



Resolution 1556 (2007)¹

Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and rural policy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has always taken a keen interest in the Mediterranean Basin and the different problems faced by this region lying at the edge of the Council of Europe. Eighteen member states are to be found in this region and this southern border is of direct concern to the Council of Europe in the context of its neighbourhood policy. As has been pointed out many times by the Assembly, and most recently in its [Recommendation 1753 \(2006\)](#) on external relations of the Council of Europe, Europe needs stability, not only within its frontiers but also beyond, in particular in the Mediterranean region.

2. Although the democratic security advocated by the Council of Europe is difficult to achieve in view of the various conflicts and complex political situations in the region, a sectoral approach and sectoral co-operation could facilitate progress and lead to a better understanding between the two shores of the Mediterranean. In this connection, one of the key sectors which could lead to rapid and substantial progress is agriculture (and its associated policies), in the light both of its ongoing importance for the countries on the southern shore and of the existence of a common European policy in this field – the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The Assembly accordingly refers to its [Resolution 1331 \(2003\)](#) on challenges for Mediterranean agriculture.

3. A new process of gradual integration of the Mediterranean Basin began in 1995 with the Barcelona Declaration, which has not yet lived up to expectations. This process did not, however, include agriculture even though this was and remains a strategic sector in the region, given the prospect of the setting up of a large Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area by 2010. On the contrary, the Mediterranean area has become even more fragmented despite the existence of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and excellent relations with the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) of the European Union.

4. By 2020, according to United Nations projections, the population of the Mediterranean will have doubled in the space of fifty years to reach 544 million inhabitants (including a threefold increase for the southern and eastern shores). Today, one third of this population still lives in rural areas. While in the north the number of people employed in agriculture is now only one third of what it was, in the south it is increasing. Above and beyond the north-south imbalance, there is an additional division which is even more worrying: the urbanisation and coastal-oriented development of the countries on the southern shore, with accelerated rural exodus, rapid impoverishment of the countryside and increased demographic pressure.

5. The agricultural trade balances in most MPCs are also worsening, making them structurally dependent, as regards agriculture and food, on the European countries, which absorb 50% of the agricultural exports from these countries and account for 30% of their imports. Furthermore, agriculture still represents 10% to 15% of the GNP of most of these countries. An additional problem is poor food security and safety in the countries on the southern shores, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

6. Given this context, the Assembly is convinced of the need for a proactive strategy to bring about closer involvement between Europe and the Mediterranean, adopting a partnership and solidarity-based approach. To this end, strategic priorities have to be set in areas of common interest, such as agriculture. The countries

1. Assembly debate on 25 June 2007 (20th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11301](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Schmied). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 June 2007 (20th Sitting).



of Europe have a key role to play in seeking and implementing increased co-operation in this sector. The countries on the southern shore should seek concerted action and avoid competing amongst themselves and defending their own interests.

7. The Assembly is convinced that in order to avoid a situation in which the two shores of the Mediterranean go their own separate ways and become more inward-looking, thereby exacerbating existing structural differences or, alternatively, in which there is excessive development of the countries in the south, deepening the social and economic divide, the only way forward is involvement, solidarity and the defence of common and strategic interests in a globalised context.

8. The Assembly believes that national parliaments and European parliamentary assemblies have an important role to play in promoting Mediterranean co-operation. The Assembly itself and the Council of Europe should step up co-operation and dialogue with the Mediterranean countries which are not members of the Organisation to bring about greater stability and democratic security in the region. Such co-operation and dialogue should be carried out in consultation with all the partners concerned, and in particular the European Union.

9. It refers to the holding of the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Agriculture (Strasbourg, 28- 29 September 2006), which it organised jointly with the European Parliament and in co-operation with the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers. This conference took stock of trends in Euro- Mediterranean co-operation in agriculture and rural development.

10. The Assembly recognises the great value of the work of the CIHEAM to promote Mediterranean co-operation and relations between Europe and the Mediterranean, particularly as regards training in the fields of agriculture and food to bring about more harmonious development and increased stability in the region. It believes that it can and should be a common platform for dialogue and for cooperation on an equal footing between all the countries in the Mediterranean Basin.

11. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Mediterranean countries and the European Union:

11.1. initiate a Euro-Mediterranean rural development programme, aimed not only at satisfying such infrastructure needs as access to drinking water, health services and education, but also at promoting diversification of the economy and creating new activities;

11.2. implement the gradual and carefully controlled liberalisation of Euro- Mediterranean agricultural trade, with due regard for the region's socio-economic and environmental requirements. A system of trade preferences for Mediterranean products would contribute usefully to the region's economic integration;

11.3. manage rationally the agricultural output of the countries of the south, adapting it to local environmental conditions (avoiding crops which make heavy demands on water), and seeking to develop exports (particularly by means of improved access to the European Community market) without forgetting their domestic markets and providing support for peasant communities and small family holdings;

11.4. support the introduction of improved management and optimum use of water (since the countries on the southern shore have only 13% of the water resources of the Mediterranean Basin), particularly for irrigation, involving both improvements to infrastructure and fairer charges for water. Know-how transfers and awareness-raising campaigns should be carried out to improve the region's prospects in this area;

11.5. promote support for two kinds of farming: biofarming and rational and sustainable farming;

11.6. ensure the introduction of control arrangements for the probable introduction onto the market of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), in particular by recognising national rights regarding intellectual property of local genetic resources;

11.7. encourage brand-marking of Mediterranean products, based on a threefold commitment to identity, quality and security by developing certification procedures in the countries on the southern shores and promoting the setting up of a Euro- Mediterranean food safety agency, possibly in the framework or under the authority of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), to oversee the traceability and marketing of the region's agricultural produce;

11.8. promote Mediterranean eating habits and make the most of typical and branded products of the region. Where they are better informed, more aware and increasingly more concerned about their health, Mediterranean consumers might shift to local, highquality products;

11.9. strengthen consumer organisations to make people more aware of food quality, which is a vital public health issue in the region. More emphasis should also be placed on greater civil society involvement in discussions on agricultural, rural and food issues south of the Mediterranean;

11.10. rebuild town-country relationships by setting up solidarity-based partnerships between tourist zones on the coast and the hinterland, the aim being to ensure that more locally produced food is consumed in towns and tourist resorts than imported foodstuffs, and to encourage more tourists to head for rural areas (green and gastronomic tourism);

11.11. re-assess supplies and marketing of agricultural produce by reorganising the sector through better synergies between small producers, transporters and distributors. Logistics in this sector (processing, storage) will also need to be upgraded;

11.12. gradually introduce measures to jointly combat certain epizootic diseases or the effects of crop pests;

11.13. introduce more agronomic research and training to help improve the region's agricultural output through innovative means of meeting new challenges (urban pressure, deterioration of the environment, failing water resources, climate change) and by setting up a Euro-Mediterranean agronomic research area.

12. The Assembly further recommends that the European Union and the member states:

12.1. make agriculture a strategic pillar of the EMP, devoting the necessary resources to making it a force for development in the countries of the south and a motor for convergence between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The Euro-Mediterranean project cannot succeed without agriculture in all its many aspects (rural world, trade, environment, socio-economic equilibria, culture, demography, public health);

12.2. see, in the future, the CAP as mutually dependent on present and future developments in the Mediterranean Basin and extend it to Mediterranean produce. In addition, a Euro-Mediterranean fund could be set up to cover the reorganisation of agricultural structures on the southern shore;

12.3. set up a Euro-Mediterranean platform for dialogue and cross-disciplinary cooperation on agriculture which could focus on three skill areas: policy definition (decision makers, governments, parliaments, civil society), research and expertise (researchers, analysts, training staff), and professionals and producers (players involved in the agricultural chain, from production to marketing);

12.4. seek to bring about convergence of Euro-Mediterranean positions within international organisations. The first step would be to encourage closer ties and exchanges between countries on the southern shore. The next would be to present, as far as possible, a united Euro-Mediterranean front at international level, and particularly at the World Trade Organization (WTO);

12.5. continue to hold Euro-Mediterranean meetings on agriculture, such as the one held in November 2003 under the Italian presidency of the European Union, and organise by 2010 a Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting on the rural and agricultural worlds covering all aspects of agriculture (trade, environment, social cohesion, public health, regional planning);

12.6. focus more on international complementarities than on intra-Mediterranean competition in a way which ensures that agricultural production matches the environment, territories and socio-economic realities of the various Mediterranean countries. Complementarity of production could also help to intensify interregional solidarity;

12.7. implement and comply with the principles of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), setting up the instruments and machinery required for sustainable agricultural and rural policies.

13. The Assembly recommends that non-European Mediterranean countries and the Arab League, via the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, consider setting up a regional fund to finance the modernisation of agricultural structures in these countries and a balanced and sustainable development.

14. The Assembly recommends that the Mediterranean member states of the Council of Europe not yet members of the CIHEAM join this centre in order to facilitate Mediterranean co-operation in the fields of agriculture, rural development and food.

15. The Assembly further recommends that the national parliaments of the Mediterranean countries, the European Parliament, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean develop parliamentary co-operation in the rural and agricultural sectors in order to promote a pooling of information and experience and consultation and coordination over legislation in this field.

16. The Assembly invites the European Parliament to continue follow-up and development of the Barcelona Process and of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, paying particular attention to the agricultural sector and to the progressive liberalisation of trade in Mediterranean agricultural products, particularly by means of agricultural negotiations and agreements with Mediterranean partner countries.

17. The Assembly invites the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to envisage creating a regional office for the Mediterranean which would co-ordinate its activities in the countries of the region and facilitate co-operation between them in the rural, agricultural and food sectors.

18. The Assembly plans to pursue its co-operation with the CIHEAM by organising regular Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary conferences with the participation of the parliaments of the Mediterranean countries, the European Union and the relevant international organisations such as the FAO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).