area planned for 2010;

8.6. that the Icamas organise the 4th Mediterranean Forum on Agriculture, focusing on new agronomic techniques and technology transfers, in co-operation with the Mediterranean Committee of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (Ifap) and the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs of the Assembly;

8.7. that the Council of Europe's Hydrotechnological Euro-Mediterranean Institute develop co-operation between hydrological research centres, in particular with regard to the transfer of know-how and findings in the field of desalination and the reuse of water intended for agriculture.