

# GREEN EUROPE

NEWSLETTER ON THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

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of food and other  
agricultural products**



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Luxembourg: *Office for Official Publications*  
of the European Communities, 1985

ISSN 0250-5886

Catalogue number: CB-AV-85-213-EN-C

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*Printed in Belgium*

# Community imports of food and other agricultural products

## Introduction

There is a certain amount of controversy surrounding the Community's rules on food and other agricultural imports: some observers argue that excessive protection at the frontiers is keeping alive an industry parts of which are inefficient, while others think that heavy deficits in the Community's food and agricultural trade balance show that the Community market is too open to outside suppliers. This article aims to set out the facts and elucidate this long-running debate.

## Analysis of Community food and other agricultural imports (1)

### Overall situation

In 1983, food and other agricultural imports entering the Community totalled in value 50 354 million ECU. In the same year Community exports

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(1) For the purposes of this article 'food and other agricultural products' means the following divisions and groups of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC): 00 = live animals; 01 = meat; 02 = dairy products and eggs; 03 = fish; 04 = cereals; 05 = fruit and vegetables; 06 = sugar and honey; 07 = coffee, tea, cocoa and spices; 08 = feedingstuffs for animals; 09 = miscellaneous food preparations; 11 = beverages; 12 = tobacco; 21 = hides, skins and fur skins, undressed; 22 = oilseeds, oil nuts and oil kernels; 232 = crude rubber; 24 = wood, lumber and cork; 261 to 265 + 268 = natural textile fibres; 29 = crude animal and vegetable materials not elsewhere specified; 4 = oils and fats. Imports are expressed in value cif and exports in value fob.

of these products amounted to 26 693 million ECU, making for a deficit of 23 661 million ECU.

In 1965, the food and other agricultural imports of the Six totalled 9 876 million ECU; in 1972, they amounted to 13 993 million ECU (an annual increase of 5.2%). Between 1973 and 1980, the Nine's imports rose from 24 140 million ECU to 42 210 million ECU, an annual increase of 8.1%. The imports of the Ten, which totalled 44 721 million ECU in 1981, rose by an annual average of 6.3% from 1981 to 1983. (1) The proportion of Community imports made up of food and other agricultural imports, about 20% in the 1970, fell to about 15% by 1980. This was in fact mainly because of the leap in the prices of energy products imported into the Community, which therefore, for this reason alone, increased their share of spending on imports relative to all the other Community imports. Since 1980, the share of food and other agricultural goods in total imports has remained stable, which means that these imports have increased at the same pace as Community imports as a whole.

Over the same period, the Community's food and other agricultural exports also increased, but to a lesser extent in terms of absolute value, even if their growth was definitely faster in relative terms. The deficit, in terms of value, increased steadily, from 16 990 million ECU in 1973 to 22 689 million ECU in 1980 (the Nine) and over 23 500 million in 1983, but it contracted in real terms.

The Community remains by far the largest importer of food and other agricultural products in the world. Its share of the world total, which has been slightly decreasing over the past few years, is close to 20%. By way of comparison, that of Japan is about 11%, that of the United States about 10% and that of the USSR about 9%. Canada imports just over 2% of the world's food and other agricultural imports, while Australia and New Zealand account for 0.6% and 0.2% respectively. (2)

### **The main food and other agricultural items imported by the Community**

The table below shows, in decreasing order of magnitude, the value of imports into the Community of the various products in 1983, together with the value of exports and the external trade balance for each item.

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(1) Values in current ECU.

(2) 1981 data — *Source: FAO.*

**Community imports, exports and external trade balance  
for food and other agricultural products in 1983**

*(million ECU)*

Product	Imports		Exports		Balance — Value
	Value	%	Value	%	
Fruit and vegetables	7 690	15,3	1 831	6.9	— 5 859
Coffee, cocoa, tea, spices	6 735	13.4	1 122	4.2	— 5 613
Wood and cork	5 814	11.6	364	1.4	— 5 450
Feedingstuffs	5 629	11.2	1 401	5.2	— 4 228
Oilseeds and oleaginous fruit	3 630	7.2	33	0.1	— 3 597
Natural textile fibres	3 156	6.3	350	1.3	— 2 806
Fish	2 726	5.4	860	3.2	— 1 866
Meat	2 354	4.7	2 027	7.6	— 327
Cereals	2 270	4.5	4 425	16.6	2 155
Oils and fats	1 843	3.7	827	3.1	— 1 016
Tobacco	1 757	3.5	947	3.5	— 810
Crude agricultural products not elsewhere specified	1 349	2.7	1 021	3.8	— 328
Hides, skins and fur skins, undressed	1 338	2.7	612	2.3	— 726
Sugar and honey	985	2.0	1 655	6.2	670
Beverages	816	1.7	4 137	15.5	3 321
Crude rubber	767	1.5	9	0.0	— 758
Milk products and eggs	672	1.3	3 501	13.1	2 829
Live animals	574	1.1	549	2.1	— 25
Miscellaneous food preparations	249	0.5	1 024	3.8	775
<b>Total</b>	<b>50 354</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>26 693</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>— 23 661</b>

*Source: Eurostat — Siena; rounded figures, EUR 10 — 1983.*

The Community's food and agricultural imports are relatively concentrated: out of the 19 groups of products analysed, the four largest items taken together account for over half the total, and the first seven for over 70%. They fall into the following clear categories:

- (i) agricultural raw materials other than for processing into food or feed;
- (i) fruit and vegetables;
- (ii) tropical products;
- (iv) feedingstuffs;
- (v) animal and vegetable oils and fats and the basic products for manufacture thereof,

representing nearly three-quarters of total food and other agricultural imports.

The kind of products imported by the Community contrasts sharply with those exported: the imports are mainly of basic products for industrial processing or for use in livestock farming and the exports are mainly of processed products. Generally speaking, the Community imports only small quantities of the categories of product of which it is a heavy exporter, and vice versa; meat and cereals, and, to a lesser extent, fruit and vegetables and tropical products are the main exceptions to this rule.

There is an import surplus of the majority of the items in question; only beverages, milk products and eggs, miscellaneous food preparations and sugar and honey show an export surplus; imports and exports of animals are virtually in balance; the list of main imports in descending order of magnitude is reflected in the negative balance for the first seven categories of product, which together account for nearly 70 % of imports. Most of the deficits are very heavy.

Apart from cereals (decrease) and coffee, cocoa, tea and spices (no change), all the Community's food and other agricultural imports increased in terms of absolute value from 1977 to 1983.

Over the same period, 'coffee, tea, cocoa and spices' and 'fruit and vegetables' changed places as first and second items on the list of imports; tobacco and natural textile fibres moved up the table, but the largest increase was for feedingstuffs and fish (imports of which doubled in absolute value). The items at the bottom of the table (sugar and honey onwards), wood and cork and meat maintained their positions; there was a relative decline in imports of cereals and hides.

The trends in the categories mask more varied changes from one product to another: in terms of value, imports of manioc (included under 'fruit and vegetables') increased by 160% from 1977 to 1982 before declining slightly when voluntary restraint agreements were concluded with the main

suppliers. Again in terms of value, imports of corn gluten feed (included under 'feedingstuffs') rose by 230% from 1977 to 1983, to 683 million ECU.

Amplifying the above details, the following analysis relates only to agricultural products which are subject to an EEC market organization ('organized' products) giving a general picture of trade in temperate-zone agricultural products, which the Community is in a position to produce. These products are generally listed under subheadings to the items examined above and although they sometimes bear the same name as those items they are not identical to them.

**Community imports, exports and external trade balance  
for 'organized' agricultural products in 1983**

*(million ECU)*

Product	Imports		Exports		Balance— Value
	Value	%	Value	%	
Oilseeds and oleaginous fruit, fats and oils, residues and oilcakes	8 774	34.1	1 354	7.6	— 7 420
Fruit and vegetables	4 354	17.0	1 417	7.9	— 2 937
Cereals and rice, manioc, preparations of cereals	3 220	12.5	4 320	24.4	1 100
Fish, crustaceans, molluscs and preparations thereof	2 726	10.6	859	4.9	— 1 867
Raw tobacco	1 686	6.6	240	1.4	— 1 446
Sugar and honey	937	3.6	1 428	8.1	491
Pis and pigmeat	811	3.1	882	5.0	71
Cattle, beef and veal	802	3.1	937	5.3	135
Milk products	650	2.5	3 336	18.9	2 786
Wines	609	2.4	1 394	7.8	785
Sheep, goats and their meat	501	1.9	16	0.1	— 485
Flowers, etc.	284	1.1	507	2.9	223
Seeds	151	0.6	162	0.9	11
Poultry and poultrymeat	144	0.5	548	3.1	404
Flax, hemp and hops	49	0.1	135	0.3	86
Dehydrated fodder	34	0.1	1	0.0	— 33
Eggs	21	0.1	165	1.0	144
<b>Regulated products</b>	<b>25 753</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17 701</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>— 8 052</b>

*Source:* Eurostat — Table compiled by the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Commission of the European Communities; rounded figures, EUR 10 — 1983.

The products coming under EEC market organizations which figure most prominently in Community imports are oilseeds and oleaginous fruit, fats and oils and the by-products of their extraction, fruit and vegetables, cereals and the like, marine products and tobacco. Overall, the largest share of imports is accounted for by animal feedingstuffs, whether compound or the raw materials for their manufacture: cereals and cereal substitutes, oilseeds and cake, fishmeal, etc. Calculations done by the Statistical Office of the European Communities show that, in 1982, for the Community of Nine, these imports were equivalent to the production of 9.9 million ha or 10% of the Community's utilized agricultural area.

The development of Community production in this sector would allow a significant reduction of the EEC's agricultural and other food imports.

There is a balance of trade deficit with respect to 'organized' products, mostly because of heavy imports of major items. However, in contrast with the picture for external trade in all food and other agricultural products, a number of items show a positive balance. Most of these are traditional Community export items, imports of which are modest: milk and milk products, wine, sugar, eggs and poultry. Cereals and the like are a special case, since the Community both imports and exports large quantities, but the products in question are grouped under the same heading.

Between 1977 and 1983, imports of all 'organized' agricultural products increased in absolute value, except cereals, which decreased, and eggs, flax, hemp, hops and dehydrated fodder, which showed little change. The relative ranking of imports remained practically unchanged. The proportion of imports of food and other agricultural products accounted for by imports of 'organized' agricultural products, about 55% in 1973, fell to about 50% in 1977 and has remained more or less constant since then, as shown by the table below; this means that imports of products in the latter period have developed at the same annual rate as imports of all food and other agricultural products.

**Imports into the Community of 'organized' agricultural products and of all food  
and other agricultural products between 1977 and 1983**

*(thousand million ECU)*

Imports	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
'Organized' agricultural products (value)	19.44	18.54	19.94	20.60	23.58	25.01	25.75
Food and other agricultural products (value)	37.68	36.13	40.15	42.21	44.72	47.60	50.36
'Organized' agricultural products/foods and other agricultural products (%)	51.6	51.3	49.7	48.8	52.7	52.5	51.1

*Source:* Eurostat — Table compiled by the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Commission of the European Communities — from 1977 to 1980: EUR 9; from 1981 to 1983: EUR 10. The inclusion of Greek imports in the figures for 1981-83 has no effect on the percentage given in the third line of the table.

### **The Community's suppliers**

The Community imports substantial quantities of food and other agricultural products from a very large number of countries in every continent and at every level of economic development: over 70 countries exported more than 100 million ECU worth of these products each to the Community in 1983. The top 10 countries in descending order were the United States, Brazil, Spain, Argentina, Canada, Sweden, the Ivory Coast, Malaysia, New Zealand and Colombia, which each exported over 1 000 million ECU worth of such products.

In 1983, industrialized countries (FAO Category I) accounted for 46.3% of the Community's food and other agricultural imports, and the countries with planned economies (Category III) for 7.2%. The first place, however, was taken by the developing countries (Category II), with 46.5%; the ACP countries associated with the Community under the Lomé Convention exported roughly 13% of the total.

In the same year, the Mediterranean countries,<sup>(1)</sup> Spain, Portugal and Turkey, some of which belong to Category I and others to Category II, and with which the Community has special relations under trade and cooperation agreements, together accounted for 10.4% of the Community's agricultural and food imports.

This is not the place for a full list of all the suppliers of each of the agricultural and food products imported by the Community. In the case of some products, two or three countries supply virtually all the Community's imports; in others the top 20 suppliers account for less than half of total imports; generally speaking, the Community's sources of supply are very diversified. To sum up, it can be said that:

- (i) from the industrialized countries, the Community imports mainly timber and cork (Sweden, Finland, USA, Austria), oilseeds (USA, Canada), fish (Norway, Canada, USA, Iceland), cereals (USA, Canada), hides and skins (Finland, USA, Australia, Canada, Sweden), beverages (Spain, Portugal, Austria, USA), milk products (New Zealand, Switzerland, Austria) and live animals (USA, Austria).
- (ii) the developing countries supply the Community mainly with fruit and vegetables (Thailand), coffee, cocoa, tea and spices (Brazil, Ivory Coast, Colombia, Kenya, Nigeria), oils and fats (Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Senegal), tobacco (Zimbabwe), sugar (Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana), and crude rubber (Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Ivory Coast).
- (iii) the State-trading countries export some meat (Hungary, Yugoslavia), natural textile fibres (China) and live animals (Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland).

Over the past 10 years, the most striking development has been the emergence of the Third World as the Community's largest supplier of food and other agricultural products: their share has increased by over five percentage points. Today, the Community takes nearly 30% of their food and other agricultural exports and is thus their number one client for these products. In this trend can be seen the effects of the Community's move to open its market more to the developing countries, in accordance with the recommendations of the international organizations.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Cyprus and Israel.

Meanwhile, the shares of the industrialized and State-trading countries have fallen slightly, to the same extent in both cases; the share of the United States, however, which is the Community's largest supplier, has increased by two percentage points.

## **Import arrangements for food and other agricultural products entering the Community**

### **The general arrangements**

Designed as a coherent whole, the EEC market organizations have phased out national protection arrangements to achieve free movement of goods within the Community. At the same time, common arrangements have been made for imports of agricultural products from outside the Community. These arrangements are intended to embody the principle of 'Community preference', whereby the Member States must turn first to the Community market for their supplies. The instruments introduced under this system vary according to the nature of the products: they reflect the degree of self-sufficiency and the outlook for production when each market organization was set up, and they take account of the Community's obligations under international law.

In the case of most of the agricultural items produced in the Community — cereals and rice, sugar, olive oil, milk and milk products and sheepmeat — a system of levies at the frontier has been introduced which depends on the instruments selected for the various market organizations: the intervention price, the target price and the threshold price <sup>(1)</sup> <sup>(2)</sup> or their equivalents.

The price of an import entering the Community under this scheme must be adjusted to the level of the threshold price by payment of a levy equal to the

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<sup>(1)</sup> The intervention price is the price at which the intervention agencies must buy-in all the products offered to them. The target price is the price which the EEC market organization aims to ensure for the farmer. The threshold price is determined in such a way that the selling price of the imported product is equal to the target price, allowing for transport and marketing costs.

<sup>(2)</sup> The import levy on sheepmeat is subject to a ceiling in return for voluntary restraint commitments on the part of the suppliers.

difference between the threshold price and the 'third country' offer price. The levy, an innovation under the Community system, is thus a variable duty and, as such, is an 'unbound' type of customs duty (see below).

As the threshold price, which is the practical expression of the Community preference principle, remains stable throughout a marketing year, the levy system preserves the Community from world price fluctuations, whether they are due to variations in yields, movements in the currencies in which world prices are expressed or speculation in commodities.

A special combination of instruments of commercial policy is seen in the joint use of the levy system and that of customs duties. There are two variants:

- (i) In case of poultry products and pigmeat<sup>(1)</sup> there are two distinct components: a cereal component and an industrial component. The cereal component in these products attracts the cereal levy, which represents the variable component of external protection; the industrial component is covered by a standard type of customs duty, which represents the fixed component. These two components are always applied together.
- (ii) In case of imports of live cattle — apart from pure-bred breeding animals — and fresh, chilled and frozen beef/veal for direct human consumption; the normal system is based on an *ad valorem* customs duty and on an additional variable levy calculated by reference to the market prices recorded in the Community.

For some products (wine and some fruit and vegetables), given the special characteristics of their markets, external protection takes the form of customs duties and a system of reference prices. If the offer prices of non-member countries (for wine) or the entry prices (for some fruit and vegetables) are below the reference prices, a 'countervailing' charge is made.

Lastly, in the case of other products (tobacco, oils other than olive oil, some fruit and vegetables, etc.), the Common Customs Tariff alone is

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<sup>(1)</sup> A similar system also applies to certain processed agricultural products.

applied. The customs duties vary, of course, from product to product; for major agricultural products (oilseeds), they are zero.

There are usually no quantitative restrictions on agricultural imports into the Community. There are, however, provisions in all the agricultural regulations for implementing measures to protect the Community market against serious disturbances (safeguard clauses) provided that the rules of international trade in agricultural products are observed.

Conversely, in exceptional cases of shortages on its markets, the Community has reduced or waived its import levies and imposed export levies.

### **Preferential systems and trade agreements**

Alongside its general arrangements, the Community allows favourable conditions of access for a large number of countries in accordance with bilateral and multilateral agreements. These provisions concern the developing countries, the member countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and a few individual countries or groups of countries for certain products. They apply in particular to certain agricultural products originating in the countries which have applied to join the Community (Spain and Portugal).

The most important preferential systems apply to the developing countries with which the Community has fostered privileged relations over the years. The main instruments are the Lomé Convention, under which 64 ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) States are associated with the Community and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which involves over 120 independent States, including the ACP States, and some 20 dependent territories.

The Lomé Convention allows agricultural products from the ACP States to enter the Community free of customs duty, provided such duty is the only charge applicable to these products. For some products which are subject to a levy, the Community grants a reduction in the levy, provided certain conditions are met in particular cases. For instance, the threshold price for rice must be maintained, and an export charge is imposed directly by the country of origin in the case of beef/veal, so that the Community price level is safeguarded and the supplier countries ensured of extra

income. The Community has also undertaken for an unlimited period to purchase and import specified quantities of sugar originating in certain ACP States at a guaranteed price negotiated annually within the range of prices received by Community producers, up to a total of 1.3 million tonnes of white sugar equivalent a year.

The Community's Generalized System of Preferences extends to over 300 processed agricultural products. Depending on the product, it allows entry free of duty or at a reduced rate of duty, without restriction on quantity, except for a few products (soluble coffee, cocoa butter, tinned pineapple and tobacco). Since 1 January 1983, all agricultural products from the least advanced countries have been able to enter the Community at zero duty and free of quantitative restriction.

Lastly, the Community allows the Mediterranean countries reductions in customs duties on certain fruit and vegetables, sometimes between certain dates, a reduction subject to compliance with the reference price for wine and a reduction in the levy, offset by an export charge in the case of olive oil and rice, and without an export charge in the case of durum wheat.

### **Scale of each system**

The following table shows the 1982 breakdown of the Community's agricultural and food imports by the system applied and by origin of the products.

(% of total)

Origin \ Type of charge	Levy (1)	Positive duty (2)	Zero duty (3)	Total
Category I (industrialized countries)	12.6	34.2	53.2	100
Category II (developing countries)	9.4	34.2	56.4	100
of which: ACP	4.5	0.1	95.4	100
Mediterranean countries	5.9	69.1	25.0	100
Category III (State-trading countries)	17.6	25.5	56.9	100
All origins	11.3	33.8	54.9	100

Source: Eurostat — 1982 figures, processed by the Statistical Office and the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Commission of the European Communities.

(1) Cases in which the levy is the only instrument applicable to imports.

(2) Imports subject to a customs duty or a combination of customs duty and levy or countervailing charge.

(3) No duty charges.

ACP: African, Caribbean and Pacific States. Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Cyprus and Israel.

Nearly 55% of the Community's food and other agricultural imports escape duty altogether. As a result of the preferential agreements, imports from the developing countries enjoy the most favourable terms. Among these countries, the ACP States occupy a special place in that almost all their imports enter at zero duty.

The percentage of zero-dutied food and other agricultural imports from the industrialized countries is slightly below the average for all origins taken together. But the proportions vary greatly from one partner to another, according to the pattern of their exports to the Community: for instance, only 22.5% of Switzerland's agricultural and food exports to the Community enter at zero duty, but the percentage for the United States is 66.4%. It must be stressed, however, that — unlike the reductions or exemptions from duty enjoyed by the developing countries — those relating to goods originating in the industrialized countries were granted only in return for trade advantages (or concessions) granted by these countries to the Community.

## The Community's food and other agricultural imports and the rules of international trade

As the Community is a Contracting Party to the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), its policy on food and other agricultural

imports is largely determined by the obligations stemming from the General Agreement and the commitments it has entered into on a reciprocal basis in the various multilateral negotiations.

### **International trade rules on imports**

Among the main GATT rules, tariff concessions in the form of 'bound' customs duties and the most-favoured-nation clause are undoubtedly the most important.

A country accepting a bound duty undertakes not to increase the duties on imports of the product concerned; this constitutes a concession on the part of that country. In practice, concessions are negotiated with the countries concerned in exchange for equivalent concessions.

The GATT Contracting Parties can thus no longer increase at will the customs duties on the products they have bound. In order to restore tariff freedom to a bound product, a Contracting Party must normally first go through the procedure of 'unbinding' it, i.e. negotiate with its partners new concessions of a sufficient value to replace the unbound concession.

When a customs union is created or extended, the GATT requires that the situation be reviewed with the aim of restoring balance as regards concessions. Where the entire new system established by the customs union entails a disadvantage for a third country, compensation must be granted.

The most-favoured-nation clause requires each Contracting Party to accord immediately and unconditionally any advantage, favour, privilege or immunity granted to any country to all the GATT Contracting Parties. Consequently, tariff concessions, although negotiated on a bilateral basis, are in fact multilateral; this rule very substantially increases the scope and rigidity of tariff binding.

In addition to these two basic rules, the GATT includes other provisions which can influence the import policies of the Contracting

Parties, in particular those relating to quantitative restrictions (which are prohibited, apart from limited exceptions), safeguard clauses and subsidies.

Apart from the permanent rules, three rounds of multilateral trade negotiations — in 1962 (Dillon Round), from 1964 to 1967 (Kennedy Round) and from 1973 to 1979 (Tokyo Round) — have led to exchanges of tariff concessions. More recently, in 1982, a Committee was set up to prepare recommendations for a uniform interpretation of the meaning and scope of the GATT rules on import arrangements and export subsidies, or similar provisions.

### **Implications for the Community's imports of agricultural and food products**

In framing its policy on agricultural and food imports, the Community has had to take account of the obligations entered into individually by its Member States before they become members. The special nature of some instruments hitherto unknown in international trade, e.g. variable levies, which are not by nature suited to international contractual commitments, has meant that the Community has had to pay for its freedom to act in certain sectors with tariff concessions on other products; such arrangements were negotiated when the Community was founded and on the two occasions when new members joined.

In exchange for introducing levies in major sectors (cereals, milk products, meat, etc.), the Community has had to accept the binding of exemption from customs duties for, among other things, oilseeds, by-products thereof and corn gluten feed, and to agree to substantial reductions for tobacco, citrus fruit, grapes, vegetable oils, animal fats, etc. All the other Contracting Parties benefit from these concessions negotiated with the principal exporters of the products on which the Community has introduced levies, under the most-favoured-nation clause.

The Community has also played its part in the liberalization of trade called for in the various rounds of multilateral negotiations, with concessions relating primarily to its imports of tobacco, meat, cheese, fruit and vegetables in exchange for concessions received from its GATT partners on Community exports of cheese, spirits, processed agricultural products, etc.

In their present form, the food and other agricultural import arrangements result from the negotiations which have taken place since the Community was created. The levies applied to imports of most of the agricultural products which are also produced in the Community are counter-balanced by concessions in the form of bound — zero or reduced — duties on a series of other products. Altogether, bound customs duties apply to about 70% of the Community's imports; bound zero duties represent 20% of that total. The significance of these products in Community agricultural and food imports is clear — in particular oilseeds, oils and fats and feedingstuffs.

## **Conclusion**

The method the Community has chosen to ensure a reasonable income for its farmers has been mainly that of guaranteed market prices; the basic system it applies to its food and other agricultural imports logically reflects this policy option. Thus protected against fluctuations in world prices, it has been able to improve substantially its rate of self-sufficiency in food.

The Community nevertheless remains the world's leading importer of food and other agricultural products. It must continue to import some of these either because it is unable to produce them itself (tropical goods) or because it has signed undertakings to provide improved access to its markets under the GATT or other multilateral agreements or bilateral agreements.

It must be stressed that the concessions granted to industrialized countries are matched by equally valuable concessions to the Community, whether in the form of trade advantages as regards its exports or in terms of the Community's freedom to apply special import arrangements to the products which make up the bulk of its agricultural production.

All the industrialized countries protect their agriculture in one way or another. If only because of the instability of the markets, currency fluctuations or speculation on commodities, the agricultural sector requires special trade rules, which have been part and parcel of the multilateral GATT system since its inception, 10 years before the Community was set up. The machinery implemented by the Community has been judged to comply with the rules of international trade; it also has the merit of clarity and

stability and applies to only a minority share of food and other agricultural imports, especially in the case of the most novel aspect, the levy.

In its policy on food and other agricultural imports, the Community is concerned to achieve fuller cooperation to counteract the deterioration of world prices and to ensure respect for its international rights, particularly where Community action to control its own production justifies an adjustment to its external protection.

The multiple and sometimes novel forms of trade relations it has established with various groups of countries bear witness to its willingness to develop agricultural trade with due regard to legitimate mutual interests and while paying particular attention to the interests of the developing countries. The Community will continue to contribute towards the harmonious expansion of world trade and, to that end, will cooperate in the appropriate bodies in seeking solutions to the problems still outstanding in this area.

GREEN EUROPE

Newsletter on the common agricultural policy

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