



COMMISSION
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PRESS RELEASE

FREE FOOD FOR THE NEEDY

Agricultural Ministers have just approved a Community scheme to provide free food for the needy (Decision 10/12). The programme costing about £70 m (100m ECU) will last for two years. Member countries can choose whether or not to participate in the scheme. Britain is consulting appropriate charities before making a final decision.

The present scheme is based on the experiment to aid the needy suffering from the intense cold last winter. A variety of food stuffs was available directly from intervention stores, such as beef, veal and butter or from markets including fresh butter, yoghurt, cheese and milk. The food was distributed by designated charities - such as Red Cross, Age Concern or Euro-Caritas - to those in need. While the proposal was generally welcomed, there were certain difficulties in practice - not least in reimbursing the agencies from the Guarantee Sector of the Farm Fund. Moreover, as beneficiaries needed to buy less food from local shops, local stores suffered. Ease of access to the intervention stores varied and the agencies involved sometimes found it hard to cover distribution costs.

The new scheme is, therefore, improved under three heads:

- Food will be available only from intervention stocks and not from the market. Distribution will be undertaken only by designated organizations, which need not be limited to charities.
- Facilities: There is no compulsion on member countries to participate in the scheme.
- Administration costs will be charged to the Guarantee Sector of the CAP Farm Fund rather than to the Community General Budget which the Commission had hoped.

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