



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

on a programme of measures to promote the use of flax fibre for the period September
1998 to August 2000

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PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNICATION

1. Article 2 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 1308/70 on the common organisation of the market in flax and hemp,¹ as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 3290/94,² lays down that two types of Community measure may be taken to promote the use of quality European linen: information campaigns and the search for new outlets and improved products. Such measures are to be adopted by the Commission, which will inform the Council of the programme which it intends to implement.
2. This communication relates to the programme of measures which the Commission plans to implement during the period from September 1998 to August 2000.

REASONS FOR THE PLANNED MEASURES

The independent assessment of the previous programme (1995-97) showed that promotion of the mark identifying a quality innovative product is an essential means of retaining the place of quality European linen in the textile sector and improving its market position. This evaluation stressed the following points:

- an effective promotion campaign should centre on consolidating the 'Masters of Linen' collective mark;
- consolidating the collective mark as the yardstick for quality European linen requires it to be defined: in this instance it is the innovative aspects (touch, look, weight, natural fibre, ease of care and, for part of the market, crease-resistance) which should be stressed. Some of these features have already been defined while others are being investigated;
- there is a considerable lack of information about the mark in the distribution sector.

These considerations constitute the guidelines for the forthcoming campaign. As a result, attention will focus principally on promoting the image of quality European linen and the 'Masters of linen' collective mark (public relations and events). These priorities will be supported by the use made of the results of research into innovative features.

¹ OJ L 146, 4.7.1970.

² OJ L 349, 31.12.1994.

As a result of the market analysis and the evaluation referred to above, the Commission considers it necessary to ensure continuity in the information campaigns on European quality linen:

- I. The strategy of enhancing its image on the basis of recognition of and familiarity with the 'Masters of Linen' mark identifying quality European linen must continue if it is to be fully effective.
- II. The presence of quality European linen identified by its collective mark at the most significant textile trade fairs is a determining factor in the strategy referred to above.
- III. The information gap in the distribution sector needs to be filled by appropriate public relations exercises.
- IV. It would seem sensible to respond to a less favourable situation for flax, particularly as a result of greater competition from China and central Europe, by pursuing efforts to consolidate the presence of quality European linen in the textile trade through continuation of the existing promotional programmes. In general terms, however, this situation contains opportunities for promoting a return to natural fibres.
- V. Competition from poor-quality products at very low prices constitutes a challenge to quality European linen which can be met only through greater efforts in the field of information.

FINANCING

The campaign for 1998-2000 is expected to cost ECU 7 million, divided into two equal instalments of ECU 3.5 million each for 1998 and 1999.

MEASURES PROPOSED

In view of the reasons set out above and the evaluation referred to, the Commission is planning to implement the following measures relating to information, dissemination of the results of research work and evaluation. These measures will be carried out both within the European Union and in the United States of America, where earlier programmes should be continued. Sales are highly dependent on the North American market which, it is estimated, accounts for 50% of the final consumption of quality European linen. Between 1990 and 1996 that Community exports to that market grew by 23% for cloth and 25% for household linen.

Information campaigns

Public relations

1. For the reasons indicated above, enhancing the image of quality European linen in the creative sector (weavers and designers) is one of the priority objectives of this programme. The attention of the target group should be drawn to linen through public

relations campaigns aimed at weavers and designers centred on communications events such as fashion shows and competitions for designers.

Budget: ECU 2 500 000 (EU ECU 2 000 000; USA ECU 500 000)

2. The continuing promotion of the 'Masters of Linen' collective mark among distributors is also a priority. It will be pursued through measures aimed at weavers and garment manufacturers as well as distributors. These measures will result in information to consumers.

Budget: ECU 900 000 (EU ECU 700 000; USA ECU 200 000)

Events

1. Enhancing the image of European linen should involve conferences and participation in seminars and events concerned with fashion or the decorative arts.

Budget: ECU 700 000 (EU ECU 400 000; USA ECU 300 000)

2. In addition, adequate resources, some of which have been used hitherto, such as fashion notes, participation in seminars, stands at the major textiles fairs (to be held during the period of this promotional programme) and the materials library, will still be required to support supply.

Budget: ECU 1 100 000 (EU ECU 900 000; USA ECU 200 000)

Advertising

The Commission takes the view that it should continue to support promotional measures by means of appropriate advertising in the principal trade journals, together with attendance at the textile trade fairs and the various public relations campaigns aimed at distributors. Publicity aimed at the trade will use the leading professional media covering textiles and clothing in Europe and the United States.

Budget: ECU 500 000 (EU ECU 350 000; USA ECU 150 000)

Education

The Commission intends to continue the measures it has been pursuing hitherto in this field. They will be based on updated versions of a technical brochure and a technical video, a video for the distributive trade and a CD-ROM and will take the form of lectures to teachers and students in technical schools, technicians and distributors.

Budget: ECU 400 000 (EU ECU 300 000; USA ECU 100 000)

Exploitation of the results of research

These measures are intended to exploit improvements in product quality through applied research groups including technical centres, weavers and finishers. They will result in information for the trade.

Budget: ECU 600 000 (EU ECU 500 000; USA ECU 100 000)

Evaluation

The Commission will engage an independent consultant to carry out an independent evaluation of each of the schemes.

Budget: ECU 300 000

MISCELLANEOUS

1. The Commission will ensure that the Community financial contribution is mentioned in all promotional material produced and circulated and at any event or in any communications in connection with the promotional programme.
2. The Commission reserves the right to review this programme and make adjustments to it in the light of the overall evaluation to be carried out in 1998 of all promotional programmes which it manages. Changes or adjustments may also be required as a result of budgetary restrictions or information received concerning the results of the interim programme now under way. In the event of significant changes, the Council will be informed immediately.

SUMMARY TABLE OF PROPOSED MEASURES

(in ecus)

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Information campaigns</u>		
1. Image development	2 500 000	36
2. Promotion of quality mark	900 000	13
3. Events	700 000	10
4. Support for supply	1 100 000	15
5. Advertising	500 000	7
6. Education	400 000	6
<u>Exploiting the results of research</u>	600 000	9
<u>Evaluation</u>	300 000	4
TOTAL	7 000 000	100

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DOCUMENTS

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